

# Dream Machine

At Auckland Coach Builders, big is good, and there is nothing the boys enjoy more than turning dreams into reality.

WORDS + PHOTOGRAPHY *Jason Burgess*



01



02

**M**artin Wellesley says he has always drawn pictures as a hobby, mostly to give form to his ideas. The difference between Martin and closet visionaries, is that his drawings usually become realities. One such doodle was his very first motorhome project—a \$550,000 rolling apartment that required around 5,000 man-hours of work over the course of two years to build. In part, the bus looks like it may have been dreamed up by Martin's imagination when he was just a kid. The 'Moon Cap' hub covers were inspired by the Thunderbirds and the low-rider wheel housings hark back to his boy racer teens. Then there's the enormous entertaining saloon with its twin slide-outs, fully stocked bar, 5.1 home theatre, 46-inch TV with PlayStation 2 that doubles as his DVD – all of which are undoubtedly inspired by 1960's Sci-Fi TV fantasy. Having sold his IT business two years ago, Martin—now in his early forties—finds himself in the enviable position of being able to travel whenever he likes. "I no longer need to make a commitment to somebody else's deadline for an income," >

"If Ian wasn't the individual that he is—an entirely open minded, expert technician, experienced in all facets of coach building and with an ability to hear someone out without pre-conceptions—then this thing would have got six months down the track and ended up in the dump."



03

01 Cool paint job! 02 Martin Wellesley, at home on the road 03 Spacious living





04



05

he says. Officially, he may be retired but his mind works overtime. It freewheels between fresh projects and bus designs, inspirations and his obvious love of Aotearoa, evidenced by a paua and koru motif running the length of his 10.5-metre 1993 Nissan UA510. When I express surprise, he assures me it really is a 1993 vehicle. Apparently, this also surprises many of the passersby who inspect his “rego” stickers. Although he reckons he’s pretty much left the front and rear intact, the subtle changes that have been made have smoothed out the vehicle’s original harsh bulky lines and contemporised its character. Of course, the drawings alone did not make a bus and Martin credits Ian Paterson and the team at Auckland Coach Builders (ACB) for bringing it all together. “If Ian wasn’t the individual that he is—an entirely open minded, expert technician, experienced in all facets of coach building and with an ability to hear someone out



06

“I went to ACB with concepts and raw hand sketches. I had an idea and we built the idea. It’s the most expensive way to make something—a big one-off. But thanks to detailed planning, we never had to redo anything.”

without pre-conceptions, then this thing would have got six months down the track and ended up in the dump.”  
 “I went to ACB with concepts and raw hand sketches. I had an idea and we built the idea. It’s the most expensive way to make something—a big one-off. But thanks to detailed planning, we never had to redo anything.” >

04 View to front 05 Big, bold and beautiful 06 Rear bedroom





09

inventive use of space, no stone was left unturned. "It's so important," says Martin, "when you're investing half a million dollars into 27.5 square metres of real estate." In the saloon area, he can comfortably host 13 guests. After the party, the sofa and diner-style dining area converts to two double beds with a privacy curtain in between. The kitchen area is large enough to stack 1.75-metre camp bunks for the kids, and there is enough room left over for people to move around in the event of a midnight duty-call. Martin believes that the working area in his

approximately two thirds of the length of the bus, opens beneath the kitchen and bedroom floors and is big enough to house sailboards. An external locker runs the width of the bus and is fitted with super-sized drawers featuring telescopic rails that extend 900 mm for easy access. A crucial consideration for maximising the space in the living area was the placement of the entrance steps. Martin decided that too much floor area would have been lost by internal steps creating unnecessary intersections in the living flow. Sticking them up front was not an option, as they would have interfered with the cockpit



10



11

"Martin is a systems man and before he started looking at potential vehicles to shoulder his dream bus, he phoned all of New Zealand's major holiday parks to get an idea of just how big he could go."

Martin is a systems man and before he started looking at potential vehicles to shoulder his dream bus, he phoned all of New Zealand's major holiday parks to get an idea of just how big he could go. After the bus was driven to Auckland from Christchurch in 2003, it was deconstructed and measured up by ACB. Then, TSV engineers produced structural drawings for sign-off. Martin says that he inherited his "hobbyist" design smarts from his father. "Dad is brilliant in his genius of deepwater craft design. He pioneered offshore powerboat racing in New Zealand and



08

Australia in the 1970s. About half the boats racing in the '70s were Dad's boats," says Martin. The first job ACB did on the bus was to raise its roof. By going up, Martin got his desired head height and enough space to insulate with Batts and make a flat ceiling. This fitted with his vision of an airy entertaining space that replicates a domestic setting. "After six months of exhausting the social aspects of a static house, I get bored. Just getting on the bus puts me in a better headspace," he says. His bottom-line design decries miniaturisation and when it came to

kitchen alone is more than he has ever seen on any other house bus. An 800 mm-deep bench creates enough width to run a domestic sink lengthways. Beneath the counter, a series of large plastic insert boxes sits two deep with a tally/location sheet taped to the cupboard door to see where everything is. A tall closet houses a ladder, mops and brooms, and there is a full-size fridge/freezer, oven, double-drawer dishwasher, and a four-burner cooker and rangehood. Further storage space is found in the huge bed linen storage space which sits above the cab. Another inboard storage area, which runs

area. Therefore, Martin and Ian devised a pivoting system that allows a solid set of stairs to tuck away into the body next to the barbeque and outdoor entertainment lockers. In the bathroom, there is a 750 x 750 mm shower box. Hot water for house use is supplied by an on-demand 13-litres-per minute calfont water heater. A ceramic macerating toilet (which allows 50 flushes into a 100-litre dump tank), plus a full sink and vanity, complete the wet area. Outside, there is an exterior shower to hose down after a stint at the beach. The rear bedroom features a large wardrobe,





“Further storage space is found in the huge bed linen storage space which sits above the cab. Another inboard storage area, which runs approximately two thirds of the length of the bus, opens beneath the kitchen and bedroom floors.”

with two smaller wardrobe racks, one on each side of a king size slat bed. The bed has four drawers built into it, and the room is completed by a Denon 5.1 theatre system and 32-inch flat screen TV with Sky.

To power all his toys, Martin has adopted a three-way system using shore supply, a Victron inverter, and a Honda generator. Combined, these can produce 9 kW of



power. The inverter draws power from the batteries and parallels it with any incoming current to double the amperage, while also regulating input to avert blowouts.



For the past four years, Martin’s house bus has been his mobile bach, a business development think-tank and a recreational base. But now, with a baby son in tow, he’s beginning to rethink his requirements and is currently modifying a KEA to cart the family around on a South Island road trip. While he is away, he plans to finish designing a family-friendly bus. “The next one creates more space in a smaller vehicle. The trick is simple but it’s a secret until I register the design!” Stay tuned for the inside word.👁️

**Manufacturer/Dealer:**  
**Auckland Coach Builders**  
 63 Tidal Road, Mangere, Auckland  
**Phone:** 09 275 0258  
**Email:** [information@aklcoachbuilders.co.nz](mailto:information@aklcoachbuilders.co.nz)  
**Web:** [www.aklcoachbuilders.co.nz](http://www.aklcoachbuilders.co.nz)

12 Stylish bathroom is also roomy 13 Ready to roll  
 14 Well thought out storage areas