

T4 TROPHY TRAP

THIS MILO 2 Camper conversion from Middlesex Motor Caravans has been personalised by its owner, Simon Sexton and recently it won an award at our first *Camper&Bus Show!*

WORDS Ivan McCutcheon PICTURES Matt Richardson

To win awards at car shows, you have to put in a lot of effort. You can't just roll up and expect to go home with a trophy if your Camper isn't spotlessly clean – well, unless you're in the Rat Look class. Some of the really serious trophy hunters and rosette queens only use their 'pride and joys' as show cars, and spend extraordinary amounts of time on their preparation and detailing.

If you are the type of person that hands over £10 once a month at the local Polish car wash, you probably won't be getting any awards at the next VW show. However, if you're the type of person that doesn't let dust settle on your car, cleans the treads of the tyres or polishes the underside of the wings, well, your masterpiece is probably graining already.

As far as Simon Sexton, from Pinner in Middlesex is concerned, when his name was announced as the winner of Best T4 at our first *Camper&Bus Show* at Santa Pod back in April it was "the cherry on the cake". When his Camper was subsequently voted 'Best water-cooled Van' at the Plymouth Volksfest, he told us, "The awards really made me proud but



With a conversion to shower and toilet, a camper van is a family taxi as well as a holiday home.



A family taxi in the week, and a family holiday on wheels at the weekend

ultimately the thing that gives me greatest enjoyment in knowing the bus is being used mainly for what it was designed for - a family taxi in the week and a family holiday on wheels at the weekend."

CHERRY GAYS

Clearly, Steven's T4 doesn't sit in the garage all week long, waiting to be driven to show to do better in the concours arena. In fact, it's more likely to be seen zigzagging north-south on the school run or dodging trolleys in the local supermarket car park. But then this shouldn't be a surprise, as since going up around Volkswagen that were put to rest. "As a child growing up in the Seventies I have fond recollections of many a family holiday spent in my dad's mustard and white Ray Windows Devon Motorcar, the most memorable trip being a tour of Europe in company with my dad's friend's Newcastle Bay. To this day I have a strong memory of being in a mountain car park in southwest

and seeing a 'newangled' Type 25 a couple of weeks after its launch and thinking, 'one day I will own one of these!' Not long after, Dad sold the Motorcar?" Steven admits he always had, as he puts it, "the Camper bug". But after the Devon, he was sold it laid dormant for a number of years. By the time Steven's own motorcar career started it was, to use his own words "dominated by '80s and '90s British cars", although most of his friends were into British, so he attended a few Run to the Sun and Bug Inn events. He went as to say that once he was married and had two very young sons he "decided that a Camper Van would be the best way to enjoy family holidays again. So in '98, after a lengthy search I purchased a 1997 Type 25 1H Top Devon Motorcar in fantastic condition - my childhood dream finally realised. We spent some great times with the Van, including an extended six-week tour of France, until eventually it made way for a



Historic Barber van the North car

Using the pop top (right) for extra storage space



In the pop top a bed for two



Think of it as a good head on wheels



Michael Steven's Motorcar

series of practical VW cars, and a brief flirt with a blue Type 25 Casado."

Jumping forward to 2008, and Steven felt it was time to invest in another VW Camper Van. "The urge became too strong to resist so I started hunting around. Initially the idea of an old Van was tempting, but as this was to be my daily means of transport as well as a leisure vehicle I decided something more modern might be appropriate. While searching online I stumbled upon the VW's forum and after a few weeks of looking in the background I decided a T4 Camper would be ideal for us."

As the T4 has aged, it has come of age and in terms of what you get for your money, they're unbeatable. "The ever-growing enthusiast base and T4 forum means likeminded owners have plenty of opportunities to get together or find advice. Once Steven had done the maths - two sons aged 8 and 10 and a two-year-old daughter - he needed a Camper that would work during the week as a family car and be big enough for the whole family to slip away for the weekend. "I looked at quite a few T4s, then I was directed to a conversion company very local to me, Middlesex Motorcaravans in Uxbridge, North-Mid London, as a long-established conversion company with a personal approach to their customers. After exploring about their current stock, Graham and Hilary at M4C told me they had a suitable Van within my budget. So in December 2008, after viewing the Van, I paid the deposit."

