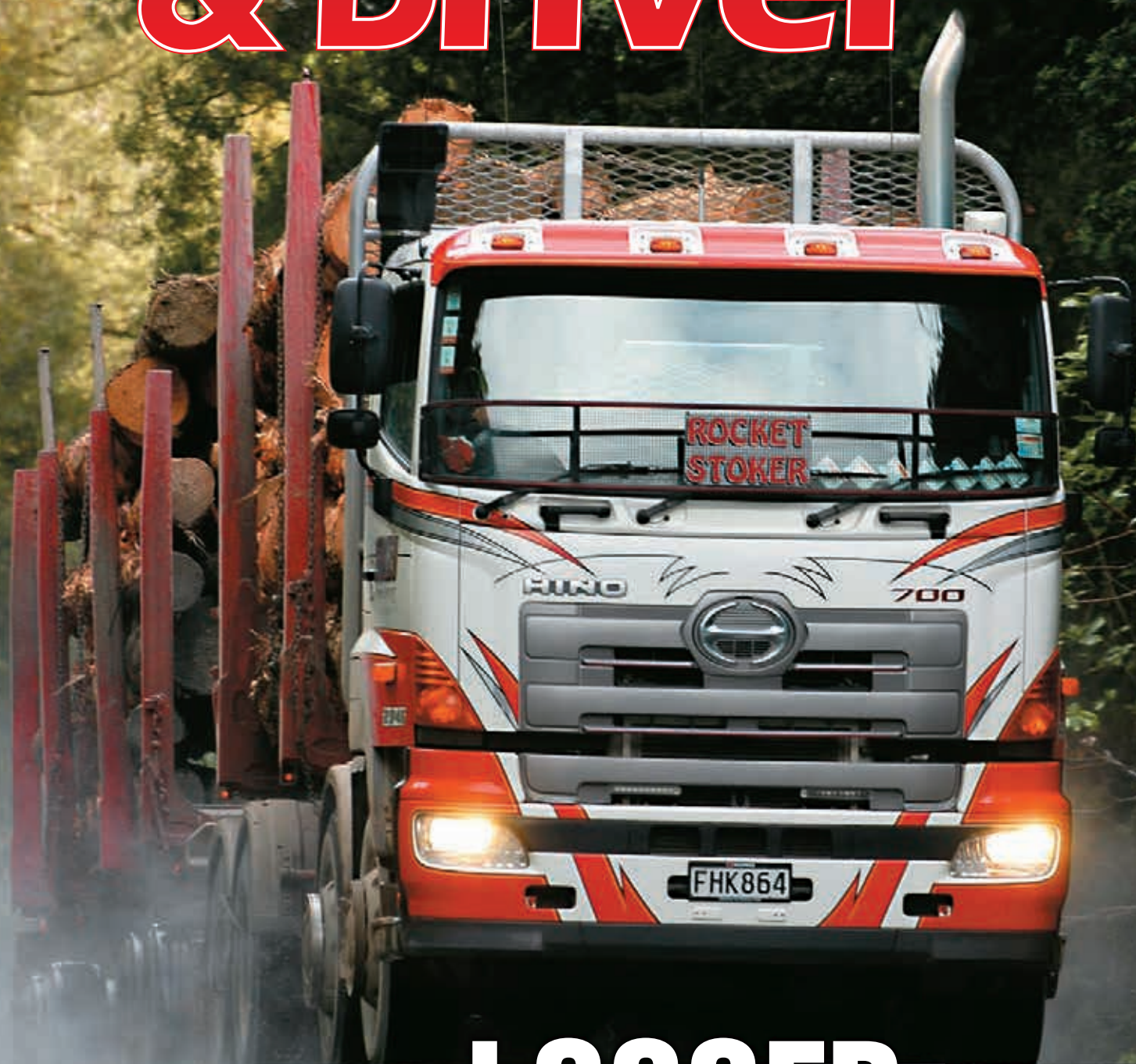


NEW ZEALAND **TRUCK** & Driver



LOGGER, luggér

The Hino's at its best grunting up hills, coping easily with its 28.5-tonne load

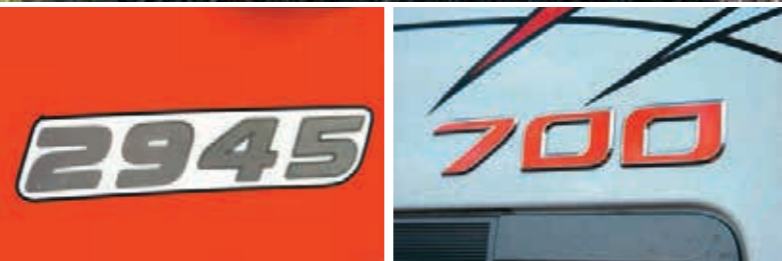
LOGGER luggèr

Story **Wayne Munro**
Photos **Gerald Shacklock**





The Hino has lately been doing a shuttle run between this skid-site and Marsden Point or Portland – shifting three loads a day



IT'S A TOUGH START TO A FULLY-LOADED TEST: A STIFF CLIMB UP A soft, greasy forest road – though a series of tight corners...from a standing start. And with the Hino 700 Series logger loaded to close on 45-tonnes.

But C.G. Stokes Transport driver Gary (Pocket Rocket) Lawton's been here many times before in his Hino FY2945 8x4 and he's super-confident that this is going to be a pushover.

After all, one of the main reasons he reckons it's "the best truck I've ever driven" is the pulling power of the 12.9-litre 450-horsepower (331kW) Hino engine under the cab.

In fact, he doesn't even bother to put in the cross-locks on the Hino diffs – just takes the tyre pressures down to 54psi, using the central tyre inflation system, before **New Zealand Truck & Driver** tester Trevor Woolston moves off.

"Yeah," says Gary, "the engine's smooth – and pulling-wise it just seems to be getting better and better." Peak torque from the E13CVC inline six is 2157Nm at 1100rpm – with 97% of that maximum available over a 500-rev band, from 1000-1500rpm.

Gary drove a Stokes Fuso before this – "a 430 that had been tweaked out to 500. Even though it'd been re-chipped, it didn't have the lugging power that this has got. This has got great torque – it just hangs on around 1100. Bloody good," he adds emphatically.

The combo of this road – with its soft spots, unsafe edges, greasy surface and tight bends – and the steepness of the immediate climb ahead, isn't actually the toughest that the Whangarei-based Hino has to deal with: That honour goes to a nearby road called BCNZ, Gary reckons.

