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[The Pacific Swim?](#)

David Turney - Saturday, December 12, 2009

We love hearing about people and companies who feel the same way about environmental responsibility as we do.

Recently we learned of The Plastiki, a project designed to raise awareness of the negative impact of post-consumer plastics on the Earth's eco-systems. The central theme of the project is a boat made entirely from recycled PET drink bottles, that will sail from California to Sydney, Australia via the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, a seething mass of post-consumer discarded plastic circling within one of the Pacific Ocean's largest gyres.

You can read about The Plastiki in our previous post [here](#). Incidentally, word out of the US is that the boat is now floating, testing and preparing to set sail for a March 2010 arrival in Australia.

But if you thought sailing across the Pacific in a plastic boat was impressive, then you'll be bowled over by this.

Australian documentary filmmaker Richard Pain is preparing to swim across the Pacific Ocean from Japan to California, 9000km's give or take. Yes, he's swimming. He's going to be swimming behind a boat that'll be towing a protective capsule that'll be in the shape of a PET bottle and made entirely OF PET bottles. His route will take him through the same garbage patch that Plastiki will have visited some time earlier and he'll release the whole trip as a documentary.

His aim is to raise \$1 million to donate to organisations engaged in trying to clean up the garbage patch as well as raise broader community awareness of the issue by doing something crazy and memorable. Well Richard, we think you've nailed it.

Prep time is estimated at 12-18 months and the actual swim set to take around 40 weeks. You can read one of the articles covering the recent launch of the campaign [here](#) (source: SMH)

While both Plastiki and the Pacific Swim (as it's dubbed) are bound to raise awareness about the impact of post-consumer plastic waste on the

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environment, our [Repeat](#) products also aim to change behaviours and attitudes towards plastic recycling in the automotive repair industry. Our scope is narrower, but our message is the same.

In the midst of the debate over climate change and reducing CO2 emissions, it's vital not to ignore the unfolding ecological catastrophe being brought on by discarded and non-recycled plastic waste, one that we can see with our very own eyes.

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[All aboard The Plastiki](#)

David Turney - Wednesday, October 28, 2009

The most amazing and confronting story has just crossed the news desk at Smart Automotive, which has special relevance to our own business. It's a story that must be spread, because it brings to the fore a problem that's serious, undeniable and reversible yet, for some reason, we have little awareness of.

The Plastiki is a 60-foot catamaran, being constructed in a warehouse overlooking San Francisco Bay, to make a journey across the Pacific and - all things to plan - sailing into Sydney Harbour some time during March 2010.

What's so special about that? The Plastiki is made entirely from PET plastic bottles, some recycled and some still in original form lining the frame and hull, for buoyancy. 12,500 bottles alone will line the frame of the boat. It's the brainchild of David de Rothschild (a descendent of the Rothschild banking family) and is designed to highlight the ecological impact of PET plastic waste and raise awareness of the need to act now to arrest the growth of plastic waste, including reusing and recycling. You should check the expedition website by clicking [here](#).

Early into its journey, The Plastiki will set sail across what's known as the eastern pacific garbage patch, which is a mass of post-consumer rubbish in the Pacific Ocean, gathered by natural ocean currents (gyres) and an area at least twice as big as Texas (or New South Wales and Victoria, in Australia, combined). Yes, you read it right; a rubbish patch twice the size of Texas, floating in the ocean. Unimaginable enough, but most confronting is this: it's been discovered recently that the mass of plastic now exceeds that of plankton (the food source for thousands of species' of sea animals and birds) by a ratio of six to one. That's sampled at the edge of the gyre too. Therefore it's theorised that, due to the nature of the gyre, at the centre, the ratio would be much higher. Take a look at this [clip](#) and we dare you not to be affected.

At Smart Automotive, we're very excited by the expedition for two reasons.

Firstly, we share the same passion and similarities in our attitudes for making a positive impact on the environment. On our own patch, we're doing what we can by using and encouraging the use of reusable, sustainable material. Second, the expedition will complete its ocean journey in our hometown and HQ, Sydney Australia (after which the boat will be broken down and recycled again). The boat's due to depart some time during November and we'll be following its journey closely as it heads towards its goals and our home, so visit us (or their site) often to get the latest.

In your line of business, there's a practical need and desire to protect customer cars while they're in your care. It reduces your liabilities and protects your image as an automotive professional. Smart Automotive fulfils this need in an environmentally responsible way and our [Repeat seat protectors](#) break new ground by being manufactured from 100%

recycled PET bottles. When you buy and use Repeat seat protectors for your workshop, business or franchise network then you're also doing your part to reduce the impact of PET plastic waste on the environment.

