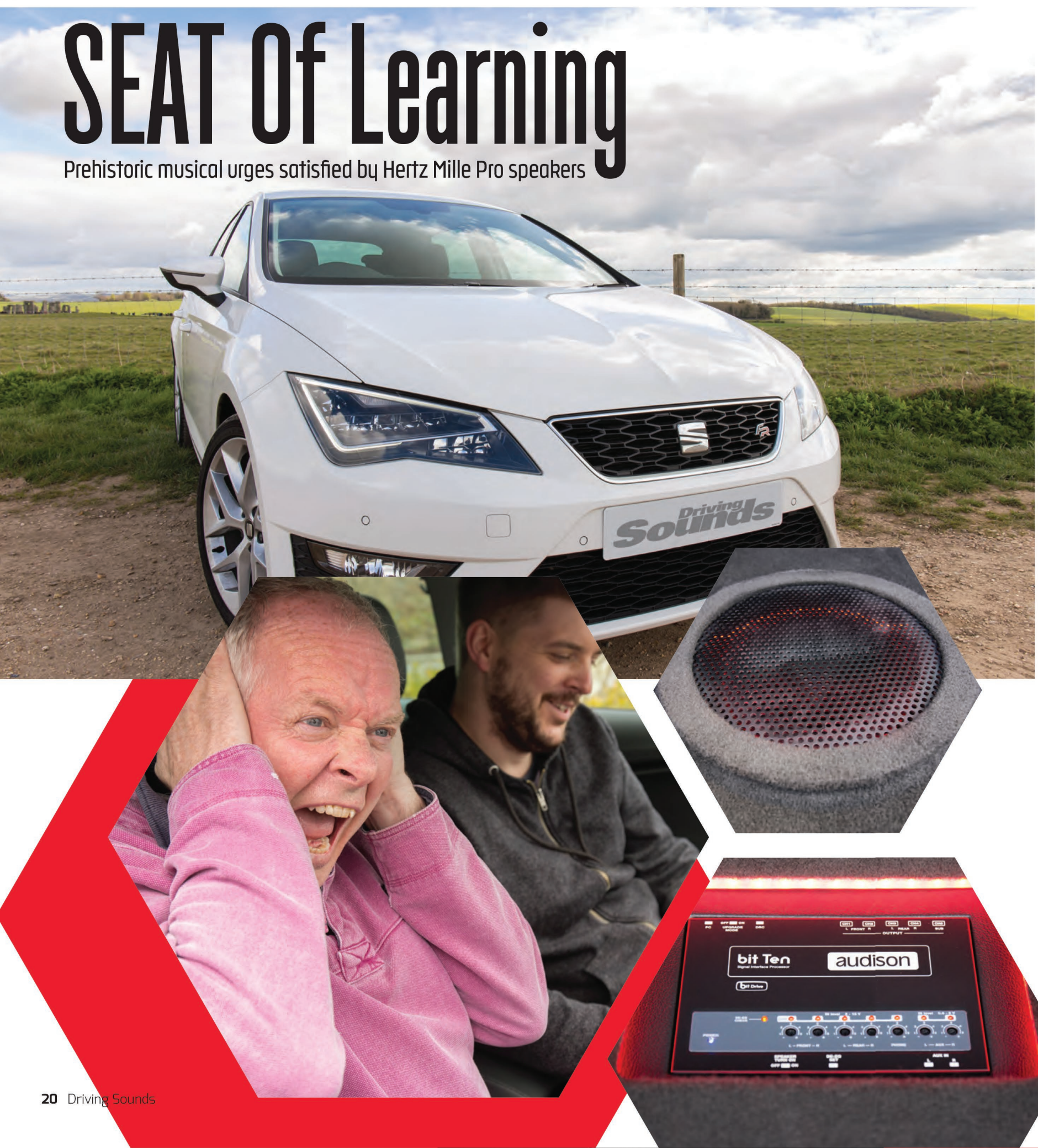


SEAT Of Learning

Prehistoric musical urges satisfied by Hertz Mille Pro speakers



the equipment does not need to be shown with just the sub showing through a rugged, load-bearing grille. The only visible modification to the car is that the USB port, which is central to the functionality of the Carplay system, has been moved from the factory location in the centre console, to the right hand side of the steering wheel. This is something that Ed was extremely excited about and when I thought about it I could see why. Whilst putting a USB port in the centre console suits left-hand-drive vehicles, for those of us who are right-handed and drive on the right side, it means we have a cable running over the top of the steering column which is not only messy but inconvenient and arguably dangerous.

