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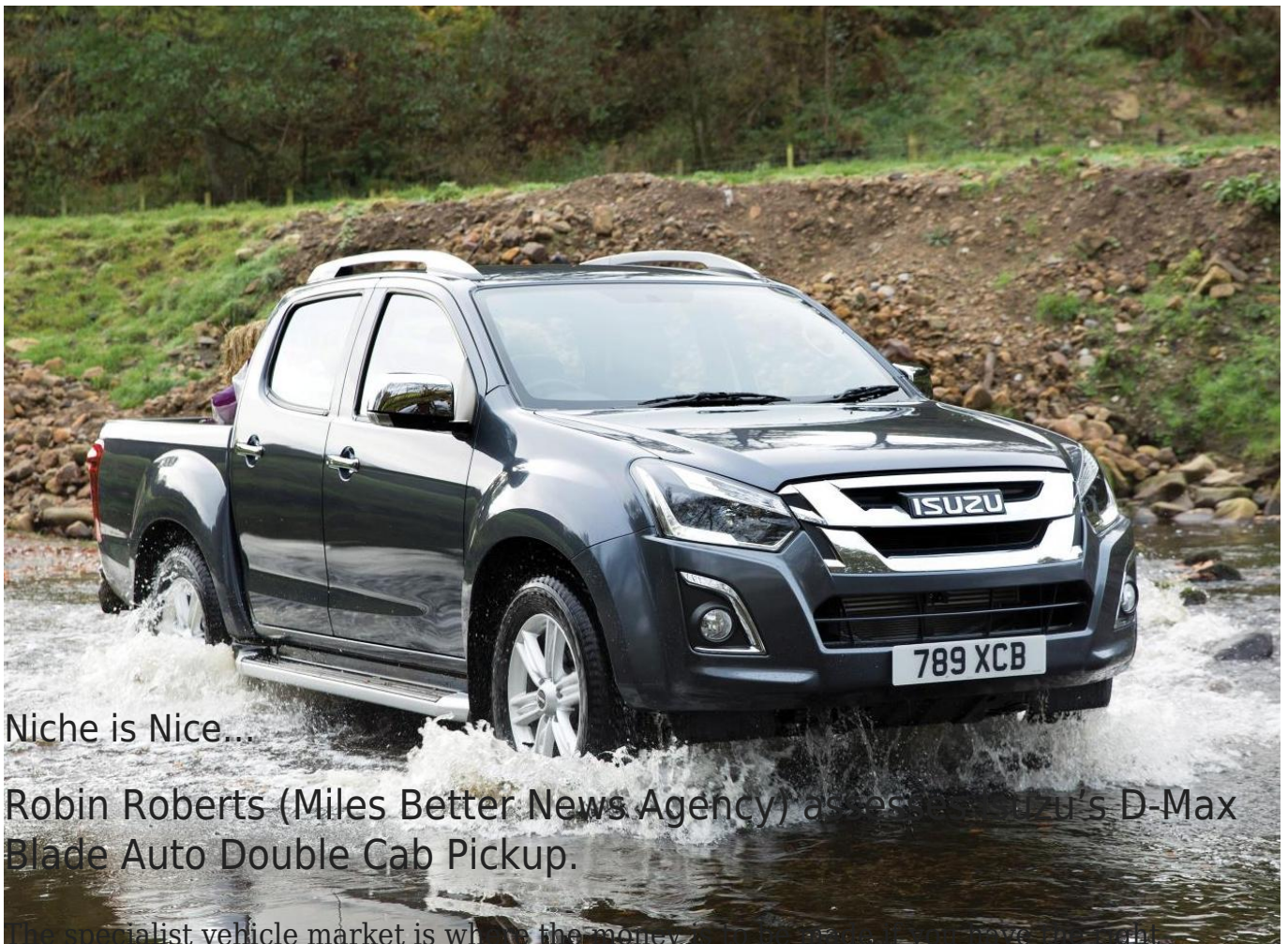
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Isuzu D-Max Blade Double Cab Pickup – Road Test

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Niche is Nice...

Robin Roberts (Miles Better News Agency) assesses Isuzu's D-Max Blade Auto Double Cab Pickup.

