

Driving Force shifts from bands to Blitz

Australia Wide Coaches has gained maximum exposure with its Driving Force concept.

Is it a yacht? Is it a cruiser? Is it a private jet? No, it's Driving Force, the road-going combination of all the above.

A chauffeur-driven luxury penthouse on wheels, created in Australia and winning new friends and admirers by the day.

Welcome to Australia's only purpose-built commercial sleeper coach/motorhome, the sleekest, most luxurious form of travel on the road today.

There's nothing like regular TV exposure to get folks talking, and the Driving Force motorhome, owned and operated by Australia Wide Coaches, has certainly become a familiar sight to Channel Nine's Domestic Blitz viewers.

Unusually, the coach was already used to being the centre of attention in its previous life when it was used as transport and accommodation for the crews and bands that toured Australia earlier in the decade.

In true showbiz style, prior to its debut on Domestic Blitz, the Scania-based vehicle went in for some substantial cosmetic surgery ahead of its new life on TV.

Australia Wide Coaches' Managing Director, Richard Dawes explains: "Driving Force was built from scratch as a motorhome. I saw a need in the Australian market and decided to take a punt and build a sleeper bus, along the lines of those that are so popular in UK and US as the transport solution for bands. There was nothing like it in Australia," Richard says.

The concept attracted all the top names in music during their tours Down Under, from Robbie Williams to Silverchair, Pink and Keith Urban, among a galaxy of stars.

"Driving Force was fitted out by Jacana at Tarree. It is a Scania K 124 EB powered by a 420hp six-cylinder engine complete with Scania Opticruise. The 13,5m body is a high-deck by Coach Design.

The initial design brief was that it must not look like a caravan, but be like a yacht or cruiser. The result was spectacularly successful. It was in use for five years and clocked up 160,000km. So then I thought, 'why not give it a refit?'" Richard says.

He didn't hold back on the new interior, adding even more luxury features to further improve the concept.

"Now it is even better, and we have been able to expand the appeal of the vehicle into the corporate market, which is handy given the reduction in the number of international acts touring Australia at the present time.

"We think it will be ideal for corporate events and trade shows as well as on-track hospitality at horse-racing and motor-racing venues and the like," Richard says. "We're thinking of adding a side awning and maybe a suitably designed trailer to extend its range and the possibilities for its use."

The vehicle is exceptionally well-equipped and has an on-board generator so it is self-contained and self-powered. It brings A-grade facilities to a corporate event almost anywhere a 13,5m bus can access.



Features include 14 luxury seats, including two and four-seater leather loungers and four electric full leather Business Class sleeper seats equipped with seat belts, located in the forward and rear lounge areas. The floor is polished timber combined with luxury carpet.

The Business Class Seats also have individual Work Station and Privacy Curtains, while the interior is heated and cooled through four separate air-conditioning systems.

The galley offers filtered water, a refrigerator, hot water urn, microwave, ice maker, dishwasher and granite bench top food preparation area, as well as a fully stocked bar. The bathroom features a



Mobile Command Centre: Driving Force was commandeered for a Scania media event in May, to assist Svempa and his R 999 Red Pearl meet the press. Channel Nine presenters, Shelley Craft and Scott Cam, below left with Driving Force owner Richard Dawes, are as much the stars of the show as the motorhome. Fans flock to the vehicle to try to grab a glimpse of whomever is inside.



toilet, vanity unit and mirror, while the entertainment system comprises a large LCD screen with additional flat screen monitors throughout the cabin, and VHS Video/CD/DVD/Sony Playstation systems and an iPod Docking Station.

There are six beds in private bunk configuration with full inner spring mattresses, complete with reading lights and safety curtains. The rear lounge can also convert to a large single bed. Dimmer lighting and power points located throughout.

Perhaps the best feature is the slide out full-size barbecue and sink, separate entertainment unit, table and chairs stowed underneath

the vehicle, which do not take up too much of the underfloor luggage capacity. As a final dash of luxury, there is a private portable outdoor shower unit that can be fed with hot and cold water.

“Channel Nine saw the US-version of Domestic Blitz used a big black bus, so the fit was instant and highly appropriate,” Richard says.

“We’re now on the third series of the show and the exposure has opened many doors for us. The branding is very powerful. Wherever the bus pulls up, people come from all around to see if the presenters of the TV show are onboard. Even if they are not, everyone wants to see the inside, because it is so different,” he says. ●