

FOUR MASTERS

THE ROUTE TO COMMON BEST PRACTICE

Minds meet to move industry forward

Throughout Driving Sounds Magazine, avid readers will see the term "FOUR MASTERS" used very frequently. We felt it was time to remind everyone who they are, what they do and why they call themselves MASTERS.

The FOUR MASTER network is a loose conglomeration of some of the best car audio installers in the land. They are all independent businesses with their own premises and geographical locations. All are established and highly skilled professionals with many years of experience working their magic on cars. When Brian Parton and Jas Dehele formed the high-end UK distributor of car hi-fi products in 2005, they needed to do something radical to shift the industry from its path to almost certain obliteration and find a new way to market their products to an audience more concerned with how their cars sound than how good they can make them look while spending the minimum amount of money!

One of the reasons the industry had got sucked into a downward spiral was its lack of voice. Powerful global manufacturers had forced the market down the route of high volume and low prices in order to sustain "loading" on their factories. The skills and knowledge that built the industry in the first place were being completely overlooked, and worse, given away for free! The FOUR MASTER network was developed in 2006 to preserve the specialist installer as the place car-owning music lovers go to hear what is possible in a car and receive some commonality of service, quality and cost.

Ten years down the road and the network continues to thrive. Skills have improved, as has the quality of service and particularly after-sales service. The customer has changed somewhat too. Gone are the backwards baseball caps and T-shirts with rude words printed on them and we are now dealing with grown up music lovers who want an improvement in their on-the-road listening experience as they travel from meeting to meeting in their executive saloons. There is no doubt that during this time, listening to music has become



FOUR MASTERS
The Independent Car Audio Network

an essential part of being in a car and more car drivers are realising that their music simply doesn't sound right when played through factory installed systems. What is also clear is that maintaining functionality and keeping a system as hidden away as possible is the new "Saxo-stuffed-with-four-12"-subwoofers".

FOUR MASTERS meet up on a regular basis to share information on their own local market place. They profile their customers, talk about which cars they are seeing most of and what solutions they are promoting to help car owners suffering poor factory-installed sound systems. This helps FOUR to attract more music lovers to explore what FOUR MASTERS have to offer.

Earlier in 2016, FOUR MASTERS met at the radical Library of Birmingham. This is noteworthy as those in attendance represent the pinnacle of current car audio know-how. Rather than keeping their skills and most recent discoveries a closely guarded secret, these independent specialists are committed to sharing fresh knowledge and skills with each other. This can be how to get the best out of a product or how to remove the A-pillar trim on the latest Jaguar XF facelift or similar!

Birmingham is a favoured venue for FOUR MASTER meetings which have taken place at many City landmarks over the years. The day itself is an open forum where tabled agenda points are discussed and improvement suggestions are put into place.

This year for instance, FOUR MASTERS were looking for a way to help each other instantly if faced with something they had not seen before on a new vehicle for instance. This interchange of information has been in place for some years but they wanted this information to be seen by all FOUR MASTERS at the same time. As a result a closed Facebook group was immediately established and is now a method by which the knowledge of the entire network is instantly on hand and solutions are archived for future reference.

These may not seem like industry-saving initiatives but they have done more to help focus FOUR and the network on its true market than anything done by major manufacturers. Another good reason for regular meetings is to learn about new products. In-car audio products have become increasingly sophisticated in order to overcome some of the barriers often thrown up by car manufacturers. Fortunately and as has always been the case, the aftermarket is innovative and smart enough to keep a step or two ahead but a forum in which to share knowledge and expertise is essential. Many challenges are overcome by products that consumers may never set eyes on. These "OEM Integration" products are black boxes that carry out hugely complex functions in order to pick up a clean signal from a vehicle's source unit and allow it to be tailored for optimum performance of the amplifiers, speakers and subwoofers employed. You can read about one of these in the article called "Getting The MOST From Your Car" elsewhere in this issue.

Ultimately, the network exists and thrives as a result of its inherent skills as well as its customer charter which gives music lovers a predictable, excellent result with the peace of mind of a three-year equipment and labour warranty which is transferrable between FOUR MASTERS across the UK. So if you find yourself away from home and something should go wrong which is preventing you from enjoying your music, you can visit the FOUR MASTER you happen to be closest to and be treated as if it was the original installer of the equipment. You can also visit any FOUR MASTER and get a demonstration of how good a car can sound before you commit to upgrading your own!

Naturally, following a busy day of knowledge and idea sharing, there is always a social activity at which work matters inevitably continue to be discussed. In this way, FOUR MASTERS are not only professionally but also socially familiar.

Visit yours today for expert advice, knowledge and skills.
www.fourmasterscaraudio.co.uk