

1967 Kombi Restoration : Part 3

Paint and panel

It had taken me the better part of three years to complete all the rust repairs on my 67 Splittie. Too often my attention had been diverted to other projects which passed through our household. The first was Big Red: a 64 Single Cab Aussie Ute which my boys had purchased. This car was one of a group which had been converted into novelty fire trucks for carnival rides. We still have a photo of my wife at about 4 years old, on the back of "Big Red" (or one of its siblings). Initially we had hoped to restore this ute, but unfortunately years of storage at North Haven, had left her absolutely riddled with rust. Eventually we stripped the ute, cut it up and sold off what we could not use.



I managed a few other minor jobs during this time. One of these was to attack all the hinges. After 40 years of opening and closing, the hinge pins get worn and the doors flop about on the hinges. To make it worse,

the hinge pins rust in to place and can't be driven out. This meant carefully drilling out the hinge pins and locating oversized replacements. Fortunately they are available (along with correctly sized clearance drill bits) from Motorspares. The cargo door and rear gates hinges all received new pins. The pins on the lower cab door hinges were replaced and the upper hinges made ready for new stainless steel mirror arms.



The next distraction was the Club Kombi. With every Saturday and many Wed evenings spent at North East Powder Coaters, I was finding it very

hard to get any time on my car. Before I knew it, the Club Kombi was driveable and my Kombi had barely progressed. Through this period a string of other cars passed through our garage, each demanding attention: Andrew's 11 Window "Filmore", a 61 Ghia, my own 67 T3 Ghia, Steven's Single Cab Ute, a couple of T3 Notches, a Bay Window Kombi, a couple of buggies. So getting time on my Kombi was a rare event. By June 2005, I had managed to get the whole car primed in 2-pack. It goes on thick and can then be sanded flat – OK, then you fill, cut, bog, fill, cut, bog, seemingly forever, before hitting it with primer all over again. The whole car got a good coating - both inside and out.



Whether this approach is better – or easier – than the traditional approach of primer then spray putty remains to be seen. Spray putty is certainly a lot easier to sand!

After completing the priming, I had another idea: Bay Window kombis were fitted with an engine inspection hatch which greatly eased access for servicing and repairs, could I fit one to my splittie? Fortunately one of the cars that passed through our shed was a T3 Squareback.



These have the largest of all engine covers - dwarfing the ones found on later bays. This was another of those scary jobs: fancy cutting solid, primed metal! None the less, I persisted and the end result is superb. Looks like it came out of the

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factory like that. I even used some spare ute ribs as reinforcing under the front and rear edges.

Just as we had done on the Club Kombi, the first layer of two-pack primer was sanded back, only to reveal lots of highs and lows. This necessitated some more judicious tapping, a touch of filler and more sanding. Once all this was done, I hit it with another coat of primer – enabling me to finish off the engine inspection hatch at the same time. Once this second coat of primer was flatted, things ground to a halt again: too many other cars, too much time on the Club Kombi and too little cash.



While waiting for the chance to get going again, I spent lots of time pondering about paint. There's plenty of discussion around on the choice between acrylic and two-pack paints. Two pack paints have traditionally contained isocyanate, making them a health hazard. Spray painters wear masks with an external air supply to ensure they don't breathe the fumes, but these are too expensive for home painters. Which pushes the decision back towards acrylics. Acrylics take much more time: with the need to apply several coats, which for best results, are in turn covered by clear coats. The need for hand sanding between these coats can add further to the time taken. Well applied two-pack gives the required finish "off the gun" and shouldn't need sanding. I had put a bet on each way, buying 8 litres each. In 2007 the interior was shot with two-pack top coat, then everything languished while I helped my son Andrew restore his latest baby – another single cab ute.

The benefits of two-pack led me to purchase 8 litres and get them tinted to the original Lotus White spec. Then about 6 months later I reconsidered and ended up buying 8 litres of acrylic. When Andrew decided to change the colour of his ute from burnt orange to blue and white (even before it hit the road) he claimed 4 litres of my acrylic to do the white parts with. However once the paint was on, we realised it

was a mis tint: of the two 4 litre tins I had purchased, one had been correctly tinted, while the other (which Andrew had grabbed) had missed some pigment and ended up a fairly clean white, rather than the cream hue which marks Lotus White. This was actually a blessing as the plain white is a far better contrast to the metallic BMW Blue of the lower body.



As a family we debated long and hard about the colour combination. I always wanted to retain the original Lotus White colour but while everyone agreed on that, we couldn't decide on whether to apply a second highlight colour. Two-tone paint jobs seem to define the splittie in most people's minds, but if I had one, it had to be reversed: instead of a light colour above the waist and a dark below, I wanted a light roof, dark middle and light lower section. Fellow Club Kombi devotee, Dave Furlong was a firm advocate of this idea, but others weren't so sure. Eventually I reached a compromise: blow the whole van in Lotus White, then see how it looks. If it was too stark, the centre section (windows to nose) would be sprayed in a contrasting grey. The only question was when would it be done? Oh yes, and when I would actually buy some more paint to replace what had gone into the ute!

.....To Be Continued in the Next Edition.