

Bakkie takes luxurious persona

By [Lerato Matebese](#)

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Mahindra SA has had some rather cheap yet crude products, mainly aimed at farmers and those in the mining sector who required a value for money proposition with little in the way of frills, comfort and refinement.



Photo: *Car Magazine*

Then along came the Mahindra S10 Pik Up, which is somewhat of a left-field option in the mainstream double cab bakkie segment, even showing suitability in the leisure market.

Featuring a visage similar to its Scorpio SUV sibling, the styling may not be everyone's cup of tea, but it looks considerably better than the outgoing model. There are daytime running lights, while the rest of the vehicle's exterior is arguably the same as its predecessor, including those extended wheel hubs, although the cabin is more chalk and cheese than before.

The materials have better tactile quality, while the overall layout looks more well thought through, thanks to the black colour theme.

There is a touchscreen infotainment screen, which is not the most intuitive to use, but the Bluetooth connectivity was particularly easy to pair with my smartphone. It must be said that the remote buttons for the infotainment screen on the steering wheel feel too tacky.

Leg and headroom are good for both front and rear passengers, while the load bin, which looks as though it has been tacked on to the rest of the vehicle, can load up to 995kg in the instance of the 4x4 variant on test. One other aspect that I feel can be improved is the turning circle of 6.7m.

For me, it is the engine that truly manages to impress the most and is easily the crown jewel of the entire package. Displacing 2.2l, the turbodiesel unit may put out a paltry 103kW and 320Nm on paper, but in reality it translates into an eager performer offering up to 2,500kg towing capacity (braked trailer). Allied to the six-speed manual transmission, the engine is remarkably smooth - something I really did not expect.

The ride quality is slightly on the bouncy side on the open road with an empty load bin and the leaf rear springs, but perhaps not too far off some major industry players.

It is on the gravel and off the beaten track where the model shows its mettle and the ability of its four-wheel drive system, which can be selected on the fly. It has a tough-as-nails disposition that means I can see this vehicle being thoroughly utilised off-road as it felt to be in its elements in those environs.

On road, the engine makes some notable haste and the sixspeed transmission comes in handy on the open road.

At R354,995, the S10 might seem pricey, but then you troll through the list price of turbodiesel double cabs in the segment and it actually comes in at a relatively keen price.

While it might not upset the applecart of the more established brands, there is no denying the fact that the S10 will play a pivotal role in Mahindra's sales plans.

If you are looking for a workhorse that has a slight ounce of comfort to be used as a leisure bakkie at a relatively low pricing point, then the model is worth considering.

However, I believe that the majority of South African buyers in this segment would gravitate towards the better known brands.

However, the S10 Pik Up is easily the marque's plushiest bakkie offering yet.

Source: *Business Day*

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