**ROLLER TEAM AUTO-ROLLER 600** 

# **ECLASS**

**Roller Team Auto-Roller 600 and Swift Sundance 630L** 

These middleweight offerings from Italy and England share family appeal with loads of space for all



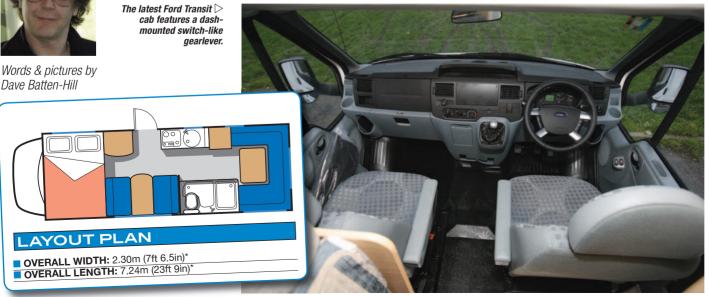
Dave Batten-Hill

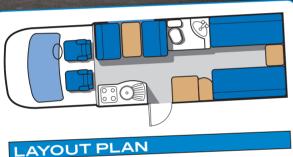
oth contenders this month are overcab coachbuilt, tail lounge, family 'vans. Is each D a clone of the other? Far from it. But do the differences mean one is better than the other?

The mid-sized sector of the coachbuilt market is, of course, hotly contested. There is choice aplenty and the two vehicles here represent popular options, particularly for families. Italian manufacturer Roller Team's 600, based on the twin-wheel variety of the recently rejuvenated Ford Transit, mildly restates the proven theme of using a tough workhorse of a chassis under a biggish, roomy coachbuilt body. Juggling interior storage space and occupant accommodation, it offers a big washroom and wardrobe plus the expected dining and cooking appointments at some expense to the lounging facilities.

ROLLER TEAM

The Swift Group has, to mix a couple of





NDANCE 6301

OVERALL WIDTH: 2.24 (7ft 4in)\* OVERALL LENGTH: 7.34m (24ft 1in)\*

metaphors, firmly seized the new kid on the block by the horns. Rather than simply tacking existing conversions onto the new Fiat Ducato, Swift has executed comprehensive exercises in both styling and engineering. The Sundance's top-option 630L has the well-liked, facing-sofa tail lounge allied to a forward dinette, the two separated by amenities for meal-making and personal hygiene.

Our two rivals may differ in terms of capacity, base vehicle and layout, but they have elements in common. Both offer six berths, both have linear kitchens and washrooms, a full dinette and most obviously, both have an overcab bed. Subtle differences nonetheless exist.

# **MOTIVE POWER**

Everybody's excited about Fiat's brand new Ducato, with good reason. Why? Well for a start, the 2.3-litre turbo-diesel lump under the Sundance 630L's bonnet out-horsepowers its old, 2.8-litre ancestor by three bhp, with a torque increase into the bargain. Add a new six-speed gearbox, a 70mm increase in the rear track, more refinement and a complete restyle and it's small wonder that expectations run high. Most are fulfilled in the Sundance, with ABS and EBD (electronic

The new Fiat cab is fussy but all the  $\triangleright$  equipment works well.

brake-force distribution), a driver's airbag, variable rate power steering and electric everything, including remote central locking for the cab.

Good old Henry's treasured Transit, as featured underpinning the Roller Team 600, also shines in the horsepower department, the 2.4-litre TDCi having 140 ponies on tap, and six gears to boot. Discs all round apart, not too much has changed below decks. There's still a propshaft, as opposed to driveshafts, turning the twin rear wheels and the suspension remains a known quantity. Up in the cab, there is a collection of tempting toys: ABS, driver and passenger airbags, remote central locking and a fully plumbed-in sound system. You also get four cup holders and Ford's excellent cruise control.



# ON TEST: ROLLER TEAM AUTO-ROLLER 600 AND SWIFT SUNDANCE 630L



# **ROAD MANNERS**

And so, to the asphalt: like time, progress marches on and here, it's signified by light commercial vehicles becoming more car-like.

