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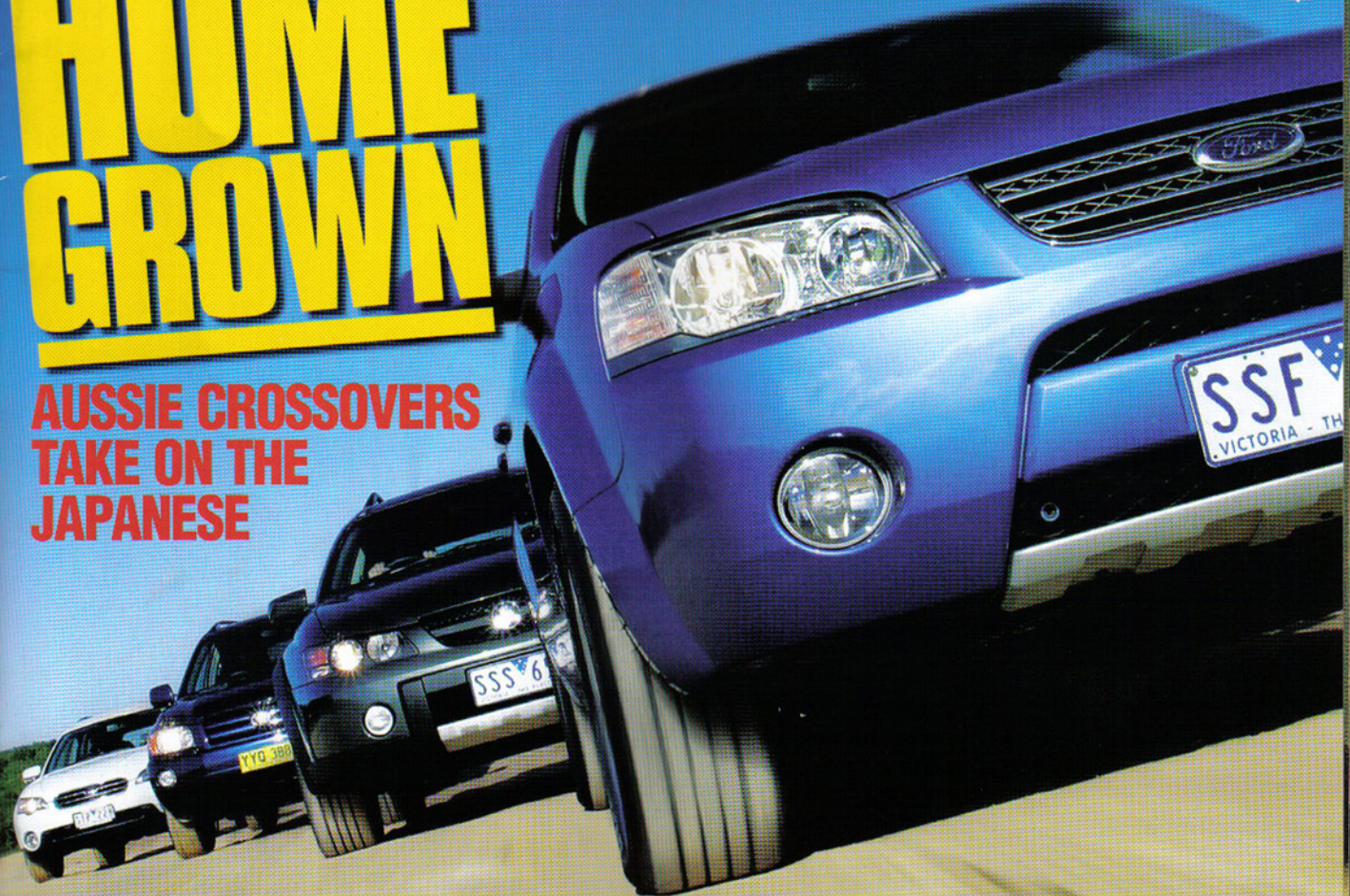
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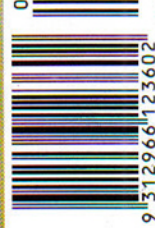
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- All in a good cause
- Four second-hand Discoverys
- Visiting Australia's Red Centre

Rock On

In November of 2003, a team of adventurers set out on an expedition with a purpose – to raise money and awareness for Parkinson's Disease. Gregor Stronach joins the Drive Around the World expedition for their drive to Uluru.

WORDS & PHOTOS BY GREGOR STRONACH

It's a massive undertaking no matter how you look at it. A team of people, made up entirely of self-funded volunteers, has embarked on a 50,000km journey around the world, visiting 34 countries across four continents. Calling themselves Drive Around the World, the group has set off on what for many would be the trip of a lifetime, to raise money and awareness for Parkinson's Disease.

