



Cabbie's Mate - the Sat Nav with a Difference!

TAXI-TALK

Alf Townsend

Ever since Bob Oddy asked me to trial three different makes a couple of years back my opinions on Sat Navs are well documented. My honest opinion was that they were a time-consuming annoyance for central London cabbies, but could prove quite useful to our suburban colleagues, or the guys and gals who work at Heathrow on a regular basis (and, of course the minicab fraternity who don't know their way around anyway!).

Now suddenly I am singing from a different hymn-book, so the saying goes. I was invited recently to trial *The KnowledgeMaster* that apparently is all the rage among ComCab drivers. To put this popularity into context, I need to inform you that ComCab is in fact one of the many agents of the Sat Nav company, so consequently ComCab drivers can pay for the device on a monthly basis out of their radio work.

Nevertheless, this particular Sat Nav is by far the best I've ever trialled, or quoting from the title of Tina Turner's hit record, it's 'Simply

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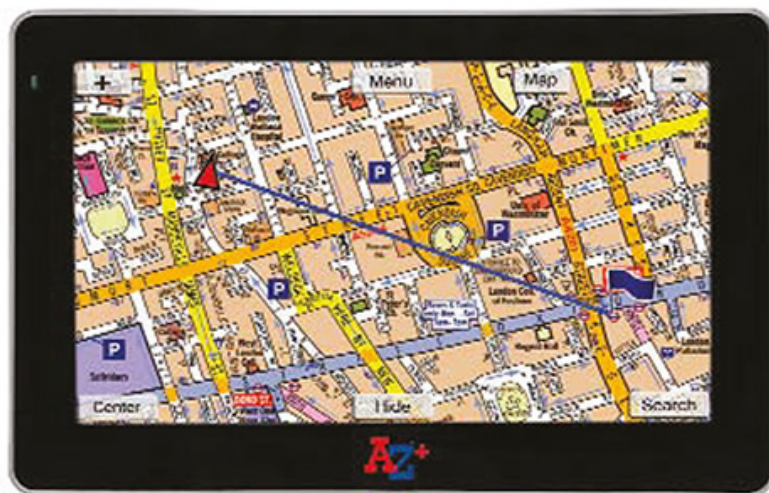
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Screen shot showing 'on the cotton'

the best, better than anything!! In fact I will go as far as to say, "Okay guys and gals, it's time to clear out those tatty old Geographers and those dog-eared A - Z books because technology has finally made it to the London taxi trade!"

The *KnowledgeMaster* is in fact two Sat Navs in one. It's got the standard GPS facility like all the others that can take you anywhere over the UK. But, and here's the good bit that concerns the London cabbie, it also has the latest GPS-enabled A-Z maps in its Cabbie's Mate Sat Nav.

It has an A-Z super scale Central London map, A-Z Greater London map, an extended A-Z Greater London main road map, with navigation and A-Z maps in one compact unit. It locates streets, postcodes or points at the touch of a button. With its Bluetooth facility, you can log in your mobile number for hands-free phone calls.

I was certainly highly impressed with the unit, but even more impressed with the story behind the design. Back in 2004 a frustrated night cabbie who was trying to read his A-Z in one hand while driving along, thought there must be a better way of solving the problem of a 'Senior Moment'.

The cabbie in question wants to stay anonymous for fear of all the begging letters! So he got together with his cousin who was a technical whizz and they managed to create a digital A-Z map facility. By 2006 they had developed a seven inch Sat Nav and by 2009 they had reduced the size to less than five inches and incorporated the hands-free. Their final design to show the

manufacturer was around four and a half inches long and had a faster and a much more efficient navigation system.

Now I'm not a technical person and had to hire my grandson to download all my documents onto my new laptop when my old computer finally expired, but even I can operate this new toy. Example, a pleasant couple at Kings Cross wanted Victoria Road but they didn't have a clue which one. So you tap in your Start button on the keyboard and simply 'pin' in one of the many roads by that name and scroll down to the relevant postcode that they recognise.

Then you tap in *Destination* on the keyboard and almost immediately it gives you the complete run 'on the cotton'. The map scrolling is super smooth and you can even light up the screen when it's dark outside. It also gives you audible and visual speed camera warnings and its simplicity in itself to change from Cabbie's Mate back to the UK Sat Nav.

Now the price, it certainly ain't cheap at £335, but you do get a one year's manufacturer's warranty – plus a unit to fix on to your windscreen, a charger for the cab, another charger for indoors and a connection to download.

If you want more info or a demonstration, phone the marketing man Lindsay Todd – another London cabbie, on 07941-412-865. I'm not quite as 'straight' as your Roman Roads, but when I trial something I'm not on a 'backhand', so I always try and give an honest opinion! And this time around, my honest opinion is that this device is a winner!! TAXI