Still, this one – in the forest near Kaikou, about 40 kilometres

in a straight line northwest of Whangarei – is pretty close....testing enough that Gary recommended that the young drivers not be put on this run.

But his confidence in the Hino isn't unfounded: The fully-loaded truck and trailer unit pulls away effortlessly, Woolston working the 18-speed Roadranger up to fourth as we climb through the corners, using most of the road's width. Gary's already been on the radio (just as he was most of the way out here), calling our location and the direction we're heading in, to avoid meeting another logger in a tricky spot.

"See," says Gary proudly as we near the top of the climb, "she really digs her heels in here."

The torque, he reckons, is much better than the earlier version of this EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) engine – at least, it seems that way, based on a drive he's had in one of two older 700 Series Hinos in the Stokes fleet: You can, he says, definitely feel the difference in them – "oh shit yeah – 'specially in your low-down torque eh. Whereas this one will hang on much better, the other one seems to keep dying."

Certainly our last test of the previous version of the 12.9-litre engine left us wondering about its torque and power – the combination of a windy day and the high-sided refuse bins on the truck and trailer unit seeing it only slowly edge up to 90km/h on relatively flat highway running.

This newcomer, which complies with the US04 emissions standard, is meeting with widespread operator approval, reckons Hino Distributors sales development manager Jamie Lockwood: With about 35 of these new engines so far in use here (following-on from 700 earlier models of the 700 Series sold in New Zealand



Left: After many years of driving many trucks, Gary Lawton emphatically rates the Hino the best he's ever driven
Below: The new US04-compliant EGR engine feels stronger and with more grunt than its predecessor

