



**SUMMERNATS**  
CAR FESTIVAL

*Australia's Biggest Horsepower Party!*

# ***JUDGING INFORMATION***



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Judging begins at scrutineering where the vehicle gets classified and pre-judged. Firstly it will be decided if the vehicle belongs in Show (Elite) or Street Class. The main difference between these two classes is the condition of the undercarriage and of course the general build quality. If the car does not have a detailed undercarriage then it is difficult to place that car into the Show Class, as it will score very low, if at all, for undercarriage and therefore very low overall. There may be some exceptions in this area, if the vehicle is presented in such a manner as the judges find it hard to believe that the car has regular street use. Areas such as the engine bay finish and signs of street use on the undercarriage will tell us if the car is to be in street or show, but this should be discussed with the owner on a case-by-case issue.

Then a car is classified as to its body style of modifications eg. A highly customised coupe may be placed into custom as apposed to coupe if the modifications are too extreme for it to be considered a coupe, the same would go for all categories. If the Judges are unsure of what category the car is to go in they will discuss with the owner the options and come to an acceptable result. But when all else fails the Chief Stewards decision is final.



## **CRITERIA**

Judging will be based on

- Quality of workmanship – This is of utmost importance when a car is being presented for judging. It doesn't matter how major the modifications are, if there is evidence of poor workmanship.
- Cleanliness – The judges will mark a car down on points if it is not presented in a clean, tidy and well maintained manner.
- Innovation – For a car to perform well overall it would be necessary for there to be a certain amount of modifications that reflect innovation on the car builders part. This could involve engineering, interior, paintwork and overall design and concept.
- Presentation – The car must be presented to the judges ready for judging. The judges will only judge what they can have access to. The car must be unlocked and the bonnet open for the car to receive points for these areas. If a judge cannot gain access to any part of the vehicle then that part will receive nil or low points if access is limited. It is also advisable to have a tech sheet with build pictures available in a convenient location to show any special points about the construction.

## **POINTS OVERVIEW**

Points are awarded in the following areas taking into consideration workmanship, innovation, degree of difficulty, cleanliness, and presentation (as above).

1. **Paintwork** – There are two areas in the paint category (Special Effects and Standard Paint) and a car can only score points in one of these areas. Special Effects Paints which include, Kandy Urethane and basecoats, Exotic Pearls, Kamelions and full custom graphic, flamed or blended paint (not available on OEM vehicles) whereas Standard Paint is a solid, metallic or pearl colour available on OEM vehicles. The Judges will look for any imperfections in the paintwork including the preparation, primer and overall finish, especially in the difficult areas and score the car accordingly. Note: Murals, graphics etc would be judged separately if there were enough cars to warrant the inclusion of a separate category/s.
2. **Bodywork** – Judging of the bodywork looks at the preparation of the body before paint is applied. Consideration is also given to the, gaps, straightness, quantity and degree of difficulty of modifications to the body of the car. Even if the car has many modifications they still need to have a high quality of workmanship otherwise the car may receive a low score. Therefore it is not only how many modifications the car has, but also how well they have been executed. Bodywork also includes fitment of the bumpers, moulds, grille etc.
3. **Interior** – Creativeness, workmanship and attention to detail are key areas for judging in the interior area. This includes all items visible from the doorjambs and includes dash, floor coverings, rear parcel/floor, hood lining, seats, modified/fabricated panels, car audio components, use of materials, fitment and other finishing's etc.

4. **Undercarriage** – Includes floor pan, substructure, driveline components, suspension components and all visible brackets, fuel lines etc on the underside of the car. To achieve a high score on the undercarriage it is suggested that considerable attention be paid to all metal work and components visible to the judges.
5. **Engine bay** – Fitment of non standard engines and accessories and all other components in the engine bay and include areas such as the firewall, inner guards and radiator support etc. Also the overall finish and enhancement of the engine bay as a whole.
6. **Engineering/Re-engineering** – Covers all non-factory modifications that would require a degree of manufacturing to improve the function of particular part/parts including driveline and suspension components. There is also the re-engineering of factory or aftermarket parts, this is done to enhance the looks, function and/or performance of the overall vehicle.

Many builders are removing sheet metal or hiding parts for the clean uninterrupted look, sometimes it is more difficult to tidy up and perfect what is there, all these issues are taken into consideration when judging. This is often where degree of difficulty comes to the fore, but quality of finish is usually the key factor.

A further explanation of these areas is provided below and should be read by all those who wish to compete in any category of car shows.

This information was written by show judges and gives an insight into the way a car is judged and how you can prepare your car for competition.

