

BMC NIFTY



## BMC's new 25-27 seat Nifty: well-built and well-priced

Competitive pricing puts Nifty in the value-for-money category and could see it established as a top seller in the 25-27 seat market

Above: The BMC Nifty;  
Opposite (clockwise from top): Nifty's 25-seat interior with leather upholstery; Large coolbox can be substituted for two more seats; Fair boot capacity; Wide entrance with powered door

The new BMC Nifty looks like it has the potential to gain some substantial sales at the top-end of the minibus market.

The Nifty is essentially a small coach which is based on a front-engined chassis and offers levels of passenger space and luggage capacity largely unachievable with Vario or Daily-based competitors.

BMC is currently offering Nifty as a 25-seater with a large coolbox positioned between the courier seat and the first pair of nearside passenger seats, or as a straight 27 seater. The seats are leather trimmed recliners

manufactured by Grammer - which are both attractive and comfortable.

The chassis is an in-house BMC product which features a Cummins ISBe four cylinder engine rated at 160bhp and currently meeting Euro 4+ emissions requirements. It is coupled to a ZF six-speed manual gearbox and comes with a multi-stage electromagnetic retarder as standard.

Other standard equipment includes air conditioning and a DVD player and monitor screen.

At just over 7.4m long, Nifty has quite a 'stubby' appearance and, as a

consequence, it lacks a really spacious boot. However, luggage capacity isn't compromised as there is substantial underfloor space in the luggage lockers. Internal luggage space is provided by parcel racks on either side of the saloon, which also incorporate individual passenger sets for lighting and ventilation.

The front entrance has a pneumatic plug-type door and is quite generous in width, although the entrance steps are quite steep - a natural consequence with most front-engined layouts. The courier seat folds neatly out of the way



and doesn't impede entry. The steps lead on to a sunken gangway which ensures more than adequate headroom for passengers moving along the aisle. At the rear, an emergency exit/continental door is positioned on the offside, just between the rear row of seats and the last pair of offside passenger seats. A safety rail had been positioned in front of the offside sides in the rear row to prevent passengers falling into the stepwell.

The light interior contains a mixture of grey shades, providing an airy feel to the saloon. Carpets are included in the specification although they weren't fitted at the time of this evaluation.

Sidewalls sport a mix of hard and soft trim and window pillar mouldings and sill cappings are finished a grey glass-fibre trim with a textured surface. Pleated curtains are also fitted.

The driver's position gives a good view and there is plenty of adjustment on the seat to cater for a wide range of sizes. The instrument binnacle is plainly visible and easy to read and most switches and controls fall to hand readily. While functional, the dash itself is best described as utilitarian

# First Drive

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and some attention to styling would certainly make it more aesthetically appealing.

Driving the Nifty is not too arduous a task. The steering feels very light, the clutch operation is also light and the gearchange perfectly acceptable. The foundation brakes were well balanced, giving quite good feedback and without needing a great deal of pressure on the pedal. The retarder can be switched on or off independently, but when active is generally quite adequate for most normal braking situations on the open road. Its control

**THE VEHICLE OFFERS LARGE COACH COMFORT LEVELS AND IN MOST INSTANCES, AN EXCELLENT VIEW**

stalk is mounted on the dash, which is slightly less convenient than one attached to the steering column, but not too difficult to cope with.

Under acceleration in the lower gears the noise level in the front is at its highest. It isn't too intrusive but it is very noticeable that once cruising speeds are arrived at it becomes much quieter. This is far less obvious further back in the saloon, away from the engine.

The light steering can cause the front to feel a little 'jittery' over uneven surfaces but, like with the noise level,



**Top:** Nifty is essentially a small coach on a front-engined chassis; **Top Right:** Emergency exit; **Above:** Functional dash; **Left:** Split rack maintains headroom over exit; **Below:** Side lockers.



it all seems to settle down as cruising speed is reached.

Handling and roadholding both seem to be highly acceptable. There is very little tendency for 'nodding' or much sign of body roll. Overall it seems quite a stable package.

From a passenger perspective, the vehicle offers large coach comfort levels and, in most instances, an excellent view. There is little interference with vision from window pillars and curtains and the only exception to this is where the offside rear seated passengers attempt to peer through the continental exit door.

The problem is the door height. It tops out just below eye level and there is a broad lintel above it with a small window over the top of that. It would be much better for the passenger if the door was made full height with single window on the same lines as the side windows. BMC has noted this and says it will look into modifying the design on future-build Nifty models.

While Nifty might lack the degree of refinement the market would expect from established European coachbuilders, this is one of the company's best attempts yet. It is pitched into a sector where there is not a great deal of choice and for £69,000 it seems like good value for money.

Its advantages are the coach-style, coachbuilt body which gives sufficient height and width for generous passenger space and comfort, plus a great deal of luggage space. The first of the early deliveries are sold and already entering service. More are currently in build and due to arrive in the UK shortly. ●

