



HEAVEN'S OUTSIDE THE GATES OF HELL

Here at Driving Sounds, we like to hear personal accounts of how an installed system has affected the life and musical taste of its' owner. And here is a particularly good example of how improving the quality of your system can affect what you listen to!

Dave is co owner of a car detailing (that's cleaning to you and me) products company, Waxybox. Having worked hard to establish his business with business partner Rich over the last few years, he felt that it was time to invest in his own car. He dreamed of owning a BMW Mini Cooper S, but as this was to be his first car at the age of 27 years, he found he simply couldn't get insurance for such a weapon and therefore had to re align his expectations. However, he was determined that any compromises made would be minimised by employing the latest techniques and skills to "up spec" the look of his beloved first car.

Whilst performing many upgrades including the fitment of a Cooper body kit as well as removing anything chrome and replacing with black, Dave became increasingly perturbed by the lack of bass produced by the standard system. The closer Dave got to realising his ambition of owning a car he could be proud of the more dissatisfied he became with the tiny sound coming from the factory music system. Turning it up just introduced horrible distortion and a tiring listening experience, particularly whilst motorway driving.

As an ardent fan of rap music, he sought advice from friends who had been active purchasers of car entertainment systems some years ago and was convinced that what he needed was a simple bass upgrade. Fortunately, his friends recommended Source Sounds in Sheffield as the best place to go for help with his problem.

Dave picks up the story; "From my first visit to Source I was surprised at the lack of sales pressure coming from Paul Ellis. Instead, he asked questions and seemed genuinely interested in finding a permanent solution to my perceived problem. I had absolutely no prior knowledge technical or otherwise as to what I might need but I did have a budget figure in mind and a requirement that all equipment should be completely hidden from view. I wanted this to be a fully considered purchase and so I took information away from my first visit including a copy of Driving Sounds magazine, which I found very inspiring.

Paul pointed out that by simply working on a bass solution, I was in danger of ending up with an unbalanced system, which I didn't want. By now, Paul had demonstrated equipment in a product stand and I was beginning to think beyond just bass. Following a number of visits and discussions, Paul arrived at three possible solutions all of which would offer different levels of performance. I finally opted for the most budget-stretching option, as I now felt extremely comfortable that I was going to get a lot more than I

had originally expected. The system I chose was to consist of a pair of Hertz ESK163, 3-way component speakers up front with a pair of Hertz Energy EX 690, 3-way coaxials for the rear, a Hertz HX250 High Energy 10" subwoofer and a Hertz HDP5 5-channel amplifier, a good deal of Skinz sound deadening and an Audison Bit 10 interface/processor"

Early on, Source educated Dave as to the relationship between power and volume when it comes to amplifier and speaker power ratings. The need for power to be controlled and pointed at the right audio frequencies in order to ensure a correctly balanced system was also explained. Controlling the low end is particularly important and subwoofers are far easier to control when mounted in a sealed enclosure of the right size. Source advised that an alternative solution to carrying a spare wheel would free up space that could be utilised for this purpose. An enclosure was constructed from MDF and fibreglass and although Dave saw this in construction, it is completely hidden away under a false, hinged "peek-a-boo" boot floor.

Dave's requirement for a system that could not be seen led to him purchasing a pair of A-Pillar covers from BMW designed to accommodate tweeters as the mid-driver and woofer of his 3-way system would occupy the factory positions once inhabited by the standard 2-way system and from reading Driving Sounds he knew that high frequencies need to be produced at height in a car rather than fired at the sides of your knees due to the critical directional information they produce.

The EX690 inch coaxials simply slotted into the factory mounting positions in the rear passenger area of the car.

Dave listens to a vast library of music stored on an iPhone and wanted to stick with his original car stereo which was already able to take its' input. This was made possible by introducing an Audison Bit 10 sound processor which takes the speaker outputs from the standard system, equalises the (not very) specially tweaked outputs to give a more complete audio response and offers nearly infinite possibilities for adjusting equalisation to suit genre and sound preferences.

