

A Range Rover restomod on the mean streets of Brooklyn

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It's no secret we love Land Rovers and Range Rovers at Classic Driver. But what we love even more is when someone applies their personality to a build. Like Darren from Stray Dog Classics. After finding his car on Instagram, we gave him a call.



Darren, define Stray Dog Classics?

For me a car is like a piece of clothing that should make a statement without being too garish. Our cars are meant to be driven, our toys our meant to be played with, our vintage vinyl should be listened to etc, we are lovers of analogue. There are no garage queens at Stray Dog! I guess that's our vibe.

Well, congratulations on the build, tell us about this car?

It's a late 1994 Range Rover Classic 300TDI "Soft Dash" sourced from Spain. We went through the car, totally refurbishing it. With the paint we wanted something period, but different so we picked out a 1974 Jaguar colour that we liked. On the exterior we added new back-dated, bobbed bumpers, new wheels and a skid plate. Inside there's a new leather interior, carpets, and headliner. We also couldn't resist putting in a brand-new sound system with CarPlay and a rear camera. We also attended to the suspension and undercoating. The engine is diesel with a stick shift 5 speed. The specification is simple, no gadgets that can fail like the UK and US cars are so prone to and I chose a diesel because they just run forever. I use this as daily driver. The build took about 6 months in total, but the hardest part was sourcing a good enough low mileage car as our start point.



Why a Range Rover Classic, when did they first catch your eye?

It all started in 1987, I was just 13 years old and they just arrived in the USA, I really loved them. And now I am in my '40s there is a definite nostalgia about that original boxy shape. I spent a semester of college in 1995 in London just when the P38 was coming out and remember thinking how modern it looked compared to the Range Rover Classic. But the Classic was so much nicer in my opinion, it's so simple and elegant without being ostentatious. And since all modern SUVs basically look the same it really stands out. People who "get it" will give me an enthusiastic thumbs up or smile and wave when I drive around New York, I love that.

Have you been off-road in it?

As a city dweller living in Brooklyn, NY I haven't had a chance to take it properly off road other than a couple of excursions to the beach in Montauk and Amagansett up Long Island. It was super capable and fun to drive, I definitely want to do more of that when I can.



Ok, so in these locked-down times, where do you dream of driving it?

The Dakar rally would be pretty sweet - but I don't think I have the stomach for it at the speeds the racers go. Years ago, I drove a dune buggy in the massive dunes at Pismo Beach in California, I think it would be fun to drive the Classic from northern California all the way down to Pismo Beach and hit those dunes again!

What are your plans now this car is finished?

We've had an amazing reaction to the car already and we plan on making five more to start with. They will all have a similar "back-dated, '70s on steroids" vibe to them and be painted in period appropriate colours.

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