



# DESERT STORM

Mark Saville is as happy as a sandboy behind the wheel of this Matzker-modified Discovery 5

PHOTOS: TOM CRITCHELL, VALERY KLOUBERT



**S**oft, powdery, axle-deep sand fans out from all four wheels. The Disco 5's exterior bodywork is almost too hot to touch beneath this blazing sun; the under-bonnet temperatures must be furnace-like, yet still this unassuming family 4x4 refuses to bog down or get stuck. Believe me, I'm really trying – never has an envelope been so enthusiastically pushed in search of its limits than by me today in this overland-prepared Matzker DC8.

For those of you not already familiar with the work of Cologne-based Matzker Technology and Accessories, you should know that the company's upgrades are so highly regarded by Land Rover Germany that the modifications it makes don't affect the vehicle's warranty; and some of those modifications are pretty significant too. Matzker is also a franchised Jaguar Land Rover dealer.

So, I'm behind the wheel of a brand-new Disco 5 that's clearly been modified to cope with some arduous conditions by a company that knows precisely how it should be done. This knowledge was largely gained through the company's late founder, Amadeus Matzker, who had a passion for desert racing and overland adventures in North Africa. I had

the privilege of experiencing Amadeus's finely honed off- and on-road driving skills when we featured the Matzker DC4 and Evoque Rallye concept (LRO December 2012 and September 2012 respectively).

**Why's it called DC8?**

The first Matzker, a modified Sandglow 2.7 TDV6 Disco 3, was called the DC5 because the re-map gave it more than 500Nm of torque. 'The subsequent Disco 4 model put out almost 600Nm, and so we naturally called it the DC6,' explains Matzker's joint managing director Bernhard Körner. 'When the later version of the upgraded Disco 4 came along, the sequence was firmly established, so despite not producing 700Nm we called that the DC7. Today, we have the DC8.'

That explains the name – but what sort of buyer is the vehicle aimed at? 'I think it's a

good, standard car for travelling and for daily driving; a good company car,' says Bernhard. 'When you see the car in standard trim you don't immediately think it will be so great off-road in mud or sand. But the changes we make transform this impression and in practice it delivers – more power and more torque.'

'It's still a great family car or daily company car. I think the interior is beautiful, so we don't make any changes there. We are specialists in technical and mechanical upgrades; other companies handle interiors.'

**What's it like to drive?**

With its ultra-dark tinted side windows this DC8 is not legally allowed to drive on public roads, so I can only tell you about driving it off-road. Today's location is a disused military area just over the border in the Netherlands but it may as well be on the edge of the Sahara. It's boiling hot and deep sand stretches to the horizon – perfect conditions for trying out the extra power and torque made available by the 'TR6 Performance Enhancement' and the trick suspension that now has the potential for nine different height settings instead of the standard three.

Disco goes up, Disco goes down – your options are almost endless. The main reason for so much flexibility is to give the driver the

**'The trick suspension has a potential for nine different settings instead of the standard three'**

**TECH SPEC**

- **Model:** Matzker DC8
- **Engine:** 3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel with TR6 programme
- **Power:** 306bhp at 3750rpm
- **Torque:** 670Nm (494lb ft)
- **Max speed:** 235kph (146mph) with speed de-limiter
- **Suspension:** Electronic Handling and Off-road Kit -28mm on-road and +30mm off-road, and seven other height options
- **Tyres:** 255/55 R20 Goodyear Wrangler Duratrac
- **Wheels:** 20in alloys with 25mm spacers
- **Expedition roof rack:** Front Runner
- **Second fuel tank:** 90-litre mounted in spare wheel recess
- **Winch:** Warn M8000 3600kg with 30m synthetic rope with split-charge system
- **Driving lamps:** grille-mounted Hella Luminator 130 X-LED



The concealed Warn winch can also be controlled by radio



**Split charge**  
DC8 has a second battery tucked under the bonnet; Mark's found the isolator switch for the Warn winch.

**THE BOSS:** BERNHARD KÖRNER  
Bernhard, who joined Matzker 10 years ago, is now joint managing director with Nina Matzker. He's a real Land Rover fan and the proud owner of a Td5 Defender 110 and a 'wonderful' 1954 Series I.



**Suspension**

This discreet button controls nine suspension height settings instead of the original three.



The sharp end of Matzker's excellent suspension upgrade

**Serious rubber**

Wrangler Duratrac MTs on standard 20in wheels with 25mm spacers work remarkably well.

**Under the skin**

This stylish matt wrap protects the paintwork; it's the only upgrade not done in-house.

**Kept in reserve**

A second 90-litre fuel tank with a tough 3mm-thick skin sits where the spare wheel once did.

**Twin filler**

The original fuel filler neck now has two internal openings, one for each tank – a neat touch.



**Top attraction**

the effective Front Runner roof rack keeps your equipment well away from the flying sand.



**Raised up to the maximum**

Matzker's DC8 is mighty tall at its maximum ride height, 30mm above standard, but it's a firm ride.



**Standard off-road height**

Matzker's 'black box' keeps the DC8 at standard off-road height at speeds up to 62mph (100kph).



**Lowered to the minimum**

How low can you go? The DC8 can drop to 28mm lower than standard, but only while stationary.

ultimate choice in height and ride control, 28mm lower or 30mm higher than any of the three standard ride heights. Matzker's clever system also allows you to drive in the raised position at speeds up to 100kph (62mph) before it returns to standard ride height, instead of just 50kph (31mph). But, as Bernhard explains, 'Lowering the ride height reduces air resistance on motorway journeys and noticeably improves vehicle stability, because the dynamic stability control cuts

**'The problem seems to be that this twin-tank Disco has run out of fuel. Whoops!'**

in much later to compensate for sudden steering movements. In the off-road setting, the additional height provides for ground clearance of up to 340mm and a significantly improved approach angle.'

With the suspension set to its new maximum – 30mm higher than the standard off-road height – the ride is very firm, even over deep sand, so I opt for 'standard' off-road height. The extra 70Nm (52lb ft) torque and 45bhp of power extracted from the 3.0-litre V6 turbodiesel provide a useful and much-needed boost, powering through the powdery and power-sapping sand.

The fat 255/55 R20 Goodyear Wrangler Duratracs paddle through the sand effectively but, unsurprisingly, they dig in quite quickly as soon as forward momentum is lost. Keeping the power on usually enables the DC8 to dig its way out; however, this rarely works on a slope, where reversing out is the only answer.

Eventually, after a couple of hours roaring around this Dutch 'desert', the DC8 cries enough and refuses to go any further. It's been blisteringly hot all day and the workload I've been demanding from it has been punishing. Ironically, the problem turns out to be simply that this twin-tank Disco has run out of fuel. Whoops! Fortunately, there's a jerry can of diesel on-hand. Suitably refreshed, the testing continues; it's tremendous fun.

**Verdict**

As with the previous Matzker-modified vehicles I've driven, this DC8 has been very carefully and sympathetically upgraded; so much so, it feels like a factory job. If I had a Discovery 5, I would be very tempted to send it to Matzker for a similar upgrade.

At the very least, I'd send in my ECU for reprogramming. After all, who doesn't want more power and torque? **LRO**