



# Changing Faces

One of the few commercial vehicle manufacturers to unveil a completely new vehicle at this year's Johannesburg International Motor Show (JIMS), Powerstar is launching an assault on the local market

“The visitors seem to have the perception that if you have a stand in the hall, you're playing with the 'big guns',” Erwin Stolze, marketing manager and dealer development at Powerstar SA tells **FOCUS**. “It makes a difference to your presence and exposure – the stand has emphasised the fact that we are a premium Chinese brand.”

Powerstar's stand at JIMS certainly was notable, especially for the introduction of the company's new range of vehicles – the facelifted VX and the new, striking V3.

The VX – up to now Powerstar's mainstay model – has been thoroughly facelifted with a new grille, bumper and interior. The cabs also now come standard with air-conditioning and the warranty has been upgraded to three years/350 000 km, from the previous two years/200 000 km. Stolze says Powerstar is confident this will emphasise the faith it has in its products.

The first of the new VX to be brought in is the 2628; Powerstar's most versatile truck, widely used for tippers, water tankers, bitumen distributors and skip loaders. The range will remain with initial 6x4, 6x6 and the popular 8x4. This will be followed by 4x2 and 4x4 versions.

The mechanical specs remain the same: double chassis rails, HL7 hubs, and the same engines. The trucks will replace their predecessors as and when demand for the individual models dictates.

“It's a lot more comfort in the same basic, rugged truck,” notes Stolze.

Powerstar's new supermodel, the V3, represents a departure from the norm for the manufacturer. Being a long-hauler, the V3 is more sophisticated and with greater comfort and luxury, but still features the same simple, hard-working technology. The new vehicle's technical components have been kept simple to ensure it is as easy and cost-effective to maintain as the tried-and-trusted VX.

It will feature a Euro-3 engine, with a GVM of 26 tonnes. It will come standard with a manual gearbox, as well as the option of an Automated Manual Transmission (AMT). Powerstar is expecting the two gearbox options to sell in equal measure, so both are offered from the off. Final specifications will be confirmed at launch.

The company won't disclose too much away as yet, but among the other options will be full air-suspension and, as the vehicle is standard with double chassis rails, it will also be homologated to cater

for the abnormal-load market. A GCM of 100 tonnes can be accommodated.

Stolze says Powerstar realises this new segment is uncharted waters for the company. “Our plan is to launch the truck before the second quarter of 2012. By then all should be in place, but we are not going to launch it to market if our dealers aren't up to the task of supporting it correctly.” Powerstar is also driving a full local research and development programme to ensure the V3 is fully suited to South Africa's conditions.

Sharing the stand was engine supplier Weichai. Weichai and Powerstar OEM Beiben have had a joint venture for the supply of the engines from the beginning, and so Powerstar was pleased to emphasise this established link.

The new offerings – in particular the V3 – created a pleasing stir at the JIMS Truck and Bus show. “The competition's been coming to have a look,” smiles Stolze. “But the new market will be a challenge; long haul is the biggest segment in the EHCV market – it is extremely competitive.

“So we have to do our homework – and do it right – before we enter the market. That's how you do it, when playing with the 'big-guns'.” ■