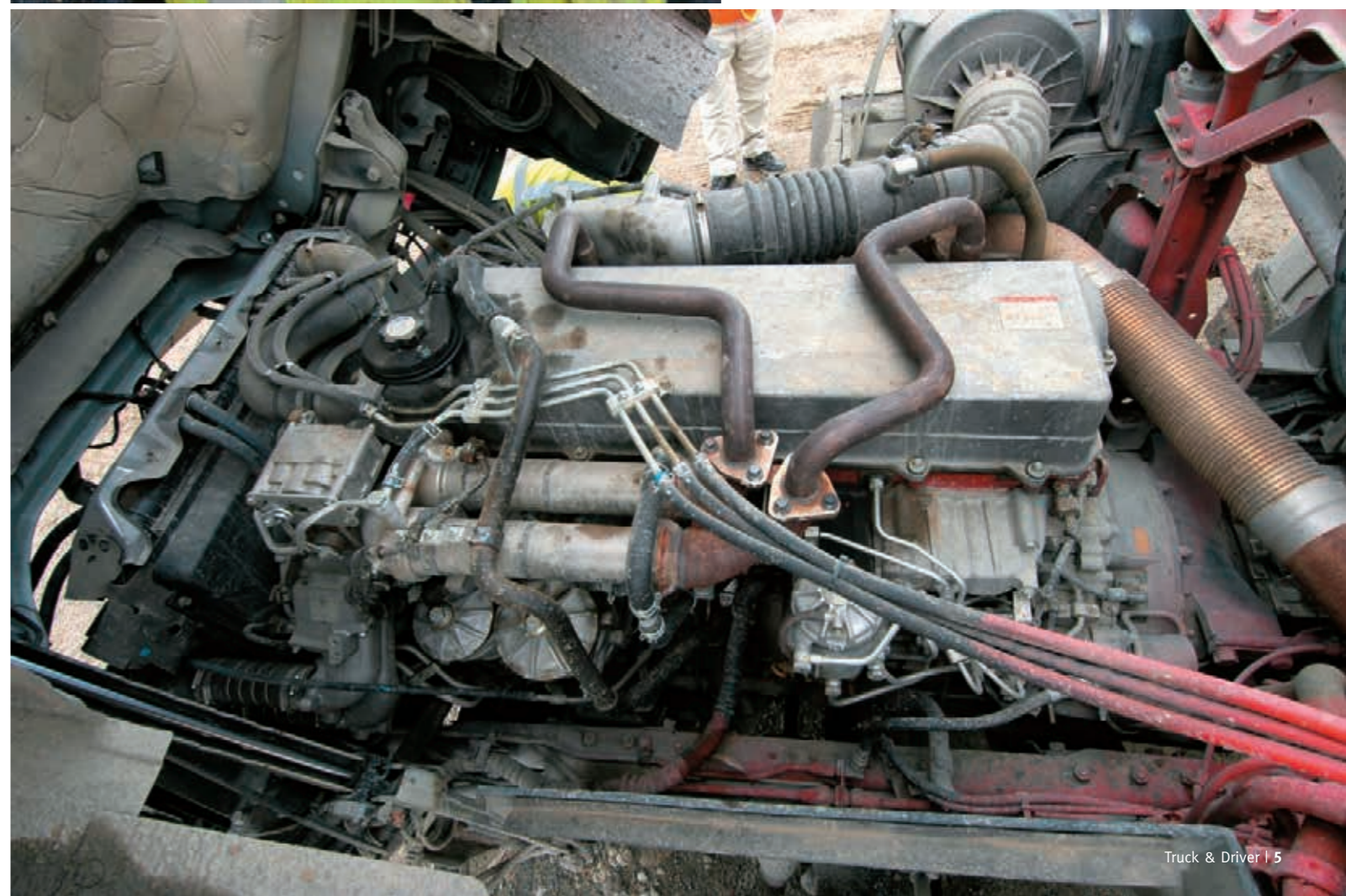
since 2004) "all indications are that they're going really well." That's both in terms of engine performance and maintenance-wise, he says.

Back in the forest, as recommended by the Hino's regular steerer, Woolston drops a gear for the steepish descent that follows the initial climb away from the skid-site: "She's holding nicely," he reckons initially, as the EGR engine's revs rise to a modest 1500rpm and the Jacobs engine brake holds us back to about 30km/h. But it soon needs a helping hand in the form of a few dabs on the brake pedal to keep things nice and steady.

