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“The Disco 4 was a slab of Tonka-toy perfection from the day it launched to the day it died”

Harris

Land Rover is the success story of the British motor industry. Sales have skyrocketed, profitability is better than ever, and without it, Jaguar, the other part of the JLR business, would struggle to survive. In fact, LR's recent work has been so popular we've almost become certain that any new models will automatically be the best-in-class, without even stopping to scrutinise them. That's exalted status right there – treatment normally reserved for a new 911, or an S-Class Mercedes.

But I'm a little worried for Land Rover. Not because it is producing bad cars – far from it; the cars, of course, are very competent – but because the cars appear to be becoming not very good-looking. And whether they've been crappy to drive or terribly unreliable, Land Rovers of yore always looked the business. The Classic Range, the P38, the wonderful L322, the Discos and Defenders – all of them nothing like as competent or reliable as the newest LR's, but all of them so perfectly sophisto-rugged people really didn't care if they could complete a journey or not. Looks matter more than anything else. And the new Discovery is a proper turd.

Yes, it will breeze across a desert for Bear Grylls without breaking into a sweat, but once someone has likened its weird asymmetrical arse with Sir Geoffrey Boycott's smile, you'll never be able to unsee its terribleness. Now I cannot in any way claim to be the arbiter of what is or isn't good-looking, but I can say that I've not heard a single positive comment uttered about the new Discovery's styling. And that has to be a problem. Next time you see one in profile, look at the sheer amount of metal above the rear wheel and tell me it doesn't look plain weird. And the car it replaced, the Discovery 4, was a slab of



Tonka-toy perfection from the day it was launched to the day it died. I'd far rather have the old one than the new one.

In fact, the ugly stick has been whacking its way around Gaydon for some time now. Yes, the Evoque is a masterstroke, but every time I see a convertible on the road I don't know whether to laugh out loud or offer some kind of condolence to the driver. It's a silly car that makes its driver look idiotic. The Discovery

Sport could have been built by Hyundai in 2003, and I still think that the current Range Rover isn't anything like as Range Rover-ish as the last one. It's just a large homogenous lump of off-roader that could carry any number of carmaker's names on its bonnet.

And then there's the Velar. I'm not best placed to be positive about cars like the Velar because they're the type of image-inspired crud that makes my urine boil, but I've tried – really tried – and failed. It's miles better than the Discovery, but it's still charmless, and its origins look suspiciously similar to the Ford Explorer Platinum sold in the US.

It's not all bad. The current Range Rover Sport is a honey, the Evoque is every middle-class-mother's dream wheels and, of course, I mustn't forget that much of Land Rover's product is aimed at parts of the demographic where considerations of taste are of little importance.

I can remember being told by a man who had made many tens of millions of pounds selling cars, that he could flog anything so long as it looked good. “Doesn't matter if it drives badly, it'll still sell. But if it drives well and looks like s**t, it won't shift.” He was right, and, judging by its current model range, LR might want to think about a general reskin before the rot sets in.