As you read on it becomes apparent that one of the most important areas to consider is not on the car itself, but starts before you actually lay a spanner on your car. That is the area of planning. Top show cars are always planned, with the builder knowing what the outcome will be, even if it is not all achieved in the one build and has to be done over time. A plan is a must, know what class you are building your car for so you can maximise your point's gain and understand how a car is judged. This will give you the edge.

## **POINTS CLARIFICATION**

### **1. PAINTWORK**

All the categories are important in Show Car judging, but paintwork is the area that the public notice most. The paintwork of an elite show car must be excellent in all areas including under bonnet, boot and doorjamb. It is essential to have the outside excellent but it is the difficult to access areas like underneath and inside door jams etc that separate the top winners from the rest. As with all the areas the paintwork must be planned and managed as well. Think about the colours, do they go together, is it right for the shape, do you want graphics or murals, there is a lot to consider. If you decide to go with graphics or murals they must be of high quality and good final finish on the clear to get maximum points. More is not always better, whatever paint you have, it must be of a high standard.

Quality is the key to paintwork, it must have a good foundation. If you have prepared the body correctly, it would be primed with Epoxy primer filler and sanded with hard block and finished off with a fine grade paper ready to shoot the colour. The area's almost always neglected are roof gutters, under sill panels and under panels. If you are shooting for a Show Car award, all areas must be prepared, sanded, painted and detailed to a high standard. In show car judging we get into every crevice and quite often half a point will only separate it.

After applying paint the finish will need to be cut and buffed. With the introduction of two pack paint in the 80's most companies claimed buffing was finished. If you want your finish to match existing factory finish peel you can settle for an off the gun finish but if you want a show winning job it will need to be cut and buffed. Most winning custom paint jobs will have colour, possibly graphics or murals, clearcoat, then sanded back, more clearcoat and sanded back with fine paper and buffed and polished.

Top show cars are removing handles, mouldings and rubbers before applying paint. They are also removing engine and mechanical items to paint engine bays and undercarriage. Painting engine bays and undercarriages to a high standard will take your car from a street car to a show car so you must understand the direction this will take you. You will not be able to drive a car with fully detailed undercarriage on the street every day and compete at the level of a show only car.

There are so many exciting new finishes out there today, look around at the bright clean colours and effects including stain and matt finishes that set you out from the crowd. Check out the winning cars and the companies that are supporting your scene at the shows and talk to the personnel on the stands about paint and how to keep that show car shine.

## **2. BODYWORK**

The bodywork of a show car and the quality of finish required are often overlooked when planning and building your project yet it can encompass such a wide range of areas and materials. Materials can include anything from steel and aluminium, to fibreglass, carbon fibre, numerous plastics and rubber.

Areas judged are: main body panels, (guards, doors, bonnet, etc), flares, spoilers, full body kits, bumper bars, moulds and glass, for fitment and condition. For maximum points in body, quality body modifications to the existing sheet metal if applicable will always place you higher than bolt on parts. Quality modifications to the existing shell are often over looked because they are costly and time consuming, meaning that your car could be in the build for lengthy periods of time. But remember that a judge will recognise the time and effort it takes to produce quality modifications.

The amount of work in file finishing a body for paint is almost endless and will take substantial time. Unfortunately there are still only a small number of professionals prepared or capable of delivering you a file finished body, but there is nothing more impressive than a completely file finished metal body. If your show car has been prepared this way make sure you have photos when displaying the vehicle for the judges to inspect.

There are no problems when a small amount (called a skim) of body filler has been used, however when deep dents, or fibreglass panels joined to metal have been finished with excessive filler, problems are inevitable. Fibreglass or plastic panels expand and have different flexibility to metal. This leads to a scenario where cracks and delamination can occur. This is an area where it would be better to look around for suitable body shapes from other car or make you own body panels or custom flares. Hot rodders and street machiners have been customising and making panels from steel for years. Bolt on kits and panels can still work, but you must take the time to trim them and file edges to ensure they fit perfectly. This can take days depending on the quality of the mould the panels came from.

The fit (or gaps) of any ad-on panels, and straightness of the body have to be absolutely right to score high points in body. If the gaps are not even and flat and there are dents or inconsistencies in the panels a low score in body will be received. Even if there is customising it must be done well and finished in all areas to achieve high points.

Condition and fitment of moulding, handles, bumper bars, glass and rubbers are also areas that need to be addressed. Even standard cars can improve in these areas with refitting and adjustment. Once again it is imperative to take as much time as necessary to ensure that any of these parts are fitted and installed perfectly so as to maximise your judging points.

Remember paintwork will never hide poor bodywork.

