



**ISUZU MU-X LST
WINNER OF THE OZROAMER
2013 7 SEAT 4WD UNDER \$60,000 AWARD**



OZROAMER 2013 AWARDS

by Anthony Hood



Launched in late 2013 Isuzu has joined the party with its 7 seat version of the successful and popular D Max. Oddly named the Isuzu MU-X. I really don't know where they get the name from but the MU-X is built on the same platform as the D Max Ute with suspension improvements and a heap of other design features to produce quite a pleasing 7 seat family 4WD.

The Isuzu MU-X is well proportioned, follows the D Max styling and looks smaller than it actually is. Don't however let its good looks fool you it's a true 4WD. Roof rails, side steps, alloy wheels, shark fin GPS antenna, electronic fold in mirrors and fog lights all complement the stylish exterior.

Internally the immediate impression is quality. The black leather seats, door inserts etc all produce a feeling that exudes value for money. The electrically adjustable driver's seat is comfortable and its firmness is appreciated after many kilometres in the seat. The passenger seat is manually adjusted.



In front of the driver is the smallish thick leather steering wheel that houses the usual controls. The dash has two lag dials with a MFD between them. The control for this is on the end of the indicator stalk and its spot on for ease of use. Like all these ute based vehicles the wheel is only height adjustable. As a taller driver I would have appreciated a slightly longer seat travel, but at no time was I uncomfortable.

The centre stack houses a premium audio system with 6 speakers. iPod® and Bluetooth® phone connectivity is standard, while the rear passengers are entertained with Isuzu's "Sky Sound" roof-mounted sound system and 10" DVD monitor. Along with Bluetooth® audio streaming, the LS-T also features a touch-screen satellite

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navigation system with live traffic updates and over 10,000 off-road destinations.

Internal storage is a feature. All car designers should sit in the MU-X and see just how simple it is to provide an abundance of storage areas. There are door pockets front and back (with bottle holders but small otherwise), two decent sized glove boxes, a storage bin on top of the dash, bottle holders in front of the air vents (great for keeping things cool in summer), a shelf below the steering wheel, a sunglass holder above your head, a door sill recess, cup holders in the centre console and a large centre storage bin. There are 14 cup holders in total. Seriously, all cars should be like this.

The middle row seats are comfortable more for two than three with a fold down arm rest with cup holders. They are a little flat but comfortable enough for long distances. For all but the tallest passenger there is adequate head, shoulder, knee and foot room in the middle row. The third row is easily accessed and with deep foot wells is up there amongst the best of third row seats, better than the Landcruiser.

With the rear seats in use there isn't a lot of space behind however like most of these type of vehicles it is usually a short drive with all seats in use. Both rear rows of seats benefit from air-conditioning in the roof above them. Importantly all outer seats have grab handles for the rough drives ahead.

Driving the MU-X is the long lasting Isuzu 3.0L diesel. This engine is one tough motor and is renowned for its build tolerances and longevity. The term indestructible comes to mind. The engine produces 130Kw of power @ 3,600rpm and a lazy 380Nm of torque at 1,800rpm. These figures don't always tell the full story though The transmission is a five speed sequential sports shift auto with an adaptive feature that styles itself on your driving. The engine is refined and quieter than you expect and is economical with a fuel usage rate of just 8.4L/100Km. On the freeway we got that down to a little over 7.5L/100Km.

The MU-X is equipped with Isuzu's super-easy to use "Terrain command" 4WD select dial and auto versions are fitted with hill-ascent and descent control. The Terrain Command system is shift on the fly style and while simple works brilliantly.

Car-like ride and handling both on and off road is provided by a new suspension geometry custom designed for the MU-X. Front independent double wishbone suspension with coil springs, gas shocks and stabiliser bar allows the driver positive feedback and steering control regardless of the terrain underfoot, and a rear five-link suspension configuration also with coil springs, stabiliser bar and gas shocks provide superior stability when traversing off road or towing.

The Isuzu MU-X LST has a 5 Star ANCAP with a host of safety features including: a high-tensile steel passenger safety cell with side-intrusion bars, comprehensive crash avoidance electronics including 4-channel 4-sensor ABS with EBD and EBA as well as ESC and TCS, six airbags (dual front, curtain and side), reverse camera and rear park assist sensors.



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\$58,784 RDAP

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Model	Isuzu MU-X LST
Model Price	\$58,784 RDAP
Engine	3.0L Tdi 4 Cyl
Drivetrain	4WD 5 speed Auto
Power	130 Kw @ 3,600 rpm
Torque	380 Nm @ 1,800 rpm
Safety	5 Star ANCAP
CO2 Emissions	223 g/km
GVR	2 ½ Star
Economy	8.4 L/100km (ADR comb)
Tow Capacity	Max 3000 kg
Tow Ball Rating	300 kg
Servicing	TBC
Warranty	5yr/ 130,000 km with full roadside assist



Off road the MU-X auto performed effortlessly. The MU-X is fitted with rugged off-road protection in the form of a front steel plate skid/splash shield as well as steel plate guards to protect the sump and transfer case. Clever engineering ensures there are no low-slung components – the front lower control arms don't hang too low, and the air intake is hidden within the front fender. In the engine bay, the ECU isn't exposed, and the alternator sits up nice and high. There is substantial 230mm ground-clearance, 30.1° approach and 25.1° departure angles. Isuzu have come up with some great styling packs to really stand the vehicle out from the crowd with factory fitted accessories that compete with anything the aftermarket boys can come up with.

We took the Isuzu MU-X LSTY on a family holiday towing a 2800kg caravan through the narrow windy and hilly back roads of Tasmania. The MU-X never missed a beat. While towing we averaged about 14-15L/100km and there was plenty of power and low down torque for the job. That is what I mean by sometimes the figures don't translate to real world driving. The MU-X performed like it had another 100Nm of torque.

Over all the new Isuzu MU-X is a strong contender in the family 4WD market. It has almost car/wagon like handling, enough power for almost everything you will ask of it, plenty of creature comforts, 5 star ANCAP safety, will seat 7 in relative comfort, is a robust and competent 4WD and all for less than \$60,000. That's pretty good.

What the Isuzu does though is make you really question why you would pay upwards of \$80,000 on some of the other 'family 4WD wagons' it's that good. I think it is interesting that you can get an Isuzu MU-X LSU and a decent camper trailer for less than a new top spec Prado and be out there enjoying the Australian bush and not missing a thing.

The Isuzu MU-X LST is a worthy winner of the 7 seat 4WD under \$60,000 category for 2013. It's worth noting though that it was by the slimmest of margins. That is not to denigrate the MU-X but to say the others are very close as well.



What's Good:

- Towing Capability
- Driveability
- Robustness

What's Not:

- No steering reach adjustment
- No front seat squab tilt
- No rear diff lock

Overall OzRoamer Rating: 91/100

Behind the Wheel	8	Practicality	10
Comfort	8	Fit for Purpose	10
Equipment	9	Towing Ability	9
Performance	9	Off Road Ability	10
Ride & Handling	9	Value for Money	9