DEAL ON A DISCO

PICTURE THE scene: a family are looking for a new car and they fancy a used Discovery 3 or a new D4. So they take a demo ride round with the sales person in a D3. They think it's 'quite nice' but, just to be sure, they opt for another demo in the petrol version. Dad especially likes it as the V8's throaty roar tweaks his ears, and he can feel that it's a bit smoother and quieter.

So, they sign up to buy the petrol version and everything is tickety boo until they check their bank balance a few months later, and realise that they are ploughing £150-worth of fuel in it every week just to do the school run and the shopping, with the odd weekend outing thrown into the mix. Eventually the Disco 3 V8 has to go, and from then on these excellent Land Rovers, it seems to me, become landmarks that nobody wants, plonked on some car dealer's forecourt. They sit there for months on end because everyone wants a diesel D3. Just doing a quick check today on the web I saw a 2006 D3 diesel with a lot of miles for £17,450, but a petrol version with less miles on the clock was going for around £12,750. Essentially, what this means to me is that I would offer the buyer £12,000 and see what occurs from there because they cannot sell it.

We all love the throaty burble offered by a V8, and not the wallet damaging costs. However, Charlie investigates another option

Words and Photographs: Charlie Thorn

If you can source one they are as cheap as chips, with the obvious draw back being the fact that the petrol version will not give you a good return in miles per gallon, compared to the diesel. So what to do?

all is not lost

There is a man who knows exactly what to do and he has been able to buy two Petrol D3s for very little money and has then worked his magic on them. Gordon Alderson and his wife Helen run 4-Tech, the Land Rover specialist garage in Leverington, Cambridgeshire.

Gordon told me: "We had a few older non-Land Rover vehicles around the place and we decided to clear them all out and treat ourselves to a Discovery 3. On investigating it, it was instantly clear to me that the 4.4 V8 petrol versions in the secondhand market were going for silly money.

"Our intention from the start, after realising just what a good deal they were, was to get one and to convert it straight away to run on one of my LPG systems we install here at 4-Tech."

An internet search took Gordon and Helen on a Sunday visit to a Land Rover dealership where they had a secondhand petrol D3 which had been languishing on their front for several months.

Gordon went on to say: "Over the last 13 years we have done so many LPG conversions that I have lost count. We used to buy our kits from Italy and a few from Holland, but three years ago we started to get the conversions we fit here from a supplier in Poland. These Polish systems are more technically advanced then anything we have ever seen before, and the quality is so good that we can offer on a conversion a two year unlimited mileage guarantee."

After 4-Tech undertake the conversion to LPG, your D3 will be totally reliable with no drop in performance, while giving much better economy over the TDV6 diesel model. There is still a whopping 300bhp on tap and as Gordon says: "and we still have the benefit of that timeless V8 exhaust note."

Another internet search took Gordon to another dealer who had one which was also dirt cheap. After purchasing it, Gordon converted that one as well for Helen. Like Gordon, I am a V8 man, and I have been able to hang on to our old 1985 Range Rover Classic 4.2 auto only because it was converted to run on LPG when I bought it. Although it looks a bit tatty now I will hang onto it as long as I can.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

disco dialysis

While I was at 4-Tech they had cleared their work diary for the day to spend some time with me, apart from one customer in a diesel D3 who was coming along to have the fluid in his gearbox changed. The fluid in these D3 ZF six-speed gearboxes is supposedly life sealed, but in reality a lot of owners are noticing that they start to feel a slight juddering through the seat, and harsh gear changes. This seems to occur after they reach approximately 75,000 miles. If you take these concerns to a Land Rover dealership they remove the sump and some of the internals and flush the system out and replenish with new fluid. One owner I spoke to told me that the dealership he went to with this problem presented him with a bill for over £1,000 which included an 11-hour labour charge.

4-Tech however have a much quicker and less expensive solution to this problem. Gordon told me: "Some years back, on a visit to the USA, I saw a Mega Flush system so I bought one and had it delivered here. With this D3 gearbox problem it has really come into its own and we can easily deal with it. I can connect it into the gearbox fluid system and perform a dialysis treatment which will change 97 percent of the old fluid and replace it with clean new fluid. I can do this without disturbing the gearbox internals.

"After I have flushed out the gearbox, I connect up my laptop with the Faultmate Extreme system all as part of the service and do a diagnostic check of the vehicle. After a run up the road with the customer you can feel the difference immediately. We have been inundated with many requests to carry out this service through the various D3 forums all over the country. In response, I have fitted out a trailer to perform this flush service and any other D3 or Land Rover related problems owners may be having with them.

"The trailer carries full diagnostics systems including Black Box Faultmate Extreme which allows me to carry out not only diagnostics but also updates and programming normally only limited to the main dealers."

It's great to see an company that has responded to a real-world need, bringing otherwise costly D3s down to a much more attainable level. Thank goodness we'll still be hearing distinctive V8 rumbles on the roads for a little longer. LRM

CONTACT

4-Tech, Park Lane
Leverington
Wisbech, PE13 5BE
Tel: 01945 870255
E mail: info@4-tech.co.uk