### 3. INTERIOR

Firstly, we need to define vehicle interior. Too often, interior is mistakenly referred to as trim or upholstery, (two areas that only represent a portion of an interior), although, probably the most important part of an interior. Modern trends, extend much further to areas such as sound systems, DVD's, console modification and fabrication, paint application, fabricated arm rests, moulded floor panels and door handles etc. Upholstery refers to a certain finish using soft materials such as leather, vinyl and fabrics, but can also include interiors that are predominantly steel or aluminium and painted with only two seats and dash to create an interior.

Judges will particularly look for innovation and quality, but can only assess what is presented to be judged. When the scores are close areas the judges take note of are:

- Gaps where two panels meet
- Stitch patterns not lining up where panels meet
- Uneven seams in head linings and seats etc.
- Unnecessary gaps between seats and squabs
- Poor fit of seat upholstery
- Poor fitting carpet or moulded floor panels
- Under dash wiring hanging down where a neat fitting panel would cover this
- Unsightly seat brackets
- Lack of cleaning

The overall concept is possibly the most important area to make a top interior. Although this is a matter of personal taste, if not followed through from beginning in a professional and consistent manner, an interior of less complexity may score higher. Colour can also be a personal taste, but it is worth making several points here. Be aware that a dark interior, especially black is like looking into a dark tunnel. The point here is if you have two identical interiors, one totally black and the other a light colour, (tan or cream), the light colour will show all the fine detail and quality workmanship much better than the black. This may be important when planning and designing your interior.

To summarise, most interiors are made of upholstered seats, panels and carpet. This is where attention to detail is critical, mostly this would have to be completed by a qualified tradesperson to achieve a top score. If this is the case, it is imperative you choose the tradesperson carefully. Tradespeople capable of doing show winning quality work will be proud to show other examples of their work, or you will have noticed their work at previous shows. Discuss and make clear your requirements and reject anything you are not satisfied with, but you need to keep in mind your budget. Finally it needs to be noted that judges will often agonise over the winner with first, second and third often separated by only one or two points. Quite often it will only come down to cleanliness, which can make the difference between winning and minor placing in interior and more importantly overall placing. As with the other areas of your car plan ahead, seek out the right tradespeople and complete interior with quality not quantity for a top score.

#### **4. UNDERCARRIAGE**

Engineering and detailing the undercarriage is a big dilemma for many car owners, as most vehicles are regularly street driven. This can still be achieved, you just have to think it out and plan it. For street driven cars suspension parts can be modified and then powder coated or painted. All paintwork underneath should be two pack (catalyzed with hardener) or powder coated for durability and ease of cleaning. The finish of two packs is also more robust and smooth and therefore easier to remove road grime.

Exhaust systems can be modified making neater joins and tidying up or replacing brackets while off the car. With rear wheel drive cars the diff assembly can be removed, smoothed over and painted which tidies up the undercarriage enormously.

For a show car with limited street use, the undercarriage is what will take you to the next level of competition. The car needs to be stripped bare of all parts, paint, so you can start from scratch. The direction you decide to go is still based on personal taste, money or suitability for your circumstances. One direction is to use existing components and re-engineer the car underneath retaining the original floor pan with the proof cote cleaned off, seams welded, creases smoothed out, painted with two pack. The alternative is to replace with a false floor, smoothing all joins and fitting existing or new modified mechanical components in new recesses in the floor.

You can work with existing floor pan, although there is more work to make it look good, therefore higher points if it is quality workmanship. After the floor is complete the next area is up in the wheel arches. This area is mostly filled with large wheels but the judges will also look closely at this area. The real issue here is the more you do the more you have to do as any area not smoothed and detailed will stand out dramatically.

Like all others area's of the car the undercarriage also needs to be thought out and planned especially with the location of lines, wiring and exhaust system. The more of these items removed or hidden the easier to clean and detail for showing.

When actually building a full on show car with undercarriage detailing the car should be on a spit/roisserie so welding, filling, smoothing and painting can be carried out in a vertical position and not under the car on your back.

The biggest decision you have to make is the amount of street use you have in mind for your car. If you are intending to drive it regularly, then you can tidy up and paint it, but if your intentions are full-on show, then get to work and join the elite.

## 5. ENGINE BAY

For street use you can remove the engine and detail the block, head and parts. This could be by polishing alloy parts or painting with two-pack paint. Most two-pack paints will remain on the surface with good preparation and low film builds of primer and colour. While the engine is out you can clean up inner skirts, rails and firewall and repaint if necessary. Also hide as much wiring and plumbing as possible.

