



# Missed Shift? American 'Top Gear' struggles to find its own identity

By ERIC TEGLER on 11/30/2010

Print



"What happened to 'Top Gear?' " my favorite bartender asked this past weekend.

"Somebody took the BBC's scripts and wrote Tanner, Rutledge and Adam over cues which previously said Jeremy, Richard and James," I replied.

It's an easy sideswipe I admit, but for me--and I'm guessing for the automotive enthusiasts who constitute *AutoWeek's* audience--it largely tells the tale. "Top Gear USA" (TGUSA) lacks its own identity.

The U.S. version of "Top Gear" is broadcast on the History Channel.

Like the original, it features a trio of hosts. There is an American "Stig" who records "power laps" on a (dusty El Toro) airport test track where celebrity guests likewise flog a modest econobox (a Suzuki SX4) and a hangarlike studio with a live audience. There are helicopter camera shots, chases and challenge segments lifted directly from the UK "Top Gear." The problem is that this approach invites direct comparison and, no surprise, the American "Top Gear" fares poorly.

The heralded chemistry of Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May has yet to surface among drifter/stunt driver Tanner Foust, comedian Adam Ferrara and NASCAR "analyst" Rutledge Wood. On Speed Channel's comparatively modest "Battle of the Supercars," Foust is likeable, even witty. But on "TGUSA," he seems stiff as does Ferrara, whose stand-up isn't translating. Wood is nonthreatening but also noninteresting.

The History Channel can't lavish the resources on "TGUSA" that the BBC does on the original, but it could at least get the basics right. After racing two skiers down a snowy slope in a Mitsubishi Lancer Evo X in episode two, the car from which Foust hurriedly exits is dry and shiny. Continuity?

In a segment reviewing Aston Martin's Vantage, Wood tells us the Brits are liars because the speedometer in the V8 reads 220 mph when the car's top speed is 180 mph. Satisfyingly jingoistic but light on cleverness. Clarkson, May, and to a lesser extent, Hammond, are all writers. Foust, Wood, and Ferrara--not so much.

A general audience may miss or forgive these moments but *AW* readers watch with a more critical eye. They'll notice good bits as when Foust tells Subaru STi owners who say the Evo X is just a "pavement queen" they're wrong. So why not give them, and everyone else, something fresh? In my view, the producers should have kept a few of the classic elements but otherwise gone their own route. Toss the "Top Gear" templates and write new material.

That might take pressure off the hosts of "TGUSA" to live up to the English trio. It might even depart from the formula so much so that the show no longer resembled "Top Gear." And that would be fine. Should "TGUSA" head in that direction after its initial run, it might better succeed. If not, the producers may have missed a shift.

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**VOTE**



**Coultergeist** wrote:

Adam Corolla (he did audition) should have been the host of this along with Tanner Foust. Adam can match wits (and controversial social commentary) with Jeremy Clarkson and Tanner is not only a great personality but also a great driver. Then add a witty automotive writer like Dan Neil (formerly of the LA Times) assuming the fine Autoweek staff is too busy (or if not then I would suggest Natalie Neff) and you'd have something to work with.

Then maybe do at least one bit per episode that is not a 99% redux of something the UK Top Gear has already done. The Mitsubishi Evo vs. Skiers in Mammoth was fun but not very different than Richard Hammond in a VW Toureg vs. snow mobile racers. They even did the obligatory "jump over the car" during the race!

12/1/2010 1:12 AM EST

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**jd** wrote:

I've been watching TGUK for a long time, and even in it's infancy, it was more appealing to me than TGUSA. I have a few ideas to help.

Just Dump "the stig" there's no banter or witty remarks about him being created in a lab or even the odd musical tastes. Put Tanner in the car and let him drive. His personality is currently transparent enough that we probably wouldn't recognize him if they weren't practically screaming it.

Rutledge is actually kind of okay. He's a little pompous and outspoken. great, let's get more of this.

Adam is practically a wall flower. especially with his wardrobe and physical similarities to Foust. Just dump him. Can we get Christopher Titus or something? He's a car guy and a comedian. we need some pompous, outspoken witty guy to kind of put a presence to the show. Carolla, maybe? I saw snippets when he was doing some driving for something else and it wasn't really TGUK caliber but certainly better than what we're getting.

We need some GOOD cinematographers. Maybe read off the nominees from the last academy awards, track down the ones who didn't win and received more than one nomination in the last 10 years. I've seen better editing and camera work on Vimeo.

12/1/2010 1:02 AM EST

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**f1fan56** wrote:

TG-USA has a very hard act to follow. Top Gear BBC is possibly the most popular TV program in the world. It's pretty obvious the US version would be a pale and bland imitation. That's what American versions of all foreign things are.

Having said that, if they get the right people, and go to some cool places, I'm willing to give it a chance. They can't duplicate Clarkson, May and Hammond, but if they put together Foust, Paul Tracy and a hot looking gal who could actually drive (Danica Patrick?) it might get interesting.

11/30/2010 11:33 PM EST

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**autofanaticsince1980** wrote:

I wish people didn't have such short attention spans and give the show a chance for crying out loud. It's only been two episodes and no one has seen the other 8! I've seen the original and loved it, but damn that dynasty wasn't built overnight. Did anyone see the interview with Clarkson on 60 minutes a couple weeks ago?? He talks about how it took a couple years for that chemistry to build, how the show was nearly cancelled several times, and how the show didn't become a success until after its tenth season! I've seen both episodes and I think it's quite alright! After watching football all day on Sunday, by Sunday night I'm footballled out and look forward to watching something interesting. I'd rather watch TGUSA than, desperate housewives or dancing with the stars, or some other cheesy reality show! For crying out loud give the show a damn chance! Geez.