I decided a T4 Camper would be ideal for us



Do it all with bar and bike rack

ALPINE ICE

"After installing a new Alpine stereo system and fitting a towbar, my next job was to create an extra bed to make our Van five-berth. I bought some material to match the Camper's upholstery and constructed a cab bunk that sits on the door cards and has been a great hit with my young daughter."

"Quite happy with the Van's mileage 88bhp 2.5TDi engine, I went about making the Van look more individual. First up were a set of 17-inch Borbet alloy wheels, fitted with 245/45 tyres. These are the same as the 'Estemo' wheels that were offered by VW as an option on the T4, so at least I know they are up to taking the weight of the Van plus its conversion." They also have the look of a factory-optional alloy, which is always a winner in our book.

So what other modifications has

Simon made? "I have replaced the front and rear indicators with crystal clear ones and added some front fog lights, all from Ade at T4SRUS [www.t4srus.co.uk]. The stainless steel side bars are courtesy of Jeff at RDC, racing and the chequered bonnet bar was supplied by Mike at Cheshire Motor Caravans [www.c-m-c.org.uk]. The front chin spoiler is off a Mk3 Golf VR6 which fits long-nose T4s with very little alteration. The Camper is running on standard suspension components to keep the



Closest mud flap ever

ride nice and comfortable, although I did lower the front about 25mm by adjusting the torsion bars to make it sit with a more purposeful stance!"

If you have recently purchased, or are thinking of buying a T4 it'd be well worth checking out the T4SRUS and CMC websites as both offer a range of products you didn't even know existed.

Simon had made all the changes he'd planned and was more than happy with the appearance of his Camper. Now it was time to get away in it, so he started planning the first family holiday in the T4. They headed off to France in August 2007 for an 18-day holiday, and loved every minute of it. On their return, the Sextons tried to get away for the weekend as often as possible. Simon really got into the T4, and started to get more and more involved with the VWT4 forum. As he puts it, "some would say I'm addicted to the forum!"

DIGGING THE SCENE

They have attended many meets and shows with fellow members. "It soon became apparent you could not hope to meet a friendlier bunch and to help out a little I have organised Forum camping areas at this year's Big Bang / Camper-Bus show, Plymouth Volkstest and Camper Jam." Obviously, being a Volkswagen you expect a T4 to be very good in terms of reliability as long as it has been maintained properly, so, we thought we'd ask Simon if his T4 has been well behaved.

"The Van has been without fault, apart from one episode I would rather forget! After a pleasant weekend away at the Holton Classic show last year, I was heading



Simon's Reimo-based conversion uses a Domestic fridge



home on the M3. Without warning at about 70mph the pop top flew open accompanied by a very loud bang, forcing me over to the hard shoulder. In a panic I managed to fold it back down but one of the hydraulic struts seemed to be damaged. Once home it became apparent that the only part that needed replacing was a small plastic clip – just goes to show how well made the Reimo roofs are!"

So for anyone else out there with a pop top, please don't forget to secure your roof with the internal straps before driving off – you have been warned!

From the minute the first VW Transporter rolled off the production line it was clear it was a true multi-purpose vehicle. Simon Sexton has proved that his T4 is everything he

could wish for. He's personalised it to make it stand out and it's proved not only good enough to win awards but also to be featured in this magazine. The man behind the Van has found that VW ownership has brought with it some great new friends. The VWT4 Forum has benefited from Simon's involvement too, so basically, since the day he bought himself this Camper, everyone's been happy!



Very Special indeed: Simon's SBBC model was once a builder's Van



Sitting pretty on Borbet alloys to retain that 'factory' look