

HOW THE BEAST CAME TO BE

Building Kenwood's Ford Focus Demo Vehicle

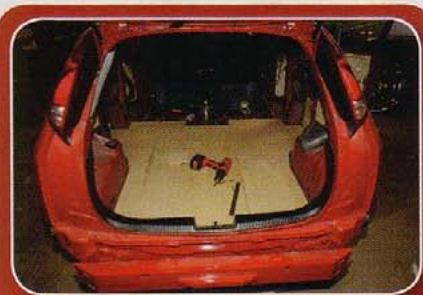
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 Photography Courtesy of Fesler Productions

If you have ever been to the International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in Las Vegas then you know how out of control the 12-volt market has become. In today's world of bling bling rides and 26-inch wheels also comes the need for flashy and outrageous system installations. That plain square box just won't cut it anymore, no matter how unique you try to make it.

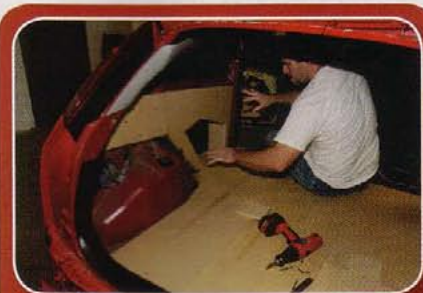
Kenwood USA knows better than anyone how to outfit any vehicle with a quality sound system. They have been building stereo equipment for vehicles and homes for decades and as a result have been building their own demo vehicles for nearly as long.

For the 2005 show season, Kenwood USA called upon seasoned vehicle builder Chris Fesler to handle the design and build of their three demo vehicles. As a result, a Scion xA, Ford Focus and Pontiac Vibe were born. These three vehicles have been seen all over the country at various 12-volt events.

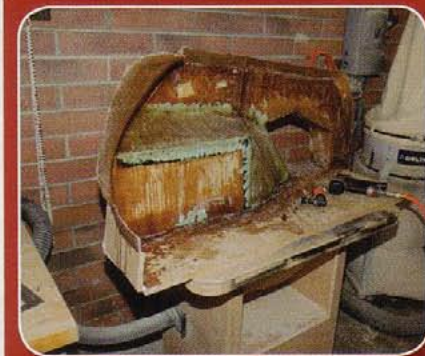
We took this opportunity to tag along with Chris as he documented every stage in the build of Kenwood's Ford Focus. Chris ultimately hired Sound Xpression of Phoenix, Arizona to handle the build of the 12-volt system. Known for their impressive craftsmanship and impeccably timelines, Sound Xpression was just the crew for the job. Read along and see exactly what goes into building a major demo vehicle before you try something like this on your own.



1. What we started with was pretty much a little bubble. Once emptied the little Focus was quite round and quite small in area. It was going to take some creative thinking to get this compact car looking like a grown up.



2. Pop quiz... Can you guess what most of the system consisted of? You guessed it, wood, MDF to be exact. Several sheets of this wood were used during the installation process. The first pieces were laid along the back floor to give our guys something to work up from. This will serve as platform for the rest of the system.



3 & 4. Pop quiz number 2... Can you guess what other material went into the design and fabrication of this system? Fiberglass, lots and lots of fiberglass. The side panels in the rear of the vehicle were too intricate for just wood. Jeff and Dave used fiberglass to make a mold of the area which they will then build off of for the rest of the components.



5. With the side panels drying it was necessary to map out the center portion of the system. This is where the amplifiers and processors will ultimately reside. Measurements were taken to determine the precise location of the components before cutting away the MDF.



6 – 8. Two pieces were required to hold both the amplifiers and the processors. These two pieces will ultimately be attached to each other but in the beginning they start out as two separate pieces.



9. Now it was time to get down to the nitty gritty and construct the system skeleton. When we say skeleton it is for good reason. All of the components propped up and arranged tend to look a lot like a skeleton not to mention that these pieces are the backbone of the entire system before more fiberglass is added to fill in the gaps.



10 & 11. Once our skeleton is perfect, layers and layers of fiberglass are added to fill in our shape thus creating one giant enclosure which ultimately will fit like a glove along either side of our focus.



12. Can you say vinyl? It took a mighty large piece of the stuff to cleanly cover just one of our enclosures. Yes, you read me right; just one giant piece was used. It took several hours to meticulously stretch and place the enormous piece so that there were no wrinkles, bumps or bruises.



13 & 14. Now, you can bet we had second thoughts about the enclosures when we had to lift them and put them in the car. Lets put it this way...the car ultimately was lowered four inches but we only had to install a lowered suspension on the front of the car because the weight in the back lowered the rear just right!



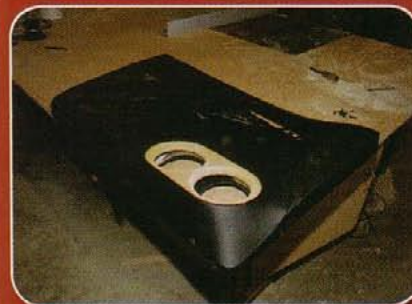
15. With correct placement achieved the woofers could now be installed on a more permanent basis.



16. You saw our amp rack and how it resembled a staircase as it climbed higher and higher with each amplifier. Because of this we were left with a large space under the amp rack. We thought it was the perfect location for a couple of Optima Redtop batteries and most of the wiring.



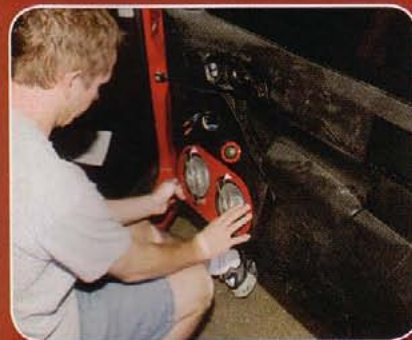
17. The back portion of our amp rack was used to house the many Kenwood processors and wiring necessary for the system to work properly. Although hidden from view, these pieces were vital for system operation.



18 - 20. The door panels started out pretty much the same way as our enclosures...with lots of MDF and fiberglass. Once a mold was created it was then wrapped in black vinyl and positioned on the door.



21 & 22. The deck of the Focus was a little tricky to transform. First the area where the stock radio sat had to be fabricated to one solid piece before mounting the new Kenwood deck in place.



23 & 24. Since the Focus color theme was red/black, there were quite a few trim pieces that were sprayed with automotive quality red paint.



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