



ACM PLATINUM EDITION MOTORHOME

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Photos Cam Leggett

We check out Auckland Coach and Motorhomes latest addition to their range – the hand-built and fully customizable Platinum Edition model

One of the star exhibits at this year's COVI show was a pair of Platinum Edition motorhomes on the stand manned by Chris Cunard of Auckland Coach and Motorhomes (ACM). These two RVs certainly stood out from the crowd with their handsome European-look exterior styling and expertly constructed, well-designed interiors. And, while both of these RVs were super desirable, one proved to be a real head-turner due to the custom-built inclusion of a piano! Now, that's not something you'd normally expect to see in a motorhome – but as Chris pointed out when we chatted to him a few weeks after the show, all manner of special details and features can be chosen by customers.

Indeed, the whole philosophy behind Chris' creation of the high-end Platinum Edition motorhome was to create a hand-built, bespoke RV specifically tailored to suit the differing requirements of each customer. In achieving his

goal, Chris called upon the experience of many years as a boat-builder – the skills acquired in that previous career being well suited to the construction of these motorhomes.

CUSTOM INTERIORS

Stepping inside one of these show RVs, you are greeted with a modern, clean and well-laid-out interior – but of course the interior layout is entirely down to each customer. Bathroom areas can be made larger, the kitchen can be altered to include individually ordered features and appliances, and seating and sleeping arrangements can also be altered. Despite this level of customisation,

one factor that doesn't change is the overall quality of materials and construction employed by ACM.

The built-in piano is a prime example of what can be done and it's interesting to note that the piano is designed to be removed and replaced with cupboards or shelves if the customer ever decides to sell their RV.

This level of detail is applied to all interior features. As an example, all cabinetry is completely hand-built – and when Chris says hand-built, that's exactly what he means! All cabinet, cupboard and other joinery components are hand-cut from marine-grade plywood; no CNC-machined parts are used.



Photo Bruce Mountian

Caption



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After cutting and shaping, each part is then laminated with tough, scratch-proof Formica. As an ex-boat-builder, Chris refuses to use MDF or chipboard even though marine ply effectively doubles costs. However, he points out that the improved durability provided by these materials has been well proven in the less-expensive motorhomes ACM build for the rental market.

All joinery is glued and screwed into place – no staples are used – and you'll not find any exposed screws, all such fixings being carefully concealed.

ACM are uniquely positioned to employ these labour-intensive construction methods at their Auckland-based factory where they currently have 17 employees. Fifteen of that number are highly qualified tradesmen who are joined by two apprentices. This allows the company to build one motorhome a day, as well as being able to handle all manner of custom work. This skilled labour-force provides the practical basis underlying the creation of Platinum Edition motorhomes.

Of course, this is a more expensive way to do the work but, in the long term, Chris believes that ongoing maintenance costs can be minimised through the use of quality materials.

UNIQUE FEATURES

Pianos apart, the pair of Platinum Edition models on display at the COVI show were chock-full of interesting features – one of the first things to spot being the touchpad mounted alongside the RV's main door. This not only allows for keyless entry, but can also be used to toggle through lighting modes for night or day. Night mode is particularly clever; if an occupant happens to wake up and move around during the night, sensors track their movements within the RV and automatically switch interior lights on and off as appropriate.



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Another smart touch that we haven't seen in any other motorhome is the novel method of accessing the cab-over double bed, this being achieved not by the usual ladder but via a cleverly designed set of fixed steps that double as a shelving unit – of course, the shelves are reinforced to allow their use as steps.

Talking about steps, the rear-mounted ladder is also very clever. In many RVs, such a ladder would mean reducing the size of the unit's rear window but not so with the Platinum Edition. Instead, Chris has designed and custom-built a two-piece ladder that allows easy access to the roof without sacrificing rear-window area or, indeed, its ability to be fully opened – a feature of every window in the Platinum Edition model.

As well as external access to the cassette toilet and the facility for a slide-out BBQ unit, the



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Platinum Edition also features generous rear stowage that is accessible from both sides of the RV. This is large enough to stow away anything from a pair of kayaks to a mountain bike for all the family. As a clever touch, this storage area is also fitted with two pull-out drawers – one giving exterior access to the under-bunk storage the other a dedicated storage area for tools and other small items.

