

CLASSIC DRIVER

Meet the 21-year-old Landy lover who's carving her own mud-filled path to success

Lead
Documenting her love and occasional hate relationship with her 1985 Land Rover 90, University student Tatiana Reed has amassed over 150,000 loyal followers, as well as a lifetime of memories along the way. Here's how this love story came to be...



I must make a confession, I'm more of a Mercedes-Benz G Wagon kind of guy. Their quirky exposed rivets and shape, the rugged dependability and 'park it anywhere' presence are things few other cars possess. Don't get me wrong, I love an old Land Rover, but would immediately opt for the luxury and presence of an early Suffix Range Rover, a car which would undoubtedly cause more headaches than a few rounds with Mike Tyson. However, on this wet and blustery day deep in the Hampshire countryside, a piece of blue sky-shaded joy was about to introduce me to another world of Land Rover and lead me straight to the Classic Driver Market in search of one to call my own.



Tatiana, perhaps the proudest owner of any classic car I've ever met, bundled me into the rear bench seat of her 1985 Land Rover 90 affectionately known as 'Blue Tit', with photographer Tom Shaxson riding shotgun, his camera's image stabilisation working overtime. We immediately found thick, knee-deep unforgiving clay-like mud that would

hinder even the most capable of modern off-rovers, but the Land Rover was born for this. With every rattle, every water droplet hitting my shoulder, every puff of white smoke from under the bonnet, I noticed something – all three of us were giggling like hyenas at just how fun riding in this car really was. I immediately understood the appeal of these early Landys, and as we halted the 90 perched on a 30-degree incline, I was intrigued to find out more about where Tati’s love for the brand and cars in general first laid its foundations. “The answer to that is not one I can exactly put my finger on. Neither of my parents were into cars, my earliest memory of combustion engines was probably me sitting on my dad’s lap steering the lawnmower. My love for this car in particular stems from perhaps what it symbolises more than it being four wheels and an engine. After my parents separated when we were little, as is typically the case, it became a catalyst to growing up quite quickly. Both my sister and I have always been incredibly self-sufficient, which probably explains the stubbornness in refusing to take the Landy to a professional - a “How hard can it be?!” attitude can get you surprisingly far!”



It’s an attitude we all possess to an extent, but even after spending a few hours with Tati, I promptly learned how that attitude is put into practice, as some would say a vital part of Land Rover ownership is the stubbornness to fix it yourself before seeking help. “The Land Rover love is relatively new; I don’t remember Land Rovers being in my life until I was 18. The first time I drove one, I was told that you must stand on the clutch, and it wasn’t long until I was discovering the rest of the quirks and foibles that make Land Rovers so lovable.”



So, bitten by the Landy love bug, Tati began her search for the ideal companion, approaching the task with a healthy dose of care to spot the clunkers from the diamonds - sadly, so many of these early Land Rovers suffer from corrosion. Eventually, she stumbled upon this Stratos Blue 90 from 1985, complete with the 2.5-litre naturally aspirated petrol engine, highly regarded as the ideal motor for trundling around country lanes and off-roading, as well as comfortably cruising at 65mph, maybe with a little help from the wind.

“I picked her up in May of 2023 and two days and two break downs later, a friend and I were off to Europe for the summer of a lifetime. My slightly more cautious friend, who was accompanying me for the first leg, encouraged me to get breakdown cover on our way to the channel crossing, which needless to say came in handy just three days later!”



"Blue Tit the Landy had suffered anything from a rusty fuel tank, to cracked cylinder heads, entirely broken suspension, which has led to my toolbox being developed exponentially." Tati began to document her trials and tribulations on her Instagram profile @overintherover, which quickly amassed a loyal fanbase, all eager to see Tati's heroic confidence to right the Landy's occasional wrongs, adding a healthy amount of humour along the way. "I often feel a bit fraudulent - imposter syndrome is the technical term I suppose - as I don't have a background in cars so, I don't know that much now, although I'm desperately trying to learn. I have a wonderful, knowledgeable, kind, supportive group of friends around me who know far more about Land Rovers than I do, so without them, I would have been pitifully knocking on workshop doors a long time ago. I make a real effort to keep my Instagram as genuine to me as possible, which people seem to be enjoying!"



Clearly, it's a match made in heaven for Tati and Blue Tit, and one that has enabled her to wake up with a coffee in some of the world's finest vitas. "Apart from driving onto a lot of flatbed trailers, we have also driven the length of France, from Dover to Nice, then onto Turin, Zurich, Milan, Pisa, Florence, St Marino, we skirted past Venice, the breathtaking Dolomites, Austria, Lichtenstein, Andermatt, Basel, Luxembourg, Belgium and Germany, all with... relatively few hiccups!"

Many purchase vehicles or long to own vehicles such as this for the freedom you feel when exploring new-to-you landscapes. Leaving the stress and chaos of the everyday life behind to seek solace is a wonderful sensation, and one Tati simply can't get enough of. "When we were traveling around Europe, I purposely didn't upgrade my phone's data plan - I loved the peace and quiet. The knowledge that no one apart from my family knew exactly where I was in the world was a strangely and yet incredibly freeing feeling. Ironically, I don't really like my phone, so not being that contactable was heaven to me."



I'd come to learn the charm with an old Land Rover is in the inconsistencies. Sure, sometimes it's nice to be able to hop into a bottom-heating, double-glazed, leather-clad motorway muncher, but the thrill comes from the journey, not the destination itself. With every oil leak, every motorway break down, comes the thrill of the fix, the constant tinkering, and the education that comes along with it, something no modern car will ever be able to capture quite in the same way. "The joy the car brings to me is second to none. She has brought me, and hopefully will continue to bring me a lifetime of memories, adventure, learning and fun. I owe her the world!"

Keep track of Tatiana's journey with Blue Tit the Landy here.

Gallery