The slowly, slowly approach of our test driver suits Gary: "It's not fast coming out of here loaded 'cos it's that soft. You can feel it pull you. And you've gotta keep over in the middle – away from the camber off the bloody road."

Lawton, who's driven a wide variety of trucks in a lot of different applications in his 40 years behind the wheel – here and in Australia – reckons that in logging, more so than in anything else he's done in trucking, "you've gotta drive to the conditions of the road. You just can't bulldoze ahead."

Caution's a good friend to drivers around here – where a good part of the 85km run between this skid-site and Portland is on gravel roads...regularly pockmarked with pot-





*Above left: Getting in and out of the cab is easy, courtesy of good grabhandles and three non-slip, grated steps
Above right & below right: Low-frills cab still has everything you need, says driver – including simple, easily-seen dash controls
Below left: Checking the oil doesn't even require lifting the front inspection flap*



*Above & top right: There's been no call for Gary to lift the cab before our test, so it takes a while to activate the electric/hydraulic lift
Lower right: It's before 8.30am and, as the Patchell trailer is loaded onto the Hino for the trip back to the forest, Gary's already done a third of his day's work*

holes and soft spots, 'specially on a wet winter's day like this.

WE MEET THIS TRUCK AND DRIVER AT MARSDEN POINT AROUND 8.20am – Gary having just delivered a load of export logs....the result of his first run of the day, which started, as usual, at 4am.

He's at the gantry, reloading the four-axle Patchell trailer on to the 8x4, ready for this second run.

Although he can be dispatched to pick up logs anywhere from Taupo Bay (north of Whangaroa Harbour) to the south head of the Kaipara Harbour on the other coast, lately Gary's mostly been doing three loads a day out of here. The truck's doing a lot more: It's currently being doubleshifted to meet demand and has clocked up 33,000 kilometres in its 11 weeks in work so far.

It's an indicator of the nature of the roads – not just the ones in the forest, but also the public roads north from Otaika Valley, Maungatapere and Moengawahine – that it takes over 90 minutes to cover the 85kms or so from the port...an average of somewhere around 56km/h.

The roads are tight and windy enough that Gary is on the radio pretty early on – way before we drive through the settlement of Kaikou (where at least one of the roadside homes we pass has no power line running to it) – to let other logger traffic know where we are...and keeping tabs on them.

There's at least 18 loads of logs a day coming out of the forest around here, he explains: "You've got to keep communicating on

this road – it's not a wide road for two trucks to pass.

"Nah it's pretty narrow through here – not many places to pull off...so you rely on your radio. It's just a matter of commonsense and a lot of communication between trucks."

The radio talk means it's no drama, for instance, when we meet the Fuso he used to drive: Gary pulls over just before a one-way bridge so they can pass safely.

He's loving this involvement in the logging industry again – picking up where he left off years ago in Western Australia and impressed with the safety standards that now apply: "Oh they've come a long way – a long way."

It is, he confirms, different to most other parts of the industry he's been involved with: "Oh yeah, driving over these roads after linehauling! Me driving style has well and truly changed.

"You've gotta keep a watch on what's going on around you all the time. It's only what you make of it – you make it safe for yourself....it all comes down to the individual at the end of the day."

Log transport in Northland means driving over a lot of gravel roads – a lot of them pretty rough, says Lawton. And this is one of them. As he dodges the worst of the pot-holes, he sounds off about the local council: "Oh yeah, we call it 'Judder-Bar Valley.' Bloody pathetic! They knew we were gonna be logging up here – but no, they didn't do anything to the road. Plus it's a school bus route."

Fortunately for him, the Hino's suspension is "a hell of a lot better" than the Mitsi he climbed out of. It has Hino's six-rod rear

suspension with semi-elliptic springs (rather than the optional Hendrickson airbags). On the front it's a mix of semi-elliptic tapered leaf springs, a stabiliser bar and shocks.

There's also the four-bag air suspension and shock absorbers under the cab and the driver's air-suspended seat. There are no complaints from the regular driver (nor the tester) about the Stokes truck's seat, but as of July new 700s are getting better ones anyway – the highest-spec Isringhausen seat available, with integrated three-point seatbelt.

