

# Ballroom Bentley

CAR  
FEATURE



## Jason's Top Five Driving Sounds:

Chasing Cars | Snow Patrol

Again All Odds | Phil Collins

Don't Stop the Party | Black Eyed Peas

Money For Nothing | Dire Straits

New York | Jay-Z & Alicia Keys

Jason Butler is the co owner of a thriving accountancy practice in Shipley near Bradford. Having worked hard to qualify and then become successful, Jason has earned his little bit of luxury, which comes in the form of a beautiful Bentley into which he has had his dream audio system fitted.

On the face of it, Jason could have looked like the dream customer when he first contacted his FOUR MASTER to enquire about a system for his Bentley. Clearly successful, Jason has the demeanour of a man who appreciates the finer things in life and a FOUR MASTER, were the ideal specialist to approach for an audio system. However, this seemingly serendipitous union came about through other historical factors.

Jason's wife, Sally, went to school with manager and co-owner, Peter Preston and continued to be indirectly in touch via Facebook. Examples of Peter's work had appeared online from time to time and so Sally was fully aware of how he made his living. Car lover, Jason had

dabbled with car audio in his youth and was from the generation who would stuff the interior of their Escort RS Turbo's with subwoofers and amplifiers determined to bring down the aged walls of a crumbling society, as is the want of every young man trying to make his way in life. Outside of this, Jason had no strong musical ties or experiences in his upbringing and only really became very keen after going to see Michael Jackson followed by Madonna live. As always seems to be the way when I speak to people about their influences, the impact of a live musical event left a long-lasting impression on Jason and from then on, his listening habits quickly developed.

Jason was very disappointed with the standard fit audio system in his Bentley and

in particular the lack of bass and he and Sally decided that old school friend Peter could help them find the ideal solution. He immediately felt he was in the hands of a professional and was happy, within certain budget constraints, to leave product selection to them.

Jason was asked many questions about his musical taste and was able to give very clear guidance as to his musical preferences. Bass was always going to be a very important element of the system and it was decided early on that this would come courtesy of a custom designed box that would sit in the luggage compartment and fire through the vehicle's ski flap and in fact, Jason tells me that the flap is now always open to give him maximum whoomph! The sub box

was given a couple of esoteric touches to remind Jason of his car audio roots. These include an acrylic panel making up one side of the box which is etched with the Bentley and FOUR Master logos and which features red illumination. Apart from this element, the system is completely discreet and utilises the factory speaker mounting positions that now house a pair of Hertz ECX 690 coaxials with the mid and tweeter drivers disconnected and a pair of Hertz DT 25 tweeters. More importantly to Jason, the original head unit and controls still control the front end of the system. This is made possible by use of an Audison Bit 10 digital interface/processor connected directly to a digital output of the original equipment that equalises this output to give a perfectly flat and distortion free basis on which to begin tweaking to suit Jason's specific needs. Audio from the Bit 10 is fed to a Hertz HDP 5 five-channel amplifier which drives the front speakers actively, so individual channels for each woofer and tweeter and then drives

the Hertz HX 300 12inch subwoofer with it's fifth dedicated subwoofer output delivering a mighty 380 Watts RMS.

The HDP 5 is a Class-D amplifier that enables it to drive lots of power from a compact case. It also runs extremely efficiently with minimum heat build-up allowing the guys to mount it on top of the sub box behind a nicely finished vanity panel, which can be easily removed for further tweaking (and photography!) The Bit 10 is mounted on the side of the sub box and is equally, highly accessible in case of the need to tweak at a later date.

The front doors have been comprehensively treated with Skinz sound deadening and wave diffuser to minimise road noise that is amplified by untreated panels and back waves, which upset cone performance in the speakers. This may surprise some readers who may think that car manufacturers would do this as a matter of course.

It surprises us too but not a single car manufacturer takes this vital step in making it's car sound better even those who boast about having Mark Levinson, Bang & Olufsen, B&W, Dynaudio or other systems on board. Without this fundamental step, the quality of any speakers fitted is being literally thrown away!

