

# OHIO ROVER



Spring  2024

Editor's Note

Rover Around Ohio

From the Field

Trip Report: WV

Upcoming Events



# OHIO ROVER

SPRING 2024

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On the Cover: Gene Paulin drives his D1 at Southington Offroad, Garrettsville OH

Back Cover: A group at the overlook, Southington Offroad Nov 2022

# Out the Alpine Window

DJ HARVEY

Dear Rover Enthusiast, this first edition newsletter is designed to be a tangible token for rover enthusiasts in Ohio. Most owners are spread across the metropolitan areas of Ohio namely Columbus, Cleveland/Akron, and Cincinnati/Dayton. The seven Land Rover dealerships in Ohio follow the populations centers and the distance between Land Rover Cincinnati and Land Rover Solon is 282 miles and takes 4hr24min to make the drive. Ohio is a big state with a lot to offer but off-pavement driving is NOT one of Ohio strengths!

However, Ohioans are resourceful, and we make use of the few off-road parks and trails of Vinton County in search of muddy tires and an escape from the concrete jungle. The size of our state makes it prohibitive for many enthusiasts in the different regions to easily and regularly meet up and yet rover enthusiasts crave the company of other enthusiasts. Time spent together creates friendships and bonds with people who might just be as quirky as oneself! There is strength in numbers as well as camaraderie. This makes the idea of regional groups more appealing however doubles and triples the efforts needed to organize and plan events. The Columbus group is the epicenter of the Green Oval Guild (GOG) and has built a great tradition spanning nearly 20 years of history and experience from which every Rover enthusiast in Ohio has benefitted. In addition to the Green Oval Guild, I belong to several

other rover clubs (i.e. Facebook group) including Pennsylvania based R.O.V.E.R.S. club where I used to live, Ottawa Valley Land Rover Club, the Pacific Coast Rover Club, and the new GOG sister club/regional chapter Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club based in northeast Ohio. The membership for all these clubs is free (except for Ottawa Valley) and this allows me to engage with other rover enthusiasts and see how people in other regions engage with their rovers. For the enthusiast these vehicles embody adventure, freedom, capability, resourcefulness, and for some, a little distinction of class, to name a few. My aim is to provide a way for people to engage with others near them, and that by strengthening local/regional groups and clubs we can strengthen the entire rover community throughout the state of Ohio.

May this newsletter find you well, and may you find camaraderie and companionship with other likeminded rover enthusiasts in your own backyard.







## Rover Around Ohio:

# Nizami's Rovers

## Range Rover on the big screen and twin Discos

Story: DJ Harvey      Photos: Mike Nizami

Some people are excited to watch movies for the actors, some for the story, and some for the action. An even smaller group of people are excited to watch movies for the cars and if you're reading this you've likely kept your eye open for a Land Rover in the background of any movie scene. Imagine the excitement of seeing your own rover on the silver screen. Mike Nizami, owner of Planet Motors in Youngstown, OH, has the distinction of seeing his 2010 white Range Rover L322 HSE in not one but two movies! Mike was tipped off to the search by Chris Ray (Amanda, OH) for a range rover for a Lionsgate movie. Mike reached out to the production team of *First Kill* (2017) but was disappointed when he was told white

vehicles are not considered due to difficulty with lighting and the appearance of white cars on film. Despite the disappointment, the production assistant told Mike to send some pictures of his range rover. Mike's rover was a hit with the director, and he received a call back requesting the L322 for the film. The white L322 is featured alongside Bruce Willis and Hayden Christiansen. After filming with the Range Rover had completed the production team offered to ship the vehicle back home however Mike offered to pick up the truck and requested a tour of the movie set. In addition to a tour of the movie set, Mike was treated to breakfast with Hayden Christiansen. Upon retrieving his L322, Mike





## Car detailer thought the autographs were chicken scratch!

was gifted with Christiansen's and Willis' autographs on the headrests. Unfortunately, the autographs are no longer present due to an eager car detailer who thought the autographs were chicken scratch! The range rover wasn't quite ready for retirement after the first movie. Mike's L322 was called back to cinematic duty for Lionsgate's 2018 film *Acts of Violence* which was filmed in Cleveland.