It's part of an upgrade package that also includes a driver SRS airbag as a standard fitting, "smarter interior colours" to replace the old blue/grey colour scheme in the test truck and heated and electrically-adjusted main mirrors...and heated spotter mirrors.

Hell, Gary's happy with what he's got – never mind any improvements. Mention that she handles the rough stuff well and he enthuses: "The ride on this? She's awesome!"

On corrugations and unavoidable potholes "you get the judders – but that's understandable.

"But you're not getting thrown around. In the Mitsi you'd get shaken to hell around here. In this it rattles a bit – but absolutely no jolting. This felt a hell of a lot better than the Mitsi straight away. It doesn't jar your back. You get out of it at the end of the day and you're not bugged."

Since he first hopped into an old TK Bedford 40 years ago, doing rural work around Waitoki, just north of Auckland, Gary's driven a

lot of makes – Bedford and Ford in the 1970s, MAN 8x8 loggers, Volvo, Mack and 350 Cummins-engined Kenworth roadtrains during many years in Aussie, then Mercedes-Benz, Hino, Mack and Freightliner experience more recently, back in NZ.

Apart from logging he's mostly done general freight – metro and linehaul – with a bit of tipper work thrown in.

When it comes to comfort in the trucks he's driven, by Gary's judgment, this Hino is No. 1: "Then you come down to the Mitsis. Freightliners? I wouldn't give you the time of day for them...."

He hasn't driven a Kenworth for many years – and, while he appreciated the grunt of the Cummins in the ones he drove way back, he didn't like their ride. He remembers "the old cabover Macks"as "quite comfy."

It's his firm belief, repeated a couple of times during the test, that these Hinos are "a bloody good truck for what you get for your money.

"This has got all the comfort you need. I'd rate this probably about eight out of 10.

"You know, everything's just there – all the controls are so simple to grab. Nah, it's bloody awesome actually."

Having been away from log trucks for so many years, Gary reckons he's enjoying being part of the modern NZ industry: He was happy, he says, "even before I got this.

"You've got a fellowship among logging drivers – I think the logging industry's sort of a breed of its own, you know. At the

It's a tough start to a fully-loaded test – straight into a stiff climb, on a soft, narrow and windy road



Lovely as it is, nobody here’s paying any attention to scenery: On the muddy skid-site the crew is hard at work....adding to the log-pile, as a Komatsu loader does its best to put a dent in it, as it loads a Smith & Davies logger

gantry (at Marsden Point), if anybody’s getting behind putting their trailer up and getting all the bolsters folded down, you go and give them a hand. And they give you a hand. Nah it’s bloody good really.”

And there is a lot to learn – “you sort of don’t stop. I’d much sooner do this – it’s a challenge. Every day is different – the roads are different.”

Currently working a five-and-a-half-day week, he’s not bothered where the Stokes operation sends him – and doesn’t mind this relatively short shuttle-run: “Nah...happy doing this repeat run. I just go and do what I’m told to do. That’s it.”

Having said that, he points out that this particular job is nicely straightforward: “At the moment, where we are, we’re doing three loads quite comfortably within our hours and everything, so it works out really bloody well.”

Loaded, the truck and trailer unit is almost always running at 45-45.5-tonnes: “The truck’s weighing out at 11,260 and the trailer’s 5100kg – not a hell of a lot different to the Mitsi I was on. We’re good for 29-tonne.”

By the time we turn off Pipiwai Rd and onto a forestry road, Gary has long since used the Bigfoot central tyre inflation system to drop the tyre pressures to the system’s “offroad unloaded” setting – back where the road got really soft.

“I use that out in the bush all the time – got to at the moment.” And when we come out, he says, he’ll put the Hino THD18 diffs’ inter-axle diff locks in as well. It’s a combination, he says, that “does the job...I’ve had no problems with it.”

One last corner and we’re at the skid-site – the felled trees

allowing an awesome view way off to the northeast, over a series of misty sawtooth ridges.

Lovely as it is, nobody here’s paying any attention to scenery: On the muddy skid-site the crew is hard at work with a Thunderbird log-hauler and a Waratah-equipped Daewoo log processor – adding to the log-pile, as a Komatsu loader does its best to put a dent in it, as it loads a Smith & Davies logger.

