

Way before KZIBIT pipped out rides, cars and music have long gone together. With the right combination of glass windows, uppositioned seats, well-positioned speakers and a killer sound system, every car owner has their own personal listening room.

While we certainly love the purr of a finely tuned engine, we can't imagine going out for a spin without turning up some big tunes.

YOU MIGHT BE STUCK IN DEADLY BUMPER-TO-BUMPER RUSH HOUR TRAFFIC, OR CRUISING WILD AND FREE ON AN EMPTY HIGHWAY, BUT REGARDLESS OF HOW EITHER MAKE YOU FEEL, YOU CAN ALWAYS RELY ON A FRESH BEAT TO TAKE YOU OUT OF YOUR HEAD TO ANOTHER LEVEL. BUT WHAT IS IT ABOUT LISTENING INSIDE THE CAR THAT MAKES IT SOUND SO GOOD?

It's an insider fact that any producer or musician worth their salt will crank their tunes in a car stereo as a litmus test before going to press. Kid Koala, Canadian icon and legendary turntablist told us that the last thing he does before he finishes mastering a track is play it in the car because "that's where it sounds best! There's even a recording studio in Montreal that has turned a car into a listening room. You burn your CD and they have it wired out to a car in the parking lot to give you an idea of what your record will feel and sound like inside. They went that far because they know that's where a lot of people listen to music!"

In fact, record companies like RCA, Capital and Columbia knew this so well that back in the '70s, they held an opinion poll that determined that most record buyers were driving beat up cars with at least one blown speaker. The findings greatly altered the way music was engineered. Here on after, music was made specifically to cater to that audience so that no critical aspects would be lost in the playback.

Even DJ Premier, career maker for rappers like Jay-Z, Mos Def and Jeru The Damaja, has been known to test out his tunes in a pimped out Mack truck cab, and techno godfather Carl Craig wrote one of his seminal electro-tech albums "Landeruising" as an ode to his many long trips cruising down the I-96 west of Detroit heading home from warehouse parties.

Tony Bongiovi is a sound engineering guru, founder of Power Station Studios where he produced legends like Gloria Gaynor and The Ramones early albums. "There's no reason why you can't have the same sound environment

in your car [as in the studio]. As a producer, I'm only interested in the little subtleties that I put in, and I want it as good as it can so everyone can enjoy what was originally intended - a high quality version of the song that the artist wanted for the audience" he explained.

His current business is producing a Scion stereo upgrade option, the Bongiovi Acoustics Digital Power Station™, a small box that bumps up your car stereo to give you exactly that studio sound. "Our job is to get the entry-level systems to sound as good as they can. It's a combination of mixing the car acoustics with the playback system be it over the air broadcast, satellite, FM or a handheld playback device. I wanted to bring a really cool sound for that car that not only represented what the car was capable of, but also that sporty youthful environment."

John Alexion creator of the SubPac, a device that actually emits bass frequencies through a sort of massage pad has been talking to auto builders about packaging it along with specialty cars to fit into standard sedan and bucket seats. Perhaps he has the most technical answer:

"When you go to the club and the sound is hollow and muddled, it's because of a lack of fabric treatment; sound bounces everywhere. But in the car, you have a combination of a tight area with the right 'treatment' that absorbs sound and prevents sound waves from bouncing around. Further, you are in this enclosed area with a proper surround sound experience. In many ways, the car is the ideal 'room' for listening to music, and thus allows for a much richer sound experience."

Whether you want to really think about the specifics, or just embrace the simple pleasures in life, you can rest assured, your car stereo will always be by your side.

DID YOU KNOW?

Mobile telephones were first introduced inside cars in 1950, but they were parked a year later for obvious reasons. The frequent needs skipping caused by unpredictable road conditions. Drivers were left at the mercy of the AM/FM radio unit. B-tracks came along, replaced by cassette, CD, and now the invaluable mp3 and satellite radio.

WORDS JESSE SHIP ILLUSTRATION SHINGO SHIMIZU