

GOOD EVANS

Honda CRV owner's pursuit for excellence



Geoff Evans likes his cars so much he tends to hold on to them for a long time. His latest vehicle, a Honda CRV, has received the expert attentions of FOUR MASTER John Kleis not just once, but twice as Geoff's musical taste and commitment to listening is influenced by Driving Sounds Magazine.

I first met Geoff at the 2016 New Forest Show. He came to the event specifically to meet Driving Sounds as well as John Kleis' demon installer Simon Longmuir. Geoff was keen to tell us how pleased he was with Simon's work and how much he enjoyed the magazine. It was only later that Simon explained that Geoff had decided to replace his recently installed Hertz ESK 165's with a 3-way set of Hertz Mille Legends after reading about them in Driving Sounds Magazine.

So it was, some two months later that we contrived to meet up at FOUR MASTER John Kleis in Reading to have a listen with a view to covering the car in this issue of the magazine. The car was undergoing a set up following the pre-requisite "playing in" time which often sees speakers "relax" and require a bit of a tweak to re-optimize performance. This was done using traditional methods beginning with a scan via an AudioControl real-time analyser (RTA). This is a spectrum analyser that plots frequency against amplitude on a graph when presented with sounds (in this case a flat frequency sweep between 20Hz and 20kHz generated from a CD) collected by a microphone located at ear height on the driver's seat back. Simon uses this plot as a starting point. A car interior is not a particularly ideal environment

for sound and with lots of hard reflective surfaces, adjustments can often involve turning levels up or down at specific frequencies to compensate for unwanted peaks and troughs. However, Simon mainly uses his ears and his experience to make the final tweaks. In this case, adjustments were only available via the Pioneer head unit that has limited on-board processing (time-alignment and 9-band graphic equaliser). Finer adjustment would be made possible by the addition of an Audison bit processor (31-band) but none was specified (maybe a future upgrade Geoff?). It is well worth noting that as well as his experience Simon is also relying on his knowledge of how Geoff likes his cars to sound.

Once Simon was happy, I was invited to jump in by a proud Geoff.

I have become a big fan of Hertz Mille Legends and was keen to get my ears in straight away and threw a couple of tracks at the system from a compilation CD I always carry with me. I was immediately struck by the depth of image as well as the definition in the high and mid frequencies, which gave the snare drum extra zing and ensured startling attack at the front edge of cymbal hits. More on sonic performance later on, first I was keen to explore Geoff's journey in car audio so far.

Sporty Geoff is Newbury born and bred and went from school to a 3-year apprenticeship in the then buoyant print trade. Print has seen a dramatic slump in recent years and Geoff took the brave decision to retrain and now operates an automated thermal building block fabrication plant.



Simon checks system tuning. Head unit only allows for fairly coarse adjustments



Hertz Mille ML 1650.3 sits behind factory grille as does the ML 280 Tweeter (Left). Impressive pillar build houses ML 700.3 mid range



A music lover from birth, Geoff was brought up in a household with music an ever present. He had a go at playing trumpet and latterly, sang for pleasure with a guitar-playing friend but would not be persuaded to describe himself as a musician in any way or form and focussed hobby time on playing football.

We spoke about live music and Geoff admits that he did not particularly get swept up by going to see favourite bands play live. In his youth, he did however, frequent clubs in Ibiza and beyond and enjoyed the effect that the music had on a good night out. Although not an audiophile at this stage, he has been moved to upgrade the audio in all of the cars he has owned with particular interest in boosting bass performance. This is an incredibly common motivation and is borne out of the lacklustre (I am being very kind here) performance of standard-fit car audio in this key area.

It is only latterly that Geoff has been as emotionally affected by the rest of the audio spectrum. One of his key triggers was attending a demonstration of a new pipe organ installed in a church in Caversham, which he found most enjoyable and took him by surprise. For those of you who have only ever heard old aunt Maude struggling through the wedding march at family weddings on this incredible instrument, it is well worth hearing a pipe organ at the hands (and feet) of an impresario. Commonly reaching down to 20Hz, pipe organs define sub bass as being frequencies below 60Hz – none of the namby-pamby 80Hz as defined in other fields of audio for

them – church organs are where hardcore bass comes from! Other than this, Geoff recently went to see Level 42 who I know for a fact put on a jolly good show with particular emphasis on the incredibly percussive bass lines of Sellotape-sponsored, Mark “Thunder thumbs” King.

