

MOTORING

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BRIGHT SPARK



British brand Evertati has converted a classic Land Rover Series IIA to electric power. **Tim Pitt** drives it.

First, Evertati took on the world's greatest sports car, transplanting the Porsche 911's air-cooled engine for an electric motor. Then it electrified a Le Mans legend, the Ford GT40, substituting cubic inches for kilowatt-hours. Now, it has given a true British icon, the original Land Rover, the EV treatment. Good sense or sacrilege?

Evertati founder Justin Lunny's light-bulb moment arrived during the royal wedding of 2018. As Prince Harry and Meghan Markle drove past his Windsor home in the electric Jaguar E-Type Concept Zero, the tech entrepreneur imagined a range of future-proofed classic cars. After a chance meeting with co-founder Nick Williams (at Le Mans, of course), their new brand was born.

Some EV conversion companies simply swap out engines for the batteries and electric motors from crashed Teslas.

Evertati does things differently, re-designing each car from the ground up, fitting a brand new OEM-spec drivetrain, then upgrading components such as brakes, suspension and steering to suit. After road and track tests, each car is signed off by director of engineering, Mike Kerr, a man whose CV includes stints at McLaren, Lotus and Cosworth Racing.

This holistic approach perhaps explains why Evertati's Porsche 911 is the first – and to-date only – convincing electric sports car I have driven. No heavier than a regular 964 Carrera, its rear-biased weight distribution is also nigh-on identical. Result: a zero-emissions electric car that handles like a classic 911. All I missed was the yowl of a petrol flat-six.

Few will feel so nostalgic about the clatter of a Land Rover Series IIA's 2.25-litre petrol or diesel engine, replaced

EVERTATI SERIES IIA

PRICE:	£180,000
0-62MPH:	13.0 SECS
TOP SPEED:	100MPH
RANGE:	125M
CO2 EMISSIONS:	0G/KM

here by a 60kWh battery pack. Driving two or four wheels via a Defender transfer 'box, it serves up 150hp and 221lb ft of torque: good for 0-62mph in 13 seconds. The 1971 original, by contrast, needed an extra 10 seconds (and a following wind, ideally).

Based on the ex-RAF airfield at Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire, Evertati has an ideal location for testing cars. It's also a place this Series IIA, riding on steel wheels and painted Pastel Green, looks instantly at home. It might cost

£180,000, but the Land Rover has a rugged, no-nonsense demeanour that brand new Defenders can only aspire to.

The same is true inside, where upgrades are subtly integrated, rather than in-your-face like a Tesla touchscreen. The front seats and rear benches, for example, are both heated, an LCD panel sits within the speedo and there's a bespoke audio system inside the centre cubby box. Traditional Land Rover quirks, such as the sliding windows, fold-down windscreen and levers to engage high or low range, are all carefully preserved.

The car here is a prototype, so my drive was limited to the runway and perimeter roads of the airbase. As someone who grew up driving Land Rovers (I cut my writing teeth at Land Rover World magazine), the lofty driving position, approximate steering and plentiful body-roll all feel familiar. Even with more than twice the 70hp it was born with, the IIA

prefers not to be rushed – and that's part of its charm.

What's less familiar is the near-silence and instant shove of the electric motor. Instead of a mechanical commotion punctuated by slow and deliberate gearshifts with a spindly wand, progress is smooth, automatic and utterly serene. Well, until you go a bit faster, when wind noise and tyre roar soon bluster to the fore.

All that electric oomph is beneficial off-road, too, where the Evertati retains all the ability of the original car. Even so, I suspect most will find homes in central London, as an eco alternative to the ubiquitous Mercedes-AMG G-Class, or at beachside holiday homes and ski chalets, where a real-world range of 125 miles will be plenty. I can't think of a nicer way to potter around.

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Tim Pitt writes for motoringresearch.com

RML SHORT WHEELBASE: BRITISH-BUILT RETRO SUPERCAR NEARS PRODUCTION

The first RML Short Wheelbase is due to hit the road next month, before full production of the British-built GT starts in spring 2022. A total of 30 cars will be made, priced at around £1.3 million each.

This is the first own-brand car from RML Group, the engineering firm behind many of Aston Martin's Le Mans racers, plus some very specialist road cars. Highlights from its back-catalogue include the Nissan Juke R and record-breaking NIO EP9 electric hypercar.

A 'reimagined' classic in the mould of a Singer 911, the Short Wheelbase is styled to resemble a 1959 Ferrari 250 GT SWB, but borrows its 5.5-litre natu-

rally aspirated V12 from a 550 Maranello (1996-2002). With 485 prancing horses and less than 1,600kg to shift, expect 0-62mph in 4.1 seconds and a top speed of 185mph-plus.

Each Short Wheelbase is based around the central chassis of a 550 Maranello and retains that car's identity for registration purposes. However, many components are bespoke: designed and hand-made in Wellingborough by a 60-strong team.

Their focus has been to enhance an analogue driving experience with modern comforts. The car's cabin, for example, combines an open-gate manual gearshift with cupholders and a pop-up

touchscreen.

The carbon fibre composite body for 'Car Zero' is now complete and ready for paint, after which the engine, wiring, brake lines and interior trim will be added. CFD (Computational Fluid Dynamics) has been used to fine-tune the beautiful, Ferrari-inspired shape and will soon be bolstered by real-world road testing.

Michael Mallock, chief executive of RML Group and a former British GT and GT4 driver, will be on-hand to offer feedback. He promises "an emotional experience for all the right reasons". Look out for a review of the RML Short Wheelbase in late February.