The system electronics are connected together using Connection cables. These are designed specifically for automotive use and have a very high resistance to external electrical influences that can cause pops bangs and hums if not rejected completely. Connection cables and accessories were also used for running power to the amplifier as they are extremely flexible despite their necessarily heavy gauge and also highly impervious to any sharp objects they may come in accidental contact with.

I selected three tracks to listen to in this vehicle expecting a neutral set up which would excel with all sorts of musical genres



but have to say that I became increasingly uncomfortable with what I was listening to. I began with Prince's Sexy MF, a track I love for it's audacious big band parody as much as anything but also for it's lively drum track and fabulous guitar solo. Spatially, I had absolutely no complaints except that the system was set for centre that made it seem a little "lefty" to me. Once I reset the balance control for selfish listening I could appreciate the full width that played well beyond the confines of the car and the depth that gave distinct position to all the instruments while maintaining a coherent balance with no obvious holes. The drums were a little more forward than I would like for my taste but the cymbal hits were crisp and crystal clear. The brass played over the whole of the sound stage and the human breathiness of the sax solo was wonderful. However, the bad news is that the guitar solo was a little swamped with low rumbling bass that I found slightly distracting.

Determined to explore a broad soundscape, I next put on an old Pink Floyd track, Sheep from their Animals album. This begins



with a spacey Fender Rhodes piano with lots of time manipulation effects on it and some natural sheep and bird sounds underneath. This part sounded beautiful. The bass guitar builds very slowly coming from under the keyboard and then taking, in this case, a too dominant role. By the time the track exploded it again, all sounded a little overwhelmed by bass.

My third track of choice was Eva Cassidy's rendition of Fields of Gold. Although I love the vocal, the guitar sound has always troubled me. I would guess it is an Ovation with a piezo transducer doing most of the work and it sounds a little cold and a million miles away from what I would call a lovely acoustic guitar sound, which is a shame as the guitar arrangement is fantastic. However, on this system it actually sounded really fitting but the exceptional element was the vocal. It sounded like Eva was sat on the dashboard. The vocal climax at 3mins 45 fair brought a tear to my eye and the gentle comedown afterwards was exquisite.



I was ready to leave it at that with regards listening. Don't get me wrong, it sounded really good but not quite what I was expecting and I was left feeling that if it were mine, I would have a bit more tweaking done. However, whilst retrieving my discs from the changer in the glove box, I spied an iPod. I had a quick flick through and noticed that the music consisted entirely of dance tunes from the 80's and 90's. I selected "What is Love" by Haddaway and had a sudden blinding realisation that this was what the car has been set up for. The vocal projection sitting on top of that low punchy bass with all the previously unnoticed production elements in there, bought the entire car to life. I hungrily browsed through other tracks such as the meticulously produced "Killer" by Seal and "Pump up the Jam" by Technotronic amongst plenty of others and in the parlance of the far-younger-than-me, the system really slammed! I have pretty eclectic tastes but admit that this music passed me by the first time around but sitting in that car with that iPod full of those great tunes, I finally felt I have really missed out on a lot of musical fun!

I think more than anything, this car has demonstrated to me that in the hands of a great installer able to extract the right brief, a system can be truly tailored to taste. The great installer in this case is Carlo Corbin who is already a legend in the car audio world. A long time sound judge and installer of award winning systems across Europe and indeed America, this is a fine example of what can be achieved.

As for Jason, he tells me that he finds himself smiling a lot more when driving and waiting for a track to finish before switching the engine off and getting out of the car. I am guessing that he and Sally reminisce a lot while listening to this particular system and maybe this is all they need. I suspect however, that the system will help to move their taste on to new as yet undiscovered genres as is reflected in Jason's top five. One thing is certain however, as long as they continue to use FOUR MASTERS their musical future is in great hands!

