



Quality assurance



Scania has long enjoyed an enviable reputation for its trucks' driveability and brand charisma. But do the new R and S Series have the same driver appeal? Brian Weatherley finds out

Any truck manufacturer spending €2 billion on a new range is entitled to want a tangible ROI. That sum has not only paid for Scania's new modular range of wind-cheating cabs - adopted first on its latest R and S Series - but also updated versions of its straight six and V8 diesels as well as a fast-shifting Opticruise auto.

Together, those new cabs and powertrains deliver a claimed 5% fuel saving over the previous truck ranges. But what of the less tangible stuff - like driver appeal? For UK fleets looking to retain or recruit drivers, does Scania's next generation have the same pulling-power as its forebears? Having now driven the new R and S Series in Sweden, my answer is unequivocally yes.

Any line-up of test trucks by Scania inevitably features V8-powered 25.25-metre, 60-tonne behemoths. But for this test, new models relevant to UK fleets were the target - so those powered by Scania's SCR-only (selective catalytic

reduction) 13-litre in-line six (see panel). Consequently, my first drive was in an R 450 6x2 with the tallest 'Highline' cab. For the record, both the R and flat-floor S series come with a choice of standard sleeper or high-roof Highline cab.

Scania has long attracted praise for its cab entry and egress, and the new R and S maintain that tradition with their broad-tread 'step ladder'. Likewise, the Swedish truck maker historically scalloped the side edge of its cab floor so that when drivers open the door they immediately see the top step without leaning out. Both those traits are carried over to the new range. Even the tallest flat-floor S cabin is easy to access.

One of the major changes affecting both R and S series is the repositioned driver's seat, now 65mm closer to the windscreen (thanks to a less intrusive dashboard) and 20mm nearer the door. That works well. Sitting closer to the windscreen and offside door glass gives an improved awareness of what's happening around you. And when that

is combined with the new cab's lowered dashboard, narrower A-posts (interior surrounds are angled so only the thinnest part is visible), greater downwards rake of the door glass, and increased gap between mirrors and A-posts, the result is better sight lines all round. Particularly for driving in urban areas this can only be good - especially in light of CLOCS (Construction Logistics and Cyclist Safety).

SOLID 44-TONNER

Meanwhile, with 450bhp and 2,350Nm of torque on tap, the R 450 is well suited to 44-tonne operations. And, when based on Scania's most popular 12+2 GRS905 manual synchro box, the faster-changing Opticruise AMT (shifts are now 0.4 seconds) ensures minimal breaks in torque. Those speedy changes are the result of fitting a lay shaft brake to all Opticruise autos. On the road, I certainly noticed. You can still make manual shifts,



NEW POWER PLANTS



Scania's latest Euro 6 SCR-only 13-litre in-line six is rated at 370, 410, 450 and 500bhp. All feature reworked combustion chambers and injectors, while new oil thermostats allow the engine to run at a slightly higher temperature, thereby reducing internal friction. The all-new cab on the R and S series chassis also enables a larger intercooler radiator with a greater cooling capacity for intake air.

Standard-fill on the new 13-litre and V8 diesels is Scania's LDF-3 'long drain' 10W-40 synthetic oil which, depending on operating parameters, allows service intervals of up to 150,000km. Scania says LDF-3 is backwards compatible with its previous LDF-2 and LDF oils. So operators can use the new oil in older engines, too.

although the absence of a clearly marked green band on the rev counter in the new main dash suggests Scania would prefer drivers to select auto and leave Opticruise alone.

Moving up, the new 500bhp 13-litre rating will appeal to artic operators faced with more aggressive topography. Pulling a bulk tank trailer, my R 500 4x2 Highline tractor maintained a brisk pace over the switchback section of our test route, typically running at a gear up over the R 450 when hill climbing.

As a lighter alternative to a 16-litre 520bhp V8, the 500bhp DSC13 deserves serious consideration if journey times are an issue. That said, both the 450 and 500 exhibit good 'luggability' right down to 1,000 rpm.

Steering on both R and S tractors is on a par, if not better than that found on the Mercedes Actros and Volvo FH. It's light, precise, has good feedback and is commendably isolated from road shock. The command buttons for cruise control

and the downhill speed limiter buttons on the bottom of the steering wheel boss are well placed, too. And, while the wheel's flatter lower quadrant may not appeal to everyone, it certainly doesn't feel strange when you're spinning it.

Scania's top-weight tractors have traditionally had a soft (though never sloppy) ride and the next generation continues that comfortable pattern. R and S Series cabs have four-point air cab suspension as standard and I can't see drivers grumbling about ride quality or general handling.

My final drive was in a 450bhp S series with the Highline top - the biggest cab on offer. Climbing in, you quickly appreciate the absence of the R series' 16cm engine hump, while the S cab's lofty headroom and abundant living space are attractive. Out on the road, the flat-floor cab did exhibit some body roll when pushed hard through corners, though it's no worse than any other big-cab rival. And at no time did I feel disconnected from the chassis or what

was happening at the wheels. Moreover, if required, the 'comfort' setting on the R and S cab's air suspension can be adjusted to be slightly firmer.

There's no question that both build quality and comfort of these new cabs will appeal. The S Highline's cavernous front overhead cupboards and under-bunk storage area (plus the dashboard drawer and exterior lockers) will accommodate all the kit long-distance drivers want. The under-bunk slide-out fridge and drawer units can also be configured to suit individual tastes.

On that subject, the rear wall bedside controls are already in the perfect position for British drivers - kerbside on a right-hooker. If you don't want twin bunks, there's an alternative single bottom bunk with an optional additional row of storage lockers on the back wall.

Ultimately, fleet managers rather than drivers will have the final say. But with the new generation of Scania tractors I can't imagine there'll be many complaints about their new 'office'. **TE**