



# KLUDO WHAT? KLUDO WHITE!

Words & Photos: Paul Knight



**Paul Knight ‘takes a trip’ to the South coast to visit one of the most colourful characters in the UK VW scene, Kludo White and to get the lowdown on his VW-themed album ‘Campervan Radio’...**

**D**riving down a bumpy road that appears to lead to nowhere I am besieged by ‘sleeping policemen’ that nearly wrench the exhaust system from my trusty Notchback. I arrive at a white bungalow by the beach with a palm tree outside. On the driveway sits a most colourful psychedelic Bay camper van; it looks like it’s smiling and me, and is certainly bright and cheerful.

I ring a large brass Ship’s bell by tugging on a white rope. It’s very loud (a bit like the paintjob on the van.)

A sandblasted wooden door opens and I am met with a toothy grin. It’s Kludo White; a blonde mop of hair in a Blue Hawaiian Print Shirt, jeans & flip-flops. ‘Good timing,’ he says, ‘I’ve just put the kettle on’.

The house smells of coffee and joss sticks and instrumental Indian sitar and surf guitar music alternate on the iPod. I’m led into the kitchen, which is practically empty except for a huge wooden table; the top is hip height off the ground. ‘Do you like my table? I made that. It was a gift from the seal. The foot wide 4 metre long timber planks, he tells me, were washed up on the beach a few years ago; they dried out in the sun and one day he took a handsaw to them. ‘My wife, Caroline, thought I was mental, but after two days I had this table. The hardest part was lifting it from the garden into the kitchen as it’s pretty heavy’ He hands me a mug of steaming coffee that smells like heaven and we sit down for a chat.

Kludo likes making things. He’s an artist, musician, songwriter and actor. He’s been making driftwood art, furniture, and paintings of VW Bugs, Camper vans and rock icons such as The Beatles and Jim Morrison for the last eight years. There are rainbow coloured canvases and lumps of driftwood all over the house, ‘It’s our West Coast Californian Bungalow - on the south coast of England!’, he enthuses. However, more recently he’s been making music again... and he’s quite good at it, too!





Watch (listen?) out for Kludo and his trade stand at a VW show near you. It's not just artwork, you can expect music, entertainment and laughter, too!

'I used to live a very different way; Life in London, chasing acting Jobs, girls, touring in bands and theatre shows. It was crazy and fun but I woke up on tour one day and just knew I had to get a VW Camper van to escape from the madness; my freedom'. He continued, 'Within a week I'd bought one and a week after that I was in Devon learning how to surf. It was my breakthrough - owning one is definitely a way of life! I mean, now I even bake my own bread, something I'd have never done a few years ago!'

His first car was a Beetle but he sold it whilst touring in his twenties. He commented, 'I loved that car, he was called "Vincent" 'cos he only had one wing mirror, y'know, like Van Gogh!'

Over the years, Kludo has owned three Bay window Campers, but the hand painted one parked on the drive is his favourite. 'I spent a fortune and wasted so much time on my last van; three engines, welding, re-spray, new wheels ... I went the whole hog, then really wished I hadn't'. He laughed, 'he was like a really high maintenance girlfriend!'

Kludo continued, 'I learned the expensive, hard way that what really matters about my van is that I feel comfortable in it and that when I turn the key it starts!'. So what's the story behind the wild paintwork? 'I'm proud that "Mr Fuffer's" paint job only cost £100 in paint from B&Q.. Why spend thousands?'. He continued, 'It took thought and effort and he's totally unique. My Bus is an expression of my freedom and individuality - Like the Rat-look philosophy, but with a hippy twist. Try it; it's great fun, good therapy and wherever we go people love him; especially kids! He's my daily driver, my work van, my surf bus ... he's like my mate! Driving along, everyone smiles, waves or honks their horn; it's great!'

Kludo's reintroduction to vintage Volkswagens was after a serious back injury sustained whilst working in a touring rock and roll musical. 'I had to pull my brakes on really fast and take it easy for a bit. I realised there's a whole world out there that I'd forgotten about ... we can all drive by the good stuff too fast, and in a vintage dub you really 'get' that as you can't go too fast! It made me realise; life's about the journey, not the destination!'. Kludo is by his own admission 'a bit of a hippy... and not much of a petrol-head'.

'I've made great friends because of my VW. At festivals, camping, surfing and just driving to the supermarket. I've met "searchers" from all walks of life; fellow pilgrims on their quests. It's tribal - we are a tribe. At a VW show we pitch up with our covered wagons, eat, dance, sing and play together round a campfire. We share a commonality and I don't think there's enough



here are just a few examples of Kludo's previous designs and projects. He's painted everything from driftwood to guitars and has even released his own VW-themed colouring book, too. As you can see, there's a real sixties feel to much of the artwork (and the same could be said for the musical vibe!)



of that in modern society.'

'Was this the inspiration behind the album "Camper Van Radio"?, I ask. He beams.

I wrote these songs whilst living in the Bay as I wanted to write an anthem for the VW tribe. That's where the song "Camper Van Driver" came from. It's for anyone who's owned, driven and fallen in love with a vintage VW. The songs on the album are about summer, surfing and wearing flip-

flops. It's feel-good music - It certainly felt good to write and play, and that vibe's been captured in the recording. I wanted to share these songs with people who'd understand them and what's great is they do. Plus, with every copy that sells we're all doing something good by raising funds for the Teenage Cancer Trust', something Kludo is proud of.

Last month Aaron Phillips, DJ on Amazing Rock Radio, said Camper Van Driver

'Sounds like summer! If The Beatles and The Monkees had grown up together in Southend and drove VW buses they'd have sounded like this!', which is perhaps the best explanation for the vibe of this album we've heard yet.

'Yeah!' replies Kludo, 'That's it! The spirit of summer, the mid-sixties, the California Dream, the Beach Boys when they got interesting, the romance of '60s pirate radio; of the Beatles movies; a sunny naivety and a

love for retro and rock and roll. Everybody likes tunes you can sing along with or whistle but we don't hear them these days. Y'know how the Tarantino movies have that cool retro soundtrack? That's what I wanted to make, something that felt like that, in a radio show format that you put on in your dub at the start of a journey and 50 minutes later you've been on a time travelling musical mystery tour'.

The album is refreshingly different and

unpretentious... in short it's fun for beach bums! The 14 songs are eclectic in style, separated by silly radio jingles and a tongue-in-cheek interview with Michael Caine! It's like listening to a radio show from another time, and owes as much to Monty Python and Peter Sellers as it does to mod music and rock and roll. Incidentally, Kludo has already started on Camper Van Radio II.

When I suggest the music sounds like his paintings look he smiles. 'Yeah... I like

that... you get it!' **UVW**

*Look out for Kludo & The Camper Van Radio Band on tour throughout 2012 at VW festivals. And don't forget to download 'Camper Van Radio' the album from iTunes or order a CD online via [www.campervanradio.com](http://www.campervanradio.com). Profits from every CD sale Aid the Teenage Cancer Trust Charity. Kludo's Artwork is at [www.kludoman.com](http://www.kludoman.com)*



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