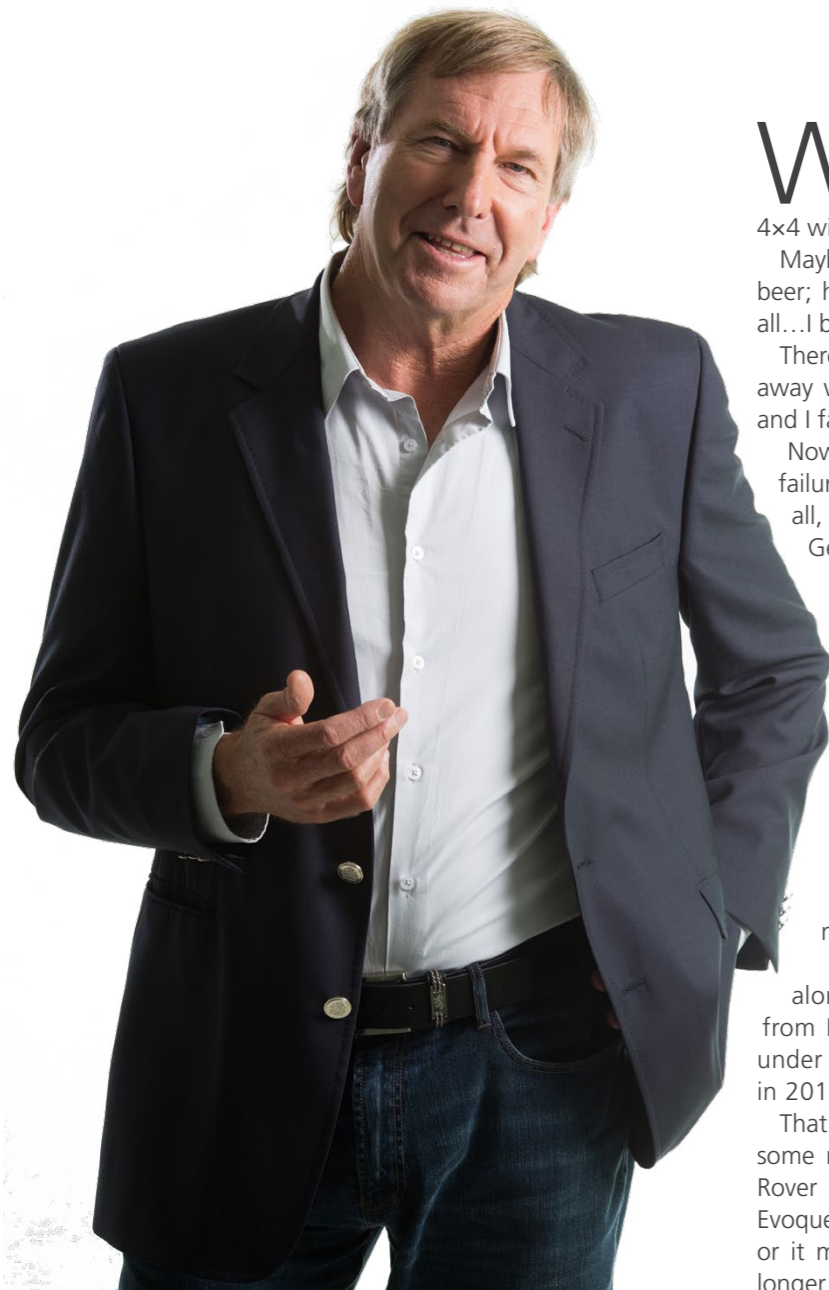


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WATTS

BAKKIE BRIGADE



When the Bakkie Brigade genes were handed out, I must have been right at the back of the queue. Somehow, I cannot get behind the wheel of any 4x4 without the feeling that I am faking it.

Maybe it is because I do not have a favourite brand of beer; have not worn khaki since army days, and worst of all...I braai on gas.

There was at least the possibility that I could, at least, get away with a MercedesBenz XClass double cab. But, Merc and I failed on that one.

Now the Brits would have a complete sense of humour failure if you called the original Land Rover a bakkie. After all, it was granted a Royal Warrant in 1951 by King George VI.

More than two million Land Rover Series and Defender models have traversed the roughest terrain, been embattled in the cruellest wars, and been driven by international celebrities from Paul McCartney to David Beckham.

The last of the classic off-roaders, loved by Queen Elizabeth II and starring in many Hollywood blockbusters, rolled off the Solihull production line on 29 January 2016.

But that is all history and over the decades Rover has been through more separations, divorces, and marriages than the average soapie.

Let us just say in the latest episodes Land Rover, along with Jaguar Cars, was bought by Tata Motors from Ford in 2008. The two British brands were joined under Tata Motors to become Jaguar Land Rover Limited in 2013.

That complicated series of relationships has produced some rather attractive offspring. From the original Range Rover in 1970 to the Discovery, Freelander, Velar, and Evoque with Victoria Beckham throwing her ten cents in – or it may have been the other way around. Certainly no longer bakkies and not all with 4x4 capability.



Enter the 2021 Defender 110 – already wearing the World Car Design of the Year award and offering an XDynamic option to really make a style statement, this is an off-roader that I immediately had a DNA bond with. Gas braai and all.

First of all, how do you combine rugged and elegant looks into one vehicle? Well the ponytails have retained the unyielding upright stance and minimal overhangs front and rear, but subtle curves and some startling trim give the new Defender an entirely modern era look.

And that carries all the way through to the way it drives – not like an SUV on steroids, but smooth acceleration from the sixcylinder 300D engine coupled with an eight speed 'box takes you to the ton in 7.0 seconds with claimed consumption of 8 l/100 km on the open road.

If you are going to head for the hills, you have the confidence that this is not a luxury show pony. It is the old Defender capability (and more) wrapped up in high-tech push-button terrain handling with powertrains to match.

Steering is optional. Well that is not entirely a cynical comment, Land Rover is working on a remote control system to allow for low speed driving from outside the vehicle. You do not want to spill your Earl Grey tea after all!

For now, you remain in complete command behind the four-spoked steering wheel with the essential controls at your fingertips along with bold and stark instrumentation and an understated central infotainment screen.

The Defender X Ingenium (base price R1 665 000) leaves the showroom with more standard features than you shake a memory stick at. From panoramic sliding roof, to Blind Spot Assist, to 3D surround camera.

But, it is the intricate devices that you do not see that help you to look like Stéphane Peterhansel when you dare to leave the tarmac.

The new-age gizmos like All Terrain Progress Control (ATPC), Roll Stability Control (RSC), and Hill Descent Control (HDC) that are part of modern outdoor adventure for dummies ...as well as the professionals.

Sure it was an adventure of its own driving a Land Rover in the seventies, battling through the gear changes, getting

shaken to the core through rocky passes, and having to dig your way out of some muddy patches.

For me the new Defender 110 is off-roading redefined and, at last, I feel like I belong to the tribe.

The bad news is that some of my more brawny friends and motoring colleagues say it is too high tech. Fat chance of them being invited to the next braai.

