

LDV G10 first drive review

LDV's freshly introduced G10 commercial van is a trailblazer among Chinese-built vehicles.

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Chinese-made cars haven't exactly been a rollicking success in Australia.

Wind the clock back a decade and you might recount some of the more forgettable examples: Great Wall with its pick-a-part specials, Chery with its poor safety scorecard and most recently the born-again MG division, which has been reincarnated under the tutelage of Chinese manufacturing giant Shanghai Automotive and Industrial Corporation (SAIC) with limited success.

But just when you thought it was time to write off the Chinese-made car altogether, an unlikely choice has emerged in the form of a robust commercial van.

It's called the LDV G10, and it's arguably the best mainstream vehicle

to hail from China. As background, the LDV brand falls under the same SAIC ownership model as MG, but there are some key distinctions in its build quality and parts.

Measuring 3.2 metres between the wheels and standing 1.98 metres high, the G10 sits below the larger V80 in LDV's Australian line-up.

It makes a compelling argument on value. Priced from \$29,990 drive away for ABN holders (\$31,569 for everyone else), the G10 undercuts the rivalling Toyota HiAce, Renault Trafic, Ford Transit and Volkswagen Transporter if an automatic transmission and petrol engine is a must.

Pulling yourself into the LDV's highly set cabin feels strangely familiar. That's because much of the

switchgear, dials and interior fittings actually hail from General Motors and the Volkswagen Group, under an arrangement with SAIC.

Having those accompaniments lifts the mood of the cabin straightaway. There are soft, supportive seats with arm rests, a thoughtful driver position including decent outward vision and well-resolved ergonomics across the two-seat layout, including an arsenal of storage options.

The theme of quality carries over to the driveline, where a twin-turbocharged 2.0-litre petrol engine makes 165kW and 330Nm.

The engine never feels languid or thrashy under heavy acceleration. Instead, it does a reasonable job of shifting the G10's 1907kg heft willingly

LDV's G10 commercial van treads a new path for Chinese-made vehicles in Australia. Photo: Supplied.



and smoothly – thanks in part to an excellent six-speed ZF transmission which drives the rear wheels. Pulling away briskly from traffic lights is never a challenge, the engine summoning its peak power from low in the rev range and transitioning smoothly to the upper echelons.

Fuel use is moderate but not excellent, especially in the company of more efficient diesel rivals. The official claim reads 11.7L/100km, though casual driving can lower that figure in the real-world.

As for how the LDV performs under load, we will have to leave that verdict for another day. Its 1093kg payload and 1500kg towing capacity rate well against the established set (total GVM 3 tonnes). The business end measures 5.2 cubic metres in total (2365mm long, 1235mm wide and 1270mm high), dimension LDV claims caters for two standard pallets. The cargo space is well accommodated, too, with dual sliding doors and a traditional tailgate. Eight tie-down points and a spread of interior lighting ensures excellent amenity in the cargo space.

Even unladen, the overall ride of the LDV feels spot on. Its five-link coil-sprung rear end feels more compliant against traditional leaf-sprung rivals, a factor enhanced by a car-like MacPherson strut front suspension. The configuration amounts to handling that is immune from porpoising

over bumps and feels compliant over everyday road imperfections – even on 16-inch alloy wheels.

A turning circle of 11.8 metres ensures straight-forward, but not excellent, inner-city manoeuvring. Honest, accurate steering and four, well-modulated disc brakes cement a handling package that leaves some rivalling machines in the shade.

The LDV recipe isn't perfect though. Upon closer inspection there are some packaging shortcomings, such as the bulging sections of seat material and the lack of illumination on the steering wheel at night. On highway trips the floor of our test vehicle became disconcertingly warm, something we will keep an eye out for during future load testing.

A diesel engine would also boost its appeal – and lower fuel consumption while doing so. Same goes with a manual transmission. Plans are afoot to introduce an oil burner but stakeholders haven't given any indicative timing.

But as a sum of its parts equation, the LDV G10 is cheap and honest, based on our first impression. Its long list of standard features include cruise control, MP3 connection and DVD player, seven-inch LCD touchscreen, Bluetooth phone and audio connection, climate control, power side mirrors, tilt-adjustable steering wheel, reversing camera and parking sensors.

Standard safety features extend to anti-lock brakes and electronic stability control, as well as body-roll control and a tyre pressure monitoring system. Two airbags (dual front) are fitted standard, but no side impact protection.

The G10 is backed by a three year/100,000km warranty, supported by LDV's national network of 35 dealers. Twenty-four hour roadside assistance is also available.

In many ways, the LDV treads new ground for Chinese-produced vehicles in Australia. Its fate now lies in the hands of discerning trade buyers.