



MAKE ROOM

Nissan tackles the full-size pickup segment head-on with a new truly full-size Titan, and the Cummins diesel engine is one big card up their sleeve.

By Joe Sage

The full-size pickup segment is the most loyal there is. It's as close to a zero-sum game as the industry has, where strong loyalists must be converted to any new arrival. Knowing this, Nissan is upping their game in a big way. And Cummins is a key part of the game plan.

Nissan has had a Titan pickup in the US since 2003. But whereas it was larger than their mid-size (once compact) Frontier, it has not been 4x8-plywood-large like Ford, Chevy/GMC or Ram. Or Toyota Tundra, which itself used to be less-than-full-size, but upped its game and its size in 2007.

Ford F-Series rules the market, with upper-30-percent share (with its EcoBoost V6 turbo selling well), to Chevy/GMC's combined lower-30s. Ram has moved above 20 percent (with big sales for its EcoDiesel V6 turbo). Tundra comes in at 5 or 6 percent, but the smaller Titan had dropped in the past decade or so from about 3 percent to less than one percent. It was time for a bold move.

As a new full-size Nissan Titan launches, one of its boldest moves is also one of the boldest moves for Cummins Engine. The first new big Titan—the Nissan Titan XD—will be powered by an entirely new Cummins 5.0-liter V8 turbodiesel. For Nissan, a smaller player with a shorter lineup, this provides the fuel economy of a turbo with the work capability of a big diesel V8. It's one solution occupying a very sweet spot.

This is a new move for Cummins, who specializes in heavy-duty trucks (and ships and trains). The new V8 for Nissan shares 70 percent of its parts with the powerful heavy-duty Cummins V8, the one capable of towing 30,000 pounds or more in the heaviest models from some of the competition. Titan with its quiet, chain-driven, smaller 5.0L Cummins turbodiesel V8 is expected to tow more than 12,000 pounds (a preproduction estimate).

The engine puts out 310 hp and a powerful 555 lb-ft of torque from a low point of 1600 rpm. This is run through an Aisin heavy-duty 6-speed automatic and an electronic locking rear differential.

The first model—built in Canton, Mississippi and promoted as “American Titan”—will be a

The Titan's V8 is being built in the totally revamped historic Cummins Engine Plant in Columbus, Indiana, which Cummins calls “the oldest new plant we've got.” • At founding Cummins VP J Irwin Miller's home and gardens, we fired up founder Clessie Lyle Cummins' 1936 Cadillac, which he converted to diesel to first make the rounds pitching his new technology. • The Cummins Foundation, among the Top 10 organizations in the US for architecturally significant places, has for decades paid the fees for the world's greatest architects to design the civic buildings in Columbus, a showpiece town of 80,000.

crew cab 5-passenger model (or six with a bench front seat), available with rear- or four-wheel drive. Wheels range from 17-inch to 20-inch, and steering is a strong recirculating ball high-capacity system. The truck sits atop double-wishbone front suspension with stabilizer bar and a rigid axle leaf spring rear suspension with twin-tube shocks. Brakes are four-wheel hydraulic power ventilated discs, 14.2 in front and 14.4 in the rear.

The Nissan Titan XD includes every feature you are wondering about and plenty you hadn't even thought to ask—LED lights front and rear, puddle lamps, step rails and easy cabin access, quiet and strong laminated side glass. Occupants enjoy advanced seating, remote-start dual zone climate, supplemental heater and air filtration. Infotainment includes dedicated NissanConnect navigation, mobile apps and services, and 12-speaker Rockford Fosgate premium audio.

The tailgate operates firmly with a dampener and two-way assist. The bed includes 120V outlets, a fold-out flat floor, LED rail lighting, lockable in-bed storage, sprayed-in bedliner and an integrated gooseneck hitch receiver.

Electronic aids include Nissan's spectacular 360-degree perimeter cameras plus a rear monitor with trailer guides, moving object detection, front and rear sonar and blind spot warning, plus a tow/haul mode with downhill speed control. One novel feature any hardened trailer-tower will love is an available trailer light check from inside.

We were shown pre-production versions of the new Nissan Titan XD during our Cummins tour, and we were allowed to get in them, poke around under them and so on, but we did not run them.

A few weeks later, we were able to drive the Nissan Titan XD at the Texas Truck Rodeo, where it won the coveted Truck of Texas award (see elsewhere in this issue). Driving impressions are under strict embargo until later in November.

But we can tell you this. With the combined formula of hardware, layout and features of the truck, Nissan is delivering the goods. It's a tough market to crack, and they know it, but they are dead serious and bringing everything they have to the game. Things bode well for the Nissan Titan XD with its Cummins V8 diesel. ■

