

RADIO

OUT WITH THE OLD AND IN WITH THE NEW, AS THEY SAY. HERE WE INSTALL A NICE NEW SOUND SYSTEM

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CONTROLLED



1. This is the gear we picked up. The head unit not only plays MP3s, CDs and all that jazz, it's also Bluetooth compatible. So, if you have tunes on your phone, you can listen to them, but more importantly the unit acts as a Bluetooth hands-free mobile kit. Very handy



2. Before we're going to let you do any work, we will have to show you the obligatory 'disconnect your battery' shot. Don't take this as a joke. When doing electrical work in particular, it's important that the system is charge free

3. First up, disassemble the back seat. The lower section comes out very easily – stick your hand down the back of the seat and pull up. Remove and cast aside



There was one major problem with the stereo in the VB. Sure, it was there and looked great in all its factory glory, but it was missing a rather integral function – it didn't make any sound.

So, we hit the road bound for our local SuperCheap to pick up some audio gear – stuff that wouldn't just sound the part, but that we could fit with a minimum of fuss. More importantly, stuff that wouldn't ruin the appeal of the factory interior. What we came up with was the gear pictured.

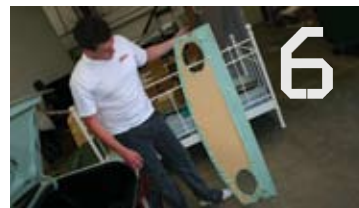
Install-wise, it's all very basic, but when it comes to installing in early girls, there are a few things you should know. That's not to say it's early girl specific. Hell, many things here are applicable to all installs.

In the instance of the VB, we chose to run our own 12V constant, accessory power and earth lead. This was for a number of reasons.

The factory loom, aside from not having provisions for constant power (remember the factory tape deck had no clock or preset memory), was insufficiently sized to cope with the higher-powered units on the market today. On top of this, we know that the sources we run with are good, and if there's a fault, we know where to start looking.

While on the topic of wiring, we took no chances when it came to connections. Every soldered connection was heat-shrunk and taped to ensure that nasty leaks and shortages wouldn't hamper our audio experience.

The wire being used is 4mm 25ohm cable that is nice and thick to ensure a solid signal reaches the player. This should keep our sound crisp and stop the battery gauge jumping around like an ADD kid on Fanta. As they say in the classics, a picture tells a thousand words. *SC*



4. Next comes the back section. Pull the seat free from the retainers at each of the bottom corners and then simply push the seat up from the bottom to release it from the top hooks

5. Our dusty factory parcel shelf is next. Disconnect the rear speakers and pull the parcel shelf out

6. Knock yourself up a schmick custom shelf like this bad boy. We've shown you how to make items like this before, and with an hour or so to kill, a jigsaw and some MDF, it's not hard to turn out a nice solid base to mount speakers to

7. Locate your speaker wires now before you mount your speakers and connect them prior to screwing them down

8. Secure the speakers well using the fasteners provided. No one will be impressed with a 6x9 to the head under hard braking

9. With the rear end taken care of, move to the front. The first step is removing the ashtray, which will allow us access to the back of the head unit

10. If you're anything like me, you like the factory head unit and don't want to see it cut out in a fit of rage. Remove it carefully. The easiest way is to remove the dials and plastic façade, which will reveal the retaining mechanism

11. The mechanism simply needs the two holes squeezed together and the unit pushed from the back. You can see here how it works, which will make it easier to remove

12. We ran 12V straight from the battery, and an in-line fuse soldered in before the line was connected to the head unit. We simply ran the wire through a grommet in the firewall and crimped on an O-ring eyelet for a good connection



13. The accessory wire was sourced from the ignition barrel, and now is the only time you should reconnect the battery until the install is done. Use a test light to find a suitable wire from the many in the ignition barrel. We went with the brown one

14. The final power wire is the earth. Instead of trusting the factory one, we made our own, earthing the unit to the chassis using a screw right above where the head unit sits. Nice and short with ample gauge wire is the key

15. We soldered the power wires into the Sony harness to check that we had it right. Yellow for constant, red for accessory and black for earth is the standard wiring layout, and we got it right. Remember to properly insulate your connections

16. That's what we wanted to see. The unit sprang to life meaning we had the power wires right. Now, it was simply a matter of grappling with the speaker wiring

17. The new head unit in the factory slot. Some head units may require that you file a little from the plastic surround, but it's not a big deal as the amount is minute at best

18. Not wanting to chop any of the factory trim up as many other opt to, we chose to make custom kick panels. The panels are made from thin MDF and are trimmed in the same material as the parcel shelf

With the speakers mounted, the wiring can be run back to the head unit. If you forget the polarity or which wires go to which speakers, a battery (AA or 9V) can be used to pop the corresponding speaker.

Black trace wires always go to black trace wires, and from there it's a matter of connect the colours. We can't tell you how much of an improvement a solid day of work made on the stereo in the VB.

The best thing about a mod like this is that it's easily reversible should you want to sell it and keep your gear, or be charmed by the appeal of factory stereo gear once more. Just a few things to keep in mind:

- MDF requires that you wear respiratory protection
- No electrical work, save for using the test light or a multimeter, should be undertaken with both terminals of the battery connected
- All connections should be sealed with heat-shrink and electrical tape
- Never scrimp on your wiring. If in doubt, replace it