When you meet Mike it's like connecting with an old friend. He is kind and outgoing and eager to engage in conversation. He is

genuinely interested in the people around him and the people that work with him enjoy his company. Mike's passion for land rovers is readily apparent when you meet him and his team. His passion for the marque began in early childhood while growing up in Kuwait. Mike was raised both in and around land rovers. Mike's father, Able Nizami, was the Land Rover Kuwait Shop Manager for 26 years. His parents each drove range rover classics and Able was a desert rally race driver and a winning driver in his range rover classic. As political tensions grew in the middle east and the Gulf War was eminent the Nizami family returned to their native country of Jordan in 1990. Several years of life without a rover ensued as the family navigated a changing





## What kind of trailer would be better than another half rover?

world and found a new home in the United States in 1993. Rovers however were not far from Mike's mind and the Nizami family was reconnected with a Land Rover in 1997 when Mike purchased a MY89 rear wheel drive Range Rover Classic (the front drive shaft had been removed by a previous owner). The vehicle gave Mike several years of enjoyment before being totaled in an accident. That '89 Range Rover was the first, but not the last, rover for Mike.

In addition to running a business and his L322 movie credits, Mike is most well-known for his Discovery 2 projects that began 9 years ago with the purchase of a 2003 Vienna Green Discovery 2. With the help of custom fabricator Dark Crow Designs' Chris Fritsch (Westerville, OH) the 2003 Discovery 2 now sports custom rock sliders and a custom front bumper as well as a Voyager roof rack, snorkel, 5" terra lift, and 34" BFG KO2 tires. The decals also provide a distinctive look. Several years after purchasing the Vienna Green Discovery 2 Mike came across a twin Disco 2 with the same model year, specs, and color. Only one problem existed with the Cleveland based vehicle: it was not running. Mike decided to make a custom off-road trailer out of the nonrunning Discovery 2. Mike always wanted an off-road trailer and states "what kind of trailer would be better than another half [Land] Rover!" Fabricator Dark Crow Designs was called upon again to fabricate a trailer from the second Discovery. The front half of the chassis rails

were preserved to manufacture the tongue of the trailer. The harness and fuel tank were saved allowing for working power windows and a powered fuel pump to move gas from the trailer's tank to the primary Discovery. Effort to keep the Disco 2 running after 3 failed rover motors has led to this year's addition of a 5.3L LS engine swap that Mike and his team at Planet Motors have done themselves. The engine is running on the original Land Rover harness and after 400 miles there are no signs of any issues nor any check engine lights.

Another current project is a 1997 right hand drive Defender 110 with a 300tdi engine. The truck was bought sight unseen in Florida and shipped to Ohio. Overall, the chassis is in good condition with some light rust. The truck has been disassembled and currently exists as a rolling chassis. Some exciting plans exist for the Defender, but we'll have to wait to see what those are.

The next time you're in Youngstown and want to discuss rovers, see a rover project in process, or even buy a rover, make sure to include a stop at Planet Motors and say hi to Mike and his team. And if you've seen all the rovers you can in 007's *No Time to Die* (2021) be sure to check out Mike's L322 on a streaming service near you.





FROM THE FIELD:

# BRINGING HOME A CLASSIC DEFENDER

Story + Photos: Jamison Yager

For two decades I've driven various Jeeps including three YJs, a WK, WK2, WJ, and JT (Gladiator). The rugged Jeep is an adventure vehicle that speaks to a particular type of American adventure. The 1941 Willys MB is arguably the greatest symbol of America's involvement in World War II. Land Rover, born out of the practicality and ruggedness of Jeeps, has always been synonymous with adventure. One only needs to look back at the antics of Crocodile Dundee, the adventures of Indiana Jones, and even the comedy of Jewel of the Nile to find out why. 90's Adventure movies, the movies of my youth, spoke to a time when adventure was easy to find, quicksand was a real-world danger, and wit and grit trumped strength and firepower.

