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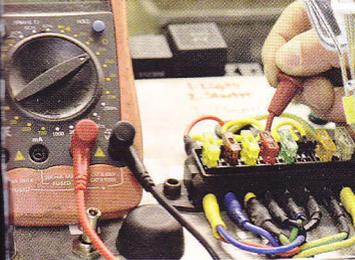
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Carpe diem

With a life motto of 'life is for living, you are only here once', Gary Bain gives his all to everything he does. The proof can be seen right here



It's funny how one thing leads to another and, before you know it, your life has completely changed direction, often quite by chance. And this is exactly what happened to the owner of this stunning '65 Split. This is the story of how this Bus ended up in Gary Bain's driveway.

Being a serial hobbyist, Gary can't sit still for any length of time. He has to be doing something and, if he's not doing something, he has to be planning what he's going to do. I think for you to better understand Gary, I'll let the woman who has been by

his side for 21 years describe him. "Gary is known as 'Peter Pan, the lost boy' by his family and close friends," says Debbie Bain. "He's a hobby freak and since we have been together he has gone from one hobby to the next – bird of prey flying, carp fishing, tournament paintballing, scuba diving, miniature aircraft flying, Koi fish ponds, marine fish tanks and Xbox, to name but a few. Nearly is not in his vocabulary, so each hobby is done to the max, either in achievement or money spent. Since starting his latest venture, kite surfing, a number of years ago, he began admiring T4s and the

need to get changed somewhere warm on the beach became his excuse to buy one. Of course, this then had to be modified and then he had to join a club. Very rapidly he got into the VW scene and enjoyed going to shows and camping. Finally, Gary had found a hobby that we could do as family and I think we all loved it."

As we all know, once you get hooked on VWs there's no way out, and the desire for a specific model grows. In Gary's case, that model was a Split Screen Bus, but having invested a lot of money into his 'new' T4 he couldn't justify having two Campers, so »

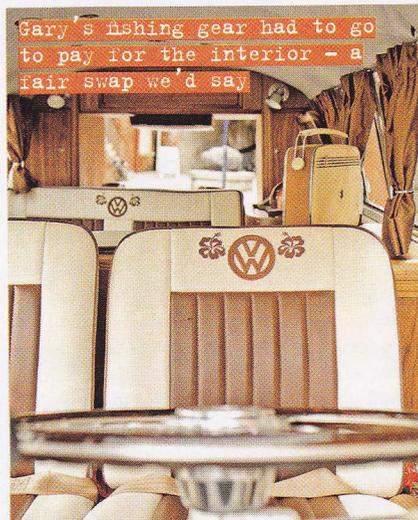
eBay became his nightly haunt until he found an advert for this 1965 Split



woodrim wheel, cocoa mats, gauges... it's safe to say Gary likes his accessories



Gary's fishing gear had to go to pay for the interior - a fair swap we'd say



Flip-down DVD player for entertainment on those rainy camping trips



Eye-popping paint makes this Bus look like a wild custom. Look again though and you'll see it's largely stock

the T4 was put up for sale and eBay became his nightly haunt until he found an advert for this 1965 Split. It was matt black at the time but looked straight and solid so, with the majority of the money scraped together, it was time to say yes to full on vintage VW ownership. "Gary's plan was to drive the Split as it was," Debbie continues, "but even I could tell that was never going to happen. From the minute we made it through the gates of our first VW show, I knew he was going to do his best to get a Split Bus and you can imagine the look on my face and the laughter from our friends knowing exactly what this meant. To do it to Gary's exacting standards was going to cost a small fortune. Stories of money pits, travelling to the end of the earth for parts and heartbreak seemed to follow everywhere I went as I spoke with other VW widows."

The fear of not being experts and getting it wrong was scary, but thankfully Debbie need not have worried because Gary bought a good 'un. It didn't require any major bodywork, apart from some small patchwork repairs and a section of the cab floors, and soon the once ratty matt black

Bus was ready to be given a fresh coat of Cocoa Brown and White by George at K&K Body Repairs in Portsmouth (tel. 07816 264683). The nose badge was also painted in Cocoa Brown in contrast to the white it sits on, while the bumpers and overriders were also shot in white.

