

Pimp my Ride vs Top Gear: Kings of Car Culture

Ever since Henry Ford spawned the internal combustion engine, petrol heads from around the world have worshiped the automobile.

Car culture expresses itself in many forms; there are a plethora of magazines which cover all manner of car topics such racing, off-roading and classic cars; while on TV two of the most influential shows currently on our screens are Top Gear and Pimp My Ride.

Top Gear is a long running, award-winning BBC show about cars, and has been running since 1977. In recent years it has become more quirky and humorous and as such attracts a wide following, with some 8 million weekly viewers in the UK and an estimated 350 million viewers worldwide. But perhaps Top Gear's greatest achievement is its wide appeal; a large proportion of its viewers are not car enthusiasts. The show is presented by the oft-said arrogant Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond (nicknamed The Hamster by his co-presenters), James May - a well spoken, long-haired hippy type, and The Stig - a mysterious racing driver whose identity is unknown to the public and who never speaks or removes his helmet.

The American show 'Pimp My Ride', which is produced by MTV has also met widespread global acclaim. Presented by rapper Xzibit, the idea behind the show is to take old, beaten-up cars, and give them a complete custom overhaul. Though mechanical faults are repaired to allow the car to run, the "pimping" of the vehicle is largely cosmetic; the bodywork is given a brand new paint job often including flashy features such as "go faster stripes" and hot rod flames. There is also substantial customisation of the car interiors, which is normally tailored to fit the particular interests or hobbies of the owner; for example a tenpin bowler had a special ball washer installed in his trunk, and a surfer got a clothes-dryer fitted in the back of his van.

The show has been very successful both in the US and worldwide and has spawned dozens of subsidiaries around the world, for example in the UK (presented by hip-hop DJ Tim Westwood), Italy, Germany, Brazil, and there is even an Arabic version that translates as "Spoil you Car"!

Both Top Gear and Pimp My Ride are important parts of media car culture which continue to inspire petrolheads around the world, and in addition to online car communities, [motoring blogs](#) and internet forums, these shows are an important part of a multi-billion pound automotive industry.

About the Author

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