LUCAS ABELA
CORRUPTED BY MR. SOCIOLOGICAL MEMORY MAN

by Seymour Glass



SEYMOUR GLASS: *I'm unsure about the kind of automobile used on your CD. Is A Kombi a brand or model of car, or was it your nickname for the vehicle?*

LUCAS ABELA: The word *Kombi* is widely used Australian slang for any VW van of classic '60s or '70s origin. You know, the kind hippies drive.

I suspected it might be a Volkswagen, since the disc art depicts a VW logo.

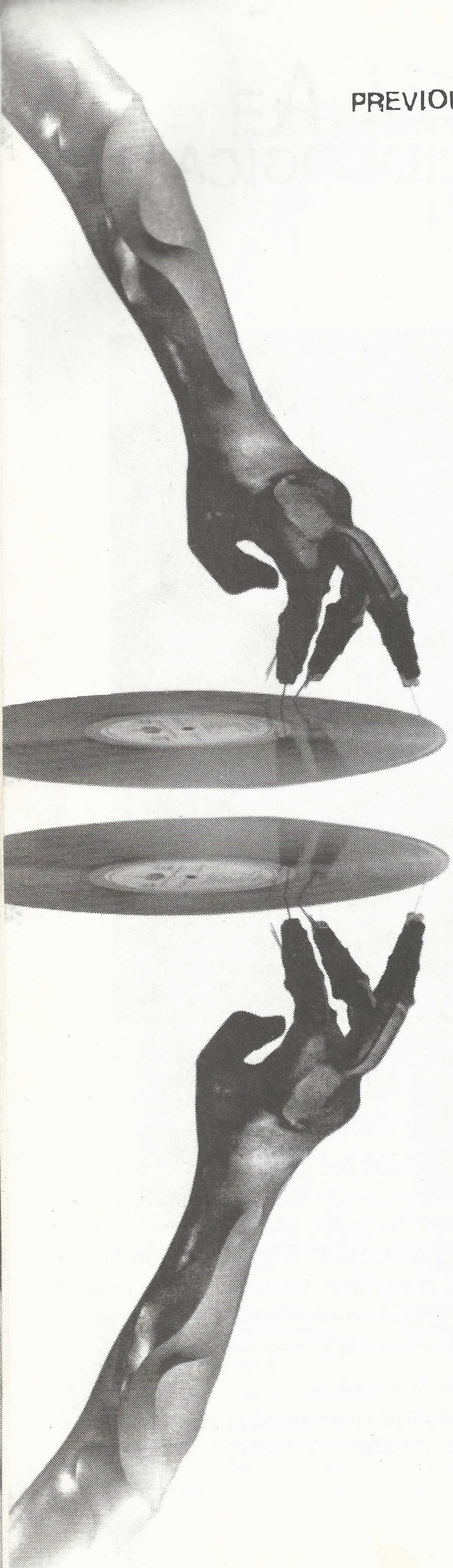
You are the smart one. I believe the word came from the Volkswagen company themselves. It was the model name or something for their campers, the ones with the pop-up roof, gas stove and fridge. If you inspect the cover of the CD, you'll see to the right of the Popemobile a mustard-colored van. That's A Kombi.

What were you doing driving alongside the Pope?

I was just driving southbound over the Sydney Harbour Bridge one cloudy day when I noticed a string of police cars in the lane to the right of me. At first I thought, Fuck, what have I done? Four motorcycle cops came into view beside me. Then the next thing I knew, A Kombi and I were directly parallel to the Popemobile.

Were you tempted to misbehave?

All I had to do was swerve into him and I could have been world famous in a matter of minutes.



THESE PAGES: THE STYLUS GLOVE
PREVIOUS PAGE: LUCAS ABELA DEMONSTRATES THE BRIDGE

I thought about it as I paced him along the bridge, laughing uncontrollably all the while.

How did you happen to get a picture of yourself driving next to the Pope?

It was news footage. He looked more dead than omnipotent. I think he was asleep. You can see one of the cardinals reaching for his arm as if to wake him.

What a photo op—sleeping religious leader in a rolling bubble. When you made the recordings what kind of setup did you use?

My friend Severin, who owned a DAT, and I took A Kombi out to Waverly Cemetery, a beautiful graveyard on the edge of a cliff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. We strapped the DAT to the roof and let A Kombi perform magic for about 70 minutes, 40 of which made it onto the CD.

