



WEEKEND VAN MAN

Stand
By
Your
Van!

The lowly white van has become the accessory of choice for those enjoying active weekends. Customvanz in Chippenham should know, as they are stacked-out with upgrade work for one of the most popular weekend vehicles, the Volkswagen T5. We were fortunate to be offered a close-up look at their work.

As I walk into the workshop at Customvanz, there is the familiar sound of someone who clearly enjoys music with big beats! The "someone" in question is Jantzen Nutt, proprietor and founder of Customvanz and inspiration for everything they do. From the many training weights and other instruments of physical torture stacked against the far wall to the graffiti that covers every available flat surface, the whole business is clearly an extension of Jantzen's own personality.

Although clearly very busy, Jantzen is very welcoming but declines my outstretched hand due to being up to his elbows in glue. An obviously very fit man, Jantzen explains that he is just back from a much-needed five-day break. This is his first holiday since the one day he allowed himself at Christmas! Customvanz is clearly

the place to go for T5 upgrades, so I begin by asking Jantzen about his business model; "I have been in the business of customising vehicles since I left school some thirty years ago. I have been very fortunate in having been able to learn my trade on high-end vehicles, which gave me a fantastic grounding in many of the skills I have learnt over the years. I wanted to do more to take a vehicle on from where the manufacturer stops. I set up Customvanz 8 years ago as I saw a huge potential to offer quality upgrades to the VW T5. Although not in love with the vehicles, I felt I could make what is essentially a panel van into a luxury weekend vehicle. We now work almost exclusively on T5's and have worked closely with VW in developing homologated modifications under our Raceline brand. The upgrades include everything from much-needed sound deadening to leather seats, audio systems, up-rated springs, wheels and other internal and external modifications that suit the individual customer. All of the parts we use are genuine, VW approved

Many of our customers use their vans for weekend leisure pursuits and most will have

BMW's, Porsches, Mercedes etc. parked in their driveways and so our aim is to provide a vehicle in keeping with their regular drive. It seems to be paying off as our reputation has grown to the point where we are attracting work not only from all over the UK but all over Europe."

I wanted to know where this business comes from. Jantzen explained; "I am a big advocate of online promotion. Five years ago, I employed Zaff and although his duties are wide and varied, he spends every day working on optimising our site. We appear on the front page of an amazingly varied number of google search phrases and most of our customers come from our efforts in this area. Word-of-mouth is also very important to us, which is why we try to offer a friendly and first-class service. To have customers talking positively about their experience with us costs little but the benefits are huge."

Looking around, I can see that there are no less than nine vehicles in various states of completeness. I can only see three staff however. This clearly needed some more investigation; "We have two others including my son, Aaron. He is still at school but spends the rest of his time here with us. My daughter

Chloe works with us on a full-time basis and again has many duties including stripping new vans out ready for me to work on alongside administrative bits and pieces. Zaff I have mentioned. He used to be a famous "detailer" back when hardly anyone was carrying out that kind of work. I say famous as he had many loyal individual customers as well as some high-end car dealerships that would keep him in what was then, very lucrative work. He has many skills though and is a valuable asset. We also have Ken. Ken is off today but he does a lot of our wiring work but as with everyone else, he mucks in and will turn his hand to anything."

As was bound to happen, my attention was drawn toward car audio. This is clearly an important part of Jantzen's offering judging by the banners adorning the barrier at the front of a mezzanine floor overhead. Jantzen confirms that the VW factory installed

system is "utter rubbish" but sees this as a huge opportunity; "We offer quite a range of audio upgrades as our experience shows that customers have very different ideas on what they want. Some are happy with a modest speaker upgrade and a head unit that has navigation built-in and maybe a full-colour screen for reversing cameras. Most however, want something more. We have found that the Hertz range of equipment is ideally suited to the customers we have. It delivers punch with purity and is extremely reliable and also increasingly well known. When building an audio system we always take the customers taste into consideration but are often given a free reign to create a system to a budget. We still find a large call for big bass in these vehicles and are only too happy to oblige with bass heavy systems but we always stick to best practice principles. We spend a lot of time and effort treating all panels

to reduce the effects of external noise and vibration. We are fortunate in that the T5 has plenty of hidden space where we can hide equipment away. Our favoured position for amplifiers for instance is under the driver's seat where there is plenty of room to mount two amplifiers if the system requires it. I have recently got interested in the tuning abilities offered by the Audison bit range of products. These enable me to cancel out the audio anomalies associated with panel vans and give a good starting point to develop a bespoke sound for our customers."

Having been allowed unfettered access to both workshop and showroom, I was able to see how much effort and ingenuity Jantzen and his team put into their work. The finish is of the highest quality and had I the money and a use for a weekend leisure vehicle I would be thrilled to allow Customvanz to do their unique and spectacular thing to it. □

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JANTZEN'S
TOP
FIVE
DRIVING
SOUNDS

- Notorious B.I.G.**
Sky's the limit
- Mobb Deep**
Shook ones
- Bone thugs n harmony**
Crossroads
- Blackstar (Ft. Common)**
Respiration
- Marco Polo (Ft. Masta Ace)**
Let There Be Rock (live)

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