The specialist vehicle market is where the money is, and it's all about the right products selling at the right prices, like the Isuzu D-Max Double Cab pickup. Isuzu will be one of many pick-up manufacturers and importers airing their wares at this week's Commercial Vehicle Show at the NEC in Birmingham from 24 to 26 April.

Double Cab pick-ups for instance serve as useful vehicles varying from rural family duties, for business user-choosers attracted by the lower Benefit-in-Kind company car tax costs



over a large 4x4 SUV, in the building and engineering industries, in farming, lifestyle and sports use, also for the rescue services, Highways Agency and the Police.

The Isuzu D-Max range, which took over from the Rodeo series, comprises Single Cab, Extended Cab and Double Cab models using the same engine and with a choice of six speed manual or automatic transmissions. They come with four-wheel-drive except for the entry-level rear-wheel-drive version and there are essentially five trim levels.



Our Blade Double Cab Automatic sits towards the top of the 18-model lineup and its standard equipment is very high, rivaling an executive car in many respects. Standard equipment includes LED lights, tinted glass, powered windows all round, Bluetooth & DAB



radio with apps compatibility, touchscreen and satnav, leather seats and a full suite of safety features and 18-inch wheels. So it's not lacking in the equipment stakes.

The bigger body is a bit of a climb into and out of but it's very roomy and the seats are big and comfortable with reasonable adjustment on the front pair, and an adjustable steering column to tailor make journeys as relaxed as possible. There's plenty of oddments room as well.



Under the big bonnet there is a comparatively small sub-2.0 litre turbodiesel four cylinder engine which works hard to perform and lets you know when heading towards maximum revs and it becomes boomy. Matched to a smooth six-speed auto-box the performance is adequate but not head-turning, but its overdrive higher ratios help it ease past 30 mpg overall. Use the box and that figure will dramatically fall away.



We did not see any point in taking the acceleration time as it would be slow by comparison with many vans, SUVs or cars but we did like the huge capacity loadbed even if it was a challenge to lift heavy items up onto the 90-degree tailgate and slide into the space. There are tie-down points and there is a single handle release for the tailgate, which is convenient.

Inside the cabin you have fairly good visibility but its bonnet does hide things up close and the reversing camera and sensors really come into their own when parking. The lights were reasonably long sighted and the wipers did a good job clearing the screen.

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Noise levels were generally confined to the engine at speed but there was a bit of road rumbling going on underneath. The D-Max ride was naturally firm but not bouncy and it coped well with winding roads without making anyone feel sick.

The most annoying issue with the D-Max was a very big turning circle because of its commercial vehicle 4WD system which made urban driving a challenge when it came to manoeuvring or parking, but it was not an issue on open roads or in the country.

Secondary controls were straightforward and worked well, the instruments were clear and sensibly sized while the good-sized touchscreen was easy to read and use.

Brakes were well up to the required job and the parking brake securely held it on a slope.

With the pulling power of 360 Nm (266 lb.ft) from 2,000 rpm it was good for towing and so long as you sensibly used the gears you could keep a good pace on open roads.



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VERDICT

There are many rivals to the Isuzu D-Max but I find them lacking in room and sometimes refinement as well, so it may not be your first consideration, but could be the last word for serious leisure or workhorse requirements.

For: Comfort and room, interior trim and equipment, durable powertrain, lower company car tax rate than a large 4x4 SUV.

Against: Restricted turning circle, lacklustre acceleration, unladen firm ride, some access &



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visibility issues.



Mini-Milestones and Wheels-Alive Tech. Spec. in Brief:

Isuzu D-Max Blade Auto 4x4 Double cab Pickup

Price: £34,739

Mechanical: 164 hp, 360 Nm (266 lb.ft), 1.9 litre four cylinder turbodiesel, six speed



Auto

Max Speed: 112 mph

Combined MPG: 31.4

Insurance Group: 40A

C02 emissions: 205 g/km

VED road tax: Commercial vehicle £250 annual charge

BiK company car tax: Commercial vehicle £3,350 standard rate where the 20% tax employee will pay £670 a year, the 40% tax rate is £1,340 a year.

Warranty: Three yrs/60,000 miles

Sizes: L 5.30 m (17.39 ft), W 1.86 m (6.10 ft), H 1.80 m (5.91 ft)

Payload: 1,101 kg (2,427 lb)

Kerb: 1,949 kg (4,297 lb)