

**If it ain't broke,
don't fix it**

Dave Cox tests the Isuzu EXY 530 Giga – a popular heavy commercial truck that continuously performs

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This truck has been out on the showroom floors for a couple of years now but I thought it was high time I took one for a drive to find out why it is still such a popular model over its rivals. It's fair to say that Isuzu has always been a major contender in the heavy commercial vehicle sales arena and the EXY 530 GIGA certainly fits that mix.

I am sure most people would agree that change for change's sake is not a good model to base a successful business plan on and the good old adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" has to be said of the impressive Giga.

The EXY 530 Giga fits the Japanese O2/O4 Emission standard, which means it has the cooled EGR (Exhaust Gas Recirculation) and has been supplied courtesy of Steve Sansome of TCL Isuzu in Auckland. Steve arranged Kelly Keogh, Isuzu's product engineer, to ride with me and explain all the finer points of the Giga. This was an excellent idea, as I am sure you will agree that operating a vehicle to its full potential involves a lot more than just knowing how to point the truck down the road in the right direction. The difference is actually quite vast when you take into account the possibility of operating the vehicle in a manner that could be detrimental and possibly cost the owner big bucks in the long run. Over the last few years I have been amazed at how many

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Who the truck is suited to:

- Heavy duty bulk tipping units
- Line-haul units
- Large Class 4 town delivery
- Any 18-tonne-plus requirements
- Any combination 44-tonne units

Pluses:

- Excellent visibility
- Efficient and silent retardation
- Roomy cab
- Large amount of storage
- Strong drive-train combination
- Smooth automated gearbox
- Excellent cab access
- Top of the range driver's seat
- Superior lighting for night driving

operators are given a truck to drive and have been shown nothing about how to operate it. This is especially evident when a truck with all the automated computerised equipment is handed down to the next driver in line or is bought second-hand and the poor driver that has inherited it just has to find out the best way to drive it by trial and error (error being a costly lesson).

The basics

As I arrive at the vehicle it is good to see that all the rudimentary fundamentals are all easily accessible like oil, water and all other essential fluids. This is a point that some may take lightly but if these crucial bread and butter every day checks are difficult to get to on a cold, wet, early morning, it is possible that the driver will not carry out their responsibilities and check them before the start of day.

Features

One great feature is its remote control in the cab, giving the truck the ability to raise and lower the height for loading or hooking up to trailers. This has an auto return to factory height settings as soon as you exceed 20kph.

Cosmetically it has 22" Flat glass main mirrors, with built in convex spotters in the lower segment giving great uninterrupted viewing, both of which are heated and electric. When it comes to lighting up the night sky there are very impressive HID headlights (High Intensity Discharge). Kelly said he thought they were around 2000 volts. These only come out on the units that have airbag suspension because it is important to have the vehicle at the correct ride height all the time with such high powered lights.

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The gearbox

I fire it up and look for the appropriate gear on the Isuzu MJX16AMT Automated transmission so as to get our rig rolling.

This is where Kelly steps in to explain that the computer is programmed with default gears, which are 4th and 9th for a tractor unit and 4th and 6th for an eight-wheeler. This happens when the computer senses if there is a trailer plugged in or not.

When a trailer is plugged into the truck there will be a current draw. The computer senses this and dials a lower gear to start off in, as opposed to when no trailer is towed and the gear is set slightly higher.

What if you don't want to start in that gear? No problems, as a click on the selection lever will put it in the gear that the driver thinks appropriate. This gearbox is not a lot different to other Automated gearboxes; it has "A" for Automated "M" for manual and "R" for reverse.

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How does it handle?

We headed out to the motorway, picking our way through the notorious Auckland traffic, and it is at times like this that the automated gearbox comes into its own. The Isuzu box is sometimes referred to as the Smoother G and for very good reason. It's smooth, steady and effortless to drive. This is definitely a bonus in heavy traffic with numerous sets of lights, crazy motorists attacking you from all directions and stopping and starting at regular intervals.

I am instructed that the clutch pedal is not used for starting and stopping but only used in situations where you might have to reverse slowly and need accurate control of your vehicle speed, like when hooking up to a trailer. You can utilise the clutch almost as an inching brake. Kelly pointed out another common mistake that some drivers make is when sitting at lights on a hill or sitting stationary they are sometimes inclined to rest their foot on the

accelerator, which makes the computer try to engage the clutch, giving the same result as riding your clutch in a manual gearbox.

While cruising along the southern motorway I try the power/economy switch so when the transmission is set in Auto mode it will change the engine rpm shift point. This is not very often used as the power mode seems to be sufficient most of the time and the driver can just drive and manage the gear changes at the appropriate times.

Retardation unit

As we cruised around South Auckland and along the motorway, the next feature to try out is its retardation unit. This Giga has a two-stage retardation, with exhaust braking on the first stage and a very impressive

The cab

Up in the cab I immediately felt comfortable with the large amount of space and the ISRI 6860 high spec seat is easy to sit in.

The 530 has the high-roof cab and carpet on the floor with a six-stack CD player as part of the standard spec.

There is locker storage just above your head, right across the width of the cab and just below that, more individual lockers.

The dash is plastic with wood grain surrounds and inserts. In the centre beside the driver is the classic Isuzu document/storage locker and alongside this is a compartment called the hot/cold box. This clever innovation has an air conditioning/ climate control duct running to it so when the air conditioning is on cold it will make the little compartment cool as well, thus keeping your drinks cool in the summer without having to fit a fridge unit. You can also adjust the ducting so cool air will also be fed into the sleeper compartment if necessary.



