Modified: Cars, Culture and Event Mechanics

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Dedication

I dedicate this work to my parents, Robert and Jenny Fuller, for allowing me to make my own mistakes. I have made plenty of mistakes but this has allowed me to find my own challenges in the world. They supported me through every challenge and without their support this work would not be possible.

My brother and sister, Paul and Clare Fuller, have supported me with a critical strength that only siblings know and helped me cope with being away from my family. Every time I returned home, I felt like I was returning home.

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Glen Robert Fuller
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Abstract

This is an investigation of the enthusiasm, scenes and cultural industry of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia, based on fieldwork research with an online-based car club – where I participated as an enthusiast – and archival research of 30 years of enthusiast magazines and other texts. I develop a post-Kantian event-based conception of enthusiasm by drawing on the previous scholarship on modified-car culture read through post-structuralist theories of the ‘event’ and ‘affect’. The oeuvre of Gilles Deleuze is a key theoretical influence on this work, which also draws on the historical method and philosophy of Michel Foucault, the practical social theory of Pierre Bourdieu, and develops Theodor Adorno’s work on the cultural industry by examining its biopolitical dimension.

Enthusiasm is often thought of as a charismatic relation between the enthusiast subject and the enthusiast object modified cars. But here, enthusiasm is understood as the event of a multiplicity of affects that exists on transversal scales from the personal to the scene and beyond. I argue that the charismatic relation of enthusiasm is a reduction that enables the enthusiasm of a given scene to become a resource for cultural industries servicing that scene.

The event of enthusiasm is defined by the affects that circulate across bodies and which are actualised in the capacities of enthusiasts, the objects engaged with, and practices performed. The scene is defined by the character of the cultural events which populate it and the enthusiasts who participate in the events. The cultural events include cruising, working on cars, racing, showing, and consuming or participating in the
enthusiast media. I draw on my fieldwork to examine the affective composition of some of these events. Transformations to the cultural identity of scenes and enthusiasms correlate with broader social changes exemplified by the processes of globalisation. The event of enthusiasm is repeated in different ways that make connections between the scales of the subjectively experienced affects of cultural events to the global-level transformations of the automotive industry and scene.

The cultural industries and social institutions enable the enthusiasm by investing in the infrastructure of the scene and facilitating the existence of cultural events through sponsorship or practical support. Archival research on enthusiast magazines allows me to map the transformations to the composition of power relations (dispositif) between the state (governmental regulatory bodies), social institutions (online and offline car clubs, and federations), enthusiast cultural industries (magazines, event promoters, and later importers) and different populations of enthusiasts (from interested public to highly skilled and devoted enthusiasts). The periods roughly delineated include the militancy of street rodding era (the 1970s), the spectacle of street machining era (1980s through to the present), and the immanent online-sociality of the import era (mid-1990s through to the present). The power relations of the three eras of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia are contrasted and I argue that the current dominant set of relations involve spectacular cultural events.

In the context of 1980s street machining, I examine the way ‘elite’ level vehicles built by highly skilled enthusiasts following spectacular ‘head turning’ styles of modification are used by event promoters and magazines to collectively individuate a population of the interested
public. The ‘head turner’ is a singularity that organises the social spaces of the street and car shows and the discursive space of magazines. I argue that the emergent synergistic relation between magazines and event promoters is organised around the capacity of ‘head turners’ to mediate relations between different populations of enthusiasts so that enthusiasm is reduced to a charismatic relation and cultural events become spectacular.
Introduction

"The mechanic is part of the machine, not only as a mechanic, but also when he ceases to be one." (Deleuze and Guattari 1986: 81)

In this dissertation, I set out to investigate the enthusiasm, scenes and cultural industry of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia. The purpose of this study is to ascertain the character and function of ‘enthusiasm’ in the scenes of modified-car culture. The dissertation is based on fieldwork research with an online-based car club – where I participated as an ‘enthusiast’ – and archival research of the last 34 years of enthusiast magazines and other texts. It offers a new critical investigation of enthusiasm in popular culture that has not to date been investigated in this way. This research examines the way enthusiasm is an event of affective relations that exists on transversal scales from the personal to the scene and beyond. I shall argue that the dominant charismatic relation of enthusiasm is a reduction that enables the enthusiasm of a given scene to become a resource for the enthusiast cultural industry servicing that scene.

The limited amount of scholarly work on modified-car culture is often framed in terms of the expression of identity and creativity, and more generally the positive way participation in the culture can present participants with the opportunity for meaning in their lives.¹ In the most

¹ In my review of the current literature on modified-car culture I could only find less than four dozen scholarly works and not all of which are useful for this study. Compared to other domains of popular culture, such as music studies, this is a very limited field for such a large and vibrant culture that has at least a 50 year history.
recent research that engages with modified-car culture in Australia, Mandy Thomas and Melissa Butcher (2003) write:

For some groups of young people (and while predominately male, there are some women also involved in the art of car modification and cruising), the car is the site of symbolic power, giving them a source of status, self-worth and peer acceptance as well as pride and excitement. (142)

With assistance of a 21-year-old informant, Hiba, they write about traveling to various sites of sociality, mostly beach side strips, and engaging with the young people who congregate there. Their work was part of a much broader research project, called GENERATE, looking at the creativity of youth, and in particular migrant youth. Absent from their otherwise excellent account of the goings on in part of the Sydney modified car scene is a sense of history that could locate their observations.

Australian modified-car culture has a rich history dating back to at least the early 1960s. My focus is the ‘contemporary’ period beginning in 1973 through to the present. Starting in the third chapter I shall outline an account of the emergence of the contemporary scene of Australian modified-car culture. The history constructed is far from complete, but it is useful for contextualising existing and future research. My interest at the start of my research project, however, was not in producing such a history. Instead, I was intent on producing a cultural geography of the contemporary scene in Sydney and most of my early research work was directed to this end. I knew different populations of enthusiasts were interested in different dimensions of modified-car culture. After six
interviews with enthusiasts and halfway through my fieldwork, I had not discovered much about the scene, and what I discovered of substance I already knew. Essentially, such an undertaking is far too large for a single research project, particularly in an area where the historical dimensions were relatively unknown.

Part of my work is also outlining the specificity of the Australian modified-car culture, which is why I begin my historical analysis in 1973 as the complete institutional split in the ranks of hot rodding between the drag racers and the street rodders is uniquely Australian. Modified-car culture is defined by the practices, sociality and enthusiasm of mostly young men interested in the modification of production automobile. It has a long history with origins located in the regional practices of youth in Southern California of the period between the World Wars. In an essay for an art exhibition catalogue, ‘hot rod historian’ Pat Ganahl argues that in the 1930s the enthusiasts called their cars ‘gow jobs’ or ‘hop ups’ and the “term ‘hot rod’ did not come into common use until after World War 2, and then primarily as a pejorative by the newspapers” (2000: 13). Besides modification, the principle activities of these early enthusiasts were organised around street racing and salt lake racing. Gene Balsley (1950) wrote the first scholarly work on modified-car culture during this era, and focused on the hierarchies of status amongst those on the ‘street’ leading up to the non-street driven salt lake race cars. The authority in the scene was the Southern California Timing Association (SCTA). It worked with various clubs to organise salt lake racing events.

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2 This was complicated by my casual employment as a freelance writer for enthusiast magazines as I discuss in the final chapter.
The enthusiasts belonging to the first wave of a mass organised scene in the post-World War 2 era are known as ‘hot rodders’. ‘Hot rodding’ is not just a cultural practice of individuals involving modified cars. It is also an organised cultural industry, mainly consisting of enthusiast magazines, but also some ‘B-grade’ films, and an institutional apparatus; both of which serviced, controlled, and exploited this enthusiasm for hot rodding. Ganahl writes, “hot rodding exploded as a full-on teenage craze, with the older rodders setting companies to make parts to feed it” (14). This was the origin of the companies that constitute the large US-based Specialty Equipment Manufacturers Association (SEMA). Similar in part to Balsley’s analysis, Theodor Goldberg (1969) engaged with the street-based practice of ‘cruising’ and described it as a ‘teenage institution’, and most of the ‘teenage craze’ that Ganahl notes was organised around this street-based dimension of the hot rodding scene.

Ganahl notes there was a shift that involved the advent of “competitive car shows and organized drag racing” (14). Bert Moorhouse’s (1986; 1991) excellent work on the history of hot rodding traces one dimension of this shift through the emergence of an organised scene around the competitive motorsport of drag racing. His focus is the development of drag racing and the infrastructures of enthusiasm. Tom Wolfe (1999) in his famous essay, “The Kandy-Kolored, Tangerine-Flaked, Streamline, Baby” briefly outlines some aspects of the other show-based dimension in a slightly later period of the late-1950s and early-1960s with the emergence of custom car culture. There were a number of sanctioning bodies of hot rodding, but the main authority in the US was (and remains) the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA). The NHRA is the governing body of drag racing in the US. Part of the reason for its authority, as argued by Moorhouse, is the connection it has to Hot Rod magazine. Hot Rod was
the first and most successful of the enthusiast magazines. Traditional hot rods were to return in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the emergence of ‘street rodding’. Custom car culture was reborn in the 1970s as the primarily Chicano subculture of ‘low-riding’ (Holtz 1975; Chavoya 2004).

Moorhouse’s work is excellent for shifting the focus away from a perspective primarily concerned with the cars or the enthusiast perspective, and instead examined the way enthusiasm itself functioned. As I outline in chapter one, enthusiasm extends beyond the subjective experience of enthusiast relations and the existence of these relations requires the infrastructure of the scene. In some regards, Moorhouse’s notion of ‘enthusiasm’ is similar to the notion of a ‘scene’ used in popular music and subcultural studies. I develop a post-Kantian event-based conception of enthusiasm by drawing on the previous scholarship on modified-car culture read through post-structuralist theories. The event of enthusiasm is defined by the affects that circulate across bodies and which are actualised in the capacities of enthusiasts, the objects engaged with, and practices performed.

The scene is defined by the character of the cultural events which populate it and the character of enthusiasts who participate in the events. The cultural events include cruising, working on cars, racing, showing, and consuming or participating in the enthusiast media. I draw on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze to examine the way the event of enthusiasm is differentially repeated through the cultural events of the scene. There are different ways of using Deleuze’s solo work or that co-authored with Felix Guattari. Although I take into account nearly all his works, I have found the period of his oeuvre originally published the late-1960s and early-1970s to be the most productive in thinking about events.
In the first chapter I engage with Deleuze’s concepts of ‘affect’ and the ‘event’ to work towards developing the concept of enthusiasm as an event.

Gregory J. Seigworth (2006) has recently argued that Deleuze’s work as it is used in Cultural Studies may be productively rethought in the context of Raymond Williams’ work on ‘experience’. Seigworth seeks to resuscitate, as did Deleuze, a sense of experience that is always thought with experiment. He writes, “The goal is, as it had once been, to open up the concept of experience affectively to the (more-than-human) being of the sensate world, not allowing it to lodge only within the interpretative powers of a being’s knowing sensibility” (109). The argument developed in this dissertation shares this goal: to explore enthusiasm not simply as the subjectively experienced relation with a particular object, but as an event through which the movement of affect gives the combination of subject and object (and much besides) a contingent consistency. Part of the problem of my interviews is that the enthusiasts had very little sense of history, but they also were reluctant to interrogate their own enthusiasm. Hence, I shifted away from the subjective dimension of enthusiasm and addressed it in the context of the scene. The relation between enthusiasm and the scene is crucial. I shall argue that the scene

3 Part of this problem was obviously the way I structured questions with the expectation enthusiasts would have historical knowledge and a critical relation to their enthusiasm; I was mostly mistaken. One exception, given the code name ‘Accordboy’, proved that not all enthusiasts were like this, and perhaps I should have continued with my interviews. By the time I had carried out enough archival work to feel competent asking questions about the scene it was literally too late as I was well advanced into my research project. I did however manage to organise an interview with, Geoff Paradise, the inaugural editor of Street Machine magazine, which proved very informative. Now I have a much better sense of who I would need to interview to expand on the research presented here.
constitutes the infrastructure of cultural events (‘sensate world’) through which the event of enthusiasm is differentially repeated (‘experience/experiment’), and changes in the composition of the infrastructure changed the dominant sense of purpose around which an enthusiasm is organised.

The scene of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia exists in three largely distinct periods. The periods roughly delineated include the militancy of street rodding era (the 1970s), the spectacle of street machining era (1980s through to the present), and the immanent online-sociality and globalisation of the import era (mid-1990s through to the present). At various moments there are crises within the culture as changes to the scene affected the way enthusiasts experienced their enthusiasm.

1) In the street rodding era the introduction of governmental rules that could have had the potential to restrict the building of modified cars forced the enthusiast social institutions to work with the State to ensure the future of the scene.

2) In the street machining era, the rise of large or spectacular cultural events and a focus on ‘elite’-level cars produced a new semi-professionalism in the scene, but this was at the expense of the amateur sociality developed during the strong club and federation structure of street rodding.

3) In the final era that saw the rise of the imports, the introduction of ‘import’ and ‘hi-tech’ performance technologies challenged the dominance of the ‘traditional’ V8-engine-based enthuasisms of street machining and street rodding.
The contemporary scene is defined by the tensions that emerged in these periods of crisis. There is an anxiety around the legality of modifications and the capacity of police to ‘defect’ modified cars. The focus by the cultural industry on the often unattainable ‘elite’-level cars, often referred to as ‘show ponies’ or ‘trailer queens’ (because they are not ‘street’ driven), transforms the average enthusiasts from being a participant in the scene to a consumer.

Lastly, there is a tension, now less acute, between different enthusiast populations who organise their enthusiasm around different automotive technologies. There is also a cultural politics of valorisation immanent to the affects of enthusiasm expressed in cultural events and changes to the infrastructure of the larger event of the scene. The automotive technologies are ‘performance’ technologies. As technologies they are defined by their efficiency in tests of effectiveness, but as the tests of effectiveness are cultural the technologies have a social efficacy. The mixture of efficiency and efficacy is given coherence by the affects of enthusiasm for which ever enthusiasm or enthusiasms the social institutions and culture industry organises around.

Enthusiasm, scenes and valorisation are three ways to address, describe and engage with the pre-personal event of enthusiasm distributed by the singularities of the enthusiast body (habitus), the infrastructural capacities and power relations of the scene (dispositif), and the efficacy of affectively valorised performance technologies (haecceities). To map the changes to the enthusiasm through contemporary modified-car culture in Australia is to follow the individuations that do not constitute a person, but the “individuality of an event: a life, a season, a wind, a battle, five o’clock in the morning...” (Deleuze 2006: 351). The habitus,
the dispositif and the haecceity are separate concepts that in different ways are useful conceptual tools for articulating the individuation of the event of enthusiasm.

To introduce these elements, and modified-car culture more generally, I shall now recount my participation in a cultural event early in my fieldwork.

**Defects**

As I was moving to Sydney to carry out this research, joining a club was the only way for me to become part of a social milieu proper to the scene. If I had grown up in Sydney, then I would have possibly belonged to a locality-based social milieu. Similarly, if I had stayed in my home city of Perth then I would not have had to go through this process of becoming part of the scene (again) as I already belonged to a car club and had several friends from other areas. It was not until near the end of my research did I realise that this process of becoming part of a social milieu of the scene was actually an important part of my research project. It certainly was not the way I thought about my research when I started carrying it out.

The type of car club I joined would be largely determined by the type of car I bought. The dominant contemporary mode of organisation of enthusiast car clubs is through online forums. The decision to get the ED XR6 was as much a decision about the forums as about the car itself. Even the older car clubs and federations (discussed from chapter three) have their own respective online presences. I was already a member of a
few Australia-wide forums such as Performance Forums and the Fast Fours forum. I had also been actively involved in the SilviaWA forum when I owned a Silvia, and knew some eastern states-based members. I joined a few others when arriving in Sydney to get a feel for what sorts of groups did what activities. These included BoostCruising, Hot4s Forums (linked to Hot4s magazine), SilviaNSW, ToyMods, Ford Forums, and FordMods.

My relationship to all this is slightly complicated as I was often hired by the Australian Consolidated Press (ACP) as a freelance writer during my final undergraduate year of university study in 2002 and then again when I first shifted to Sydney in 2003 and later again in 2006. My articles were published in Street Machine, Street Machine presents Street Commodores and the now defunct 2DMax magazine. The complicating factor is that the relationship between the magazines and the scene is largely mediated through the freelancer. As I shall describe in later chapters, a freelancer belongs to a scene and writes about the scene for a magazine (or multiple magazines). In the circuit of content from the scene to the magazine on one side is the readership but on the other side is the freelancer. The freelancer reduces the multiplicity of the scene into a form that fits with the image of the magazine. The magazine circulates a certain image of the scene, and most media studies work has been concerned with deciphering the multiplicity of ways the readers (or audience) use this image. My concern has been with tracing the other side of the circuit and understanding how the freelancer interacts with and selects from the heterogeneous elements in the scene.4 As a freelancer I was exposed to certain parts of the scene that I

4 When in Perth I would bring stories to Street Machine, but I largely wrote up stories on cars that already had been photographed by professional photographers. I later realised that I was being used, with a photographer with whom I was later teamed, to break the monopolistic
would not otherwise have had access to, such as speaking with many owners and modifiers of ‘elite’-level ‘head turners’. Although this was not a formal part of my research project, and it was not cleared by the university ethics protocol committee, it certainly affected the way I thought about the scene.

One of the online forums I joined to help facilitate research was the Fast Fours Forums. The forums are run by Fast Fours magazine. Fast Fours caters for enthusiasts of four-cylinder and late model ‘performance’ cars and has been published since the early 1990s. I discuss the ‘Fast Fours’ movement within street machining in Chapter Seven in the context of modified-car culture and globalisation. In early 2004, forum member named “BOMB_ASS” posted a request for modified cars to participate in a car show. The original post is reproduced below as close as possible to the original format and layout:

****MODIFIED CARS NEEDED *******

It’s that time of year again and the Fairfield City Council “Bring it On - Youth Festival” is on again. Sunday 4th April 2004 @ Fairfield Showground (where Small Car Sunday is held)

As per last year, I am helping out with the car exhibition section of the festival and seeking expressions of interest to display your modified vehicle.

stranglehold that a single motoring journalist had over the Perth scene. When I wrote for 2DMax magazine I was emailed the photos of cars and I would speak to the owners and builders across a number of conversations for an hour or more on the phone. I was a writer-based augmentation for whoever found the story; that is, the role of the freelancer was distributed across photographer, writer, and field editor. In this way, no matter how good my writing, I was a bad freelancer because for the purposes of the magazine I did not properly belong to a scene that the magazine serviced.
There will also be music, food, entertainment, info sessions etc etc on the day as well as 'Levi' from Aust Idol performing live.

Last years festival saw over 4000 people attend in 1 day. Last years winner of the car exhibition was the Black TT Supra "MPRESV" owned by the girlfriend of a f4s forum member. 
As part of this years program we are trying to focus on responsible ownership and driving of vehicles which will hopefully also include workshops providing legal advice on vehicle modification. As well as information from police who are also supporting the festival. The Police [Subaru WRX] STI is also expected to be in attendance. Last years event went off without a hitch and this years is looking to be even bigger.
There is no charge to have your vehicle displayed on the day and prizes will be awarded through peoples choice voting system.
I will proved entry form details asap pending on interest/suitability.
Cheers.

The original call for modified cars was posted on February 16, 2004. As my online avatar, Dr_Hoon, I posted a reply to the thread on March 06, 2004. It read:

I am keen to do this! I am buying my new car this week, it is an ED XR6 with a few minor mods. Is it suitable? Different styling/genre of car to others... I will send you PM.

_________________

And on we raced, hurling watchdogs against doorsteps, curling them under our burning tires like collars under a flatiron. Death, domesticated, met me at every turn... Marinetti
The Marinetti quote was my ‘signature’ which is a portion of text or image that is inserted below every post. I had also worked on an avatar image which would accompany my name on every posting.

I was perhaps a little too excited about getting my new car. Not only had I been without a car for just over one year, it also meant that I could begin my fieldwork properly. I had chosen a car that would allow me to participate in the activities that belonged to a certain part of the modified-car scene in Sydney. The car I was buying was an ED XR6 Ford Falcon. It was a special ‘performance’ model of Ford Australia’s top-selling Falcon model. The ‘ED’ referenced the model which was made between 1993 and 1994. Bomb_Ass replied to my posting with:

PM answered 😊 It better be modded! 😊

Bomb_Ass and I exchanged ‘PM’ or ‘private messages’, which eventually lead to him emailing me an entry form. I signed up and looked forward to ‘debuting’ my new car at a car show. My fieldwork ethics protocol approval from my university’s ethics committee. I thought I would have problems with the issue of street racing or cruising due to the recent ‘hoon’ moral panics and introduction of ‘anti-hoon’ laws (Fuller 2007). Instead the ethics committee only wanted to see a draft of my ‘call for participants’ that I intended to post to various online forums.

When I arrived at the event I found two lines of cars parked in such a way as to be facing each other. There was some rain falling during the day and some sections of the grounds were muddy. The ‘show’ area was underneath a long metal roof that covered a concrete base and luckily
kept the displayed cars dry. I parked on the very end of the line of cars closest to where I entered this area. The other end of the display area opened to the rest of the festival's space, including a modest stage for music performances and award presentations, several stalls for information and food, another much smaller stage and DJ set-up for the break-dancing competition, and a skateboard half-pipe. I was therefore parked away from the 'action' end of the rest of the youth festival. The line of cars I happened to park along were mostly older-style 'street machine' vehicles of highly modified cars originally manufactured in the 1970s. I shall discuss the emergence of the 'street machining scene' in the third through to the sixth chapters. Street machining is the dominant scene within modified-car culture in Australia.

Facing the 'street machines' was a line of more recent 'imports', and although this division was not absolute (one Holden Commodore with air suspension was on the 'import' side) it was very noticeable. There is a generational and ethnic divide between the scenes – 'street machining' and 'import' – expressed in the respective styles of vehicles and modifications. Part of the reason for the division at the festival may have been more as a result of the older 'street machining' enthusiasts all belonging to the same club and arriving at the same time, than an explicit ethnic divisions. The other 'import owners' were not organised in the same way; like me, most having come after hearing about the event through the Fast Fours Forum.

To further complicate this relation the suburban area in which the youth festival was hosted had a large second generation migrant youth population and this was reflected in the awards handed out on the day. All the awards were "people's choice" which means that the public
attending the event voted on their favourite car. The winner on the day was a BMW painted orange with large, highly polished ‘chrome’ mag wheels. Most of those voting were not enthusiasts, and most enthusiasts that I spoke to on the day were very impressed by a Datsun 1600 that had an engine swap to a later model Nissan SR20DET. The enthusiasts judged the car in terms of the evident skill of the owner/builder expressed through the ‘build quality’ of the Datsun. The ‘people’ seemed to vote for the award more according to the visual impact of the BMW in question. It was much more of an impressive and flashy vehicle and parked in a prominent position close to the action of the festival. In the sixth chapter I shall discuss how a charismatic enthusiasm for ‘head turning’ spectacles is used as a resource in the culture industry of modified-car culture.

Interestingly, even though the Datsun was owned by a younger enthusiast, because of the car’s 1970s vintage and the evident ‘skill of the build’ it largely transcended divisions within modified-car culture expressed in the line up of vehicles across generational and ethnic lines. I shall discuss the emergence of the discourse that valorised the ‘skill’ of modifiers and the ‘quality’ of the build in the third chapter on ‘street rodding’.

At one point the two main groups had a ‘rev off’. The owner of a loud Mazda RX7 with a rotary engine was showing off his vehicle to a couple of young women that seemed to have taken an interest. He started the car up and revved the engine loudly. The young women were suitably impressed by the rotary engine’s throaty roar. I think they may have walked off (with the RX7 owner in tow) to view some of the other action at the festival. A few minutes later the owner of a Nissan 200SX started up his vehicle and starting revving the engine. At this point all the ‘street machiners’ seemed to have conspired with each other to start up their
large V8-engined cars at once, which they did, and then rev them very loudly. The barely-muffed sound of the heavily ‘worked’ V8 motors was deafening. The ‘street machiners’ were all grinning in a very satisfied manner. The ‘import’ owners did not rev their engines again. In the final chapter I shall engage with the cultural politics that emerges across the scene with the ‘rise of the imports’ in the mid- to late-1990s.

As part of the car show and youth festival being a local community initiative, there was an information evening before the event with an accredited automotive engineer and a police liaison officer. Below is the email that circulated to participants:

Subject: Car & Bike Exhibition Registration/Workshop

Registration night will be Monday 29th MARCH 7pm - 9pm @ BONNYRIGG YOUTH HALL (top of B’rigg Plaza Carpark)

Engineer will do a presentation on legal modifications etc.
We are hoping to involve Police & Road Safety Officer in this workshop (currently negotiateing), however there will be a second workshop (that will not be a rego night - date TBC)

The engineer in question, John Varetimidis, was regularly quoted in Street Machine magazine as part of the magazine’s “Expression Session” segment. “Expression Session” was a regular section of the magazine that featured artist drawings an often fantastic and imaginary modified car. The side-bar next the drawn images featured text that covered the major areas of vehicle design according to the Australian Design Rules, such as lighting, braking, interior, engine emissions, and so on. Varetimidis would
interpret the design brief presented in the form of the artist's imaginary modified car and comment on the legality, safety and often the reality of the modification from an automotive engineering perspective.

I attended the information evening with about a dozen other participants. I brought along recording equipment (a Sony Minidisc recorder) to record the talk presented by Varetimidis. It was a very informal affair where we all sat around in a circle in an open area of a multi-purpose community centre. Unfortunately, my first blunder during this part of the research was to not check the sound levels of the recording. In the end I recorded much background noise. As soon as I got home, however, I checked the recording and I quickly wrote down notes regarding what had transpired.

Much of Varetimidis’s talk, and especially the less structured discussion with attendees, revolved around communicating, without directly expressing it, the nature of the regime of registration and defect notices handed out by police as being more than an expression of the technical dimension of automotive technologies. Varetimidis knew, as did most of the older enthusiasts in attendance, that defect notices are not so much a technological defect of the car, but a mode of control based on the technical dimension. Defect notices mark the car and owner as socially defective.

In the April 1994 issue of Fast Fours & Rotaries magazine the editor Todd Hallenbeck wrote a damning editorial of the methods of Sydney police. The first wave of ‘hoon’ moral panics had just started and the police invited the mass media along to a ‘crackdown’ at a popular cruising
location where the police used vehicle defects as a social engineering tool:

Do you know that the police can defect any vehicle without reason? This, in effect, gives the police the power to harass us at will. We have no recourse short of accepting a wrongly issued defect or fighting it out in a costly legal battle.

Now, thanks to unprofessional methods used by the hierarchy police, we cast perhaps the worst public image modified car owners have ever cast to the extreme extent that anyone driving a modified car is presumed to be a menace to society. We are not a menace. We are plain and simply [sic] car enthusiasts who take an active part in what we drive. (Hallenbeck 1994: 5)

I was lucky enough not to receive a defect while carrying out fieldwork even though my car was certainly too loud. There are perhaps some obvious reasons for this, I am older and my car is not popular amongst ‘youth’ (i.e. it is not an ‘import’), but these obvious reasons coalesce with more sinister possible reasons including racial and ethnic profiling. As an Anglo-Australian driving what is ostensibly a car belonging to Anglo-Australian-dominated car enthusiast culture, I was ‘safe’. I did observe, from the safety of the car park, a spontaneous ‘defect station’ set up near the Krispe-Kremes doughnut franchise in the Sydney suburb of Liverpool. Such defect stations are a common sight at popular cruising/hang-out locations.

