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Comeback kids

Absent from last year's Commercial Vehicle Operator Show, the truck manufacturers are returning to Birmingham's NEC for the full-fat CV Show with high hopes for the industry in 2011 and beyond

It's no secret that there has been precious little to celebrate recently in the commercial vehicle world for the heavy-duty manufacturers. If the recession of 2008 hit them hard, the following two years saw them endure arguably tougher times, with production suspensions, redundancies, and a major re-think of how they operate and meet the needs of the target markets they serve.

But talk to the OEMs today and that is fading into the past. The economy may not have fully recovered, but confidence and, more importantly, customers are returning. Three years after its last CV Show appearance, the commercial vehicle industry is in a very different place. New engine and emission regulations are around the corner, in the

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shape of Euro 5 and 6, for vans and trucks respectively; there is talk of more and more heavy-duty hybrid applications; and everyone you meet talks of the growing importance of saving fuel and efficiency improvements.

For DAF, the return to the CV show after a hiatus of three years is representative of the market slowly coming back and people willing to spend money on new vehicles. “After two years in survival mode, we think it is time to come out and start talking again,” says Tony Pain, the company's marketing director. “As the market leader, we have a responsibility within the market. We think [many operators will be] considering fleet replacements between now and the introduction of Euro 6.”

Like the underlying theme of the industry he represents, Pain says the reason behind DAF's decision to exhibit at the CV Show is efficiency. “I can justify being at the show by the number of people that we will interface with,” he explains. “If we put people in cars and sent them all around the UK to meet that quantity of customers, it would cost much, much more. For us, it is important to be meeting and greeting people.”





A mention of Euro 6 leads Pain to point out another exhibit that will be of interest to many at the show: a US-built 12.9-litre engine similar to that used in the CF85 and XF105 range. Why the importance? The unit is specified with a combination of SCR (selective catalytic reduction) and EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) technology – meaning it can meet North American EPA10 standards. While it might not strictly meet Euro 6 on this side of the pond, Pain emphasises the comparisons. “That engine will be a similar standard to Euro 6,” he states. “It illustrates the fact that we have the technology and the engine, in that sense, in mass-market applications.”

The DAF stand at the CV Show will feature

Equipment portfolio

Away from the vehicles themselves, a broad selection of products and services will be available within the halls of the NEC. Blue Tree Systems, for example, will be inviting visitors to take the R:COM challenge and see why more than 60,000 commercial vehicles across hundreds of fleets around Europe and the US use this fleet management system.

Capabilities that, according to the company, can be selected to meet any operational requirements and fleet configurations include vehicle tracking, fuel monitoring, engine and driver performance monitoring, refrigeration unit monitoring, full tachograph management, in-cab driver communication and navigation.

Elsewhere, tyre pressure monitoring systems (TPMS) will be on the agenda at the TRW Automotive Aftermarket stand. The company's TPMS technology promises improved tyre performance, fuel economy and safety – all major concerns of CV operators.



Of particular interest will be TRW's external TPMS range. The system has been developed for the European independent aftermarket, and consists of five kits that provide direct measurement of individual tyre pressures for CV, HCV and trailer requirements, with up to 14 tyres in 19 configurations.

According to John Thomas, TRW's European electronics and tools product manager, the installation process is quick and easy, as the ECU is pre-programmed to identify whether the vehicle has been fitted with four, six or eight sensors.

Meanwhile, visitors to the Somerstotalkare stand will see the S6cf wireless technology lifts supporting a vehicle, with examples of workshop essentials including transmission jacks and axle stands. Its stand will be staffed by the sales team and the firm's technical director, offering in-depth product knowledge, price plans and advice on best workshop practices in the heavy-duty lifting sector.

Moving on, Alphatec's new Welfare Van is the first vehicle of its type to include Webasto's Dual Top diesel powered hot water and interior heater as standard specification on the open market. Based on the Ford Transit long wheelbase, high roof van, the new vehicle will take pride of place on its CV Show stand. Aimed at the civil engineering, railway maintenance and fleet hire markets, where all-weather capabilities are vital, the compact Dual Top integrated heating system generates interior warmth, as well as high volumes of quickly heated water for washing.

Fontaine's stand will be showing two patented coupling systems, designed to guard against vehicle and trailer misalignment. You'll see



Fontaine's patented fifth wheel Tech-Lock system, which prevents 'high hitching' and is also designed to stop mis-coupling, while additionally reducing the risk of a dropped trailer.



Need a van, man?

Keen not to be outshone by their bigger brothers, LCV manufacturers will have a major presence at the CV Show. Many operators are looking to downsize, in a bid to save operating costs, and many of the new vans on the market will help some achieve their goals.



Showing two versions of its iLoad van, Hyundai will make its CV Show debut this year. Available in panel and crew format, the iLoad is

powered by a Euro 5 engine, which helps achieve a 10.4% reduction in CO₂ emissions and an 8.4% improvement in fuel economy over the previous model.

Also making an appearance will be the first working version of the iLoad converted by the police, courtesy of Cambridgeshire Constabulary. Hyundai Motor UK has recently become a preferred supplier to the UK Police Authorities and this bespoke version further demonstrates the versatility of the iLoad van.