How much of the CD is raw, as it happened, and how much was processed by you later?

Each track is live and in real time. During postproduction, Severin thought the three tracks in the "Midnight Serenade" series sounded better with some reverb. A tape of a live-to-air radio performance of mine happened to be in A Kombi's tape deck at the time, but besides that, it's pure Kombi.

Other than the scenic view, why did you choose the Waverly Cemetary for your recording site?

It occurred in a six-month period, during which I was living out of the back of A Kombi. You can imagine the lifestyle: waking up at sunrise sweating, fixing myself some muesli, and sitting out on the cliff face before heading out for a full day of fun. I liked to sleep at another cliff at Bondi, the pavillion, Pleasantville Avenue in Erskine, and the National Park in North Sydney. That was the best place to sleep, except that the police used to wake me up in the middle of the night asking stupid questions, so I soon learned that Waverly Cemetery was my home.

Do you have a history of recording things like this?

No, not at all. Besides some taped radio shows, the A Kombi sessions were my first experiences with recording.

If I looked into your past, I wouldn't find less ambitious projects documenting the death of an air conditioner and duets with malfunctioning washing machines?

Before I discovered A Kombi's abilities, the only musical exploration I had made was drilling holes into records after hearing about Non. At the time I was unable to purchase or even listen to that kind of music on the Gold Coast, so I decided to replicate some of Boyd Rice's experiments by smashing and drilling records, just to hear what it sounded like. That was years before A Kombi came into my life, which was my true introduction to the love of making music.

Really?

Before A Kombi I wasn't involved in making music. I didn't start doing live-to-air radio performances until mid-'94. *Music to Drive-by* was recorded September 1994. Since then I've been building my own musical instruments. Currently my favorite is this instrument I call The Bridge, because its first incarnation looked like the Sydney Harbour Bridge. It has a series of exhaust engines with discs attached to it.

What are the disks made out of?

LP record, circular saw blade, industrial vegetable cutter, stainless steel plate, drum cymbal... They spin at high speeds. Then, using the magnetic carts from turntables, I can turn items like swords, bowie knives, skewers, springs, barbecue grills and claw rings into large-scale styli,

which I grind against the discs. It's like table work, but larger and more powerful. Some of the sounds produced by The Bridge were edited into a really short video compilation called *Black and Budget Minded*.

I imagine many hazards await the untrained player of this instrument.

Yes. During one part of a show by Peeled Hearts Paste (one of the names I perform under) at the Harbourside Brasserie (which, incidently, is my place of employment making desserts), I was grinding a stylized spring against a drum cymbal that was bolted to one of those exhaust engines used to suck the air from a room.

I've never found it necessary to suck the air from a room, so I'm not familiar with the device.

Fine. Just imagine this fucker spinning incredibly fast. One of these engines, with the drum cymbal attached, lacerated my right wrist. It happened so quickly, this is what I figured happened: the spring I was holding got caught on the cymbal's jagged edge (because I'd attacked it with a knife on previous occasions), forcing my arm down into it. My right wrist was cut down to the bone, severing my radial nerve 100 percent and lacerating two tendons—one 50 percent and the other 75 percent. It was funny because Al, the Brasserie's bar manager, was just finishing a paint job on the hallway floor when I came off stage bleeding all over his efforts, before being rushed to hospital. The microsurgeons were great. They didn't bother to put me under, only anesthetizing my arm. We got to chat all the way through the procedure.

I'm thinking of dropping this whole experimental musician thing and changing the focus of future issues of the magazine to people who've been to the emergency room.

To this day I have limited feeling in parts of my hand.

Jeez. Any other instruments?

The first instrument I built was this silver ladies' right-up-the-arm glove. On the end of each finger I attached a stylus and had the cords run up under the glove, giving my arm this alien vein type of appearance. It was great. I could play four record grooves at once and change them randomly with ease, but instead I tended to punch the shit out of my equipment in short bursts of premature ejaculative performance. I'm still experimenting with stylized metal sheets on which I blow air via an air compressor.

What sort of stylization is involved?

I say stylized because all my pickups are made from old turntable cartridges.

Does it sound like anything other than hissing air?

