

# Classic Minis Hugely Improved



CALLUM is an automotive design house. It is the brainchild of Ian Callum CBE, a man with a huge history and first-class pedigree in car design. We were excited to be invited to see their work, a collaborative project with Wood and Pickett, featuring an Audison audio upgrade.

We first became aware of CALLUM work through Lee Preston of FOUR Car Audio. He had been asked to come up with an audio solution which would be in keeping with the pristine Wood & Pickett Mini by CALLUM. The system had to be non-intrusive and deliver high-quality audio befitting a sporty rework of this iconic classic car.

Those familiar with the Mk . 5 sportspack Mini will recognise elements from the original, but almost everything is bespoke or has been improved in some way. Ian Callum draws on years of design work, including projects for Ford, where he worked on the RS200 and Cosworth models. His enthusiasm and notoriety for designing high-performance, exciting drives led him to Tom Walkinshaw Racing (TWR) where he designed Aston Martin models, including the DB7 and Vanquish, amongst others. In 1990, he took up the post of Director of Design with Jaguar Land Rover (JLR). In this role, he worked on both Jaguar and Aston Martin portfolios.

Ian is clearly not the sort to sit behind a desk and twiddle his thumbs while those around him do the work. His passion for design and innovation keeps him busy, so CALLUM became his outlet. Here, he can work

on a variety of custom projects based on some of the cars he originally helped design, new vehicles that need a helping hand, and classics such as the Mini.

My talented colleague, Lauren, had come in contact with the WP Mini by CALLUM at both Goodwood Festival of Speed, and Salon Privé in 2025. She actually got to sit in and listen at the latter event. She was excited enough to suggest that we try and include it in this issue of the magazine. Shortly after, I spoke with Lee Preston, who mentioned that since Lauren's encounter, an additional pair of speakers and an amplifier had been added to the Mini, making a startling improvement to performance.

Lee mentioned the first customer for the Mini was international style icon and classic car enthusiast, David Gandy. One thing led to another, and somehow, I ended up meeting David and CALLUM's head of marketing, Nina Crowe, on a Teams chat. Despite somewhat putting the cart before the horse, this was an excellent opportunity to speak with the eventual owner of the car, before he had actually heard the system himself!

David is originally from Essex. This would put him at the centre of the car tuning and modifying scene during the

noughties, when magazines like Max Power actively encouraged young car owners to take their cars apart and add, sometimes dangerous, upgrades. Things were chaotic then. However, it fed a popular youth pastime of car cruises. David had a friend who entered into the spirit of the cruise scene with a modified Renault Clio in Williams livery. The car had a couple of 12" subs built into the rear and made a lot of noise. David recalls listening to LL Cool J. However, apart from accompanying his friend on cruises in Southend and Thurrock, David's interest was more focused on iconic classics and motorsport.

His musical journey began years before. His family home featured a B&O system. Back then, these would typically be large, high-design items that delivered excellent sound quality.

He vividly remembers listening to mix tapes his mother prepared on European summer road trips. These consisted mainly of Motown, Soul and bands like Hall and Oates. He recalls fond memories of travelling up to London at weekends with his mother, listening to music all the way. Things were different when travelling with his father, who would prefer to drive in silence. However, music in the car became and remains very important. Despite this, David didn't really go in for audio upgrades in his own cars, except for upgrading a head unit once, so the Mini is likely to be his first experience of what

music can sound like in a car with a decent system.

It is quite typical for car enthusiasts of David's age to tell me that their listening habits were formed in the heady days of all-night clubbing. David admitted that he was more likely to run away from such pursuits. I very much get the impression that his musical preferences are cool and sophisticated. Having said this, he points out that his four and seven-year-old daughters have definitely shaped the playlists on his Spotify account. As with all good parents, he has embraced their enthusiasm for the Trolls movie soundtrack and K-pop!

David has suggested he would be happy to have a follow-up chat once he has lived with his Mini for a while. This could make for interesting reading in the next issue.