Cocoa nut

Looking at the Bus you can't help but think that it's been dramatically modified, but in fact it's bone stock, with the colour combination being the only break from the norm. Obviously the wheels and stance are not as VW signed off on, but it goes to prove just how important striking the right colour choice is.

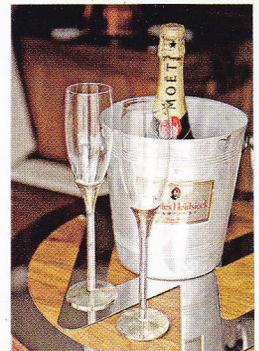
The Bus sits lower, thanks to dropped spindles up front and a straight axle conversion out back and Gary feels it sits exactly right, being perfectly useable whilst at the same time exuding that cool factor.

Behind those blingy EMPI fives lurk stock drums that Gary plans to upgrade to disc brakes soon because with the 1641cc motor the '65 came with, Gary says he would feel more secure knowing that he

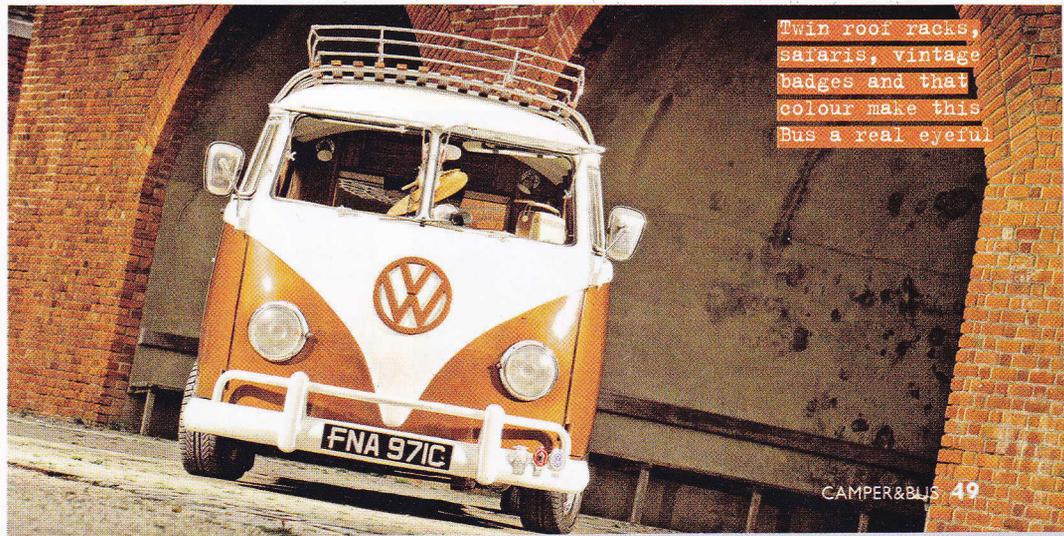
had more modern braking available to him.

Vanfest has been the starting point and inspiration of many a restoration, and this Bus was no different, except in this case it was the interior restoration that the event inspired. After attending the show in 2010, Gary saw cabinets by bespoke Bus furniture makers, All Things Timber, in North Yorkshire (tel. 07786 072872), as well as the work of Bromsgrove Auto Trimmers (tel. 01527 576643). Gary: "Our hearts were set, and we had to have their work in our Bus. I hadn't budgeted for an interior re-fit to the scale and degree we went for and the well was dry, so something had to give. That was to be my carp fishing gear that had taken 13 years to amass. It was the only way I could raise the money to get the interior I wanted, so I had no choice. This, as well as anything else that wasn't bolted down, found its way onto eBay and we managed to raise the cash."

