



Above left, centre: It's very much a case of leading with your banker when it comes to the suspension. The Ranger runs a +2" Old Man Emu kit, complete with coil-overs at the front and greasable shackles on the rear leaf springs

Above right: This makes room for a set of 33x12.50R18 Radar R7 mud-terrains mounted on 18 x 9" Mickey Thompson rims. Behind them, you can see the six-pot PB disc and six-pot caliper upgrade that means brake fade is never likely to be an issue. They're fed by braided hoses, so off-road damage is that much less likely to be an issue too

and the previous Ranger was among them – but with its combination of size and styling, the T6 model set new standards.

The Ranger is the closest thing you can get to an American truck in the UK without actually buying one. That's one reason for the enormous popularity it's gained since its arrival. It's big, even by double-cab standards, it's bold, even by double-cab standards... and, as if to seal the deal, you can get it with an engine that knocks the others' into a cocked hat.

At the bottom end of the range, the Ranger is powered by a 2.2 TDCi which, which perfectly adequate, feels a lot like the Transit unit it is. Up at the top, however, you can get it with a 3.2 TDCi whose 200bhp and 346lb.ft give it the sort of performance you've got a right to expect from such an in-your-face vehicle. At a time when most pick-up engines are getting smaller, Ford is one of the only manufacturers to recognise

the demand for trucks that lead with a genuine display of heft.

There's another reason why this Ranger has taken Ford's presence in the pick-up market to a whole new level, too. This is that unlike the previous model, which was a badge-engineered Mazda, it was developed by Ford Australia. Its popularity Down Under – and indeed in many other key markets around the world – means accessory makers were on the case from first light, so building one these days isn't a case of taking whatever you can get.

Take the Ranger in these pictures, for example. Its owner, Andy Smith, lists a Nissan Pathfinder, a Toyota Surf and a couple of Series IIA Land Rovers among his previous vehicles – all good, credible 4x4 kit, but you definitely get the feeling that this T6 is what it's all been leading up to.

Andy bought it new – which, if you can afford it, is the best possible way to start a project.

He then got in touch with Paul Brown at PB Customs, which is another of the best possible things you can do.

It wasn't bad for Paul, either, because working on a vehicle that hasn't already been marinated in a cocktail of rainwater, abrasive mud and corrosive minerals has got to be one of the rarest privileges a 4x4 specialist can enjoy. Most of us can only afford to base projects on older vehicles, which means that before anything can go on a whole array of grotty, flaky, crusted-up and rounded-over fixings has got to be fetched off – a necessary evil, but oh what an evil.

Andy describes the Ranger's build as a 'progressive stage evolution', and like all such things it's not yet fully evolved. His future plans are mainly in the area of overlanding prep, though, so for now this is a good indication of how far he and Paul felt it needed to be taken as an off-road tool.

Below left: A slick new truck like the Ranger would like distinctly odd with a scaffolding-style roof rack up top. It would also tend to hit a lot of trees, and neither is the idea at all. Hence the Frontrunner Slimline 2 job you see here – which, as well as being ready to lug a tent or no shortage of kit, is home to a CB whip and a 40" Duplex LED bar from Wilderness

Below right: Wolf Boxes from Frontrunner provide worthwhile stowage for cargo straps and so on, and the whole lot is secured beneath a Mountain Top roller

