

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE! REGISTERING UK KITCARS IN GERMANY CCK KEMPTEN GETS IT DONE!



Don't worry this isn't a feature on Brexit and how it will affect us all after October 29. Rather we take a look at a German company who is flying the flag for Britain's kitcar industry and working very hard with the authorities to get kitcars registered and road-legal in their homeland and beyond - STEVE HOLE reports.

Even though we could hitherto go and work unhindered in any one of the other 26 member states in Europe, it wasn't really very easy to get kitcars and low volume cars on the road, even when we were a bona fide full-on member of the EU. It simply doesn't work that way when it comes to kitcars. Not one that hasn't passed low volume European type approval, anyway.

UK kitcar manufacturers often argue that because their cars pass IVA, they should be allowed - and able - to register their cars in France, Germany or wherever, really. Not so. As a result, only a very few manufacturers even attempt to send kitcars to other European states. As the red tape involved is often impossible to cut through and also because the IVA regs

differ fundamentally, especially with regard to emissions and noise.

However, a German company called CCK Kempten, run by Gunther Schleyer, has been beavering away tirelessly trying to enable a variety of specialist car makers to be able to fulfil the orders that would undoubtedly be there, if the markets were open to them.

Gunther has form. Lots of it. He is a hopeless specialist car fanatic. He bought his first Dutton 42-years ago and then became a German dealer for Caterham Cars. He's since become the distributor for Westfield, so understands the cars and luckily for other UK manufacturers he knows how the registration system works in many parts of Europe. He reckons he's registered over 250 UK kitcars in Germany.

Talking of Germany that used to be a

great place to sell kitcars, both imported ones and courtesy of a very healthy domestic market that was dominated by Lotus Seven types and Cobra replicas. They've nearly all gone now.

The barriers came down in 2016, when the German authorities became aware that some Chinese makers were basically sending a variety of vehicles there, through the back door, which didn't go down well.

Most of these cars were getting into Germany via the UK's IVA process. The by-product of the clampdown was that a UK kitcar that has passed IVA now won't be awarded a registration document in Germany.

That old chestnut, 'emissions' is another key word - and problem - here, too. A pre-93 car, or one registered before December 31, 1992

can be registered as they escape Euro 1 regulations.

BREATHE (NOT SO) EASILY

However, anything built from January 1, 1993 has to satisfy emissions requirements in place for production cars when the vehicle was built. That is, its date of first registration, so just because the car has subsequently been adorned with an age-related number plate, that doesn't work.

How that applies to kitcars is fairly straightforward. Let's say you have an MK Indy built in 1992. This vehicle can be registered, as long as it meets other criterion. If that same vehicle was built after January 1993, it could not be registered.

In Germany, the first registration or the date of the conversion always applies, for example, when building a Jaguar C-type replica. Since 1993 engines up to and including 2-litres need emission compliance.

Added to these considerations is the fact that any new kitcar or whatever, now has to meet the very strict Euro 6 regulations if the car is to be used legally on the road in Germany.

Until now that has made it virtually impossible for a German customer to register his dream car in his homeland, without having to spend vast amounts of money on meeting compliance issues.

However, things are (whisper this)



This is the receipt for Gunther's first UK kitcar, a Caterham Seven, purchased in 1977

looking up, and Gunther's hard work and knowledge of the system needs applauding as he has been working with the authorities to enable several commonly used kitcar engines to meet German regulations.

His first Euro 6 'project' was with the Ford Zetec. Initially, he was scoffed at, because that engine isn't built

anymore, so there didn't seem any way to make it comply with Euro 6.

Undeterred he's managed to make the Zetec meet Euro 6 regulations and as you read this, he has achieved the same success with Ford's EcoBoost units (the 2-litre and 2.3-litre variants, anyway).

It can't be underestimated how significant this development could be for UK kitcar manufacturers and German kitcar enthusiasts.

This is also where Gunther's friend, Mark enters the story. He happens to work for an OE manufacturer on engine calibration, so when he and Gunther were introduced there was plenty to discuss.

At the time, Gunther's Zetec-powered Westfield had failed Euro 6 emissions tests a number of times, but with Mark's help it passed. Mark used the services of aftermarket ECU maker, MBE and catalytic converter manufacturer Cats & Pipes from North Wales (no, they are not a marching band!).

Although Gunther gained German approval for his Zetec fitted to his Westfield the results can apply to any other make of kit and low volume car fitted with a Zetec as long as stuff like weight are within eight per cent of a Westie's.

As the EcoBoost is Ford's current 'future proof' engine, the work on its compliance hasn't been quite as tortuous. For this one, Gunther worked closely with another ECU supplier



CCK's showroom is an impressive facility and a very light and airy environment. I think I have done road test features on two of those cars in the photo. The LB (ex-Lister Bell) Stratos replica and the Tiger ERA (Lotus 23 replica) at right!



Specialist Control Systems, run by Simon Hill, and the Norfolk-based company has been heavily involved adapting one of their SCS Delta ECU's to enable the EcoBoost units to meet the German authorities' requirements.

Gunther is quick to praise the efforts of Mark and also Simon and team at SCS because without both of their inputs he couldn't have achieved his aims. Indeed, he now works exclusively with SCS an arrangement that he describes as a very pleasant business relationship.