Yes. The sounds of the vibrations of the metal when the air hits it are what you hear. They vary depending on the air compressor's angle and distance and on the texture of the metal—like a storm usually. Very dark and ambient, but I have plans to rectify this with some metal tubing attached to the sheet to give it some high-pitched whistles or something.

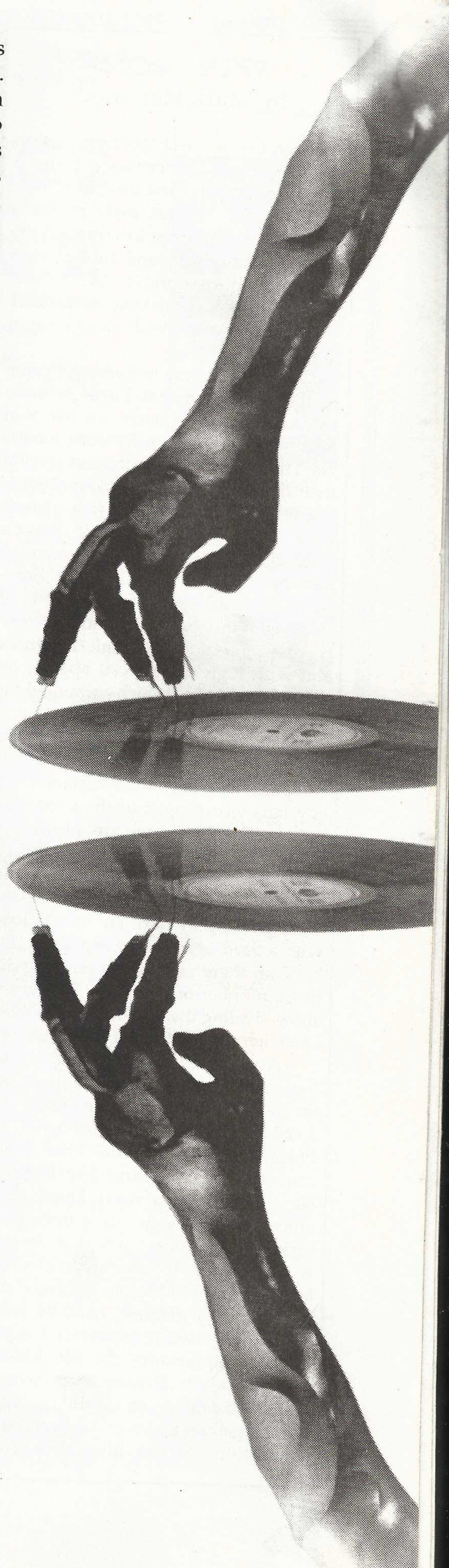
I heard about a performance you did with a mate that involved needles going through the heads of your cocks.

That was one of Severin's performances. He built this black box noise circuit called Severin's Erotometer, complete with two wires with piercing rods on the ends. For the show we simply gave ourselves frenum piercings and then, to make the music, just touched each other. In doing so we completed the circuit, creating noise.

You're not Psychic Youth, are you? I'm trying to recall the last time I heard someone use the phrase "simply gave ourselves frenum piercings."

We finished the piece off by doing a rendition of Burt Bacharach's "This Guy's in Love."

An acquaintance mentioned another performance where you were "sucking back bulbs and spraying metal with some air