Beyond the socio-technical defects in modified-car culture are my research defects. Instead of participating in the event of the car show and understanding the ‘action’ of the car show as a cultural event that is
part of the larger event of the scene of modified-car culture in Sydney, I engaged with the event as a potentially constituent element of my research. Of course, ethnographic researchers have to do both to a certain extent – participate and research – but I was largely oblivious to gaining a participatory appreciation of the event beyond my capacity as a doctoral research student.

Much to my embarrassment I actually brought along a card table upon which to display a selection of quasi-scholarly enthusiast texts that covered the history and imagery of various eras of modified-car culture. I thought it might be a good prop to trigger conversation. I literally folded my research practice into the event of the car show by producing a quasi-scholarly space amongst all the cars. In doing so, I carried out the worst kind of ethnographic practice. At the minimum, I should have known that in such situations the cars serve as props or mediators of sociality, so that by having a conversation about the car, the enthusiasts have a conversation with each other. They didn’t talk about the books. The effect must have been somewhat bewildering for the actual car show participants because I had a car at the show on display and yet I was walking around talking about the research project I was doing. It removed all objective pretence from the concept of ‘participant observation’ by eliding the distinction between my research practices and the practices of enthusiasts (or at least enthusiasts not doing research). In retrospect it is very easy to say that I should have approached the car show event in terms of wanting to participate in what I knew would be a small-scale car show to get some sense of the dynamics of the event. The sort of questions that would have been my explicit focus would have been: What do participants do for the seven or more hours they were at the show? How do different groups
(enthusiasts/interested public, different enthusiast groups, etc) interact? What was the demographic composition of the ‘public’ in attendance? Who organised the event? What was their goal? What did enthusiasts think of the event? How did they carry themselves during the event?

I knew that whenever I ‘went into the field’ I would not be cultivating the event of my own research project on contemporary modified-car culture in Australia. Rather, I would be participating in the event of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia and most of my research work would involve tracing the large and small events of which I would be part, and then mapping these events back through the archive to understand their conditions of emergence. To put it bluntly, the car show fieldwork event forced me to appreciate my own potential failures just as I was beginning the engaged part of my research. Between researcher and enthusiast there was little middle ground, and I had to be attentive to my enthusiasm while at the same time learn how to unlearn it so to become a researcher. As an enthusiast, I became an undercover researcher. I had to learn not so much how to do the right thing or carry out research free from error, but use the contingencies of the field to position me in relation to my research endeavours; essentially, my own experience as a researcher was an experiment.

**Structure of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is structured into eight chapters. Chapters 1 and 2 introduce the concept of enthusiasm. Chapter 1 engages with the affective relations and event of enthusiasm by drawing on the fieldwork example of an organised ‘cruise’. Chapter 2 extends this engagement by outlining the serial nature of the problematic event of enthusiasm in the context of fieldwork examples and the practical knowledge of socio-
technical ‘know how’ of technology and a social ‘know how’ of the scene. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 introduce and then engage with the historically shifting composition of the scene. Chapter 3 introduces the ‘scene’ as another dimension of the event of enthusiasm and begins the historical analysis of contemporary modified-car culture with the militant culture and institutions of the 1970s era of ‘street rodding’. Chapter 4 builds on the notion of the scene and examines the 1980s era of ‘street machining’ through the spectacular transformations of the scene by following the ‘professionalising’ trajectory of cultural entrepreneur Chic Henry in the creation of the Summernats car show as an emergent synergy in the cultural industry. Chapter 5 shifts the analysis again by exploring the role of automotive technologies in the belonging to the 1980s ‘street machining’ scene and the spectacular ‘pro-street’ style of modification. Chapter 6 returns to the notion of enthusiasm to engage with the way enthusiasm is reduced to a charismatic relation and used as a resource by synergies in the cultural industry. Chapter 7 returns to the history of the culture and analysis of the scene. It follows the ‘fast fours’ movement away from ‘street machining’ as a way to track the emergence of ‘import culture’ and frames the emergence of new techniques of modification. Chapter 8 examines the politics of valorisation in the contemporary scene and most recent shift to modified-car culture with the increasing efficacy of online-based sociality in relation of this sociality to the existing spectacular synergies between the cultural industry and the scene. The conclusion surveys the broader cultural context of enthusiasm and the ways the cultural industry invests in scenes to cultivate enthusiasm as a material and cultural resource.
Chapter 1 Events of Enthusiasm

The enthusiasm experienced by modified-car enthusiasts defines modified-car culture as a culture. The experience of enthusiasm is, in part, constituted by what enthusiasts are enthusiastic ‘about’: modified cars. Enthusiasts would agree that they are in fact enthusiastic about modified cars. Commentators from the enthusiast cultural industry would agree that, yes, enthusiasts ‘love’ or ‘admire’ modified cars, or, if I use the sexualised discourse of the cultural industry, modified cars make enthusiasts ‘hard’. This is possibly the least problematic way to represent and define modified-car culture, and discussing the enthusiasm of enthusiasts almost borders on the tautological. As enthusiasm is so central to modified-car culture, however, I shall problematise a number of the key assumptions that, on a superficial level, seem perfectly reasonable regarding the nature of enthusiasm and the relations between enthusiasts and the objects of enthusiasm.

A sophisticated definition of enthusiasm needs to account not only for the way enthusiasm is manifest as a relation between enthusiasts and the objects of their enthusiasm, but also in terms of the emergence of enthusiasm itself as a certain kind of relation or set of relations. An enthusiast gets enthusiastic about something, but not all enthusiasts are enthusiastic about the same things. When two enthusiasts have a common enthusiasm for the same thing or set of things, however, they share certain elements of their enthusiasm with each other. This gives enthusiasm a unique property. Enthusiasm is subjectively experienced, but to the extent that the enthusiasm can have a shared, common dimension, there is an impersonal relation between the objects of enthusiasm and enthusiasts. This seems to be a paradox. How can there
be an impersonal dimension to something which is so subjective? The simple answer is that even though enthusiasm is commonly thought of as the subjective experience of a set of relations, these relations do not belong to the subjects or objects of the given relation. Instead, I shall argue that the relations belong to the events within which the subjects and objects are arrayed. Within modified-car culture enthusiasm is constituted by the affective relations manifest within cultural events of certain practices that are integral to the culture, such as cruising, modifying, talking/hanging out, racing, policing, etc. In short, the affects that define an enthusiasm as a shared, subjectively experienced, but impersonal set of relations belong to the events and the scene of the enthusiasm. In terms of the perspective developed here, the enthusiasm does not belong to enthusiasts; rather, the cars and enthusiasts belong to an enthusiasm.

My use of the term ‘enthusiasm’ was originally influenced by the work of Bert Moorhouse (1986; 1991). Moorhouse researched the post-War activity of US-based hot rodding and emergence of the organised motorsport of drag racing. Instead of replicating the assumed and dominant charismatic enthusiast relation by focusing on the objects of enthusiasm, his excellent work opens up new ways of looking at enthusiast cultures by focusing on the infrastructures and practices that pertain to the enthusiasm. As Moorhouse discovered, the infrastructure of the hot rod enthusiasm includes the magazines, in particular Hot Rod magazine, and the social institutions of the organised associations, such as the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA; the governing body of drag racing in the US). Moorhouse called this the Hot Rod economy. By concentrating on the infrastructure of the (generic) scene of US hot rodding, Moorhouse shifted the analysis from the symbolic semiotics of
subcultural formations (Hall and Jefferson 1976; Willis 1978; Hebdige 1979; Clarke 1981; Stratton 1997) to the practical conditions of the emergence of a scene.

Although Moorhouse’s work is excellent to the extent that he produces new ways of understanding enthusiasm, he avoids engaging with the notion of affect. ‘Affect’, briefly defined, is a complex notion referring to the tendential capacity of a body in the world, and which is related to, but not the same as, emotion or feeling. There is an autonomy of affect that escapes the embodied confines of a body by colouring the relations between bodies. The closest Moorhouse comes to explicitly discussing the affective or closely related embodied dimension of enthusiasm is during a discussion of women in drag racing in a short section of his book concerned with gender and masculinity. He writes that the “male [drag racing] drivers often suggested they had a particularly driven attachment to the sport [of drag racing]. They often explained the impact of hot rodding in terms akin to a love affair, terms like ‘fever’ or ‘fascination’ were often used” (1991: 187-188).

The affective dimension of enthusiasm needs to be better understood than these brief comments mapped according to the heteronormative template of object ‘love’.

Closer to my approach is the work of Paul Hodkinson on the contemporary British Goth scene and his concept of ‘(sub)cultural substance’. Hodkinson argues that the Goth scene is not characterised by “fleeting, ephemeral amalgams of young people music and style.”

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5 Moorhouse is collapsing distinctions between the modified-car culture of hot rodding and the closely related motorsport of drag racing. In the US context this may not be so much of a problem, but in Australia as I shall show in Chapter 3, it is important to understand the distinction between the two.
rather there is a “level of cultural substance” (orig ital. 2002: 7). He then defines four qualities of this ‘(sub)cultural substance’ (30-31). First, the Goth scene has a consistent distinctiveness with a relatively clear set of ideals and tastes. Second, participants in the scene share feelings of identity with one another and are involved in a distinct cultural grouping. Third, commitment:

Depending upon the nature of the group in question, subcultures are liable to account for considerable portion of the free time, friendship patterns, shopping routes, collections of commodities, going-out habits and even internet use. (31)

Lastly, the ‘(sub)cultural substance’ is defined by a level of autonomy dependent on a “complex infrastructure of events, consumer goods and communications, all of which [are] thoroughly implicated in the media and commerce” (32).

The position developed in this dissertation is largely in agreement with the conceptual methodology of Paul Hodkinson’s analysis of the Goth scene, in particular his emphasis on the singular importance of cultural events for the functioning of the subculture. He argues that events are “the most important practical aspect of the Goth scene for individual participants and, probably for the overall facilitation of their subculture” (107). I shall return to the importance of cultural events below in terms of enthusiasm and in the third chapter where I shall engage with the concept of the scene for it is through the cultural events of the scene that enthusiasm is affirmed.
The principal difference between our respective approaches is that from my perspective, in modified-car culture a scene can have more than one enthusiasm, and the distinction between enthusiasms is not a case of vertical hierarchies of distinction or taste, but horizontal distributions of affect. We appear to differ on the question of affect and this should probably be understood more as a question of scholarly accent than methodology. Hodkinson is certainly attentive to the affective dimension of the Goth subculture; for example, he states that rituals of shopping and preparing to go out “were driven ultimately by the excitement and anticipation of displaying the finished result to others in the public space of a Goth event” (ital. added, 92). The modulation of affect before an event (in preparation) and after (through story telling, exchange of photos, etc.) is a very important part of the social activity of enthusiasts.

The way Hodkinson defines ‘commitment’ (quoted above) is illustrative of the difference of the position I shall develop. He defines ‘commitment’ in terms of the extensive involvement of a subcultural participant in the scene and the portion of the participant’s time, sociality, and consumption. My concern is with the intensive involvement of enthusiasts in the scene. Indeed, the notion of affect has largely been neglected in the study of subcultures, scenes and other similar cultural formations, such as fan cultures. From a symbolic interactionist perspective Gary Fine and Sheryl Kleinman argue that

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6 Perhaps because of the relative coherency of the Goth scene – its ‘distinctive consistency’ of ‘identity’ – is reflected in the ‘shared feeling’ of identity a concept of enthusiasm is not necessary in Hodkinson’s analysis. In modified-car culture, as I shall explore in later chapters, a scene is often defined by the shared feeling of different identities and senses of purpose.

7 The only engagement with the work of Fine and Kleinman that I have found in the literature on subcultures or fan cultures can be found in
Sociologists who study subculture tend to ignore the affective components of social life. Hence, analyses of subculture are often limited to ‘substantive’ features, such as values, norms, behaviors, and artifacts. (1979: 13)

Hodkinson’s definition of ‘commitment’ clearly fits Fine and Kleinman’s assessment of studies of subculture that focus on the ‘substantive’ features of an ‘extensive’ commitment. However, even though Fine and Kleinman draw attention to the fact there is a dearth of material on affect within subcultural studies and related fields, they have a far too simplistic conception of affect. Affect is discussed under the rubric of “self-identification” (Fine and Kleinman 1979: 12-14). Fine and Kleinman are arguing against a culturally determined self, defining culture as “not a blueprint for socialization; instead, culture usage consists of chosen behaviours” (12). Affect here figures as the measure of either ‘centrality’ or ‘salience’ of the identification chosen by individuals in the dialectical play of subculture and identification as symbolic complexes.  

The intensity of social relations is very important, and can be read in terms of identification, but I prefer to focus on the affective dimension of participating in cultural events and the scene – the ‘happening’ of the social – rather than social identification per se. Enthusiasm is set of

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Nicholas Abercrombie and Brian Longhurst on Audiences. However, they mostly summarise Fine and Kleinman’s position without teasing out the ramifications of a more sophisticated account of enthusiasm in terms of affect (1998: 134-137)

8 ‘Centrality’ refers to the degree of commitment to the population segment and ‘salience’ refers to the frequency of identification. Fine and Kleinman’s discussion of affect is congruent with Kantian ‘enthusiasm’ discussed later in this chapter. It is a product of a choice or decision interiorised and then expressed in a given set of behaviours.
subjectively experienced relations that are often mistaken for being a purely subjective phenomenon; enthusiasm is social, not because of identity but because it necessarily demands the proximity of other (human or non-human) bodies. An ‘enthusiast’ is characterised by the affects or capacities for action that must be felt as much as ‘read’. The fieldwork examples discussed in this chapter, however, allow me to begin outlining a more sophisticated account of the affective dimension of enthusiasm.

In chapter six I focus on the assumed enthusiast relation (between enthusiasts and cars) and the way this relation is used by the enthusiast culture industry. I shall discuss it in terms of a neo-Weberian conception of charisma. I do not begin with this obvious charismatic relation of enthusiasm because the participants in the scene of modified-car culture have a lived experience of enthusiasm that involves many relations other than the charismatic relation between subjects and objects. The reduction of enthusiasm to only being a charismatic relation is an effect of the power relations formed between the cultural industry and the scene of modified-car culture. The role of the enthusiast culture industry relates to the problem of event scale and the role of the ‘scene’ as a constituent element of enthusiasm. The existence of relations of enthusiasm relies on the infrastructural capacity of the scene, and it includes far more than cars and enthusiasts. Indeed, over the next several chapters I shall problematise enthusiasm on a number of levels: the event of enthusiasm in this chapter, the shifting capacities of action in relation to the embodied experiential knowledge of ‘know how’ in the next chapter, and then a sustained discussion of the contemporary scene of modified-car culture over a number of chapters in order to understand
the infrastructural dimension that in part constitutes the relations of enthusiasm between enthusiasts and their cars.

As I stated in the introduction, my fieldwork involved participating in the cultural events of the scene as part of the scene. My own body served as an affective barometer of the action of such events. In a similar fashion to the way Clifton Evers (2004) has engaged with the masculine body as a site of constantly changing and continuous affective states in the context of surfing, the enthusiast body is a site of constantly shifting and continuous affective changes. My interest is in the relation between affect and the capacity for action to modulate cultural events. The dominant enthusiast relation is tempered with much more subtle affective inflections of what is ‘happening’ as part of the ‘happening’. I shall discuss the event of an organised cruise, and specifically two occurrences that happened as part of this cultural event. Both of these occurrences involve complex relations between affects that belong to events of different scales. Firstly, I shall begin outlining some of the myriad affective relations that constitute enthusiasm as a complex of affects (such as interest, shame, excitement, joy, fear, anxiety, and so on) and affective relations between various elements and practices beyond a focus on the modified car itself.

Secondly, I shall develop this notion of enthusiasm at the end of the chapter by outlining the problem for thinking about enthusiasm across different conceptions of affect, and the event of enthusiasm on different scales. The purpose of the fieldwork examples is not to simply produce an inventory of affects for a given event, but to engage with the dynamic relations between masculine automobilised bodies, their relations to
technologies of automobility, and the events which in part consist of the performative expression of them.

**Bathurst Cruise**

Part of my fieldwork involved becoming part of the scene of modified-car culture in Sydney through buying a car and joining up with other enthusiasts. The event I shall discuss occurred on my first cruise with the Fordmods.com online car club. Very briefly, Fordmods.com is a website and forum that allows those interested in the modification of automobiles manufactured by Ford to meet online and to organise events to meet offline. The most common car owned by Fordmods.com members is the Australian-built Ford Falcon. The car I owned, my cultural identity, and my enthusiasm for and knowledge of modified cars meant that I belonged in a general cultural sense to this group. ‘Belonging’ demands having shared experiences together and participating in events; such was the nature of my intended fieldwork I participated as an enthusiast. This cruise was meant to be out to a seafood restaurant beyond the Blue Mountains in Outer Western Sydney. Eventually, after dining at the restaurant for lunch, most members of the cruise agreed to continue to the famous racetrack at Mt Panorama in the town of Bathurst.

The meet-up location was the McDonald’s restaurant on the M4 Freeway in the Western Sydney suburb of Eastern Creek. The M4 Freeway is the

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9 I shall discuss the historical location of Fordmods.com with other online-based social institutions in more detail in the final chapter on the current composition of the scene of contemporary modified-car culture.
11 All names and identifying characteristics, beyond the forum name and car types, have been changed.
main arterial road that connected the suburbs of Western Sydney and beyond to the city and inner-ring of suburbs.\textsuperscript{12} The McDonald’s restaurant once was an infamous location for the site of meet-ups for organised illegal drag racing and is a relatively well-known location in the modified-car culture scene in Sydney.\textsuperscript{13} The cruise had been organised online through the ‘Events’ section of the forum. I was very excited because I was driving my new car: a 1994 Ford Falcon ED XR6. Plus I was finally getting out into the field and doing proper participatory fieldwork. One of my supervisors had leant me her car when she had been away from Sydney. I had gone out to the Krispe Kremes takeaway doughnut shop in the southwestern suburb of Liverpool. I knew from various discussions online that it was a favourite hangout location. The fieldwork event starting at the McDonalds carpark was different, however, as I was driving a car I had bought deliberately to do fieldwork in. It was a nice a car with a ‘factory enhanced’ four liter straight-six motor and desirable 5-speed manual gearbox. My girlfriend accompanied me. We were getting out of our little flat and experiencing some aspects of Sydney together. For her, as much as for me, it was an adventure.

I did not know anyone personally, only impersonally through studying online posts and forum profiles, and I was glad to have the company of

\textsuperscript{12} Michelle Zeibots (2003) has researched part of the history of transport within the system of automobility for this part of Sydney.

\textsuperscript{13} Andrew Leigh’s (1995) brief paper gives some insight (now largely historical) into some elements of the street racing scene in Sydney. An interview on the ‘Hack’ current affairs program of the national youth radio station Triple J 22/03/06 was carried out in the carpark to this McDonald’s where reporter Ronan Sharkey spoke to ‘Steve’ a modified-car enthusiast. The topic of conversation was the situation involving enthusiasts and police. One of the first questions Sharkey asks is regarding the whereabouts of Steve’s modified Subaru WRX. ‘Steve’ replies that “it gets a bit scary drivin’ it now” because of the monetary cost in police fines and the like.
my girlfriend. I am not too sure how glad she was to have my company, as I was excited, a little anxious, and very nervous. To occupy my racing mind I wondered around the parking lot, but not talking to anyone, just having a smoke. I listened in to the conversations of the others who had also arrived for the cruise. Some were discussing the costing for replacing the standard light fittings in their vehicles with high-intensity LEDs. One fellow had a sample of the replacement LED-globes and was demonstrating the difference on his own vehicle.

The organiser of the event, Peter, finally arrived. I had exchange private messages (PM) with Peter on the forum asking him about the nature of the cruise. He was my only real contact. Peter was 22 and drove a modified ex-taxi EL-model Ford Falcon. It still ran on liquid petroleum gas (LPG) and was ‘taxi’ white (like most taxi cabs are in Australia). Falcons were a favourite of taxi fleet managers because they were built to last a very long time. Peter’s Falcon had been fitted with a body-kit and larger 17” mag wheels. Plus it had a larger ‘sports’ exhaust. At this point in time however, he was very enthusiastic about the event and his car. When I went over and introduced myself he shook my hand and chatted with me in a warm and welcoming fashion.

A decision was made to assemble on the other (western) side of the fast food restaurant complex as there was a semi-trailer truck staging paddock where we could all take group photos of the cruise cohort. After standing around for roughly half an hour and smoking too many cigarettes with too much coffee, I felt very excited to get moving.

My girlfriend looked a little bored and huffed slightly as she put down her book when I slid back into the driver’s seat. I had a massive grin on my
face and she gave me a little smile back that told me she knew I was excited. I squeezed her hand. She had been with me as I had jumped around the flat getting my gear together and then she had waited patiently as I washed my car on the way to the meet-up location.

I pulled out from the parking space and was moving with the rest of the group. This was exciting in itself, but now finally my actual fieldwork felt like it was underway. I was amongst it.

After driving slowly over to the western paddock and parking behind the other assembled cars I got out my digital camera. Others were also getting out of cars with cameras. I got out of my car without a proper grip on my camera and it dropped to the ground and broke. I registered the event with a little grimace and picked up the pieces from amongst the compacted gravel and random blades of grass. I reasoned that I didn’t need my camera and could carry out fieldwork without it. My girlfriend cried out when I dropped the pieces back onto my seat. I told her not to worry about it. In retrospect perhaps it was an omen of things to come.

Others were taking photos. I spoke with a fellow who was driving an XE model Falcon. It was the model after my other car (XD Falcon) that I had in storage on the other side of the country. I asked him about the wheels which did not look like the ‘normal’ sort of aftermarket mag wheels found on a Falcon of this era. Surprisingly, the wheels were sourced from a second-hand Toyota Soarer imported from Japan. The Soarer shared the same ‘Ford’ stud pattern, but needed ‘spacers’ (between the wheel and the wheel hub) to align them properly. I was surprised as this was contrary to some of the other largely prejudicial views regarding imports I had
read on the forums. In fact, the earlier minor event with the LED globes also contradicted much of the talk about ‘rice’ and import car culture.\textsuperscript{14}

Soon we were on the road. We were driving along the M4 Freeway. Most of us were content to simply cruise at the speed limit. A few drivers were having some fun darting in and out of traffic ‘giving it some stick’. The first stop on the cruise was a BBQ and picnic spot in the Blue Mountains so those members from the forums who lived in the area could join us. A few more members eventually turned up and again the cars were aligned so photos could be taken.

One of the members to join us was Jason. Jason was 19 and drove an ED Fairmont the same basic model as mine (ED) also has the same ‘Cobalt Blue’ colour. I would later talk with Jason through the online chat (MSN Messenger) a number of times during my fieldwork. Roughly a year later I would buy a tachometer from him (known as a ‘monster tach’). After I had finished actual fieldwork with the group, but still kept in contact online, Jason would be involved in a crash on a cruise and his Fairmont would be ‘written off’. At this stage, he was very keen to develop the stereo system in his car and was very proud of the in-car DVD player.

Back on the road. I was being cautious by keeping my distance from the cars in front but keeping them within view. I had been on many organised cruises before and knew the biggest risk on a cruise was from other cruise members driving too close behind. These roads were unlike

\textsuperscript{14}‘Rice’ is a derogatory ethnocentric term originally used to refer to non-Australian or non-US manufactured vehicles, so-called ‘imports’. Now it is used to refer to styles of modification often associated with non-Anglo enthusiasts. I shall discuss this in Chapters 7 and 8 regarding the importance of automotive technological cultures and the rise of the imports.
the uninterrupted three-lane freeway of the M4. They were long, winding tree-lined roads, common in certain parts of non-urban Australia. My girlfriend slept a little, I drove and smoked.

**Kant’s Enthusiasm**

Central to this early part of the cruise is the obvious excitement of various enthusiasts as they stood around talking and showing off their vehicles in the McDonald’s carpark. ‘Excitement’ is one of the central affects that define enthusiasm. There is a distinction between the affects felt in an enthusiast body, and the affective relations formed between bodies. Immanuel Kant’s work on enthusiasm seems to agree with all common sense appreciations of enthusiasm as it exists within modified-car culture to the extent that it “arises from the fusion of affect, idea and imagination, and can serve as a spur to action” (Caygill 1995: 176). Importantly, however, in this fusion Kant privileges the power of ideas; enthusiasm is a “stretching of the powers [of the subject of enthusiasm] through ideas” (Kant 2000: 154). Kant’s definition of enthusiasm is congruent with his critical philosophy that valorises reason over affect. The highest praise is given to enthusiasm that is ‘affectlessness’, which Kant describes as ‘noble’, because it has “pure reason on its side.”

Jean-Francois Lyotard has engaged with Kant’s notion of enthusiasm in terms of serving as the impetus for a revolutionary break in history; it disrupts the stable coordinates of space and time upon which the faculties of reason are based.

The imagination tries to supply a direct, sensible presentation for an Idea of reason […]. It does not succeed and it thereby feels its
impotence, but at the same time, it discovers its destination, which is to bring itself into harmony with the Ideas of reason through appropriate presentation. [...] The imagination, even at its most extended, does not succeed in presenting an object that might validate or “realize” the Idea. Whence the pain of the incapacity to present. What is the joy that is nonetheless grafted onto this pain? It is the joy of discovering an affinity with this discordance [...]. (1988: 165-166)

Lyotard focuses on the example of a ‘historico-political enthusiasm’ that Kant provides of the enthusiast pathos experienced by the spectators of the French Revolution. Lyotard acknowledges that even though such enthusiasm is on the “edge of dementia” and a “pathological outburst” with “no ethical validity [...] [in] its periodic unbridling, however, enthusiastic pathos conserves an aesthetic validity, it is an energetic sign, a tensor of Wunsch [desire; request]” (1988: 166-167).

The first distinction therefore needs to be made between this historico-political enthusiasm and the more banal or humble, but no less ‘energetic’ enthusiasm of modified-car culture. Kant also briefly mentions enthusiasm in a slightly more mundane context however, and this second enthusiasm is more useful for my purposes. In The Critique of the Power of Judgement Kant writes:

[En]thusiasm is aesthetically sublime, because it is a stretching of the powers through ideas, which give the mind a momentum that acts far more powerfully and persistently that the impetus given by sensory representations. But (what seems strange) even affectlessness [...] in a mind that emphatically pursues its own
inalterable principles is sublime, and indeed in a far superior way, because it also has the satisfaction of pure reason on its side. Only such a mentality is called noble -- an expression subsequently also applied to things, e.g., buildings, a costume, a literary style, a bodily posture, etc., if it arouses not so much excited astonishment (an affect in the representation of novelty that exceeds expectation) as admiration (an astonishment that does not cease when the novelty is lost), which happens when ideas in their presentation unintentionally and without artifice agree with aesthetic satisfaction. (2000: 154)

Kant’s version of enthusiasm here is still congruent with the revolutionary version, the difference being that the definition of “ideas” that “call forth one’s powers” is not of the ideas of revolution, but the ‘humanity’ in the object of ‘buildings, a costume, a literary style, a bodily posture, etc.’. In addition to this brief list I add modified cars and the system of automobility. Nonetheless, there are complexities of the relation of ‘admiration’ for the qualities of novelty are not ‘lost’ to exhaust the durability of enthusiasm. I shall introduce here and then explore for the rest of the chapter a number of qualifications that inflect this Kantian definition of enthusiasm into more productive post-Kantian directions. In the final section I shall follow Deleuze in inverting the Kantian relation between affect and idea to begin developing a concept of the pre-personal event of enthusiasm. This inversion albeit retains the important function of the imagination, as shall be explored in the final section of this chapter and expanded in the next chapter.