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[Compare & Save!](#)

David Turney - Wednesday, October 28, 2009

In our line of business, there's a lot of rational processes in making decisions. There are high costs and squeezing margins, so you need to be crystal-clear about what to invest in that'll add value to the experience and satisfaction of your customers via the service that you give them.

To do that you want choices, features and benefits. You also want to get all of the most valuable aspects in as few choices as possible, otherwise you end up spending more time thinking about what to do than actually doing it.

Although using guard and fender covers enhance your business image, also providing promotional value and additional revenue through merchandising, when used in your workshop they're an offset cost. This means that they cost you up front but over time they will save you (potentially, significantly by reducing damage liabilities).

Once you've made the right decision to use them, you need to compare.

Apart from the style, colour and branding options we offer, our [guard and fender covers](#) incorporate all of the required features that are sometimes offered as options by our competitors. That way your choices are down to the exciting stuff like choosing colours and print graphics.

So ask yourself of guard covers, are they made of tough, durable vinyl? Do they have a soft, fleece backing to protect the paintwork? Do they use sand-filled channels to hold them in place instead of magnets that attract metal fragments? Do they have a tool channel on the top of the cover? Do they have a generous overhang to cover as much of the fender on just about any car? Do they have a wheel-arch cutout so the front wheels can still turn and not rub on the cover? Are there cutouts at either end so they can butt up close to the firewall while clearing bonnet hinges, etc? Are they available in a variety of colours? Can they be custom-branded with your business name, logo or visual identity? Are they available in several styles, including single, 3-piece and 4-piece wrap around sets?

Compare our guard covers and sets to Brand X and if you can't answer yes to all of these questions, then [contact us](#) about the save part.

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[A little bit of background on Repeat](#)

David Turney - Sunday, October 18, 2009

We recently launched our new Repeat seat protector, which is made from recycled PET bottles.

Here's the story behind Repeat. It's a longer post, but a really interesting one and worth the read. To check out the Repeat seat protector, [click here](#).

Polyethylene terephthalate – commonly abbreviated to PET – is a thermoplastic polymer resin of the polyester family most commonly associated with food and drink containers.

Interestingly, though, it was initially developed as a material from which cloth (polyester, dacron and terylene) was produced and most of the world's PET production still is for synthetic fibres (more than 60 per cent: think polar fleece, carpeting, sails and space blankets as well as for various industrial uses) with bottle production accounting for around 30 per cent of global demand.

PET was patented in 1941 by British chemists John Whinfield and James Dickson of the Calico Printers' Association of Manchester and the PET bottle was patented in 1973.

While most thermoplastics can, in principle, be recycled, PET bottle recycling is more practical than many other plastic applications. The primary reason is that plastic carbonated soft drink bottles and water bottles are almost exclusively PET, which makes them more easily identifiable in a recycle stream.

Recycling PET bottles saves 84 per cent of the energy it takes to make new bottles from raw PET, however according to a spokesman for a Sydney recycling centre, less than 10 per cent of PET bottles produced are actually recycled.

Given one PET bottle equals one PET bottle, theoretically, if every bottle was recycled, there would be no need to create new PET. That being said, the reality is the discrepancy between bottles produced and bottles returned.

The other issue is one of clarity. Over time, with multiple processing, the transparency is affected: in other words, the recycled bottles aren't as clear. That can be an issue for food and beverage presentation in particular. Also, if a manufacturer wants a coloured bottle, they need a percentage of virgin material to keep the colour true.

Although PET production is an important segment of polymer

production, it should not be confused with polyethylene (PE) or polypropylene (PP), which are both produced more throughout the world. PE is widely used, especially in the production of the plastic shopping bag while the fatigue-resistant and recyclable PP has a variety of uses including packaging, textiles, stationary, plastic parts, lab equipment and parts for automobiles.

Aside from Repeattm, Smart Automotive also uses non-woven polypropylene (NWPP) for its products. It is actually called non-woven polypropylene because the cross-hatched 'pattern' on the material is stamped on to make it look woven.

While the term 'environmentally friendly' implies that PET and polypropylene leaves no ecological footprint, that's not entirely true. Obviously they are manufactured using fossil fuels and so contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. However, they contribute to waste reduction (because they're recyclable) and the movement away from one-use products, which means the ecological impact is smaller than that of similar alternatives.

