



We all need to get from point A to point B. Whether it is a commute to and from work, or from the airport to the hotel, the *where* does not matter nearly as much as the *how*. In many urban centers, underground train networks are an efficient way to get people where they need to. San Francisco's Bay Area Rapid Transit, as well as Hong Kong's Mass Transit Railway are key examples of this. Buses are another excellent means of transportation. In most places around the world, both inter- and intra- city buses service the masses. In the United States, the Greyhound bus system augments transportation needs to great effect.

While public transportation options are functional, they are not glamorous. Furthermore, there are times where there is no means of getting to a destination by way of public transport. It is on these occasions where a car is simply required. In Puerto Rico, where public transportation options are nonexistent outside of San Juan, automobiles are the first and only option to get to most destinations. Sure, cars involve fuel economy, insurance, maintenance and so on, but sometimes you have no choice but to make it work.

Practicalities aside, there is a certain romantic mystique involving cars. From the quintessential road trip narrative, à la *Thelma and Louise* and *Easy Rider*, to drag racing muscle cars, automobiles are a key long-time aspect of American culture. For nearly a century, the United States' largest vehicle manufacturers, known as the 'Big Three', reigned supreme.



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Dodge CHRYSLER

Image: A vintage ad for the 1970 Dodge Challenger (Source: [GrayflannelSuit](#))

Comprised of General Motors (GM), Ford Motor Company, and Chrysler, these automotive giants are responsible for the proliferation and popularity that vehicle culture still experiences to this day. Through the successful marketing of horsepower, the muscle cars of the 1960 and 70s made owning a car 'cool'.

While indeed a brilliant campaign 50 years ago, it failed to take into account the rising cost of oil and the greater public interest in green technology.

When The Organization of Oil Exporting Countries decided to embargo the United States in 1973, the American public began to realize that their 'cool' cars were less than efficient in the face of oil rationing. [At that time](#), the average mileage per gallon (MPG) of a vehicle was 11.9. While the Big Three tried to maintain their 87% market share via a series of hasty adaptations, they failed to do so with lasting effect.

It was during this era when American consumers [began to look outward](#) for their vehicle purchases, most notably to Japan. Compared to the abysmal fuel economy of American-made cars, the 1977 Honda Civic's 40 MPG blew the competition out of the water. Less than a decade later, the Japanese Big Three, Toyota, Nissan and Honda, had surpassed the production levels of their American counterparts.

As it stands, the 'Big Three' are now Toyota, GM and Honda. In 2008, Toyota overtook General Motors in both sales and production to become the largest company of its kind in the world. Chrysler was also replaced, with Honda taking over its position that same year.



Image: A car park with Mount Fuji in the background - Kawaguchiko, Japan (Source: [Jordan Steinberg](#))

Every year, it becomes clear that American car makers are no longer the **behemoths they once were**. While Japanese producers are raking in ever-larger sums of money, the American Big Three had to be bailed out of bankruptcy in 2009. In 2014, Toyota sold 10.23 million units worldwide, while GM managed 9.92 in the same time frame. That said, money does not tell the whole story.

While enterprising start-ups — i.e. Tesla — have tried to bridge the gap, the traditional Big Three have never been able to truly compete. Issues of massive importance, such as the improvement of fuel economy, the embrace of alternative fuel sources, the increase in safety standards, and the heightening of manufacturing reliability, which Japanese automakers addressed early, have caused American vehicle manufacturers to lag. For instance, while Toyota launched its first hybrid vehicle in 1997, Ford did so four years later, and only

due to their joint-development agreement with Mazda. It took GM until 2010 to finally enter the competition with the Chevrolet Volt.

Regardless of which country a car is from, it is important not to believe that a vehicle is infallible. A car [can be a lemon](#), or the owner could just have bad luck. Either way, it is imperative to remain both prepared and vigilant. To that end, [car warranties](#) can provide peace of mind when making a car purchase.

While East Asian brands, such as Kia, Mitsubishi and Nissan are known for their [factory warranties](#), Western brands are no slouches either, with GMC and Buick leading the charge. Should an at-purchase warranty not be initially in the cards, an aftermarket version becomes appealing, our partners at [Endurance Warranty](#) would be a wise place to start research on the matter.