

KATIE'S SHARP GOLF

Fun in the sun

Katie Sharp lives on a farm. She has a VW Golf, and a boyfriend who has access to some of the coolest and best sounding car audio products on the planet. She allowed me to have a close-up look and a listen to her lovely machine.

Katie is very lucky. Without the influence of her partner Connor, she may have missed out completely on the joys of great sounding car audio. Connor works for FOUR MASTER, John Kleis in Reading and is one of the hottest car audio product experts around, as many a satisfied customer would attest.

Katie works for Waitrose and is currently fulfilling the role of Leisure Benefits Coordinator (I will be talking to my boss as it sounds like we need one of these at Driving Sounds Towers!) This is a temporary secondment from her normal role in customer services that she has held for the past five years. She has also worked part-time at John Kleis in the past helping out on very busy weekends and so she knows something of the car audio business herself. Katie has attended many car shows not only as a dutiful partner to Connor but also as an interested participant in the tuning and styling scene herself and it was from these frequent excursions that she drew inspiration for the modifications she has had made to her silver Golf 2.0 Litre TDI. Katie has owned the car for two months at the time of writing and is extremely proud of this car. I asked her about her previous car; "It was a Peugeot 207 and I was perfectly satisfied with it until I heard Connor's extreme Astra (featured in issue two and available to view at: www.drivingsounds.co.uk). That completely ruined any enjoyment I got at all from listening to music in the Peugeot. It had all sorts of rattles and was quick to run into distortion and lacking in just about everything really. I had a pair of Hertz Energy components fitted and a 10-inch subwoofer driven by a Hertz HCP 4 amplifier which made it sound much better and far more fun to drive."

Katie's Golf however, needed to be better. She explains; "I wanted more of everything really. I am not a big music aficionado but enjoy high-energy, feel-good music including cheesy pop tunes, R&B, and also some Classic Rock. I got really into Reggae before a recent holiday in Jamaica. This seemed to put quite high demands on my Peugeot audio system, as it sounded best turned up loud! Growing up, my mum used to listen to lots of Motown." Katie seemed almost embarrassed to tell me this, come on Katie, some of the best music ever, was produced on the Motown label,

this is a cool thing to have grown up with!

Katie continues her story; "When the Golf turned up, Connor proposed that if he could get me a "deal" on some equipment, I might be happy to take the car along to John Kleis occasionally, so that the system could be demonstrated. I was quite happy to accept this situation although not keen to lose complete control of the car and its space! I was particularly keen to retain boot space and more than a little worried that "bass head" Connor might fill it up completely with a giant sub box. I put my foot down about that and I am pleased I did as it made Connor work harder to achieve a result that I am very happy with."

Life is full of compromise and I suppose allowing the commercially-oriented boyfriend to pick the equipment to be used in the car could have gone horribly wrong but in fact, Katie and Connor despite their constant public mickey-taking, are clearly very close and I would say looking in from the outside, well suited to each other. In any case, Katie ended up with a cracking product line-up in my opinion.

The system installed features a Pioneer SPH-DA120 head unit. This tripped me at the first hurdle as I tried to find out where to put my test CD. This unit along with many now has no CD slot. Apparently modern folk don't take their CDs into their cars anymore favouring to take gigantic libraries of stored music on external disc drives or mobile phones and connecting them either by USB cable or Bluetooth. Fortunately, I had heard of such dark magic and had taken the precaution of loading my test tracks on to my iPhone in as high a resolution a format as I could muster! I was extremely impressed with the user interface on this unit, which is equipped with a system known as "Apple CarPlay". This enables the unit to display my iPhone apps on the 6.2 inch built-in touch-screen. I can now operate my phone from the head unit - spooky - and I am certain the Luddites will have something to say about this!

The head unit connects via on-board line outputs to a Hertz HDP 5 amplifier. This has five channels of amplification

Above This disk-free head unit caught me out initially

Below Big bass from a custom enclosure, but still plenty of room for shopping!



"I am not a big music aficionado but enjoy high-energy, feel-good music including cheesy pop tunes"

LUKE'S TOP FIVE DRIVING SOUNDS

- Avicci
The Nights
- Fleetwood Mac
Everywhere
- Macklemore (ft. Ray Dalton)
Can't Hold Us
- Disclosure
Voices
- B.o.B
Magic

on board; 4 X 70 Watts RMS, 1 X 380 Watts RMS. All channels run in class D. This means they run extremely efficiently and provide plenty of clean power without becoming too hot or stressed even when faced with pre-holiday Reggae compilations at high levels! It also means that the amplifier is very compact and easy to hide away.