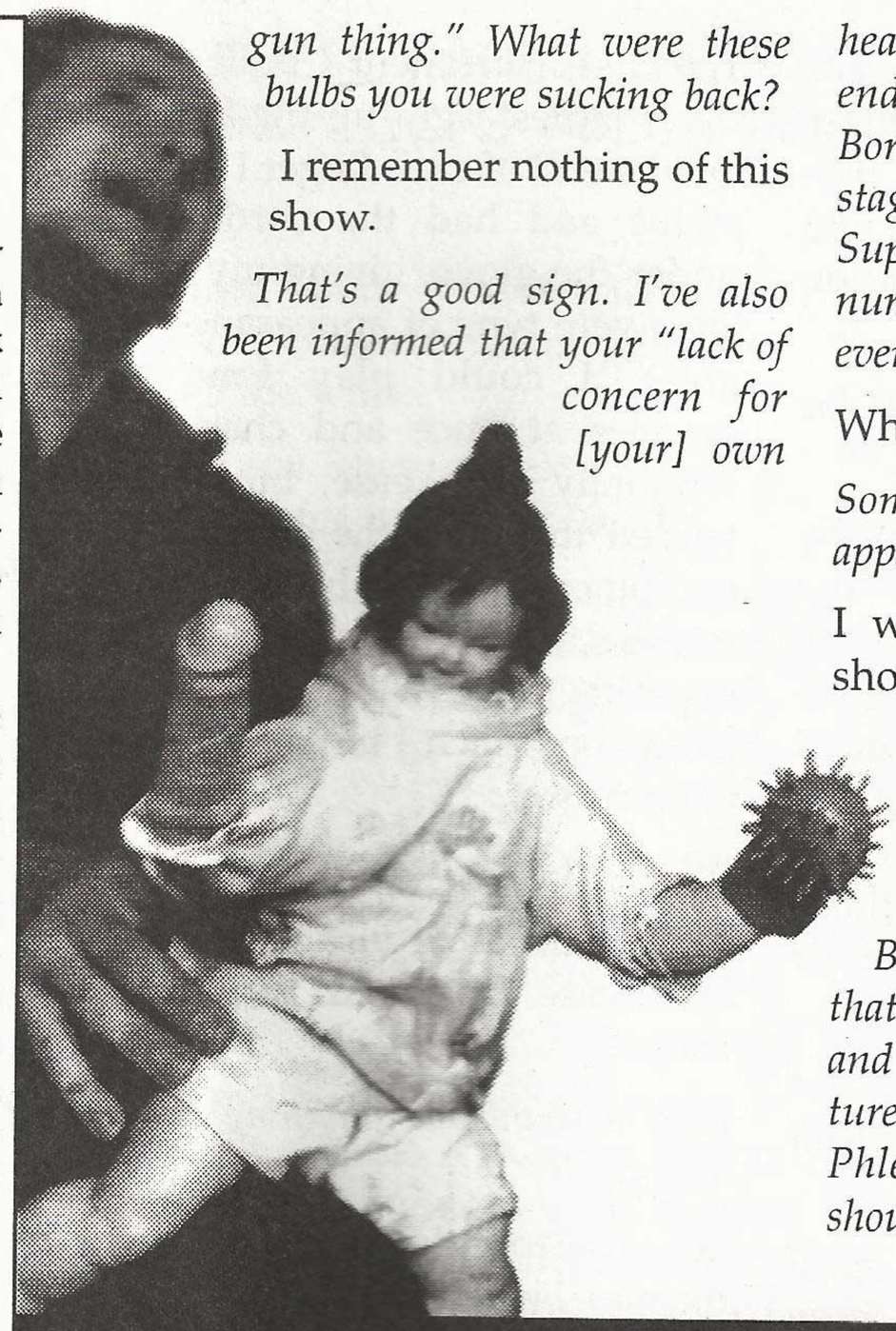
TRUE GOSS
by Mark Harwood

I've seen Lucas Abela "perform" several times, every performance being a definite laugh. The first time, at a "rock pig" pub, he and his mate removed their clothes, stuck needles through the heads of their cocks and rubbed each other to produce sound/noise. The second time he was sucking back bulbs and spraying metal with some air gun thing.

During my stay in Sydney, I came to the conclusion that Lucas is quite mad: his lack of concern for his own health and safety is really quite a marvel. The Boredoms were in town during their first tour of Oz, back in April 1995. We went to a show in a small beach town where they played at Wave's Nightclub to about 300 skegs (drongo surfer-type lads). You see, the Boredoms were invited to Oz as guests of Regurgitator (Australia's hottest new band—genre-mixing funk/rap/rock shit with high commercial appeal) on their national tour, which accounted for the beefhead quota at all shows.

Of course, the surf boys and girls had no idea what to make of eYe and company and kept their distance. We city lads worshipped at the front, like the obsessive geeks we are. Lucas was going off, jumping about in a crazy, Lucas-like fashion. He got onstage and dove off into the crowd, which was not there to support him. He would land with a thud, stand up, jump about, get back up there and do it again. He did this a number of times throughout the show, rivaling the Boredoms as number one entertainment factor that evening.

