



## A mortgage on wheels

Some pretty unusual vehicles have appeared in our *Rarity* features in the past year, but none more so than this one. It's a General Motors Motor Home, all 3 tons of it. It is powered by a 7.5 litre Toronado engine driving the front wheels, and is available from the United States via importers General Motor Homes, of Ruislip, within four to eight weeks of ordering. Prices new in Britain start from £8750, but by the time you've installed all the creature comforts like showers, oven, deep freeze, video-cassette player and the rest you're going to need a mortgage to buy one. Such machines are common enough in the United States, and a number are used by the top motor racing teams as hospitality and rest units. We asked Charles Lucas to report on life with Lord Hesketh's Motor Home. His comments are not to be taken too seriously.

Petula Clark's father, Kenneth, once said, "The march of civilisation is dictated by the basic control

over one's immediate environment". At the moment civilisation seems to have met its match in the shape of the motor car.

To overcome this temporary hold-up we are told that the only way to avoid the traffic jam which is at the heart of the problem is to cut down on the number of cars, or try to squeeze into smaller models. Now whenever the same number of people decide to jam they don't take up so much room as they did 10 years ago. Very logical, but wrong.

The thing to do is to adjust the vehicle to the situation, which is exactly what General Motors have done with their GMC Motor Home. Their argument is that if we are obliged to spend more time on the roads, whether moving or stationary, we must be able to pursue our mundane activities, which are all that the traffic jam restricts.

Motoring boredom was partially alleviated by the car radio and now the tape player, until we took them for granted. The cocktail cabinet is no longer advisable unless you have a chauffeur, while the odd

television or telephone help. But nothing really removes the frustration of actually sitting in a car going nowhere.

General Motors have cured this with great foresight by supplying everything to hand that one would be doing if one was not stuck in a jam. They have removed frustration to the extent that some of my happiest moments in the last few months have been spent in traffic jams.

Let me give an example. Strangely enough I have now been stuck in the Woolwich tunnel twice. The first time was in a Mini, when I thought that I was going to die; the second was in the racing team's GMC Motorhome.

After a non-stop drive from Italy I managed to arrive in the tunnel just at the moment that a lorry shed its load at the entrance. Fumes, chaos, heat — the ultimate jam. But for me it was the chance to turn to the GM Static Transit System. On with the air conditioning and coffee percolator. Unfortunately I couldn't call the office as the radio telephone didn't work from 20 ft

under the Thames, but a quick session on the dictaphone and typewriter soon disposed of the office work I had for the morning, with none of the distractions of the office proper.

That done, I defrosted a loaf in the micro-wave oven and settled down to a meal of hamburger, fried egg and baked potato (9 mins in the micro). Washed this down with red wine and watched *The Two Ronnies* on the video cassette machine.

Still no movement by the end of the show, so I had a look outside. By this time the conventional commuters were beginning to crack up, so I thought the least I could do was try to spread a little joy. On with the kettle and a quick round of tea and biscuits, scotch and a few gin and tonics. It seemed to help. (Fortunately the ice maker was still full.) One city gent was in such a bad way I had to give him a quick vibro massage and a welsh rarebit, and after a quick wash and brush-up in the lavatory he became almost violent when asked to return to his Rolls-Royce. Fortunately the policeman who had been acting as doorman assisted.

Then the real test. On his way back from returning the gent to his Rolls, the policeman found a lady in a Scimitar who looked like producing at any minute. Ready for anything, it took only a moment to make up the bed in the back, draw the curtains and put the kettle on. They always seem to do this in the movies, though I've never known why. The lady arrived, fortunately with a nurse who had been found in the jam. I made a quick adjustment to the level of the air suspension to put the bed on an angle to ease delivery and 20 minutes later it was all over. The first baby Motor Homer was rather premature but with the help of the oxygen bottle we carry for hangovers and the central heating, he seemed quite comfortable. I suggested popping him in the microwave but the handbook only listed baby chicken or sucking pig. The mother was fine, so we celebrated with a bottle of champagne out of the deep freeze.

We actually got through six bottles before the all-clear was given. By that time the atmosphere was becoming positively festive, with toasts to General Motors and Lord Hesketh, the team's patron. We finally left the tunnel to the strains of, "For it's a jolly good motor," and drove quietly to St Margarets to drop off mother and child.