Psychological theories have developed since Kant’s philosophical forays. ‘Astonishment’ in the terminology of clinical psychologist Sylvan Tomkins
seems to be a combination of ‘interest’ with other affects. The durability of interest pertains to the contraction of habit into the bodies of enthusiasts as the acquired disposition towards ‘astonishment’. ‘Interest’ accelerates in the body into what Tomkins calls ‘excitement’. The movement from interest into excitement follows ‘activation contours’. Two points develop from this.

As Tomkins argued, affects have a certain freedom to be ‘invested’; hence, there is not an essential object or event that someone has to be interested in. Enthusiasm therefore must be learnt because the bodies of enthusiasts have to acquire the disposition of interest to be interested in particular things of events. The term *habitus* is used by a number of philosophers and social researchers to describe such a socially configured and durable bodily comportment. Secondly, the acceleration of interest into excitement is a correlate for another dimension of Kant’s definition of enthusiasm as a relation to the sublime. That is, enthusiasm is an experienced of the paradoxical ‘passage’ and ‘impasse’ of the sublime (Lyotard 1988: 166), which, to coin a portmanteau neologism, could be called the ‘impassage’ of enthusiasm, and hence manifests as a ‘self-motor’ or yearning for the destination of imagination. The subjectivist orientation of Kant’s notion of enthusiasm is so far congruent with these psychological accounts of affect.

Beyond this Kantian reduction of the affective dimension of enthusiasm as subjective interiority (of ‘pure reason’), Tomkins and others have argued that affects, such as excitement, are contagious. The excitement of enthusiasm moves between bodies of enthusiasts. There is an important shift here from affects accelerating within a single body to the affective dimension of relations between bodies. An enthusiast feels
another’s excitement and in turn becomes excited; this excitement then circulates through the bodies of other enthusiasts. Enthusiasm exceeds the bodies of enthusiasts who are swept up in its contagiousness and who refract the activation contour (for example, from interest to excitement) through their own bodies, adding to the shared experience of enthusiasm. The way excitement ‘built’ as all the enthusiasts waited in the car park at the beginning of the cruise is a clear example of the way the event of the cruise is ‘enthusiast’. The excitement moved between the bodies of the enthusiasts and, even though the carpark was packed with cars, without this movement of excitement the cruise would not have been ‘enthusiast’ as such.

The acceleration of excitement across bodies transforms an enthusiasm from being a subjective relation into the subjective experience within an event and shifts the terrain of enthusiasm into post-Kantian territory. Events of enthusiasm are defined by this circulation and acceleration of affect and, in turn, an enthusiasm is defined by the events and the way(s) affect accelerates across some bodies and not others. The events exist on various scales (spatial and temporal) within which enthusiasts are arrayed according to (habitualised) subject-object relations recognised as ‘enthusiast’.

A focus on the affective dimension of events offers a different way to engage with the cultural function of affect within social relations compared to a perspective that takes the body, or the object-subject relation of car and body, as central to analysis. Clifton Evers writes that affective bodies “are bodies where we do not know what they do, they are bodies as multiple, in various states of locomotion, and as feeling – bodies surfing” (2004: 29). Bodies ‘surf’ in Evers’ examples in more ways
than one. They surf in the literal sense of the leisure time and lifestyle activity, but the type of surfing that is actually the basis for his essay attempts to capture the dynamism of the human body in its becoming: what can an enthusiast body do? Evers writes that he endeavours to provide a “mapping of male surfing bodies whereby fiberglass meshes with flesh, wax, fear, excitement, economics, sweat, politics, erotica and representations” (2004: 28). Similarly, by ‘affects of events’, I mean affective relations that necessarily emerge between bodies but in such situations where being affected means undergoing a change in the qualitative state of the body in its capacity for action. The complex web of relations within which enthusiast bodies are continually in connection can pass certain thresholds of social efficacy, cultural meaning, or physiological efficiency whereby new affective states and relations emerge that were not previously possible at lower (or higher) degrees of connection.

An enthusiast becomes part of the constitutive complex of enthusiasm as it is manifest within particular events, such in the example above of where I simply walked around the carpark of the McDonald’s. I feature in the actions of this event not as a simple ‘abstract’ observer but as a participant and through my own affective disposition I was part of the social relation produced by the immanent activation contour from interest into excitement. In the next section based on my fieldwork experiences, I first encounter what I shall call (using the enthusiast’s description) “stupid shit”. It is an event that involves a particular configuration of elements and integral to the event are the immanent affective relations between elements.
The first view of the seafood restaurant was not too promising. It appeared to be a roadside eatery that serviced mainly truckers and the like. It had definitely seen better days. I would find out a few years later that it had actually shut down some time after the cruise. The main diner building was positioned in the left-hand corner of a rectangular block. The parking area was large as it would mostly accommodate long-haul trucks and the waves of tourists heading in and out of Sydney. The surface of the parking area that I could see from the road was compacted sand and gravel. Unlike the man-made grey gravel of the McDonald’s restaurant truck staging area, this was the natural red gravel mined and crushed to serve as a hard-weathering drainable surface.

I watched as cars turned across gaps in the oncoming traffic to drive into the red-gravel parking area. The road was relatively busy with tourists and residents traveling from the semi-rural towns and rich farming land just behind the Blue Mountains and on their way to the Sydney suburbs or city. Some of the more eager members of the cruise had of course arrived first (because they had ‘given it some stick’). As they drove onto the compacted sand and gravel parking area some drivers opened up the throttle a little and made their wheels spin on the loose surface. This sent sprays of sand and gravel up behind them. The rhythm of the oncoming traffic meant that there was a large gap between each of the vehicles turning into the car parking area.

When I got close to the end of the queue to turn into the parking area however, I could see there was a relatively large gap in the oncoming traffic. I turned with the car in front of me to pass through the same gap in on-coming traffic. The driver of the car in front was on his ‘P-Plates’ and
I could see had two friends with him. The driver opened up the throttle of his car and drove in a large wide arc across the compacted sand and red gravel. When I realised what the driver was about to do I started shouting, “No! No!” but to no avail. The car in front sent a large spray of gravel up behind his car as the wheels spun, kicking it up over my car.

Every tiny indeterminate ‘ping’ of a rock hitting my car felt like my car was being savagely attacked and each rock extenuated the creeping grimace of my face. At first I was stunned and then angry at the manifest stupidity of the driver. Then I started swearing and I bashed the armrest of my car with a tightly wound fist. My girlfriend told me to calm down. I slowly exhaled a long stale cigarette breath. I dropped my head and closed my eyes in frustration and disappointment, but not only about my car being sprayed with gravel. I had read dozens and dozens of articles from the road safety industry about young drivers (‘P-Platers’) and their over-representation in road safety statistics. Had I just witnessed first hand the alleged abject stupidity of ‘young drivers’ in action?

I got out of my car. Peter had parked nearby and came over with his girlfriend. I told him how my car had just been sprayed with gravel. He was startled as he had been smiling and happy and now he had to deal with my obvious animosity and continuous stream of swearing. His girlfriend looked at my girlfriend. I was shaking my head and sighing. Should I just let this go and not worry about it? I might cause a scene, which would ostracize me from the rest of the group. What should I do?

I decided that I should at least let the other driver know what he had done. I inspected my car for damage. There were slight defects in the paint that may or may not have been caused by sand and gravel, but
there were definitely a few bigger blemishes caused by the gravel as I could see the impacted sand still stuck to the metal panel. I walked over to where the P-Plater had parked and tried to present myself as having a calm disposition. I asked who the driver was. A slight fellow spoke up. The smile that had been on his face and which he had been sharing with his friends slipped off to be replaced with a look of trepid nervousness. He did not know who I was and yet he could see that I was obviously agitated and about one and a half times his size. I told him that he had kicked up all the gravel onto my car. He was startled and seemed speechless. His friends gave each other worried looks. I told him in an authoritative voice to come over to my car and I turned around and walked away without looking back. He followed, and his friends followed him.

He told me that he couldn’t see any damage to my car. I pointed to a few obvious blemishes to the paint. He offered me money to purchase a ‘touch-up’ paint pen to cover over the blemishes. I explained to him that it wasn’t money I wanted and I didn’t care so much about the minor damage to the paint. At that moment I was concerned about what I would say, what I was trying to say, and what I was trying not to say. I didn’t want to explain to him that he had simply lived up to the negative stereotypical expectations of young male drivers represented in the road safety literature, but that is what I was thinking. I said to him that he needed to think about doing “stupid shit” before he does it. He pursed his lips and stopped moving. He didn’t want to hear this. He said that “everyone else” was “doing it.” It was a good reply as it spread what he understood to be the burden of responsibility onto “everyone else.” I told him that I didn’t care if he was “doing stupid shit or not” in fact I agreed, “doing stupid shit was fun.” I wanted him to realise the paradox of
thinking about having fun, i.e. doing “stupid shit”, before doing it. It was a paradox because doing something stupid necessarily implies that it hasn’t been thought about. I told him that the others had not sprayed a whole bunch of gravel up on other cars. He didn’t reply. I continued and said that I had little choice but to turn into the parking area when there was a gap in traffic, but that I probably should’ve been smarter than to follow a P-Plater onto a gravel carpark after watching others “arc up.” He remained silent. His girlfriend motioned to the diner say that she was hungry. He looked at me. I told him that “it was cool, man” and “don’t worry about it.” I had said what I wanted to say. The situation had been depotentialised. A few of the other older members of the group were tensely standing off to the periphery but were paying attention to what had transpired. I was older and relatively experienced as an enthusiast, but I was still new to this group. The situation had been repotentialised in other unknown ways.

Within the event of the cruise are a series of other events, such as this incident with the gravel and another I shall explore below. The particular moment described above is an event that involves enthusiast bodies passing through various affective states determined by the immanent asymmetrical distribution in the movement of affect along activation contours. A certain thread of this distribution can be written serially as a list of contiguous affective states and relations that roughly follows the above narrative for certain actors within the event, such as excitement/anxiety-joy-boredom-anger/joy-confusion/confusion-confrontation-anxiety. The real question, however, is “Where is the ‘enthusiasm’?” It certainly exceeds any simple hypostatic charismatic relation between modified car and enthusiast. Is it located ‘in’ the event or some part of another event, an event within an event somehow?
Between the collapsed totality produced from the contraction of all moments of other cars in the history of car culture ‘spinning their wheels,’ the other cars driven on this cruise ‘spinning the wheels,’ and the P-plater ‘spinning the wheels’ of his car in front of me, is a complex inter-relation of affect between different temporal orders. The present rearticulates the past and in doing so repotentialises the conditions of emergence for certain micro-events (‘spinning the wheels’). There is a complex interplay between different temporal orders within a single event, because every event is actually always multiple events. Tomkins (1995: 46-48) notes there is no necessary temporal determination for affective responses – what he calls “time freedom” – so ‘my’ enthusiasm could be reassembled from a reconciliation with the complex affective relations of what had transpired with others over the course of a month, a week, or an hour. The event of spinning the wheels has to actually happen, but its happening is dragged back into the past and forward into the future along the relations between events of different orders.

In a sense I was also angry at myself for not anticipating this sort of incident involving a ‘P-Plater’. Brian Massumi (2002: 91-93) argues that anticipation is a relation of futurity in which one moment is superposed upon the next, and it exists on a continuum between perception and sensation. I certainly had read enough of the road safety literature to have the perceptual capacity to anticipate what happened, but I think that the joy and excitement in that moment – perhaps the same positive affects that the P-Plater was feeling – clouded my perceptual apparatus and thus polluting the possible relations of anticipation for what could, and did, happen.
In terms of the enthusiasm there are more general relations of anticipation. Encounters with other cars spinning their wheels emitted the first singularities as a prelude to this actual event. Talk on the discussion board acts to discursively produce a sense of anticipation that is immanent to the enthusiasm of those participating in the discussion, and these singularities may be repeated in different ways. Meeting other people at the initial meet-up point modulates the ‘possibilizing effect’ of anticipation. In such relations “[e]ach actual conjunction is a dynamic mixture of different orders materially combining experience of the [relations] actually under way with possibilizing extensions beyond itself” (Massumi 2002: 92). Perhaps talk amongst friends in the car of the ‘P-Plater’ modulates it further. Seeing other cars with spinning wheels on arrival at the destination certainly modulates it again. ‘Spinning the wheels’ is a contingency defined by how what is possible keeps on changing, rather than a contingency as simply a selection of different established possibilities, and it is changed as the conditions of the present action through the potentialisation of the present-past.

We went into the diner and ate some deep-fried fish and chips. My girlfriend was silent. It was my turn to hold her hand and squeeze it gently. I gave her a smile that was meant to reflect my empathy for her frustration and, to be honest, boredom. Everything seemed to be going badly. I dropped my head yet again, and sighed into my half-consumed plate of poorly battered fish. I felt bad for dragging her along with me. The oil sat heavy in my stomach alongside feelings born from these contingent events that I had done the wrong thing in the way I had dealt with the situation. My hand was getting sweaty and she pulled her hand gently away. Just then Peter approached the table. He had a curious look on his face. It was kind of half-startled, and his upshot eyebrows
gave it a welcoming ‘open’ look. He asked if it was alright for him and his
girlfriend to join us. I smiled and said, “Sure.” I ate some chips. They sat
down. I introduced myself to his girlfriend. We chatted. I started feeling
better. My girlfriend’s laugh eventually progressed from being strained to
a silent and pretty smile. The day suddenly felt much better.

Affect versus Drive(r)s
The performance of ‘stupid shit’ by the young masculine P-plater would
appear to be an example of the sort of behaviour that is generally
highlighted as problematic by road safety experts. Linley Walker has
examined the relationship between the dominant form of heterosexuality
and the construction of a hegemonic masculinist car culture. Her main
conclusion is that “inculcation of patterns of desire ultimately underpins
motor vehicle use by young men” (1999: 186). She seeks to demonstrate
this by drawing on the influential work of R.W. Connell to argue that for
young, working-class men, car culture is a form of protest masculinity.

Protest masculinity is the performance of gender identity by males who
do not ‘fit in’ to the privileged subject positions of hegemonic gender
and social relations of a patriarchal society. Following Connell, Walker
notes that homosocial institutions require affective relations between
men, then she makes the claim that “car culture is a homosocial
institution” (1999: 180). Her argument is based on indeterminate fieldwork
and evidence interpreted from the discourse of “working class car
culture” which she assembles from interviews and a brief reference to the
enthusiast literature. It is structured around four main points, three pertain
to gendered sexual relations and the fourth indirectly to unequal class
and cultural stratifications:
1) Cars are eroticised and sexualised (181);
2) Masculine discourse – especially around sex and cars – is sexist and that the car serves a function as a “sex aid” in certain socio-sexual practices (182);
3) The male sex drive discourse is “hydraulic” and this is homologically related to car culture (183);
4) Motor vehicles are a “social equaliser” of cultural difference (physical, ethnic, racial and class-based) (184).

Walker's work is an excellent start to understanding the relation between gender, class, and car culture that is paradoxically both extremely obvious but complicated at the same time. There are two ways her argument can be developed.

The human drive and affect systems need to be separated as distinct albeit related socio-biological systems. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank make this point clearly in a discussion of Silvan Tomkins' affect theory and the layering of what they call ‘digital’ and ‘analogue’ elements:

Sexuality is no longer an on/off matter whose two possibilities are labeled express or repress. Sexuality as a drive remains characterized here by a binary (potent/impotent) model; yet its link to attention, to motivation, or indeed to action occurs only through coassembly with an affect system described as encompassing several more, and more qualitatively different, possibilities than on/off. (Sedgwick and Frank 1995: 8)
Although, as Walker argues, patterns of desire probably do underpin motor vehicle use by young men, I argue that it is the complex patterning of affects through which this desire is lived that makes enthusiasm a social relation and the practices of these young men intelligible. The events of enthusiasm are lived as affective dynamic of masculine automobilised bodies and their relations to technologies of automobility.

The distribution of affects within the events of modified-car culture, such as those noted by Linley in her article (cruising, racing, working on cars, and talking about cars) are not necessarily linked to homogenous ‘masculine’ or ‘working class’ cultural identities and nor does such a distribution of affects correlate with a homological mapping of innate biological drives of the human body. Rather, the distribution of affects is an effect of a patterned contingency, and such contingency is in part dependent on highly complex inculcations of habit as repeated and contracted affect (Tomkins 1995: 39; Massumi 2002: 236-237). ‘Contract’ has a useful ambiguity here in that it refers to the absorption of something, not unlike a viral contagion in a host, and also something discursive or scripted, such as an employment contract. This ambiguity captures the close relation between the concept of the habitus – popular amongst a number of previous researchers interested in the intersection of culture and the body – and Tomkins’s (1995: 180-182) notion of the ‘script’.15

To a certain extent, Walker assumes the problematic common sense understanding of a (charismatic) enthusiast relation between an

15 ‘Script’ describes the “individual's rules for predicting, interpreting, responding to, and controlling a magnified set of forces” (Tomkins 1995: 180).
enthusiast and an object of enthusiasm. In doing so, her work misses a complex point about the modified-car culture as a homosocial institution and the difference between affective relations and affects experienced in the enthusiast body. The notion of a homosocial institution is derived from the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) who uses examples from literature to triangulate gender relations in terms of the homosocial desire between men mediated by a third term (commonly a woman, but anything could function as the third term). Of importance here is the way Sedgwick defines ‘desire’:

I will be using “desire” in a way analogous to the psychoanalytic use of “libido” – not for a particular affective state or emotion, but for the affective or social force, the glue, even when its manifestation is hostility or hatred or something less emotively charged, that shapes an important relationship. (Sedgwick 1985: 2)

Sedgwick’s work on homosocial desire predates her work on affect (mentioned above); therefore, the equivalence implied between psychoanalytic ‘libido’ and affective or social force needs to be read in this context. The motor vehicle and other attendant technologies within the system of automobility together serve as the basis of an explicit homosocial institution. The charismatic enthusiast relation of modified-car culture between car and enthusiast mediates and sometimes even eclipses other important affective relations amongst masculine enthusiasts. Instead of simply triangulating masculine subjects with a mediating third term of the modified car as a static homosocial institution (‘glue’), however, a more sophisticated engagement is needed for the

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16 Walker’s approach is also probably influenced in a similar way to that of Connell’s early work on gender by neo-Freudian theories of the role of sex-object relations in ego development.
complex inter-relation between the multiplicity of terms or elements that enter into and out of relation depending on the heterogeneous material temporality of events.

If Sedgwick’s earlier work is reread through her later work on affect, then the processual dimension of enthusiasm – that is, *enthusiasm happening in time*, and not as a static relation or state – is absolutely crucial to understanding enthusiasm’s function as an ‘affective or social force’ of Sedgwick’s definition of homosocial desire. The contingent and temporal dimension of enthusiasm of events is important because affect states are not static, but exist on ‘activation contours’: affect amplifies or diminishes affect as part of a qualitative biopsychological feedback system. In this context, the shared dimension of enthusiasm is assembled from the amplificatory effect of the affects of other enthusiasts. The affective feedback systems of enthusiasts mingle and amplify the constituent affects into an ‘enthusiasm’ as it moves across bodies in such a way that is inflected according to the contingencies of events. Furthermore, Sedgwick notes that negative emotional states, such as hostility or hatred, can shape homosocial bonds. Enthusiasm therefore cannot simply be assembled from positive affects and their circulation across enthusiast bodies in affective relations; the affective relations of enthusiasm incorporate and can be organised around negative affects. The negative affects are not the ‘impassage’ of enthusiasm in the relation of reason to the Kantian sublime and the correlate movement of the eager imagination’s deficit to think *ideas*, but immanent to the cultural situations of human and non-human *bodies* in dynamic relation to each other.
Hot Lap
Word circulated that ‘we’ were now thinking of going on to the country town of Bathurst to visit the famous motorsport track at Mount Panorama. The racetrack, or simply ‘Bathurst’ as it is known, is home to the biggest annual motorsport race in Australia. The racers who have “conquered the mountain” are heroes in the motorsport and car culture folklore of Australia. The racetrack at Mt Panorama is relatively unique in that it is a public road for most of the year and is only closed intermittently for motorsport events. This meant that the public – including the members of the cruise – could drive on the racetrack.

The event of the cruise had suddenly jumped to a different magnitude. It was no longer simply a ‘cruise’ consisting of a ‘country drive’ to a seafood diner in a semi-rural location. It had become a pilgrimage to an important site in the mythopeia of Australian car culture. Some of the members of the cruise were not continuing on. I asked my girlfriend if she minded if we went to Bathurst, too. (I didn’t ask if she wanted to go.) She agreed to continue on. Only when we filed out of the diner and headed to our cars did I realise that the P-Plater’s car had gone. This made me feel a little odd. I wondered if he had left as a result of our brief confrontation and what I had said to him. Later, on the Fordmods.com forums and during the post-cruise dissemination, he would remark that ‘he had other stuff to do and that his girlfriend was bored’. He also apologised (to the group) for causing any harm when doing “stupid shit.”

Retired racer and now motorsport team owner, Dick Johnson, has a short account of the Mount Panorama race track in his autobiography:
Mount Panorama: it's a very special name, and it's a very special place. It's certainly one that crops up a few times in this story, because Bathurst has been a part of my life for almost as long as I can remember. Some people, especially in recent years, have taken to calling the Melbourne Cup [horse race] ‘the race that stops a nation’. Ask any true Australian motor racing fan to name the race that stops his nation, and the answer will be: Bathurst. [...] It's also a cult thing for a lot of people. It's like a Grand Final in the AFL [Australian Football League]; people dress their houses up for a motor race! You can drive up a street in Brisbane and people have got all the Ford Falcon or the Holden flags flying, and they just make a whole big day of it. It became a day, rather than just a motor race, when people began sitting down in front of the TV to watch it - not for two-and-a-half minutes or three minutes like the Melbourne Cup, but for six or eight hours of television! They come and go during the day, some people, and others sit down there and don't want to be disturbed. That happened mainly from the late 1960s and early 1970s. (Johnson and Sykes 1999: 76)

When I was a child I used to get up early on the morning of the Bathurst motor race and watch the start of the race with my father. It is interesting to note Johnson’s acknowledgement of the effect of television to transform it from a ‘race’ into a ‘day’. This would locate it as something similar to Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz’s (1992) notion of a “media event.” Their conception of “media event” seeks to capture a neo-Durkheimian spirit of (in this context, an aptly termed) “mechanical spirit” (1992: vii). Unlike the royal weddings, national ceremonies, and presidential debates of their examples, which operate within the symbolic of nationalist ‘society’, the Bathurst motor race operates within the symbolic realm of
motorsport and the system of automobility. It is a different order of belonging, one which is assembled from enthusiasm and may be present in Dayan and Katz’s examples, but is not necessarily congruent with the implied top-down transmission of symbolic norms from sanctified ritual through broadcast into lounge rooms and the like.

The excitement about the event exists within bodies watching the race, the unfolding contingencies of the race determines the excitement, and, as Johnson writes, for “any true Australian motor racing fan” the consistency of this affective relation has a cultural resonance. ‘Australian’ here could simply mean that the race happens in Australia and concerns Australian motor racing fans. Beyond this somewhat naïve reading however is a more complex sense of ‘belonging’ produced by Bathurst motor race that has a strong resonance of nationalist identity through the types of cars raced, such as Fords and Holdens (similar in some regards to stock car racing in the US)

On arriving at the bottom of the racetrack we stopped for a short while near the fork in the road. One direction went to the National Motor Racing Museum located at the foot of the mountain and the other went to the racetrack. A consensus was reached to drive onto the track and then into the starting positions of the racetrack as if the members of the cruise were participants in a race. A photo was taken by another member of the cruise (Figure 1.1).

Mine is the blue car with its passenger door (front-left) open on the fifth staggered line of cars. Peter’s car is the white car on the third row directly in front of my car. The cars with the four little headlights instead of two large long headlights are “factory special” versions of the Falcon – named the XR6 and XR8 – or copies of the factory special.

17 Mine is the blue car with its passenger door (front-left) open on the fifth staggered line of cars. Peter’s car is the white car on the third row directly in front of my car. The cars with the four little headlights instead of two large long headlights are “factory special” versions of the Falcon – named the XR6 and XR8 – or copies of the factory special.
Some of the cruise members took off for a ‘hot lap’ of the racetrack. The adverb of ‘hot’ signifies a certain intensity of experience or more precisely in the future tense it is the capacity for the contingency of this experience. Within the enthusiast discourse of modified-car culture such affective transformations of language are common. This includes the transitive verb form of ‘hotted’ or ‘hotting’ up a car through modification. Also common are emotive or emotional terms used to describe technology, such as a car that is ‘angry’ or ‘nasty’. In the sixth chapter on enthusiasm and the cultural industry I shall discuss the affective dimension of discourse further.

I was very wary of getting caught speeding by police, as I had just started my fieldwork and I needed my car, so I drove at the speed limit. I had never been to the racetrack before and I was investigating the
residences of those who lived on the track (as a public road). Every now and then a car would zoom past ours.

Although I had never been to the actual track before, it did feel uncannily ‘familiar’. Dick Johnson observes that the television broadcast of the race changes the nature of the track.

While it has become an annual fixture on the couch potato’s calendar, what television shows of Mount Panorama is only two-dimensional. It flattens everything out, and that’s the irony of the whole thing. People who have never been there say, ‘Goddamn, I can’t believe this place!’ the first time they see it for themselves. And in that respect it stands alongside some of the greatest circuits in world motor sport. (Johnson and Sykes 1999: 77)

Indeed, driving around the track is a very different experience even in the contemporary era of tiny in-car cameras.18 There is a special section of the track that metonymically embodies the rest of the track and captures the disjunction that Johnson describes between the televised image and the actual experience of the track. It is called the ‘Dipper’ and is in the series of tight ‘Esses’ in the third quarter of the circuit. The track is tight with extreme camber changes as it drops into the Dipper. The name ‘Dipper’ sounds more like a ride at a fun park than part of a famous racetrack, and, as I was to discover, negotiating the Dipper can also produce a startling affective experience of terror similar to a fun park ride.

18 The technology of in-car cameras was actually pioneered in the late 1970s by local Australian broadcaster, Channel 7, and was used for the first time in the world for the Bathurst race.
My girlfriend and I drove up to the top of the mountain – the part of the track called ‘Brock Skyline’ – where various other members of the cruise had stopped on the side of the road to take photos of the bottom half of the track. I got out and wondered around, while my girlfriend stayed in the car. Other members asked me if I had done a ‘hot lap’ yet. I said no, but that I was looking forward to the ‘Dipper’. I walked back to my car.

As the racetrack is actually a public road it is open to traffic going in both directions. This means that there is the potential for someone who decides to do a ‘hot lap’ and follows a ‘racing line’ inevitably to cross over to the other side of the road and collide with oncoming traffic. The ‘racing line’ is the actual path taken by a vehicle across a race track. Unlike a normal road that is perhaps made of one or more ‘lanes’ within which drivers must keep their cars, the racing line can potentially transverse the entire race track surface (and beyond it). The racing line is determined as the fastest way around a track. I was wary of this while driving and, as I was going around the track in the racing direction, kept an eye out for anyone doing a ‘reverse hot lap’.

A ‘fun’ aspect of the racetrack is the large concrete barriers either side of the actual track itself. My car has a larger ‘sports’ exhaust and the exhaust note is loud and ‘aggressive’. The exhaust echoed between the concrete barriers that amplified the noise. While doing the speed limit in second gear my car was revving right in the largest part of the torque curve, so it was very easy to ‘blip’ the throttle and accelerate a little and make a loud noise with the exhaust. I did this a few times going up the mountain and my girlfriend told me to drive sensibly. Going across the top of the mountain and starting through the ‘Esses’ (of which the ‘Dipper’ is one) my ‘blipping’ of the accelerator sounded much louder
and the close proximity of the large concrete barriers accentuated the sense of speed at which we were traveling.