11/30/2010 11:05 PM EST

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**striper** wrote:

First, this show is boring and childish. I expected better from Tanner and the other two are just goofs. I was excited when announced to see a new automotive based show that didn't have anything to do with NASCAR. Right now, the show is a waste of an hour. I hope they can fix it, I really want it to be good. It really sucks and isn't even remotely close to the BBC TopGear.

11/30/2010 11:05 PM EST

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**ROBERT PAINE** wrote:

Rather watch thee original on BBC.

11/30/2010 10:56 PM EST

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**Juantt2009** wrote:

I'm glad we have an American version because the brits are always bashing the American cars!! However, there is no chemistry with this trio and it's killing the show!! The only one I would keep is Tanner. I don't

see the other 2 in the next season.

11/30/2010 10:53 PM EST

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**RBMOJO** wrote:

Reminds me of the difference in the contrived Monkees vs the originals, The Beatles ...

11/30/2010 9:56 PM EST

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**porsche914six** wrote:

Without comparing the show to its BBC counterpart, and looking at it on its own merits, the three hosts have no chemistry and are not likable or entertaining. I suppose I could record episodes and fast forward through the commercials and the host's "happy talk" leaving just car pictures (sound turned down). I think I'd rather just read about the cars in AutoWeek and the other magazines I frequent. The show was a good idea, just poor execution.

11/30/2010 9:48 PM EST

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**bobus63** wrote:

I liked the "aston martin/brits are liars" remarks as Clarkson's frequently trashing the U.S.

11/30/2010 9:44 PM EST

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**cardijp** wrote:

I tried to watch the first episode, but the dialogue made it impossible. There is no chemistry between the American hosts, which made the jovial dialogue just unbearable. I couldn't bring myself to watch more than three minutes. I don't think it will get a second shot, nor should it.

11/30/2010 9:37 PM EST

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**btc909** wrote:

Sooooo I really didn't miss anything by missing every US episode of TopGear so far.

11/30/2010 9:20 PM EST

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**wkile76** wrote:

Give the show a chance. The 2nd show was already better than the 1st....they are starting to build that chemistry that we all love on TGUK. All in all I think the show is pretty good, and face it, it's a hell of a lot better than MotorWeek....

11/30/2010 9:18 PM EST

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**b3rays** wrote:

You've to wonder though, even with nearly unanimous disapproval of the show, will the execs re-examine the idea and actually try to make it a show worth watching, or will they simply let it die on the vine. The idea has true potential, just do it right.

11/30/2010 8:50 PM EST

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**Seasideclub** wrote:

I prefer "Fifth Gear" over TG USA or BBC. "Fifth Gear" is geared towards real enthusiasts. Too bad it was dropped years ago.

11/30/2010 8:36 PM EST

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**RabidWolf** wrote:

I won't watch it. I've watched the BBC version and it was fun, mostly.  
But ANOTHER cloned BBC series? Are there nothing but Xerox Machines at all these networks?

And please, 'History Channel' just change your name to something else. There hasn't been any history on it for a couple of years. Albeit I might buy a couple cheap lipstick-cameras and make my own show which you can buy.

Just give me the BBC Top Gear, and do something else!

11/30/2010 8:20 PM EST

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**alfordac** wrote:

I can't really add much to what's been written already-the show is a mess and is in desperate need of a reboot.

11/30/2010 8:11 PM EST

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**DAVID CLARK** wrote:

I can usually count on BBC Top Gear to make me laugh so hard my belly hurts, but I didn't get anything close to a chuckle from USATG.

11/30/2010 7:58 PM EST

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**aiyer** wrote:

TGUSA was really bad. I have been watching TGUK for the last 10 yrs or so or however long it has been. The hosts are complete misfits. And for bringing Leno, he is a car guy... but he cannot drive. He was on TGUK in the reasonably priced car and I was expecting him to be up in the top on their time chart... but he did pretty bad. Maybe he is good w/ talking about cars... but he sure cant drive.

11/30/2010 7:54 PM EST

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**T2** wrote:

So far the American version of Top Gear is nowhere near as entertaining as the UK version. With the "not available in USA" car reviews and Clarkson, Hammond and May's interactions and foolishness add vastly to the entertainment value of UK version of Top Gear.

11/30/2010 7:18 PM EST

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**Kulprit** wrote:

Tanner has potential, but the other two have no charisma whatsoever and visibly strain to play their roles. When the US version was announced I assumed that the show would fall flat because it would lack the type of chemistry that Jeremy, James, and Richard have. I didn't for a second imagine that it would fail because they're just inserting American presenters into bits lifted directly from the BBC.

Why would I want to watch a show that I've already seen? Come up with original challenges and "characters" and let's see what this show's capable of. As it is, there's no incentive for Top Gear fans to watch. TGUSA is left appealing to those car enthusiasts who have never seen an episode of Top Gear in their lives.

11/30/2010 7:16 PM EST

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**jackkeystone** wrote:

Keep Tanner, Dump Rutledge and Adam. Get Paul Tracy and some chick like Milka Dunno or Katy Legge... Yeah she is British and let them do their thing

11/30/2010 7:16 PM EST

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**GEORGE GRACIA** wrote:

I have to agree...it is better than reality crap that show that most can't live their own lives and have to do so vicariously. The only thing that I would change is get rid of Rutledge. Who the hell is this guy? I don't even like him on or as a NASCAR analyst. Where did they find this guy? Damn You, FOX...He's just annoying as all get out.