At another show a few nights later in the center of Sydney at an inner city venue called the Metro, the lineup was some shit rock band, followed by Phlegm and Mu Mesons, after which came the Boredoms and then Regurgitator. In case you don't know these other bands, Phlegm are a three-piece rock/improv noise outfit from Sydney with theatrical, obscure/ridiculous leanings and Mu Mesons are easily one of Australia's greatest. Lead by Jamie Leonarder, a social worker and expert on UFO abductions, the Mu Mesons cast of players all have some form of mental instability or disability, have been together for over 10 years with connections to the Black Eye/Thug



gun thing." What were these bulbs you were sucking back?

I remember nothing of this show.

That's a good sign. I've also been informed that your "lack of concern for [your] own health and safety" is somewhat legendary. This was in evidence at a Boredoms show where you dove off the stage without many people to catch you. Supposedly you "rivaled the Boredoms as number one entertainment factor" that evening.

Who have you been talking to?

Some easily entertained Australian, apparently.

I was kicked out of the Boredoms show before they took the stage. In order to get back in, I disguised myself by cutting off my shoulder-length hair.

You stage-dove at a different Boredoms show. Isn't it true, Lucas, that you had to cut your hair because you and a friend tried to prevent the premature ending of a set by the support band, Phlegm—an injustice for which you should be commended for attempting to



TOP: THE EROTIC BABY. BOTTOM: LUCAS ABELA ON LEFT AND SEVERIN ON RIGHT WITH THE EROTOMETER AT BUDINSKI'S. MELBOURNE. AUSTRALIA. APRIL 15. 1995. PHOTO BY LIZ HUGHES

correct, granted—and were bounced out of the premises?

Did someone else give you a version of the story? If so, print that.

Watch me. You were also described as "very reckless and bold, charming, passionate and committed."

Who said all this rubbish?

Someone who cares about you very deeply. What did your friends and family say when you told them you were going to release a CD of car noises?

My parents said they were proud of me but wore vacant expressions when they listened. My friends, the only people in Australia to actually purchase the CD so far, were more supportive. Generally, everybody I know outside of Australia's difficult music community thinks it's crap and wonders why I waste my time, except, of course, Kombi enthusiasts who support all things Kombi.

What do you mean?

When I first purchased A Kombi, I heard an expression "Kombi drivers of the world unite." I didn't know exactly what it meant until I noticed the waving. When you sit behind the wheel of your Kombi, you instantly join this unofficial club that exists around Australia. That's when the waving begins. Whether young, old, crusty or conservative, all Kombi drivers do it—the Kombi wave—when passing other Kombis. To me, it's the most powerful form of national consciousness existing in Australia that I know of. After some time behind the wheel, you stop thinking about it. The waving action becomes a reflex triggered by the sight of other Kombis.

Do you think it enriches the listening experience if one is aware of the recordings' origins?

I like to think the recordings stand on their own and are as good, if not better, than some of the drivel being released under the guise of noise these days. They have a feel all their own but when combined with the knowledge of the sound source, it just adds weight for the ear.

Judging by the wording of the credits, I'd guess you consider the car the artist and yourself the recording engineer.

A Kombi is definitely the artist. I'm not even the recording engineer. That'd be Severin. If anything, I'm Yoko Ono, living on the fame of a dead lover.

I know it's just an analogy, but I'm going to have to step in and defend Yoko Ono. Her husband may have been more popular, but she deserves more respect for her artistic endeavors than she has received. Her's is one of the most incredible, forceful and distinctive voices in modern music, and it's only one of several avenues of expression she's used. She's worked with the likes of Ornette Coleman and John Cage. Plus she had the sense not

scene, and have only one side of a seven-inch to their name (a split with Phlegm). Their shows always consist of the bizarre and unpredictable.

Anyway, leading up to the show that day, the Metro was having second thoughts about letting Phlegm et al support. For one thing, they found out that the entire lineup was 11 members and could not handle this many people backstage. Arguments persisted all day until finally the lads convinced the owners that all 11 members were required for the performance. This sort of scenario—the venue discovering that a show is going to be "different," freaking out, and becoming very hostile toward the artists—is very typical of Australia, perhaps everywhere else, too.

Lucas and I were sitting upstairs having to endure the lowest form of music that was the first act. Restless, we heckled and carried on a bit.

