



GOLF ANYONE?

We take a first look at Golf's new Linwood SE. Were we impressed?

Words by Isaac Bober Photography by Karl Dietrich

You could say the award-winning Golf Linwood is a tough act to follow. It is one of the company's most successful products, has a loyal army of admirers and is still one of the best looking 'round-the-block' luxury tourers on the market. With styling cues from Europe and a fair

dollop of his own imagination, Hugh Isermann crafted a van that set a new standard for caravan design, a standard many other makers have failed to meet. That's why six months ago when Hugh tipped me the nod he was designing a new Linwood, I became nervous. Nervous

because I wasn't sure how he'd go about improving an already classic design. But the self-confessed genius had made his mind up, parking himself in his office with sketchpad and pen, he set about creating his next masterpiece. Bugging him constantly for concept drawings, all he'd

tell us was it would be something special.

We needn't have worried, the new Golf Linwood is everything it was expected to be. Sleek, stylish and engineered to within an inch of its life, it's the perfect replacement.

Countless changes have been made to the Linwood – the tail-lights, the toilet – but it's the rhinoplasty that has made the most noticeable difference. Gone is the large front window and the three-stage look of the front, also in the bin is the padded vinyl stone protection.

In their place is a rounded cleanskin fibreglass nose, a smaller shatter-proof

front window and in the place of padded vinyl protection is a urethane-based skin called Stoneguard, which is applied to the fibreglass after it has been painted.

Our review van is a prototype, built for one of Hugh's friends, and so while it is bigger than the usual Linwoods built by Golf (it is 23R long as opposed to 21R), it gives us a great insight into what we can expect from production Linwoods.

On The Outside

A lot of makers treat the front of the van as nothing more than a slab with a window and

a boot. But Golf has really put a lot of effort into giving the Linwood some personality.

Instead of having a flat front boot lid, the new Linwood's boot is fully moulded fibreglass and has been cast in the same shape as the van's nose (see photos). A new, self-supporting hinge mechanism has been used on the lid, which opens out and then up, and inside, the boot has been broken up into compartments. The gas bottles sit smack in the middle, not on the drawbar, and can be accessed fairly easily. On either side of these is free space to store odds and ends.

You'll notice the front of the van and



indeed the sides are two-tone. This was done to add some definition to the Linwood and I think it works. A lot of people in the office have remarked the Linwood looks naked without stone protection, but I think it looks new and modern – and never fear, it does have stone protection. But like most things Golf does, it's not conventional. Stone protection for the

Above: Golf gave the Linwood some rhinoplasty, improving its already good looks
Below: Extra LEDs have been added to the tail-lights

Linwood comes in the form of a plastic film used in the automotive industry to prevent headlights being broken by stones.

Looking at the van's flanks, one is immediately struck by the clean, functional and integrated look. I find a lot of makers tend to make the windows at the front of the van too big, making it look heavy and ungainly. Another point of difference is the size of the awning; complete with weathershield, the awning spans from front to back and isn't

fouled by any of the windows or doors.

The door at the back of the van also looks somewhat different from the usual caravan doors we see. Supplied by Dometic, it looks modern and suits the Linwood perfectly. And while it doesn't have a grab-handle light, there's a light over the door and another one halfway along the flank.

There's a storage locker at the front of the van, which is for the toilet's cassette, more about that later though. Other than that, the Linwood's flanks are free from



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lockers and other such adornments.

The back of the van hasn't changed much from the last model of Linwood. Although, like the front of the van, the back is made of fibreglass and continues the moulded theme, giving it plenty of character. The major change with the back is the inclusion of extra LEDs into the tail-lights.

In The Kitchen

You could be forgiven for missing the kitchen entirely – tucked against the driver's side wall, the kitchen sits towards one end of a massive bench. Amazingly uncluttered, there's a deep-bowl sink and a four-burner cooker and full oven. Both the sink and the cooker have glass covers to keep things neat and tidy looking.

It's refreshing to see a van that isn't dominated by the kitchen, and it's nice to know you can use the bench next to the cooker to prepare food and not have to spread out and cover the dinette with food just to make a sandwich.

Golf has added a filtered water tap off to the side of the standard flick mixer tap, as it found customers didn't want all their water running through filters, just their drinking water.

Right: Unbelievably clean and uncluttered, the Linwood's kitchen is the best I've seen – functional and subtle
Below: An L-shape leather lounge wraps around the back of the van

Keeping the kitchen light and airy is a big Dometic window, which has an in-built flyscreen and sun shade. This does away with the need for curtains, which run the possibility of being set alight by the cooktop. One difference is the fact the sun shade has been altered so it runs up and down, not side to side as is customary with that type of window.