11/30/2010 7:01 PM EST

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**jarnold101** wrote:

They already have the first season done, 10 episodes. The ideas to improve it from the dozen of forums concerning this topic won't be taken into consideration until(if) they get a greenlight for a second season. Also, what if Top Gear UK got axed by the BBC which has been threatened a few years in a row now? I know, "I'd watch the Top Gear UK reruns of a 4 year old car review"...right.

I'm happy for a car show, anything that gives me an alternative to having watch reality crap.

11/30/2010 6:23 PM EST

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**WHITE BREAD** wrote:

I agree with Porsche-001. I THOUGHT IT WAS A HOAX. At least Tanner is a professional driver. The other 2 guys are zeroes. I'll give it time... but not much.

11/30/2010 6:17 PM EST

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**m3chief** wrote:

Show #2 was strike 2 for me. Next Sunday will determine if I ever bother watching it again. My few suggestions for improving it:

- 1) They should immediately dump Adam Ferrara. The guy is car clueless! He doesn't even know how to hold a steering wheel - never mind being stumped by a manual transmission.
- 2) They need an actual automobile journalist. Someone who knows cars, has experience testing and writing about them, and is comfortable in front of a camera. Someone like, say, Natalie Neff...
- 3) Their "race" track is horrendous! If they want a car wrung out to it's ultimate limit, it should be a track design that is challenging to the car, while not dangerous to the driver. There should be plenty of run-off area. This way, "The Stig (American version)" can REALLY show what the cars are capable of... isn't that the goal of putting him in them?
- 4) They need original ideas. Racing two skiers? Come on! What's next? Launching a car off a URL jump?

11/30/2010 6:09 PM EST

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**GTIMK6** wrote:

I'm back. After spending the last hour reading all the posts I have one conclusion. Our entertainment industry (for a lack of a better name) has figured us out. A short attention span and simple mindedness has given us sit coms like the Big Bang Theory, @#\$\$ My Dad Said and Simpsons. We accept NASCAR as racing (have you seen Australian V8 Super Racing) and elected O#%^A as president. Do I really need to say more. I am an "AMERICAN" (and Veteran) and proud of that.

11/30/2010 6:06 PM EST

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**Porsche-001** wrote:

At first I thought it was a hoax. Then reality set in. The present show just plain SUCKS! I will not waste my time on it.

Top Gear UK RIP.

11/30/2010 5:40 PM EST

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**olddog** wrote:

Garbage.....absolute Americanized garbage. What a disappointment. Read "Judge Bean's" commentary. Exactly right!

11/30/2010 5:29 PM EST

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**MrSlotracer** wrote:

I'll just keep watching the BBC version.

11/30/2010 5:24 PM EST

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**vfr800** wrote:

watch the 1st series of the current bbc version. they had a boring dork that they replaced in the second series with james may. this guy did a bit on used car prices. BORING. the studio was almost empty for the 1st couple of episodes and the shows were boring. there were no crazy stunts. there was very little chemistry between clarkson and hammond. the third guy had no personality. and there was very little humor, either. as you watch the episodes in chronological order, you'll see the shows getting better and better, with more humor, more zaniness, and more camaraderie between the presenters. even in the 2nd series when may was added, it took awhile before he was much of a factor in the episodes. so....

we can only hope that the american version progresses in a similar manner. but don't expect to see any no holds barred reviews of the cars they test, because of the commercial nature of this version.

11/30/2010 4:57 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**bogus** wrote:

I have been thinking... I am concerned about the chemistry thing. IF this was a sitcom, they would have cancelled it after two episodes.

It needs an edge, and that edge can't happen here in the states 406. As long as we fear legal recourse, we won't get that edge, even on cable.

Copy? Resemble? How much of the Top Gear image is the format? How much was created by the hosts and not by BBC?


They need better writers... that will help a ton.

I spoke with Adam Coralla at a function last year and he told me the US top gear was funny and well done. They made 2 episodes for NBC, before the economic crisis took it off the slate. I would love to see those episodes.

As far as \$\$ and the history channel... HC is trying to reinvent itself. It no longer wants to be the Hitler Channel, so they are trying to create programming that is more than just WWII.

History is part of A&E. Which is interesting, because BBBCA is part of Discovery. Hm... I always wondered why the Discovery networks didn't take this one on.

11/30/2010 4:56 PM EST

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**Smitty** wrote:

How about, why mess with a good and very well proven thing? It's really OK that we didn't come up with the original Top Gear. Thank the hosts and send them on their way.

I'll stick with the original.

11/30/2010 4:53 PM EST

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**R MCNAY** wrote:


What the heck are people expecting? Top Gear UK may have just popped up, fully formed to us Americans a couple of years ago, but take note, we just finished seeing season 15 on BBC America!!!! TGUK wasn't always this great bit of car fun, it took a heck of a long time to form. The show was on the brink of being cancelled a few years ago before they found the right combination.

Unfortunately, the dominant "immediate gratification" gene and short attention spans of current TV viewers have probably already doomed the show.