Of our two contenders, the Roller Team 600 was the more bullish. Though commendably quiet, in terms of both engine and conversion noise, it has what's termed - somewhat inelegantly - grunt. As ever, first gear is visited briefly to get you moving. Thereafter, cog swapping is a breeze, courtesv of the kind of switch-like gearchange for which Ford is famous. A distinct shove in the vertebrae is the reward in the lower gears and further up the range. The dash may not look too thrilling but is informative enough and the controls are light and positive. The power steering is well weighted and the cruise control's wheelmounted buttons are clearly marked and extremely conveniently placed.

Faced with use on the open road, in the wild grey yonder of a December day, the Roller Team 600 gained a number of points. Riding smoothly, it handled inclines and bends with panache. The only real downside occurred in, and was revealed by, substantial crosswinds.

The 600 became restive, a characteristic just as inextricably linked with (what cornering showed to be) a high centre of gravity.

The Sundance 630L offered a combination of desirable dynamic behaviour and a high level of refinement. Quieter than the 600, it had very light controls that were just as responsive as its rival's. Again, six intelligently spaced ratios made gearchanging quick and easy, though the dash-mounted gearlever lacked the 600's fluid precision. Proportional power steering made manoeuvring effortless at no cost to the system's on-road feedback. The new dash may be a little fussy, but it does the business, even telling you to which angle setting the headlights have been tweaked. You get radio with CD and MP3 entertainment, a good heater, electric toys and even a lockable bin for your laptop. The seats are comfortable but on this prototype, offered no lumbar support adjustment - I'm told that production models will have this.

Out in the wilds, the Sundance 630L's wider rear axle showed its mettle. Though neither this, nor any other coachbuilt, will ever be a car, it did a fair impression of one. These characteristics, abetted by the motor's velvet glove power delivery, made for a drive as relaxing as it was sprightly.

In both instances, manoeuvring was easy, provided the seven-foot-plus tail overhangs' demands were considered.

## LOUNGE AND DINE

Swift's Sundance 630L offers the kind of lounge most would appreciate. Two lengthy, facing sofas dominate the area. These flank a threedrawer chest, which has a useful, flip-over tabletop that constitutes dining option one. The left sofa has a cabinet at its leading end, whose top serves as a TV location and has the required power and aerial feeds. While in this area, we can consider dining option two – a freestanding table that is stored in the wardrobe.

Ranks of high-level lockers march around the lounge, underpinned with a quartet of adjustable switched spotlamps. Softer lighting is presented either side of the Heki rooflight; this and the lounge's three windows make it airy. The russet patterned upholstery is bold, but not too busy and the lockers' subtle silver header and footer panels add definition. Open quarter shelves, though too high for night time essentials, increase usability. Lightly-patterned

# MMMEAD-TO-HEAD TEST

yellow gold curtains with faux nets add a touch of warmth to the trim scheme while underfoot, removable beige carpeting with contrasting tape binding adds a luxury.

Dining option three, the dinette, shares the lounge's appointments as regards its soft trim, lockers and two spotlamps. Beneath these stands the dinette itself, a Pullman unit complete with no fewer than four lap-and-diagonal seatbelts, each with a height-adjustable top mount. These travel seats are separated by the expected, wall-mounted table.

The Roller Team 600 also boasts a full dinette, complete with a similar table and four seatbelts, although those for the seats facing away from the engine are merely lap straps. Above, an open TV locker, with the relevant signal and power feeds, leads a brace of lockers, with depressingly tacky, plastic handles. Beneath, a switched fluorescent light illuminates the dinette, a task that a central, loop-shaped fluorescent light also performs for it and the kitchen. The TV locker stands proud of the storage lockers, meaning that even if a turntable were fitted, only forward-facing watchers could view a TV. The upholstery, in blue and grey stripes with added spots, looks tough enough but its big pattern visually robs the area of space.

Speaking of space, the tail lounge, though not compromised by cabinetry, stands around a large, squarish, sliding table. This can be clamped to the floor for travel, which is a good point. But sliding or not and despite its cut corner, it makes lounge entry and egress tricky.

At high level, a trio of doors in the same pale shade as all the woodwork, offers access to three, separate lockers, while at the sides, open, lipped shelves each with a supporting/ separating rib to the ceiling give additional storage space. This area is lit, none too impressively, by a single loop fluorescent light.