Specifications ISUZU EXY530

Engine	390kW (530ps) @ 1800rpm
Torque	1676lb/ft @ 1300rpm
Transmission	MUX16-AMT 16-speed Automated.
Gears	16
Clutch	15.5" twin plate
Rear axle	Isuzu RT210
Ratio	4.10:1
Rear suspension	Isuzu 8-bag air
Brakes	Drums 410mm diameter
Retardation	Isuzu butterfly exhaust GIGA-Tard NT65 Permanent Magnetic

magnetic retarder on the second stage. This is mounted just in front of the front diff and is well placed to get good cooling and is also speced as a lightweight unit. It is very nice to use and one of the real bonuses is that not only is it very efficient and slows the vehicle extremely well, but it is also completely silent.

The beauty of this system is that when descending down a hill into a built up area where there is a by-law stating 'No engine brakes', the Isuzu Giga can happily have full retardation and no-one would know.

Getting along at a nice clip of 90kph the ride is smooth. The axles are Isuzu and the brakes are Isuzu as well, so when you match all this from stem to stern with Isuzu engine and

transmission, it just makes for a very solid, well thought-out package.

The verdict

Overall performance and comfort are great and the automated gearbox makes driving this model a breeze. I do strongly recommend that anyone who drives a vehicle like this for the first time engages the services of someone like Kelly Keogh and not just the previous driver or a mate that once drove one to show them the ideal way of getting optimum performance from their vehicle! ■

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How they compare – Isuzu against its rivals

TRUCK MODEL	ENGINE	HP (kW)	TORQUE (Nm)	TRANSMISSION	REAR AXLE AND OPTIONS	REAR SUSPENSION	FRONT AXLE	FRONT SUSPENSION	BRAKES	GVM (kg)	GCM (kg)	TARE (kg)	WHEELBASE (mm)	BBC (mm)
Mercedes-Benz Actros 3 265LS 6 x 4	OM502 LA - 16 Litre V8 Turbocharged & Intercooled Diesel	551	2600	Mercedes PowerShift 12 Speed Automated	Mercedes-Benz H7 - 13,000kg capacity	Mercedes-Benz 8 Air Bag suspension with shock absorbers and stabiliser bar	Mercedes-Benz VL4 - 7,500kg capacity	Mercedes-Benz 3 Leaf parabolic springs with shock absorbers and stabiliser bar	Telligent Brake system, Disc brakes, dual brake circuits, air dryer, ABS, ASR	26,000	70,000	8340 (Total with Medium size cab)	3300	2095 (Medium Cab - we offer smaller and bigger cabs)
Mercedes-Benz Actros 3 2660LS 6 x 4	OM502 LA - 16 Litre V8 Turbocharged & Intercooled Diesel	598	2800	Mercedes PowerShift 12 Speed Automated	Mercedes-Benz H7 - 13,000kg capacity	Mercedes-Benz 8 Air Bag suspension with shock absorbers and stabiliser bar	Mercedes-Benz VL4 - 7,500kg capacity	Mercedes-Benz 3 Leaf parabolic springs with shock absorbers and stabiliser bar	Telligent Brake system, Disc brakes, dual brake circuits, air dryer, ABS, ASR	26,000	70,000	8340 (Total with Medium size cab)	3300	2095 (Medium Cab - we offer smaller and bigger cabs)
Freightliner Argosy 6 x 4	Detroit Diesel Series 60 EGR	500 Standard - 470 & 525 also available options	1850 Standard - 1650 also available	Eaton Manual RTLO-20918B as standard - RTLO-18918B manual, RTLO-22918B manual, RTLO-18918A-AS Automatic, RTLO-20918A-AS Automatic and RTLO-22918A-AS available as options	Meritor RT146-160CP 20,870kg capacity standard - RT140-145GP 18,140kg capacity, RT150-160CP 20,870kg capacity, RT152-185GP 23,580kg capacity, RT152-380CP 23,580kg capacity, Dana DDH44P 18,160kg capacity available options	Freightliner Airliner 46K 20,870kg standard - Avliner 40K 18,140kg, Freightliner TurTrac 40K 18,140kg, TurTrac 46K 20,870kg, Hendrickson PRIMAAAX 460 20,870kg, Newway AD-246 20,870kg available as options	Meritor FG-941 6,620kg standard - FL-941 7,258kg available option	Parabolic taper leaf 6,620kg capacity - 7,258kg capacity available option	Meritor S Cam brakes, Wabco ABS & Traction control, Wabco air dryer	24,000	65,000	7750 (Total for standard truck)	4375 or 4600 depending on cab	2274, 2573, 2825 depending on cab
Scania R500 LB8X4MHA 8x4 rigid cab & chassis	Scania DC16 04-500 Euro 3	500 (368)	1900	Scania GR5095R 14-speed	Scania RB662 + R660 Hypoid Ratio 3.42:1	Scania air suspension with electronic level control	Scania 2 x AV1620 Forged, toughened alloy steel	2x30mm Parabolic springs with extra stiff anti-roll bar	Full air disc brakes with EBS, ABS with traction control & load sensing, Air dryer with APS	32,400	Up to 60,000	Not supplied	5778	Not supplied
Mitsubishi Fuso Shogun FV550H1	6M170-5A17	382 (535ps gross) @ 2000rpm	2160 (1663lbft gross) @ 1100rpm	FUSO INOMAT MZ00516 16-speed	D12(H/T) Single reduction - hypoid	Multi leaf 6 rod	F090T capacity: 7500kg	Long taper leaf	Full air taper roller system with auto adjust ABS, ASR Traction Control	27,600	60,000	8000	3710	2130

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