While Gary waits his turn, there’s time for a five-minute inspection of what the Hino brings to the job: First and foremost, says Gary, there’s comfort – and “everything’s there in front of ya.” A slight turnout in the dash accommodates the R/T, heater, stereo and CTI controls, plus a couple of storage slots. It also adds some woodgrain finish to what’s otherwise all workaday blue and charcoal grey vinyl.

The vinyl gets the nod from Gary for being easy to clean – aided by the compressed-air hose installed as an extra.

Storage-wise there are overhead lockers, a tray and bin on top of the engine hump, a little bit of storage space under the bunk and a bit more behind each seat: “For what we’re doing there’s enough,” Gary reckons.

The bunk doesn’t look inviting, but he’s not critical: “Yeah,” he agrees, “but I’ve slept on worse. And it is a little bit wider than the Mitsi’s. I don’t use it anyway.”

Interior lighting is effective – thanks to a large centre light in the roof and smaller spots above each door. We don’t get to see the headlights in use, but Gary’s had plenty of experience with them courtesy of his early-morning starts and reckons they’re good.

Vision-wise, he says, “I think this is a little bit better than



Top: The product of our test run with the Hino is unloaded at the woodchip plant at Portland
Above left: Gary chains up the load ready for the off
Above right: Even once we’re out of the forest, the roads are tight, narrow and soft

the Mitsi down the front.” And to the right, it’s possible to look between the mirrors at intersections and the like.

As for getting in and out, the FY has three surefooted grated steps and substantial grabhandles each side of the door opening. It’s all you could ask for, even in wet and muddy conditions.

Time for a quick squizz outside before it’s Gary’s turn to back down to the skid and get the trailer unloaded: The Bridgestone 11R22.5 M840 steer tyres and L317 rears are all mounted on Alcoa alloys (although in these muddy conditions you have to rub them to know!).

There’s a stoneguard – which Stokes fitted with a “Rocket Stoker” name board, in deference to the diminutive Gary’s nickname. A sunvisor caps the windscreen and a high-rise air intake stands up behind the cab on the driver’s side – outreached by the vertical exhaust on the other side.

The round 400-litre alloy fuel tank sits between the steerers and drivers on the left side, while the same spot on the driver’s side accommodates a small gear locker. The latter is the one thing that Gary reckons isn’t good on this truck: “No, it’s not big enough.” Well there’s that....and a “useless” horn.

It only takes half an hour to load and secure between 28 and 29-tonnes of logs – these ones destined for the woodchip

plant at Portland.

Gary gives test driver Woolston the benefit of his local knowledge as we head off – immediately negotiating the steepest challenge of the whole route back to the port. The Jake-brake engine compression retarder, for instance, is left on the whole time. And Gary doesn’t bother with the first (footbrake operated) stage or the second stage.

“Only time I’ll switch it off is if it’s greasy on a real steep hill. Then I’ll just take my time and come down on the trailer brake.”

Is it better or worse than the retarder on his last truck? That makes him laugh: “The Fuso’s retarder? You could stick a carrot up the exhaust and blow it out – that’s all they’re good for.”

At its best the Hino’s retarder delivers 350hp (257kW) – at 2150rpm. In Gary’s judgment “it could be a little bit stronger, but it’s not too bad – it does slow you down a bit. If you come right down in your gears it’ll pull you back – but in your higher gears, no.”

It’s good enough, he adds, to help him maintain his usual driving style: “I try and stay off the brakes as much as possible.” Although the Hino does have ABS, Gary reckons he “rarely” touches the brake pedal: “I have my foot there, just in case. But I don’t touch it much.”

As for getting the best out of the E13CVC engine – that’s easy:



Taking it slow and easy is a good friend around here – and so it takes one hour, 45 minutes to do the 85km run to Portland

“I just drive it in the green band – from 800 to 1440rpm.” In addition to producing its 2100Nm (1591 lb ft) of peak torque over a wide band, the inline six turns out over 440hp from 1500 revs, through its (450hp) 1800rpm peak...to 1900.

So has it got enough power for the loads and the roads it has to handle? He says yes...but doesn't sound convincing. Then he adds: “It's all good having big horsepower, but at the end of the day, you know, your big horsepower trucks are not gaining that much on us.

“Sure, like I've had them pass me on the way to the port – but at the end of the day I'll catch them up load-wise.”

