A worthy new contender from MAN

The latest MAN, the ‘TGX D38’, looks to have been set up to specifically target the all-important B-double prime mover market.

The trucking industry has a particular set of specifications in mind when sourcing a prime mover, and the list seems to get longer each year as new technologies come into the mix. The latest release from MAN looks as though it has been developed to tick off every item on that list, at the same time as the European cab-over prime mover is becoming more popular in the Australian market.

The Penske Commercial Vehicles organisation took on the licence for MAN in Australia just a few years ago and would have looked at quite a chequered history for the brand at the time: MAN had achieved some success with a 6x2 rigid model for Australia Post and scored some goals with all-wheel drives for military and mining customers, but the big volume segments, prime movers and heavy rigid, eluded them.

The reason seems to have been a lack of specifications fitting the expectations of Australian truck buyers. This made it hard for the brand to get traction in the market and led to MAN gaining a limited profile.

The arrival of Penske on the scene was well timed. Several months after the US organisation took over MAN, Western Star and Dennis Eagle distribution, MAN announced the introduction of a six-inline 15-litre engine. This would be capable of putting out the kind of power the Australian buyer likes to see in their prime movers. Until this point, MAN had been limited to 13-litre engines which, with power stretched to 530hp, were unable to get much penetration.

The news sent a wave of anticipation through the MAN team and the priority became getting the D38 model over here, but in the right specification to give it the best chance of cracking the market. The first stage of the operation was bringing some evaluation trucks over, one of which was seen at the Brisbane Truck Show in 2015.

In the intervening period, this truck has undergone a number of evaluation tests, going around the country to see how the technology fits into the Australian experience. The upshot of this testing is an MAN truck capable of holding its own as a B-double prime mover and close to the specification most operators prefer to use.

“MAN has been a major player in the European market for a lot of years, we certainly haven’t achieved the results I believe we can and this is the start of a new era with Penske,” says Mark Mello, General Manager, MAN Truck and Bus Australia. “We are very confident the new TGX D38, as the
flagship of our vehicle line up, will really put us in a strong position here in Australia.

“Our focus has been on the whole-of-life costs of the vehicle. We are focused on ensuring we are providing a solution to our customers. We tailored this truck, from a specification point of view, to perform the duties it needs to perform and targeting the B-double market.”

**MAN** has been able to make this foray into the market due to a change of policy back in Germany. In the past, high-horsepower MAN engines have been V8s, which were not viable here due to excess mass over the steer axle. The decision to develop a 15-litre six-cylinder has been crucial for potential Australian sales.

The new engine comes as a next step for the current engine line-up. MAN came up with a completely new engine concept over ten years ago, with the 10-litre D20. Later came the 13-litre D26 and now the 15-litre D38.

Rated at 560hp (412kW) in the horsepower stakes and with 2700Nm (1991 ft lb) of torque, this engine has the capacity to handle the task with plenty to spare. The 12-speed Tripmatic transmission is the well-proven ZF automated manual with an MAN control system overlaid. There is also an optional ZF Intarder available, offering up to 600kW of retardation if needed.

Innovative design concepts are included in the design, such as the top-down cooling system, which introduces the coolant at the top of the engine, around the combustion chamber and injectors. This means it meets the hottest part of the engine first when it’s still at its coolest.

The common rail fuel injection system runs at 2500 bar. The wiring loom on these trucks is encased in foam, inside the conduit, to eradicate chafing and rubbing between cables.

**MAN** is also adding to the plethora of new acronyms on a truck with the introduction of CRT on the D38. This stands for the Continuous Regeneration Trap, as opposed to a Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF). The continuous regeneration is said to give the system a longer working life.

“The design of this vehicle is as important as when we talk about the engine,” says Roger Penske, Chairman Penske Automotive Group. “We talk about an Automated Manual Transmission. We don’t buy a manual in the US now, for two reasons. One, from the driver perspective and, two, for the residual value.

“The metrics we’ve seen and the feedback we’ve got on the vehicles were quite positive. I think we have to be a better company here in Australia, from a service perspective. We look around the country and see our service locations number being able to grow over the next eighteen months. Even though the market is down, we need more market share and we need to invest in our service locations.”

If the MAN brand is set to grow, this is the Penske group’s opportunity. Any growth will be from a low base, but the new model looks to be a good platform to build on. It ticks all of the boxes as a truck and if the promised increase in service locations eventuates, it should be able to perform. Penske’s purchase of the Detroit network gives it plenty of outlets and the possibility to exploit the strengths of this new player in the market.