Through each of the ‘Esses’ my girlfriend started raising her voice louder each time in protest, and then we reached the ‘Dipper’. I wasn’t looking at her, but concentrating on driving my car on ‘my’ side of the road. The approach to the ‘Dipper’ is quite intimidating for it appears as if the road just drops away. So for a split second it feels as if you are driving into some kind of abyss.

I was in second gear doing under the speed limit but it felt as if I was going much faster due to the extreme camber of the road, the proximity of the concrete safety barriers and the loudness of the exhaust reverberating off the concrete barriers. For the brief duration we were going through the ‘Dipper’ my girlfriend was screaming. A tiny smile flashed across my face as the collapsed memory raced through my mind of dozens of Bathurst races watched on television and seeing cars drive through this part of the track thousands of times. From the ‘Dipper’ there is another tight corner but the road opens up and feels less constricted.

We drove through the Dipper and I looked across at my girlfriend. She was terrified; so much so that she had produced a corner in which to hide, wedged between the passenger seat and the door. Her wide eyes were glistening with a wild sheen of terror. I slowed down to a crawl and let the car roll down the hill of the track. She readjusted her seating position and let loose with a string of screamed insults against the day, and me, including my research. She was very upset. I let the moments silently pass and we slowly went down the main back straight. More cars zoomed past us. She said that she wanted to go home.
Had I managed to repeat the unthinking behaviour of the P-plater from the carpark? Me, the person who had apparently taken the moral high ground about the ‘time and place’ for doing ‘stupid shit’? Had I performed my own ‘stupid shit’? I know that I felt incredibly ashamed that I had actually smiled while going through the ‘Dipper’ while my girlfriend was screaming. At the same time, however, I felt a kind of joy or elation. Part of this was the affective state of the release of tension produced through the driving on the racetrack, the nature of the racetrack, and my screaming girlfriend. Another part was a kind of historical cultural affect that I had brought with me in knowing that precise piece of racetrack and having often wondered what it would be like to drive through it.

My girlfriend’s reaction and subsequent mood were understandable, but doubly so. Not only were they understandable in the context of her experience of terror and my inconsiderate behaviour, but also of my experience of her experience as reinforcing the experience of that piece of track. My girlfriend was terrified, I was smiling, and this moment captures precisely the gendering of risk in the context of automobility. I was not consciously performing myself as ‘male’, and the performance of a masculine subjectivity was not enabled through discourse or language. Instead I had followed the congruent lines of force within an event – driving on the Bathurst racetrack through the part of the track called the Dipper. Certain elements of the event had circulated repeatedly through the media representations of the event. These elements are the singularities of the event: the dynamics of speed and sound, the proximity of the concrete barriers, and the extreme camber of the road itself. These singularities are arrayed within events that have a
cultural dimension that exceed that particular event itself, in terms of
gendering, the socio-technical system of automobility, and specific
recent historical eras. Similar to the relation between the ‘racing line’ and
the appropriate way of occupying a ‘road lane’, my body and other
elements of the event were composed along habituated gendered lines
of force and affect, and not located within a ‘discursive’ frame of the
‘masculine’.

This event does not simply bring together a much more complex set of
elements than those that are apparent in the first event involving the P-
plater on gravel; it instead highlights the complexity of the relations of
enthusiasm of any event. The first event on the gravel and the second
event of the Dipper involve enthusiast practices that in some way turn
out badly or at least not as expected. In both cases the temporal and
spatial coordinates of the event seem to be confined to the limited
passage of action to which the actual events happen – that is, ‘arcing
up’ on gravel or racing through the Dipper.

The affects of the first event – the excitement-joy, startle, and anxiety –
are immanent to the action of the event. The affects or distribution of
affects in the second event are much more complex because they do
not correlate simply to the performance of action. My girlfriend’s
reactions – her terror and then anger – to my behaviour and the action
happening at the time are certainly immanent to the action of the
situation in question. For me, however, the action did not only exist as the
event of me driving across a piece of racetrack (or, now, writing about it).
The duration of this action follows a complex heterogeneous materiality
of a multiplicity of other moments invoking this piece of racetrack, race
cars and racing. The affects were felt of the body – with a little smile and then the complex associations of guilt.

There is a key question here in the context of enthusiasm: Do these affects pertain to the action of the event of driving through the Dipper, or does the event of driving through the Dipper gather together a number of different vectors of action? That is, in terms of the enthusiasm, the event of the P-plater arcing up was also an event of the cruise and an event of the scene, but my act of driving through the Dipper was an event of the cruise, an event of the scene, and an event of the motorsport racetrack. The immanence of the action and therefore the capacities to act and the capacities released within the act do not exist in the simple temporality of ‘this instant’ of the present, but belong to a complex material temporality defined by the coordinates of the multiplicity of events of which it is part.

Enthusiasm is an event that exists on various spatio-temporal scales that are not always subjectively perceived by the actual enthusiasts in question. The commonality between the various events is produced through the impersonal social singularities that they share. As I have already stated, in the case of racing through the Dipper the singularities of the event include the dynamics of speed and sound, the proximity of the concrete barriers, and the extreme camber of the road itself. Events do not have to be mediated by the physical proximity of other bodies in the normal sense.

Another problem emerges in the example of racing through the Dipper. My girlfriend experienced some of the same singularities of the event as I did, yet she certainly did not enjoy the ‘action’ of the event at all. The
singularities of an event or relations between bodies were actualised in different ways. We had different senses of the same event of action. The sense I had of the action is another type of event. It is this problem I shall explore in the next section.

**The Event of Enthusiasm**

I have described some of the events I participated in as part of my fieldwork. They are all examples of an event of a different order, however; the event of enthusiasm itself. The cultural events of my fieldwork belong to the scene of modified-car culture and are mostly organised around discrete, but related practices that have become ritualised as part of the culture, such as the cruise, hanging out in the carpark, ‘arcing up’, and the pilgrimage to Bathurst. From these events I have argued that enthusiasm is not a subjective state or relation with the world, but is a shared set of impersonal relations. Now I shall push this idea further and suggest enthusiasm itself is an event of which enthusiasts are part and the affects of the event furnish a subjective dimension of the event, inculcated in the bodies of enthusiasts, with having particular capacities to act. That is, the event of enthusiasm is a change in the capacity to act experienced by enthusiasts that is triggered by the affects that circulate within cultural events.

There are two conceptions of affect that need to be understood in the distinction between the different conceptions of enthusiasm and different non-enthusiast experiences of enthusiast cultural events. The first way of thinking about affect is derived from the tradition of clinical psychologists, such as Tomkins, and is largely congruent with the Kantian conception of enthusiasm, while the second is derived from a
philosophical tradition that includes Benedict Spinoza and Gilles Deleuze. On the one hand, affects are habituated physiological tendencies in the bodies of enthusiasts that are evidenced by and join with the conjunctural affects of events. On the other hand, they are also variations in power relations formed around the intensification or a diminishing of the capacity to act by enthusiasts and automotive technologies within these events. 19 The distinction is one of causality, where affects of enthusiasm are experienced in the unbridled imagination’s attempt to think ideas worthy of the sublime, or enthusiasm is an event that serves as the quasi-causal expression of the affective mobilisation of bodies and correlative capacities to act.

From a Kantian perspective, the enthusiasm of modified-car culture would account for the tremendous energy expended by enthusiasts and their capacity to participate in the culture with a sustained and intense engagement. Affect of enthusiasm are qualities of the interiority of subjectivity produced by the power of imagination in accounting for the “representation of a novelty that exceeds expectation” (Kant 2000: 164). An unwarranted division is assumed between subjective interiority (the power of imagination) and the force of novelty upon the body of an enthusiast. Kant locates the origin and enduring quality of ‘novelty’ and its relation to imagination’s ‘powers’ in relation to transcendent Ideas. A Deleuzian engagement with Kant’s notion of enthusiasm would invert this relation and question the qualitative nature of the durability of enthusiasm; essentially novelty is not ‘lost’. Novelty, in Deleuzian philosophy, is not the excess remainder of a process of synthesis between

19 The capacity to act is further complicated by ‘feelings’ (the idea that we have of how we are affected). I have not, however, investigated this avenue of research as it would require extensive interviews of participants.
the ‘idea’ of the ‘good’ and subjective ‘affections’ experienced as the sublime. The ‘new’ of novelty “with its power of beginning and beginning again, remains forever new” (Deleuze 1994: 136). That, is the new of the new is given, or as Sanford Kwinter (2001: 4) has phrased it in terms of temporality, “[t]ime always expresses itself by producing, or more precisely, by drawing matter into a process of becoming-ever-different.”

In Kant’s argument the Idea of the good of enthusiasm is transcendent and calls forth one’s powers. In Deleuze’s (1994: 143) concept of “transcendental empiricism” it is the novelty that calls forth one’s powers; “the new — in other words, difference — calls forth forces in thought which are not the forces of recognition [i.e. not Kant’s categorical judgement]” (Deleuze 1994: 136-137). This relates to Deleuze’s celebrated concept of ‘difference’ as an account of singularly intensive capacities to individuate themselves (Deleuze 1994: 38-39). For Deleuze ‘ideas’ are problematic in nature. They are not defined by their transcendent identity (and subjective non-representation in the case of imagination and enthusiasm), but the difference retained when an idea is repeated. Affects are forces that express and which are swept up in this repetition, and they do not necessarily have to be ‘human’ affects of the Kantian interiority, but affects of another body or mixture of bodies.20 Between

20 Daniel Smith is very clear on this point in his translator’s introduction to Deleuze’s *Francis Bacon* (‘becoming’ in the below quote can be understood as ‘differential repetition’ in the terminology used here):

…Deleuze breaks with Kant and inverts the critical philosophy. For Deleuze, the faculty of Ideas is no longer identified with Reason; rather, Deleuze posits Ideas within sensibility itself and defines them not by their transcendence to Nature but rather in terms of their immanence to experience itself (the noumenal as immanent). Ideas remain suprasensible, but they now reveal the forces or intensities that lie behind sensations, and which draw us into nonhuman or inhuman becomings. (Smith 2003: xxii)
Kant and Deleuze is a balance of power or forces: the power of transcendent ideas versus the force of novelty or difference of transcendental empiricism.

There is resonance here with Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “will to power”. The ‘becoming-reactive’ of forces triggered in the response to a problem are

sublime because of the perspective they open up for us and because of the disturbing will to power to which they bear witness. They separate us from our own power but at the same time they give us another power “dangerous” and “interesting”. They bring us new feelings and teach us new ways of being affected. (Deleuze 1983: 66)

As I shall elucidate further in the next chapter, the enthusiasm of the enthusiast is only affirmed in an active sense when an enthusiast confronts a contingency, such as a ‘problem’, and is rendered incapable. The enthusiast is forced to extend his or her capacity to affect and be affected by translating the contingency of the ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’. This relates to the final problem with Kant’s conception of enthusiasm. If enthusiasm can be exhausted, and indeed it often is, what then what is ‘lost’ (as per Kant’s definition of admiration) if ‘novelty’ is given? There are two ways. Firstly, enthusiasm is exhausted when an enthusiast is no longer capable or can no longer bear enduring the capacity to translate the contingencies of ‘problems’ into ‘challenges’, but not all enthusiasts reach the edge of their capacity to affirm their enthusiasm before enthusiasm is exhausted. The second type of exhaustion relates to the complicating relation in the temporality of
‘admiration’ (durable excitation). A post-Kantian or Deleuzian conception of enthusiasm is defined by the manifest and contingent relations of durable excitation – and the intensification or diminishment of capacities to act – determined by the singularities of ‘novelty’, the contingency at the heart of a challenge.

Working from Bourdieu’s (1984) social critique of the judgement of taste, and therefore Kant’s conception of judgement, another way of talking about this ‘durability’ is though the concept of the habitus. Bourdieu (1984: 486-491) demonstrates that Kantian aesthetic judgement is derived from the ‘social distance from necessity’ of bourgeois aesthetics. The social dimension of aesthetic judgement is premised on the distinction between bourgeois taste and ‘popular taste’. ‘Popular taste’ is based on an aesthetics of necessity and defined by what the popular aesthetic form does (vulgar, sensible, etc.). If an assumption is made regarding the connection between ‘excitation’ and ‘taste’, then in the context of Kantian enthusiasm Bourdieu therefore can be understood as isolating a social relation in the ‘durability’ of excitation.

Bourdieu’s work has often been interpreted as an attempt to overcome the social science problem of the dichotomy of agent and structure, which is a variation of the subject-object relation. In Bourdieu’s approach the play of structure is mediated by contingencies of social practice. Central to the extent of freedom of this play is Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of the habitus. The habitus is a “durably installed generative principle of regulative improvisations” that he explains produces practices that reproduce the conditions of the generative principle of practices (1977: 78). For Bourdieu, practices are understood as a conjunctural enacting of the social structure.
A Deleuzian conception of enthusiasm also requires a critique of Bourdieu’s conception of habitus. This is not because of Bourdieu’s argument regarding the distinction between the habitus of subjects belonging to different social classes. His focus is the “regularities immanent in the objective [social] conditions” (Bourdieu 1977: 78). The novelty immanent to the conjunctural or evental conditions of practice places different demands on enthusiasm than the structural role of enthusiasm or discourse more generally (for example, to function as ‘distinction’). The difference in accent is actually present in Bourdieu’s work, as Anthony King and others have noted. King (2000) points to what is generally called the ‘objectivist’ (conditions of judgement or distinction) and ‘practical’ (contingent manifestation of structure) tendencies in Bourdieu’s work. If there is a relation between structure and contingency mediated by practice in social action, and Bourdieu largely (but not entirely) focuses on the structural conditions of possibility for practice, then my focus is primarily on the other contingent side of contingency-practice-structure relation. The conjunctural ‘in-action’ 21 of discursive structures of enthusiasm is not determined by the objective rule-based structures enacted in events, but through the capacities for action (that may nevertheless be inculcated in such structures). 22

Deleuze also has a conception of the habitus. He argues we are composed by a multitude of habits in the domain of passive synthesis (Deleuze 1994: 78): the habitus is a contraction of sensation into habit.

21 ‘In-action’ is a neologism I have coined to describe what happens to elements of events as events happen. I explain this notion further in Chapter 2.
22 See, for example, Deleuze’s (2004) often overlooked essay, “How Do We Recognise Structuralism?”
From a Deleuzian perspective, there is an ontological distinction as well as a social distinction between the habitus of subjects belonging to different social classes. The ontological distinction is brought forth by the experience of different ‘differences’ (intensive singularities). The social distinction is therefore not between judgements of tastes but a pre-conscious capacity to refuse or select and inculcate the power of novelty or singularity. Bourdieu was concerned with the social conditions of taste or the power between different inculcated capacities to recognise and judge aesthetic worth. While certainly accepting the validity of Bourdieu’s social critique of the judgement of taste, Deleuze problematises the capacity of recognition (from a subjectively sensible or ideational basis) that underpins the practice of judgement itself. This relates to the operative mode of a Kantian conception of enthusiasm that is unable to recognise an appropriate Idea for the experience of sublime. Instead of recognition of actual elements or ideas that can be named and therefore rendered distinct, a Deleuzian perspective focuses of the singularities of difference that are actualised and assembled into composite elements of events that enable such recognition.

The singularities of novelty punctuate the durability of excitation with a cadence that is not social, in the sense of being determined by social stratifications, even though such social stratifications correlate with it; instead, the cadence is a movement between thresholds of durability and the immanent capacity of ‘excitability’ to organise around the novelty of itself. If the ‘novelty is lost’, then the true ‘novelty’ of singularity has expressed itself through a reconfiguration of the capacities of the durable excitability of enthusiasm. The novelty as such does not wear off; rather, the capacity to translate the stream of novel singularities into the ordinary becomes exhausted. A singularity thus emerges and forces the
production of new thresholds of excitability of the enthusiasm. The counter-intuitive point I am making is that enthusiasm is the act of transforming the singular into the ordinary and incorporating the potential of novelty without exhausting it; the exhaustion of this capacity involves the actualisation of a singularity (or ‘novel’ novelty) and thus a transformation of the habitus of the enthusiast and the relations of enthusiasm. What I have endeavoured to at least indicate is that enthusiasm is a complex of affective relations that unfold in a dynamic and contingent set of relations determined by the singularities of the enthusiasm expressed in the cultural events of which enthusiast are part.

The event of enthusiasm encapsulates the discernible and indiscernible dimensions of singularities – distributed across problematic ideas and human and non-human affects (bodies, technology) – around which the durable excitement belonging to enthusiasm is organised. The discernible dimensions include capacities of objects and bodies of enthusiasts evident in the practices of enthusiasts. The indiscernible dimension includes those elements which are not necessarily sensibly imperceptible, but may be objectively realised as part of enthusiast practices and which do not constitute the elements of the practice itself. An example is of the media representations of Bathurst that I had consumed as a child, that may have modulated the affective capacity to act when driving through the ‘Dipper’, and yet these media representations were not actually present in the cultural event of driving.

Indeed, events exist across various scales, because the singularities around which they are organised do not simply exist on one level of reality but exist on all transversal dimensions. Deleuze does not properly
address the problem of scale of events in his philosophy. Enthusiasm exists on the level of the subject and of the body, but it also exists on the level of cultural events and of the scene. As suggested in an earlier section, enthusiasm is set of subjectively experienced relations that are often mistaken for being a purely subjective phenomenon; enthusiasm is social and relies on the proximity of other bodies and the movement of affect across bodies along activation contours. The movement of enthusiasm within cultural events and across enthusiast bodies is determined or 'expressed' by enthusiasts and other elements of the event; while, at the same time, individual enthusiasts get caught up and determined in more or less durable ways by the activation contours of affect across enthusiast bodies.

I am approaching the core problem of thinking about the affects of enthusiasm. There is a difference of active and passive affections; in the inherent capacity to act as active affections, and the way bodies ‘suffer’ from passive affections. Deleuze (1992: 231) argues that "we must distinguish what determines us, and that to which we are determined." Drawing on Spinoza, Deleuze (1992: 92) argues that "the power of acting (or force of existing) ‘increases’ or ‘diminishes’ according to the proportion of active affections contributing to the exercise of this power at any moment." Passive affections are affections “relating no longer to the body itself, but to what happens to the body; no longer the soul (the

23 For example, Deleuze discusses a wound as an event shared by the knife that wounds and the flesh that is wounded, but belongs to neither. He also discusses an event of a different scale, a battle which is also an event that “floats” in its virtuality above the actual battlefield. If such a wound was part of such a battle then the relation between nested events becomes problematic once the causal relation between the event of the battle is thought alongside the event of the wound. It is a relation between singularities that transverse different scales of sense.
idea of the body), but to what happens in the soul (an idea of what happens in the body)” (Deleuze 1992: 146). To what extent is the enthusiast body determined as a ratio of that to which enthusiast bodies are determined? Or, to ask the same question a different way, what can an enthusiast body do?

Deleuze (1992: 218) answers, “[w]hat a body can do corresponds to the nature and its of its capacity to be affected.” The enthusiast body, and the case for any body (Deleuze 1992: 222), is a combination or ratio of affective and passive affections. The problem, however, is that the singularities of enthusiasm extend beyond individual enthusiast bodies and include the expression of the event of enthusiasm as other bodies become ‘implicated’ just as the affects of enthusiasm are ‘explicated’ or distributed across them and accelerate across activation contours. This does not mean that the enthusiasts’ capacity to act is somehow rendered impotent by the ‘complication’ of social forces, rather as Deleuze argues:

To the linkage of feelings with ideas [i.e. Kant’s conception of enthusiasm] we must add the further linkage of desires with feelings.

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24 Firstly, I am drawing on Deleuze’s notion of *le pli*, or the ‘fold’, that he introduces in his first engagement with Spinoza in the 1960s and then develops almost 20 years later in his book on Leibniz, *The Fold* (1993). Deleuze (1992: 214-215) argues that “modal expression […] is constituted by [a] double movement of complication and explication.” Secondly, I am largely eliding the distinction Deleuze makes between two levels of expression of the sense-event of attributes and modes. Deleuze (1992: 105) writes, “the substance [designated by a proposition] is expressed in the attributes, attributes express an essence. The attributes are in turn their expressed: they express themselves in modes which designate them, the modes expressing a modification.” In the context of the argument developed here, the shift in the capacity to act outlined in the next chapter on ‘know how’ is an example of such a modification.
As long as our capacity to be affected remains exercised by passive affections, [...] our desires themselves ‘are born’ from passions. But, even in this case, our power of action comes into play. A given passive affection determines us to do this or that, to think this or that, and thereby to make an effort to preserve our relation or maintain our power. Sometimes we make an effort to ward off an affection we do not like, sometimes to hold on to an affection we like, and this always with a desire that is all the greater, the greater the affection itself. But ‘that to which’ we are thus determined is explained by our nature or essence, and must refer to our power action. Passive affections do, it is true, testify to our impotence, and cut us off from that of which we are capable; but it is also true that they involve some degree, however low, of our power of action. (Deleuze 1992: 231)

Drawing on Bourdieu’s terminology of ‘taste’, it is not simply a matter of producing ‘distinction’ for the purposes of producing or reflecting social stratification, but translating the singular into the ordinary from the field of intensive differences. The singularities belong to and are distributed across all elements of the enthusiasm in question: not only the bodies of enthusiasts (as internalised subjectivity, embodied disposition, etc.) but the entire system of automobility and modified-car culture. The production of durability in the bodies of enthusiasts and in the infrastructure of the scene through cultural events that underpins enthusiasm is therefore the habituated practice of translating the continual and indiscernible 'singular' points of becoming-ever-different into ‘ordinary’ points.
In this chapter I have argued that the affects of enthusiasm do not belong solely to the bodies of enthusiasts; rather, the affects of enthusiasm belong to events and are distributed across the bodies and other elements of the event through the activation contours of affects. Enthusiasm is experienced as the acceleration across the bodies of enthusiasts within events, such as from interest to excitement. Affects accelerate along activation contours and then become exhausted (or not); they have a somewhat transient quality. The actualised event of enthusiasm however, such as the actual cruise event from my fieldwork, is actualised repeatedly as a series. The many years that enthusiasts remain involved in modified-car culture means that the durability of enthusiasm seems to exceed the transience of activation contours. This leads to the question, how is enthusiasm durable? Or, to put it another way, what is the relation between the transient events of enthusiasm and durability?
Chapter 2 ‘Know How’

What is revealed when we look at the specialist media of the hot rod world of the 1940s and 1950s and right on into the 1980s are directives in its pages, and the carrying out in practice, of personally chosen projects unconnected to paid labour: ‘work’ as hobby, as relaxation, as fascination, as something you really want to do rather than being constrained to do. About feeling good by working hard. (Moorhouse 1991: 195)

Enthusiasm is a multiplicity. A multiplicity is not ‘multiple’; it captures a sense of the shifting nature of heterogeneous totalities and therefore includes a temporal relation of change. The multiple, on the other hand, does not refer to change as such and denotes a number of elements. Enthusiasm is an intensive multiplicity defined by thresholds of intensity of flows; beyond these thresholds enthusiasm undergoes a qualitative change. Deleuze and Guattari calls this change a ‘becoming’ (1987: 8-9). The singularities in question cross a number of social and cultural scales. For example, a singularity defining the enthusiasm subjectively experienced a personal level is also the singularity of a scene. Each event of enthusiasm is a patchwork of different events adjacent or subjacent to each other and on different cultural and social scales.

Enthusiasm is not durable so much as there are a number of different ‘durabilities’ present in the different events and retained from the changing events of enthusiasm is a specific relation. Furthermore, the event of enthusiasm is ‘problematic’ in the sense that it is repeatedly actualised in different ways. The events of enthusiasm are actualised in different ways depending on the elements of the infrastructure of the
scene. The notion of something simply ‘happening’ (conjunctural phenomenological events) is troubled by the extension of the ‘happening’ across the heterogeneous materiality of multiple durations of infra-perceptible and historical-scale changes. The question of the durability of enthusiasm is also the problem of the seriality of the event of enthusiasm. What is durable if the enthusiast event is repeated?

The enthusiast habitus and the scene are the two durable infrastructures of the event of enthusiasm. ‘Know how’ is a form of practical knowledge that is modified with changes to the enthusiast capacity to act; as I shall argue in this chapter, it is expressed through the capacity of enthusiasts to translate the contingency of a ‘problem’ into that of a ‘challenge’. The capacity to translate contingencies is inculcated as the enthusiast habitus. The ‘scene’ is the material and discursive infrastructure of cultural events across which the event of enthusiasm is differentially repeated. The serial repetition of these events forms larger events on a different scale.

25 This is another way of thinking the distinction between Lyotard’s interpretation of a historico-political enthusiasm and the idea of revolution versus the conception of enthusiasm developed here. Deleuze and Guattari call the infra-perceptible the ‘molecular’ and the ‘historical-scale changes’ in this context are what they call ‘molar’ (1987: 335-337).

26 In Chapter 6 I shall return to the concept of enthusiasm and the way the enthusiast culture industry works through the ‘spectacle’ to shift the composition of affections from the active affections of ‘know how’ to the passive affections of ‘charisma’. To know what an enthusiast body can do means appreciating the character of scenes and the relations between enthusiasts.

27 Deleuze (1993: 69) is almost coquettish on the problem of evental scale: “On a given scale, it remains for us to distinguish the singulars from the ordinaries or regulars in relation with one another.” By introducing the notion of the ‘scene’ in the final section of this chapter and then elaborating on this notion over the next several chapters I shall seek to address the problem of the transversal relations between singularities of different scales of events.
To address the paradoxical tension between the fleeting dimension of enthusiasm as it is experienced through the contingencies or ‘novelties’ of cultural events and the durability of the capacities of enthusiasm to sometimes last most of a lifetime I shall separate enthusiasm into passive and active affections. On one hand, I locate the passive affections that an enthusiast ‘suffers’ are the charismatic relations of enthusiasm. On the other, the active affections determine and are determined by the enthusiast capacity to act, which is most clearly, but not solely, expressed as ‘know how’. As I shall discuss in Chapter 6, there is certainly not a direct correlation between active affections and ‘know how’ or passive affections and ‘charisma’.

In this chapter I shall engage with the concept of ‘know how’ as an expression of the active affection of enthusiasm. I begin with a conception of ‘know how’ based on the familiar socio-technical notion of the ‘handyman’ and ‘amateur’ mechanic or technician. Then I shift to thinking about a social ‘know how’ as a correlate with Sarah Thornton’s conceptualisation of ‘subcultural capital’ that is less in tune with Bourdieu’s hierarchical structurations of cultural distinction, and more with the other side of his work that focused on the relation of practice to contingency. A shorthand way of thinking of this different engagement with Bourdieu’s theories is indicated by the way enthusiasts talk about the scene when they casually ask ‘what’s happening?’ In the conception of the scene developed here what is ‘happening’ is not the subcultural status of participants or objects, but is an experimental investigation into

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28 In a way the enthusiast echo Erwin Straus when he writes as part his engagement with the problem of sensation, “[i]n sensory experience there unfolds both the becoming of the subject and the happenings of the world. I become only insofar as something happened, and something happens (for me) only insofar as I become...” (1963: 351).
the capacity of cultural events of the scene that allow for the maximal
differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm.