#### **COOK'S QUARTERS**

In the Roller Team 600, a small lounge yields a big kitchen and this linear unit is impressive. The fridge/freezer is easily big enough to cater for six and it is topped by a useful fiddlerailed shelf with a cabinet behind. Worktop, punctuated by a circular stainless steel sink, occupies the next slot forward. Underneath, in a sizeable cupboard, a Truma Combi does the heating and takes up a lot of usable space. Next up is a rank of cooking equipment, consisting of an ignition-less, three-burner Smev hob, above a neat, Smev oven/grill, with illumination and sparks. Beneath, a large cupboard houses a pull out cutlery drawer, itself above some usable pan space. Up top, there are two lockers.

The Sundance 630L also has a linear kitchen opposite its dinette. This starts, at the front, with a Stoves dual-fuel cooker. Three burners, with spark ignition, are cheek-by-jowl with an electric hotplate and a separate grill and oven complete the line-up. The cooker sits atop a pan drawer and is next to a narrow cupboard that has a pull-out drawer, a wire rack and dedicated slots for storing the drainer and chopping board. Atop this is a worktop, with a circular, brushed-finish stainless steel sink. Underneath, a cutlery drawer is located above a rather modest refrigerator.

The kitchen worktop is lit by a single fluorescent striplight attached to a pair of overhead lockers. Lighting is also provided by a pair of downlighters, next to the speakers in the new interior overcab moulding. A smaller Heki rooflight adds both natural light and ventilation to the kitchen/dinette area.

# SUNDANCE 630L

#### BELOW FROM THE TOP:

Washroom and wardrobe separate Sundance lounge from kitchen-diner.

Fore to aft, a study showing how pleasant an interior the Sundance 630L possesses.

The dinette has no less than four three-point belted travel seats.

Looking back on a comfortable lounge.

# **I LIKED**

- The base vehicle's abilities
- The innovations
- The conversion's appearance
- Six safe three-point travel seats
   The swing wall washroom
- The base vehicle's specification
- the sade vehicle's specification

# I WOULD HAVE LIKED

- A bigger refrigerator
   Night time corner shelves in the
- lounge

## I DISLIKED

The smaller water capacities



# **ON TEST:** ROLLER TEAM AUTO-ROLLER 600 AND SWIFT SUNDANCE 630L







Auto-Roller's overcab bed is big and comfy.

#### **BATHING SPACE**

The Sundance 630L's washroom is a good example of using space efficiently. Initially, it begs a question: how do you pack a swivel-bowl toilet, a basin, shower, mirrored cabinet and towel locker into a compact washroom? Answer: use a swinging wall. Unlatching a turnbuckle lets the basin wall swing aside to protect the WC, towels and towel locker from spray, while yielding a single drainer shower tray fed by the pullout tap that supplies the basin. A rigid screen completes the water-resistance. The good news about this arrangement is that it painlessly makes the washroom dual role, while permitting the warmth of wood for the towel locker and keeping hung towels and the loo roll dry. The ovoid basin is a good size, the downlighters illuminate one's image in the mirror, the cabinet space behind this is useful and the accessories are well placed.

The Roller Team 600's washroom is bigger and so can be more conventional. The ubiquitous Thetford WC shares half the space with white mouldings carrying an oval basin with a side shelf, with a corner cupboard and a fiddle panelled storage spot. Above is a twodoored locker, with fiddle-panelled cubbies.



The washroom excuses its intrusion by being enormous inside.

# MMM HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA - AUTO-ROLLER 600

#### PRICE

- From: £31,995 OTR
   As tested: £31,995 OTR
- As tested: £31,995 OTR
- BASICS (\*manufacturers figures)
- Berths: 6
   Three-point belted seats: 4 (including driver)
- Warranty: Three years base vehicle and conversion
- Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes (EN1646 ONLY)
- Construction: GRP-clad, sandwich construction overcab coachbuilt
- Length: 7.24m (23ft 9in)\*
- Width: 2.30m (7ft 6.5in)\*
- Height: 2.95 (9ft 8in)\*
- Wheelbase: 3.95m (12ft 11.5 in)
- **Rear overhang:** 2.25m (7ft 4.5in)
- Maximum authorised weight: 3850kg\* (Note: Check your licence before contemplating the purchase of a
- motorhome with a GVW over 3500kg)
  Payload: 700kg\* (after driver and 90 per cent fuel)