When building a full-on show car there is potential in the engine bay to really stand out. After removing engine, de burr all casting marks on the block, head and parts. Polish, paint and detail all parts. Weld all holes and seams, on the skirts and firewall. After welding, grinding and smoothing of the engine bay, paint and detail under the bonnet and radiator support panel as well. This is extremely time consuming and fiddly work but will separate you from the crowd.

Possibly the most difficult part here is to hide or neatly route all wiring and plumbing as much as possible. It can be run through boxed panels or under the skirts with false panels hiding the wiring or pipes. Several vehicles have moulded fibreglass panels that fit in areas of the engine bay hiding wiring, etc. These panels are more suitable for street use than the full-on show cars.

Other important aspects of an engine bay are the aesthetics of the components used. Remember to look at how the parts appear in an overall aspect and this can be achieved by lining up the fuel lines, heater hoses, breathers and so on. Ensure that parts are aligned correctly or parallel with nice symmetrical curves in pipes and brackets neatly placed etc. Your attention to detail is what will be noticed.



## 6. ENGINEERING/RE-ENGINEERING

These two areas are often confused and with very good reason as it's hard to distinguish between the two especially when this area is often confined to the undercarriage and other hard to see areas that are not visible to the eye. These two areas are judged under the heading of Engineering so a car that has a high amount of engineering will compete on the same level as a car with a high amount of re-engineering.

### ENGINEERING

Examples of work done that would be considered engineering can include the whole car as in a race car or any of the major components of the car that will change the performance of the car, this could include such things as:

- Chassis – any amount of chassis work would be considered engineering.
- Upper and lower control arms ('A' arms) but only if they are manufactured to act differently to the original item. It is worth noting that if the 'A' arms are manufactured but still fit to the original mounting points on the original chassis then this is considered Re-engineering.
- Shortened diff
- Roll cage but only if it is an integral part of the car i.e. Fixed to the main body or chassis and is functional
- Floor pans
- Wheel tubs
- Firewall
- Any major sheet metal work
- Engine swaps that require the manufacturing of components for the fitment of the engine.

### RE-ENGINEERING

This area includes items that are functional but will not affect the overall performance of the car, it is also a hard area to be judged as many of these parts can be "off the shelf" items. It would be advisable for you to include a tech sheet with your car advising of the modifications.

Areas of re-engineering could include such things as:

- New 'A' arms that replace the original items to help enhance the look of the car but not its performance.
- Brackets that hold on items to the body or chassis i.e. Fuel lines, brake lines etc
- Mirrors
- Door handles or the removal of them
- Hinges
- Catch cans
- Locks
- And many more items

The list in this area is endless and can take considerable time, effort and ingenuity on the car builders' part. This is why the two areas of engineering are judged under the banner of engineering as it is felt that just as much work, thought and execution goes into both.

As you can see engineering can cover a whole car as in a racecar or re-engineering of original parts that you really have to judge the car closely to pick up. No matter how much engineering is done it has to be in keeping with the overall concept of the vehicle. Most engineering is different from other areas judged, as it is usually made off the vehicle and fitted after body, paint etc. The exception here is obviously in racecars and hot rods.

A vehicle doesn't have to be highly modified/engineered to score well in engineering as several cars over the years such as Ron Barclay's HQ Ute and more recently Sam Caruana's Bad HJ Holden sedan which are excellent examples of original looks with re-engineering in most areas of rebuild. As with all other areas judged, quality is paramount. Also in engineering practicability and safety are also seriously considered. More is not necessarily better, it must be good quality.

It is also useful to point out modifications that have been done to the vehicle to judges on a tech sheet, as there are so many "off the shelf" parts available today. This will help the Judge recognise all the work done on the vehicle. It could be worth more points if you have had to source material, design and make parts. This is covered with 'work done' and 'degree of difficulty'.

Judges also look for a fresh approach to make something work different or better than original. This is often difficult to achieve with the amount of research and development that goes into new vehicles, but there has been some excellent examples over the years from hot rods, street machines and racecars of what can be done with imagination and ingenuity.

To score well in engineering, plan your project, make sure the modifications you make enhance your vehicle in performance, safety or presentation, and above all ensure the quality of workmanship.

With the high cost and amount of time required to build an Elite show car we have seen the emergence of Street Elite builds where the cars have elite paint, interior and engine bays with tidy but not detailed undercarriage. There are room for both of these categories and anything else you may want to build including tuff street, real street and WOW cars to be noticed.

Judging will always be subjective, you may not agree with every decision but judges are usually experienced people continually building cars in today's conditions and environment that are qualified to make the tough decisions. They should always be available to discuss decisions and give advice to improve or guide your next project. Remember that the difference is usually only a point or two and this may be in the presentation or cleanliness of the vehicle.