It was difficult to sell my last Jeep, the Gladiator. It was perfect for me with its

olive drab (OD) green exterior, armor all around, 37-inch mud terrain tires, lockers, lift, winch, open top, the list goes on and on. The day I sold it I felt a cold dread in the pit of my stomach as I signed the title over to a gentleman from Ann Arbor, who, I suspect, did not share my love for off-roading adventure. I lamented the fact that "Gladdy" might never stretch her legs in a trail again, or battle rocks and mud. In fact, I feel it now, writing this. She's retired, and in a way my heart aches for her. I felt similarly about my childhood bicycle being left outside and asking my mom if the bike would get cold being left in the rain. Tough men do tough things and I needed to see the sale of "Gladdy" through.

After selling my last Jeep, I started my rover adventures by purchasing a Discovery Series II in November of 2023. It has a black







exterior in great condition with an anemic V8 and opulent interior. I wrote out a plan to make her better. Diff lock installed, off road bumper added, lift kit and rims in my cart but never ordered. I quickly discovered the Discovery wasn't the adventure vehicle I wanted. Dundee wouldn't drive this, he'd balk at it, and complain it was too soft. The top didn't come off, and the carpet would get soaked when crossing a river in the outback. My wife liked it though, so I gave it to her in lieu of her Jeep Renegade. I searched on, through the jungle of Facebook Marketplace, Bring a Trailer, and other auctions sites. Lo and behold, the classic Land Rover Defender smashed through the line of weird old SUV shrubbery and into my life.

The 1996 right hand drive Defender 90 with a 300TDi engine was everything I wanted. It was tough, rugged, capable, simple. It was ready for quicksand, cannibals, jungles, and treasure hunting. So, on a rainy Friday night I went and bought the Defender. It's exterior color in what my co-worker describes as "Tiffany Blue". Color aside, I was excited. So excited, I didn't check for rust, leaks, bad parts, or problem areas, all of which it has. Driving the Defender home

my tiny wipers failed to battle back the rain as I cruised down I-75 South, the sun setting on my right and my wife following behind. Driving on the right side of the car, shifting with my left hand, while trying to follow the white line instead of the center was a harrowing experience. To my wife's frustration I exited the highway three times by accident, mostly around Troy, which was a nightmare. But, like the heroes of the 1990's, albeit in a much smaller fashion, the Defender and I triumphed. Parking her in my drive, I began to make another list, a list of the mods "Tiffany" needed (my Wife's name for it). Honestly, she didn't need much. Bigger tires, probably all the gaskets, and fresh fluids.

I've been driving the Defender on the wrong side of the car two weeks now, and it doesn't bother me anymore. I still miss the beastly and beefy Gladiator, but the Defender is truly the vehicle I have always wanted. She's ready for adventure, and I guess my wife and I will see what obstacles lie ahead for our two-truck fleet of Landys. No matter what it is, I bet they can handle it.







# Rovers in West Virginia

## CVLRC's mini Winter Romp

Story + Photos: DJ Harvey

Every Presidents Day a large cohort of land rover owners come together in Maine for Winter Romp. Bruce Fowler, a land rover enthusiast, sponsors and host the event on his farm. In 2024, over 200 trucks were in attendance. Unfortunately, not everyone can make the trek out to Maine so this year, over Presidents Day weekend, two rover owners from Ohio travelled to West Virginia for their own winter romp. The trip to Monongahela National Forrest was the brainchild of Tom Martin. Tom and Cora Martin (Chardon, OH) drove their 2012 Range Rover L322 from northeast Ohio to Davis WV. Their L322 has no mods other

than a roof rack, light bar, and Toyo AT3 tires. DJ Harvey (Hudson, OH) drove his 2013 LR4 down from Northeast Ohio where he met his father Jim Harvey (White Sulphur Springs, WV) in Elkins WV. The only mods to the LR4 are a prospered roof rack and 18" TuffAnt wheels on BFG KO2 tires. During planning, it seemed the trail could easily be done with basic recovery gear and no need for a winch.

