



...he calls me

Gumby

the Karmann Ghia...

story and pics Bill Holden



Smooth as a baby's bottom. It's not a car, seriously, it's a Karmann Ghia! The Karmann Ghia is one of the world's most recognised cars, which is no small feat when you consider the car has been out of production for over 30 years. At first glance, this green Karmann Ghia just appears to be another run of the mill 1974 right hand drive cabriolet from Sydney, Australia. But wait a minute, Volkswagen Australia didn't sell any Karmann Ghia cabriolets, just coupes from 1960-1969. This Zambesi Green Karmann Ghia was born as a left hand drive in 1973 for the 1974 year model and happens to be one of the poster children for Volkswagen America's 1974 brochures.



1974 Karmann Ghia Convertible

This 'run of the mill' Ghia is indeed a little bit special. "Gumby", as I affectionately call this green Ghia, spent part of its life on the east coast of the United States, doing what it does best- catching the eye of every motorist passing by. Driving down Autumn tree lined streets, whisking through the fallen leaves, and every Spring and Summer, running around topless. Amazingly enough Gumby never suffered any real motoring accidents as many Ghias often do.

Gumby finally ended up in San Diego California in late 2003, the same time I was on a buying trip for several Karmann Ghia cabriolets to bring back, as there is such a shortage of them here in Australia. I had already acquired a Red, Orange,

Yellow, and Blue Ghia Cabriolets, and so why not get the green one to make the full light spectrum? Of course, I would need to find an Indigo/Violet as well. The proverbial needle in a hay stack search unearthed a close second, a white cabriolet with a purple pearlescent shine to it.

Gumby, with only 67,000 original miles on the clock was on the big adventure to the land down under. Eight weeks later Gumby, and his newly acquainted 5 brothers and sisters arrived in Sydney on March the 4th 2004. First port of call was the Sydney Mardi Gras who had requested the loan of the six Ghias to provide rides for celebrities during the parade. Detailing six Ghias for the parade was difficult enough, but the lights had to also be changed over to RHD, and all six cars registered by the 6th of March 2004.

The VW Nationals was the last event for Gumby before a little R+R was due - rest and restore. A conversion to right hand drive, with a new leather dash, a new paint job in the factory Zambesi Green (L64K), new carpeting, wheels, tyres, rear disc-brakes, re-chromed bumpers, re-conditioned KMH speedo and gauges, engine rebuild, stereo, alarm, and immobiliser, and did I mention new seat belts? Come September 2005, the restoration was finally completed for this 32 year old Karmann Ghia.

When you drive a Karmann Ghia, you will grin from ear to ear when most drivers give you a thumbs up, or high five at the traffic lights. The Karmann Ghia is also a favourite of the little kids who always wave at you, especially from the school bus windows, and yell out "Cool Car!". Since the Karmann Ghia is steadily increasing in value every year, they're a very sound investment especially with quality restorations. Karmann Ghias are becoming more popular with various TV, and Film productions due to their timeless classic lines. Gumby

is currently on display for the next three months at the Classic Car Club in Sydney, and you can even arrange to Rent Gumby for a day or the weekend for that spring or summer drive to the Hunter Valley or Blue Mountains with the top down, just like during his stateside carefree days.

