



Huge demand makes DAF an elusive beast

by **Graham Smith**

It's one of the world's most acclaimed trucks, having been voted International Truck Of The Year 2007, but the DAF XF105 is no certainty to hit our shores despite the desire of DAF's general manager Brad Wolstenholme.

If Wolstenholme has his way the big cracker DAF cab-over will be added to his portfolio of Dutch-produced trucks, but it all hinges on his ability to build a sound business case for the truck and DAF's capacity to supply them.

"The XF is selling so well in Europe that it's hard to get them to allocate trucks to us when they can sell every truck they can build," he says.

"Our market is so small it's hard to get them to take notice of us."

DAF introduced the heavy-duty XF105 to rave reviews in Europe in 2005, the ultimate accolade coming at the Hanover truck show last October when it was named 2007 truck of the year.

While it follows the theme of the XF95, the XF105 is virtually a new truck with a new cab, new interior, new engine and a new chassis layout.

Externally the cab follows DAF's bold styling theme set by the XF95, but it has

new upper and lower grilles, a new steel bumper, and new super space cab roof that creates a massive interior.

Climb into the XF105's spacious cab and you find a refined workspace with great ergonomics, attractive colours and materials all impressively put together. The centre tunnel is just 150mm high, making for a semi-level cab floor, which makes it easy to get around, and if the automated AS-Tronic transmission is specified, the floor is completely flat. Even when the manual gearbox is selected there is a retractable gear lever to make it easier for the driver to move around.

Either way, there is also plenty of headroom to make it even more comfortable. In the Space cab it's 1.75m, but in the Super Space cab it grows to a massive 2.10m. Under the XF105's cab lies PACCAR's 12.9-litre MX Euro 4-compliant engine with power ratings from 300kW to 375kW with torque from 100Nm to 2500Nm available from 1000 to 1500rpm.

The MX engine was developed by DAF and the Euro 4 version, which uses SCR, is built in Holland, while another version, which will be seen in Australian-built Kenworths in a year or so, will use EGR and be built in America.

There is a choice of manual or AS-Tronic automated manual gearbox, the latter an increasingly popular choice in Europe where driver comfort and safety are becoming more important issues. The automated gearbox is also making it easier to get drivers who aren't experienced with constant-mesh gearboxes, and may not have even driven a car with a manual gearbox.

A recent drive of an XF105 in Europe confirmed it is a refined, quiet and comfortable truck with plenty of performance courtesy of the MX engine.

While the volume of XF105s Wolstenholme could sell is relatively small, it would give the brand a market boost. He says it's important to get trucks on the road to get noticed, and no other DAF would turn heads like the towering XF105.

With DAF's factory bursting at the seams as it tries to squeeze every last truck out to meet the demand in Europe, Wolstenholme says it would be February 2009 at the earliest before they could build any trucks he wanted to order. Even so he will persist with his requests for the XF105 and remains optimistic he will be able to eventually have the truck in local dealerships.



Desired... the DAF XF105's popularity has the truckmaker struggling to keep up with demand in Europe, let alone Australia