



The International Coach of the Year Award

September 24, 2007

Volvo 9700 wins International Coach of the Year 2008 title

Volvo's 9700 coach has won the International Coach of the Year 2008 title after a jury of leading industry journalists thoroughly appraised the latest coach designs.

To enable the Jury to reach its verdict in a fair and informed manner, a three-day test called the Coach Euro Test was staged in Switzerland. Jurors had the opportunity to drive and travel on the candidates on a 52km test route taking in a wide variety of different road conditions. In addition, presentations were made by each of the manufacturers. Coaches of 12-metres or more in length, launched within the preceding two years were invited to participate and this year's field was the strongest for some years.

The 9700 Prestige entered was a 13-metre, three-axle, rear-engined, luxury touring coach from a range of products that bears the 9700 name. Other members of the family offer length options of between 10.4m and 15.0m, two or three axle configurations and height alternatives of 3.4m, 3.6m and 3.8m. Three equipment levels are offered: Comfort, Optimal and the top-of-the-range Prestige. Both the underframe and body are stainless steel, ensuring a long life.

The 9700 is the most recent manifestation of a line of Volvo coaches that can be traced back to the early 1990s. It's an evolutionary coach rather than a revolutionary one; 'a good ongoing development of a good concept.'

Power came from the latest generation DH12E six-cylinder engine, which in this execution delivered 460bhp (336kW) at 1465-1800rpm and impressive torque of 2200Nm at 1100-1465rpm. It achieves Euro4 emissions levels by means of selective catalytic reduction (SCR). The second generation of Volvo's own AT2412C I-Shift automated 12-speed manual transmission was installed.

In deciding which coach to award the title, jurors took into consideration a variety of factors. They looked for innovation, comfort, performance, ease of driving, safety, style and a host of other factors that determine the appeal of a coach to its passengers, driver, operator and maintenance team. The contending coaches were a strong field, some of which had individual features that bettered aspects of the 9700, but the Volvo was judged to offer the best all round package.

It was particularly strong in terms of the experience provided for passengers. The sloping floor, with its theatre style seating layout, coupled with an uninterrupted view through the front screen and no unnecessary styling features meant there was nothing to impair enjoyment of the scenery. The seats themselves, complete with three-point seatbelts, offered excellent comfort and like the rest of the interior, were trimmed in perfectly coordinated materials and colours. Smoothness characterised the on-road performance. 'It's a traveller's coach,' was one opinion.

Equally impressive was the driver's perspective. Comfort, sufficient space for belongings and an excellent mirror set-up are only part of the story. Put simply, the jurors enjoyed driving it, their comments including: 'the second generation I-Shift gearbox is almost flawless,' 'synchronisation of the gearchange and the engine was exceptional,' and, 'a super vehicle to drive – I was really impressed with it.'

Volvo have been criticised in the past for bland styling. With the 9700, a look has been achieved that makes its mark without resorting to the kind of over-extravagance that can rapidly date. On top of this, the new front instantly identifies the brand, or as one juror put it, 'they want people to know it's a Volvo.'

Volvo has always been known for safety. The 9700 makes further advances in this direction with the introduction of the FUPS front underrun protection system as standard. Though others had innovative safety developments the Volvo doesn't yet offer, it nevertheless scored well for both active and passive safety systems.

For the owner, the appeal comes in the quality of the build, the knowledge that passengers and driver are going to be happy and the confidence generated that this is a coach built to do a job professionally for a full life.

The trophy will be handed over to Håkan Karlsson, President and CEO of Volvo Bus Corporation, by Stuart Jones, Chairman of the International Bus & Coach of the Year Jury, during the Busworld Exhibition in Kortrijk. The ceremony will take place at 11.30 Friday 19 October on the Volvo stand in Hall 5.

Media representatives and photographers are welcome to attend.

- Ends -

Note to Editors:

The Jury consists of respected journalists from 17 leading European bus and coach industry publications. Each jury member ranks the vehicles in order, placing that he or she considers the best first, and so on.

The full list of candidates participating was:

Irisbus Magelys.
Mercedes-Benz Tourismo M
Neoplan Cityliner HD
Noge Titanium on MAN R33 chassis.
VDL Jonckheere JSD140-460
Volvo 9700

The Bus of the Year title is awarded in odd years (2005/2007 etc) and the Coach of the Year title in even years (2006/2008 etc).

Winner of the International Coach of the Year 2006 title was the Neoplan Starliner.

Winner of the International Bus of the Year 2007 title was the Mercedes-Benz Citaro U.

For more details of the CoachEuroTest and the International Bus & Coach of the Year organisation, visit the <http://home.netwings.ch/trenold/> website.



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