In order to get the most from the speakers and to help attenuate road noise, the whole car except for the roof, was treated with Skinz sound deadening. The install took three days in total and Dave could not wait to get his car back and see how closely his brief for an invisible system had been met.

As can be seen from the pictures used in this article, the untrained eye would just not know that anything had been done to the interior of this vehicle. Another BMW Mini owner may notice the false boot floor and the characteristic Hertz orange colour showing through the speaker grills, but other than that the vehicle looks just like a John Cooper Works Mini. Satisfied that this part of the brief had been well met, Paul demonstrated the system to Dave while an increasingly incredulous Dave. "To say I was impressed is a complete understatement. I was completely knocked over by the crystal clear sound, stunning definition and number of musical elements in my chosen reference tracks that I had simply not heard before. Whatever I threw at the system, it was handled brilliantly and completely came alive and this has continued and got even better with time"

Climbing into this car, I was concerned that the compact lay out of the interior would render the stereo image of the system too narrow. I was also a little concerned that Dave's self-confessed love of rap music would have affected the set-up. I needn't have worried however, as my first test track, Feist's "The bad in each other" from the fabulous Metals album warmed up the subwoofer and played a stage, which easily reached to the outside edges of the wing mirrors. The forceful bass did not swamp the top end as feared and the overall balance felt extremely comfortable and safe. I just had to click on to track 7 of the same album "Bittersweet Melodies" on which I could almost hear the valves in the guitar amp rattling! I could feel the bass wobbling the seat and so, as the car was stationary, I reduced the subwoofer level. Driving down

the road, I know that this control would be turned up again as road noise will cancel bass frequencies extremely efficiently!

Next up, I went for something retro but which I know to be beautifully recorded - XTC's "Yacht Dance" from the album, English Settlement. I was listening for guitars, and yep, there they were in their glorious splendour sounding like they were actually being played live in the car! Finally, I put a Nelson Riddle arrangement of Frank Sinatra rendering the wholly wonderful; "I've got you under my skin" from around 1963 with it's completely mad trombone solo and fantastically organised but often difficult to reproduce brass crescendos. This again was handled with complete aplomb, very unusual for a system set up for rap! Having waited respectfully for the last notes of the track to fade to zero, I flicked back to radio only to notice that Dave was tuned in to Radio 3! On investigation, it seems Dave, as a result of having the system installed, has strayed from the righteous path of rap and now listens to "pretty much anything"

This brilliant sounding system came to being as a result of a car owner wondering whether it was possible to add a bit more bass to his car. It would have been the easiest thing in the world for Source Sounds to throw a powered subwoofer in the boot and put a couple of hundred pounds in the till, but this is not how FOUR MASTERS work. Dave himself told us; "I began this journey with zero knowledge and with hindsight, no idea how much music meant to me. I must admit, I was a little worried that I would be talked into parting with lots of money unnecessarily,

but my experience was way wide of that mark. I was eased into the world of car audio and the more I learnt, the more excited I became. Paul at Source treated me as a friend and a student rather than cynically trying to open my wallet. I have grown to completely trust his judgement and ability and would whole-heartedly recommend him to anyone who would like to begin a whole new musical education.

TOP 5 TUNES

Dave was keen for us to point out that this is just a snapshot of his top five on the particular day on which we met him; "My taste is so diverse now, it is incredible. My best friend is "Shazam" and by using this when I hear tracks on the radio, I am building an extremely eclectic library of music I love to listen to. I even have friends and relatives recommending tunes for me to listen to in the car"

DAVE'S TOP FIVE DRIVING SOUNDS:

HALF TIME | NAS

CONCRETE SCHOOLYARD | JURASSIC 5

COOL OUT SON | JUNIOR MURVIN

I'M READY | FREDDIE KING

RESUSCITATION | SHERYL CROW