11/30/2010 4:46 PM EST


 Recommend (2)

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 **carno** wrote:

Give it time. The British Top Gear is a great show but has its horribly scripted moments - did anybody watch their tour through the southern U.S., or making us suffer through them "deciding" if a car is "cool" or not? The U.S. show will need to develop its own original content and the hosts will have to loosen up for it to work, but it's too soon to tell how it's going to turn out. Sometimes the best programs don't get noticed until they've been on the air for a couple of years and if you go back to see the first episodes they're nearly all like this.

11/30/2010 4:41 PM EST


 Recommend (2)


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 **Road** wrote:

It was painful to watch the first episode let alone the second. Sorry guys, but this formula isn't working very well and I agree that it should resemble Top Gear UK, but not copy it.

11/30/2010 4:35 PM EST


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 **GTRUNNER** wrote:

TGUSA - "Epic Fail."

11/30/2010 4:34 PM EST

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 **rcklutts** wrote:

It's a whole mess... The host's suck, the stories are complete ripp of the BBC version and even the music is the same along with the art-si-fart-si picture/camera angles and so on. Cars are great though just get real host's for the show and new writers!

11/30/2010 4:27 PM EST


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 **RYAN ISHMAEL** wrote:

This is one TV show that should not have been stolen from the Brits it should have been left in their very capable hands and theirs alone. This show is just a bad ripoff of the original and has no reason to live.

11/30/2010 4:21 PM EST

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 **matthewx** wrote:


...Missed a shift??

They dropped the gearbox in turn one.

11/30/2010 4:18 PM EST

 Recommend

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 **Daspuma** wrote:

Lew Dawg- Leno was offered the show. He loves the original and was smart enough to decline. I agree, he would have been a good choice.

11/30/2010 4:18 PM EST


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 **REUBEN** wrote:

The 3 "hosts" have the all the panache of a 6 year old...they all dress like they shop at a garbage dumpster, then sleep in it...Faust has as much personality as a wet dishrag...he does not belong on tv...

11/30/2010 4:08 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **ian99** wrote:

forgot, calling Aston Martin and the Brits liars, that is way off just like every chev speedometer that was calibrated plus or minus 10%.

11/30/2010 4:05 PM EST

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 **ian99** wrote:

Junk, Junk, no creativity, no style, just three unqualified post teens with no authenticity. Scrap this format and invent a US one.

11/30/2010 4:03 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **khpage** wrote:

Chemistry between the hosts next to non-existent. Sad. We have any number of folks here, even those who post on this site, who would/might do better. As for me, I wanna take the place of the "Stig" and be the "little old fat guy" who tests the cars. As long as I didn't manage to kill or permanently maim myself I would be up for the job in a New York minute.

11/30/2010 3:56 PM EST

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 **Lew Dawg** wrote:

Love the show (UK). It's on auto record on the dvr. Sometimes I want to reach through the screen and smack those guys for what they say but it's still a great show. Clarkson, Hammond, May and the producers all do a great job. As for personalities in the States, why not Leno? I bet he would do it as a hobby for not a lot of money. He loves the show. Carolla would also be great. And there are many, many great personalities among racing drivers and auto journalist. If none of them work out, they should hire me and my buddy Tom McMical. We spent all of our lives in the auto business and we have a lot of auto and motorcyle racing and thrashing background. We can still scare the hell out of old people with a car and we can each tell a good story. We have lots, although some cannot be told in public. It would be the best job I've ever had (except maybe driving the black Dodge in the picture).

11/30/2010 3:53 PM EST

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 **Daspuma** wrote:

Man, people loves them some UK Top Gear! I really do too. It's done beautifully with the perfect hosts. The main reasons I was weary about a US version: Could they replicate the high production value and have hosts that were knowledgeable, entertaining, and likeable. The US version is proof how hard it is to catch lightning in a bottle. It may help if the new hosts can improvise more, the too close to the script dialogue is a little painful to watch.

11/30/2010 3:44 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **iammorpheus2** wrote:

i agree to a point, but we really dont have any "good" car shows out right now so let it stay on for now till they can fix it !!!!

11/30/2010 3:35 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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 **SDCALSPCL** wrote:

First, why do we need to have an "American" version in the first place. Are the 12 year old writers on the left coast unable to actually come up with something original? The show is a bad joke, with a trio of dolts. I could not get past the Cobra (no markings?) segment, with the crewmen imitating military members (a beard!) when obviously they were not. At least in the Apache segment in the UK version the chopper and crew were military. And, come on, getting lost at the airport! Dump this travisty now, it is an embarrassment.

11/30/2010 3:32 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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 **Brown Dog** wrote:

I think we all agree. The show stinks. But something nobody has mentioned: did some of it look faked? When they each drove their own Lambo did anybody notice the background (out the window) was white? Were those scenes filmed in a studio? There were other shots that I questioned also. Maybe it's ok that it's crap because it's fake crap.

11/30/2010 3:31 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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 **MilwDave** wrote:

The hosts are terrible and the show is doomed. The hosts on BBC are the attraction and the cars are the frosting on top. The real test is have your wife watch both shows. There is no way my wife will sit through the U.S. version yet she enjoys the BBC show. There is so much more subject matter available here in the U.S. This show could be so much better. My choices to replace the three turds are Jay Leno, P.J. O'Rourke and Adam Carolla.

11/30/2010 3:24 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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 **iammorpheus2** wrote:

well the only thing i see what they need to do is keep tanner and replace the other 2 !!!! they really suck to be honest !!!!

11/30/2010 3:23 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **406** wrote:

As long it is necessary to be painfully PC on US TV, there is little hope for a "home grown" version of TG.