Moorhouse (1991: 157) mentions ‘know how’ in a discussion of the labour
of enthusiasts and its representation in Hot Rod magazine. The affective
dimension is clearly present in Moorhouse’s analysis, to the extent that he
discusses (in the quote at beginning of this chapter) the labour of
enthusiasts as something subjectively enjoyable and worthy of meaning.
But again even this subjective dimension of affect is not the focus of his
research, and his theoretical apparatus did not allow him to explore the
dimensions of enthusiasm that are of interest here. Moorhouse posits
enthusiast labour as an ideological function of the ‘work ethic’ and a
kind of moral valorisation of working class leisure activities. As I shall later
argue, the external moral valorisation of enthusiast practices is irrelevant,
because enthusiasts valorise their own activities. Moorhouse posits a
relation between labour and ‘know how’, however, that is a useful way
to begin engaging with the practical socio-technological configurations
of the active affections of enthusiasm. His goal is to understand how
particular meanings or ‘ethics’ become associated with particular
‘works’ (151) and explores this problematic in hot rodding through the
example of mechanical labour (152-153).29 The meanings of mechanical
labour (of working on the mechanics of vehicles) are examined as
‘presented’ in specialist magazines and books of post-war US hot rodding.
He uses examples of the emphasis in hot rodding magazines of “the
importance of applying and testing knowledge in a practical, down to
earth way” (155) to critique a conception of the modern ‘conspicuous

29 After a slightly disconnected discussion of the role of ‘work’ in post-war
capitalist societies, Moorhouse problematises the meanings associated
with work arguing that “there is no intrinsic meaning to any piece of
consumption’ society, arguing that hot-rodding was “more in tune with older virtues” (157).

Moorhouse is proffering a defense of working class leisure-time labour and associated activities in the face of the ‘radical’ critique to ‘refer to ‘capital’ shaping ‘leisure’ and to dwell on ‘commodity provision’” (Moorhouse 1991: 159). This ‘radical’ diagnosis of labour and exchange relations in terms of the dialectic between subsumption and antagonism is naïve, but so is Moorhouse’s rearticulation of labour in terms of some alleged ‘work ethic’ as ‘presented’ in partisan enthusiast magazines. To use Foucault’s terminology, magazines are part of a popular dispositif of power that seeks to shape the scene in particular economic and social ways. I shall expand on this notion of a scene dispositif much more in the next chapter. The meaning of leisure-time labour framed in terms of valuations of the good (‘older virtues’) and the bad (‘conspicuous consumption’) are less important, from my point of view, than the capacities inherent in such activity to affect and be affected.

The very term ‘know how’ itself implies an assumed knowledge-based relation to action and not simply representations or meaning. ‘Know how’ is practical knowledge because it is valued for its capacity that must be enacted, or, to coin a neologism, in-acted. ‘In-action’ captures some sense of how ‘know how’ is a constituent element of particular events of action while at the same time being transformed as a processual component. Knowledge is an abstraction, but ‘know how’ is a process of continual refinement through practical application that transforms the process of abstraction itself. ‘Know how’ therefore needs to be reoriented in terms of the capacities of enthusiasm in-acted during labouring activity, rather then more abstracted social structurations.
'Knowledge' is an abstraction from the in-acted capacities of ‘know how’ and the complex of affective relations of ‘enthusiasm’, yet along different axes of correlation it remains congruent with both. This explains how different examples of ‘know how’ abstracted as socio-technical knowledge can be in-acted in events belonging to different enthusiasms or variations of the same enthusiasm.

Moorhouse notes a tension between, on the one hand, “the emphasis [of the presentation in magazines] not simply on working metal but on theoretical understanding, scientific knowledge and designing skill,” and, on the other hand, how “[t]heoretical knowledge was not [...] regarded as important in its own right; what mattered was its application” (154). Moorhouse is noting a circuitous movement here from experience (‘down to earth’, ‘working metal’) to discourse (‘theoretical knowledge’) to experience (‘application’). I want to expand on Moorhouse’s engagement by developing a conception of ‘know how’ that is a transversal movement of knowledge and practice together. From a Kantian perspective this would be evidence of the legislative function of Ideas over the ‘imagination’, but which from a Deleuzian perspective the power of the ‘new’ is distributed across the singularities of objects, ideas, and the thresholds of practice.

Across the series of events discussed below where I explore the movement of my own ‘know how’ my comprehension of a mechanical problem changed. Each event was a differential repetition of a singular problem, and not a repeated engagement of the ‘same’ enthusiast (me) with the ‘same’ object (my car). ‘Know how’ is a practical relation but it is also a movement of difference (‘something happens’) in part enabled by the affective disposition of my habitualised enthusiasm. The
happening of ‘know how’ is not simply the application of knowledge, but a transformation in the arrangement of the enthusiast relation between my car and I (and to a lesser extent the scene). I eventually did have some ‘idea’ about the problem, but this is a result of my repeated affirmation of my capacity to engage with the problem, rather than the idea determining the problem in advance.

Moorhouse indicates a way to talk about the complicated relation between the singularities of various objects and relations of enthusiasm actualised in the relations of ‘know how’. He briefly touches on the shifting coordinates of techno-mechanical dimensions of the culture on a ‘historical’ scale of practice for the whole scene:

> In recent years on-board electronics and electro-mechanical devices could be viewed objectively as commodities stripping away skill and, indeed, dealing the death blow to the mechanical basis of rodding. But this is not how they are presented to those who read the magazine. They simply represent new challenges. (161, ital. added)

The ‘progress’ of automotive technologies is not presented as a problem per se, but as a challenge that must be engaged with.30 A ‘challenge’ defines more than the objective conditions of a problem; a ‘challenge’ captures a sense of the contingency of events from which an enthusiasm is expressed as an opportunity to re-affirm the conditions of the

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30 Jennifer Slack and Greg Wise (2005) have engaged with the discourse of technological ‘progress’ noting that it relies on evolutionary metaphors and a linear conception of development.
enthusiasm itself. That is, the enthusiasm is not simply reproduced in a new state of affairs in terms of a resemblance of enthusiast identity to previous examples of the enthusiasm; rather, the enthusiasm is created anew (differentially repeated) from the contingent state of affairs. The contingencies of shifting technological progress serve as a resource or opportunity from which to assemble an enthusiasm anew.

In enthusiast culture a 'challenge' is the basic enthusiast rearticulation of contingency. ‘Challenges’ therefore gain special meaning within enthusiast cultures as the point at which the event of enthusiasm is itself differentially repeated according to the shifting practical coordinates (singularities) of the enthusiasm. Hence, a different kind of durability is indicated compared to the embodied duration of the enthusiast habitus or the material and discursive duration of the scene; this is the durability of the enthusiast relation itself.

The problematic of 'know how' is not simply determined by contingency but in the relation of contingency to structures of knowledge. In the next chapter I shall introduce the street rodding scene in terms of my archival work to plot the relation between the State and the relevant knowledge required for building street rods. There is a tension within discourses between different agents seeking to redefine the conditions of possibility that 'take hold' within 'discourse events' and therefore the capacities of events of action that belong to the scene. In the examples I explore the core tension is between knowledge sanctioned by the State and the practices of valorisation of 'know how' by enthusiasts.
The fieldwork example I engage with below should be understood along these lines, not as a constant problem that hampered my ‘true’ enthusiast enjoyment or identity, but the continual presentation of an opportunity to reaffirm the enthusiasm to which I belong in different ways. I shall map the movement between experience, knowledge-based skill, and the application of this knowledge as ‘know how’ in terms of the intensive singularities of the enthusiasm. My focus is not on the conditions of experience from a Kantian perspective, but what experience does within the context of events and the relations of enthusiasm. This involves moving beyond the terms of the subject-object relation (of me doing something to my car and having knowledge about the practice and the car) to looking at the array of relations within an event.

The Belt Part 1
The problem I had with my car involved the belts at the front of the motor. One belt repeatedly broke. This is a trivial problem compared to the catastrophic engines failures or serious crashes that I have been involved in during my past experience as an enthusiast. What this example provides is a clear demonstration of the relation between ‘know how’ and the ‘in-acted’ capacities of enthusiasm.

The four-litre ‘straight-six’ motor in my Falcon has three belts: 1) between an idler pulley, the alternator, and the water pump, 2) the air-conditioning compressor, and 3) the power steering pump. The first belt kept on snapping. This belt is crucial to the functioning of the car because without a water pump the engine eventually overheats and without an alternator the battery eventually drains. The other two belts are not necessary for the car to be driven, and I actually drove around for a long while without the air-conditioning compressor connected.
The first occasion of the belt breaking occurred on the way to a Fordmods organised ‘dyno day’\(^\text{31}\) at a workshop, Crescent Motorsport, and while I was driving along an older suburban road, Canterbury Road. The first sign that something had gone wrong with my car is that the needle on the temperature gauge rapidly rose. Then I noticed the battery warning lamp was on. I was already experienced with engine failure – everything from overheating to a motor literally blowing up – so even in normal driving conditions I regularly glance at the gauges of the dashboard. Upon noting the alarming signs I changed lanes and looked for somewhere to pull over. I shortly came upon a service station. I quickly pulled in, parked, shut down the car and popped the hood release. I did not know yet what had happened.

‘Popping the hood’ of any car is the first step in realising that cars, even when stationary, are not simply ‘objects’, but events and part of events. Cars are not so much an object but a continual process of negotiation. To begin with, modified cars are often ongoing projects that do not have conceivable end points. For example, a common way for a magazine article to end is with the owner talking about future plans for the vehicle. In this way a modified car is similar to older modes of car ownership

\(^{31}\) A ‘dyno day’ is an event organised around the running of cars on a chassis dynamometer. The drive wheels are aligned over dynamometer rollers and the car is strapped into place and is then driven. Through measuring the acceleration in inertia (electrical-magnetic or mechanical or a combination of these) a measure of torque and power is produced. There are other forms of dynamometer with the other common type used by engine builders to run motors when being built or removed from cars. Basically a ‘dyno’ measures how much power and torque is produced through a twisting force, be it the engine crank or drive wheels. In Chapter 7 I shall discuss the emergence of ‘dynos’ as an integral part of the scene.
where the masculine automobilist was expected to carry out most of the maintenance and upkeep of the vehicle (Gartman 1994; 2004). The necessity of working on cars when the required financial resources are unavailable is often the impetus for pulling apart what Bruno Latour would call the ‘black box’ or plural ‘black boxes’ of the automobile.32 ‘Popping the hood’ is the first act in opening up the ‘black box’.

Enthusiasts problematise the ‘black box’ status of the car as a conventional object. The car is an assemblage of multiple ‘black boxes’. For example, the major components, such as the engine, gearbox, diff, suspension, steering assembly, braking system, electrical system, seats and interior, instrumentation, and body, can be considered individual ‘black boxes’. The example of enthusiast labour and working on cars raises the question of the affective dimension of ‘black boxing’. A quick,

32 The first meaning of ‘black box’ describes a convention that is usually a dynamic model with an input and (a corresponding) output (Latour 1987: 2; Stengers 2000: 103). The term ‘black box’ as it is used here is borrowed from the field of cybernetics where it refers to literally a ‘black box’ drawn around a complex component or part of a circuit diagram. Through ‘black-boxing,’ one is allowed to disregard complexities of circuit, machinery or code assigned to the dynamics within the box. "A black box contains that which no longer needs to be considered, those things whose contents have become a matter of indifference" (Callon and Latour 1981: 285). ‘Black-boxing’ is an everyday process and decision making tool. The power of the ‘black box’ is the reduction of complexities, increased speed of reactions to situations. When a ‘black box’ fails to guide an agent the principle of the ‘black box’ might be questioned, if the failure is not assigned to another ‘black box’ of the remainder: noise. ‘Black-boxing’ always carries with it a number of error sources, usually referred to as ‘noise’. Noise is generally influences that might disturb the correspondence between a particular situation or problem, and the structurated ‘black boxed’ construed to assist an agent in relating or solving the problem. When the ‘truth’ of the box is questioned it is (re)opened, and such a process might dissolve the box altogether, or lead to a restructuring of its contents, and dynamical principles.
but perhaps not very accurate test of whether something is a ‘black box’ or not is to assess one’s comfort in attempting to fix something or whether or not one would even know if something needs fixing. These two elements of the ‘black box’ are closely related.

1) The affective complicity required whereby ‘black boxed’ technologies can produce anxiety if tampered with and therefore indicates an affective threshold (singularity).

2) Related to this affective threshold is the knowledge, skill or experience, and tools required to ‘open’ a black box. These are all elements of ‘know how’.

Part of the general knowledge of ‘know how’ that I had accumulated regarding automotive technologies is that there are two basic systems for making an internal combustion engine powered car ‘go’: ‘fuel’ and ‘spark’. However, a third subsidiary system enables the fueling system and ‘spark’ or electrical and ignition system to function: ‘cooling’. The motor in the Falcon has a water-based coolant system and I checked for any obvious leaks. When checking for leaks I found what appeared at first to be a piece of reinforced or ‘steel-belted’ rubber tyre. I had experienced plenty of bits of tyre when witnessing burnouts being performed (when drivers ‘burn rubber’ in a ritualised display). I realised however, that it was not actually a piece of tyre but one of the belts at the front of the motor. The only belt still connected was the power steering belt. I followed the geometry of the pulleys and realised that the alternator was not connected anymore. I did not yet realise that the water pump was part of the same pulley run, plus I did not realise that the air-conditioner compressor had become disconnected, too. However, I had the Gregory’s manual for my car and some basic tools in a cheap tool kit, as
well as the confidence in my own ability to fix the problem and ‘rise to the challenge.’

I phoned my friend Peter from my mobile phone. He was already at the dyno day and asked if I was “ok with fixing it”. In part he was genuinely concerned with my welfare, but I also felt this was a test of my capacity to ‘deal’ with the problem (and translate it into a ‘challenge’). I told him I would be fine and related a story about how I had had similar problems with my previous car, a Nissan Silvia. I did have a problem however, in that I didn’t know if there were any spare parts shops in the area. He didn’t know of any in the area either. He put me on the phone to the owner and head mechanic at Crescent Motorsport, Joe. Joe said that he had a spare belt “here” and “in a worst-case scenario we could probably organise to get it to you”, but he said that there should be some sort of spare parts shop nearby as “there usually is.” I agreed. I noted there was an auto electrician’s workshop over the road from the service station where I was parked and told Joe I would go there and ask for a belt or if they knew where to find a parts shop.

The auto-electrician did not have a fan belt but he said there was a spare parts shop called “Robbo’s” about 10 minutes walk up the main road – Canterbury Road – to which we were adjacent. I apologised for interrupting his work and thanked him again.

Canterbury Road is a main road with a large carriage of traffic, but it is also a suburban road. It is ‘suburban’ in the nature of buildings and businesses along its length, its median proximity to both the ‘city’ and the urban setting.

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33 On some of the differences between a main road that is suburban and other sorts of roads see the Walking the Parramatta Road report (Goodall 2000).
edge of the city, and in the direction of its outwards-inwards propagation from the city and inner-city area in relation to the outer ring suburbs. I had driven along Canterbury Road as I was unsure of the way the freeways and toll-ways worked in Sydney. I knew by driving along suburban roads I would not have to pay a toll. Plus it allowed me to gain some appreciation of the consistency of Sydney’s suburbs compared to the suburbs in Perth where I grew up. I knew that the logistics of movement and the ways of dwelling in the suburbs was different than other urban spaces. The nature of the road is important because when the fan belt broke if I had been on a non-suburban road (freeway, toll-way, city, outer-urban, rural, etc.) with a different composition and density of certain ‘suburban’ businesses, then I would not have been able to fix my car.

Robbo’s is typical of many spare parts shops I have frequented over the years. These shops are not like the massive auto-parts chain stores that stock everything from air-fresheners to under-car neon lights Instead they cater for the home mechanic or time-constrained professional who cannot wait for parts to come directly from (less expensive) wholesalers. Such spare parts shops are unique in that their specialty is not so much the parts they stock; rather, the key business and why they can charge more for the exact same items than the larger chain shops on the same road is that the counter staff have ‘know how’. The staff can be classified into two categories determined by ‘know how’ and experience: those who know something and those who defer to someone who knows something.
When I asked for an alternator and water pump belt for an ED Falcon four-litre motor the counter staff serving me deferred to his colleague who rattled off the part number (without looking up a parts catalogue). While the first staff member found the belt, the second asked me if I knew how to tighten the tensioner properly. I replied that I thought that I did and besides I had the Gregory’s manual to help me. He paused and gave me a skeptical look. The other staff member returned with the belt. The face is important for expressing affects, which in this case related to the performative disposition of ‘know how’. Now I realise I should have read the ‘know how’ on his face.

The staff at Robbo’s perform the acquired disposition of ‘know how’ through their nonchalance, which is the opposite of the active affection of enthusiasm expressed when translating problems into challenges and reconfiguring the enthusiast habitus. A ‘proper’ customer, just like a ‘proper’ enthusiast, recognises (in the Kantian sense) the value of their ‘know how’ and therefore asks questions in a particular way that draws on the ‘know how’ of the counter staff or at least allows the counter staff to perform their practical knowledge regarding the issue or problem at hand. A new terrain of problems is therefore produced based on the capacity to recognise, identify, and group ‘know how’. This is also an acquired attribute of the enthusiast habitus as it relies on a ‘know how’ on a more abstract level from the specificity of the contingent situation at hand. It is a ‘know how’ assembled from the contingent specificity of the generalities shared in the situation: a ‘know how’ of ‘know how’. It is borne from the experienced-based capacity to abstract from the spatio-temporality of individual problems, and actualise them as a series of a single problem.
I walked back to my car and started taking apart the pulley system to get access to the broken belt. The diagram in the Gregory’s manual was not particularly useful for dismantling the required engine bay components to get to the pulley, so I did not pay too much attention to the written instructions. (As I would later discover, this was not a good move.) I had to remove the unusual vent tube that connected to the battery on the right hand side of the engine bay and the cold air intake to the box housing the air filter from the other side of the engine bay. Next I had to figure out the size bolt head the bolts holding the pulley brackets to the engine block. I judged there were basically three easily movable brackets or engine bay elements that I would have to move to change the belt and did this without too much consternation (except, of course, for the necessary uncomfortable dexterity of working in the tight space of this particular engine bay when the engine had been running and was still relatively hot).

The alternator tensioner system did not look familiar to me and was different to all the other cars I had owned or worked on. There was a 13mm bolt that I could access and which seemed to clamp the alternator to the bracket. I tensioned up the alternator as much as possible using a spanner to lever it into place and then tightened the 13mm bolt. This seemed to hold it. I put the rest of the engine bay pieces back in place. My hands were sore and dirty by this stage, but I felt happy and proud that I had changed the belt literally on the side of the road and was now about to be on my way again. I started up the engine and it started with a rubbing squeak that I associated with the new belt. The sound went away after the engine idled for a while as I checked all the bolts. I thought it was fixed.
I arrived at the dyno day in time to make my booked dyno run. My car made 116kw or about 155hp at the rear wheels. The belts squeaked when I started it up for the dyno run, and the mechanic asked me if I had tensioned the belts properly. I said that I had. Below is the graph print out of my car’s ‘dyno run’.

Figure 2.1

The abstract content of knowledge that belongs to modified-car culture at first seems to be organised around the obvious question of the technico-mechanical objects of automotive technology, and this is Moorhouse’s focus in his chapter on hot rodding labour. The technico-mechanical objects of automotive technology, and this is Moorhouse’s focus in his chapter on hot rodding labour. The technico-

34 To put this into perspective my turbocharged four-cylinder Japanese-import 1991 Nissan Silvia made this too but with about half the torque. My other car, a 1981 XD model Ford Falcon with a 5.8 litre V8 motor, made about twice this power and with twice the torque.
mechanical dimensions of modified-car culture have not changed considerably over the last 40 years – basically a car body, motor, drivetrain assembly, interior, wheels, etc. – therefore some elements of the processual relation of ‘know how’ remain constant within the culture.

Modified-car culture is not simply about cars however. Moorhouse describes the ‘message’ of Hot Rod magazine as representing hot rodding as involving “ideologies of activity, involvement, enthusiasm, craftsmanship, learning by doing, experimental development, display and creativity, all circulating around the motor car as an object in use’” (152, ital. added). Motor cars are the obvious common thread but the activities associated with a ‘motor car as an object in use’ require a socio-technical network of both contingent and durable relations with other social objects and agents. At a minimum the motor car as an ‘object in use’ (in any normative sense of using a motor car) obviously requires the entire system of automobility.

Although not discussed explicitly, there is an experiential dialectic of ‘know how’ in Moorhouse’s exposition of enthusiast labour that informs his problematic of leisure-time work. The dialectic is between experience, knowledge-based skill and the application of knowledge. The dialectical relation is mediated by contingencies and the relation itself is between inherited knowledge that becomes ‘know how’ through its practical application, and knowledge learnt through experience as ‘know how’. ‘Know how’ is not simply a deployment of an abstraction inculcated in

\[\text{35To a certain extent this invokes a quasi-Heideggerian reading of the event (Ereignis) of the motor car properizing itself as when a thing is thinging I tend to side with Deleuze’s conception of the event as a problematic incorporeal ‘happening’ that exists as the cosmic 4th-person singular and not necessarily as its actualisation in a state of affairs or its becoming as a threshold movement.}\]
discourse, it is a repotentialisation of the capacity of the knowledge through its integration within the contingent experience of a happening event. A few questions immediately arise: What is the content of this knowledge in relation to contingency of events? How does the relation of experience and abstraction relate to enthusiasm?

The key thinker of ‘know how’ as practical knowledge has been Michel de Certeau. De Certeau sought to locate ‘know how’ in relation to Michel Foucault’s notion of discourse and Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of practice. The movement between experience and discourse that Moorhouse implicitly isolates in his discussion of theoretical knowledges and their application is mirrored in de Certeau’s discussion of discourse and practical knowledge. De Certeau describes ‘know-how’ or ‘art’ as knowledge “without discourse” (65). ‘Know how’ in modified-car culture is largely concerned with the techno-mechanical dimension of the ‘motor car in use’, not only in the sense of driving it and so on, but in the sense of the modified car as an on-going socio-technical project. The other is primarily cultural form of ‘know how’ is discussed in later chapters. It is concerned with the practical knowledge of the ‘scene’ pertaining to modified-car culture and what is ‘happening’.

The car is an event, not only in terms of being an element or tendency within the event of the ‘social’ as per Bruno Latour’s conception of ANT

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36 De Certeau’s work, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, is much celebrated in cultural studies for its elaboration of an innate theory of ‘resistance’ or ‘art’ of everyday life in terms of tactics and strategies. However, in this context, I am not concerned with the general coordinates of De Certeau’s popular conceptualisation of tactics and strategies.

37 I shall engage with the work of Sarah Thornton through this prism of ‘know how’ derived from De Certeau and others. The same structuralist tension noted in part of Bourdieu’s work is even more evident in Thornton’s work.
(Latour 2005), but also in Whitehead’s sense of an event that exceeds the social and is defined by its immanent relation to contingency. My car can be defined by its model and year of manufacture – 1994 Ford Falcon XR6 – in other words, its identity or formal existence within car culture. But it can also be defined as a concatenated series of contingencies of the singularities that define it as ‘this’ car ‘here’. A productive ‘philosophy of contingency’ dominates the late work of Louis Althusser (2006), and is very useful for understanding the properly immanent nature of contingency. In Althusser’s materialist philosophy of the encounter a

38 This is to follow Alfred North Whitehead (and to a certain extent so do Latour and Deleuze) in his definition of events as a nexus of immanent actual occasions and a ‘society’ as also being a nexus of actual occasions but one which is durable. An actual occasion is of a prehension prehending another prehension. The durability of a ‘society’, which can be anything including a car, is defined by its capacity to incorporate contingency:

A society has an essential character, whereby it is the society that it is, and it has also accidental qualities which vary as circumstances alter. Thus a society, as a complete existence and as retaining the same metaphysical status, enjoys a history expressing its changing reactions to changing circumstances. But an actual occasion has no such history. It never changes. It only becomes and perishes. Its perishing is its assumption of a new metaphysical function in the creative advance of the universe. (1967: 204)

39 The encounter “becomes the basis of all reality” (2006: 169):

Whence the form of order and the form of beings whose birth is induced by this pile-up, determined as they are by the structure of the encounter; whence, once the encounter has been effected (but not before), the primacy of the structure over its elements; whence, finally, what one must call an affinity and a complementarity [compleitude] of the elements that come into play in the encounter, their ‘readiness to collide-interlock’ [accrochabilité], in order that this encounter ‘take hold’, that is to say, ‘take form’, at last give birth to Forms, and new Forms – just as water ‘takes hold’ when ice is there waiting for it, or milk does when it curdles, mayonnaise when it emulsifies. Hence the primacy of ‘nothing’ over all ‘form’, and of aleatory materialism over all formalism. (2006: 191-192)
true contingency belongs to a non-encounter and a non-accomplished fact, while the contingency that ‘takes’ with the minimum of formal consistency (what Althusser calls an ‘accomplished fact’) as an encounter is no longer a contingency as such but becomes the singularity of the conjunctural event of an encounter.

Similarly, my attempts to repair my car could be described in terms of identity and eventually fixing a specific problem. However, this misses the process of ‘know how’: the incorporeal movement by which the boundaries between the known and the unknown shift with every experiential and performative in-action of knowledge and skill through my engagement with my car’s problems. The on-going incorporeal movement of ‘know how’ is ‘in-acting’ of the capacities of enthusiasm. The durable excitement and capacities of enthusiasm are articulated in the movement between two singular points – a problem which becomes a challenge.

**The Belt Part 2**
The second time the belt snapped I had friends staying at my flat for another friend’s wedding and I was driving them around Sydney. I was due to travel out of New South Wales shortly after the wedding and I did not have time to organise any repairs or sustained mechanical investigations into what now appeared to be a constant problem. In fact I had to get my car sorted within the very short time frame of a few hours. This time my battery had also been drained because the belt broke near my place, as I drained the battery driving the car despite the broken belt, hoping to get home. The technical nature of the problem had changed slightly in that I had to buy a new battery and a new belt. After walking to
the closest spare parts shop I discovered they did not stock the correct belt. I had to get a cab to a nearby suburb and purchase a belt and battery there.

I had acquired sufficient technique for dismantling the engine bay components and therefore carried out this task very efficiently. Not only had I learnt how to dismantle and reassemble the engine bay components, I had figured out I could bash the alternator with a soft mallet to tension it up, and then tighten up the bolt that seemed to lock it in place. To stop the squeaking of loose belts I rubbed some shavings from a graphite lead pencil across the belt.\(^\text{40}\) This got the car going again sufficiently to get it home, get me to the wedding and then not have to worry about where I had left my car over the summer break. I eventually replaced the air-conditioning belt at a later stage as I had a family member visiting me and I wanted to make sure my air-conditioning was working during the sticky Sydney summer heat. Besides the occasions of the belt snapping, the belts would consistently become loose (and squeak) and I would have to get out the mallet and bash the alternator and tighten the lock bolt. This became a ritual and happened at least twice a week or before I would be driving other people in my car.

A few months later an informal meet-up was organised through the Fordmods forums. The meet-up was at the Krispe Kremes doughnut shop franchise near the Sydney domestic airport. Here I finally found out from another enthusiast why I was having a constant problem with my belts and pulleys. First, the small 13mm bolt was a locking bolt from a much larger sprocket that had a 26mm head and which bit into the teeth of

\(^{40}\)I had learned about this trick from a mechanic at a service station at which I had once worked after I had had similar problem with my Silvia.
the alternator bracket in such a way so that when the 26mm head was
turned (with a suitable spanner) the teeth of the sprocket bit into the
teeth of the bracket and the whole alternator rotated, tensioning up the
belt. Second, a consistent problem that occurred with this model Falcon
and this design of alternator tensioner and bracket system was that the
teeth on the bracket eventually wore away and needed replacement.

I had encountered another’s ‘know how’ regarding the problem twice;
first at Robbo’s and then at the Fordmods meet-up. The fellow Fordmods
enthusiast was far more forthcoming. The bond of friendship is an
expression of the (possibly homosocial) desire to belong to the group and
it is mediated not by the car as an object, but the way the object exits in
relation to contingency as an event. I felt slightly foolish once it had been
explained to me. The information in the Gregory’s manual also gained
new meaning. I tracked down a new bracket from a Ford spare parts
service center that was part of a Ford dealership in the middle of the city
and I bought a large 26mm spanner for the tensioner sprocket head.