The four 70 Watt channels are bridged in pairs and run a set of three-way Hertz Energy ESK 163L.4's & ES F25.5 which are mounted in the factory positions. These have been treated for sound by the application of Skinz sound deadening and Wave Diffuser. Bass is provided by a Hertz Energy ES F25.5 Slimline, 10-inch subwoofer. This is mounted in a Q+ enclosure that not only suits the Thiele Small parameters of the subwoofer but also fits neatly in the near side wheel arch. Connor carried out a lot of the installation work himself although he did recruit the help of resident John Kleis master installers to help with the tricky bits including the Alcantara covered surround for the head unit, but don't tell the boss!

There are a number of other features that Connor was on hand to enthuse about including a front mounted camera that points downwards and alerts the hasty parker to high curbs which may damage the front valance of the vehicle. There is also a reversing camera that fits neatly under the badge/boot release that motorises out when reverse gear is selected! – What? First the "Spinning Jenny" and now this!

In the spirit of Katie's enthusiasm for high-energy music, I selected Michael Jackson's "The Way You Make Me Feel" from his 1987 album, *Bad*. The opening tom-toms, dance across the dash with frightening movement and accuracy. The attack is violent and the width bamboozling. Once the track settles down I listen out for a heavily filtered guitar note that crops up occasionally and makes me smile and there it is. I am a little puzzled by the top-end before realising that Katie is both elegant and tall where as I am somewhat shorter. I raised the seat and the missing high-end came back and the height of the image suddenly made much more sense. Despite running short on time, I cannot bring myself to move on with the audition until the track has finished, to do so would have been disrespectful to MJ and to the effort that has gone into creating this system. I am already grinning as the full joy of Quincy Jones' production presents itself in its entirety.

Next, and now in the mood for another track with dynamic attack, I forward on to Stevie Ray Vaughan's "Pride And Joy" the first track on his debut album; *Texas Flood*. This is a fast shuffle blues song that requires very controlled mid-range in order to deliver the percussive counterpoint between snare and guitar. This system manages to do this perfectly without breaking a sweat. On some systems I have noticed that the track, which is a little bass light anyway, can sound harsh and unpleasant, but here I am hearing the full tone from Stevie's Fender Stratocaster, both bass and treble strings sounding with

The Equipment:

- ☐ Pioneer SPH-DA120 - £349.99
- ☐ Hertz HDP 5 Amplifier - £549.99
- ☐ Hertz Energy ESK 163L.4 Speakers - £269.99
- ☐ Hertz Energy ES F25.5 Slimline Subwoofer - £129.99
- ☐ Q+ Subwoofer enclosure - £134.99
- ☐ Skinz Expert Sound deadening
- ☐ Skinz Wave Diffuser
- ☐ Skinz Panel Liner
- ☐ Connection Cables and Accessories



great precision and space – Just for your information, he tended to tune half a tone down and favoured first position chords which allowed for open strings to ring on, adding a bell-like quality to his playing. This was all delivered super accurately and once again, I greedily consumed the entire track revelling in the smooth tones and complex rhythms that you just wouldn't notice on a standard factory system.

I felt the need to throw something orchestral at the system to see how it would play and chose the main theme from *Star Wars*. This piece of music without the film, has real drama and I thoroughly recommend all *Star Wars* fans to listen to it and marvel at John Williams' ability to stir your emotions armed with just the talent of an undoubted musical genius and a symphony orchestra – OK, that's quite a lot of collateral for the use of the word "just" but, I worry that movie fans completely ignore the effort that goes into making a film fly – try watching with the sound turned down – it will not stir you anything like as much as listening to the soundtrack without the picture will.

Of course, having been caught out before, I had to play some of Katie's music. I had a listen to "Oopsy Daisy" by Chipmunk at her recommendation. This is not my bag I have to say but it grooved and jumped and I could appreciate the fun behind the track and could imagine Katie driving to work singing it at the top of her voice! Finally, I had a go at Fleetwood Mac's "Everywhere". This is very well recorded and it all comes out in this car. There was enough space around all of the instruments for me to pick everything out and it made me tap my foot. The keyword here is engagement – come on Connor, do the decent thing! – no not that kind, I mean engagement with the music. It would be impossible to drive this car and ignore whatever tune was playing on it.

It was a real joy to not only meet Katie but also to have the privilege of sitting in her much-loved car and to listen to this system. It does not attempt to deceive or hide any special tricks or hidden processing, but just does a totally honest job of recreating the tunes you present it with, in a manner that I am certain the recording artist would be happy with. I don't think you could ask for anything more unless you were prepared to go to far more extreme and therefore expensive solutions. This is a cracking system for those looking to bring maximum fun out of the music they listen to. □

Above See, listening can be so much fun!

Below Most of the system is hidden, but orange behind the grille gives the game away

Bottom Facing down, the front mounted camera helps prevent parking damage

