

Seasoned Painter Collects Spray Guns but Prefers SATA

SATA

by Autobody News Staff

Kevin "KT" Thompson has painted more than 40,000 vehicles during his 21-year career so he knows a few things about spray guns. He collects them and tries new ones all the time just like avid golfers that continually buy and test new drivers searching for longer and more accurate shots. Thompson is always searching for that perfect spray gun, that will consistently provide the ultimate in comfort, ease-of-use, and—of course—an exceptional finished product.

Thompson is the foreman/head painter at Zara's Collision Center in Springfield, Illinois, a 25-year-old body shop that fixes more than 200 cars every month. Using Sikkens paint made by AkzoNobel, Zara's switched over to waterborne back in September of 2009, even though it's not yet mandated in Illinois.

As a gadget head who isn't afraid to learn and embrace new technology whenever he encounters it, Thompson tries to stay ahead of the game by researching the best practices and products he can find.

"I was studying waterborne well before anyone else was even discussing it. When it comes to the newest equipment, I want it, because I want to take advantage of the benefits. If I can find something to make me more efficient as a painter, I'm excited to try it."

Thompson said there are only 2-3 legitimate players in the spray gun game, but SATA is the clear winner, in his opinion. "It's a personal choice, but I like the SATA guns more because they make me more productive," he said. "First, they're ergonomically superior. If a gun isn't comfortable, I can start to feel it in my neck and in my shoulders. Other spray guns feel like slinging a weight around, but the SATA is lighter and balanced. I love it."

Thompson is the only painter on the team at Zara's, but he's backed by a skilled crew and using a production strategy that has him painting every single car that comes through the doors. "I qualify the color and then I apply it—that's my job," Thompson explains. "I have a four-member prep crew and they do all the taping and sanding. It's a great production system and really the only way to do it, in my opinion."

Dan-Am Company is the exclusive independent importer/distributor for SATA Spray Equipment in the USA & Puerto Rico. The company manufactures a wide range of paint



The painting team at Zara's consists of (from left) Marcus Singleton, Kevin "KT" Thompson, Kyle Barton, Gene Benedict and Cole Vance. Thompson does all the painting and the rest of the crew performs all of the prep and sanding

spray guns, compressed air filters, and respirators for worker health protection, handheld dryers, spray gun accessories and aluminum piping systems for compressed air.

"KT" has more than 25 spray guns of different brands, but the one he likes using the most is his SATAjet 4000 B HLVP. According to SATA's website, the 4000 B HLVP features state-of-the-art technology, a soft spray pattern, perfect ergonomics and outstanding atomization for superior finishes. With an ergonomically formed gun handle, it fits like a glove. By reducing its weight by 15% over its predecessors, the gun is easier to wield. With a new design that has lowered the gun's center of gravity, it's a painter's dream, according to Thompson.

Other characteristics of his SATAjet 4000 B HLVP allow for a faster application process that saves time and effort without the noise associated with other systems, Thompson said. "Overall, it's lighter and allows me to work faster. The entire process is more efficient overall. And it's quieter as well, which allows me to think while I'm working."

SATA calls the SATAjet 4000 B HVLP their "Super Saver" because it achieves particularly high transfer efficiency rates, due to its low pressure technology. "Not wasting paint is really essential, because waterborne is not inexpensive. The coverage is exceptional and we're saving money, so it's definitely everything we want from a spray gun."

As a techie, Thompson appreciates SATA's customer support tools

and calls upon them for updates and useful information on a regular basis, he said. "SATA has a great web site, an informative newsletter and SATA TV that has a ton of training videos. If I ever have a question and I need a fast answer, all I need to do is call Dan-Am Company's SATA tech line and they respond immediately."

To stay updated and informed, SATA's local rep visits the shop periodically to keep Thompson abreast of the company's latest and greatest. "Chris Gjeltzen is an area sales manager from BC Marketing. He is our SATA guy," Thompson said. "He shows us their newest products and is very knowledgeable. Any time we ask Chris for anything, he comes through without question."

Zara's also uses a wide range of SATA's accessories in its paint department, Thompson explained. "We use their 484 compressed air filters and their dry jet to shorten drying times with the waterborne. I also use their SATA vision 2000, a helmet respirator that covers the entire head and blows air across the user's face, which I prefer. And SATA's triple filtration system is awesome because it takes all of the moisture out of the air lines, which is crucial for the finished product obviously."

With a long history of using SATA spray guns over the others in his extensive collection, Thompson isn't planning on changing anytime soon. "I bought my first SATA gun back in 1988 and it's still operational. Sure, I like new technology, but I also respect things that are well-made and will last!"

Zara's Collision Center

Location: Springfield, IL
Telephone: 217-522-7768
www.zaracollision.com

Company At A Glance...

Type: Collision Repair
Facility Employees: 25
In Business Since: 1987
DRP Programs: 12
Number of Locations: One
Combined Production Space:
16,000 square feet



Over the years, Thompson has collected a plethora of SATA spray guns and still uses the very first one he bought more than two decades ago



Head Painter/Foreman Kevin "KT" Thompson paints 200 cars monthly at Zara's Collision Center in Springfield, Illinois, and prefers using SATA spray guns

Dan-Am Co. – Exclusive independent distributor of SATA Spray Equipment in the US and Puerto Rico.
website: www.sata.com