

CLASSIC DRIVER

Is the Toyota Land Cruiser the best 'Landie'?

Lead

In Australia and Africa, those who speak of the 'Landie' are not referring to the all-conquering British icon, but rather the Toyota Land Cruiser. Recent years have seen the early FJ40 go from reliable workhorse to collector's item...

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A wide variety of Toyota FJ40s are to be auctioned by Barrett-Jackson in Scottsdale, but RM Auctions, Bonhams and Gooding & Company have also recognised the potential of early Land Cruisers - with each offering a prime example in their Arizona sales, all in restored states and with estimates ranging from 35,000 to 85,000 USD.

Between the 1950s and 1980s, the FJ was employed as an inexpensive yet reliable workhorse throughout Africa, Australia and the United States. During this period, an equivalent Land Rover Defender cost around twice as much in South Africa. As a result, thousands were built but, due to their nature, a good example can be difficult to source. Unlike the Defender, the FJ40 had a steel body - and even though later models were given an aluminium tray for the underfloor area, uncared-for bodies are prone to rust.

All-terrain cruiser



In the States, the FJ40 has had a loyal fanbase for some time. However, with a technically solid drivetrain, including an enjoyable six-cylinder petrol engine, many were used until the body collapsed into dust. Luckily, with the basic design kept the same for decades, many parts were interchangeable with newer models and some owners used the opportunity to get creative. Production continued in some countries until the 1990s, so the parts supply is comparatively good. Only in recent times, however, have people begun to spend tens of thousands of dollars on complete frame-off restorations with an emphasis on originality. Still, when looking at the three prime specimens being auctioned this week, you can see why many think it's worth the effort.



Homage to a hero: Toyota FJ Cruiser

In 2003, the FJ's story continued when a toy-like design study shown at the Detroit Motor Show proved so popular that Toyota was almost forced to put it into production. To date, with more than 200,000 of the resulting FJ Cruisers sold, retirement beckons once again with a final 'Ultimate Edition' going on sale in the States next month, limited to 2,500 examples.



Photos: Toyota, RM Auctions, Bonhams, Gooding & Co.

Gallery

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