He admits he doesn't keep a close eye on fuel use – “but I think this is a little bit thirstier than what the Mitsis are. Using probably about 350-360 litres a day – for 500kms (which works out at 1.38-1.43kms per litre).

Back on the public roads there's one particularly tight hairpin bend on a slushy stretch of road and Gary recommends that Woolston drops the Roadranger down into the low box and “just coast around” and up the incline after it: “It's just so tight and so slippery that if you put too much power on you'll just get wheelspin.”

Woolston mentions that the Patchell trailer, with its Hendrickson air suspension, tracks nicely and Gary agrees: “The only thing you've gotta be careful with airbags is not to go too fast into corners because they're either there or not – not like a spring, where you can sort of feel it more.”

Three-quarters of the way to Portland, Woolston hands the wheel back to Gary, who happily and regularly points out the Hino's

engine's pulling power: “See – that's in top gear and I let it drop down to about 1100 and it just sits there. It makes it easy.”

Means you don't need an automated manual transmission, he suggests. He has driven a SmartShift and “quite liked it – but it was a bit slow on takeoff.”


At Portland, the logs are unloaded at the woodchip plant, the trailer's lifted back onto the truck and Gary drives out – a little disappointed that the load was about half a tonne lighter than his 29t prediction. The trailer, he explains, was on a slope when it was being loaded and that can play with the weights a little.

Before he heads back for another load from the same skid-site, we get him to tilt the cab for a look at the well-shrouded 12.9-litre and its exhaust gas recirculation piping.

It takes a while....because it's not something he's ever had to do. In fact, he usually doesn't even have to lift the front inspection flap: To check the oil he just pulls the dipstick through the grille.

Eventually a team effort figures out how to activate the electric/hydraulic switch above the bottom step on the passenger side.

The thing is, the truck hasn't even had any teething troubles: “No, nothing....no problems with it at all eh. From day one, it's been going good. Apart from its regular 10,000km services, it's had nothing done.”

This is one contented driver – no question. He tells us: “The silly part about it – this truck was offered to two other drivers before I got it. One's got a Mitsi, one's got a Kenworth.” He has a good laugh at that, before adding, unnecessarily: “I'm happy.” 

THE TREVOR TEST



OUR LAST TEST IN A 700 SERIES HINO LEFT US with a questionmark....on the performance of the 13-litre engine.

The trouble was, the truck we tested was on waste disposal work – carting high-sided modular container units stuffed full of rubbish, from Hamilton to the Hampton Downs landfill. It was a windy day on the wide-open Waikato Freeway...and so we came away unsure whether the fact that it took quite a while to get up to 90km/h was down to the wind on the bins, or the engine.

Interesting then that Gary, the driver of this Stokes unit, is overwhelmingly impressed with the torque produced by the latest version of this engine – its exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) emissions control system now upgraded to US04 standard.

And it only takes the first few minutes behind the wheel, after leaving the skid-site deep in the Northland forests, to confirm it....he's right: This engine, albeit with only a modest 450hp, seems to punch above its weight in terms of grunt.

She pulls well as we climb a steepish hill, through a series of tight bends – shrugging off the climb and the added drag of a soft and slushy road surface. Not bad considering we're loaded to just under 45-tonnes.

There's more evidence further on along our tight, windy route to Portland.

Repeatedly, I can cruise through corners without dropping a gear – pulling away again from 1200, even 1100 revs, no problem.

Gary says it's an easy drive – and he's right again: That pulling power makes life behind the wheel pretty easy, because you're not having to grab gears in a big hurry going up hills and it cuts down on the number of gearchanges you have to make on a windy road like this.

I follow his advice and simply drive it in the green band, sometimes dropping below 1000 revs with no sign of strain from the engine.

I don't think the engine brake's anything to get excited about: I'm on the brakes a lot on the

big downhills in third gear – to the point where I wonder if the retarder is actually on at one point. It is.

On easier hills you can feel it working alright, so I'd rate it okay – but nothing like the retardation you get out a big CAT, or the Cummins with its Intebrake.


The gearshift initially feels a bit vague but it's more a matter of me taking a while to get the feel of it: It's very light and it slips into gear quite nicely, without you feeling the gates. I pick it up and carry it a bit too much at the start. But she's a nice, smooth shift – one you don't have to rush at all.