Saturday morning the group awoke to 6-8 inches of fresh snow! The teams met up for breakfast at Milo's Café in Davis WV where they made plans for the day's adventures.







Two trails were chosen. The first was the Canaan Loop Road, a nearly 18-mile loop road which the group drove in a clockwise fashion ending at Blackwater Falls State Park. The fresh snow made the trails more challenging than anticipated, but extremely fun. A tow rope and traction boards were used a couple of times on the trail. The snow and the forest were beautiful. The group had fresh untracked snow for a large portion of the trail. There were several areas available for dispersed camping and several campers were passed along portions of the trail. Along a portion of the trail was a beautiful stream open to fly fishing only. There were several water crossings and an area where pinstriping was unavoidable.

The second trail was Canyon Rim trail, also known as Forest Road 18. This is a 7.5-mile trail that was driven from east to west. There was only one obstacle that would



have been relatively easy without the snow and ice. The use of traction boards were required and the LR4 had minor mishap while climbing out a stream a portion of the rear bumper cover was dislodged but easily snapped back into place. At the end of the trail the group drove up to Olson Observation Tower which was built in 1963. The tower is 100 feet tall and has 133 steps to reach the top. Due to the snowfall and slippery conditions the tower was not climbed on this trip. The group took some photos then said their goodbyes. Work and family called the group to their respective homes and the group said farewell. The group hopes to make another trip later this year and is considering making the mini romp an annual event in February. The next trip will hopefully include some camping, fishing, as well as some on road exploration following one of three overland routes/motorcycle touring trails known as the infamous Monongahela Adventure Trails (iMAT). The iMAT currently has three routes mapped ranging from 120-180 miles in length through the region.

## **Trip Summary**

**Location:** Monongahela National Forrest, WV

**Nearest Towns:** Davis, Thomas, Elkins WV

**Difficulty:** Canaan Valley Loop (18 miles) and Canyon Rim Road (7.5 miles) are easy

**Special equipment:** 4x4, tow rope and recovery point. Winch not required. Stock vehicle ok as long as you're ok with pin stripes.

**Other Activities:** Blackwater Falls State Park, Canaan Valley Ski Area, Snowshoe Ski Resort, Seneca Rocks, Greenbank Observatory

**Distance from NE Ohio:** 240 miles, 4.5hr drive

**Distance from Columbus:** 250 miles, 4.75hr drive

**Minimum Time:** trip can be done in 24 hours/1 overnight





# 2024 Spring & Summer Events

**April 27:** Rovers and Fireworks. Hudson OH. Meet for dinner with the Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover club and then drive to American Fireworks for their annual demo day and pyrotechnic presentation. The evening starts slow with one firework at a time or demonstration purposes, followed by an incredible pyrotechnic show. Fee is 50\$ per vehicle. A 50\$ gift certificate for use at the store is provided.

**May 3-5:** Southington Offroad: Total Offroad Cleveland, Columbus, and Pittsburg Customer Appreciation Day. 30\$/ day. Online preregistration saves 5\$ and enters you into a raffle.

**Early May:** Green Oval Guild Tech Day: Rover Engine Head Gasket Repair. Follow the Facebook group page for details!

**May 31-Jun 2:** Southington Offroad

**July 5-7:** Southington Offroad

**July 20:** British Car Day Cleveland – Hudson: Sponsored by the Northeastern Ohio British Car Council. 9AM-3PM. The Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club will be meeting for breakfast beforehand.

**Fall TBD:** Join the CVLRC for a scenic autumnal drive through one of the country's greatest collections of covered bridges, right here in northeast Ohio!





# Get Involved! Ohio Rover Clubs



**Green Oval Guild** – Ohio's Best Land Rover Club: 19 years and counting. Columbus based with regional groups throughout the state.



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/greenovalguild/>



@green\_oval\_guild



**Cuyahoga Valley Land Rover Club:** started in 2023 and based in Cleveland/Akron area. On and Off Road Adventures and Social Club



<https://www.facebook.com/groups/cuyahogavalleylandrovers/>





Have a story and want to share your enthusiasm for rovers?  
We'd like to hear from you!  
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