

SUPER ROVER-Birth Of A Champion

Story and Photos by Francis Watson

Some of you recently encountered Super Rover at the ABFM in Portland. Amidst the lovely British weather conditions, the preliminary testing as for it being water-proof was indeed positive!

Super Rover is a long-time dream of mine. The project became an exercise in applying my Land Rover experience and passion, many years of aviation expertise as for building/flying airplanes, designing avionics, and integrating state of the art computer systems into aircrafts.

With Super Rover I wanted to build something completely different and I wanted a hi-tech approach to the well-known Land Rover off-road capabilities. Also, I didn't want to build just an off-road vehicle – I wanted it to be my personal version of an expedition vehicle. Take it from somebody who has lived in the driest place on earth, driven some of the highest and most dangerous trails in the world and spent time in the Amazon. My dream was to have an extremely capable vehicle, but yet do it with style!



Project Super Rover was completed in only 8 months. The starting point was a 2001 Discovery 2 and here's the list of my modifications:

- 2004 head lamps mod
- 5.2 liter high performance engine
- High compression cylinder heads
- Borla High Performance stainless steel exhaust
- Re-mapped engine software
- High flow fuel injectors
- Stronger front and rear driveshaft
- Underbody "armor"
- 3½ inch suspension lift
- Old Man Emu shocks
- BF Goodrich KM2 285/75/16 tires
- Off-set 16 inch steel wheels
- ACE (Active Cornering Enhancement) computer control hydraulic system that allows the car to lean into turns, greatly enhancing highway driving, yet disconnecting the sway bars when in low gear and by command (another mod)
- ABS disconnect mod (helps in rocky terrain crossing)
- ARB bumper
- 9000 lbs winch with synthetic rope
- 6 PIAA lights
- 2 upper amber flood lights
- 2 upper driving lights
- 2 lower Hi/Low high intensity lights
- Front and Rear locking differentials
- Onboard full duty air compressor
- Onboard air tank
- 150 amp alternator
- Total of 3 Batteries
- 1200 cca Optima and 2 smaller Odyssey
- Computerized multiple battery controller with provision for solar charging
- 4 solar panels
- Additional 12v outlets for extra accessories
- Auxiliary fuse box

Rear mounted 12v jumper posts (allows jump start vehicles from the rear of the car)

Onboard Car-PC featuring:

- 32 gig Solid State harddrive
- 500 gig Auxiliary harddrive
- Low power consumption industrial embedded motherboard (for reliability)
- Windows 7 OS
- Complete US topographic software
- 3D Street navigation software
- Engine Self Diagnosis System
- 7 Inch 1000 nits Transflective touch screen monitor
- Aviation style bulkhead GPS WAAS enable HUD (Heads Up Display) projecting vehicle speed and RPM to a semi-transparent screen directly in front of the drivers field of view. HUD has 5 dimming settings for day or night driving

iPod-PC and radio interconnectivity

Cobra CB radio transmitting from an 8 feet tuned antenna

Still a lot more to come so stay tuned!



PS: Several people have asked about the whereabouts of the Defender 110 Td5 driving German couple Stefan and Silke who were featured one year ago in this magazine. They are currently in Ecuador. They are 16 months into their 24 month long driving expedition from Canada to South America.

Where are Stefan, Silke & Fender?
<http://www.pdxrovers.com/adventure.html>

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