The inability to find hosts that have even a modicum of chemistry and apparently little ability to ad-lib and hold an audience is very disappointing, given the number of potential candidates but maybe the pay is nowhere near good enough to attract them.




attractive blonde, but I digress....).

Maybe, if they survive until next year, I'll give them another chance but for now, it is "au revoir" for TGUSA as far as I'm concerned.

BTW, if Clarkson is so "Anti USA", why did he purchase his Ford GT and he was very complimentary about the Viper, while criticising it's very basic nature (crudeness?) he really liked the driving sensation it provided, which is surely the purpose of the car.

11/30/2010 3:18 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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**Spd6Rcr** wrote:

One more thing: History Channel, put it on at better times. I missed it Sunday night and the rerun came on at 11PM EST Monday and the rest of the week they were on like at 3AM. I don't have Tivo (or an Evo) so give us some better options.

The best thing on Episode 2 was the dog, Nash, peeing on the studio floor at the end.

11/30/2010 3:17 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**Spd6Rcr** wrote:

Keep Tanner, fire the other two dolts, and hire the blind guy and his dog who won the drift competition in episode 2.

It all seems too forced. Even the camera work is clumsy. I know they don't have the budget like the BBC has for TG UK, but at least splice the video together better. The ski race with the Evo was plain stupid.

11/30/2010 3:13 PM EST

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**Q MAN** wrote:

Watched TG on CBC and liked it a lot. This is not the same show, it lacks hosts.

11/30/2010 3:08 PM EST

 Recommend (2)


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**St. Gearheaditis** wrote:

Comparing TG UK with TG USA is like comparing the Marx Brothers with the Three Stooges. One (Marx Bros. and TG UK) are talented, funny albeit a bit silly, and clever. The other (Three Stooges and TG USA) are a bunch of bumbling fools going for the cheap laugh every time. I'm not impressed (with TG USA) NYTimes says by the third episode things get better. I have my doubts but we'll see.

11/30/2010 2:56 PM EST

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**9010M3** wrote:

I didn't realize that a "new" Top Gear was being produced so I was pleasantly surprised one day when I saw the listing on the History channel. I had not been able to view all the previous BBC episodes so I thought that this would be an opportunity to catch up. Man was I wrong. Fine minutes into the show where they were racing a Cobra Helicopter I was channel surfing. Nothing against Foust but he was on another show where he and Paul Tracy were doing comparisons. The "nice guy" "bad guy" thing got old in a hurry. The roles were so "forced" they were not believable. Same with the "new" Top Gear. No chemistry. Roles being forced again. What the heck is a driver anyway. That's not racing. More like ice dancing with a car.

11/30/2010 2:53 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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**JOSEPH SAVINO** wrote:

You know what's really amazing? The most commented article on the entire website is a review of a TV show! Hahaha!

11/30/2010 2:52 PM EST

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**JERRY HOLDER** wrote:

I don't think the show will make it for several reasons and most if them have been beat to death already. I agree this group wants to be politically correct and will not say anything bad about any potential advertisers brand with maybe a few exceptions. This keeps them from trashing English automobiles. I'm sorry the English don't own an automobile company. I think the Germans own most of them. Someone should clue Mr. Clarkson in on that.

With that said, I do like the BBC version but I will give the U.S. version a chance. Now I'll go beat another dead horse.

11/30/2010 2:51 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**LooseNut** wrote:

Listening to those dolts on Top Gear USA was akin to listening to the drill at the dentist's office. They stole an hour of my life and I want it back.

11/30/2010 2:47 PM EST



↑ Recommend (2)

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**motordc** wrote:

I agree with most of the comments and I think if you never saw the BBC version you might like this show. That said, I was disappointed in Adam Ferrara, who I was expecting to be funny but came across as mundane. Rutledge Wood seems to think he knows everything and maybe he does but doesn't have the personality to pull it off. The other guy, well he appears to be a good driver but what is he 20? They need more personality. However, I saw a glimmer of hope at the end of episode 2 when the dog peed on the floor, it begged me to ask was it planned or spontaneous. I guess I am wishfully thinking that time will heal this show. If it doesn't at least there is the BBC version.

11/30/2010 2:44 PM EST

↑ Recommend (1)

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**wrenchedexcess** wrote:

The idea of copying the UK version is sound the format is o.k. however loose the hosts, two comics and a drifter do not make car fanatics. That is the largest difference between both shows. I would rather see Barry Meguiar, Reggie Jackson and Patrick Dempsey than who they have now.

11/30/2010 2:36 PM EST

↑ Recommend (1)

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**Gator Colt** wrote:

I tried to watch, it's not very good. Maybe it's because I can't get past the annoying Rutledge. I have stopped watching NASCAR on Fox because the commentators are very annoying, period. It may last, maybe they need some stupid gopher to crawl out of Rutledge's hair.

11/30/2010 2:35 PM EST

↑ Recommend (2)

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**Plasticar** wrote:

To me, it is either too much like TopGear UK, or not enough. They change the names of things just to be different, even though they are otherwise identical. "Star in a reasonably priced car" has typical British dry humour, while "big star - small car" just sounds trite. Plus there is the false mythology around the Stig and "tame racing driver" that has been completely overlooked.

Either copy shamelessly or go your own way. Pick one and just go with it.