The financial goal they've set for themselves isn't small, and every penny contributed to the expedition will go directly towards finding a cure for Parkinson's.

As part of the journey, Drive Around the World invites others to join them on the expedition, under the banner of the Take Me With You! program. Just about anyone can apply to join the team – journalists, celebrities, travellers and photographers can jump on board and travel with the group as they make their way around the world.

Overlander 4WD met up with the expedition in Alice Springs to join in for a short

portion of the journey into Australia's Red Centre, to Uluru.

By the time we met up with the team, they had already travelled some 30,000km through North, Central and South America, before heading for Australia. After travelling from Brisbane, north to Cooktown, then west to Alice Springs and along the Gunbarrel to Perth, the expedition will head north through Asia and up into the Arctic Circle, heading east once more to North America again, where the journey will end, back where it started, in Sunnyvale, California.

The team is doing the journey with just four vehicles, supplied by Land Rover Certified Pre-Owned, a program designed to reassure potential buyers that used Land Rovers sold in the US are in top condition. The vehicles are all Discovery II V8 autos, but each has more than a couple of modifications done to them to ensure that they would survive the gruelling journey (see sidebar).

Drive Around the World has benefited

from its association with Land Rover, and from a host of other important contacts. During the planning stage, the team put together an advisory board, which included Camel Trophy legend Ian Chapman and former Land Rover North America bigwig Bill Baker. Ian and Bill put together and completed the New Discovery Trek, which hailed the introduction of the Discovery II, an enormous undertaking that saw them arrive at the Paris Motor Show in a Discovery II that had travelled more than 30,000km through four continents – there is some serious distance-driving experience behind this expedition.

The aim of the expedition is pretty straightforward – raise money and awareness for Parkinson's Disease. The methods employed by Drive Around the World, however, are a little more complex, and they're achieving excellent results.

Aside from the drive itself, the expedition has a comprehensive website with daily journal updates, and an excellent section for education. Anyone can log in and



ask the team questions, whether they're related to Parkinson's or not. The team is trying to answer as many questions as possible over the course of the journey – the target is 10,000.

Done it Before

This isn't the first trip around the world Nick Baggary and the team have done. Their love affair with long-haul driving began with the unlikely catalyst of old Land Rovers and the delivery of medical supplies.

Inspired by the story of a couple of guys driving around the globe in an elderly Packard, Nick got together with other Land Rover enthusiasts that he met on the internet, and began putting together expeditions himself, and in 1999 an expedition called LATITUDE – comprised of six people and two Series II Landies – circumnavigated the globe.

When Nick arrived home, it was to the news that his sister had been diagnosed

with Parkinson's Disease. It was around the same time that Todd Borgie, who had accompanied Nick on LATITUDE, discovered that his father also has Parkinson's. While talking one day, Nick's wife Chanda suggested a charity drive – to raise money and awareness by undertaking another expedition, this one called LONGITUDE – and Drive Around the World was off and running. After 18 months of planning, preparing the vehicles and choosing the team, they hit the road in late 2003, and they've been driving ever since.

Joining Nick, Chanda and Todd on this drive are Justin Mounts and Nancy Olson. Land Rover enthusiasts who followed the recent G4 competition closely will recognise Nancy as the USA's competitor in that event – Nancy's love of physical challenges is the stuff of legend. She makes a damn fine cup of coffee, too.

Adam, Neil and Colin make up the rest of the team, as the documentary film crew

travelling with the expedition, recording the entire journey for later broadcast. You could tell when their vehicle was approaching in the quiet of the desert – the pounding reggae music and surfboards on the roof were a dead giveaway.

Heading to Uluru

The drive to Uluru itself was pretty uneventful – it's all good highway out that way, but the twist was this: all of the expedition vehicles are left hand drive. It's an interesting sensation sitting on the wrong side of the vehicle, but on the right side of the road, while trying to drive and stay under the speed limit – the speedometers in the expedition vehicles are in miles per hour, too.

We got a bit of a late start on our drive out of Alice due to some paperwork hassles – the team needed specific permission to enter and film on certain sections of Aboriginal land, and that took a little



while to tee up. However, once that was arranged, we were off into the darkening evening. By the time we reached the highway, dusk was well and truly underway, and with it came the danger of animals on the road. We were fine for the first half of the trip out to Eralunda, at the intersection of the Stuart Highway and Lasseter Highway – the road here is fenced off for the most part, keeping the local wildlife at bay.

