

EVENTS/CAUSES

Land Rover commemorates Defender with charitable send-off

December 9, 2015



Still from Land Rover's Defender film

By JEN KING

British automaker Land Rover is readying to bid farewell to the Defender model with a London takeover and charity auction.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246** ▶

Production of the Defender began in 1948 after its launch at the Amsterdam Motor Show in April of that year, and over the course of the 67 years since then, 2 million of the 4x4 model have been produced in Solihull, Britain. Land Rover has plans to discontinue the model's manufacture, but citing its historical and brand significance, the automaker has orchestrated an effort to capture consumer nostalgia for the Defender.

"The overarching brand is Land Rover," said Chris Ramey, president of [Affluent Insights](#), Miami. "Reinforcing their heritage and evoking emotion via Defender's demise fortifies their DNA as a luxury brand.

Mr. Ramey is not affiliated with Land Rover, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

[Land Rover](#) was unable to comment before press deadline.

Defend till the end

To mark the end of an automotive era, Land Rover took to the streets of London to commemorate the Defender 4x4 model. While doing so, Land Rover filmed its London takeover to create a piece of nostalgia for enthusiasts of the Defender.

The film begins with a man passing a vintage Defender and approaching a nondescript black Defender parked on the side of a road, similar to the iconic black taxis traversing London. As he gets in the driver's seat and sets his GPS device, a road map in the shape of the Defender is seen.

As the driver goes about his route in the taxi-only lane, he passes by Defenders from different decades, showing the model's evolution. Included is a woman purchasing an ice cream cone from a white Defender that had been repurposed as an ice cream truck.



Land Rover Defender as an ice cream truck

These coincidental occurrences endure as the driver continues around London. Nods to the Defender include printed tees worn by a pair talking on a bench, a double-decker bus with Solihull as its destination and a young child carrying balloons imprinted with the model's likeness.

The film continues to show advertisements for the model from years' past alongside an escalator and a "thought of the day," from Dec. 8, that reads, "What this country needs is something to rely on."

Additional tokens include a Defender-themed headline at a newsstand, bake shop cookies made to look like green Defenders and a number of models going about their day, showing the versatility of the model.

As the video concludes, the Defender taxi driver is seen pulling up to Bonhams auction house on New Bond Street. The auctioneer will be the venue for Land Rover's Defender 2,000,000 charity auction on Dec. 16, with a preview exhibition the day before.

Land Rover launches London takeover to celebrate the iconic Defender

On Dec. 16, Land Rover will auction its Defender 2,000,000, a one-off model that has been created for the occasion. Proceeds from the auction will benefit Land Rover's humanitarian and conservation partners, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Born Free Foundation.

The model, numbered 2 million, is outfitted with a map of Red Wharf Bay, where the original Land Rover was first designed in the sand. The map is engraved in the model's fender, which contrasts with the Indus Silver satin paint used for its frame and its Santorini Black wheels and hardware such as roof, door hinges, grille and mirror caps.

Land Rover's Defender 2,000,000 also includes a "no. 2,000,000" badge on its rear as well as on its leather seats' headrests. A bespoke aluminum plaque is also included, signed by all who helped build the vehicle.

A final touch includes a front and rear license plate reading "S90 HUE," referring to the first pre-production Land Rover, which was registered "HUE 166."



The Defender 2,000,000 outside Bonhams

The Defender 2,000,000 is also the subject on an informative Web page on Land Rover's Web site where the model is showcased along with details on the auction and the aforementioned video.

Long goodbyes

Land Rover has also looked back on the Defender's origin in an effort that brought the vehicle back to where it all started, Red Wharf Bay.

The automaker Land Rover returned to its roots with the launch of a year-long celebration of its Defender vehicle.

From the largest sand drawing ever in the United Kingdom to three limited-edition models, Land Rover is looking back to the genesis of its company of utility vehicles. These special editions are likely to appeal to the 44's fans as the classic car ceases production in the U.K. in 2015.

Land Rover's giant drawing took up 3,200 feet of sand on the beach at Red Wharf Bay, where the automaker's iconic Defender was first sketched in 1947 by Maurice Wilks, engineering director for Rover. The Wilks family owned land in Wales, and the engineer wanted a vehicle that could work both as a tractor and off-roader.

While the Defender is ending its era in the U.K., Land Rover has said it might look into production overseas.

In a branded statement, Nick Rogers, Land Rover vehicle line director, said, "We wanted to mark the end of Defender production at Solihull with a special-edition but coming up with a single identity was impossible, so we developed three very different interpretations of the Defender to reflect its strength and breadth of character. Whether our customers want to celebrate Land Rover's unrivaled off-road heritage, demand the ultimate in terms of design and performance or have a genuine thirst for adventure, there will be a limited-edition Defender that will be fit for purpose" ([see story](#)).

Giving back to the British people through philanthropy is a sensible way to bring the Defender's era full circle.

"Adding an element of philanthropy is increasingly obligatory," Mr. Ramey said. "Wealth and luxury have responsibilities; their own civic rent.

"[Also,] adding a philanthropic element allows Land Rover to expand their reach to a far larger ecosystem."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter on Luxury Daily, New York