



Luke Massy has the vehicle interiors market sewn up!

I first met Luke Massy when he was 22. He had just taken the giant step of working for himself and was already in hot demand to supply cover cars for the tuning and styling magazines of the day. These have nearly all disappeared now and in any case, Luke has very much outgrown the audience for that kind of coverage. We have bumped into each other a number of times since so I guess you could say, I have watched him grow from afar but I was not prepared for what I found when I was asked to visit him and report on his progress and his work for the benefit of the readers of Driving Sounds Magazine.

"Plush" is defined as a textile with a longer pile than velvet but has come to be better known as something that is "expensively luxurious". When naming your business, it is always wise to think hard about your ability to stand up to people's expectations of the attributes it invokes. I am not sure if Luke seriously did this in 2006 when he set up the business. He was young, new to business, and inexperienced in marketing terms. However, I have never had an issue with Luke using this word, as there is no better way to describe the results he achieves.

Luke began his working life as an auto upholsterer for Noble before joining one of its suppliers as an auto-electrician working on interiors for Noble Automotive in Lutterworth. He tells me; "we were a small firm and everyone got involved in every aspect of the process. We were situated right next to Noble and our interiors were literally hand-carried over to the main factory. I learnt a lot of skills when

working there, but I was also learning many more skills by modifying my own cars and those of my friends too. Interiors soon led to external styling modifications and I realised that I seemed to have a good eye for what would work and what was going to look ridiculous. I seem to be blessed with an almost OCD-style attention for detail, which is probably one of my most talked about attributes."

I was keen to know more about how his business developed; "I was fortunate to start my business during a very popular period for car tuning and styling. Magazines like Max Power, Fast Car and Redline had been around for a while and were desperate to feature new and different approaches to car modifying and I guess I fitted the bill, as every car I built was more or less fought over for coverage. At the time, I also began to show my work at car shows and this resulted in a bulging order book. It became clear at this time that due to the level of work I was being asked to quote on, that I would not be able to go for a volume market on my own and so I focused on prime jobs which required as many of my skills as possible. In any case I was working out of a single garage and on the drive of my parents' house at the time."

This is a long way from what I experienced during my visit. A brand new purpose-built workshop with room for three cars and a hydraulic ramp is now supplemented with a machine / fabrication workshop as well as a separate studio dominated by a huge cutting table, two industrial sewing machines and a boggling stock of coloured yarns and leather.

I was also greeted by unfamiliar faces as Luke now heads a team of four. Scott is a franchise-trained motor mechanic who spent some time running his own garage. His skills are focused toward suspension work, brake upgrades, welding and any other mechanical functions, but he is also at home working with wood and tends to get involved in fabrication when the need arises. "I have been involved with audio during my full-time career and can help out here when required too." Scott tells me.

Mitch is a trainee. He attended a motorsport engineering course straight from school, but has always been interested in modifying cars and has an impressive collection himself! Mitch tells me; "I have learnt so much working with Luke. He is very

particular in his approach to all things and you can easily see why he has the reputation that he does. I am learning to not just get the job done, but to get it done perfectly which is many steps beyond the call of duty. I have learnt a lot about the different materials we use. How best to utilise them and how to make the best choices when achieving a customer's requirements"

Last and by no means least, we have Leanne. I asked her how she became involved in the business; "Luke and I have known each other since the age of 14. Later on, we used to see each other at cruises and car events and eventually got together and have been together ever since. Even when Luke first started I would help out with the books and carry out other administrative tasks that would help free Luke up to do what he does best! Right now, I run our websites, one of which is a retail site. I look after order processing, picking and packing, product updates and customer liaison. I still carry out the administrative role I had at the beginning. We are extremely busy all the time, which makes the days go quickly. I think we all enjoy our work and rarely if ever fall out! Luke is keen to leave us space to operate at our own levels but often takes an interest with a view to suggesting "improvements"

I wanted to find out about Luke's audio work, how he finds his customers and the influence of audio installs on the look and feel of his vehicles. Luke explained that his work tends to encompass all parts of a vehicle upgrade; "The vast majority of my clients come to me with a complete project in mind although

they tend to start with one single element. For the last two years, it is our reputation for high-end air-ride that has bought most people to us. Once they experience our work ethos, they tend to get us to do other work that they may have been keeping an open mind about. Audio has taken an unfortunate back seat during this time as frankly, we have had enough to do keeping up with suspension, wheels, brakes, bodywork, and interior upgrades. Interiors is where we would be most influenced I think. We really like doing interiors although it is very labour intensive work and the modern trend is to keep the dashboard looking standard. Until a couple of years ago,

this was difficult to achieve but with the OEM upgrade equipment available from Audison in particular, we can build a truly hi-fi quality system based on the original source unit and controls. This is beginning to have a big effect on what we can offer and audio is definitely back! For many who lived through the years through which loads of bass meant loads of subwoofers, the memory of Saxos and Corsas stuffed with four 12" subs is still a little off-putting. With recent stuff we have done, we find that a single 10" and a compact Class D amplifier can knock that kind of set-up into next week and still allows usable luggage space. I have already planned a re-prioritisation of audio particularly as sound quality is becoming much more important generally."

Luke is very keen to protect the privacy of his customers so you will not find much detail on the cars he was working on

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in this article. However, the Audi A1 you may have caught a glimpse of is fully revealed in the following article.

I have no hesitation in declaring Luke a genius in my own eyes. If you have a car and want it developed to become the best it can be, give FOUR MASTER Plush a call now, but expect to encounter a three-month waiting list, as that is how much in demand top, top work is! If you just want to see what magic Plush is capable of, take a look at the online gallery. □



Left Sewing may not be on every car stylist's CV!

Centre A needle pulling thread?

Right A separate fabrication room is essential to keep dust away from customer's vehicles



FOUR MASTER Plush:
01455 246156, www.plush-automotive.co.uk

www.drivingsounds.co.uk

Tel: 0121 451 4936