Having spoken with both companies, it was then up to Gary and Debbie to decide how they wanted their interior to function. So, after many sketches and designs, the duo finalised their idea and passed it to Adrian >>



Beautiful bespoke units were crafted in walnut by All Things Timber



Twin roof racks, saharis, vintage badges and that colour make this Bus a real eye-ful

Straight axle conversion brought the back down. It's lower than stock but maintains a comfy ride



This life-loving couple have created a truly eye-popping Bus with gusto

at All Things Timber, who constructed the cabinets and seats using American walnut.

The rear seats are mounted closer to the doors with the cabinets along the facing wall. The reason for this is both Gary and Debbie felt that as they were paying for a high end, bespoke interior they wanted people to see it, which doesn't happen if they are mounted on the opposite side. It works too because the first thing you notice when you look inside the Bus are the solid curved units facing you. The unit to the left has a flip-up cover that reveals the cooker, while the unit on the right has a similar flip-up cover with the sink beneath. Both units have storage underneath, accessed by the solid curved doors. Being a Bus that was always destined to be used, storage was high on the list of requirements, especially as their daughter,

Elisha's, friends now tag along for as many trips away as possible, and with young girls comes lots of clothes and toys. Then, if there is any room left, Gary will bring his kite surfing gear.

Space saver

As you would expect, there is storage under the rear seats once you lift the cushions to reveal the finger pull, but there is also storage behind the seat back rest so as not to waste an inch of available space. The round table is used more for shows than anything else, and for day-to-day use there's an oblong table that collapses to form part of the bed base.

Bromsgrove Auto Trimmers stepped up and covered the rear seats in brown and white vinyl with embroidered VW logos on the uprights, while on the reverse they

went for a more durable brown fabric to sleep on, which also prevents the not-so-attractive vinyl sweats!

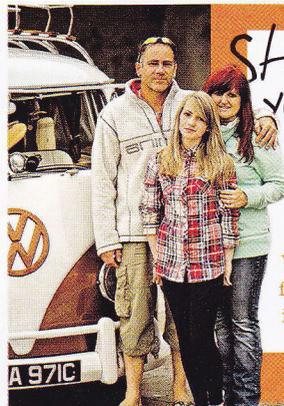
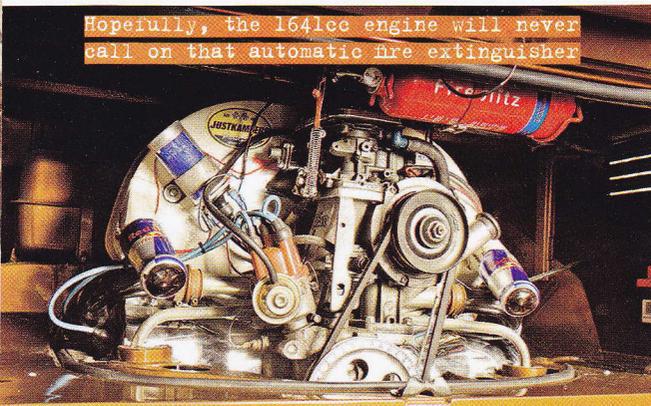
The Recaro seats that came with the '65 were swiftly removed and replaced with stock seats, again re-covered in matching brown and white vinyl, while the same materials found its way onto the door cards.

Laminate wood flooring can be found in the rear, while the driver has cocoa mats under foot. Debbie can take a bow too as she has cleverly used napkin holders as tiebacks. The centres would have originally held photos, but Debbie inserted matching curtain fabric instead, giving a very elegant feel to this once ratty looking import.

All in all, this life-loving couple have created a truly eye-popping Bus with gusto and I suspect that motto we mentioned at the start may just be Debbie's also! 🇩🇪



Hopefully, the 1641cc engine will never call on that automatic fire extinguisher



Stand by your van Gary Bain '65 Split Screen

Thanks to their VW, Gary, Debbie and their daughters, Elisha (13) and Kiri (22), enjoy a new way of life. Debbie sums it up perfectly: "We love our Bus and the lifestyle it brings. We've made some great friends and enjoy fantastic weekends away. This is one hobby that is for keeps, even the 'lost boy' agrees with that!"