11/30/2010 2:33 PM EST

↑ Recommend (1)

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**GomerPyle** wrote:

Wow, this has to be the most commented on article I've read since AW started a comments section. While I'm not a fan of British comedy, the BBC version of TG is great. I actually like how they make fun of Americans. If you can't laugh at yourself, then you're too dull and American. That's why they do it.

I've seen commercials for TGUSA and was not impressed. I'm glad I didn't waste my time.

How to perfect TG? Record 2 varieties of the Brit show. One the way it is for them, and one without the British celebrities for us. Actually, I guess they did that in a few episodes last season with American celebrities instead (Tom Cruise and what's her name from Something about Mary - oh yeah, Cameron Diaz). Even better, put Leno on the show with the Clarkson, Captain Slow, and the Hamster.

11/30/2010 2:33 PM EST

↑ Recommend (1)

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**jarnold101** wrote:

On BBC America: Top Gear on Monday October 11 averaged 295,000. The first episode of History Channels Top Gear, 1.9 million. I'm curious on what the number drop off will be this week. BBC America is available in almost 69 million homes in the U.S. Most of the cable networks are available in close to 100 million homes.

I think they aren't so worried about offending the lovers of the original Top Gear, they are looking for the large numbers here in the USA who haven't seen it. My humble opinion, it should have been on Spike, TBS, TNT, or even Speed. The BBC owns, produces, and writes the USA version. Their network Facebook and web pages supports the USA version. They are hoping it works here, it would make them more money.

11/30/2010 2:29 PM EST

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**billyjoejimbob** wrote:

Drift-boy Tanner is too self-absorbed to be of any interest here. Make him pay for his own tires... then we'll see if he can drive.

Agree with the overwhelming sentiment here: Top Gear US edition is to Top Gear UK as the Monkees were to the Beatles... and will have similar longevity.

11/30/2010 2:23 PM EST

↑ Recommend (1)

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**riIsTRON** wrote:


I think we need to give them time to "mesh" and develop some chemistry. I agree, it looks right now like they're still getting to know each other and the jokes and wise-cracks are awkward and forced. Once they loosen up a bit, it should be fine.

That said, I got goosebumps several times when they were doing the feature on the Aston Martin Vantage, and also (unexpectedly) during the Mitsubishi Evo challenge.


Overall, I think it needs some more time to really develop the chemistry of the UK version, but it's still a very entertaining show with lots of beautiful car-eye-candy!

Although, I wish they would have chosen a different car for their "big stars in small cars" segment - the Suzuki is boring. How about a 20 year old Ford Festiva or Subaru Justy or something? THAT would be funny to watch.

11/30/2010 2:22 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **WDR** wrote:

I always recorded the British series for watching at a more convenient time, same as I do the American version. According to Jeremy's sendoff a couple of weeks ago, that was the LAST show of the SERIES!! Also, in the credits of the new series, I believe BBC America is credited with production. I hope it gets better, but I'll watch every episode anyway, just to judge.

11/30/2010 2:20 PM EST

 Recommend

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 **B5AudiVW** wrote:

While watching the first episode, I kept thinking "They DO know that we've all seen the original, right?"

Taking the basic format and even style is one thing, but every single detail is "Xeroxed" from TG UK. Watching the waay over-exposed and too-sincere Faust deliver lines that were clearly written for the King of Condescension Clarkson was so bad it was disorienting.

11/30/2010 2:19 PM EST

 Recommend

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 **MoebiusStreet** wrote:

@SpikedLemon - the British have no issue with completely bashing everything they don't like.

I guess you missed the episode where they were doing reviews while driving people home from bars. Hammond was using condiments ("the handling is ... salty") as codewords to avoid having to say that it was bad.

11/30/2010 2:17 PM EST


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 **winloseblowedup** wrote:

Whats more amazing is how many executive producers thrive and get rich on peddling complete crap and unwatchable train-wrecks.

11/30/2010 2:16 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **MoggyPig** wrote:


Cancel the series after the 10 episodes are done.

Nothing will replace the chemistry of the three blokes on original top Gear - UK

Jezza, Hamster and Captain Slow have jelled into pure entertainment.

Even non-car people love the show. People who think oversteer is a right wing plot love it. Why bother imitation? No matter what, they are not going to get the chemistry of the UK guys.

11/30/2010 2:05 PM EST

 Recommend (1)


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 **SpikedLemon** wrote:

It's things like this why I still like reading UK mags instead of American ones.

Any review in an American mag seems to tip-toe around any issues with the vehicle while the British have no issue with completely bashing everything they don't like. American mags are afraid they'll tick off the companies that supply them with vehicles.

11/30/2010 2:05 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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 **deyes** wrote:

I agree with the comments about chemistry. I thing Carolla would've been a better bet. Pair him with Alonzo Bodden, a known freind of Carolla and you have chemistry that exists from the get go. Throw in a third guy as sort of a bumbling non car guy character and they'd have had a winner. None of the hosts of the current show seem particularly quick witted ALA Carolla, nor are they knowledgeable and funny like Bodden (was a machinist for Lockheed Martins "Skunk Works"). As is, the show is a miserable, unwatchable FAIL.

11/30/2010 2:04 PM EST

 Recommend

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 **jarnold101** wrote:

El Squid, can always count on you. Some of us don't have BBC America or BBC America on demand.

11/30/2010 2:04 PM EST

 Recommend

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**El Squid** wrote:

I watched part of a new American Top Gear episode. It was so appallingly bad I changed channels and watched a re-run of the BBC's version.

