



Master Taj

The Land Rover brand was revived by the takeover by Indian car manufacturer Tata. The fabulous new baby Range Rover Evoque promises to become a huge success. *Top Billing* motoring editor Dieter Losskarn experienced it around Liverpool

MOTURING EDITOR **DIETER LOSSKARN** PHOTOS **DIETER LOSSKARN AND SUPPLIED**

RANGER ROVER INVENTED THE LUXURIOUS FOUR-WHEEL DRIVEN CAR four decades ago, which was when the first one rolled off its assembly line. Now, in time for the 40th anniversary, they are reinventing the segment. The Evoque, slotting in behind its bigger brothers Vogue and Sport, is about a tonne lighter, smaller (43cm shorter and 18cm lower), more economical, half as expensive... and so much hipper.

Inspired by the concept car LRX (which was presented at the Geneva Motor Show in 2008), it is styled aggressively and muscular, without being too masculine (if this makes any sense) – it's one of the few cars where males and females look equally cool inside. The roofline is sloping, the roof itself floating and the wheel arches are wide. The falling roofline shrinks the rear window to an arrow slit. That's where the rear-view camera proves to be quite handy. The baby Range comes in a five-door mum's taxi version or as an even sleeker three-door coupé, with a 3cm lower roof. Both are based on the civil Freelander 2 platform.

The cool exterior matches the inside. Instead of a musty British gentleman's club you'll find a hip, chill-out lounge with brightly coloured leathers. This lifestylish Zeitgeist vehicle is definitely de-dusting the whole brand image. A bit like the Mini, where you also have endless possibilities to create a look that suits you best. One hip colour throughout, or a differently sprayed roof, a chromed or plain rear bumper – or an interior, that matches your favourite lipstick.

Enough theory... how does the Evoque perform on and off the road? For the launch, Land Rover had worked out a fantastic route through northern Wales. A combination of tiny, winding country roads and muddy farm tracks. With the firm and direct steering and the adaptive chassis, the vehicle performs like a sports car. It is hard but it's never uncomfortable, enabling superb road-holding.

Buyers will have a choice between two engines, a 2.0-litre petrol and a 2.2-litre diesel. I couldn't even tell which one I preferred. The petrol one is stronger and sounds better, but the diesel makes up for it in torque and fuel efficiency.

And, luckily, the baby is still a Range Rover – through and through, combining sheer luxury with amazing off-road abilities. If you want to take it out of shopping mall parking, lots you can. The seating position is, despite the smaller size, still commanding, high up in traffic. And it is more than capable of doing anything its brothers Vogue and Sport can do – whose off-road abilities are legendary. Just select the setting of whatever surface you're driving on - mud, grass, sand - with the electronic terrain response control, engage hill descent and off-road you go. Even deep, slippery ruts don't bother the supposed city slicker at all.

The next morning Land Rover had a rather unique surprise for the Evoque drivers up their sleeve: we went underground into the old disused Edgeway railway tunnel from 1830, directly underneath the city. In fact, the illuminated sat-nav system showed the Liverpool street grid above, while we crawled through the dark, waterfilled subterranean pipe. The final leg of the trip was on the water. In a canal in Liverpool's Duke Dock, where a submerged pontoon bridge proved the wading abilities of the Evoque.

After experiencing this perfect allrounder, a first in the history of Land Rover comes as no surprise - at the time of going to press there were more than 20 000 confirmed Evoque pre-orders worldwide, with some 600 of them in South Africa, where the car is going to be sold from November. This shows once again that you have to be daring to be successful.



RANGE ROVER EVOQUE

Engine 2.2-litre diesel / 2.0-litre petrol

Power 188/238hp

Price from R582 995 (5-door) and from R592 995 (3-door)
landrover.co.za

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Grand Style

With the looks of its bigger, all-wheel driven brother Grand Cherokee, the Compass (Jeep's first-ever 4x2 offering in SA) will thrive in the market

MOTORING EDITOR **DIETER LOSSKARN** PHOTOS **DIETER LOSSKARN AND SUPPLIED**

AT FIRST GLANCE IT LOOKS LIKE THE BIGGER, much more expensive Grand Cherokee. With the Compass facelift, Jeep successfully pimped a previously slightly bland vehicle. As with all Jeep models, the Compass comes completely equipped. Quote: 'Jeep doesn't do option lists.' Well, the great sunroof must then be the only exception!

For the first time, Jeep offers a two-wheel drive car in its hardcore 4x4 line-up... but the Compass is still good for dirt roads or untarred mountain passes. The Jeep brand also has the same credibility as another American icon – Harley-Davidson. With the purchase price you're paying for the lifestyle – the vehicle you get for free!

Chrysler South Africa offers only one engine, a 2.0-litre petrol with 156hp and an average consumption of 7.6-litres/100km. So, getting rid of two-driven wheels makes quite a difference, especially if the car is used predominantly in urban areas (like most SUVs!).

In terms of driver aids, the Compass offers ABS brakes, ESC (electronic stability control) and the practical hill start assist.

At R269 990, I have no doubt that this Jeep will do well in South Africa.

JEEP COMPASS

Engine 2.0-litre, petrol

Power 156hp

Price from R269 990

jeep.co.za



Pocket Rocket

Lots of driving fun in a small package from Renault's Clio in its RS outfit

MOTORING EDITOR **DIETER LOSSKARN** PHOTOS **DIETER LOSSKARN AND SUPPLIED**

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT FEELING LIKE ONE OF THOSE CRAZY FRENCH rally drivers with the unpronounceable names when you're go-karting up and down the Franschoek Pass in one of those hot Clios. Proving that it doesn't have to cost you an arm and a leg to get fast and furious in a car. Slide into the narrow sport leather seat, push the start button in the cockpit and you're greeted with an eager, throaty roar. The steering is very direct, the gear ratios racy and the throttle response instant.

Unfortunately, the Gordini's cup chassis has a murderously hard suspension and very uncomfortable seats, resulting in a rather bumpy ride. In Franschoek, where the Clio had the opportunity to breathe in some baguette-impregnated air, its Gordini look was appreciated a lot, while its driver tried to recuperate his spine by sitting down and devouring a crêpe and café au lait.

So, in conclusion, forget the better looks of the Gordini and go for the R20 000 cheaper 'normal' RS – same driving abilities but more comfort (albeit less dramatic styling).

RENAULT CLIO RS/GORDINI

Engine 2.0-litre, petrol

Power 201hp

Top speed 224km/h

Price R259 900 / R279 900

renault.co.za