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## AUTOS: "Car Warriors" Ultimate Speed Shop

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Imagine if there was an automotive haven the likes of Willie Wonka's wondrous Chocolate Factory. Could there ever be an equivalent to the chocolate river? Or a package of gum that also doubles as a three-course meal?

While character Charlie Bucket's storybook ending is largely the work of a creative imagination, the "ultimate" speed shop is very much a reality. It's the basis of a technologically advanced and fully equipped set for the new SPEED television enthusiast series, *Car Warriors* (premieres Feb. 23; 9 p.m. ET), to utilize as its theater of battle.

It has to be. The show's premise gives two eight-member build teams just 72 hours to take a primed classic vehicle, then plan, design, deconstruct, prepare, paint, wire, tune, etc... and create a custom vehicle that would please even the industry's most-recognized and accomplished custom-car experts.

Namely, the expert show judges are "Mad Mike" Martin (Galpin Auto Sports electronics guru and star of *Pimp My Ride*), So-Cal Speed Shop's Jimmy Shine (star of *Hard Shine*) and legendary Hollywood car builder, George Barris, "King of the Kustomizers,"

That jury of three will determine each episode which automotive work of art will be deemed the winner.

"It's just a candy store for guys," said Peter Barndt, *Car Warriors* associate producer and lead parts buyer, said of the fully stocked shop. "What we built was one of the dream speed shops of all times. It's actually quite large and has anything you could imagine; transmissions, engines, specialty kits, machinery, etc.

"If you want to change the way the door swings, instead of a conventional door, you could go to suicide doors, Lambo doors or split hoods," Barndt said. "Everything is in there; you just have to look for it. The stereo equipment is state of the art, as with the tires and wheels."

But it didn't start out that way. A mere three months ago, a parking lot full of television and movie cars was all that existed.

"It started out as a blank lot with a bunch of cars on it," said Andy Berg, *Car Warriors* production manager. "It's a full mechanic's garage with a lot of lifts, so we took out everything, we re-paved the parking lot and put up a 100x100-foot tent – it's high up (like 100 feet) and it feels like a city. Inside the tent, we built one big mechanic's shop on steroids.

"In the back of the tent there's an entire parts cage," Berg added. "It has everything you might need from wrenches, tools and all that kind of stuff. On either end, there are two, large, high-end paint booths. And these booths are all digital, very detailed in how you work it."

The set is on location at Picture Car Warehouse, an expansive part of the Los Angeles Center Studios. Ted Moser, who owns the company, has been in the automotive business for more than 18 years, supplying vehicles for such recent movies as *XXX*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, *Rush Hour 3*, *Bucket List*, *Grindhouse*, *Taxi* and *2 Fast 2 Furious*, where a whopping \$7 million budget was used to build 188 cars.

"They have beautiful Porsches, muscle cars, ambulances and SUVs. Everything you could imagine," Berg said. "Some of them are just regular cars, but others are these "souped-up" crazy vehicles. It's a perfect match because we have resources here we wouldn't have if we were just in a studio or on a sound stage.

"Here we have people who know everything in the world about cars and movie cars. They have been consulting along the way, guiding us, providing background information back and forth." How would one go about building a speed shop like this? The first order of business was breaking down the set into different sections, such as tools, custom build machines and standard garage operations. The list quickly added up.

"It was 15 to 20 pages of things we finally accumulated before actually putting the order in," Barndt said. "In here, we have everything you could imagine from the ultimate car lifts you would need to build custom cars, milling machines, lathes, box brakes, state-of-the-art tire changers – our tire changers will handle rims that are 24 inches across. Most places don't have a tire changer like that.

"The biggest challenge was to not get overwhelmed," Barndt added. "You're looking at this giant mountain. You have to go in and say, 'Okay, we're going to take this one step at a time.' If you look at the entire mountain – it's daunting. So you know it's there, but you kind of just look at it, put one foot in front of the other, start, and work your way up the hill. To get this project started, it was a staggering amount of equipment and parts that had to be brought in."

While a specific number of parts were not referenced, the total ordering process is expected to yield thousands of pieces when the 10 episodes are finalized. Once the universal build applications were put in place, the five-person buying crew went about securing the after-market parts that could be used to individually customize each of the vehicles.

"Each car is an individual, so you have to break it down per car," Barndt said. "You can't do a generic list. What I did was make a cheat sheet of every possible part for every car. For each individual car, you go down that checklist and decide what I'd like to put into that car. Looking at differentials, transmissions, engines or fuel lines... and things like, 'Are (the teams) going to fuel-cell it? Wheel-tub it? Are (the teams) going to bag it? Are (the teams) going to lift it? What types of body kits?' All body kits are different for the style of car. It's quite an undertaking for each one."

While fireworks are expected as cranky, sleep-deprived Type A personalities go into the 60th hour of a project that often takes up to 12 months to complete under normal circumstances, this advanced speed shop also has multiple audience appeals.

"When I watch this episode, I wanted to be educated about cars," Berg said. "There's a host and a reporter. The reporter is constantly going over, asking what they are doing, explaining what they are doing, while the host is standing up there telling everyone what the next process is going to be.

"When you're done, it's not just taking two cars and building them, the audience is going to learn a lot."

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