

Review - A Journey Back To Dodge

Written by Dave Conole
Monday, 28 July 2014 15:02



There are station wagons, SUVs and people movers. Then there's the Dodge Journey/Fiat Freemont twins. A SUV look with people mover capability, station wagon style room and in R/T spec, rear seat DVD screen entertainment for (presumably) the kiddies. Punted along by a 206kW/342Nm 3.6L V6 engine alongside a six speed auto, there should be little to dislike. I "journeyed" to the Australian Alps and dragged the family along for the ride.

It's a good sized veehicle, with a 4.9m length, 1.7m height and 1.8 metre overall width encasing over 1.4m of shoulder room for the front and mid row seats; yes, it's a seven seater (an option) body however the test car came fitted with five, allowing some useful cargo space at the rear.

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There's enough here to suit some finely chopped firewood...

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At the front is the aforementioned 3.6L engine. Although 342 Nm sounds reasonable, it has to haul around a kerb weight of over 1900 kilos and with two adults, two kids, luggage, it doesn't mind a drink. The 78 litre tank was drained at a best of around 9.5L per 100 kilometres and at worst, you'd be better off towing a fuel station behind you. With such a relatively low torque figure, through just six speeds and inside a vehicle that's not exactly a lightweight, unfortunately consumption will be in the negative

If Mitsubishi can offer a seemingly miniscule 2.2L diesel with 360 Nm that kicks off from around 1500 revs (peak torque from the 3.6L is high at 4300 revs), then surely there'd be something suitable within the Chrysler/Fiat family? The transmission itself was mostly smooth, however sometimes felt, at certain rev points, that it was being strangled, holding gear and refusing to shift up or down and extra engine work was required, plus there were some clunks and shunts, almost as if something wasn't meshing properly. There were some instances of thrashing from the engine, almost as if the revs needed to overtake weren't being fed properly to the transmission when the loud pedal was prodded loudly.



The exterior is solid, bluff, squared off and looks somewhat masculine with the front bumper being pumped out at the corners, housing the driving lights and an integrated skid plate in the centre. The Dodge family grille bisects a squared off headlight cluster before leading into a not unattractive profile, wrapped in premium pearlescent paint, before finally finishing in a workmanlike if blocky looking rear, whilst rolling on "tuning fork" 19 inch alloys.

Of note are the wide opening doors, with the second row opening up to 90 degrees and allowing superbly easy access and egress. On top was the optional sunroof, sadly not used during the cold weather however the R/T does get heated wing mirrors.

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The meaty and leather wrapped tiller is on a reach and rake adjustable column, and if it was heated as well, I couldn't find the switch. All seats in the R/T are leathered up, with the second row adjustable for angle and and can be moved forward and aft as well. Vision from the driver's pew (leather clad and heated, thank you kindly) is broad, obscured to the rear by the fold down DVD screen when in action. Perhaps rear seat passengers would be better suited with headrest screens as that's a real safety issue.

What isn't an issue is the 8.4 inch navitainment touchscreen; it's largely intuitive, controls most of the onboard functions and is linked, in the R/T's case, to a thumping Alpine audio system with a decent depth and clarity. DVD playback is also visible when the car is in park however the controls didn't seem to always work in conjunction with the disc menus. Set and forget aircon for the rear seats, LED lighting a another storage locker in the mid row centre fold down add value to the family package.

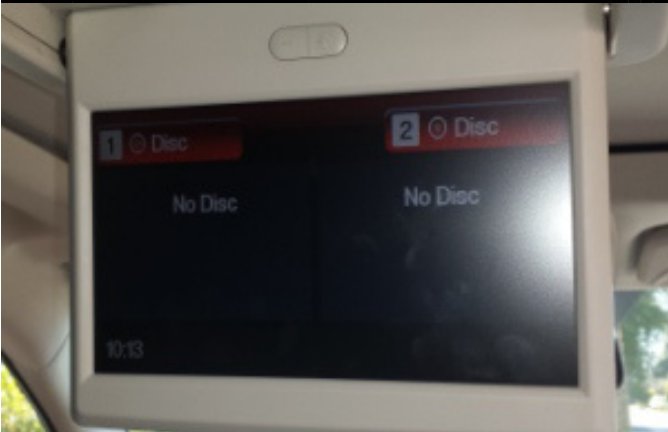
The GPS system was also largely user friendly however the search parameters seem a bit arse about when dialling in an address. For the driver there's a handy info screen, operated by steering wheel mounted buttons, with info such as fuel consumption, messages from the bluetooth linked phone and tyre pressure. That last one made a lot of difference as the front left seemed well under the other three. Going from 28 psi to 36psi helped the ride, especially with the load onboard.

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