

## FEATURE



Sawyer and Prebble are ready for season



Photos: Paul Sawyer, Silverlake, Mini Challenge Clubsport

Auto recycling firm Silverlake backs Sawyer and other championships

# MUSIC MEETS MINIS

House music DJ Paul Sawyer is back for a second Mini Challenge Clubsport season, and is aiming higher, as **Graham Keilloh** finds out

**L**ast year house music DJ and producer and Krafted label partner Paul Sawyer – whose musical exploits have taken him as far as Radio 1 presenting – could be found in, for him, unusual surroundings.

He had an on-and-off background racing bikes – both motorised and non-motorised – but, following one injury too many, last year he switched to four wheels and made his competitive debut therein, in Mini Challenge Clubsport.

He did well too, exceeding his expectations by finishing fifth in the R53 standings. This year he's back, and is here to stay. "Definitely," Sawyer smiles when Motorsport News asks this, "I've got the bug. It's absolutely taken over my life, but in a good way. All my family love coming, and a lot of my friends come along. And I absolutely love the thrill of racing, always have done. So this is just on another level."

He's also got higher ambitions for year two: "I finished fifth in the championship last year so I really wanted to make sure we finish on the podium this year, and aim for the top if I can. I can't see why it's not doable with the team I've got."

On that point, Sawyer's changed a lot around him to help his loftier aims. For running his car he's switched to Sussex Road and Race with Kevin and Josh Fulbrook, who ran last year's winning mount. There have been significant changes to Sawyer's machine, including brand-new suspension.

"It's just amazing the change. How I managed to get it around the circuits last year I don't know," Sawyer laughs.

"I watched [Sussex Road and Race] all year last year and just saw how professional they were. They've been involved in Mini racing for many, many years and you could just tell that they've got so much knowledge about the cars themselves."

All this is on top of Sawyer's general learning from



Sawyer looking for podiums in '25

his debut year, and he's given that a boost too with a new driving instructor, Chris Williams. "He knows Minis really well and his instruction's been just fantastic, it's really brought me forward, thinking more about using more of the circuit," Sawyer says.

Sawyer's many backers for his racing includes automotive recycling business Silverlake, which provides a range of parts and services from its impressive Hampshire facility. Silverlake is also Mini Challenge Clubsport's parts supplier, and sponsors other affordable contests C1 Endurance Series and the new DS3 Cup, and it is also entering a car in the latter.

Silverlake managing director Allen Prebble explains: "Paul was very passionate about the racing and came to us for some parts, and we like to support low-cost racing with sustainable green parts; it's a good fit for us. We can keep their race cars on the track affordably, and most of the people who go along are motor enthusiasts, which is what our USP is about, supplying affordable parts to our customers and race enthusiasts."

Prebble's a familiar face and name too, as not only does he race himself in C1s he's part of the famous Prebble family synonymous with Castle Combe championship success, as the brother of Brian and the uncle of Adam and Gary.

"We're passionate about motorsport, that's our

DNA of the Prebble family," Allen continues.

"And it's good for our staff to get involved in and they love cars, working with cars, so it's a good all-round fit for Silverlake."

And while motorsport and house music might seem worlds apart, Sawyer has been successful in "bringing those two things together that I'm passionate about." Sawyer was put in charge of the music for Mini Challenge Clubsport's Saturday-night get-togethers, called Sunset Garden, and his music went down a storm.

"I thought I was going to have to make it a bit more commercial, but I don't really come from a commercial background. So I kept with my roots, which is all progressive house and deeper house, and so I've made sure that all the playlists were still along that vibe and everybody seems to enjoy it," Sawyer says. He's also set before May's round one to release an album based on it all.

While from the other side, plenty from the music industry have been supportive of his racing venture, often coming to watch, and he's got sponsorship – and a couple of articles about his racing – including from music magazine *Zone*. "It's surprising how many people from the music industry are into motor racing, more than I ever realised actually," he notes.

Last year Sawyer sampled other machinery too, including racing in C1s and EnduroKa, and as a Porsche fan has eyed the Sprint Challenge and has been to Carrera Cup events. He's also been invited to observe Ferrari Challenge this season.

"Who knows what's around the corner?" Sawyer says on his future racing. "I would still like to experience more racing in other cars, if anything comes along I'd like to have a go at I definitely would give it a go. [But] I think I'm here to stay with the Minis for a while."

● You can find out more about Paul Sawyer by visiting his website: [paulsawyer.co.uk](http://paulsawyer.co.uk)

## Why Mini Challenge Clubsport is a great place to start

Paul Sawyer's experience in the last year or so is testament to Mini Challenge Clubsport as a four-wheeled racing starting point.

The entry-level championship for first- and second-generation Mini Coopers, about to embark on its third season, is the brainchild of ex-Mini Challenge racers Rob Austin and Tom Halliwell.

"[We wanted to] rejuvenate the Cooper Ss, find a home for them, with Mini Challenge going the JCW route," 2020 Cooper S champion Austin tells Motorsport News.

"We wanted to create a championship that we would have wanted to race in, which was a club championship, with plenty of races, some good prizes, and affordable racing. That's what we managed to achieve."

"We've had drivers come through who they're trying to get on the Mini Challenge, they just can't afford the budget, but they want to race, they want a good calendar, they want the TV coverage that we get through YouTube, they want all that at the best price they can."

"Our calendar is exciting in the fact that we've got two truck support races at Thruxton and Snetterton, you get 25,000-30,000 people there."

This year the championship has simplified regulations with specific classes for the R56 and R53, plus a novice and ladies' cup added.

Mini Challenge Clubsport has attracted good grids, with bosses prioritising encouraging new people into racing, even seeking newcomers from the relevant models' owners' clubs – which have approaching 50,000 members.

"We've got five drivers in this year who've never raced before," Austin notes, "and I remember my first-ever race, it was the most daunting experience I'd ever been through."

"Our technical guy, Glen, he can guide these drivers through what they need to do on the technical side. We've got a great website, we've put a lot of stuff on there about encouraging people how to get involved in motorsport."



The Mini championship is aimed at new racers

**"This year I'm aiming for the top"**

Paul Sawyer



Sawyer now run by Sussex Road and Race

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