#### THE VEHICLE

- **Engine:** 2.4-litre turbo-diesel engine
- producing 140bhp
  Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox
- driving twin-wheel rear axle
  Brakes: Discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent. Rear: Rigid axle
- Features: ABS, power-assisted steering, cruise control, electrically-operated cab windows, remote central-locking, driver and passenger airbags, security sound system, four cup holders, swivel tray, door pockets

#### INSIDE

- Layout: Overcab bed. Nearside full dinette opposite full-height wardrobe and caravan door. Central offside kitchen opposite washroom. U-shaped rear lounge.
- Insulation: Floor 75mm, walls and roof, 30mm
- Interior height: 2.06m (6ft 9 in)

# **KITCHEN**

- Sink: Brushed finish circular stainless steel unit with monobloc mixer tap
- Cooker: Smev three-burner hob over mini oven with grill, illumination and spark ignition
- Fridge: Thetford (Roller Team badged) N150 fridge/freezer with SES (Smart Energy Selection). Capacity 149 litres

## WASHROOM

- **Toilet:** Thetford electric-flush, swivel-bowl cassette
- Basin: Vanity unit with mixer tap and storage above and below
- Shower: Separate enclosure with mixer/ flexible feed to riser-mounted showerhead, single drainer floor tray, nylon curtain

#### BEDS

- Overcab double

  Length: 2.16m (7ft 1in)
- Width: 1.68m (5ft 6in)
- Headroom: 680mm (2ft 5in)
- Dinette double
- Length: 1.85m (6ft 1in)
   Width: 1.25m (4ft 1in)
- Lounge double
- Length: 2.10m (6ft 10.5in)
- Width: 1.45m (4ft 9in)

#### EQUIPMENT

- Fresh water: Inboard. 130 litres (28.6 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung. 105 litres (23.1 gallons)
- Water heater: Truma Combi EH, mains/gas operation
- Space heater: Truma Combi EH blown-air, mains/gas operation
- Leisure battery: 85 amp hr
   Gas: Capacity one 15kg and one 7kg
- cylinder
- Lighting: Three loop-style fluorescent units; one in washroom, one in overcab, one in lounge. Two switched filament lights over kitchen and dinette
- Sockets: 230V: three, 12V: one

## **OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

Fitted to test vehicle	
Base vehicle: None	
Conversion: None	
Other options	
Base: None	
Conversion: None	

## E&OE

# 🗛 M 🖊 EAD-TO-HEAD TEST



Big cooker, little fridge - the kitchen proves you can't have everything.



Despite slightly restricted headroom the Sundance overcab bed is easy to use and neatly designed.

# MMM HEAD-TO-HEAD DATA – SUNDANCE 6301

#### PRICE

- From: £38.395 OTR
- As tested: £38,395 OTR

## BASICS (\*manufacturers figures)

- Berths: 6
- Three-point belted seats: 6 (including driver) Warranty: Three years base vehicle and
- conversion Badged as NCC EN1646 compliant: Yes
- Construction: Alloy-clad sandwich construction overcab coachbuilt, with moulded GRP overcab, moulded rear
- panels, alloy skirts

   Length: 7.34m (24ft 1in)
   Width: 2.24m (7ft 4in)\*
- **Height:** 3.05m (10ft 0in)
- Wheelbase: 4.04m (13ft 3in)
- Rear overhang: 2.39m (7ft 10in)
- Maximum authorised weight: 4005kg\* (Note: Check your licence before contemplating the purchase of a motorhome with a GVW over 3500kg)
- **Payload:** 690kg\* (after 75kg for driver plus 90 per cent fuel, water and gas)

#### THE VEHICLE

- Engine: 2.3-litre turbo-diesel producing 130bhp Transmission: Six-speed manual gearbox, front-wheel drive
- Brakes: Discs all round
- Suspension: Front: Independent.

Rear: rigid axle

Features: ABS, EBD, uprated rear springs, rear anti-roll bar, heavy duty rear extensions (for optional towbar), variable power steering, driver's airbag, electric cab windows, electric mirrors, remote central locking (cab), rolling code immobiliser, radio/CD/MP3 player, lockable laptop storage, adjustable steering wheel, internal headlight height adjustment, door pockets with bottle holders, height-adjustable seatbelt mounts

#### INSIDE

- Layout: Overcab bed. Offside dinette, opposite kitchen and caravan door, central offside washroom opposite wardrobe, rear lounge with inward-facing sofas and central chest of drawers
- Insulation: Floor 36mm, walls and roof 32mm Interior height: 1.96m (6ft 5in)