11/30/2010 1:59 PM EST

Recommend (3)

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**JOHN STRANGE** wrote:

It does need to season and I'm willing to give it the 10 episodes they've filmed. I agree with all the comments about poorly done rehashes of the U.K. Show but to me one of the most irritating things is they're clearly reading from scripts rather than musing or talking to us. It's that level of informality that's needed.

11/30/2010 1:59 PM EST

Recommend (1)

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**reholmes** wrote:

Missed shift--more of a DAF

11/30/2010 1:58 PM EST

Recommend

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**GenevaBob** wrote:

The problem is more than chemistry. Faust might know about cars, and with other cast members might work out. But there are way too many car guys with personalities out there for this to continue.

The show would be a gas for some of the names mentioned below to host. Its a carshow and transends the normal network logic of casting. Go with the guy that thinks burning the tires off of a G8 would be fun.

11/30/2010 1:52 PM EST

Recommend

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**Gmanaed** wrote:

As many have said, it's about the people, not the cars, stunts or skits. Carolla would have been a good sub for Clarkson, in that he tends to say what he thinks, and that makes him polarizing. Although Clarkson is insufferable, you watch him knowing his comeuppance is just around the corner. These guys don't have the personalities needed to keep you interested. It's about the people, and personalities-and they are hard to copy.

11/30/2010 1:47 PM EST

Recommend (1)

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**Fritz T Coyote** wrote:

This version seems like a Cargo Cult rendition of Top Gear. Copy the appearance, format and scripts, but using gimmicks and props instead of genuine humor and understanding of cars and people.

The fact that they are relying on the weakest part of the UK version (the ridiculously staged races) have missed the strong points - genuine humor (not forced) and a obvious joy in getting paid to drive like nuts in somebody else's car. The humor (or humour) is what made TGUK popular even with non-gearheads.

11/30/2010 1:42 PM EST

Recommend (2)

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**JudgeBean** wrote:

The Brits are witty, sophomoric, charming, crude, literate, chauvanistic, condescending, sophisticated, talented, and funny, in varyiing degrees at various times. Putting it mildly, the Yanks are just a bunch of Sophomores with the world's greatest study hall fantasies, but of no entertainment value to anyone else. Why not just import Top Gear for those who don't get BBC America? At least get hosts with a pretense of adulthood and sophistication.

11/30/2010 1:42 PM EST

Recommend (5)

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**jarnold101** wrote:

TG UK did a crossover with the German show and it was okay. I think they should do the same with the USA show....and I've sent the BBC Top Gear folks an email saying the same. Clarkson vs. Wood, two fat blokes in sportscars. May and Ferrara making fun of each others accents. Foust and Hammond arguing over which one the girls think is cuter. They meet at Indy for high speed runs around the track in comparable US vs. UK cars....turning left. Then Clarkson challenges them to left and right turns on the F1 circuit. Two for one episode to be aired on each side of the pond. That would be fun to watch.

Writing even takes tweaking since the USA guys aren't writers like the UK guys. I agree, they should all loosen up but they have alot of pressure trying to live up to an amazing legacy.

11/30/2010 1:41 PM EST

Recommend (2)

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**bogus** wrote:

Hey, jarnold - the US population wanted instant fixes to our screwed economy, so they elected the same ppl who caused it. That's why we demand instant everything here. dumb a\$\$es...

I agree with you, it takes time.

However, the writing isn't sharp... it is really rather dull. Tanner is beginning to grow into his role; Rudledge should make it... but Adam? meh. Don't like the delivery. I think - hell, I know - I could do a better job.

There will be comparisons to the UK version, can't help it... but give it the 10 weeks it deserves to flush things out. If it is making its own living, then reassess where it needs to be improved, and improve it.

Oh, as far as repeating it, there are versions of TG in Australia and Germany, that I know of. So yes, it can be done.

11/30/2010 1:35 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**bolosmith** wrote:

Short on entertainment, long on sophomoric humor, short on any talent to present the virtues of a car or perhaps even drive it. On the last show, it appeared that 2 of the 3 didn't know how to handle a manual tranny car? Filled with trite comparisons and what appear to be completely fabricated situations, this American version will not last but one season. Too bad, because I awaited it with eagerness. Now that I've seen two episodes, I'll just try to forget it and stick with the BBC version....

11/30/2010 1:33 PM EST

 Recommend (2)


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**jarnold101** wrote:

2 shows and you expect instant chemistry?? What a joke. After the season is done I'll toss in my two cents. I watched an episode of top gear recently that Clarkson did on the Vector, horrible. I watched episodes before May showed up, crap. It took years for them to get their chemistry and for the show to hit its stride. The last 5 years of Top Gear UK are some of the best TV I have ever seen. Give the USA guys an opportunity to get chemistry and for the formula to work.

11/30/2010 1:28 PM EST

 Recommend (4)

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**TR2501968** wrote:

The US version is a joke...you can't create the chemistry of the BBC show with casting people...it just happened and trying to repeat it is a joke

11/30/2010 1:25 PM EST

 Recommend

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**R Nelson** wrote:

This show sucks big time. The three guys, one a redneck goober, an annoying 'Joisey' accented guy, and a normal guy trying to act like they like each other, have no credibility or humor. It's a tv show, but they constantly cuss and cussing can't be heard on tv, so it's a constantly annoying and irritating bleeping going on. And to top it all off, these supposed adults keep calling each other 'dude' like 12 year olds from the poor part of town. Top Gear BBC should be embarrassed for allowing this.