CLEVER CONSTRUCTION

Under their handsome exterior skin, the two Platinum Edition RVs featured here are built upon an Iveco 3.6-ton chassis – Chris preferring this to the more usual 5-ton chassis used by many other motorhome constructors, as the lighter chassis affords a more car-like driving experience. The Iveco cab/chassis utilises a 127kW, 3-litre turbo-diesel engine mated to an eight-speed automatic gearbox – and engine upgrades are available. Customers can also choose to have

their motorhome built upon a Mercedes-Benz of Fuso cab/chassis.

Whatever base is chosen, the Platinum Edition features a fully insulated steel-frame floor, complete with fibreglass underfloor protection. The exterior and interior walls are constructed from vacuum-formed fibreglass (3mm thick for the exterior) with a polyurethane core. Internal strength comes from an aluminium ring frame, reinforced at appropriate points. This manner of construction ensures that if the unit suffers a water leak there's nothing hidden that can rot away. However, such a leak would be highly unlikely when you consider ACM's method of construction.



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HALF PAGE AD SPACE

Utilising his boat-building skills, Chris has devised a system that ensures each basic shell – side walls, plus one-piece rear and roof – are slotted into place and are 100 per cent watertight right from the start. Pro-Guard sealant is then used around all areas where the fibreglass panels have to be cut into for such items as vents, aerials or other external fitments.

This method of construction allows potential customers to alter and change many features. For instance, the main entrance door can be repositioned to suit individual preferences. The only factors that remain fixed are unit width and height, these dimensions being dictated by the vacuum-formed, one-piece fibreglass rear wall. However, length can be changed – although the two RVs featured here are 7.5 metres long, ACM recently accepted a customer's order for a more compact 6.5-metre unit.

The sky's the limit

Alongside the plethora of motorhomes currently flooding the local market, Chris



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believes a healthy demand exists for a locally made motorhome that is not only well-designed and constructed but can also be individually tailored to suit the exacting requirements of customers who place overall quality and pride of ownership above all else.

Of course, these high levels of construction and personalisation do come at a price, the base price of Platinum Edition model coming in at \$200,000. However, final costs are totally dependent upon each individual customer and, as Chris says – "... the sky's the limit".

Is there a market for a locally built, fully customizable motorhome with the starting price of ACM's Platinum Edition? Well, that was answered at the COVI show when Chris took orders for seven units. With those orders, plus the two RVs featured here, ACM expect to have 20 Platinum Edition RVs sold and built by the end of this year.

It looks like Chris and ACM are onto a bespoke, hand-built winner! **RV**



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ACM PLATINUM EDITION MOTORHOME STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS

BASE VEHICLE:

IVECO Daily Chassis 3-litre diesel, 127kW, Hi-matic, 8-speed auto transmission.

Cab – GPS/Satnav, electrically adjustable heated rear-view mirrors, reversing camera, suspension seats and cruise control. GVW 3.6 tons

BODY/FLOOR:

Fully insulated steel frame floor, one-piece fibreglass underfloor protection.

Fully insulated aluminium-framed, vacuum-formed fibreglass walls, interior and exterior. Double-glazed fully opening windows with integrated blinds.

PLUMBING AND GAS:

200-litre fresh- and grey-water storage
2 x 4.5kg LPG bottles, or 1 x 9kg with monitor

ELECTRICAL:

12V LED lighting – top and bottom mood lighting, fully automatic lighting with day and night modes. Keyless entry, lighting mode operation and central locking via exterior touch screen. Dual-battery 240-amp-hours system with 160W solar panel

FIXTURES AND FITTINGS:

Non-scratch 15mm lightweight laminated ply for all interior cabinetry. Large rear boot lockers, under-bunk storage with internal/external access. Contoured laminate bench tops, fitted cutlery/crockery holders, pull-out pantry, large soft-close kitchen drawers and curved cabinetry doors.

BERTHS SIX:

Two rear singles (1900 x 720mm) – Cab-over double (2200 x 1400mm) – Rear double (2200 x 1900mm)

APPLIANCES:

185-litre three-way fridge, Dometic 4-burner gas oven/grill, 2.2k Eberspacher diesel heater, 22-litre Suburban 240V/gas auto-light hot water and built-in kitchen extractor fan.

SHOWER/TOILET:

Separate shower with glass door, Thetford swivel cassette, 20L. Full electric flush with overflow sensor, roof vent extractor fan.

OTHER STANDARD ACCESSORIES:

Radio/CD player in rear, 12V TV/DVD player combo with satellite dish.

Exterior shower and pull-out BBQ connector, 4500mm awning and 2.5-ton tow-bar.