After a break, Phlegm appeared, all 11 of them. What a sight. The stage was packed with ladders, costumes, Chinese dragons, a 40+-year-old man wearing a worn-out suit and playing a sitar, and Billy McCoy, one of Australia's greatest artists, similar to the David Helfgott chap as portrayed in *Shine*. Billy rambled on and on, "Wouldn't ya luv a cuppa tea? I been a roun' da world on a one-dollar ticket. Blonde pubics…" etc., etc. It was an absolute freak-out. Lucas and I went nuts. No one else did. They played, sort of, for about 10 minutes—very bizarre atmosphere, no "real songs" yet—before heading into a structured track from the CD. We were most excited.

Suddenly, the curtains moved in a bit. Lucas and I looked at each other and immediately headed downstairs; halfway down the curtains started to close in the middle of the song, 15 minutes into the show. That was it. I pointed to the other end of the stage and Lucas ran off.

I grabbed my side of the curtain and tried to open it again as Lucas did the same thing on his end. At this point, my memory gets kind of blurry. The next thing I knew I was on the ground underneath four gorillas grabbing me and pulling my hair. I flipped out by played it safe. I kept telling them that I'm willing to leave, ease off, etc.

I met Lucas again going down the stairs toward the exit. We were both bent over with our arms forced hard up

A DEMONSTRATION OF THE TRAMPOLINE



to be in a band with Paul McCartney for 15 years or attempt to have a disco hit in the '70s by singing a duet with Elton John.

Fine, I didn't mean to discredit Yoko Ono by comparing her to myself.

Don't give me that disingenuous bullshit. You didn't try to discredit her by comparing her to yourself and you know it. You're making her sound like a Beatles estate leech, which is actually Michael Jackson's turf.

I had no idea what a hideous person I am.

Now you know, scumbag. Knock it off. How about delving into some of the highs and lows throughout your relationship with A Kombi?

While living in Grafton, I had a gig in Sydney that I was unable to get to. I told the organizers I would do the show via the phones lines, so it became a simple matter of finding the right location to make my call. On the night of the show, I headed out with A Kombi and my dad's mobile phone to find a remote location to make the call. I ended up taking A Kombi off-road a little to get to this secluded beach with a rocky outlay. I parked A Kombi and headed out toward the edge of Australia. Standing on the rocks with the waves spitting up huge walls of whitewater around me, I went to make my call, only to discover that Mobilenet didn't cover the area I was in. Devastated and with less than an hour until show time, I turned to hurry back, only to find the rocky outlay quickly disappearing under the approaching tide. With shoes full of saltwater and sand I jumped back into A Kombi and sped off to find mobile access, but I wasn't to get far.

Why not?

My right rear tire had punctured during my off-road venture.

Did you have a spare?

My spare was the tire in question. I'd replaced the old right rear tire with it just two or so days before.

What did you do?

My never-say-die attitude allowed me to persevere. I drove on the flat tire for about 10 kilometers at a slow pace, finally finding a caravan park that had a phone. I didn't have any change so I called my parents collect. My mom finally arrived some time later and took me home, where I argued with my dad about using the mobile in a nearby cow paddock in order to do the show. He refused for reasons that can't be explained.

Maybe he was afraid part of your show would be accidentally dropping his phone in cow manure.

With minutes left, I grabbed a pile of change and headed for the nearest phone booth, which happened to be in the parking lot of McDonald's, where, after much inspiration, I screamed for about 20 minutes down the phone line to Cafe De Lane in Sydney, where Nick Rizili accompanied me on piano.

When that kind of stuff happens at McDonald's here, people automatically jump under the tables.

A relatively large crowd formed on the balcony, watching with disbelief as I shrieked.

Did anyone try to stop you?

A bunch of hick teenagers came up and asked me what I was doing. I handed them the phone and walked off, leaving them to finish off the show with inane questions.

What a feverish tale.

Once I had to get from the Gold Coast to Grafton, a four-hour drive, in the dead of night during a heavy storm without headlights or windscreen wipers.

You're a glutton for challenge, Lucas.

A Kombi always had some kind of malfunction. Feeling at the time quite suicidal, I hit the Pacific Highway at 100 kph. Now let me tell you, I could not see a thing. The streaming beads of water on my windscreen resembled thousands of pixels, each one reflecting the bright headlights of semitrailers coming the other way. My vision was rendered useless as each mass of yellow dots spread across the screen until after the truck had passed. Then, black again. I kept my eye fixed on the faint white line beside me. It was my only guide to prevent certain death.