## **KITCHEN**

- Sink: Brushed-finish stainless steel unit with monobloc mixer tap, removable drainer, cutting board cover
- Cooker: Stoves, dual fuel cooker with one electric hotplate, three gas burners, separate oven and grill, electronic ignition

Fridge: Dometic RM7400 manual energy selection and push-button ignition. Capacity 96 litres

#### **WASHROOM**

- **Toilet:** Thetford electric-flush, swivel-bowl cassette
- Basin: Vanity unit with mirror above and monobloc mixer tap
- Shower: 'Swinging wall' moves basin aside to create showering area with single outlet tray and pull-out basin mixer tap.

#### BEDS

- Overcab double Length: 1.91 (6ft 3in)
   Width: 1.37 (4ft 6in) **Headroom:** 590mm (1ft 11) Dinette double Length: 1.88m (6ft 2in)
   Width: 1.23m (4ft 0.5in) Lounge double Length: 2.09m (6ft 10in)
   Width: 1.86m (6ft 1 in) Alternative lounge singles Length: Offside: 1.86m (6ft 1in). Nearside: 1.87m (6ft 1.5in)
- Width: Both: 680mm (2ft 3in)

#### EQUIPMENT

- Fresh water: Underslung, insulated, 90 litres(19.8 gallons)
- Waste water: Underslung, 68 litres (14.9 gallons) Water heater: Truma Ultrastore gas/mains
- operation Space heater: Truma Trumatic convector
- with blown-air, gas/mains operation Leisure battery: 110 amp hr
- Gas: Capacity two 7kg cylinders
- Lighting: Single switched fluorescent lamp in luton, two downlighters in overcab roof moulding, two switched spotlamps over dinette table, downlighter over entry door, two downlighters in washroom, two soft-light panels flanking rooflight and four switched spotlights in lounge
- Sockets: 230V: Two. 12V: Three

# **OPTIONAL EXTRAS**

- Fitted to test vehicle Base vehicle: None
- Conversion: None
- Other options

Base vehicle: Reversing camera with infrared and colour screen (£450), alloy wheels (£845) Conversion: Roof rack and ladder (£450), built-in microwave oven (£115), wrap-around lounge seating in lieu of chest of drawers (FOC)

E&OE

The trailing half of the washroom houses a spectacular shower. Roughly rectangular, this has a riser rail, carrying a showerhead fed from a mixer control. Somewhat archaically, the shower is closed by a curtain but has no fewer than eight, fiddle panelled storage bins and a single drainer tray. Lit by a single loop fluorescent unit, the washroom has a simple roof vent, with a flyscreen.

# **BED TIME**

The Roller Team 600's overcab bed is big and using it is simply a matter of unlatching a single, seatbelt-type fastener, swinging the beechsprung, alloy-framed base down and opening the folding mattress. Having clambered aboard, one finds a window at each end (with blind and flyscreen) and an overhead loop fluorescent light with a switch.

The next bed rearwards is in the dinette which, like all such berths, is made up of a selection of sections, some part of the dinette, some stored in the wardrobe. Simple, pullout supports facilitate bed making, as does the 'kneeler' table. Once the bed's assembled, the



The Swift's compact washroom features a clever shower-creating trick.

absence of cab curtains or blinds is explained by the presence of silvered insulation screens stored in the wardrobe.

More cushion juggling lies ahead of the tail bed sleepers. A simple unlocking movement lets the table drop and then it's just a matter of swapping cushions. The fact that there's just the single centre roof light is disappointing and there are no spotlights – an important omission.

Following the equivalent procedures with the Swift Sundance 630L reveals some welcome inclusions. The overcab bed's gas struts are rated at 50kg, which will prevent headaches occasioned by falling goods during travelling. An alloy frame borders the beech-sprung bed base. There's a single window at the left side and there's only one snag – watch the headroom!

The 630L's dinette bed is made up in a similar way to that in the Roller Team 600. Pull out extensions and a kneeler table facilitate assembly and infill cushions live in the wardrobe. Privacy is afforded by Remifront cab blinds as standard. There are four, switched spotlights to hand.