In this internally spacious vehicle, Geoff felt he wanted to fill every nook and cranny with audio excellence and so visited John Kleis who had previously given him good advice and exceptional service and asked for a recommendation. He had a specific budget in mind and the system was designed to accommodate this. He knew he wanted component speakers up front and in the rear doors, mainly to amuse his son who is also a music lover even at the tender age of seven. He also wanted big bass. The original system comprised two pairs of Hertz ESK 165's and an obscure American branded 10" subwoofer/tuned box combo. The speakers and subwoofer at this time were run by a single Hertz HDP 5, 5-channel amplifier.

Although fairly satisfied, Geoff had begun to read issues of Driving Sounds Magazine and discovered some of the music that we have used while auditioning systems. Along with his exploration of new musical genres, he wondered what difference he would notice if he invested a little more in his already competent system. He returned to John Kleis to talk about a front-end upgrade. He had his heart set on a pair of

Hertz Mille components and was interested in exploring whether a 3-way set could be accommodated in a vehicle with mounting options for 2-way. He was in luck as the installers at John Kleis provide first class fabrication skills, and they were able to convince Geoff that they could remake his A-pillar trims to accommodate a 70mm mid-range driver.

In audio terms, the addition of an extra speaker to handle mid-range frequencies, frees up cone area for the woofers to be focussed on bass and mid-bass while the tweeters are able to concentrate on accuracy and definition at high frequencies. Some reconfiguring of the amplification was required. An additional amplifier was added to drive the speakers in the rear doors (Hertz HCP2) freeing up two channels of the HDP 5, enabling the front 3-ways to be driven in Passive/Active mode. In other words, a passive crossover (a pair of which have been cunningly secreted away behind the glove box) is used to drive the mid-range speakers and tweeters while a pair of dedicated channels is used to drive the woofers. This configuration allows the system to be fine-tuned to optimise the stereo image as well as Geoff's taste for bass/treble balance.

The physical challenges presented by this set up should not be overlooked. John Kleis have done a spectacular job making the additional speaker positions look "stock". It was not until I took a second look that I realised that the mids actually sit above the tweeters. I think this is the first time I have come across this and it was nagging at me a little until the audition during which I could not make a sonic case for changing it. It turns out that the tweeters that originally fired up against the windscreen have been repositioned to project forwards. Many car manufacturers fire tweeters off the front screen and for the pretty close to monaural reproduction they go for, it does not really cause much of an issue. For those looking for a more accurate stereo "picture" it is not ideal and even a few degrees of tilt can make a huge difference in this regard as more of the tweeter's output is directed toward the listener's ears rather than being scattered by the curvature of the screen and dealt up somewhat confused and second hand with the accompanying phase issues this is want to cause.

Geoff tells me that he originally wanted to have the Hertz Mille ML 1800.3, 7" woofers fitted to the front doors but it was not possible to get these to sit in nicely. In all honesty, the additional bass reach is not needed due to the presence of the subwoofer that has been expertly blended in with the 6.5" woofers to fill any potential holes. If he were going for a sub-less system then the 7" solution may have been worth exploring more vigorously but don't worry Geoff, your system is lacking nothing in the low end.

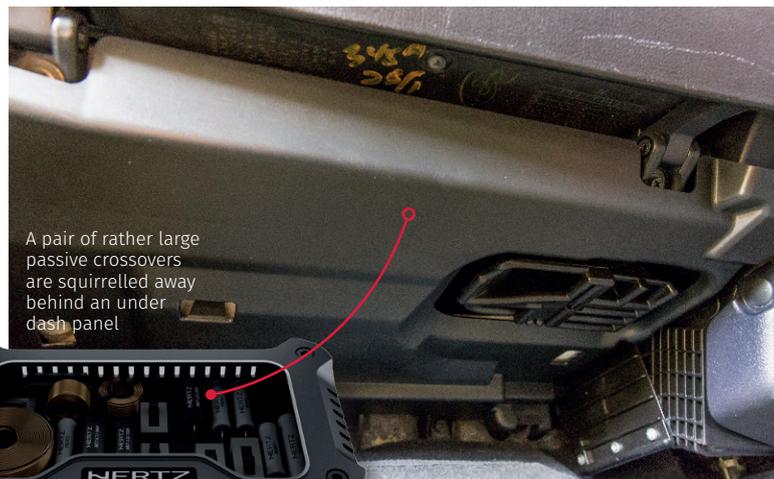
Geoff had already expressed a broad taste in music. Alongside his dalliances with 90's dance, he got through his formative years with the help of The Police, Level 42 and Dire Straits.

As a slight departure to previous issues of the magazine and to reflect the importance of using a car owner's usual material to get to the bottom of sonic performance, we are using Geoff's own top five to review his system. Geoff prefers to listen to Spotify Premium files. Although perhaps not quite as good as CD, enjoyment is definitely not affected by Geoff's choice of listening medium.

