

# CLASSIC DRIVER

## Meet the 19-year-old who doesn't give a fire truck about breaking down

### Lead

For this special Christmas Eve edition of The Classic Drivers, we caught up with 19-year-old automotive photographer Jamie Bufton to chat about his ultra-reliable daily: a 1961 Series 2 Land Rover, lovingly nicknamed Bernie!



**Jamie, thanks for taking the time to share your amazing Land Rover with us. You need to be seriously passionate to own a car like that, so how did your love of cars start?**

I can't remember exactly how it started, but I used to race RC cars with my dad when I was growing up and could name every car by their lights. I have always taken a huge liking to the 'boxier' cars, which usually means old cars. I think my love of cars stems from my fascination for all things mechanical; I used to attend a lot of airshows growing up, my dad's a very mechanically-minded guy and I have always been looking and watching what he was doing. Hence why I wanted a vehicle I can fix myself!



**We understand you were growing tired of how unreliable your Fiat Panda 100hp was, so you bought an old Land Rover. Can you walk us through your thought process?**

Well, there wasn't a lot of thought involved, truthfully. As it happened, I was in the market for a sensible daily driver to ferry me up and down the M40 for work as the Fiat was starting to show its age after nearly 30,000 miles with me. But I realised that was too boring, so I did what any sensible person would do, and bought a Land Rover from 1961.



A huge factor that made me realise I could own one of my dream cars at 19 was insurance. The sensible daily drivers that were supposed to be saving me money were going to cost upwards of 1,800 pounds every single year. However, I managed to insure my Land Rover for under 500 pounds, which is good for anyone, let alone me.



**So there is some method to the madness! Can you tell us a bit about your amazing Land Rover and its history? Considering it's decked-out as a fire truck it must have a fascinating back story...**

My Land Rover, Bernie, is a Series 2 from 1961. It's a long wheelbase Series Land Rover, so it's a 109, which became the 110 with the introduction of its younger sibling, the Defender. Bernie is a bit different to most Land Rovers you see on the roads, being an ex fire support truck from the Marconi factory, and that is as much as I know! I am forever searching old forums for more information on my specific truck, but I am yet to find much more about it, though I have found some pictures dated back to 1996 in which the truck is seen to be pretty rough, the paint is shabby and the wheels painted blue.

So it's apparent someone has done a bit of a restoration on it. There are other signs around the Land Rover of this, with the rust prone areas being in great condition, such as the bulkhead. But we believe it's a very original truck. Its past fire experiences don't just stop at the writing on the side. Inside the back of the Landy, at certain angles, you can see the remnants of equations and notes taken on the body panels about hose lengths and pressure. The original silver fire extinguisher is also still attached in the passenger foot well and is dated 1963!



**Who knows, maybe one of our readers might be able to tell you more about Bernie's past! How has the ownership experience been so far? Is it living up to the rather notorious reputation of old Land Rovers?**

I won't lie and say it's been easy. I picked up Bernie from a barn two hours north from me. It broke down on the test drive, it struggled to start, but I couldn't leave it. The drive back was probably the most eventful evening of my life, but seven breakdowns and over ten hours later we made it home. It then sat for a week on my driveway while I was busy working and I set a date with my dad to get it running nice, so I ordered a new fuel tank, new fuel lines, fuel filters and we stripped and rebuilt the carburettor with new



internals. That evening it was running lovely, but the following week I broke down every single day.

After everything I just said it may shock you to hear that I truly do not believe Land Rovers deserve their reputation for unreliability. Mine is 63 years old, it must be pretty good if its lasted that long! Yes they break, and they have some issues, but there is not much that you can't fix on the roadside as long as you have the necessary tools. At the end of the day, its a classic car, and I think its a testament to the build quality that people like me feel comfortable daily driving such a vehicle.



**What's the public reaction to your Land Rover - we imagine it must be a crowd favourite at events?**

Everyone loves a Land Rover, but make it ex-commercial and everyone seems to love it even more. I get a lot of waves, and a good percentage of people look at it when I drive by. It's not uncommon to get a thumbs up on the motorway either. I went to a Land Rovers of London meet for Christmas a couple weeks ago and was pleasantly surprised with the amount of attention the truck got. Being a Series 2 in a world full of Defenders already brings a lot of attention as I would argue its much prettier. I've had a lot of people call me mad for daily driving it, but it makes me smile.



**That's all that really matters! However, nobody buys a car like this unless they have some adventures in mind. What are your future plans with Bernie?**

Absolutely, Bernie and I will be sharing many a mile together in the future. My work often takes me overseas and the goal is to be able to drive my trusty Land Rover to those destinations. Le Mans Classic is coming up, and the goal is to go in Bernie.

Aside from work, I want to kit out the back of my truck with some storage, a sofa and some kitchen space, with a roof tent on top, to make what I would call the coolest classic travelling vehicle. I will be documenting the process, along with the journeys that we take together. I would eventually like to be able to take this Land Rover to places as far as the Artic Circle, but I will need to spend a lot of time with it beforehand, as being able to fix the vehicle on my own is a huge factor in my enjoyment of old Land Rovers. For now I'm just going to enjoy it, I'm young and lucky to be in the position to own a vehicle like this.





**After so many breakdowns, has your love of your Land Rover diminished at all? What is it that makes people fall in love with these characterful old machines?**

No. I love this Landy so much! Seeing it parked on the street makes me smile, driving it to and from my photoshoots is just the best. I get so much happiness from just experiencing classic cars, and to now own one, I love it. There are times when some comfier seats, lighter steering and cruise control might be nice, but its a sacrifice I'm willing to make for looking this cool.

Driving a Land Rover like this is a whole new experience to many people. There are no seatbelts, no synchromesh, no power steering and it's a very agricultural experience - you're quite literally sat with some springs between you and the fuel tank. But to me, that is what classic car ownership is all about, enjoying these quirks.



**Lastly, please tell us your favourite driving song for those moments when everything is working as it should.**

This is the hardest question of all, but I think it would need to be Empire State of Mind by Jay Z and Alicia Keys. One of my favourite all time songs. Doesn't exactly suit the vibe of the Land Rover, but I don't think I am the usual Series 2 owner.

*Photos by Jamie Bufton @jamiebuftonphoto*

**Gallery**

































































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