

SIX STUD

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Judge Dredd City Cabs
A 101 club magazine article



The Judge Dredd City Cab

HOW THE STORY CAME ABOUT:

RECENTLY VISITED the Peterborough LRO show, and gleaming on the Land Rover Experience stand, was, amongst others, a Mint 101 GS, and a Land Rover 'City Cab', from the movie 'Judge Dredd'.

This one had a side door opened, so that the inside could be seen. It seemed a good photo subject, and several pictures were taken, but what is the story behind these beasts?

A web search soon revealed that the best place to ask about them was Dunsfold DLR, especially Philip Bashall, who was involved in the project right from the beginning.

MOVIE BACKGROUND

The fictional character 'Judge Dredd', of UK comic "2000AD" fame was played in the 1995 Hollywood movie version by Sylvester Stallone. The film - aptly titled 'Judge Dredd' is set in the crumbling 22nd-century Mega City One, within the environs of which the Land Rover 'City Cab' features with startling regularity.

It is these we focus on now.....

Back in early 1994, Land Rover contacted Philip Bashall of Dunsfold DLR about the possibility of fitting wide fibreglass bodies to 109" chassis for the upcoming movie.

After a bit of discussion about how they would be used, and where, Phil suggested that the tighter turning circle, wider axles and forward control driving position of the 101" would make a better base for the project.

A prototype vehicle was prepared, fully kitted out both externally and internally to ensure that the idea was acceptable.

This is the yellow Dredd City Cab that Land Rover Experience display at show events (pictured right).

The prototype being a success, the search for 101s began. Many places were visited, including Germany, as 33 101 GS models were required, so many in fact, that their removal from the 'system' caused rumours of a Land Rover buy back for an export order!

By this time, most of the 101 GS fleet had already been 'cast' by the MoD, and large quantities of 101GS's for sale were a thing of the past. The largest single purchase was of 18 101's from Aston Down, effectively removing them from sale before they went to auction, much to the chagrin of trade buyers. Others were purchased through advertising, and smaller auction sales.



The City Cab was based on a 101 GS (above left)
Picture courtesy of Philip Bashall

Dredd Prototype on the LR experience stand at Peterborough

All of these 101s, both LHD and RHD models, were transported to Dunsfold, stripped down to chassis cabs, and

brought to MoT standard running condition. The petrol tanks were removed and re-fitted across the back of the chassis, the exhausts were adjusted as well. Once stripped and modified, the wheels were mounted inside out, and the vehicles were sent to "Futura" in Coventry, who fitted the special fibreglass bodies, reputed to have been designed by Rover design gurus Gordon Sked and David Woodhouse. The bodies came in two halves, clamshell style, and bolted together along a central rib.



Once this stage was completed, all 33 were transported to Shepperton studios in covered trailers, where they were fitted out by DLR staff with lights, decals and internal plywood panels to cover the petrol tank, gearbox and engine, to allow a driver to enter the vehicle

from the entry point at the back without becoming jammed in the mechanicals. All of the standard Dredd taxis were empty shells inside - only the first prototype had internal detailing. Other modifications that were needed included an external fuel filler, to ensure that petrol fumes did not become trapped inside the vehicle, and the exhaust was again modified so that it exited the vehicle vertically. It sounded good too!

Overheating was also an initial worry, as the body covered the 101's radiator tunnel,

but this proved unfounded in use.

30 experienced drivers were required for the film shoot, usually 15 each night, who soon found out how limited visibility was. To alleviate this problem slightly, the seat bases were removed, which allowed the drivers to sit lower down, but at the expense of comfort. Emergency exits consisted of 'kick out' panels in the roof, and cabin area. These panels were glued into position. Each driver also had a 'Dredd pack', which included a torch and a fire extinguisher.

Only one major driver injury occurred during filming, when a driver cut his head quite badly by hitting it off the body when exiting a vehicle.



Inside the Prototype, looking towards the driving position



101s arrive at Dunsfold for stripping and overhaul
Picture courtesy of Philip Bashall

with this vehicle being kept at a constant high tick-over to recharge batteries.

Each day from 12 noon, vehicles were refuelled, recharged and maintained as required for that night's filming.

One of the design features, the specially made very large wheel trims, was a constant niggle, as they were constantly disappearing. In order to make the vehicles look right, the wheels were fitted inside out to increase the track slightly. The wheels were fitted with three wheel nuts only, as the other three held the wheel trims on!

No major problems were encountered with the vehicles during the shoot, and indeed one was used as a 'Stunt' vehicle, which had the body reinforced internally, and was driven through a window for one scene.

After a patch up however, this vehicle was re-used for normal duties.