Rachelle Ferrell – "I Can Explain"

This track has become a favourite demo track at shows for us. Long appreciated by audiophiles, this stunning yet relatively unknown jazz singer/pianist's music also ventures into the funky side of jazz when moved to do so.

This track from the Individuality album perfectly showcases her incredible six-octave range as well as a deeply soulful delivery. The track begins with dynamic



A pair of rather large passive crossovers are squirrelled away behind an under dash panel



Hertz HCP 2 Amplifier mounted behind boot side wall

piano joined by her misleadingly soft vocal at 44 seconds. The piano sounds very lush with deep lower registers as sparkling as the higher notes. On this system, the vocal sounds open with attention drawn toward the reverb on soft peaks that really show off the "space" that these exceptional tweeters are able to leave around a dominant source. At 1:40, a slide on a fretless bass guitar introduces the rest of the band with the drums and mellow guitar joining immediately after. The guitar sits at about 45 degrees to dead centre position and the width of the sound stage was pretty remarkable considering the lack of a bit processor. The snare drum and crisp cymbal hits are perfectly balanced my only criticism being that the kick drum seems a little "thuddy" and unmusical. This is a shame as it detracts from the intricate guitar playing. This is a long track lasting just over eight minutes and every one of them fills you with the kind of prickly warmth that is only experienced when hearing something really special. A great track well rendered.

London Grammar – "If You Wait"

Geoff discovered this excellent band as a result of its mention in Issue VI of Driving Sounds Magazine. I can't take any credit for accidentally seeing them perform on Later... with Jools Holland one day and falling for the

SIMON LONGMUIR'S TOP FIVE DRIVING SOUNDS

- I Can Explain**
Rachelle Ferrell
- And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going**
Jennifer Hudson
- Turn Back the Time**
Camo & Krooked
- Back to Forever**
Lissie
- Their War Here**
Batman V Superman (Soundtrack)



Hertz HDP 5 amplifier mounted in spare wheel well

“I HAVE BECOME A BIG FAN OF HERTZ MILLE LEGENDS”



originality in their sound and particularly Hannah Reid's beautiful vocals. Her vocal is well represented in this track that begins with eerie electronic sounds before a tempo-keeping piano figure moves in to add some drive. A slow tune with quite a lot going on if you listen deeply enough. The prominence of the vocal is most welcome as it brings the band to life. The reverb on the vocal takes forever to decay and the Mille Legend tweeters deliver this until there is no more. Nothing masks even the slightest nuance as the vocal commands its space like a football midfield maestro. At 1:45 the vocal soars generating a shiver down my neck and spine. At around 2:00 the eerie sound from the intro returns and is joined by high violins and lower-registered bowed instruments for the reprise of the vocal refrain shifting it from "haunting" to "uplifting".

Dire Straits – “Private Investigations”

From the Love Over Gold album, this track features a wide variety of sounds from the initial electric guitar heavy intro to a nylon stringed guitar accompanied by pristine piano. As the song progresses I can hear a cabassa on the left and more keyboards layered under the dominant nylon stringed guitar. The piano keeps things together rhythmically and Mark Knopfler's vocal is practically hidden away. All is rendered with the very familiar high production values of Dire Straits at the height of their pomp. Explosive guitar and thunderous drums toward the back of the track demonstrate the dynamic range of this excellent system.

Jean-Michel Jarre – “The Time Machine”

23 seconds into the moody intro there is what sounds like a steam train whistle. This signals the onslaught of a benign Armageddon with layers of high quality electronic sounds building and building. The bass reaches very low and the track is punctuated by explosive percussion sounds that fail to hide away the more subtle sounds that are all over the track and clearly audible – most dramatic.

Technimatic – “Cold Shoulder”

OK, this was expected. Geoff is not shy about his love of deep bass and this track demonstrates the power of the mono channel in the Hertz HDP 5 and the bass box perfectly. Now, personally, I like a good tune and this track doesn't have one, but it does have some great sounds. It also has a great deal of deliberate audio compression that squashes the sides of your head as if you are 20,000 leagues under the sea!

All in all, Geoff's Top Five demonstrates the full highs and lows of his system. Simon has done a great job to make it sound so good despite the comparative lack of processing tools to help him. Geoff asked me if there was anything he could do to improve the system. The answer is always yes. In this case, if I were you Geoff, I would save up for a bit 10 or bit One. I think this would lead to even greater instrument definition and perhaps slightly more musical bass.

Huge thanks go to John Kleis and Geoff for allowing us to get in their way for more hours than we intended. Well done to everyone involved in the creation and delivery of this most excellent system. □