What other malfunctions have you had to contend with?

In Redfern, A Kombi suddenly stopped working. I called the roadside service people, who came and simply found the ignition plug had come out. They plugged it back in and left. I pulled out and returned to my driving, only to find that the car's electric system was so fucking messed up that INDICATE LEFT would indicate right, INDICATE RIGHT would sound the horn, SOUND THE HORN would turn the high beams on, and TURN ON THE HIGH BEAMS would indicate left. As you can imagine, this caused some confusion with my driving.

But you adapted, right?

It took me months before I bothered to have it fixed. Once I did, it was confusing to indicate left when I wanted to turn left.

Did you ever crash A Kombi?

I was following my friends Troy, Kalindi and their daughter (my goddaughter) Shasti down Henri Roberts Drive, not James Ruse Drive, as stated in the liner notes to the CD,

against our backs; in addition they were also pulling Lucas's hair, which runs about 10 cm below his shoulders. I'm a real wimp and was scared and worried, but Lucas was yelling and screaming threats at the monkeys. When we got to the bottom, they threw us out. I walked away bruised and confused while Lucas continued his one-man revenge, arguing and tussling with a few of the security people.

We both love the Boredoms and did not want to miss the show. After many attempts to try to get us back in from eYe and even the leader of Regurgitator, we were told that there was no chance. By this time, Lucas had made such a commotion that every bouncer in the region was familiar with this long-haired larrikin in a shirt and vest. The action simmered down and Lucas and I were left alone with the monkeys, who were still laughing at us.

At this point I began to worry that I was not going to see the show, so I told Lucas I thought I could slip in through another entrance. They wouldn't remember me since I kept a low profile after being ejected. We agreed that Lucas had no chance of pulling off a similar maneuver. Feeling guilty, I walked back in.

The show was great, although my appreciation was hindered knowing that Lucas had missed out. Afterwards, people were gathering to leave when I heard a shout from the bottom level. I looked down and there was Lucas: no vest, no shirt, no hair!

After I left him, he went to get coffee and, rather upset, resolved to get back in, no matter the sacrifice. After approaching a couple stores across the road to see if they had any scissors, he succeeded at a McDonalds and hurried to the toilets to begin the task. I can imagine him desperately hacking away and would have loved to see the reactions of others within.

The job he did was great: very patchy with bald bits and leftover strands. A beautiful job indeed. He removed his vest and shirt, put on an inncocent face and simply walked back in, past the same gorillas who were threatening to kill his entire family only 10 minutes prior.

It was a great moment.

on Tambourine Mountain in 1993. I was transfixed by the bobbing head of Shasti, who was sitting in the back of their Valiant. She was so gorgeous and I loved to watch her head bob up and down. I noticed I was going a tad fast and was veering into the wrong lane when cornering, so I tried to correct my position by pulling the steering to the left. This fucked up A Kombi's center of gravity, sending her ass over. It sure looked strange watching the bitchamin come straight at my face as the driver's side window met the ground before completing a flip-flop. I found myself back on my wheels facing the wrong way.

What's bitchamin?

A form of road surface commonly used in Australia. I believe you Americans call it asphalt.

What was going through your mind?

I was high on adrenalin and wanting to see Shasti's bobbing head once more. I whacked A Kombi into reverse, turned back around, and kept on driving. Once on the highway peering through the largest piece of shattered glass on the windshield, I became annoyed with other drivers' frequent attempts to indicate something was wrong with my vehicle.

Are you sure you weren't seeing a regional strain of A Kombi solidarity you weren't familiar with?

They dipped their lights. As if I was not aware that the entire back end was crushed in.

Have you ever driven across the country?

All up and down the east coast of Australia. As far up as Rainbow Beach and down as far as Melbourne.

Do you know anything about the previous owners and their history with A Kombi?

I bought A Kombi in early 1993 from a Japanese tourist named Gyn Kashima. He had just driven it from Cairns and was looking to unload it before returning to Japan. I met him through June, a close friend of mine who works in the Japanese guide business on the coast.

How much?