11/30/2010 1:24 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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**stevec** wrote:

Why doesn't History Channel just license the original? You can't "fix" the US show, no matter who you throw at it (is Leno in the woodpile?) No one is going to supplant Jeremy Clarkson, Richard Hammond and James May. Its a great show as-is. Leave it alone and show it to a wider audience. The arrogance of the American entertainment industry is to think it can always one-up an original. Watch Hollywood screw-up Girl With The Dragon Tattoo" next. Sheesh. Somebody stop 'em, please.

11/30/2010 1:24 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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**jmelcon** wrote:

As a Top Gear fanatic since before its relaunch back in 2002, I've had many misgivings about the attempts to recreate it in other markets and feel that they have yet to succeed (see TG Australia), and the first two episodes of the US version certainly have not changed those misgivings. However, as others have noted they are only two episodes in, and they're going up against one of the biggest TV shows in the world - not exactly an easy act to follow.

While it's clear that they have not yet found their footing or their own voices and styles, I have come away feeling that they seem like they might. Watching interviews with them about the show, all three hosts seem more more comfortable and naturally enthusiastic about what they're doing, which gives me hope. I think judgement should be withheld until after this first 10-run series. At that point, it will be clearer what the potential of TGUS is.

11/30/2010 1:24 PM EST

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**Red Dwarf** wrote:

As you say over in the USA! OMG! ? !

As an Englishman who watched in agony as Top gear degenerated from its 1980s origins and an informed intelligent and respected Motoring programme to the utter rubbish that it now is, I'm disgusted that its now considered representative of anything British! Clarkson is no more than a clever journalist who despite knowing next to nothing about cars, has made a ridiculously good living out of being objectionable, May is rude arrogant slob (you don't see his other TV offerings!) and Hammond is still a 3 year old at heart. I couldn't care less about the Stig who ever or whatever he is.

I gave up watching it years ago. I don't see the US show of course, but can only feel sympathy if you have something as bad as the BBC effort.

11/30/2010 1:22 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**CITADEL4U** wrote:

I have seen that since the new USA Top Gear started, the original BBC- America show, has stop running new shows. I hope they are not abandoning the US to just the USA version of Top Gear.

I prefer the British version, but like both enough to watch them all.

11/30/2010 1:21 PM EST

 Recommend (1)

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**MoebiusStreet** wrote:

I agree with much of what's been criticized, but not necessarily the suggestions. How can you have a car show hosted by a guy named "Carolla"? We may as well make the other hosts "Jack Pinto" and "Bob Chevette".

Seriously, I did like Foust's work, but Ferrara in particular really didn't have it.

The chemistry between the hosts is off. Sure, they're teasing each other. But in the original, it's much deeper than that. The hosts (particularly James) seems to have a very different outlook on what a car should be. This allows them to have disagreements that go deeper than just "this is rear wheel drive"; "yeah, well this is lighter".

But the big difference is really the difference between so much British media versus American. The Brits have some silliness that I can't quite put my finger on, but really serves things like Monty Python quite well.

And of course there are things that US political correctness simply forbid. In America we can't have TV jokes that associate Mercedes with dictators, or an African Stig dressed in stereotypical African garb. Our own over-sensitivity hobbles us.

11/30/2010 1:17 PM EST

 Recommend (3)

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**JonnyMiata** wrote:

I agree with the Adam Carolla comments but I think Joe Rogan would be another great opinionated car guy that could joke with Adam. Just a thought.

11/30/2010 1:14 PM EST

 Recommend

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**SoonerLS** wrote:

If this piece had been written after the first episode, I'd have concurred, but the 2nd show was a big step in the right direction, IMHO. Aside from the Lambo segment, there was no chemistry in the first show, but you can see it starting to gel in the second, particularly if you stop comparing it to the UK version. (I know that's hard to do, given that it's essentially TGUK starring 'Merkuns.)

You also have to consider that most viewers say it took three seasons for the TGUK chemistry to gel. These guys have only been at it for two episodes, so cut them some slack.

As far as Wood's coment on the speedo, taken in context with the same comment about the Vantage V12 later in the segment, it fits--and it's less un-clever than many of Clarkson's frequent jabs at Americans. Or perhaps you've forgotten when he said the engine on his Toyboata weighed five hundred pounds, or "almost as much as one whole American."

11/30/2010 1:12 PM EST

 Recommend (2)

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**JPH1** wrote:

Au contraire mon ami, Boxdin, Jazzer said the Prius was great when he learned that Cameron Diaz had one.

11/30/2010 1:12 PM EST

 Recommend

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**NC TRACKRAT** wrote:

This show is so contrived, it makes me sad to watch but it beats most of what else is on (which doesn't say much for TV programming these days). The car selection is fine but, pleeeeee, get some real gearheads who can speak AND be funny at the same time: Leno, Carolla or Brits like David Hobbs and Brian Redman are absolute hoots! It really pains me to see beautiful cars flogged on a dirty, dusty dry lake bed and, for God's sake, rent a real road course!

11/30/2010 1:12 PM EST

 Recommend

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**Motoracer** wrote:

I'm a big fan of the BBC Top Gear for its typically British wit, the chemistry between the 3 lads, and the outstanding videography. Trying to directly translate that show into "American" was a lame idea. Much better to develop a unique format and flavor that fits our culture. Seems like some bean counters saw the huge market Top Gear has earned and are tried to cash in without the benefit of creative input.

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