At this stage I was house sitting a small terrace in the Sydney suburb of
Annandale rented by the cousin of a friend. There was nowhere on the
property to carry out mechanical repairs and because it was a relatively
minor job I decided to do it in the street out the front of the terrace.
Annandale is an inner-city suburb and the terraces would have once
been occupied by the workers associated with the now decommissioned
inner-city Sydney power station or waterways and harbour. However, the
inner-city suburb had been somewhat ‘embourgeoisied’ and had a large
population of students and young professionals. There were not too many
occasions when someone was crawling in and around the engine bay of
a vehicle carrying out mechanical repairs in the street. In outer-lying
suburbs such ‘street’ or ‘backyard’ mechanical repairs are common. While I was crawling out from underneath the front of my car I was actually approached by a neatly dressed woman who enquired into what it was I was doing. I explained that I was changing the bracket for the alternator and gestured to the engine bay that had looked as if it had suffered a minor explosion with bits of engine strewn across the engine bay in precariously balanced ways. The woman said it looked complicated. I fitted the new bracket up and tightened the tensioner properly. Finally, I thought, I had conquered the problem and this particular challenge had well and truly been met. It was not over yet.

‘Know how’ is a subterranean knowledge of contingency that ‘takes’ (or ‘coagulates’ or ‘sets’ in Althusser’s sense) with the minimum of formalisation through practices of discourse and the capacities of demonstrative acquisition belonging to the enthusiast habitus. A special example of what Althusser terms a ‘contingency’ is the conception of ‘sense’ as the aleatory movement between series of signified and signifier developed by Deleuze in The Logic of Sense. Sense is the contingency of meaning in relation to the structures of language. It is in this sense of ‘sense’ that I understand Bourdieu’s notion of a “practical sense” (1977: 113; 1990: 66) particularly as it is interpreted by De Certeau (1984: 51) as a relation of the contingencies of practice to the structurating structures of the habitus. It was not only my active affection of enthusiasm that

41 “Practical sense is a quasi-bodily involvement in the world which presupposes no representation either of the body or the world, still less of their relationship” (Bourdieu 1990: 66).
42 De Certeau’s relation of discourse and practice to the form of time that he calls an ‘occasion’ is congruent with what I am calling an event. The connection is with the materialist temporality of Kairos (De Certeau 1984: 43). On the connection between the event and Kairos, see Antonio Negri’s work (2003).
was required to rearticulate (or ‘reformalise’) the contingency of a problem into a challenge. My relation to the Gregory’s manual, to the enthusiasts and to my car all changed as my habitus changed. These are all constituent elements of the event of enthusiasm differentially repeated with the challenge of the broken fan belt. The sense of the manual was modified, my relationship with the other enthusiast was modified, and my socio-technical skill to engage with my car was modified.

Throughout my fieldwork example the basic coordinates of ‘know how’ in terms of the capacities for action have continually shifted. In part what was at stake was the enthusiast capacity to deal with a problem and its transformation into a ‘challenge’. This transformation is the first step in the process of ‘problems’ becoming a social affirmation of one’s commitment. Moorhouse discusses contingent problems in this way (albeit on a ‘historical’ scale), and the enthusiast literature is full of countless examples that are part of ‘feature car’ stories in magazines about the ‘build up’ of the vehicle and the process someone (usually the owner) went through during the ‘build’. The modified car is a material trace of the ‘build’ and experienced enthusiasts can ‘read’ the car and modifications to follow the ‘build’.

The second step in a problem becoming a challenge is actually solving the problem. ‘Problems’ only have the potential to be ‘challenges’ and there is no guarantee that a ‘problem’ will become a ‘challenge’. ‘Problems’ become ‘challenges’ as they are in-actioned, and the singular contingencies of all the elements of the ‘problem’ (for example, the Gregory’s manual, the enthusiast and his advice, and my relation to my car) are translated through the creation of social possibilities. The
basic configuration of the practical movement of a ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’ involves a translation of the minimum of form that ‘takes hold’ (in the Althusserian sense) of contingencies.

The translation of the contingent singularity from a ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’ is an example of the performativity of both enthusiasm and gender as inculcated into the existing habitus.\textsuperscript{43} ‘Gender’ is not simply a human artifice cleaved from the Symbolic, but involves all levels of social life. It is a particular configuration of singularities and the movements between singularities. The translation of contingencies from ‘problems’ into ‘challenges’ in modified-car culture is one such example of the gendered event of enthusiasm. Very rarely do accounts in magazines manage to cover the nature of contingencies as contingencies however; instead, a linear causality is normally deployed back across the duration of the build in terms of a successful project. There are very rarely failures in magazines. Even though the cars in magazines are pregnant with contingencies, they are not considered ‘problems’ because they have become ‘challenges’ that their owner/modifiers have ‘met’ and ‘conquered’. There are two points worth noting here.

1) The general practice of modified-car enthusiasts and the nature of the scene. The performative enthusiast labour of gender in transforming ‘problems’ into ‘challenges’ produces an economy of respect; so when enthusiasts ‘rise to the challenge’ they are respected and so on, or if they fail in this act of translation they are

\textsuperscript{43} Much of the gender studies work on enthusiast car cultures involves a notion of the masculine domination of technology. I suggest that the masculine domination of technology is not evident in relations to objects as objects but is evident in particular masculine ways of ‘rising to the challenge’ of technology as a process. I discuss this further below.
otherwise understood as being ‘weak’. Feature articles on completed modified cars capture this tension between ‘problems’ and ‘challenges’ at a certain perfect moment of equilibrium, that is, of having met the challenge. However, actually living with these sorts of cars is very different. It is the capacity to ‘earn’ respect that I performed in the earlier episode when I phoned Peter and also spoke to Joe. It is also this capacity that was performed when a fellow enthusiast informed me of the specific technical nature of the problem at the Krispe Kremes meet-up.

2) The meet-up is an example of the homosociality of modified-car culture. The social desire between masculine enthusiasts is mediated by the car. Performatively in-acted however, is the ongoing capacity of enthusiasm itself. This is the capacity of enthusiasm to build upon itself, which, following Kant, is its sublime dimension, or in Tomkins’ terminology it relates to the amplificatory power of affect to accelerate along activation contours.

The fellow enthusiast who passed on the two crucial pieces of information regarding the technical nature of the belt problem was not simply forming a homosocial relation with me mediated by my car, but was articulating the larger event of the enthusiasm through his concern and manifest interest in the problem. He demonstrated the capacity to translate contingencies that did not belong to him per se, but belonged to the enthusiasm and the general intensive coordinates of the scene. As part of the homosocial institution of modified-car culture the enthusiast articulated the event of enthusiasm on the scale of the scene as well as

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44 Although I am arguing this movement is masculine, as all evidence appears to suggest it is, it is also first and foremost an affirmation of the enthusiasm.
the scale of the interpersonal homosocial relation with each other and our respective events as masculine enthusiasts.

**The Belt Part 3**

Roughly a year and a half later, on the way back from an academic conference in Canberra, the belt broke again. I was driving along the same main south-western freeway that I had avoided when I had driven out to Crescent Motorsport for the dyno day. I pulled over in the emergency stopping bay just near entrance to the Sydney Cross-City Tunnel. Unfortunately in my excitement about driving to the conference, I had not packed any of my tools in the car. By this stage I had accumulated a considerable array of tools because all the other work I had carried out on my car (besides changing alternator belts). A complicating factor in this event is that I had an academic colleague with me visiting from Sweden who had accompanied me to the conference. It was a unique opportunity for her to get some experience of the space between large Australian cities. She was very calm and sat herself on a rug in some shade to read a book while I attended to the task of fixing my car.

The problem had again shifted in character. Now I knew exactly how to fix my car but I was missing the necessary tools to carry out the task. I rang up a friend to get directions to the nearest spare parts shop, but my friend did not know the area and even after looking on the internet could not find a suitable shop. I walked up the bike path alongside the freeway and came out on Bexley Road. I new there was a service station about 20 minutes walk up the road and set out. I passed an auto-electrician who unfortunately was closed. The service station did not stock the
required belt or any tools and the young man working at the counter did not know of any spare parts shops. I kept on walking and one of my thongs (flip flops) broke, so I ended up walking bare foot. Eventually I realised where I was.

If I continued along Bexley Road I would arrive at the intersection near Robbo’s. Remarkably, I thought, here I am two years after the first event and I was in the same place. I bought some tools and two belts: one to replace and the other as a permanent spare. To my astonishment beside Robbo’s was a wholesale footwear shop that sold shoes to the public. I bought some rather extravagant sandals for my bare feet and got a cab back to the point where the bike path from the freeway met Bexley Road. This had taken about two hours. When I arrived back at the car my colleague seemed unfazed if not a little tired. This time I changed the belt in ten minutes and we were off again.

The on-going fan belt issue was not properly resolved until I could sufficiently understand the technical constraints of the tensioner system. This knowledge was not simply discursive because even though I am a relatively skilled amateur mechanic I did not properly understand the instructions in the manual. Now the instructions are very clear to me. Without question my inability to follow the instructions in the manual is due to my assumptions regarding how skilled I actually am and the necessity of having to read the manual properly. It seems as if the information of the manual needs to be tempered or formalised with a little experience, however. As soon as the problem was ‘formalised’ as an accomplished fact (in Althusser’s terminology), albeit in an informal way through an enthusiast explanation of the nature of the problem, then the location of the contingency shifted because I was able to fabricate new
expectations not only about what would necessarily happen, but also in terms of what may happen (expected possibilities). The contingencies of the problem were therefore re-distributed in the socio-technical discursive space within which I inhabit with my car and the rest of the socio-technical network of the enthusiasm I share with others. The contingencies of the belt were organised into thresholds of possibility and expectation: the breaking or squeaking fan belt was either a worn belt or a loose belt, and this was caused by either an untensioned tensioner or a worn bracket that enabled the tensioner to slacken. Each contingency could be discoursed as a threshold of possibility as the event of the belt breaking/squeaking gained a certain consistency infused with experience (incorporated into my enthusiast habitus) and knowledge (discourse), or, in other words, ‘know how’.

I have taken care to relate the story of the fan belt in such a way so as to draw attention to the shifting coordinates of the thresholds of possibility. What I thought was possible at the start of the problem was no the same set of possibilities that I expected at the end. The nature of the problem was dependent on the capacities for action including those belonging to the discourse of the Gregory’s manual, access to the correct parts and tools, sympathetic enthusiasts ‘know how’ willing to discuss and relate an experience of the problem, and the habitus of my enthusiast body. These capacities are immanent to their potentialisation through in-action of various elements in the differential repetition of enthusiasm.

**The Serial Problematic Contiguity of Enthusiasm**

‘Know how’ has to be understood as constituted by more than the realisation of already existing conditions of practice through the
“production and reproduction of objective meaning” (Bourdieu 1977: 79). It has been so far defined as the actualisation of something new or different within events immanently potentialised as the enthusiasm. That is, the potentiality of the problem was actualised into the possibilities of the challenge, and these possibilities qualitatively changed at each differential repetition of enthusiasm. It is an example of the event of both masculinity and of enthusiasm in that I performed the practical sense of being masculine and an enthusiast in the aleatory movement of a singular contingency distributed across the translation from ‘problem’ to ‘challenge’.

In the fieldwork example of this chapter, enthusiasm is an ideal event, but it is actualised within various states of affairs of the belt problem; the difference between the event as ideal and the accident (or spatio-temporal realisation in a state of affairs) (Deleuze 1990: 53). A series is defined by the singularity distributed across it and begins and ends at the threshold of another singularity (Deleuze 1990: 52-53). Singularities are not distributed according to an absolute space-time, but according to aleatory points (Deleuze 1990: 56). Ideal events correlate with the problematic (re)distribution of singularities, and can be repeatedly actualised in different ways (Deleuze 1990: 56-57). For example, my enthusiast habitus was modified at every point of contact with the mechanical problem of the broken belt, and this modified the way the event of enthusiasm could be differentially repeated. The being of enthusiasm “leaps from one singularity to another, casting always the dice belonging to the same cast, always fragmented and formed again in each throw [or ‘contingency’]” (Deleuze 1990: 107). The mechanical problem changed in nature as the capacities expressed through my actions changed. There are two orders of ‘problem’ here: There is the
problematic nature of the singular event of enthusiasm, and the normative ‘problem’ I had with my car that defines the ‘accidental’ quality of the event of enthusiasm as it is actualised as the lived reality of the car problem. Each reconfiguration of my ‘know how’, in terms of what I thought was possible, my capacities for this thought, and my ability to engage with these possibilities, kept on changing or being refined; this reconfiguration, or what I have called the translation of contingency, is an event of enthusiasm.

The differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm forms a series that defines the character of the enthusiasm. In general, the events of the series are problematically contiguous rather than spatially contiguous or temporally contiguous (Deleuze 1990: 55). Contiguity is a relation of proximity whereby elements of the relation are in contact with each other (Eastman 1910). Spatial contiguity describes a situation whereby relations of proximity are determined by extensive distributions in space, such as belonging to a neighbourhood or a city. Temporal contiguity describes a situation involving temporal relations of proximity, such as the notion of one’s generation. This Aristotelian definition of contiguity is an attempt to account for the extension of elements in the world (White

45 For Deleuze problems are ideal ‘objecticitics’ or complex events. He suggests that “everyone ‘recognises’ after a fashion that problems are the most important thing. Yet it is not enough to recognise this in fact, as if the problems were only provisional and contingent movements destined to disappear in the formation of knowledge, which owed their importance only to the negative empirical conditions imposed upon the knowing subject. On the contrary, this discovery must be raised to the transcendental level, and problems must be considered not as ‘givens’ (data), but as ideal ‘objecticitics’ possessing their own sufficiency and implying acts of constitution and investment in their respective symbolic fields” (1994: 159).
By shifting to a question of problematic contiguity I am aiming to address the intensive relations of proximity in the series produced by the differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm.

The serial problematic contiguity of enthusiasm can be mapped by the force of affects circulating within the cultural events of enthusiasm. For example, the primary affect of interest is not bound by abstract ‘metric’ conventions of space-time, but as Tomkins argued, working within the relative frame of an absolute space-time, affective investment has a time and space freedom. Affect has an autonomy that is not restricted by instinctual compulsions, but is activated in the proximity of problematic basins of singularities. As Deleuze argues, “[i]t is no longer a matter of placing bounds around the mind or of tying it up, but rather nailing it down. It is no longer a matter of fixed relations, but of centers of fixation” (1991: 124). Enthusiasm, as a series of differentially repeated events, therefore takes on a diagonal or ‘baroque’ composition in various states of affairs as the ideal event is actualised in different ways (Deleuze 1993: 157-158).

Yet, the scenes of modified-car culture are not impenetrably complex and aleatory configurations of events. They take on a characteristic regularity as the repeated events of enthusiasm gain a more general affective consistency distributed across multiple series. These are the ritualised cultural events of the scene. Instead of practices involving the translation of the contingency of a problem into a challenge, the

46 With reference to an ‘Aristotelian logic’, Whitehead (1978: 61-82) critically summarises the ‘error’ of mistaking the potentiality of the extensive ‘time and space continuum’, which he agrees is very useful for everyday living, for the ‘reality’ of the ‘creative process’ of events. What Whitehead calls an ‘actual occasion’ (of a realisation in a spatio-temporal state of affairs) is a “limiting type of event” (80).
ritualised cultural events of the scene are organised around contingencies where the conditions of possibility are habitualised as ritualised practices. The enthusiast differentially repeats the event of enthusiasm, and this gives cultural events their affective consistency. If cultural events are read in terms of the correspondence of identity, then the movement of enthusiasm is depotentialised and identity becomes circular. As Hodkinson noted in his study of Goths, cultural events are the primary site for the collective enjoyment of shared tastes, the claiming of status and the establishment of goth friendships and relationships, they tended to be at the centre of a circular process of increasing individual attachment and commitment to the subculture. (2002: 107)

‘Commitment’ here is the correspondence of identity determined by the extensive relations of elements, rather than the intensive movement of affect. However, appreciating the affective dimension of cultural events is crucial for understanding the way enthusiasts navigate the cultural events of the scene.

‘Know How’ of the Scene
‘Know how’ is also a useful concept for understanding the practical knowledge enthusiasts have of the scene for navigating and participating in the cultural events of the scene. Enthusiasts have an awareness of the capacities for certain forms of ritualised social action and this involves the immanent potentialisation of a practical knowledge within cultural events. That is, beyond the socio-technical coordinates of the mechanical problem of the broken belt, is the problematic of cultural
events that determine the character of a scene. In all situations ‘know how’ is necessarily experiential and affective in nature, therefore ‘know how’ of a scene will include, firstly, an affective dimension of affirmation that resonates with the affective complex and ‘durable excitement’ of enthusiasm. Secondly, it has a particular relation to contingency that will valorise or affirm the conditions of the enthusiasm according to the capacity of the enthusiasm to translate contingencies of different cultural events into expressive affirmations of enthusiasm.

‘Know how’ conceptualised as a practical knowledge of the scene is useful for rearticulating Sarah Thornton’s work on ‘subcultural capital’. Thornton actually references a version of ‘know how’ (as “cultural knowledge”) relating to the function of the media:

[Within the economy of subcultural capital, the media are not simply another symbolic good or marker of distinction (which is the way Bourdieu describes films and newspaper vis-à-vis cultural capital), but a network crucial to the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge. In other words the difference between being in or out of fashion, high or low subcultural capital, correlates in complex ways with degrees of media coverage, creation and exposure. (Thornton 1996: 13-14)]

Why is this cultural knowledge only relevant in Thornton’s analysis when dealing with the media? Don’t participants of the scenes in which Thornton carried out her research also have a cultural knowledge that, at the very minimum, enables them to have the capacity to judge according to subcultural tastes and which is therefore a necessary compliment to subcultural capital? Thornton inherits Bourdieu’s focus on
social practice that seeks to discover the objective social structures produced and reproduced in every subjective act, and which are expressed through the definition and distribution of cultural knowledge, but not what this cultural knowledge actually ‘does’. Bourdieu makes a useful distinction between ‘practical and ‘scientific’ knowledge, with the difference being the attention to temporality intrinsic to practice. This is the temporality of contingency and of the event. Scientific knowledge is a rule-based abstraction that becomes inculcated as discourse, while practical knowledge is concerned with contingent processes of ‘strategy’. As De Certeau (1984: 54) writes of Bourdieu’s notion of strategy, “strategies do not ‘apply’ principles or rules; they choose among them to make up the repertory of their operations.”

Thornton actually discusses such strategy in terms of ‘indicators’ of social stratification, but her focus on the symbolic realm at the expense of the affective embodied dimension is problematic. For example, she writes that the “term ‘underground’ is the expression by which clubbers refer to things subcultural” (Thornton 1996: 117). She then goes on to suggest that ‘undergrounds’ “denote exclusive worlds whose main point may not be elitism but whose parameters often relate to particular crowds” (117). Surely what is at stake here is not symbolic meaning of the underground found in the ‘exclusivity’ as such but the ‘know how’, or capacity of ‘cultural knowledge,’ to be used to navigate and transform the scene so as to produce a given ‘crowd’ or population of participants or to know where events with such a ‘crowd’ exist in the scene. Even though Thornton does not dwell on this point, an alternative perspective is indicated in her representation of the work of doormen and bouncers in that it is comparable to the function of media-based disseminators of cultural knowledge when it comes to the production of particular crowd-
populations (1996: 113-114). Both effect a certain transformation of the cultural events of the scene, in part determined by practical, cultural knowledge.

The link between Thornton’s notion of subcultural capital as a ‘hipness’ via her brief mention of ‘cultural knowledge’ and the conceptualisation of ‘know how’ developed in the previous section is necessarily experiential and affective. ‘Know how’ and subcultural capital coalesce in the discursive practices that inculcate a valorising capacity. This valorising capacity actualises conditions of possibility in ways that are congruent with the affects of enthusiasm. I am suggesting that, like the cultural function of Thornton’s media to bestow a symbolic meaning upon objects, every performative display of subcultural capital is in fact a valorisation of the capacities that belong to the elements of subcultural capital.

The scene of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia is in part animated by two tensions. The first is the constant tension between the technical knowledges of automotive engineering and technologies and the affects of enthusiasm that valorise such knowledges. I shall discuss the cultural politics of modified-car culture in the final two chapters. The difference between ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘know how’ is knowledge. ‘Know how’ is necessarily owned by an individual or handed along between individuals, and enthusiasm is a subjectively experienced but shared impersonal affective relation. The technical knowledge of automotive engineering within modified-car culture serves a number of different functions:

1) Technical engineering knowledge sanctioned by the State;
2) Technical engineering knowledge passed on from other enthusiasts or mechanics and technical workers and transmitted through various media or in person;

3) Technical knowledge learnt through the contingencies of experience working on socio-technical problems;

4) Technical knowledge learnt through exposure to the contingencies of practice and cultural events of the scene and the discursive function that technology serves as a form of valorisation.

The second tension that animates the scene is between the active affections of ‘know how’ and the passive affections of ‘charisma’. I shall work towards an understanding of the different ‘identities’ of the scene as pertaining to populations of enthusiasts in terms of the capacities of their ‘know how’ durably manifest as discourse and habitus in relation to the ways relations of charisma are continually reformed through the work of the enthusiast culture industry. The ‘know how’ that enthusiasts have of the scene does not simply ‘help’ in times of problems, but is a constituent element in the differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm in the various cultural events of the scene. A focus on cultural events of the scene and what enthusiasts ‘do’ is different to a focus on the identity of who is doing what where. Enthusiasts rearticulate contingencies to express through the affects of enthusiasm the differentially repeated event of enthusiasm. To know the scene is to know the distribution of affects and capacities to be affected within the scene; this is the ‘know’ and the ‘how’ of the scene, and this can be differentiated into more specific, but still general examples of ‘know how’:

1) Geographical ‘know how’, including sites of activity, commercial centres, and trans-local connections across states and
even globally of where different types of ‘action’ happen. For example, the ‘action’ happening at the Western Sydney International Dragway (WSID) of drag racing is different to the ‘action’ happening on Hickson Road in the Sydney area of the Rocks. In one case, enthusiasts enthralled by the performance of technology on the drag strip is contrasted with the night time sociality of ‘hanging out’ (and avoiding the police) of the so-called ‘hoons’ on Hickson Road;

2) Historical ‘know how’, including histories of given scenes and types of action, different technologies, manifestations of enthusiasm, correlations between broader cultural formations and scenes. I shall explore this in much more detail when I examine the transformation of the large ‘festivals’ from amatuer organised events of the 1970s and 1980s compared to the ‘professional’ events of the late-1980s until present;

3) Affective ‘know how’ of different intensive fields of enthusiasm within a bounded physical space, such as the different enthusiasms distributed across the suburbs of a city or urban centre. In the final two chapters I shall highlight the cultural politics of different valorisations of technology. A simple example of this is found in the Introduction with the friendly tension between the different ‘camps’ of enthusiasts at the Fairfield Youth festival;

4) Cultural ‘know how’ of the scene’s infrastructure including the workshops, the enthusiasts, and the media and magazines. I have only explored this in a limited way, but there is a capacity for discernment evident in the practices of enthusiasts that may be expressed hierarchically, but which is actually an expression of horizontal distributions of affect across populations.
In the next chapter I engage with the concept of the ‘scene’ largely derived from popular music studies and rethought for the context of contemporary Australian modified-car culture. Part of my work across the next four chapters is outlining the historical transformation of the scene in Australia from the 1970s ‘street rodding’ era to the 1980s ‘street machining’ era. I shall argue that the movements or transformations of the scene are also transformations in the character of enthusiasm. The relation between the scene and enthusiasm is actually the relation between different scales and registers of the reconfiguration and distribution of a single complex set of singularities, that is, of a single event.
Chapter 3 The Scene and *Dispositif* of Street Rodding

Modified-car culture is different to other similar cultural formations or ‘subcultures’ in that it has existed as a coherent cultural formation for at least 50 years. As I noted in the Introduction, modified-car culture emerged as a localised set of practices in Southern California and then spread in the post-war period to the rest of the US and the world. Its durability is therefore comparable in some ways to surfi, biker and skateboarding culture. This is not to say that modified-car culture has been static over this time. The character of the changes to the culture is not straightforward and this is due to the problematic multi-dimensional nature of the modified-car scene. A superficial account of the 1970s Australian street rodding scene would understand it as composed of street rods, street rodders and the practices they performed. By focusing on the function of the scene in relation to enthusiasm greater attention can therefore be directed to the composition of relations between these elements of the scene. This includes the way the composition of the scene was controlled and enabled by the social institutions and cultural industries of street rodding. For example, as originally noted by Tom Wolfe (1999) more than 40 years ago, the scene of modified-car culture is not only made up of the participants drawn from the ranks of enthusiasts, but involves a whole infrastructure of social institutions and commercial parties involved in the reproduction of the conditions of the scene for economic gain. In this chapter I argue that the event of enthusiasm is controlled through the control of cultural events as it is through these cultural events that the event of enthusiasm is differentially repeated.
If the series of differentially repeated events of enthusiasm are problematically contiguous, rather than spatially or temporally contiguous, then part of my work in this and following chapters involves developing a conception of the scene that relates to this problematic seriality. To put it simply, the problematic seriality of enthusiasm becomes the regulated seriality of social institutions, such as car clubs and federations, or the later spectacular seriality of the cultural industry. I have at least two tasks in this chapter; first, to introduce and explore the scene of 1970s Australian street rodding; second, to introduce and begin developing the conceptual tool of the ‘scene’. The longer length of this chapter is necessary to properly introduce the concept of the ‘scene’, like ‘enthusiasm’ in the previous chapters, so it can be used in later chapters. The concept of ‘scene’ is useful not only as a descriptive tool, but also as a diagnostic tool for engaging with the complexity of the enthusiasm of modified-car culture in Australia. Although I borrow some ideas from different domains involving similar relations to the action of enthusiasm, such as music scenes, the notion of a ‘scene’ is largely derived from the enthusiasm itself. Every enthusiast has some sense of the scene. The ‘scene’ is a concept (if not in most cases an actual term) of the scene.

Similar to the characterisation of the actual technical problems produced by the broken fan belt being an actualisation of a different kind of event (the event of enthusiasm), the events of the scene also have this dual character. On the actualised side of the relation are the

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47 ‘Diagnostic’ is used here in the sense derived from medicine and what Deleuze called the ‘clinical’ method of doctors diagnosing through a symptomology, which he uses this method to engage with literature (Deleuze 1997; Smith 2005).
cultural events that enthusiasts participate in and the larger social events where the scene itself happens; I shall be discussing one such larger social event in this chapter through an analysis of a particular discursive formation and its emergence in the 1970s. On the other side, the scene is an incorporeal event of enthusiasm expressed from the depths of enthusiast bodies and the objects of their enthusiasm. There are street rods that are driven by street rodders on the street taking part in cultural events (‘rodding’), but the ‘street rod’ is a kind of event that emerges from the mixture of enthusiast bodies with technology and the passions of these bodies. By articulating ‘street rod’ instead of ‘hot rod’ the composition of the scene, in terms of the relations between elements and the capacities for action, changes. The scene is a shifting arrangement of these events. The defining event however, gives the scene its consistency and arranges the rest of the events around itself; this is the event of enthusiasm.