Check out our [Repeat seat protector](#) and make an enquiry today.

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[Smart, branded parts bags make your brand more memorable](#)

David Turney - Friday, October 16, 2009

Are you in the auto parts business?

Every time you interact with a customer, you want them to remember who you are (were). That increases the chance of repeat business, and gets you in their phone directory. You want them to think "hey, those guys helped me out with that last time" as well as thinking "their professionalism really impressed me; I'll call them again". In short, you want to be remembered.

That's not rocket-science either.

When a customer orders parts from you for a job, what do you deliver them in? Maybe an old box that you were supplied some parts or products in (with your suppliers brand name on it, or worse still your suppliers supplier). You might have a bunch of plastic bags that you stuff the parts into, that get screwed up and chucked in the bin soon as they're received.

Then there's your retail counter. What do you do for bags there? Do you, again, have a disposable plastic bag that just about snaps under the strain of the parts in them?

Do you really think these kinds of bags accurately reflect your brand and make you memorable?

Smart Automotive manufactures, to order, an almost limitless line of [bags](#) that do a thousand times better job of projecting your image and extending your promotion.

Colours, styles, branding are all flexible, giving you complete control of how your brand is represented. It's a lot more professional than delivering parts in an old box or a single-use plastic bag. They don't just end up chucked in the bin either, which means they can keep on working and promoting your brand.

Now, just picture your driver turning up to your customer with a neat, custom-branded, reusable bag. Or handing your high-value retail customer their parts in custom-branded, foldaway bag that can be reused and stored neatly away. Looks good doesn't it, and keeps promoting your business long after the delivery. [Get in touch](#) with us and find out how we can help make that vision a reality.

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[Auto repair can be clean AND green](#)

David Turney - Monday, October 12, 2009

We've been at the Great Race, the Bathurst 1000, where we launched our latest product to the media. Apart from being an iconic event on the international motor racing stage, the move by V8 Supercars to E85 Ethanol fuel (made from the molasses by-product of sugar refining) provided the perfect angle from which to launch our new Repeat seat protector, which is made from recycled PET. Both Repeat and E85 reset benchmarks, being conceived to have the most minimal impact on the environment through both their manufacture and use.

Here's an extract from the media release; at the end is a link to the product page on our website, so don't forget to check them out.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, OCTOBER 8, 2009

If you thought there was no way the automotive repair business could be eco-friendly, think again.

Like the move by V8 Supercars to a cleaner, greener fuel, Smart Automotive has moved to create a cleaner, greener product range for those working in the mechanical and smash repair industry.

Smart Automotive is launching Repeat, a fabric made from recycled PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate), for its latest range of seat protectors which technicians can use to protect their customers' car seats during

service, repair and maintenance.

A Repeat seat protector will last for about six months of repeat use, depending on wear and tear, but the good news is that once its working life is over, it can be dropped into the nearest PET recycling bin ready for the next reincarnation.

Each seat protector starts out as four 600ml PET bottles (or equivalent) which are chopped, washed, ground, melted and reformulated to become 100 per cent PET flakes. Those flakes are then extruded and textured into yarn which is woven into fabric.

At this point, this process is carried out in Taiwan and the US, with manufacturing of the fabric done in China. The fabric is then bought by Smart Automotive's partner in China, which puts it through a special sealing process to ensure the products are non-soluble and repellent before creating the seat protectors to Smart Automotive's design.

While seat protectors are currently the only Repeat products in Smart Automotive's range, they will soon be joined by steering wheel protectors and similar coverings for the gear and handbrake lever, so technicians using the product know they are keeping their clients' cars clean during servicing, and being environmentally responsible at the same time."

For more information, an e-brochure and to get a quote on our Repeat seat protectors, visit the [product catalogue](#).

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Don't sit on your innovation hands

David Turney - Tuesday, September 15, 2009

Was riding with a friend just this weekend in his new BMW M3 coupe.

Very sweet car indeed. Nimble, mid-size chassis. All alloy 4 liter V8 with 420 horsepower and a six-speed manual (the way it was intended). Zero to 100 in 4.5 seconds, give or take. Apart from the bonnet bulge and the dinner-plate brake discs, it's not too ostentatious.

What makes the M even more sweet is that a standard 3 series coupe (on which the M3 is based) is had with either a 4 or 6 and is as quiet and safe as your grandparents need it to be.