There's abundant storage space in the Linwood, plenty of cupboards above and below the benchtop, and off to the side next to the fridge is a pull-out pantry.

At The Dinette

This van has been designed for two, but the dinette seats are huge. Covered in soft leather, they're amazingly comfortable, but naturally there's a slight twist: the leather against the back of the chair has been perforated to allow it to breathe.

The table itself can be removed and used to make an extra bed for when the grandkids come over. Next to the dinette,



Golf has fitted the same type of window as used in the kitchen, complete with the top-to-bottom sliding sun shade and flyscreen.

From the dinette, the roof mounted air-conditioner can easily be reached. That's one of the great things about the



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What They Said...

According to Dometic's CEO Dr Sven Stork, the new Golf Linwood SE is more than capable of competing with the best vans in Europe. The excellent finish and practicality of the van's layout had him singing its praises.

"It could easily compare with the best of the best in Europe," he said. Dr Stork's sentiments were echoed by the managing director at Dometic Australia Olaf Bach, who said Leisure Concepts was at the forefront of caravanning worldwide and that the new Linwood was at the cutting edge of design. With years of caravanning behind it, Mr Bach said Golf's hands-on approach to caravanning, testing each product on- and off-road, allowed the company to design a practical, user-friendly caravan.

The Linwood's designer Hugh Isermann said his latest creation was a state-of-the-art home on wheels, boasting more comfort and conveniences than many homes.

Mr Isermann added he had designed the Linwood to be as aerodynamic as possible, allowing it to "slip through the air". The van's front boot is part of this styling and Mr Isermann said it added to van's aerodynamics. "Its snug fit helps with its aerodynamics and good looks.



Thanks for lending us the van: Hugh Isermann, Golf Caravans (Leisure Concepts) 48 Paisley Drive, Lawnton, QLD 4501. Tel: (07) 3285 6348.



Linwood, the layout is amazingly practical, which comes from Hugh and his wife Lyn being avid caravanners. They know what needs to go where to make life on the road easy.

Many vans have club lounges opposite the dinette, but Golf designed our test van with a full leather lounge running in an L-shape across the back of the van and returning along the driver's side wall. It keeps it separate from the dinette, which allows you to finish eating and properly repair to a lounge. From the lounge the TV can be seen, and it sits on top of the fridge.

In The Bedroom

The bed is at the front of the Linwood and once again it's a stylish affair. There's plenty of walk-around room and the wardrobes on either side are nice and deep. Below each wardrobe is a useable ledge, so many in vans aren't, and below that is a set of drawers. All of the draw-



Above left: The entertainment unit is mounted on top of the fridge – the TV can be swivelled to face the lounge or the bedroom. The hand basin is separate to the shower and toilet, which is more practical.
Above: The flip track lights can be slid anywhere along their track to provide light where it's needed

ers, cupboards and overhead lockers can be opened by pulling gently on each handle, which releases the lock and voila!

Featuring a double bed in a north-south orientation, there's plenty of walk-around room, which is amazing given the van is only 7ft 6in wide. Actually, to change tack slightly, how Golf has managed to fit so much stuff inside a van of this width is amazing. I've been in plenty of vans touching 8ft that seem cramped by comparison.

Overhead in the bedroom are two speakers, two of the tulip flip track lights and a main 12V/240V overhead light. And to let the hot air out and the sun or the breeze in, a Dometic hatch has been fitted at the foot of the bed.



The Linwood's bedroom is both spacious and practical. There's plenty of walk-around room – all of the extras: hatch, speakers and deep wardrobes make it a great package

Keeping Clean

While it is more common to tuck the toilet away in the back corner of the van, the owners of our van decided to place it near the bedroom. Not huge inside, it's big enough to scrub up in.

One thing about the toilet is that there's plenty of room. I know it's not the most savoury of topics, but in a lot of RV bathrooms there's precious little legroom, as the toilets are jammed into a corner.

The other interesting thing about this toilet is that it's a vacuum toilet. Sure, it has a cassette, but it doesn't use chemicals to break down waste matter. It's being raved about in Europe and so Golf is trialling it for a couple of months to test its effectiveness. Think of an airline toilet and you're on the right track. The other thing about the new Dometic toilet is that it has a ceramic bowl, which makes it easier to clean.

Worth Buying?

Most definitely. This is the best-looking Linwood yet and possibly the best Linwood package. Golf is trying a lot of new products and many new styling ideas and they've paid off, because the new van is one of the most practical vans I've seen.

Sure, a Golf costs more than your average caravan, but then again it's more than just your average caravan. **RV**

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