



Story and Pictures: Patrick Cruywagen

# TRAVEL IN STYLE

This is how important  
and self-indulgent folk  
travelled in the 1990s

Story: Patrick Cruywagen Pictures: Alisdair Cusick





**O**n June 24, 2000, boxer Mike Tyson fought fellow American Lou Savarese at Hampden Park in Scotland. Why in Scotland? A convicted rapist, with a nasty habit of biting his opponents, everyone was a little nervous about hosting him in their country. Not the Scots though, they welcomed the former heavyweight champion of the world. The fight was a farce and lasted less than a minute. Iron Mike, as his fans liked to call him, floored Lou with his first punch of the bout.

Why am I telling you all this useless boxing information in a Land Rover magazine? Well for the duration of his stay in Scotland, Mike travelled in style. Local newspapers reported that the luxury Range Rover stretch limousine that he was being ferried about in, had been built six years prior, at the cost of £139,000. The Sultan of Brunei had commissioned its build for his younger brother, Prince Jefri, nicknamed the Playboy Prince. Incredibly Jefri is alleged to have spent more money than anybody else on earth. At one stage he had a fleet of over 2000 luxury cars, eight private planes and a helicopter. I digress.

According to Glasgow garage owner Gerry Ferguson, who acted as Mike's chauffeur, the boxer enjoyed his time in the Range Rover limo. "Tyson loved the car and the fact that it was previously owned by a Muslim." Not long after the fight, Waterside Classics of Glasgow sold the limo to Tom Shanks from Stonehaven for £40,160. Then in 2007 a Danish car collector purchased it. At the time it had only done 14,833 miles and when I got to drive it eight years later, it had only done 15,569 miles. So it was still virtually brand new. Now this rather unique-looking Range Rover is back in Britain and for sale again. This time by the Peterborough-based Classic Range Rover experts Bishop's Heritage. But before that happens *LRM* were given the opportunity to take it for a spin and experience what it feels like to be a VIP for a day.

First though, we need to take a look at the specifics of the body and interior conversion of this 1994 Range Rover Vogue 4.2 LSE. According to my sources it took nine months to complete the build and it was done by Townley 4x4, the Queen's coachbuilders of choice. So you can



imagine that they used only the finest materials available at the time. To make this limo, the original Range Rover was stretched by 40 inches by adding two additional centre fixed Range Rover doors. The chassis had to be strengthened to cope with the extra length. They then fitted all-new drive and propshafts, plus a new exhaust system. To make sure tall passengers have enough head room, the roof was raised by eight inches from the B post to the rear of the vehicle, just like in a Discovery – only grander, of course. The new centre roof frame had to be designed so that it could safely host the laminated sunroof. The problem with this raised roof is that suddenly your limo looks a bit like a hearse, which is why we had to change the venue for our photo shoot. Initially we were going to use the Thorpe Hall Hospice, but we did not want to frighten the residents with our coffin car.

Some of the other external features that deserve a mention are the new wheels and tyres, one-piece opening tailgate and Carbon Kevlar wheel arch extensions. To keep the paparazzi and peasants at bay all the windows were darkened.

To truly appreciate a limo you have to get in the back and be driven around in it. Then you get to experience firsthand the bits that have been added in an effort to make its occupants feel special. When you climb in, it's as



## BISHOP'S HERITAGE

Thanks to Chris Bishop from Bishop's Heritage for the loan of the limo for a day. These guys have been rebuilding Classic Range Rovers for over 25 years and their knowledge of these much-loved models is second to none. The 1994 Range Rover Vogue LSE limousine featured in this article is currently for sale and can be viewed on their website [www.bishopsheritage.co.uk](http://www.bishopsheritage.co.uk) or else just call them on 01733 242888.

Oxblood red leather piped in black with lashings of Burr Walnut wood... not to everyone's taste, but befitting its nature



if a time machine has dropped you off in the 1990s. While the Range Rover is Rolls-Royce Masons Black, the vehicle colour of choice for important people, the interior is all Oxblood red hide piped in black. The interior of the limo is definitely fit for a Playboy Prince. Two electric forward-facing Range Rover seats stand side by side in the back of the vehicle. This is where the number one sits while a bodyguard or less important person would have to sit on the smaller static seat positioned just behind the driver. Chris jumped in behind the steering wheel while I took up the VIP position. The interior and seats have been trimmed in only the finest quality Connolly leather using flawless hides. If you're a simple old guy like me then red seats do take some getting used to. When you climb into the back your shoes almost disappear in the thick black Wilton carpets; they're so thick they remind me of a sheep with a thick woolly coat.

I quickly found the little black button that opens and closes the glass that separates the driver from the passengers; it was framed in Burr Walnut wood. I had to raise and lower it a few times, just like they do in the movies. Now I was a real VIP. Once bored of the separating glass and looking outside, there is a pretty decent entertainment set-up to keep you busy. The only problem is that it still plays videos. I think that I still might have the Michael Jackson's Thriller on VHS, but that is about the sum total of my video collection. There are two eight -inch TV monitors with infrared remote controls, but I have to say that I have seen modern mobile phones with bigger screens. Still they were useful if you needed to catch up with the latest news. I suppose one has to remember that in the 90s this was cutting-edge tech. Despite the fact that the interior is a little dated by





“The build was done by Townley 4x4 – the Queen's coachbuilders of choice”



Patrick rides VIP-style, listening through one of the headphones that are supplied for passengers, as well as a VHS player!

modern standards, it has not seen too much action so it is in near-perfect condition. The day of our shoot was a warm one by UK standards, so I was able to utilise the rear air-conditioning system without bothering Chris as he had to focus on his driving and keeping the important passengers safe.

It was a little crazy to think that 20 years ago this took well over £135,000 to build. In modern money this would equate to about £250,000. When will we have our first £500,000 or £1,000,000 Range Rover?

After spending an hour or so being driven around I was given a turn behind the wheel while Chris hopped in the back. This was definitely the longest Land Rover I have ever driven, but certainly not the heaviest. Chris did not know the weight of the limo, but I was certain that it was less than a 3.5 tonne armoured Range Rover I once drove.

The first thing you notice when driving something this big and heavy is the braking. When you brake sharply it feels as if the limo might slam into the back of your head. You quickly learn that you need to drive it slower than a regular Range Rover and with the necessary caution.

It did wallow like a boat in long corners, but the more I drove it the smoother it seemed to feel. In fact, considering its size and weight, it drove rather well. You just have to take care when turning, stopping and making a U-turn.

As for the rest, it is no different to a regular Range Rover, just longer, heavier and with an interior fit for a king. Despite my new found limo driving confidence I would much rather be sitting in the back, drinking a cold beer than be behind the wheel while trying to negotiate the M25 on a Friday afternoon.

Later in the day, Chris let me borrow it to take the wife on a VIP experience drive. She fell in love with it and I was a little sad when it was time to give the keys back. The limo was one of the more interesting Land Rovers I've ever driven. It might have zero off-road capability, but it was good to experience how the other half used to live. Now it was time to hop into my £3000 Discovery 2 and head back to the office.



## ORTON HALL HOTEL

Thanks to the Orton Hall Hotel in Peterborough for the use of their hotel grounds for the photoshoot. For more details on this impressive Best Western hotel see [www.bestwestern.co.uk](http://www.bestwestern.co.uk) or call 08445 767676.