I first caught up with Ed and his freshly installed vehicle at a secret location quite close to Stonehenge. I was very excited about hearing the speakers, as I am a big fan of Hertz products. We jumped in and Ed put on "Animals" by Martin Garrix. Ed had already warned me that in his opinion, the system sounded a little "leftie". He was right. However, the bass was extremely low but also a little prominent for me. I felt it swamped the mids somewhat and that the system lacked dynamics. However, not being familiar with the "tune", I didn't feel it was fair to go too far with my analysis. Ed mentioned that he is a big fan of Jamie Cullum and reached for a track called Gran Torino. The sultry vocal sounded a little lost to me. The image was confused. I realised that the rear speakers were on which I feel is completely unnecessary in this particular installation. I quickly faded forward and that improved things somewhat although I was still not completely convinced. I decided that what I needed was some raw 70's recording or other and guess what? I happened to have some in my CD case. This kind of music often sounds weak and thin on car audio systems despite sounding spectacular at home. It is all about the mid-bass balance. Too much or too little and the track is not great to listen to. In this instance, I put on "Cinnamon Girl" from "Everybody Knows This Is Nowhere" by Neil Young and Crazy Horse. In my car, this is all about the energy in the electric guitars and the rawness of the recording much of which is taken live. I did know that any semblance of bass heaviness would render the track difficult to listen to, as would any over harshness in the treble. I turned the sub right down and was pleasantly surprised by the top end. It sounded live and open. I was a little worried by the mids however. I next put on "Josie" by Steely Dan. This sounded much better and the space I had heard in the top-end on the previous track was echoed in the mids, however I was now becoming a little concerned about the mid bass. There seemed to be a bit of a hole at, I guessed, 200Hz or thereabouts. Finally, I went for a James Taylor track, "Gaia" from "Hourglass". This track has a thunderous tom tom figure at around 4mins10 seconds. It completely overwhelmed the Mille woofers and sent them into heavy distortion, which surprised me. All in all, a mixed audition. On returning home, I called Stuey. He admitted to

For my guilty pleasure, we decided to install a Hertz High Energy HX 250D 10" subwoofer

having had a good deal of trouble setting the system up. As always, he had been given limited time to investigate and was instructed to just set up the basics as the system would be tuned back at FOUR's base. Stuey did report that when he tried a source fed to the aux-in on the bit 10D that the system sounded very different. Encouragingly, following a puzzling series of events the SEAT was returned to Accutek a week later for some changes to the wiring. I was able to be there on the day the car got there. Stuey then demonstrated the difference in sound when the Carplay system was bypassed altogether. It sounded like a different system. The image was more stable and played higher and the Mille Pro's blended much better with the High Energy subwoofer. I was able to draw a much clearer picture of how the Mille Pro's were performing and I have to say, they are fantastic! I can't think of another speaker at this price point that sounds so 'grown up' and sophisticated. I had to try the previously failed James Taylor track and this time it sounded astonishing – The low bass handled perfectly by the Mille Pro speakers. I continued to listen to a number of tracks and the all-exposing track "The Wheel" by Sohn demonstrated why sometimes one cannot live without a subwoofer. I had muted it to listen to the Milles but reinstated it to Ed's normal listening level. The car was stationary and there is always a quite a bit of cancelling of low bass when driving but the lowest of the three note bass line was very over emphasised for my taste. Easily adjusted of course. Finally, I selected an old favourite in order to check the mids – "The Sound of Muzak" by Porcupine Tree. Wow! Those Mille's really, really work; projecting every intricacy of the magnificent drumming and percussive effects in beautifully separated gorgeous, stable stereo!

To make sure I hadn't gone completely mad, I just had to put some music through the Carplay unit by way of contrast – I will not linger on this but, it didn't sound quite as good! – In fact, I would be tempted to take it back to SEAT not that they would have a clue what I was complaining about. Ultimately, Ed has a great install that demonstrates a pair of magnificent speakers to great effect. It is fun, accurate and engaging – as long as you don't let the factory head unit get in the way - sorry! Once more, FOUR MASTER Accutek has delivered brilliantly and gets a huge round of applause and a strong recommendation from me. ☐

