

*...a natural continuation of Peter Kenworthy's
numerous Monteverdi Matters articles
featured in Range Rover Registers newsletters
in the first half of the nineties.*



All about Range Rover Monteverdi

THE VOID

The Range Rover Monteverdi is often referred to as the first four door Range Rover. It wasn't. Land Rover, or the Rover Company as it was called those days had experienced with a four door prototype as early as 1972, the YVC905K.

It didn't make it into production however. Range Rovers sold like hot cake and no one would know how long that would go. It was best to concentrate on what was available. Little did they know that the car was going to sell just as good twenty five years later.

The vacuum this market gap had however created a plethora of conversion companies providing anything under the sun on the Range Rover platform. Regular four door models among them. One of the conversions companies were FLM Panelcraft, which were officially approved by the Rover Company. The playfulness of the long wheelbase Land Rover Series 1 station wagon springs to mind with this one. Doors were made of literally cut off parts of the original doors, inside and out. Land Rover wasn't too pleased, but they sold in spades; especially to the Middle East. They are incredible rare these days, so if you find one; buy it.

The FLM Panelcraft conversion was fairly basic, there were plenty of other companies that pulled out the big boat – most can be viewed on this excellent website: www.range-rover-classic.com

Common for them all however were a rather high pricetag, and no service backup, at least not from the Rover companies. Henceforth, the regularly consumer market were not covered.

The Range Rover Monteverdi filled this gap.

That too was more expensive, but not at all in the range of the other conversions. Add that it was sold via a Land Rover dealer, with a full factory guarantee and service back-up, and magic was born.

ENTER A SWISS RACING DRIVER

Peter Monteverdi was among the most enigmatic figures in the seventies European sport-car scene, having put his racing years behind him now concentrating on his own range of sports cars, among them classics like the 375 High Speed and the famous Hai. It is said that the place to be seen at the annual Geneva Motor Show, was the Monteverdi stand.

It was on this stand in March 1980 the Range Rover Monteverdi was competing for the limelight against, among others, a new Audi called Quattro.

The origins of the car are hazy.

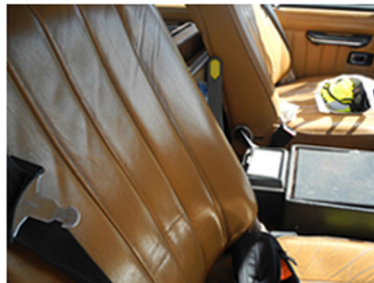
1976 stand out as a date when an arrangement was agreed. The prototype however didn't materialize before two years later - the one featured on the original Swiss brochure. The directors at Land Rover, clearly remembering what they had seen six years earlier gave it the thumbs up. In 1978 the first Land Rover revised development was collected from Monteverdi for assessment at Land Rover in Solihul. The first batch was ready in the months after the Geneva show.

Haziness blurs also production numbers. Automotive literature span all from 50 to 350 units, some even indicate 250 units a year. The number 167 was listed on a Swiss pdf listed on the internet in 2011, and this seems a plausible number, not too far from the numbers listed from Land Rover in England. For practicality reasons were many cars dispatched straight from Monteverdi.



Given the number of units planned, the residential area around the Monteverdi factory in Binningen in Basle would be industrialized, so the production were outsourced to Carozzeria Fissore in Savigliano in Italy. The liaison with the Fissore Works and Monteverdi had been steadily growing throughout the seventies, spanning a wide range of vehicles. The IH Scout based Sahara and Safari are among the most famous.

Land Rover supplied air conditioned two door Alpine White Range Rovers along with an extra set of doors. The body structure was basically unbolted and re-engineered. The Range Rover doors were reworked and installed. The interior was redone in high quality materials and a custom range of paint colours were applied. The build process is well described in James Taylor's book "The Original Range Rover", but it will also be featured here at a later stage.



Special features of the Range Rover Monteverdi:

- The chassis number had an "R" inserted to indicate the model
- Metallic paints were applied, along with white solid (list to be featured at a later stage)
- Custom sized doors and wind down windows from St Gobain
- Custom sized rear window with metal frame
- Special badges – three designs
- Specially made rear wheel-arches
- Special sized rear side panel
- High quality leather or cloth interior. Three variations in colour
- Custom cubby box and dash binnacle
- Custom interior door linings

The Range Rover Monteverdi was not a revolution, more an evolution. It was however a solid body-of-work, in as it made a fluid transition of functionality and high quality craftsmanship. The interior materials were second to none, as were the paint schemes. The doors were designed with high regard to aesthetics and made a coherent impression of a fully designed car. In that respect Peter Monteverdi spearheaded the Range Rover brand into a new era.

