

MITSUBISHI L200

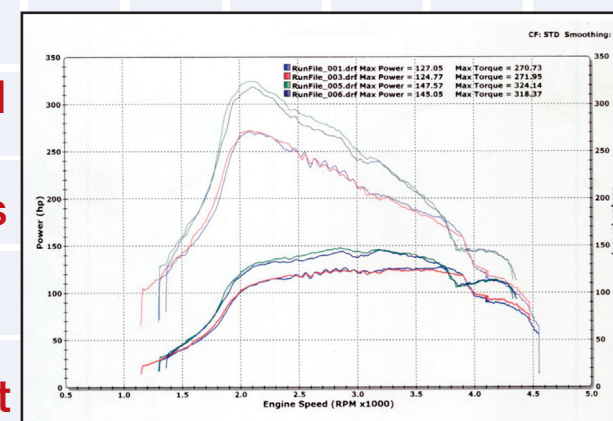
by Tunit



through the gears and the increase in torque was particularly noticeable. Altogether very impressive. It would be interesting to see what Tunit could do with the standard 124bhp/234lb ft engine. And a day or so later, after the boys had managed to get the car to a twin rolling road, we came up with the following figures which you can all see on the graph below, where you can also see how the power has been pushed up to 147bhp and peak torque was now 272lb ft. at 2,000rpm. The L200 Tunit conversion - and similar ones for a wide range of diesels - costs £400 plus VAT. Full details of the Tunit range and their nationwide network of distributors are available from them on 01257 274100, or at www.tunit.co.uk

And the charts can't lie! The L200 left up by 23bhp and over 38lb ft more torque. Fantastic!

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You've doubtless become aware of an increasing number of rugged, go-anywhere, carry-anything pick-ups around. But it may come as a surprise to learn that the market grew by an incredible 347 per cent, (yes, 347 per cent!), in the six years from 1988 to the end of 2004 - a year in which no less than 33,742 were registered. During that time, Mitsubishi proved itself the number one performer in the retail (ie non-fleet) market, albeit with Nissan snapping at their coat tails - well, not so much snapping as straining to reach them. Toyota et al were so far behind as to be almost out of sight. The market stayed pretty static in 2005, with the two major players in a process of transition: their old models were being run out and new ones were being readied for launch. But at the end of February this year, Mitsubishi's all-new L200 arrived in the showrooms, to take the market by storm and reinforce the company's dominance. As I write, Mitsubishi have some 48 per cent of the retail market and Nissan have 32 per cent. Which really leaves very little over for the others to try to scrap over. And it's not hard to see why the new L200 range has proved such a hit with its customers.

In comes Mitsubishi's new four-cylinder, 2.5 DI-D common rail, intercooled, turbodiesel unit, which bumps power up from 114bhp to 134bhp. Torque rises from 177 to 231lb ft and top speed is now 103mph. Overall, the new engine is quieter, cleaner, faster and more economical. (Manual low 30s Combined, Auto high 20s.) And it achieves Euro IV emission levels. All models in the range come equipped with Mitsubishi's renowned 4WD technology - from the tried and tested Easy Select 4WD in the 4Work and 4Life, which combines 2WD and 4WD in one system to Super Select 4WD in the higher spec. models. This 'industry first' offers the benefits of 2WD, full-time 4WD and locked 4WD. It's interesting to note, too, that service intervals have been extended from 9,000 to 12,500 miles. Even the 'basic' 4Work single-cab model at £12,250 has ABS with EBD limited slip diff, a CD player with MP3, easy select 4WD and a height adjustable driver's seat. At the other end of the 10-model scale, the £20,000 Elegance Double Cab has more bells and whistles than many a luxury car, including climate control, key-less entry/central locking, satnav, leather power/heated seats, power windows, 17 inch alloys and a CD autochanger.

Illness prevented me from attending the Press launch of the new L200. But that has proved to be something of a blessing in disguise, for it allowed me to come to the vehicle with no preconceptions when I drove an Animal derivative at Tunit this week. I say no preconceptions. That's not strictly true - I was expecting something of an 'agricultural' experience. In the event, not so. A super-smooth ride it isn't and it tends to roll and understeer a little on corners but, generally speaking, it's as comfortable as a fair few family saloons. Quite remarkable, given the job it's designed to do. As regards performance, the Animal (and Elegance) models come with Mitsubishi's own power upgrade to 165bhp and 296lb ft with the manual 'box that I drove. The result is an official 0-62mph time of 12.1 seconds. (Automatic drags the torque down to 256lb ft) That upgrade is also available as a not exactly cheap £620 + VAT option on the other models, by the way. Despite the Mitsubishi upgrade, Tunit MD Mike Bromley felt there was still room for improvement and after one of his technicians had spent but a short time buried under the L200's bonnet we stepped back to assess the results. Erm, slight problem. Unfortunately, the gremlins

struck and Tunit's 'rolling road' dynamometer went down. Plan 'B' - take the L200 from Chorley to Tunit's Awesome franchise, an hour down the road in Irlam, near Manchester. No go. The obliging L200 owner needed his vehicle back within the hour so in the absence of a computer print-out and graphs,

there was nothing for it but to judge the Tunit results the way an owner would - out on the real road. It was clear immediately that the picture had changed appreciably. Pick-up from a standing start was sharper, there was much greater urgency accelerating



Tunit are amongst the foremost of Britain's diesel electronic tuning specialists and full details of their range can be seen at www.tunit.co.uk, or you can call and speak to one of their specialist technical advisers on 01257 274100. This conversion and most others cost £400 plus VAT and are available direct from Tunit for DIY fitting, or by one of their experienced nationwide network of distributors.