



ON THE BLACKTOP

Forget all about stodgy diesels – these CRDs rocket up to lost-licence land before you know what’s hit you. We couldn’t pick any advantage in the Cherokee’s dual-ratio set-up, though. Both autos swapped cogs up and down as slick as any other five-speeder around.

Engine noise wasn’t a problem. Not if you like to hear something going on under the bonnet, anyway. At cruising speed the 2.7 revved a bit higher and made a bit more clatter than the 2.8, which just droned along like a WWII bomber squadron (see RPM at 100km/h).

Quadra Drive works brilliantly on bitumen, especially in the wet – just as we found the last time we tried a WG Limited (January issue). There’s no way you can get those skinny Goodyears to spin in a full-throttle take-off. The Cherokee wasn’t far behind in 2WD, when all the rear diff Gerotor coupling was controlling all the power. But in full-time 4WD, with the open centre diff controlling the front-rear split, the fronts lit up from time to time.

Fanging around corners wasn’t nearly as friendly as doing the numbers in a straight line. Neither wagon felt at all steady from turn-in to exit, even by fourby on-road standards. The Grand Cherokee wobbled and wandered, and the Cherokee rocked ‘n’ rolled. Just like before. We’re not

RPM AT 100KM/H

Grand Cherokee 2.7 CRD Limited (overdrive 5th)	2200rpm
Cherokee 2.8 CRD Sport (overdrive 5th).....	2000rpm

qualified to say exactly why they handle so badly, but we suspect that their three-link rear ends are involved somewhere along the line.

Ride comfort in both Jeeps suffered, producing that queasy feeling when the suspension can’t control the opposing forces of tyre traction and chassis inertia.

One small hiccup driving the Cherokee in town. The transfer lever looks like a handbrake and it’s near where the real handbrake is. If you’re not on the ball you can grab it by mistake when you’re about to get out or drive off. Don’t laugh – it caught us out more than once...

FAST ‘N’ LOOSE

On dirt roads the pair’s handling was, if anything, even more nervous than on bitumen. Highway tyres had a fair bit to do with it, but their suspensions still struggled to keep the wheels on the deck. Our ace photographer Michael Ellem, as good behind a steering wheel as he is behind a wide-angle lens, had a ball on the dirt in the WG with all that 2.7 grunt and not a lot of grip. Could be a handful in less skilful hands, though.

Ride wasn’t too bad. Most bumps disappeared without trace in the depths of those plush leather seats...

The Grand Cherokee’s rigid front end wasn’t fazed by humps and bumps, but the Cherokee’s low-riding IFS was a shocker. It whacked anything remotely resembling a pothole until we learned to hit the anchors well beforehand. Just as well the front wishbones are cast, not forged, steel. But you can’t tippy-toe through the bush all the way to the Cape and back.