As we're winding up in this exceptional piece of automotive engineering, I couldn't help but reveal to my friend that this sweet piece of German 4-wheeled fun

owed a thank you note to a distant, unlikely relative, the Pontiac GTO.

See, back in the early sixties, the then chief of Pontiac (John Z. DeLorean) hypothesised the concept of putting their big car engines into their mid-size model range, thus creating the muscle car category. The first muscle car was the 1964 Pontiac GTO and the wider Pontiac brand became a lightning rod for driving excitement.

The M3 is the exact same concept (though granted, far more technologically evolved); take the mid-size body, remove the grocery-getting engine and put in the bigger, more powerful one from the range. Instant power to weight equals instant length of smile.

Pontiac died not long ago, and while there were plenty of business factors that forced this, the brand had been on life support for years before. It'd lost its value and its distinctive positioning, one that had been accelerated (pun intended) years before by dropping a mountain motor in a mid-size. This was an innovation that shifted the direction of an entire industry and Pontiac, for a long time owned it. Unfortunately, they failed to keep it up and they let the competition catch up and ultimately overtake them.

Here at Smart Automotive, we're always looking at innovations and we're set to release a new product that takes the concept of recycled protection in a whole new direction.

In the meantime though, our current products are innovative in design and available now, so check them out in our [catalogue](#) and see how our solutions can help your own competitive distinction as an automotive professional.

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[Rally Australia, Smart Automotive and Protecting the Environment](#)

David Turney - Thursday, September 03, 2009

Rally Australia (round 10 of the WRC) kicks off later this afternoon (EST) after several years absence, this time around the Northern Rivers

region of NSW. WRC followers will know how strategically vital Rally Australia is for outright championship contenders, while at the same time throwing the wild-card of a completely new event at those drivers.

Rallying is a spectacular & engaging motorsport. Drivers in the FIA World Rally Championship must rate as the best in the world. They not only possess lightning fast reaction times and nerves of steel but also race on vastly different surfaces, most of them not designed to driven at 180kph + and sideways. The WRC is watched, reportedly, by audience numbers second to only Formula 1. In their home countries, drivers are revered as gods and are used to sell everything from the brand they drive to breath mints. Despite that, at any given rally the fan access is amazing. Drivers and teams - while being under timed pressure for the entire rally - happily mingle with their fan base, chatting and signing autographs. There's little elitism, just the love of their motorsport leveled across the spectrum.

Like most motorsport though, rallying has opponents, and they usually come from an environmental perspective. Rallying attracts particular criticism from detractors by its format; timed runs on public roads, following the curves, rises, falls and unique scenery of the landscape. In Australia at least, rallying is highly controlled and environmental impacts (if any) are analysed forensically. The 2009 Rally Australia boasts to be the most environmentally rally ever staged anywhere and backs that up with a suite of reports (all but one downloadable from their website) covering every aspect from flora and fauna, to noise and dust management. That's right, dust management. How many rallies have a dust management plan? Australia's does; 50-pages worth.

A small news piece I saw on ABC yesterday reported on and presented both sides of the argument. One interviewee against the rally (happening to be a local councillor) openly questioned why an "extreme" car race is OK where four-wheel drives aren't allowed to access. It's hardly fair to draw comparisons between the potential for an uncontrolled, disrespecting rogue element, crushing swathes through national park forests and a controlled, analysed and heavily regulated week-long event running on existing, closed (for the event), council-maintained public roads that already exist.

Whatever your opinion (and I'm pretty sure you know ours), every possible safeguard has been put in place to ensure that Rally Australia runs to satisfy environmental impact concerns, while putting Australia back on the international rallying stage. It will run on its environmental credentials and the point is, whatever you do, you need to stand on your own beliefs about what's right to balance needs with impact and as much as possible, tip the balance.

At Smart Automotive, we do just that. Like Rallying, we are fulfilling a need while making sure that the environmental impact is minimised.

Our patented, reusable, recyclable [Smartcover](#) is a case in point (as are our other [products](#) made from NWPP). By using custom-

branded [Smartcovers](#) to cover and protect your customers seats, you're not only projecting a strong, professional image, you're also helping to reduce the impact of automotive waste on the environment.

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Hot products, but not that hot!

David Turney - Wednesday, September 02, 2009

Been quiet in the blogosphere last month for Smart Automotive; we're busy working on some great new products & promotions that we'll announce soon.