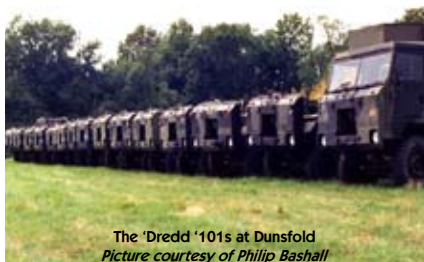
Every vehicle was in use for the final scene of the film. No photography was allowed on the film set, and so very few images of the City Cabs are available from this time.

At the end of filming, four 'Dredds' were taken by Sylvester Stallone for the "Planet Hollywood" restaurants which he co-owns with several other Hollywood stars.

All of the 'Dredds' were runners and could be driven, but only four were made road legal.

This entailed new headlights, indicators, custom wheels and tyres, detachable windcreens to get around the window wiper issue, cooling vents and other modifications. For the London premiere, these were driven around town to promote the film.

One of them was later used for a promotional roadshow around key UK cities for the local launch of the film, which additionally produced a lot of worthwhile publicity for Land Rover.



The 'Dredd' 101s at Dunsfold
Picture courtesy of Philip Bashall

Filming spanned October, November and December of 1994, with a strong possibility that filming was going to continue right up to Christmas eve.

On set, Philip used a 101 radio body as the service vehicle and accommodation,

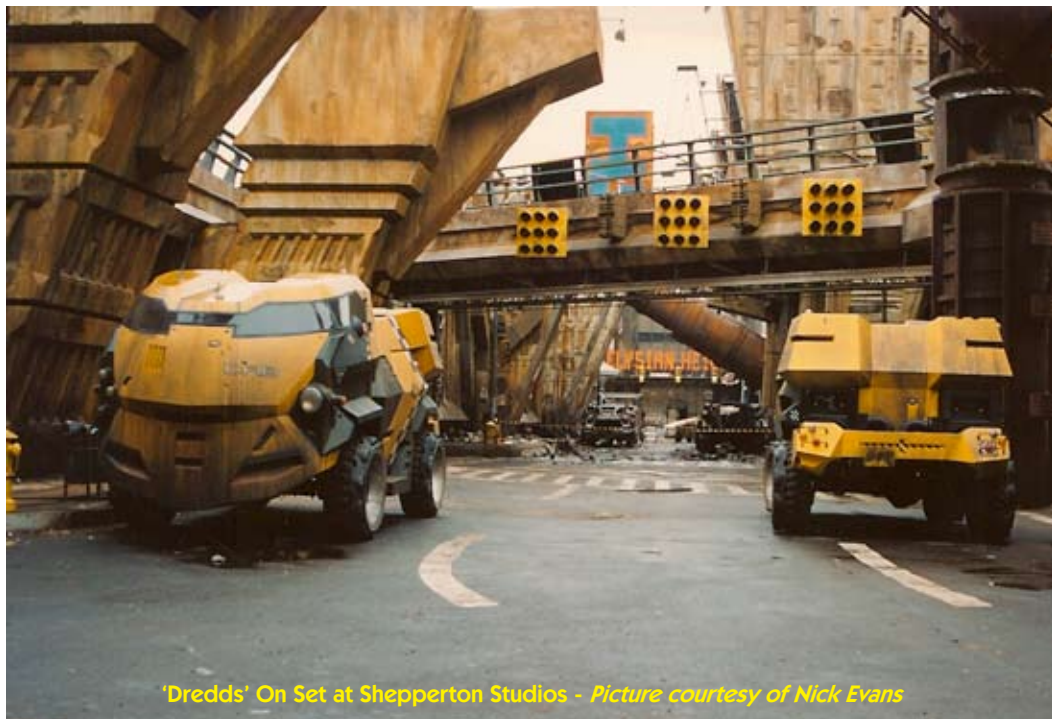
completion of the filming this vehicle was returned back to it's original condition, as were roughly half of all the 'Dredd' vehicles (maybe you own an ex-Dredd 101GS ?).

All of the removed parts from those vehicles kept in 'Dredd' spec. were sold as spares.

The remaining 'Dredd' Spec. machines were sold for roughly £8500 each, a very reasonable price for a piece of Hollywood (and 101) history.

These can still be found plying their trade generally as advertising or show vehicles, usually modified with extra 'bling'.

14 years later, Philip still gets roughly one call a month enquiring about them, mostly to see if he has any left!



'Dredds' On Set at Shepperton Studios - Picture courtesy of Nick Evans

Thanks to Philip Bashall of Dunsfold DLR for his valuable help with this story, and to Nick Evans for allowing the rare 'on set' picture to be published. Unattributed pictures by Dave Neeson. Article previously published in SIX STUD winter 2008 edition.



After this the vehicles had served their purpose, and were for sale.

One of the 'Dredd' 101s was Pre-production number 16, and on