In the context of surfing, John Irwin (1973: 133) defines a “scene” as an identifiable lifestyle based on a “non-instrumental system” in which members participate “because they share a set of meanings, and understandings, interests, and not because they have to cooperate to

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48 I am drawing on the distinction made by Deleuze (Foucault 1977; Deleuze 1990; Colwell 1997; Patton 1997; Kwinter 2001), initially drawn and developed from the ancient Greek Stoics, and then developed in other ways, between two levels of reality. Initially this distinction is made between the corporeal and incorporeal dimensions of reality. In an enigmatic use of parentheses in The Fold however, Deleuze (1993: 60-61) writes “virtual (=incorporeal).” This opens up Deleuze’s conception of the event to belonging to that of “the milieu of the event” (Negri and Hardt 2000: 25), as another part of his work engaging with Bergson (1988a) through to the cinema books (1986; 1989a) can also be read in terms of the event.
attain some goal." Furthermore, similar to Fine and Kleinman’s symbolic interactionist perspective discussed in the first chapter, Irwin writes

[The label [scene] indicates that these worlds are expressive – that is, people participate in them for direct rather than future gratification – that they are voluntary, and that they are available to the public. In addition, the theatrical metaphor of the word 'scene' reflects an emergent urban psychological orientation – that of a person as 'actor', self-consciously presenting him – or herself in front of audiences. (Irwin 1977: 23)

There is some shared direction in the activities of enthusiasts, and this direction produces aggregate effect across a population. As I have shifted the scale of my analysis from enthusiasm experienced on a subjective level to the scale of the scene I need to address these aggregate effects. A crucial distinction that needs to made, following Deleuze (1990), is between the causality of bodies and the effect of the mixing and passions of bodies at the level of the event. Enthusiasm is an event, that is, an effect of the intermixing of bodies. A sense of purpose at the level of enthusiasm is therefore expressed as an effect of the mixing of bodies. Enthusiasm serves as a quasi-cause, such as a singularity in feed-forward loops of anticipated expectation, but it is not causal in the mechanical sense. The 'sense of purpose' of a scene is therefore not the sense of a cause, but 'sense' as an effect in the Deleuzian meaning of the French sens, a direction and a meaning.

A cursory glance across the archives of modified-car culture throughout the 1970s until present makes it clear that the 'logic' of modified-car culture is similar to the 'logic' of musical scenes as outlined by Will Straw.
In the context of issues of regional and national musical space in urban centres, Straw (1991: 368) seeks to redirect discussions of musical authenticity by focusing on the differential relationship between discourse and cultural practices. Firstly, for Straw (1991: 369, 373), the notion of the ‘scene’ frames social relations through their partiality and contingency rather engaging with social relations by excluding partiality and contingency from what have become familiar expressive social totalities, such as ‘subculture’. The distinction between the expressive totalities of ‘subculture’, such as found in the conception of ‘subculture’ developed by the ‘Birmingham School’ and the partiality and contingency of the ‘scene’ is crucial. The Birmingham School’s conception of ‘subculture’ defined it as homological expression of dialectical contradictions at the level of social structure, produced in the tension between post-War consumer culture versus traditional parent working-class cultures. Youth culture figured as a metaphor for societal-scale changes to British culture (Clarke, Hall et al. 1976: 17-25). An appreciation of the partiality and contingency of the scene is one of the reasons why the concept of the scene is a powerful tool for understanding the dynamic relations between events on the same or different scales. Rather than the scene as representative of a broader social structure, the scene is determined by how contingencies are processed or ‘translated’ at the level of the scene, and how the multiplicities of enthusiasm become incorporated into the functional dynamics of social institutions or cultural industries.

49 The ‘Birmingham School’ refers to the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS) that had various academic and doctoral student members that developed an influential conception of post-war British youth culture in terms of the concept of ‘subculture’ (Bennett and Kahn-Harris 2004).
Secondly, Straw notes the importance of the discursive work of different “forms of communication” that articulate a “sense of purpose” in the affective link between “contemporary practices, on the one hand, and the [...] heritage which is seen to render this contemporary activity appropriate to a given context, on the other” (1991: 373). I shall be concerned with uncovering the ‘sense of purpose’ of each era or scene of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia. I shall focus on the ‘affective link’ of ‘appropriateness’ for each sense of purpose ‘sense of

50 ‘Articulation’ was one of the key concepts in the productive period of the reception of cultural studies in the North American context. Within communication theory, the context I believe Straw is using the term here, the conception of articulation moves the focus away from notions of ‘correspondence’ to the always double articulation of identity and relations between identity (Slack 1996: 123-124). I am interpreting articulation as a process similar in some respects to Deleuze’s reworking of the Spinozist notion of ‘expression’ whereby the “material of the idea is not sought in a representative content but in an expressive content” (1988c: 75; Lambert 2005); one that takes notions of articulation out of the communicative sphere and into the incorporeal materiality of the relations between bodies and events.

51 Straw draws on the work of Lawrence Grossberg to argue that the sense of purpose is articulated through the forms of communication and through these same forms of communication are formed “affective alliances” (374). Grossberg (1992; 1997) draws on the work of Deleuze and Guattari in his discussion of affect. The problem with Grossberg’s conception of affect is that he does not properly make a distinction between emotion and affect (Massumi 2002: 260, nn 3), and the further qualification of the different dimensions of affect that I discussed in the first chapter: either as a socio-biological conceptualisation (such as that made by Tomkins) or the Spinozist definition that informs the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. The event of enthusiasm requires both conceptions of affect, and it should be clear that the division I am making is for the sake of analysis. In the context of the present argument, alliances are certainly assembled through the positive ontological force of affect, but this is expressed in the differential repetition of enthusiasm and the shifting affective states of enthusiasts felt in the cultural events of modified-car culture.
purpose’. Through an emphasis on certain affects of the affective complex of enthusiasm the events of the scene are composed or ‘expressed’ with a structured seriality. The emphasis is not simply a relation of attention, but produced through shifting orders of expectation and anticipation felt in the bodies of enthusiasts and actualised in the cultural events of the scene and the relations between heterogeneous elements of the scene and enthusiasm. The composition of the scene in the flows and ‘modulation’ of affect determines the ratio of passive affections that an enthusiast ‘suffers’.

Lastly, from a later work where Straw uses the concept of ‘scenes’ as a way to think about ‘creative cities’, he suggests that scenes “may be seen [...] as units of city culture (like subcultures or art worlds), as one of the event structures through which cultural life acquires its solidity” (2004: 412-3, ital. added). He goes on to briefly discuss the importance of ‘cultural events’ run by a Spanish social club, Sala Rosa, in Montreal’s nightlife. He writes that “[c]ultural events, in turn, draw credibility from their association with this space of long-standing communal, slightly exotic [alternative, Spanish] sociability” (414). The infrastructure of the Spanish club is integral to producing the ‘cultural events’. It is an example of the relationship of what I am calling the cultural events of the scene and the various forms of infrastructure. In the final two sections of this chapter I shall return to this notion of ‘infrastructure’ and flesh it out by

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52 Deleuze (1991: 125) described a similar but more general relation of ‘purposiveness’ that, in part, involves “subjective tendencies of achieving and promoting goods” which are the “effects of the principles of affectivity, impressions of reflection and of the passions.”

53 Philosophical connections to how I am using this concept of a ‘sense of purpose’ find resonance in Spinoza’s notion of the conatus or Bourdieu’s related notion of the illusio.
drawing on the work of Geoff Stahl. In the seventh chapter I shall also return to Straw’s argument and the notion of ‘valorisation’.

There are three main elements of the notion of ‘scene’ that I am borrowing from Straw at this stage: the character of social relations of scenes as partial and contingent; the articulation of a ‘sense of purpose’ of a scene that I shall interpret according to the qualitative ‘affective link’ of a given enthusiasm; lastly, the scene as an ‘event structure’. In the context of contemporary Australian modified-car culture since the 1970s, the following are the senses of purpose for each respective scene or era briefly outlined. This brief list anticipates the work over the next several chapters:

1) The sense of purpose of the 1970s ‘street rodding’ scene is expressed through a concern with ‘workmanship’ and the skilled labour of enthusiasts. Cultural events are thus organised around the display and recognition of ‘workmanship’.

2) The sense of purpose for the 1980s ‘street machining’ scene is expressed through a concern with the creation of ‘head turners’. Cultural events are thus organised around the spectacle of ‘head turners’ either in static display or performance.

3) The sense of purpose for the current scene (mid-1990s until present) is a complex interplay between the structure of the spectacle and the immanent online sociality of discrete social groups. The spectacle remains, but now it is a continuum between elite-level vehicles that display a high degree of ‘workmanship’ and the attention-grabbing impact of ‘head turners’.
My attention in this chapter is focused on the 1970s-era ‘street rodding’ scene, and there are two qualities of the scene that guide my exposition. Firstly, the cultural events of the scene came to be controlled by a social institution – the Australian Street Rod Federation – and as part of the same process the ASRF worked to regulate and maintain the scene under pressure from the governmental authority of the State. ‘Regulate’ does not capture the positive effect the ASRF had on reproducing the conditions of the scene in such a way that enabled the scene to exist. By negotiating with the State so as to introduce regulations regarding the technical nature of the construction of modified vehicles, the ASRF ensured the scene would continue to exist. Secondly, these relations and regulations are contingent. Similar to the shifting nature of my capacity for ‘know how’ outlined in the previous chapter, the shifting character of the scene was determined by the interplay of contingency and the changing composition of social relations. The scale of the scene is not determined by the size or number of elements involved in given events but the relation between singularities that constitute the locus of events. Singularities of the scene are distributed as events of smaller scales involving only ordinary points on the scale of the scene. So what mattered in the events involving my fan belt were not singularities of the scene per se (although singularities of the scene were evident, such as in the composition of the Krispe Kremes meet-up), rather the scale pertained to that of elements of my own practice. What is at stake is not the relation between contingency and social structure, but the consistency of social organisation as defined by the contingencies that are part of the organisation itself. Therefore, I shall investigate the street rodding scene according to the different consistencies of organisation between ‘organisation’ and what ‘becomes organised’. The difference is
that the contingencies of the scene exist on a different scale compared
to the lived practical relation between enthusiasts and the events of
which enthusiasts are part. Regulation of the scene emerged as the
composition of social relations changed, and I shall be tracing this
emergence through the archive.

Changes to the organisation of the scene are evident at the level of
discourse; the scene is expressed as a ‘discourse event’ that resides in the
archive. My historical method is based on Michel Foucault’s method of
producing ‘discourse events’ from archival sources. This is from the
productive period between what is generally considered the
‘archeological’ and ‘genealogical’ stages of Foucault’s work. He
described the method of producing ‘discourse events’ as the ‘process of
eventalization’ in an interview (approximately a decade after the
archeological stage of his research).

[Eventalization] works by constructing around the singular event
analyzed as process a ‘polygon’ or rather a ‘polyhedron’ of
intelligibility, the number of whose faces is not given in advance
and can never by properly by taken as finite. One has to proceed
by progressive necessarily incomplete saturation. And one has to
bear in mind that the further one breaks down the processes under
analysis, the more one is enabled and indeed obliged to construct
their external relations of intelligibility. (1991: 77)

54 Foucault argued “[t]hose events [of the existence of discourse, by the
fact words are spoken] functioned in relation to their original situation,
they left traces behind, they continue to exist, and they exercise, in that
very subsistence in history, a certain number of manifest or secret
functions” (2000b: 289).
55 ‘Archaeology’ is “the study of discourse in its archival form” (Foucault
As Clare O’Farrell (2005: 79) has implied, Foucault never ‘gave up’ on this dimension of his archeological practice (eventalization); rather, in the genealogical stage of his work, eventalization was complemented with a greater attention to the functioning of discourse in particular discursive and non-discursive configurations of power relations termed dispositifs. The discursive conditions of practice within the street rodding scene only change across particular thresholds of different or transformed discursive formations. The discursive formation at stake in this chapter is part of the regulation of practices of modification and the cultural events of the enthusiasm.

In the following sections below I map the shifting terrain of the discourse of enthusiast knowledge as the series of ‘statements’ change or new ‘statements’ emerge during the street rodding era of contemporary modified-car culture. By focusing on enthusiasm however, I need to shift my focus slightly, and incorporate the ways enthusiasm continually escaped from the dispositifs of particular discursive formations, and the way the social institutions attempted to regulate enthusiasm.

‘Street Rods’
The 1970s was the era of the ‘street rod’ and the collective social institution that represented them, the Australian Street Rod Federation (ASRF). At an institutional level, the era of the ‘street rod’ is also the era where drag racing gained its own identity separate from the over-coding

56 If my study was an exhaustive archival work then I would also have to include the pre-street rodding, or hot rodding, era before 1973; I am focused on the contemporary era however, and below I argue this begins with the split in the AHRF into the ASRF and ANDRA.
signifier of the ‘hot rod’ in Australia. Indeed, one difference between modified-car culture in the US and Australian modified-car culture is that in the US street rodding never really challenged the drag racing arm of hot rodding as the dominant paradigm of modified-car culture. The situation in Australia was quite different. There was a transformation of Australian hot rodding from a cultural formation that incorporated both the drag racing and street and show-based aspects of the scene and which was wholly represented by the Australian Hot Rod Federation (AHRF) to a cultural formation defined by the institutional split between the drag racers and street rodders. I begin my historical work with the split in Australian hot rodding as it signals a divergence from US-based cultural formations, hence gaining a properly ‘Australian’ identity, and it is also when the contemporary dispositifs of the scene of modified-car culture began to emerge.

At the 1973 annual general meeting of the AHRF in Sydney the drag racers decided to split from the street rodding side and the representative structure of the AHRF. Until 1973 the drag racing arm of the cultural formation of hot rodding had been regulated in a semi-amateur fashion by the Drag Racing Council (DRC) of the AHRF. In his popular history of street rodding, magazine publisher Larry O’Toole (2004: 170) puts it this way “the two factions were growing rapidly and the structure [of the AHRF] was straining to cope with the diversity of the two groups.” Paul Bourke, the editor of the Australian Hot Rodding Review (AHRR), the peak enthusiast publication at the time, reported this event in the ‘Rodjots’ news column as “[o]ne of the biggest changes in the history of Australian hot rodding." The magazine was under no illusions regarding what this would mean: “The ultimate result of the splitting of the two groups will probably be the finish of the Australian Hot Rod Federation as
The drag racers formed the Australian National Drag Racing Association (ANDRA), which was lead by national director, John Storm. The street rodders formed the Australian Street Rod Federation (ASRF) which was headed-up by their national director, Bob Sykes. In a retrospective on events within ANDRA published in the AHRR a year after the split, the reason for the split was given as an organisational one:

The reason behind the split was simple – meetings in the past between drag racers and street rodders often ended in utter confusion with street rodders voting on vital issues in drag racing and vice versa. (Bourke 1974: 6-7)

It was not this ‘simple’. For the AHRR, at least, they now had two separate ‘camps’ to cover. A dragster appeared on the front cover of the issue of the AHRR when it first announced the split (Figure 3.1). Yet, the publication had demonstrated in an earlier issue that year, when it was the naming-rights sponsor of the inaugural 1973 Street Rod Nationals event (held at the country town of Narrandera, an important site in the history of Australian modified-car culture), that it was behind the street rodding movement. The magazine supplied and manned the ‘registration’ caravan for the event (Figure 3.2).

57 Although in the editorial of another publication, Rodscene, the AHRF and the ASRF both get a mention in the context of moral panics over street racing. It is unclear how long the AHRF lasted. Editor David Cook argues that the AHRF is needed because street racing moral panics negatively impact on both drag racing and street rodding (Cook 1973a: 5). Rodscene emerged from another magazine entitled Australian Rod. The Australian Rod/Rodscene publication is very strange in that it is the only magazine, complete with full pages of colour glossy images, which I have come across in the history of modified-car culture that has absolutely no advertising.
Until 1973 both the drag racing and street rodding aspects of hot rodding in Australia can be described as ‘hot rodding’. After this it is not so clear and this is because of the delays built into the lag of the cultural industry to cover such changes. For example, Larry O’Toole (2002; 2004) separates the ‘hot rodding’ and ‘street rodding’ eras with his two popular history volumes – History of Australian Street Rodding and Australia’s Hot Rodding. However, O’Toole separates the books according to when his magazine – Australian Street Rodding – was first published, in 1977, four years after the actual split in hot rodding.

Although I have acknowledged the cultural subsumption of ‘street rodding’ to ‘hot rodding’ in the US, the timing of the emergence of street rodding in Australia matches that of the emergence of a street rodding movement in the US. The similarities between the US situation and that of
Australian street rodding are exemplified by the theme and catch-phrase of the first Australian Street Rod Nationals of ‘Street is Neat’ which is the institutional mantra still used by the US-based NSRA. Moorhouse briefly mentions US street rodding at the end of the penultimate chapter of his book. He notes that Hot Rod magazine and Peterson Publications “also helped to found the National Street Rod Association [NSRA] whose activities catered for the showier, non-racing side of the hot rod enthusiasm” (Moorhouse 1991: 219). However, Moorhouse does not investigate this ‘side of the enthusiasm’.

The split in hot rodding between the drag racers and street rodders is important for understanding the cultural formation of street machining in Australia. The autonomy of drag racing from street rodding, and hot rodding more generally, meant that the slightly later cultural formation of street machining could have a relationship with the motorsport of drag racing that was not part of the discursive series produced by the statement of ‘hot rod’. In the US, for example, although street machining has its own identity, in terms of the practice of drag racing, the ‘street machine’ is understood as a ‘hot rod’ in a generic sense. In part, this is the reason why Moorhouse can subtitle his book “An Analysis of the Hot Rod Enthusiasm”, when he is actually examining the relationship between the cultural industry of hot rodding (mainly through Hot Rod magazine) and the institution of the organised motorsport of drag racing (mainly the National Hot Rod Association). The relation between hot rodding and street machining in Australia is less a successive repetition than a differential cross-pollination between autonomous cultural formations. In

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58 Moorhouse goes on to say that “certain analyses of this aspect of rodding err by not detailing the orchestrating role that the magazine and Peterson Publications played here too” although I have not been able to uncover to these ‘certain analyses’ to which he refers.
the US, hot rods transformed after several drag racing seasons throughout the 1950s into what are recognisable today as ‘dragsters’. In the 1960s other styles of drag racing vehicles emerged that were influenced by or born of the street racing exploits of those who used much more contemporary vehicles. The so-called ‘funny car’ is one such example. The style of these other, later model-based drag racing vehicles fed back into the nascent street machining, as I shall discuss in a later chapter on the spectacular style of street machine modification, ‘Pro-Street’.

Prior to the emergence of street rodding discourse, ‘street rod’ was a term in hot rodding discourse that was an expression of the statement of ‘hot rod’. With the institutional split between drag racers and street rodders, ‘street rod’ gained its own positivity as belonging to a separate discourse (or the discourse of modified-car culture crosses a ‘discontinuity’). ‘Street rod’ is a statement within the discourse of street rodding and defines the ‘discourse event’ of street rodding. A discourse event is defined by the dispersion of statements within the archive. A statement is not a conventional unit of language; it is both at the limit and the centre of discourse, because statements define the field of positivity for truth claims within a discursive formation itself.

Foucault’s method was largely configured towards isolating the discursive ‘field of possibility’ for ‘truth’. Foucault located this field in the capacity of dispersed ‘statements’:

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59 The ‘funny car’ got its name because it was a front-engined dragster with a body shape based on a production car. The ‘funny car’ has a longer wheelbase. This made the cars look a ‘little funny’ (Post 2001: 140-142).
One might ask what is the ultimate purpose of this suspension of all accepted units this obstinate pursuit of discontinuity, if it is no more than a matter of releasing a cloud of discursive events, of collecting them and preserving them in their absolute dispersion. In fact, the systematic effacement of merely given units makes it possible, first, to restore to the statement its singularity as an event. [...] [A] Statement is always an event that neither language nor meaning can completely exhaust. [T]he aim is to grasp how these statements, as events and in their so peculiar specificity, can be articulated to events that are not discursive in nature, but may be of a technical, practical, economic, social, political, or other variety. (2000a: 307-308)

A ‘statement’ defines the limited conditions of possibility for the way truth circulates within differential power relations. The work of the historian, Deleuze’s description of Foucault’s concept of the statement provides a slightly different understanding:

[T]he words, phrases and propositions examined by the text must be those which revolve round different focal points of power (and resistance) set in play by a particular problem. For example, the question of ‘sexuality’ in the nineteenth century can be analysed by seeking out the words and phrases used in the confessional, or the propositions put forward by pious handbooks, as well as examining other focal points such as schooling, or the institutions of birth, marriage, and so on. [...] Once the corpus has been established (which does not in any sense impose limits on the statement) we can then determine the way in which language [langage] gathers round or ‘falls’ into this corpus. [...] It is therefore possible to isolate statements from words, phrases and propositions. Statements are not words, phrases or propositions, but rather formations thrown up by the corpus in question only when the subjects of the phrase, the objects of the propositions and the signifieds of the words change in nature: they then occupy the place of the ‘One speaks’ and become dispersed throughout the opacity of language. (Deleuze 1988b: 17-18)
Foucault argues, is to transverse the documents of the archive and work towards producing a ‘grid’ or ‘series’ of the distribution of statements.61 A discourse event resides in the archive as expressed through the dispersal of statements, which serve as a trace of the contingency of historical discontinuity. ‘Statement’ and ‘discontinuity’ are two types of singularity that reside in the archive and need to be isolated for Foucault’s historical method of eventalization.

The focus of this style of historical method does not rely on teleological assumptions of expected linear development, such as Moorhouse’s (1991) work on ‘hot rodding’ and the emergence of the drag racing motorsport. A historical narrative is constructed in Moorhouse’s analysis from eventualities, not events. In the descriptions of discourse events outlined below I shall sometimes indicate connections to later events; this however, is purely for the sake of indicating the proper gravity of the contingency at the heart of historical ‘discontinuity’, not to anticipate developments. The emergence of a new iteration in the series of a ‘statement’ and hence the transformation of a discourse, correlates with the contingency of events. When there is a discursive shift, not just of statements, but of the discourse itself, so a new paradigm emerges, the sense of older ‘statements’ is transformed, and older objects become the subject of new ‘statements’. This broader paradigm shift occurs within modified-car culture at the historical intersection of two scenes and the reconfiguration of enthusiasm so there are different ‘senses of purposes’.

61 Michel de Certeau (1986: 197) described Foucault’s historical method as “exhuming the implications of aleatory events [to invent] the loci of new problematics.” The problematics take “the form of surprises, as in detective novels” (195). There is a connection here through the incorporeal dimension of discourse to Deleuze’s (1989b: 14) method of the clinical and critical, where Deleuze sort to extract the literary basis of medical symptomology as a diagnostic and conceptual tool of critique.
An important difference between my interpretation of Foucault’s method of ‘eventalization’ and my historiographical practice is regarding the nature of the archive. Mine is the popular archive assembled largely from enthusiast magazines, but includes club notes, event programs, videos, newspaper articles, and various online sources. The archive of enthusiast literature is ‘popular’ in two senses. It is largely made up of the texts of popular culture, and in this respect it is similar to Michael Lynch’s (1999) notion of the “popular archive.” Lynch uses the term to describe the archive of media video footage of the O.J. Simpson trial accrued almost accidentally as a result of a project on the use of DNA testing in trials. The second reason for calling it a ‘popular archive’ takes the notion one step further than Lynch’s definition. The popular archive of enthusiast literature only exists because of the deliberate archival labour of enthusiasts to ‘save’ magazines and the like. I quickly discovered when beginning this research that there are not any public holdings in any Australian libraries of most of the texts that I use in my research.62 I bought nearly all the magazines online through eBay and found a few in second-hand shops or through family and friends.

A second important difference is therefore between Foucault’s episteme-scale investigations of the discontinuities between particular discursive formations and the smaller scale of discourse investigated here. For example, if Foucault investigated the emergence of the ‘disciplinary society’, and Deleuze’s (1988b; Galloway 2004; Lazzarato 2006)

62 Street Machine magazine was very generous in the early stages of my archival research in allowing me access to their holdings of the magazine. This early access was instrumental in convincing me that I had to in fact carry out some formal historical research to complement my ethnographic fieldwork.
comments on the periodisation of the present as that of the ‘control society’ are regarded as accurate, then I am not, for example, attempting to research the emergence of the ‘control society’ as coherent set of discursive formations. My focus is extremely narrow compared to these episteme-scale periodisations. Most of the magazines that I have collected and read to construct a ‘popular archive’ are quarterly, bi-monthly, or monthly. This allows me to trace discontinuities on a different frequency to that of Foucault. The relation between continuity and discontinuity is therefore different in my historical work compared to that of Foucault. The rhythm of discontinuities, or points of transformation at the level of the discursive formation, uncovered in the context of popular culture are many times more frequent. That is, the rhythms of transformation to the scene are of a different scale.

‘Modified Vehicle’

The ASRF was the primary mediator in the enthusiast relation with the state via an institutional technical role interpreting the Australian Design Rules (ADRs). The first ADRs were introduced in 1969 and then a comprehensive wave of rules was introduced the same year of the institutional split between the drag racers and street rodders in 1973. A cover of the more mainstream Wheels magazine from 1976 captures some of the sentiment regarding the first anti-pollution and emissions rules, “ADR 27a” (Figure 3.3).
The ADRs developed into a very complex system of rules instituted by the Federal government of Australia and which governed the engineering aspects of the automotive industry. Only very recently, in 2006, have the major Australian rules (crash integrity, emissions control, etc) been aligned with the two major sets of legislated design rule restrictions in the world, the so-called ‘Euro’ regulations and the Japanese design rules. This has meant that any car built or modified in Australia has had to conform to the Australian rules, or local State variations, and any imported cars have also had to be reconfigured according to the specifics of the Australian rules. The specificity of Australian Design Rules compared to the rest of the world will become increasingly important as the processes of ‘globalisation’ begin to affect the cultural formations of modified-car culture in the 1980s.\textsuperscript{63}

\textsuperscript{63} In Chapter 5 I shall discuss the example of the 1984 “V8’s till 98” media-led consumer campaign to save the locally produced Holden V8 engine
The impact of the introduction and development of ADRs on modified-car culture was quite profound. The nature of the legislation and, importantly, its interpretation by registration authorities meant potentially that a vehicle could not be modified from stock or ‘factory production’ at all. There were therefore severe repercussions for street rodding, which was noted in the editorial reply to a series of letters published in the Australian Hot Rodding Review’s (AHRR) in the November 1974 issue:

The real problem lies with the Australian Design Rules legislation itself. It’s so ridiculously stringent that, if interpreted to the letter, it does not allow the existence of any type of modified vehicle whatsoever, and even the world’s major manufacturers in some instances do not produce cars which comply with Australian requirements.

In other words, the ammunition is available to each State’s transport authority to put custom car and hot rod owners off the road, and stop all further registrations. The stringency with which this is applied varies considerably from State to State - in some registration is tougher than in others.