He wanted $1,000 for it but I talked him down to $700. That was on a Monday. By the following Friday, I was en route to Sydney to go raving when A Kombi died in Newcastle, which is some sort of Bermuda Triangle for cars. Ironically, Newcastle was to be the eventual resting place of A Kombi.

Fate's a tough one to cheat.

I was going to abandon her there and then but decided against it when Severin said he would lend me $1,200 to have her engine repaired. It was the beginning of a serious fund-sucking period on A Kombi's part. Over the next three years, I saw thousands of my hard-earned dole dollars going into keeping her on the road. Gyn won't be pleased if he ever tries to reenter the country, because I never bothered to change the registration over to my name. By the time she died, A Kombi had over $3,000 in parking tickets, all in Gyn's name.

People are so unethical. Where exactly is A Kombi's final resting place?

A Kombi came to a halt en route to Queensland in a real shithole called Motto Farm. Me mate Maya and I were stuck there all night trying to convince the NRMA and ourselves that everything was okay, even though they kept telling us everything was completely fucked.

Why was their prognosis so bleak?

Something to do with oil pressure destroying the entire pistons system.

So you gave up?

I would have preferred to persevere and drag the near-dead body of A Kombi all the way to Queensland with me, especially after investing all that money to put its damned CD out. But I'd spent my last monies on crap petrol station food waiting for some mechanic to say, "She's all right." I had to sell A Kombi to scrap early the next morning for a paltry

$120 dollars to Raymond Terrace Auto Dismantlers, a complete bunch of pricks, I must tell you.

Those ghouls will never get any business from me. Did A Kombi's noises occur only when she idled?

I should explain a common misconception about the *Music to Drive-By* CD. When people hear it they think it's the engine making those sounds. I can't see how people come to that conclusion.

Why? It doesn't seem that far-fetched to me.

Have you ever heard an engine make sounds that even vaguely resemble what's on the CD?

No, but I've never heard any other part of a VW make sounds that even vaguely resemble what's on the CD.

Sound only occurred when the stereo was on. It was A Kombi's stereo that made all the noise.

Do you have any idea why?

As far as I understand, it was grounded strangely when it was installed, causing all the car's bits to become trapped in the speakers somehow. Take the first track, "St. Thomas St." That's the only track recorded while driving. You can hear the engine reverberating through the stereo system.

But the normal engine sound is inaudible?

You can't hear it raw. It's hard for me to explain without having you sit in the front seat with me. It's so much more than misguided radio signals. In parts of the CD, you can hear a backward and forward screech; that's the windshield wipers being amplified.

You didn't have any elaborate setup to make it happen?

Just pure confusion. I remember when I first discovered the noises. It was outside this venue called The Artery. I was parked outside doing an impromtu Kombi performance with Maya jamming to a Beastie Boys tape. I accidentally hit the windshield wipers, which sent a high-pitched screech through the car. We were blown away, as was Helen, the girl we hadn't yet met who started dancing in the middle of the street.

How did you meet her?

Eventually she stopped dancing, jumped in the car and demanded that we drive. We jammed A Kombi all throughout the city that night, even taking a trip under the harbor tunnel, where A Kombi sounded the greatest I've ever heard.

The liner notes mention "drive-by recitals at bus stops and traffic islands."

Those were things I did when I was bored and faced with a large crowd gathering. I would open all the windows, turn up A Kombi as loud as she would go, pull up, play crazy shit for a minute and then leave.

How did you decide to tape it?

If your car made such noises would you not record them?

Most assuredly.

I couldn't help but document it. It's just a shame that I only did it once.

The sounds had so many qualities that weren't apparent on the day we recorded.

Lately I've been on the lookout for plastic bags caught in the wind. I find it quite arresting, the grace and silence and aimlessness. It makes me wonder how many tons of garbage are flying around in the air all over the world at any given moment. I've been known to stop dead in my tracks, transfixed, only to find myself standing in the middle of traffic getting honked at as my wife frantically pulls on my sleeve.

I've always had a thing for bags myself.

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http://www.ebom.org.au/plover

"Funky Love Blast vs. Funky Anal Humor" by Justice Yeldham and the Dynamic Ribbon Device is track number three on *My Baby Does Good Sculptures*

LUCAS ABELA AND A KOMBI. R.I.P.