It was to take Land Rover seven years to come up with a model with a similar specification.

The industrial conglomerate that housed Land Rover in these years was going through significant changes; subsequently more funds were allocated. The aim was set high, and in March 1981 the first factory four door rolled off the line in Solihull. This resulted in that Peter Monteverdi was sidetracked with his comparatively small production in Italy. Production came to a grinding halt 1982 three years after it started. At the Geneva Motor show in 1981 Monteverdi displayed a Nova Swiss Turbocharge-engined Monteverdi, but to no avail.

During 1980/81 Monteverdi produced a design study Range Rover based on the factory four door designed Range Rover. It was produced to give the Range Rover designers some ideas of how to improve the quality and take the Range Rover into the luxury car market. This was done by Monteverdi Design in Switzerland. .



Land Rover continued to sell the Monteverdi model though their network for a while after the production ceased. Many models were given custom paint schemes and upgrades in order to make them more attractive to customers.

HOW MANY ARE LEFT?

At the time of writing – April 2015 – we have tracked roughly 35 cars, and we have a trace of further three cars. This is good news as it's a higher number than what we had in the early nineties when one started to trace these cars. Given the limited number these cars were produced in, it is a significant figure that 25% are still relatively "on the road".

The ownership of the majority of the cars is inspirational, as most are well-known Range Rover collectors with a proven enthusiast and restoration history. The absence of specific spare parts slows progress however, so one will see when we manage to set up replacement parts that a great number will be finished restored in parallel.

The aim is to have a structured meet schedule between the various Pan-European owners when a few more cars are on the road, and schedule for a greater gathering at for example Range Rover's 50th Anniversary in 2020. Land Rover's 70th in 2018 is another to aim for. Sightings and barnfinds still appear. In fact in just the last year there has been two of these. This is inspirational and the over-all interest has boosted considerably with the addition of the Facebook page, so as a community within the Range Rover Classic genre we go from strength to strength.

SPARE PARTS

Spare parts are literally non-existent, so there will be a focus within these pages to facilitate custom production at a later stage when the diverse needs have been charted - to prevent a further deterioration of the specie.

Rear Wheelarches will be custom produced Q2/Q3 2019. Please inquire about details.



Photo credit: Matthew Brennand

ORIGINAL BUILD PHOTOGRAPHS

www.zwischengas.com

Search: "Monteverdi Werk"

FURTHER READING

Books which have large features on the RR Monteverdi:

Range Rover The First Generation, The Complete Story by James Taylor (Crowood Press, 2018)

Nicht nur für Heavy Metal Gitarristen -

Range Rover dank Schweizer Hilfe mit vier Türen.

www.zwischengas.com 29 March 2017

<https://www.zwischengas.com/de/FT/fahrzeugberichte/Range-Rover-4-Door.html>

Note: Behind payment portal are the only known images from the Italian assembly plant.

The Missing Link

Auto-Illustrierte Sept 2017, Klassik-Extra

https://www.emilfreyclassics.ch/fileadmin/media/pdf/presse/KE_020-021_ai_09_2017

_Range_Rover_Monteverdi.pdf

Range Rover 1970-1986 Owner and Buyers Guide, James Taylor
(Yesterday Books, 1993)

Original Range Rover, by James Taylor (MBI Publishing, 1999)
(separate chapter on the subject)

Range Rover seit 1970, by Cajetan Sacardi (Motorbuch Verlag, 2008)

Range Rover, Luxus als standard, by Boris Schmidt and Stefan Thiele
(Autovision, 2001)

Magazine articles:

Land Rover Monthly, April 2003; The Full Monte

Land Rover Enthusiast, October 2004; article on the Design Study

Land Rover Monthly, May 2006; Italian Stallion

Land Rover Monthly, February 2009; article on the NEC show

Land Rover Monthly, September 2011; Technical Ecstasy

Range Rover Register newsletter; Monteverdi Matters articles

by Peter Kenworthy

Autumn 1992

December 1992

February 1993
April 1993
June 1993
August/September 1993
October/November 1993
December 1993/January 1994
February/March 1994
April/May 1994
June/July 1994
August/September 1994
December 1994/January 1995

OFFICIAL PUBLICATIONS:

Please see www.range-rover-classic.com for the official brochures



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