Meanwhile, those wishing to see Nissan's latest large van, the NV400, should make sure they are at the CV Show in Birmingham next month. The Japanese manufacturer has



announced that the new commercial vehicle will make its UK debut at the show, taking its place on the stand next to the rest of the company's van fleet.

Incidentally, also making its first appearance at the

commercial vehicle show will be the all-new Nissan LEAF. As electric vehicles are increasingly relevant for all businesses, due to their low running costs and zero benefit in kind taxation, the company believes it could attract as much interest as the larger vehicles.

Star of the CV Show on the Renault stand in Birmingham will be the fully-electric Kangoo Van ZE, one of seven UK arrivals from the commercial vehicle OEM. Renault



enjoyed record UK LCV sales in 2010 and will have one of the largest presences at this year's event, doubling the size of its stand from last year and featuring 14 commercial vehicles.

Renault fleet and commercial vehicle operations director Darren Payne says that the firm aims to prove that electric LCVs can be affordable to run and good to drive, as well as offering a more relaxed driving environment, due to their near silent operation.

Then, taking centre stage on the Fiat Professional stand is the Doblò Cargo, alongside others also making their first appearance, including the Euro 5 Fiorino range and the Punto Evo Van. A glance at the Doblò Cargo will demonstrate that the vehicle sits on an all-new platform and explain its claims to offer greater carrying capacity than before, in terms of both weight and size. Fiat says the ride quality has also been improved, thanks to a new suspension set-up.



a total of three LF hybrid trucks. After running a fleet of seven prototypes around the UK, the company is preparing to launch the vehicles into the market on a lease-only basis. Pain says this approach has been taken for a couple of reasons.

"Historically – thinking back to how gas and LPG have fared – alternative or new vehicle technologies have a poor residual value," he says. "As important is the fact that we still think the technology is not 100% mature, mainly due to battery life etc. So, after around five years, if we decide there is a better battery, we believe it is up to us to take the old one back and to use the new one. It is in our interest to change it and also to get the best value for the battery in its second life. By leasing, those decisions are taken away from the end user."

Pain estimates DAF will initially lease just 50 units a year. Interested, but wondering about costs? It ain't cheap. "The [hybrid] lease cost works out at close to double the price of a 12-tonner and that's why I don't think it will be a big hit," explains Pain. "The payback is also a considerable period, but it depends on your operation." DAF is claiming fuel savings of between 15 and 20%, having recorded fuel savings in trials of between 12 and 26%.

So, if hybrids are not going to save you money, and that's all that matters, what else does DAF have to offer? Beyond its aerodynamic work, the 16-tonne LF55 presents an interesting new opportunity. What traditionally would have been a 15-tonne vehicle is afforded the extra payload, thanks to working on tyre sizes and optimising the



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Andrew Taylor,
MAN

loading decks. “For municipal applications, it is ideal, with a great capacity,” says Pain, who also reveals DAF’s development engineers have been busy with engine development to help yield greater efficiency.

“We’ve changed injector spray angles to give a better fuel/air mix, adopted higher injection pressures, and insulated exhaust manifolds to get slightly increased boost pressure and fewer mechanical losses,” he reveals. “We’ve also changed pistons and that has led to a 40% loss in their weight, because they are aluminium, which, in turn, has led to less reciprocating weight... It’s all about eking out the last ounces of fuel economy, without dramatically changing things.”

Less pricey parts

While the DAF CV Show stand may be focusing on vehicles, truck and bus giant MAN will be using the show to launch Valueline, its new approach to the price of vehicle parts in the aftermarket. As Andrew Taylor, MAN’s parts director, explains, the philosophy was based around what happens within supermarkets and retailers. “One of the big challenges for me was overcoming customers’ and the dealer network’s perception that the MAN parts pricing market was expensive,” he explains.

He admits that, in some cases, certain aftermarket parts lines were priced 300 to 400% higher than competing components. “MAN Germany has traditionally issued the pricing based purely on a cost basis. But that sales team has now been expanded, and has had a total re-think on pricing and product groups,” he explains.

With a pilot phase beginning last February, to see how the market would react, Taylor reports

a positive response. “We will continue to expand this year and will soon have a full Valueline product range in place. The idea is for everyday low prices on key products such as air filters, brake pads and brake shoes.”

Taylor reveals that on certain products there will be no price premium. “Take a set of TGA brake pads,” he says. “Our original price was over £120, but now it is closer to £84. We have also further reduced this by 10%, because we believe that is what many retailers would do.”

And he insists that Valueline has already helped increased year-on-year parts sales at MAN by 60%. He also says the company is now actively retailing products, rather than just offering them as part of its repair and maintenance programmes.

“We are in the process of expanding the sales team from three to eight people and our whole focus is to develop the retail market – unlike before where people were more concentrated on R&M,” explains Taylor. “The dealers have taken their eye off the ball in this respect and the commercial vehicle factors have really taken that business.”

In terms of growing the business, Taylor suggests that the goal is a 50% increase in parts numbers across the board with Valueline, but remains realistic. “In my opinion, it is a two- or three-year programme,” he says. “We saw an increase last year of around 5%, but that was only on limited parts numbers. For 2011, the aim is for 20% for actual unit sales, but the big challenge is seeing the change in the customer. The business is there, but we need to get dealers engaged.”

Surely there is no better way of getting engaged than to head to the NEC for the CV Show 2011. The vehicle manufacturers are waiting for you... 