The steering's nice and positive and the throttle pedal is soft-as. So's the clutch. It's very driver-friendly in that way. And there's plenty of room for your left foot in the footwell.

I find it easy to get comfortable behind the wheel, with a mix of seat and steering column adjustments. The mirrors are pretty good, although the little optical one at the bottom is pretty small. Gary reckons it is big enough to let you know what's there, but I'd be opting for a bigger version.

The public roads on the way to and from the forest really are in a bit of a state, with big potholes dotting the route. You avoid as many as you can but inevitably you get some of them – and Hino's mix of leaf springs, shocks and a stabiliser bar on the front and leaf springs and six-rod rear suspension copes wells.

With so much tight and windy going on this run you really appreciate a nicely-handling unit – and that's exactly what this Hino and its air-sprung Patchell four-axle trailer is: The trailer is always nicely tucked-in behind – it doesn't cut in at all and there's no swinging out.

One thing's for sure: Unlike the last 700 Series tested, this one doesn't labour at all – and it's a good load we've got on...and over a testing road with a sometimes rough, sometimes soft surface that soaks up a bit of power. This engine definitely feels like it's got a lot more oomph. 

SPECIFICATIONS

HINO FY2945 700 Series 8x4

Engine: Hino E13CVC
Capacity: 12.9 litres
Maximum power: 331kW (450hp) @ 1800rpm
Maximum torque: 2157Nm (1591 lb ft) @ 1100rpm
Emissions control: Exhaust gas recirculation
Fuel capacity: 400 litres
Transmission: 18-speed Eaton Roadranger RTLO 16918B
Ratios:
Low/Low – 14.40 Low/High – 12.29
1 st L – 8.56 1 st H – 7.30
2 nd L – 6.05 2 nd H – 5.16
3 rd L – 4.38 3 rd H – 3.74
4 th L – 3.20 4 th H – 2.73
5 th L – 2.29 5 th H – 1.95
6 th L – 1.62 6 th H – 1.38
7 th L – 1.17 7 th H – 1.00
8 th L – 0.85 8 th H – 0.73
Front axles: Hino MF781, rated at 7500kg
Rear axles: Hino THD18, rated at 21,800kg
Auxiliary brakes: Hino engine decompression brake
Front suspension: Semi-elliptic tapered leaf springs, with stabiliser bar and Koni shock absorbers
Rear suspension: Hino six-rod, with semi-elliptic leaf springs
GVW: 29,000kg
GCM: 55,000kg



KEY SPECIFICATIONS

Power	331kW (450 PS) @ 1800rpm
Torque	2157Nm @ 1100rpm
Transmission	RTLO 16918B
Rear Drive Axle . . .	Dana (Air), Meritor (6-Rod) option
Suspension	Air and Spring options
GVM	29,000kg
GCM	55,000kg
Wheelbase	6005mm (Six Rod/Air)

KEY FEATURES

- Cruise control
- Jacobs brake
- Full cab trim
- Air conditioning
- ISRI 6860/870 PRO driver's seat*
- Electric adjusted and heated rear view mirrors*
- Optional Detroit Locker Non Spin on Hino diffs

* From May 2010 production

For more info contact your nearest Hino sales person, or visit www.hino.co.nz

NORTHLAND

Lyndon Andrew..... 027-477-0704

AUCKLAND

Bill Lachlan..... 027-495-6066

Lyndon Andrew..... 027-477-0704

WAIKATO

Ian Roberts..... 027-666-9777

Lester Malone..... 027-495-7267

BAY OF PLENTY

Grant Newlove..... 027-294-9295

HAWKES BAY/WAIRARAPA

Colin Duley..... 027-448-4400

MANAWATU/TARANAKI

Jeff Hall..... 027-275-8970

WELLINGTON

Keith Higgs..... 027-442-8206

NELSON WEST COAST

Ian McDrury..... 027-432-6028

CHRISTCHURCH/CANTERBURY

Dave Ching..... 027-274-1181

Murray Brown..... 027-432-2411

OTAGO/SOUTHLAND

Greg Kirk..... 027-258-9425



Heavy Duty