This excellent installation in a SEAT Leon highlighted one of the car audio installer's greatest challenges whilst searching for audio excellence in a car. However, it also provided a perfect platform for auditioning the new Hertz Mille Pro range of speakers. Ed Fulbrook-Harmer is an area manager for high-end car audio distributor FOUR. Reasonably new to the fold, Ed has a long and illustrious background in car audio having worked in trade sales and retail most famously with the greatly missed FOUR MASTER Cambridge Car Audio. Ed told us; "Although I don't have a musical background my Mum was very good friends with a Jimi Hendrix-genre band called The Hamsters who were going until recently - I was at their gigs from a very young age, around 8 I think. We used to see them on a regular basis and help sell merchandise - this was my introduction to live music and I loved it, even though I am not a rock music fan now! "My first memory is of The Hamsters at what was then a grubby pub/club called The Boat Race in Cambridge (now a fancy bar). What struck me the most was the bass guitar. I am not a bass head, but good quality, tight bass is a joy - this is what attracted me to garage music in my early 20's. I also remember seeing Rick Astley and Take That when I was about nine years old because my sister was into them - I didn't actually see Take That, I fell asleep during the warm up act and missed them even with 1000s of screaming girls all around me. My sister has been a big influence on my musical taste growing up. She listened to indie music (Pulp, Blur, Kula Shaker, Space etc.) and I used to steal her albums, which caused many an argument when we were in our early teens. She got into dance music in the late 90s and then became a holiday rep in Mallorca where I used to join her and frequent a local club there. I have more dance music on my iPhone than anything else! DJs like Tall Paul, Matt Darey and Avicii as well as my favourite Tiesto! My wife and I started to listen to Jamie Cullum after my Mum took us to a concert and he absolutely blew us away. We have seen him on every tour since and really got into Jazz music because of him." "Motorsport is my biggest passion above anything else! I have watched racing all my life. I recently took my two-year-old boy, Jack, to his first BTCC race at Donnington and he absolutely loved it. Jack is also a big music fan - there is always music playing in the house and it has rubbed off on him. He is a Taylor Swift fan at the moment, but that will change! (Nothing wrong with the girl Swift - Did you know she was named after James Taylor and started her career as a country artist? - ed.)" We wanted to know how Ed ended up in the Car Audio Industry. This usually begins with a bedroom hi-fi experience however, Ed told us; "I never had a hi-fi system in my teens as I was never at home. I now have speakers in the ceiling at my home with zone controls for different rooms, but that's about it." Oh, well what about car audio upgrades then? "My first car had a full install that I learnt to install with my step-father. I saved up for an Alpine deck, Kenwood speakers and a Phoenix Gold Octane amp. I had another Octane amp running a JL 10w3. I thought it sounded great back then but I am not sure it would perform anywhere near the level of more contemporary equipment, but I loved it! My love of cars and music drew me to Cambridge Car Audio where I worked part time while I finished studying engineering. They were fun times in a booming industry. Following this stint, I travelled around the industry working in trade sales and retail before returning to Cambridge Car Audio where I stayed until the business was unfortunately closed." We wanted to know what Ed thought about the SEAT's audio system before it was upgraded. He told us; "I drove with the car in factory condition for some months. The only word I could use to describe the audio is

"dreadful". It was boomy with absolutely no substance in the mid-ranges. Over the months, I became accustomed to it but I guess the telling thing is that I didn't play any of my own music on it and restricted my listening to radio. Even here, it was just a background noise even speech was very hard to listen to. I had specified the SEAT dealer Apple Carplay upgrade (tut, tut Ed - Don't ever do this folks, aftermarket installers do this much better and cheaper!). I carry quite a library of songs around on my iPhone but also use Maps and other apps very often as well as the phone. Carplay seemed to be the perfect technology for me. However, although I am a huge fan of the technology and functionality, I wasn't inspired to actually listen to any music of my own until after my sound upgrade was completed." Ed's professional responsibilities include promoting and demonstrating new products to his customers and therefore, an audio upgrade is an essential tool of the trade. FOUR had earmarked his vehicle for an upgrade featuring Hertz Mille Pro speakers as these were brand new at the time and FOUR had no other demonstration vehicle for what they perceived to be a very important product for them. Ed chose to take his car to FOUR MASTER Accutek to have his installation done. He explained; "My brief to Stuey was simple, I wanted a very discrete system built around Hertz Mille Pro speakers that sounded gorgeous and did not interfere with the purpose of the vehicle. As an added feature however, I did want to be able to show as many of the components as possible to customers and the general public, when required. I also wanted some excitement in the lower reaches to satisfy my 90's dance music fixation - a lot happens down below with this genre" "After some discussion, we decided to drive a pair of Mille Pro MPK 165.3's with a bridged Hertz HCP 4D amplifier. This would give us plenty of power, which should get the best out of the new speakers. Knowing what we know about factory head units, we wanted to introduce an Audison bit 10D into the signal chain in order to iron out any discrepancies that may exist." It is quite common for vehicle manufacturers to pre-set equalisation curves in order to hide unpleasant characteristics in the speakers they use and it is important to be able to flatten these out and have the facility to tune the system to the interior of the vehicle

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instead. Audison bit products are particularly suited to this. Ed continues; " For my guilty pleasure, we decided to install a Hertz High Energy HX 250D 10" subwoofer in a sealed enclosure and drive this from a Hertz HCP 1D monoblock amplifier. The Mille Pro speakers are installed into the factory locations and the doors have been heavily treated with Skinz sound deadening and panel liner to ensure a good acoustical basis. I was a little concerned at the way the tweeters sit in the A-pillar angled down toward the dashboard, however I know that Hertz have a way of compensating for poor positioning by including technologies to assist with wide sound dispersion. The electronic devices are all mounted in the boot floor and made to look beautiful by the inclusion of an edge-lit, handcrafted MDF vanity panel, expertly carpeted. A removable false floor is fitted over this when



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Ed's Top Five Driving Sounds

Martin Garrix
Animals

Fleetwood Mac
The Chain

Jamie Cullum
Mixtape

Katy B and Ms
Dynamite
Lights on

Ayla
Ayla