Back to the car. CALLUM added speakers around conveniently placed pods, which sit between the floor and the bottom of the dash in the front footwells. These accommodate a pair of Audison Voce 3.0 midrange drivers. High frequencies up front come from a pair of Audison Prima AP 1 tweeters mounted in the front door cards. Initially, all other sound came from a pair of Audison Prima APX 6.5 two-way coaxials on the rear parcel shelf. But due to the disjointed nature of the speaker placement, Lee persuaded the project manager to add a pair of Audison Prima AP 690 6 X 9" speakers,

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mounted in the panel under the rear bench seat, and more importantly, an Audison Forza AF C8.14 bit amplifier with built-in Digital Signal Processor (DSP). This allowed Lee to tune the 6X9's for low bass frequencies and use time and phase alignment to make the stereo image coherent. This has worked really well, as you will see below. Lee felt these additions to be imperative, especially as the mighty engine note from the reworked 1310 cc Stage three road/rally engine is a little difficult to get away from, even with the amount of sound treatment CALLUM has put into the car! The additional benefit of the extra low end is that the full-range speakers on the back shelf can be tuned to spread the soundstage wide.

I arrived at CALLUM to listen to the car, having listened to a new release by Nusantara Beat on my own system. I had really enjoyed the eclectic mix of styles. These move from psychedelic rock to Jazz/Funk fusion with echoes of Indonesian folk thrown in for good measure. I played a track called Kupa Kupa. With the front 3" mid-range speakers more or less on axis, the high mids were fantastic. A clean guitar features very heavily in the intro and sounds flawless. Drums were tight and precise, supporting the floating female vocal perfectly. The image extended beyond the car's limits, even beyond the wing mirrors. This makes the car interior feel far bigger than it is. The addition of the 6 X 9s is a masterstroke. The bass is low and forceful, yet musical.

The rear shelf-mounted speakers add an immersive aspect to the sound, which I am sure David will really enjoy.

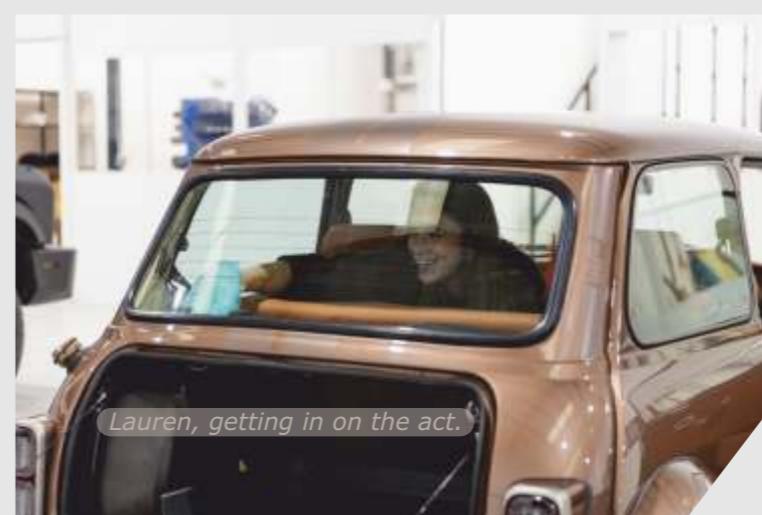
Next, I played an old fave of mine from Steely Dan, "Black Cow" from the album Asia. This track is impeccably recorded with some of the most outstanding musicians of all time gelling to create the perfect ensemble. I had not noticed the extent of the reverb on the keyboards during the introduction before, and the drums and horns were exquisite.

I stream my music from Qobuz or Tidal and strongly recommend that David adopt a Hi-Res source to get the best out of the system.

I am sure that once David takes delivery of this magnificent car, which he intends to use as his "car around town", he will often be found sitting on his driveway after arriving home to let the current track playing come to its conclusion – just like the rest of us car audio fans!

**Huge thanks to CALLUM, Lee Preston and David Gandy for indulging us and helping to create an exceptional listening experience.○**

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**Equipment list**  
**AUDISON Forza AF C8.14 bit DSP amplifier**  
**AUDISON Prima AP 1 - Tweeters**  
**AUDISON Voce AV 3.0 - Midrange**  
**AUDISON Prima APX 6.5 - 2 way coaxial**  
**AUDISON Prima AP 690 - Woofer**

