

Range Rover reaches new levels

GLEN HILL

THE latest version of the Range Rover must come close to being the ultimate on and off roader.

The first impression is one of space, filled with technology and luxurious finishes.

For example, the Range Rover features a dual view infotainment touch screen. This essentially allows the driver and passenger to view different images simultaneously – on the same screen.

This means that the passenger can enjoy a DVD movie while the driver follows navigation instructions – all on the same screen. This innovation pretty much sets the tone for the vehicle.

For the two days of the launch we were constantly discovering some high-tech innovation that sets the vehicle apart.

Traditional analogue instruments are replaced by a fully configurable 12" in TFT screen. Virtual dials and information displays change according to the requirements of the driving mode.

DRIVE TRAIN

Dials are able to move aside to display graphic representations of wheel articulation and drive train status when tackling rough terrain for example.

Functions such as satellite navigation, DVD video and audio systems can be controlled via the central display.

The new Range Rover's Adaptive Dynamics system employs predictive technology that continually optimises damper settings for the widest possible range of conditions.

Conventional dampers are replaced by precision DampTronic valve technology damper units, which incorporate continually adjustable damper valves.

The predictive technology enables damper settings on each wheel to be continuously refined between soft, comfort oriented settings and hard, firm body control settings.

Damper pressure on each wheel is monitored 500 times per second responding to both the demands of the prevailing driving style and that of the terrain encountered, in both on and off-road situations.

This translates to an extremely comfortable ride on even poor sur-



Mindblowing technology and sophistication

faces and decent handling at speed, especially given that the vehicle is running at about three tons once the passengers are included.

To move such a vehicle fast and keep it nimble requires a lot of power, and two engines are available for this purpose.

The 5.0-litre V8 supercharged petrol unit produces 375 kW and 625Nm, significantly up on the 4.2 litre engine it replaces.

FUEL ECONOMY

Land Rover claim a fuel consumption figure of 14.9l/100 km but even this is unlikely. No one buys that much power with fuel economy in mind, and somewhere around 18 or 19l/100km is more probable.

For those with an eye on fuel consumption there is still the LR-TDV8 3.6-litre diesel engine.

Although it feels a touch pedestrian after the supercharged petrol unit it is, in fact, quite adequate and at a guess will use about 25 percent

less fuel.

It produces 200 kW and 640 Nm. These figures are for European spec fuel and the dirty stuff available here means slightly less performance.

Both vehicles use different automatic six-speed gearboxes.

Obviously a heavy, high-speed car needs a lot of stopping power.

The brakes for the Supercharged model are beefy Brembo 380mm ventilated front discs.

They incorporate lightweight aluminium six-piston opposed action monoblock calipers in front, and 365mm ventilated discs with single piston sliding calipers at the rear.

The adaptive cruise control is one of the better systems I have experienced. It is smooth and allows for a smooth drive despite narrow roads carrying vehicles where there is a wide speed differential, necessitating regular automatic braking.

There is nowhere near enough space here to mention all the technological gizmos in the new Range Rover. Most of it lay undiscovered

after a full day with the vehicle, but there are a few obvious highlights.

Apart from a blind spot monitoring system, a new surround camera supports easier parking, towing and off road manoeuvring.

It features five digital cameras which relay a near 360 degree view to the touch screen display. The cameras function immediately the vehicle is started, with options for selecting and zooming in to assist with close quarter parking and with towing.

But the coolest trick from Land Rover should bury that stupid K53 driving test forever.

The "reverse tow assist" function (selected from the touch screen menu) gives a view of the reversing trailer.

Guide lines overlaid on the rear camera image illustrate both the vehicle and trailer's trajectory and these move in line with steering inputs.

This makes it easier for the driver to predict where the trailer will move to before performing the reversing manoeuvre.

TRAILER

Specific characteristics such as type of trailer, number of axles and width guides can be fed into the system to enhance the system outputs.

After that just put the guidance lines where the trailer must end up using the steering wheel and that's where it goes. Alley dock as easy as pie.

For soft sand – one of the most power-hungry surfaces – "sand launch control" has now been introduced.

This makes for noticeably easier drive-away. New, speed-dependent wheel-slip targets for the traction control system permit only very

limited initial wheel-slip, helping to prevent the wheels digging down into the sand.

Revisions to the rock crawl program improve brake and traction control response times. This helps reduce the wheels rolling in an unintended direction when traversing boulders and giving a more composed drive through rocky terrain.

The Hill Descent Control system is enhanced on the latest Range Rover with the addition of Gradient Release Control. This inhibits the initial rate of acceleration when descending very steep inclines.

STORAGE DEVICES

The new Portable Audio Interface allows connectivity to an array of personal audio storage devices – USB sticks and MP3 players.

It enable the various device functions to be accessed and controlled via the console mounted touch screen system.

The sound system is awesome and can really transform a journey.

The Range Rover's front headlights incorporate high beam assist technology.

This can automatically switch on high beam headlights where external light levels are below the system's threshold. Importantly, the system is also designed to detect preceding and approaching traffic, and in a split second will automatically switch back to low beam to avoid dazzling others.

While the lights might not dazzle others, the Range Rover itself will.

It is a truly awe-inspiring vehicle, which, unfortunately, is matched to an awe-inspiring price.

The V8 3.6 Diesel will hit you R1 164 000 and the V8 5.0 Supercharged Petrol R1 204 000. Blade, this one's for you.