The tail bed surrounds the above-mentioned chest of drawers. Beneath the drawers, a pullout panel hides the bed support mechanism, a collection of laths joined by two longitudinal tapes. Having rigged this and turned backrests into bases, one is rewarded with a sizeable double, or two singles. The Heki above does



The lounge sits atop this generous through-locker.

the ventilating and there are four spotlights, plus the TV shelf in the corner.

#### **STORE ROOM**

The one aspect rarely lacking in coachbuilts is storage room and our two protagonists are no exception to this unwritten rule.

Starting at its tail, the Swift Sundance 630L has its five overhead lockers, its open corner shelves and the storage areas under the sofas are compromised only by the presence of a transformer/charger and 12-Volt fuse panel. There's more space in the cabinet under the TV shelf, which is itself shelved, although its half-width. In the washroom, the Swift has its towel locker, an adjacent open shelf and the mirrored cabinet while opposite, the wardrobe, with its fore-and-aft rail, is a good size. The adjacent entry door has a waste bin and a single, storage cubby.

In the kitchen/dinette are a total of five overhead lockers, as well as the storage space beneath the travel seats. This brings us to the overcab, which has, under the bed, a pair of moulded storage bins that may prove useful for bedding.

The storage within the Roller Team 600 is by no means modest, especially as it has a raised floor. This yields a large through-locker under the lounge. Again going forward from the tail, the 600 has its three high-level lockers in the lounge, plus its open side shelves. A huge wardrobe has a part-depth cupboard underneath. There are three more high-level lockers above the dinette and there's the space beneath the dinette's trailing bench.

The washroom offers a reasonable amount of storage area, what with its two cabinets and bottle locations. And further forward, there are four bins on the inside of the entry door.

It's of little use having all the space in the



world in a conversion if the payload is wanting. In this respect, both vehicles are quite respectably specified, with the Roller Team having a 700kg payload, against the Sundance's 690kg. Both can be exceeded unless care is taken, but the through-locker capacity suggests that the Roller Team would be the easier vehicle to overload, especially as regards its rear axle capacity.

#### **LIFE SUPPORT**

The Roller Team has a useful, 130-litre fresh water tank, situated under the dinette. The waste water tank is underslung and takes a commendable 65 litres. The Swift Sundance has a less usable 90-litre fresh water capacity in its underslung, insulated tank, while its similarly situated waste tank accepts only 68 litres.

When it comes to heating, the two vehicles are similarly specified. The Swift vehicle has a Trumatic convector heater with a Trumavent blown-air space heating system, and a Truma Ultrastore water heater. The Roller Team vehicle favours the same manufacturer's Combi unit, which uses LPG gas and electricity to heat both water and interior space.

Refrigeration capacity varies too, the Roller Team scoring with a massive 150-litre capacity, including its separate freezer. The Swift Sundance makes do with just 96 litres, in a single-doored refrigerator with freezer compartment. As regards leisure batteries, the Roller Team's is an 85 amp hr item whereas with a 100 amp hr battery, the Sundance will be happier for longer when unhooked.

#### CONCLUSION

Is it 'you pays your money' or 'caveat emptor'? It's certainly the former, as these two vehicles have both merits and demerits. The Roller Team 600 scores for its base vehicle's toughness, for its spacious washroom and wardrobe, and for having abundant storage space. Its fresh water capacity's impressive, as is the size of its fridge-freezer. On the downside, the woodwork is in an uninspired finish, the lounge is small, the washroom panelling feels distressingly lightweight and the interior lighting is inadequate; the small roof vent in front of the lounge doesn't belong in a 'van of this price. While its base vehicle's less certain behaviour in crosswinds and on corners can be accommodated, especially at so tempting a price, some aspects, at least in my view, would warrant immediate improvement.

# MMHEAD-TO-HEAD TEST

The Swift Sundance 630L also has pros and cons. Its fresh and waste water, and refrigerator, capacities are more modest. On the upside, it has vastly superior cooking facilities, the heating system's pretty good and the leisure battery is of a more sensible size. In addition, there are numerous detail improvements, including a GRP roof, a new internal overcab moulding, 'spaceframe' locker hardware and underbed storage. The Sundance 630L is extremely well behaved on the road, both dynamically and as regards usability. A few minor details mar it, but it looks and feels worth its additional £6400 cost.

In the final analysis, you do 'pay your money and take your choice.'  $\hfill \Box$ 



The new 'spaceframe' locker hardware is a Swift weight saver.

