

F-250 is a necessary evil but it also packs tons of fun

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Ford's F-series Super Duty pickup, redesigned for 2008 and promising more included equipment for 2009, still sets the standard for heavy-duty full-size pickups designed for serious work or play demands. *Photos by Rob Beintema*

The best-laid plans of mice and men often go awry, as the old saying goes.

So when the worst-laid plans of Audi imploded with two botched test drives in a row, it was time to call in the cavalry at nearby Ford for something, anything that I could test that week.

"All I've got is an F-250," said Debbie Knights, Ford's vehicle-slinger extraordinaire, once she had consulted her last-minute list.

"Ulp," I replied.

I blinked, the universe shifted slightly and somewhere, a few kilometers away, there was probably a quiet thump as my bank manager turned white and slid under his desk.

Okay, I'm exaggerating, but a Super Duty? The biggest pickup in Ford's lineup? Maybe Petro-Canada wouldn't exactly have to sink a new oil well just for me but, with three tons of fun on the curb weight scale, a 10,000-plus pounds tow rating, with either a V8 or V10 powerplant and a potential \$200 fillup, yikes, I swear I could feel my gas card quivering in my wallet.

But, alas, beggars can't be choosers.

"Uhhh, th-that's great," I stammered. "I'll take it."

Now, some of you may be wondering, "What's the point?"

Why bother reviewing something with the image of an automotive dinosaur when everyone's shunning SUVs and turning in their trucks to flock to fuel efficient alternatives?

Well, the fact is, these trucks are more

about necessity than desire. Or as Ford reps have often put it, "our Super Duty customers don't just want a truck, they NEED a truck."

These purpose-built workhorses are not toy trucks. They are designed for heavy-duty farm and construction work, serious payloads and maximum towing demands.

And, redesigned for the 2008 model year, the new Super Duty lineup offers even more ability, power and performance for the serious truck owner.

Super Duty pickups come in three cab styles— Regular Cab, SuperCab and Crew Cab— and with two bed lengths. There's also a choice of 4X2 and 4X4 offerings in

a variety of F-250, F-350 and now even F-450 models, depending on the customer's work and towing demands.

I was testing a F-250 Crew Cab 4X4 model that stood head and shoulders above the crowd in brilliant clearcoat red. You can't be timid in a truck like this. Because not only are you going against the flow of currently-correct tiny econoboxes, you are dwarfing them. I got more than a few exasperated head shakes and occasional eco-glances cast upwards towards the solo rider in the roaring behemoth.

And why? I mean, it's not like I was driving around with a "Nuke the Whales" bumper sticker and punting Priuses off the road. But maybe I'm wrong and those

were just admiring glances as they took in the bold, more muscular shape of the new Super Duty, the bigger grille, the distinctive dropped beltline and the fender vents— red for diesel, black for gasoline.

When you climb up and into the Super Duty, the model renewal carries over with what Ford refers to as "tough luxury design", a big-truck evolution of the award-winning F-Series interior with a mix of mucho macho attitude and luxury sedan refinement. And, remembering its workhorse origins, there's plenty of useable storage— a big glovebox, deep door slots and a huge lap-top swallowing console. This is the front office section of the working truck.

Under the hood, Ford offers a choice of three engines.

The 5.4-litre Triton V8 makes 300 hp and 365 lb/ft of torque.

The 6.8-litre Triton V10 bumps the power to 362 hp and 457 lb/ft.

And, as tested here, a new for 2008 6.4-litre Power Stroke V8 Turbo Diesel engine boasting 350 hp and an impressive 650 lb/ft of torque.

When Ford first launched the 2008 Super Duty, I took a comparison run in an '07 model and the new 6.4-litre diesel is not only more powerful, it is also much quieter than the older 6.0-litre version, with significantly less of that traditional pots-and-pans diesel acceleration clatter.

The 6.4-liter Power Stroke Diesel combines a high-pressure, common rail fuel system with Piezo-electric fuel injectors and an advanced diesel particulate filter system to deliver power while reducing particulate output by more than 90 per-

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