Bit of excitement at the Smart Automotive offices today though, which I thought I'd share with you. We think our products are pretty hot and are the best thing for covering & protecting your customers' cars, but even we have to concede that there wasn't much we could do for this poor guy. Take a look at the picture....

Right out the window, in a carpark right at the base of our offices, a Ford Cougar decided to spontaneously combust. It went from a small lick to this in about 2 minutes (as you'd expect) with a thick column of black smoke billowing skyward and all the smells of burning car plastics going with it.

Even more spectacular were the fireworks of exploding electrics and the loud pops of sealed parts, glass popping and pipes exploding with the heat (some loud enough to shake the windows). This shot was taken right before the fire truck arrived on the scene and about 5 minutes into the Cougars demise, when the heat had turned the previously rolled up windows into rivers of glass. One fire fighter, getting in close with the hose, got a faceshield full of white firecracker when something under the dash exploded with a loud bang. Undeterred, they got the fire out real quick and what was once clearly someone's pride and joy (as any surviving Ford Cougar in Australia probably would be) was burned to a well-done crisp.

Later reports in the day revealed that the owner had pulled up right in that spot and become instantly aware of electrics burning. When they saw a lick of flame come up from under the bonnet, they and passenger swiftly egressed (hence the doors still swung open) and could only stand by and watch helplessly as their Cougar went up in flames.

So sure, it was exciting to watch at the time, but when I went down there later and saw that car still smoldering away, sitting on its rims and all filled with water and foam, I had only a small part of the sinking feeling the owner must've had.

Smart Automotive can cover and protect anyone's pride & joy in most ways, but this was definitely one situation where even we couldn't.

(Thanks to Paul Ridoutt at Smart Web Marketing for the pic)

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Where the cars are the stars

David Turney - Thursday, August 06, 2009

At Smart Automotive, we're real and love cars, which means we also love a good car movie.

It's a bit of a bygone era and genre of moviemaking, where the cars truly were the stars.

Muscle Cars running across country, usually on some kind of imposed deadline or task to be done (mostly illegal, but not always), or in the various stages of chase with law enforcement. There's always a fair bit of automotive carnage involved and due to the era, they're automotive gold. That usually draws a tear from any true car nut.

Then there's the movies where the cars are support cast. They carry the story and without it (or them) the story would've been empty.

There was little commercial reasoning for their casting and product placement was scarce. It was a time when cars (and particular brands or models) and people connected. Cars reflected the era and whatever the movie style, it was the cars that brought the story to life. Most of them have definitely contributed to the value of those cars on today's collectible market as well.

Funnily, I was reminded of this disappearing idea when I threw Quentin Tarantino's Death Proof in the DVD player for some automotive R&R. That movie, while paying genuine homage to car chase movies, was made in 2007. I got to thinking about my favourite car movies. I'd never say they're the best; that's way too contentious. But they're definitely up there and they're all in my collection. Any self-respecting car nut should have at least a couple of these in their collection too and we'd love you to tell us what you'd add to the list.

Thunder Road (1958) - lots of tyre noise on dirt roads but hey, that's show biz. Bullitt (1968) - 67 Mustang versus 68 Charger. Mustang wins. The Italian Job (1969) - Mini lover or not, this is some getaway. 1971 was a big year for the road movie. You have Duel - you'll never pass a truck again, Vanishing Point - 70 Challenger R/T. Mmmm, and Two-lane Blacktop (1971) - a personal favourite. 70 GTO and 55 Chevy.

Moved on through the years then to American Graffiti (1973) - American 50's & 60's, car heaven, Dirty Mary, Crazy Larry (1974) - more Chrysler action, with a surprise guest Chevy Impala sedan and Gone in 60 Seconds (1974) - the classic chase, maybe the greatest. Eleanor as a 73 Mach 1 Mustang and 93 cars in all die. An honorable mention to Smokey & The Bandit (1977) belongs here too, because that movie must've sold a ton of 77 Pontiac Trans Ams (with matching vanity plates).

The Blues Brothers (1980) go on a mission from God and wreck some cars and Cannonball Run (1983) brings a world car field to race across the US 'from sea to shining sea'. Christine (1983) stands alone as a car movie, because below the evil relationship between a car and her guy is the idea all car nuts want to believe (males any rate); all cars are girls and they are alive.

What's your favourite car movie?

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Smart Automotive is a proudly Australian owned & operated part of Smart Group Enterprises founded in 2003. We provide protective solutions that add to your brand & your customers' experience, improving customer retention & your bottom line.