MORE HURDLES AND NOT JUST EMISSIONS

Right, so you've crossed the ravine full of emissions and your Zetec or EcoBoost can be used on the road in Germany. So, let's get the car registered! Not just yet. There are other obstacles to clear, first. Reminds me of the Harrison Ford film 'Raiders of the Lost Ark'!

The German TÜV (Technischer Überwachungs-Verein, to be precise. Let's stick to TÜV, eh?!) regulations have always been tuv, er sorry, tough. Other things that need to be passed include electromagnetics, which have to be gauged, so a test cell is used to measure interference.

Then there's an incredibly stringent drive-by noise test to pass. Like 75dB, which is very low. Interestingly, they also take a static noise reading, but this will only be used if, say, you later fit a larger, noisier exhaust and you get a 'tug' by German police. If your car is a few decibels over what their figures say it once was, you'll be in hot water. Other criterion like external projections and E-marking for windows and lights are pretty much as per IVA in the UK.

CCK KEMPTEN

As mentioned in the feature, Gunther was formerly German agent for Caterham Cars and still sells secondhand examples and spare parts. Talking of which he also supplies the wares of Soft Bits For Sevens, who make (sorry about this), soft trim parts for Lotus and Caterham Sevens!. He bought his first Caterham Seven in July 1977 and with his wife, drove the 700 miles back to southern Germany!

His main activities on new cars these days revolves around the Westfield marque and he is the Kingswindsford company's representative in Germany.

Plus, you can always expect to see a few more unusual vehicles in Gunther's showroom. Incidentally, he's recently moved to a very impressive new facility down the road in Durach about five-miles from his original base in Kempten.



SO, HOME AND DRY, RIGHT?

Hmmm, sort of. The results achieved by CCK Kempten with the Zetec and EcoBoost engines mean that within reason they can now work with other UK kitcar manufacturers, certainly the forward-thinking ones, and adapt their results to suit other car makers needs so as to enable them to gain German compliance.

Obviously, there's a cost implication for Gunther's services but if we're talking about a small run of between five to ten cars, sold over a two-year period, it is very feasible, as the cars themselves sold into the EU can be more expensive thus helping to pay for the cost.

At the minute, a one-off sale would probably be un-realistic in cost terms. It can be done but the car would be very expensive as a result. CCK has undertaken this work for a German customer with a Zenos 'R', incidentally.

I ask Gunther about the current state of the German sportscar market and if there is still an interest in British specialist cars there, like there always used to be.

His reply is encouraging. "For sure, older German enthusiasts remember the old days, pre-Euro 6, and they still like the cars. If they know there is a genuine way of buying and being able to drive UK kitcars on our roads they'd be very interested. However, younger drivers think it's impossible. It's our job to educate them," he laughs.

So, the message from Germany/Europe is that there is still plenty of enthusiasm and desire for kit and sports cars, which is very promising.

Certainly, from our point of view, we sell a good number of magazines over and above what we'd expect in Germany and you'll always hear plenty of German voices at shows such as Stoneleigh.



So, Gunther has made real headway in Germany, but the results of his success can be translated to some other European countries. Probably. You see, once a kitcar is road-legal in Germany - with German number plates and log book equivalent - it should make it easier to register in other states.

Actually, this is clearly defined within mainland Europe, should the vehicle comply with the appropriate regulations, in can also be registered in all other European countries. This is the big difference to IVA, which is not European but only applies to the UK.

As it is, he has had enquiries from over 40 companies from all over Europe - and South Africa, interestingly - so it's not just UK manufacturers in need of his services. Germany is a large country with - in the main - a huge car culture. It's a market with huge potential. Even makers of period replicas are looking to fit modern engines to their cars as they receive lots of enquiries that they

currently can't satisfy.

Gunther also assisted Joey Lee of AeroMaster - see their feature in this issue - advising him on German requirements.

There have also been several companies using electric motors in touch looking for advice and assistance. All sorts of cars from Lotus Seven-style to exo-skeletal.

His old link with Tim Dutton could be rekindled, too. Gunther recently met Tim - for the first time in 42-years - at Stoneleigh and is looking at helping Mr Dutton get his Surf and Reef amphibious vehicles registered in Germany.

I've known Gunther for a long time and his enthusiasm always envelopes me, but just lately I've detected a new spring in his step, which is great for him and potentially countless German kitcar enthusiasts.

I know that, like me, he sees his job as a hobby rather than a chore and as a

petrolhead he gets his satisfaction from helping customers register their cars and using them on the road in Germany.

He's already planning his next targets for compliance - the Toyota 3.5-litre V6, namely the unit used by Lotus in the Evora and other companies such as LB Specialist Cars in their glorious Stratos replicas. By the time you read this he hopes to have the LB road-legal in Germany.

Then, it's logical for Gunther to turn his attention to the GM LS3 V8, rapidly becoming the V8 of choice in the UK. His work is never done but he wouldn't want it any other way.

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In a neat touch, every UK specialist car that Gunther sells he pins a photo to his showroom wall along with other notable images some featuring famous people who have bought cars from CCK over the years