

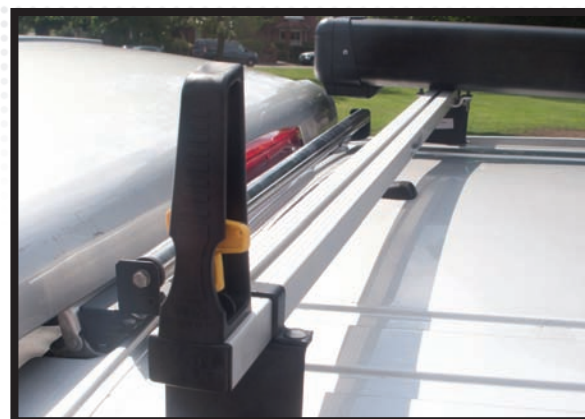
## vehicle accessories



# En guard

## *Roger Bisby guards against potential accidents with a roofbar installation on his Mercedes Vito*

I had three off-the-shelf standard roof bars on my Vito previously. They were ok but when I carried the long ladders the bars whipped a little and the ladders bounced. It was only when I carried the long ridge ladder up the motorway to North Wales that I discovered this constant rocking motion had loosened one of the fixings. Alarmingly, the ladders were in danger of coming adrift and it was only the fact that I inspected them at the motorway services that I found the problem and sorted it. That incident haunted me because a few miles further and somebody could easily have been killed. I made up my mind to get a better system.



I went to Vanguard because I had seen the company's roof bars on a van in the merchant's yard. Not only did they look a cut above the average electro-plated steel bars, they looked like they had been made for the trade, and not just adapted from some car roof bars.

### **All bar none**

The Vanguard range of purpose made brackets covers every van you care to mention, and I found that fitting them was a piece of cake. The hardest part was removing the old roof bars because one of the fixings had rusted where water had seeped down into the tapping. Vanguard brackets have a stick on foam pad and rubber washers under the plate washers so you should be able to keep the water out of the van roof.

The Vito roof dips down at the back and front so you need different brackets for the ends in order to achieve a flat plane across the top. This is all taken care of when you order the kit. The rear brackets were



labelled, which meant that the other long brackets were for the front. I fitted a wind spoiler to the front to cut down on the noise and also a ladder roller for the back, which would help to protect the high level tail light. On the Vito tailgate the roller brackets fit directly to the hinges, so they lift up to limit the rise of the door when you have ladders poking out.

The final touch was a fully locking tube carrier with an aerodynamic front, and I was really pleased with the way that this anodised aluminium tube was wrapped in a very solid cardboard tube and polythene. I propped it up on the fence while I slid in the fixing bolts, but somehow managed to let it slide off. It hit the ground with a crash and I swore. I hadn't even got the thing on the roof and through stupidity I had dented it. All that careful wrapping and then it got to me. Nervously I looked for the damage but to my amazement there wasn't any. Now I am not saying that you should try this at home – I got away with it once by some fluke but I don't intend to do it again.

It was only later that I read that the tube carrier is crash tested with 60 lengths of copper tube in it. I would prefer not to test this feature. I am hoping for a long and trouble free life with my new Vanguard roof kit. It looks really professional and I have a lot more confidence in it but I will still go around and give the fixings a shake from time to time. Where practical the nuts are shake-proof and the roof bars are tied together as a single unit by the side bars but you can never be too careful when it comes to carrying loads on your roof.

#### **MORE INFORMATION**

**For further information on Vanguard use the reader enquiry number 254**

**Readerlink enquiry 115**