The Lasseter Highway isn't fenced, which meant forward progress slowed to a crawl over each crest in the road, the team fearful of wandering stock and wildlife after the proprietor of the roadhouse at Eralunda informed us that it was 'pretty much suicide' driving that stretch of road at night. Unfortunately, our plans for the following day meant that we had no choice but to push on.

We camped by the side of the road when it got too late to carry on, driving off into



NOV 2003 Expedition departs San Francisco, California. Field centre visits Mexico, Belize and Guatemala

DEC 2003 Team crosses Costa Rica entirely on back roads. Reaches Guayaquil, Ecuador and crosses equator driving south

JAN 2004 Team arrives at southern-most road in the world – Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego.

APR 2004 Team begins drive northbound from Brisbane, Australia. Travels 1450km across the GunBarrel Highway

MAY 2004 Team arrives westernmost point in Australia

JUN 2004 Team arrives on the Thai peninsula. Crosses the equator driving North through five countries

JUL 2004 Crossing Myanmar and arrival on the Indian sub-continent. Team crosses Himalayas in Tibet for the second time. Enters China

AUG 2004 Team crosses Takla Makan Desert in China, enters Russia through Kazakhstan. Field centre visits in Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Lake Baikal

AUG 2004 Team nears Arctic Circle above the Kamatchatka Peninsula of Russia, drives the peninsula's perimeter. Arrives Prudhoe Bay, Alaska for final leg to San Francisco

OCT 2004 LONGITUDE Expedition completed in San Francisco



Seeing Uluru close up is an amazing experience – nothing can prepare a person for the moment when they are standing right next to this massive rock...





The Drive Around the World Series II Discoverys are a sight to behold, guaranteed to make just about any 4WDer jealous. Incredibly well set up, with the exception of refrigeration – there's only one fridge to service all of the participants – these vehicles have modification lists longer than could be faithfully reproduced within the pages of the magazine.

But worthy of note on the vehicles is the fact that many of the components chosen by the sponsors for fitment to the expedition vehicles are from an Australian company – ARB.

ARB supplied the bullbars and sidesteps used on the vehicles, as well as the Old Man Emu suspension. Add to this kit 9000lb Warn winches, BF Goodrich Mud Terrains, Hannibal rooftop tents and enough fluid storage for 60 litres of fuel and 40 litres of water in each vehicle, and you've got some seriously kitted-out Discoverys.

Rover Accessories, a Californian company that specialises in Land Rover modifications and upgrades, performed many of the modifications.

The team also carried a prodigious amount of spare parts with them, on the off chance that they'd be needed somewhere remote. To date, the team hasn't had any major mechanical mishaps, although they've come close to tangling with some of Australia's more adventurous wildlife along the roads.

If these vehicles sound too good to be true, there's one more thing to remember – they were all second hand when the expedition started. The vehicles underwent a rigorous 140 point inspection process before Land Rover Certified turned them over to the team. The vehicles will be auctioned off, in the current condition, at the end of the expedition – no doubt they'll be snapped up by Land Rover enthusiasts from all over the world.

the scrub a short way to find a quiet place to set up the rooftop tents. In the distance to the south, a large shape loomed in the darkness, dismissed by everyone as 'just another hill'. But when the sun rose in the morning, it became apparent that Uluru was indeed dominating the landscape.

We were lucky enough to have been granted permission to visit the Mutitjula Aboriginal Community – home to 500 people – which is virtually in the shadow of the rock itself, an invitation that is not forwarded to many visitors to the region. It was an interesting, and somewhat saddening, juxtaposition to the ritzy surrounds of Yulara, the nearby tourism centre.

Seeing Uluru close up is an amazing experience – nothing, not even being bombarded with images through the media, can prepare a person for the moment when they are standing right next to this massive rock, looking up into the formations that give Uluru its wondrous texture.

We joined the amassed tourists at the sunset viewing platform, pausing to take photos of the rock every time the clouds shifted and the sunlight brought the face of Uluru to life. The group was in high spirits, having reached a milestone in their journey across Australia.

Wrap Up

As the team sat by the vehicles, waiting patiently for the sun to sink so that Uluru could put on its famous light show, I began to think about what these people had been through, and the sights that they had seen so far on their journey. To them, Uluru was really just another stop on a long and tiring road. For me, it marked the end of my



CLOCKWISE LEFT TO RIGHT: The GPS was used on every leg of the journey, if only to help calculate the speed at which we were travelling. BFG Mud Terrains, a 4WDers best friend. The team has managed to go for quite some time without a puncture.

Roof top tents are the only way to go on extended world tours – set up and sleep in minutes. The Hannibal tents were fantastic. Each of the vehicles had been fitted with Old Man Emu suspension.

ARB bars adorn the front of the Discos, keeping the wildlife at bay.