It’s in this area that the Australian Street Rod Federation can do its best work. A standardised, and sympathetically sensible approach is required from the DMT [Department of Motor Transport]. […]

Quite clearly, all forms of street rodding are going through a critical phase - every individual and group of enthusiasts must do their bit to initiate and support moves to further the sport and the from being phased out and the reactionary discursive movement of the leading enthusiast magazine, Street Machine, to focus on V8-powered street machines as they conformed with a mainly Anglo-Australian masculinist form of enthusiasm.
preservation with-street-practicality of early cars of all types and origins. (Douglas 1974a: 53)\

In the September 1974 AHRR ‘Rodjots’ column, editor Mac Douglas quotes the New South Wales (NSW) Transport Minister Milton Morris as endeavouring to “keep car enthusiasts on the road.” The column outlines temporary measures organised between the Street Rod Committee (SRC) of the NSW Hot Rod Association and the DMT so as to enable the registration of newly built street rods. The representation work involved a number of meetings and negotiations between the SRC and the NSW Transport Department:

Rodders have their fair share of hassles and headaches with these requirements, but are more fortunate than special builders, local small makers and importers of limited-volume models because they are standing against unreasonable registration requirements with a united front. […]

Relations between Department of Motor Transport engineers and the SRC haven’t been exactly cordial at times, because of contrary points of view on many issues but some problems have been solved, some anomalies minimised and some realistic compromises reached. (Douglas 1973: 27)

Note that the issues are described as ‘problems’ and the solutions are ‘compromises’, which in this historical context is a much less positive or affirmative term than ‘challenge’. The September 1974 ‘Rodjots’ column notes that the biggest compromise is that there shall be a shift away from

64 Note that the term ‘street machine’ is not yet used in this editorial comment. Instead the term ‘custom car’ is used which locates the discourse as belonging to hot rodding or street rodding.
unrestricted ‘full rego’ to a ‘limited rego’. Secretary of the committee, Dennis Millet, is quoted as saying that “limited rego is still only part of a long-term plan in which rod-owners will be able to transfer to full rego under our own system. This will ultimately entail a committee to be formed by rodders which will check out the roadworthiness of each car” (Douglas 1974c: 4). However, the column also notes that rodders feared this was part of the NSW DMT intention to “get modified vehicles of any type off the road.”

In the ‘Rojjots’ column of the November 1974 AHRR issue a more critical observation was expressed regarding the ‘limited rego’ scheme, specifically that “in many respects this is a very restrictive scheme allowing cars to [only] take part in ‘recognised rod runs’”(Douglas 1974b: 4). This is the basic form of control exerted by the ASRF over the street rodding scene, and, at the same time through negotiations with State governmental bodies, ensured that the street rodding scene continued to exist and function. The conduit of this power was the socio-technical representational function served by the ASRF between State and rodders.

Firstly, a committee was created for each State and Territory known as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). In the November 1973 AHRR article on the impact of the ADRs, ASRF National Director Bob Sykes explains that the ASRF Advisory Committee (as it was called then) would be made up of a legal advisor, a design engineer and three rodders (Douglas 1973: 27). The TAC served a mediating capacity for the registration authorities to regulate the registration of rods in each respective State and Territory. The TAC initiative was developed to ensure that rods could still be driven on the street. The TAC provided engineering and administrative advice to ASRF members to ensure that rods could still
be built and actually registered. It is not surprising that membership composition of the TAC eventually was made up primarily by those who had a commercial interest in hot rodding. The need to organise on a quasi-political level in the face of governmental restrictions on the construction of rods also highlights the importance of the ‘street’ for modified-car culture.

Secondly, the ASRF ruled the ‘club run and show’ scene by operating as a sanctioning body. The TAC and ASRF worked on two fronts to enable rodders to participate in the ‘action’ of the street by way of specific registration laws. The first involved consultation with the registration authorities via the TAC (and hence the ASRF) regarding the automotive engineering and build quality of the vehicles. The second complementary move was to work on allowing rods to be driven at specific events – such as ‘rod runs’ – organised by clubs via the ASRF. If an event was not sanctioned by the ASRF national or representational state organisation, then rods with limited registration could not participate. In general, the ASRF’s power was basically one of representation in the political sense in relation formed with the registration authorities and government, but its power over enthusiasts was to determine the nature of events that could be sanctioned, either on an individual level through vehicles or on a club level through organised events. The ASRF therefore functioned as part of the dispositif of the government to condition the conditions of possibility for given events and therefore condition the ways the enthusiasm could be reaffirmed. I shall explore specific examples of this in following sections.

The ‘street’ is a special space for modified-car enthusiasts not only in the material sense of an actual place, but also in terms of a space of
potential where events happen. The street is commonly where the action is. The best example of the notion of ‘street’ as a space of potential in the related scholarly literature on subcultures is Paul Corrigan’s (1976) work on “Doing Nothing.” Although Corrigan’s piece is an extract from a larger work it makes an important point regarding the nature of the street. Corrigan traces the emergence of acts of minor deviance through the potentialisation of the street space as a ‘degree zero’ event space:

It is the ‘weird idea’ that represents the major something in ‘doing nothing’. In fighting boredom the kids do not choose the street as a wonderfully lively place, rather they look on it as the place where there is the most chance that something will happen. [...] The weird ideas then are born out of boredom and the expectation of future and continuing boredom, and this affects the sort of weird ideas they are. A good idea must contain the seeds of continuing change as well as excitement and involvement. (1976: 104)

If ‘weird ideas’ were an example of traditional linear or circular causality that reproduced the same conditions of possibility, then this would actually serve as the ground for future and continuing boredom. What is actually happens may involve a fight or a smashed milk bottle, but what is repeated in its singularity is the contingency of “seeds of continuing change.” In the terminology of Brian Massumi (2002: 226) ‘weird ideas’ are symptoms of a “real, material reserve of unpredictable potential.”

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65 For a romanticised account of the space of the ‘street’ as a resource for youth cultures, Chris Stanley’s (1997) essay on the ambivalence of “intermediate discursive arenas” is interesting. His focus is ‘joy riding’ however, which is a distinct practice and very different to the ritualised forms of appropriation performed by enthusiasts.
Similarly, in modified-car culture enthusiasts work to extract the potential for ‘continuing change as well as excitement and involvement’ from the cars and the street. In the case of the ASRF and the ADRs, the registration rules threatened to extinguish the potential for the ‘action’ associated the street.

In drag racing the ‘action’ is ostensibly located at the drag strip. The 1973 split between street rodding and drag racing was a split in the way the scene was organised at an institutional level through control over the conditions of possibility for different forms of action. ‘Street’ in the terms ‘street rod’, or the later ‘street machine’, refer to this double meaning of ‘street’ in modified-car culture. The discursive politics of modified-car culture over the conditions of action are inculcated in the ‘statements’ of ‘street rod’ and ‘street machine’. If a ‘street rod’ cannot be driven on the ‘street’ – that is, participate in the potential for ‘action’ of the street – then it is not a ‘street rod’. This strict discursive interpretation of the conditions of possibility of the ‘street’ would be challenged in the 1980s movement within street machining of ‘Pro-Street’. ‘Pro-Street’ vehicles were allegedly road-going cars modified according to the aesthetics of drag racing vehicles, but which were essentially unable to be driven on the street and were mainly used as ‘show’ vehicles.

I followed the emergence of the statement ‘modified vehicle’ with the emergence of the State-based discourse of the governmental registration authorities. ‘Modified vehicle’ does not emerge as a ‘statement’ in a pre-existing discourse, rather it is developed in the 1970s through the effort of State and enthusiast representatives to create a new discourse ostensibly concerned with the safety and legality of modifications carried upon vehicles. The changing discursive conditions
of possibility contained in the statement of ‘modified vehicle’ are indicative of the way enthusiast populations belonging to particular scenes were enabled with certain freedoms through the gradual development of more and more technical regulations. In Australian modified-car culture it gains a specific meaning because at various moments the ‘respectability’ of enthusiasts and the scene itself has been under threat as the safety and legal discourse of the ‘modified vehicle’ has been used to render modified cars and their owners as ‘unsafe’ or ‘illegal’.

The emergence of these statements (‘street rod’, ‘modified vehicle’) forms the coordinates of a discursive event, but at the same time the discursive event indicates the birth of the street rodding scene as a broader event of enthusiasm. The distinction is not absolute rather it is a different perspective on elements of an event and what is roughly the same configuration of ‘statements’ within discourse events and dispositifs in their capacity for ‘in-action’ in the scene as an event of enthusiasm. The institutional split between the ASRF and ANDRA did not create ‘street rodding’ as a separate discursive field with its own positivity; rather, the power relations transformed by this split are a symptom or effect of the movements of enthusiasm (or desire) that triggered it.

There is a necessary shift in methodology when engaging with the discourses of an enthusiast culture compared to Foucault’s work on ‘knowledge’ (in the study of the discourse of madness, medical sciences, and the human sciences more generally). I draw on Foucault’s historical method for engaging with the relations between power and knowledge; yet, my attention is focused on the event of enthusiasm, and the scene as part of this event. Therefore, my position is more aligned with that of
Deleuze and Guattari who argue that assemblages of ‘desire’ come before power relations. It is the role of power relations to ‘block’ (or ‘modulate’) the flow of desire, so that “power is an affection of desire” (Deleuze qtd. in Seigworth 2005: 166). ‘Desire’ here is meant in the primarily ontological sense that Deleuze and Guattari (1983: 26-27) develop it. The relations of enthusiasm that are actualised into specific events can be thought of as the effects of specific relations of desiring-production. Bound up with the power relations of discourse, and the capacity of truth in the discursive field of positivity, are the affects of enthusiasm.

The scene is part of the event of enthusiasm, albeit on a different scale than the strictly interpersonal relations of cultural events, but the infrastructure of the scene always follows the enthusiasm that circulates across the bodies of enthusiasts. The enthusiast culture industry attempts to anticipate how the enthusiasm will shift next (and it always does shift) and inspiring the enthusiasm to move in this or that direction, while the amateur social institutions attempt to maintain particular configurations of the scene by producing openings and closings regarding what is appropriate or not. I shall now turn to an example of where enthusiasm in the street rodding era was blocked.

‘Classic Customs’ (or ‘Street Machines’?)

All hell broke loose at the annual general meeting of the Australian Street Rod Federation. The controversy over classification of street rods shapes up as the biggest split in rodding since the drag racing division. (Flynn 1976: 27)
In late 1976 another issue emerged in Australian modified-car culture of who would be represented by the ASRF’s TAC. A number of members of ASRF had vehicles manufactured after 1948 even though ‘pre-1949’ was one of the key signifiers of a ‘hot rod’ and ‘street rod’. The issue at stake was of the capacity of the ASRF to represent the owners of those vehicles that lay outside the purview of the Federation’s political representative capacity. The argument was based around a technical issue of vehicles manufactured with a separate chassis to the body compared to the later model vehicles constructed with a mono-chassis-body. (All hot rods had a separate chassis to the body.) Pressures from the actual scene of modified-car culture challenged the street rodding discourse within which the statement of ‘modified vehicle’ existed within clearly defined power relations. The pressure was mounted from those who wanted to include ‘street machines’ in the representational relation between the TAC and the governmental authorities. The term ‘street machine’ actually existed, but in this context it was deployed within a ‘street rodding’ discourse, which had not yet been displaced by a ‘street machining’ discourse. The event was described in the AHRR thus:

Everything was running smoothly for the ASRF until the annual general meeting of the National Control Council [NCC] in Adelaide over the June [1976] holiday weekend. At the meeting an apparent bombshell was dropped when by a vote of 4-2 the chassis requirement in the custom classic class was deleted. This opened the way for mono-constructed vehicles of the Holden, Falcon and Valiant type, although they would still have to be pre-65. (Flynn 1976: 28)
Representatives of the ASRF South Australian (SA) Division were the strongest critics of the plan. The Chief Steward of the ASRF SA Division, Gordon Cowley, noted by allowing chassis-less cars in the Custom Classics Class this would be “in effect a street machine class” (Flynn 1976: 28). Furthermore, he warned that the power relations between the drag racers and street rodders that led to the 1973 split could be replicated with a similar situation between street rodders and street machinners, which would possibly lead to ‘street rodders being voted out of their own federation’.

The AHRR article included statements from various others associated with the SA Division including a letter from the ‘Executive Engineer’ of the SA Road Traffic Board (RTB) stating that a change to the ASRF class rules would mean that the SA RTB would lead to a “re-evaluation of the working relationship with the ASRF.” The article included a critique of the SA Division’s position by Ray Mason, NSW Divisional Director of the ASRF. He makes the important point that the ADRs only apply to vehicles manufactured after 1969 and that the rule change only applies to vehicles up to 1965 (Flynn 1976: 95). The article goes on to suggest that the SA Division over-acted, but notes that it “will be up to street machinners to get their gig together and organise themselves to form their own national body to promote their side of the sport.” Also the article observes that there are “rumblings in Sydney and Melbourne for some action on this score because a lot of street machinners are cheesed at the way the Second Nats [1976 Street Machine Nationals] were run and they feel they are being misrepresented all over the country and getting no joy from the ASRF either” (Flynn 1976: 97). The reluctance of the ASRF to

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66 South Australia has the strictest interpretation of the ADRs and this strict interpretation forms the substance of an example of the ‘modified vehicle’ in street machining discourse in the next chapter.
represent street machiners and then the relatively rapid rise in popularity of street machining in the early-1980s meant that the ASRF and street machiners went their separate ways.

For Crowley the issue at stake was that “we [street rodders] do not need street machiners – they need our air of respectability.” ‘Respectability’ here is not just a moral category. The institutional power of the ASRF is represented in terms of the ‘respectability’ of street rodders. It is this quality that the street machiners are perceived to be lacking. The ‘respectability’ of street rodding allows the institutional bodies to exist in a direct relation with the State registration authorities via the automotive engineering expertise of the TAC. ‘Respectability’ is therefore a strange relation of a social quality represented as a technical specificity. Moorhouse outlines the general coordinates of this ‘respectability’ in the context of the advocacy of US enthusiast magazines and the ‘work ethic’:

Those who operate as the cultural entrepreneurs of unpaid time, working through an unexamined literature and disregarded organisations, do draw on grander and long established (though not necessarily socially effective) cultural themes in order to defend, explain and promote their activities and make them respectable, but, in so doing, they alter the accents, replace essences and shuffle significances so that older messages ring out in new areas of life. Part of what they do is to really re-work the ‘work ethic’, locate it to unpaid labour and so, quite possibly, make it more psychologically meaningful for the bulk of the population than it was in earlier periods of capitalist society. (ital. added 1991: 169)
Moorhouse recognises that techno-mechanical enthusiast labour is rendered ‘respectable’ as such through the discursive labour of cultural entrepreneurs, which, in the case being discussed here, is in part an effect of the institutional labour of the ASRF representing street rodders. This mirrors Straw’s argument on the importance of the discursive work of different “forms of communication” that articulate a “sense of purpose” in the affective link between “contemporary practices, on the one hand, and the […] heritage which is seen to render this contemporary activity appropriate to a given context, on the other” (1991: 373). ‘Respectability’ is not simply an identity (moral or otherwise) bestowed upon a practice. The ‘respectability’ of enthusiast labour has a functional role in mediations with the State and governmental registration authorities. ‘Respectability’ refers to a set of capacities for action between differential relations of power and the ability to translate contingency (or other singularities more generally) in socially acceptable ways.

Street rodding, like hot rodding, is as much about tradition and the ‘ways’ of modification as it is about the technical capacity of modifications. The skills required to modify and build a hot rod are quite formidable not only in the depth of technical expertise required but also in the breadth. The earliest skills are primarily derived from those of the carroser (coach builder) of the early 20th century, but mechanical and engine-building skills are also required, as well as electrical skills and some sense of aesthetics. Technical skill and social respectability are two separate series that traditionally define one upwardly mobile segment of the working class. Skilled workers, i.e., tradespeople, were often in the higher social ranks of the working class through participation in trade unions.67 On the

67 The discourse of the ‘modified vehicle’ and the valorisation of skilled labour needs to also be understood in the broader historical context of
other hand, respectability is an expression of social mobility and distinction from lumpen elements (Willis 1977).

From Statements to Power Relations
Outlining these series of the discursive formation of street rodding is only the beginning in understanding the power relations of the scene and their relations to enthusiasm. The main problem that emerged for the ASRF involved absorbing the political pressure placed on the representative structure from both sides of the governmental enthusiast-regulation divide: the TAC stood between the representative structure of the enthusiasts – the Australian Street Rod Federation – and the overall controlling authority of vehicle regulation in Australia – the state and what Meaghan Morris (1992) has called the social contract of ‘laborism’. She defines ‘laborism’ as the “social contract upheld in various forms since 1904, exchanged trade protection and currency controls for a state-regulated wage fixing system and compulsory arbitration. As a capital/labor deal for redistributing national income primarily between white men, laborism was sustained by a massive immigration policy legitimated and administered on racist principles until the 1960s – but by forms of multiculturalism thereafter” (1992: 52). Morris (1992: 63) notes that the “enthusiasm for it on both sides of politics after 1975 needs to be understood in terms of the historical crisis of a particular form of protectionism with no equivalent in the United States or Britain.” Indeed, the laborist social contract was reformed in the 1980s by the Federal Labor government into the fantasy of what Morris calls ‘Neocorporatism’ where instead of the nation becoming one big market, it would become ‘One Big Union’ (1992: 66). Within the meta-discourses of the ‘hard decisions’ that had to be made by constituents Morris describes how the thematics of the ‘social-factory’ became ubiquitous. Part of this discourse meant that “by 1990, ‘productivity’ was a value to be extracted in any activity from manufacturing to aerobics to writing poetry” (Morris 1992: 65). Morris was writing in the late-1980s and early-1990s (1992: 13), however the emergent structural conditions can be traced much further back.
federal governments. The medium of this mediation was the regulations and technical specifics of automotive engineering. Issues of safety regarding automotive engineering would commonly be used by policing and governmental authorities to remove socially problematic modified cars and their owners from the street. Therefore, the ASRF as an institution had to control the nature of the constituency which they represented; this was done primarily through the governance of definitions within technical discourse through the TAC (i.e. the classic customs example) and punitive measures (‘black banning’) against clubs or individual members who participated in ‘unsanctioned’ events, which I shall discuss in the next section.

As a tool for interrogating power relations, Foucault’s archaeological method has weaknesses that are overcome in later works through attention to the distribution of bodies through institutionalised technologies of visibility (the gaze, the panopticon, etc.). In his book on Foucault, Deleuze defines the relation between the visible and the sayable (i.e. the discursive field of statements) in terms of the distinction between content and expression. In the context of penal systems:

The content has both a form and a substance: for example, the form is prison and the substance is those who are locked up, the prisoners (who? why? how?). The expression also has a form and a substance: for example the form is penal law and the substance is ‘delinquency’ in so far as it is the object of statements. Just as penal law as a form of expression defines a field of sayability (the statements of delinquency), so prison as a form of content defines a place of visibility (‘panopticism’, that is to say a place where at
any moment one can see everything without being seen). (1988b: 47)

In modified-car culture, the form of content is the scene and the substance includes both enthusiasts and modified cars. Therefore, it might be tempting to say that the form of expression is enthusiast discourse and the substance comprises those statements derived from socio-technical discourses that are valorised through the enthusiasm to speak the truth about a given practical composition of enthusiasts and cars. This is one form and substance of expression that belongs to modified-car culture. However, this is not the ‘expression’ that I have so far focused on. I have focused on an expression where the form is also enthusiast discourse, but the enthusiast discourse of the archive. The equivalent in Deleuze’s example would be to compare the discourse of the judicial system to the argot of the convicted criminals. So far I have mostly drawn on examples where the substance has been expressed from the perspective of magazines and the social institutions of the scene; this shifts the character of the substance of expression to a different register, that of the enthusiasm itself.

Through the enthusiast discourse represented in enthusiast magazines I have traced the statements of enthusiasm as a field of ‘sayability’ about

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enthusiasm. At this stage however, I shall argue that there is no direct relation between the enthusiasm and the discourse of enthusiast magazines and social institutions. Rather, the relationship is mediated through control over the cultural events that populate a given scene. Magazines and social institutions do not directly control enthusiasm in any simple way; they enable enthusiasm by controlling those situations within which the enthusiasm is differentially repeated. So if the form of content is the scene, then it is more correct to identify the substance content as the cultural events of the scene (and within these cultural events, on a different register or scale of enthusiasm, are the enthusiasts and cars are arrayed in certain ways). This leads to the question, where is the ‘place of visibility’ within modified-car culture? If the form of content is the scene, then the place of visibility on the scene is the magazine. ‘Magazine’ is both a material text of discourse, and it is also a technology of visibility on the scene. (I shall discuss this in Chapter 6.)

A ‘statement’ is a singularity belonging to discourse events that exist in the archive, but they are also exist as singularities in adjacent non-discursive events or formations. Deleuze (1988b: 17-18) argues that the location of ‘statements’ correlates with the diagrammatic power relations of dispositifs explicated in Foucault’s later genealogical work. Foucault worked to produce ‘discourse events’ in terms of the capacity for truth as the conditions of knowledge in the functioning of power. I am interested less in the functioning of knowledge in terms of its capacity for

69 Although I have already mentioned the role of the media in the ‘Hot Lap’ example of the Bathurst cruise, I am not complicating my argument at this stage with the more complex view of cultural events including the media events produced through the transmission of events through the media (Massumi 2002: 68-88). I shall develop this position in chapter six when I engage with the spectacle of the street machining scene.
truth, but the capacity of knowledge itself in relations of power in the context of enthusiasm.

The ASRF was a social institution that served as part of the infrastructure of the scene. It mediated between the State governmental authorities and the populations of street rodding enthusiasts. Geoff Stahl’s (2004) work on the music scene in Montreal, Canada, is useful for outlining the necessity of infrastructural institutions in the functioning of the scene and, as I shall explore at the end of this chapter, what Lazzarato describes as the reproductive function of institutions. Stahl examined the function of an ‘indie’ Anglophone music production business that operated as part of the institutional infrastructure for the scene. Stahl frames the notion of the scene in relation to the traditional conception of youth subculture and the more concrete manifestations and traces that such cultural formations create and leave within the cultural space of a city. He isolates a number of key themes or areas of the ‘scene’ (2004: 54):

1) Reorientation of ‘subcultural style’ so it is situated amongst ‘shifting and mobile practices’;

2) The incorporation of both symbolic and material dimensions of cultural production, aesthetic strategies, social mobility, and, importantly, affective states;

3) Complication of any single determinant;

4) As both a “context for enactment” and a “point of contact” renders cultural phenomena such as the scene at the “juncture of various trajectories and vectors.”
Stahl draws on Charles Landry’s (2000) notion of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructures for understanding the ‘creative milieu’ of cities so as to help understand the function of the ‘indie’ production companies as ‘hard’ infrastructural institutions of ‘soft infrastructure’ – that is, “the affective dimensions associated with the socio-musical experience of Montreal” (Stahl 2004: 55). In part, the ‘affective dimensions’ correlate with the embodied dimensions of enthusiasm. In the following section I outline the way the ASRF functioned as a social institution within the street rodding scene by controlling the events in which enthusiasts could participate. As I shall explore in later chapters, the dispositif of different scenes is characterised by the way social institutions controlled events in different ways. It is through these events that enthusiasts could express a sense of purpose by affirming the differential repetition of their enthusiasm.

**Black Banning and the Sanctioned Event**

On a social level, the capacity to (literally) organise is indicated in the way that the street rodding and hot rodding clubs hosted events, such as ‘rod runs’, swap meets, and, the premier event, the Street Rod Nationals. The Street Rod National events were run by clubs, and various administrative and service responsibilities of the events were given to particular clubs, such as food and drink preparation for one night or the responsibility of the grounds where the event was hosted. Magazine coverage is useful for getting some understanding of the complexity of the interrelations between clubs because each club received a mention
for whichever job they were responsible and a web of connections builds up over time.\(^7\)

From one of the last AHRRs (before it became Van Wheels), the May 1977 issue, there are examples of the different approaches that the ASRF state divisions took towards membership and the institutional power wield by the ASRF against groups or persons by ‘black banning’ them from the scene. These appear in the editorial column written by Bruce Flynn, called ‘Shorts’, and another column published on the page beside Flynn’s by Robert Riggs called ‘Riggs on Rods’. Riggs’s column captures the difference across State Divisions of the ASRF in the relations of power they had with enthusiasts, and the relationship between the rules of registration, the role of the Division in facilitating registration, and Federation membership. The South Australian and Victorian Divisions are on opposite ends in the approaches to institutional regulation of enthusiasm and are highlighted for having the strongest divisions in terms of ‘quality’ and ‘quantity’ respectively. Bob Moule, a SA Divisional councillor, is quoted as saying:

> In this State you virtually have to have ASRF membership to get full registration. For this reason we encourage rodders to join clubs. It’s easier to get info on the TAC and we can keep track of members and their progress. […] The clubs are the back bone of the

\(^7\) For example, Custom Rodder magazine was first published in 1967 and so can be used to follow the development of the Nationals and some of the club structures. This can be combined with some of the other Australian hot rodding and street rodding magazines. An interesting connection between the US and Australia is that editor of Custom Rodder, Eddie Ford, spent some time at Peterson Publishing in the US, which was publisher of Hot Rod magazine, and used extensively by Moorhouse in his research.
federation, not individual members. If we can get a guy into a club he will ultimately know a lot more, especially on the administrative side of the sport. (Riggs 1977: 5)

Riggs’s commentary on the South Australian state of affairs consisted in making the observation that “[i]t all adds up to the [ASRF divisional] council having almost complete control of Street Rodding in the state.” This is also noted in the much earlier Rodscene magazine regarding the status of the AHRF just before it split into the ASRF and ANDRA:

It is good to see that street rodders have managed to sort out a workable system with the registration authorities for the checking and building of cars in Adelaide, SA. And it is even better to see it has to be done through the AHRF. In fact if you are not a member of the AHRF they won’t recognise you as a hot rodder and consequently it is much harder to get your car registered. This is the sort of official recognition that pays dividends in the long run. Let’s hope that a similar system can be bought into operation throughout Australia. (Cook 1973b: 7)

Riggs adds to his commentary that he is agreement with the way the SA Division is run and that “[i]f Street Rodding is to survive it has to front the authorities as an organised body.” The representational capacity of street rodding (the ‘front’) is understood as a matter survival.

The Victorian Division of the ASRF receives only a brief mention in the column. Riggs begins by mentioning that a recent advertisement was placed in the AHRR by the ASRF regarding membership as pertaining to the Victorian situation: “Fill out the form and send in 15 bucks and get
your sticker.” The Victorian ASRF Division had much more liberal membership rules – this is partially due to the less strict registration rules of Victoria (which were part of the reason for the furore surrounding classification of ‘custom classics’). Victoria, apparently, had the largest membership numbers of any state. At the time of writing the column they also had by far the largest share of entries for the 1977 Street Rod Nationals with 213 of the first 286. South Australia only had 36. The economic ramifications of the different membership policies in terms of raw numbers were evident.

In noting this distinction in the organisational form and capacity of the two state divisions, Riggs is almost prophetic in his anticipation of the shift away from *collective political representation* to the rhetoric and desire of *individuality* that would animate much of the discourse of street machining in the 1980s. As he observes regarding the South Australian ASRF membership system, the “drawback […] is that the person’s individuality is lost to a certain extent.” Indeed, in the same issue of AHRR and towards the back was a copy of the constitution and rules of the then newly formed Victorian Street Machine Association (VSMA), the first of the state-based street machine associations.

On the previous page to the column by Riggs was Bruce Flynn’s editorial. The majority of Flynn’s text was concerned with a letter received from Ray Mason, NSW Divisional Director of the ASRF. Mason had written about recent event coverage in the magazine regarding two separate events, the Sydney Rod Show and the Wild World of Wheels. The letter pointed out that ‘rodders’ (i.e. ASRF members) were in favour of the way the Sydney Rod Show was run compared to the Wild World of Wheels show. Apparently there were disagreements regarding insurance claims on
vehicles for the Wild World on Wheels show. Indeed, the animosity was to such an extent that the promoter of the Wild World of Wheels, the NSW Hot Rod Association (NSWHRA), was ‘black banned’ by the ASRF. The NSWHRA operated the drag strip in Sydney and therefore were on the drag racing or ANDRA side of the AHRF split to that of the ASRF (“Where are the drags heading?” 1972: 20). A motion was passed within the ASRF “that any future applications from the NSWHRA for any event be rejected” (Flynn 1977: 4).

One of the earliest examples of the tensions that would come to dominate in the scene in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s comes from David Cook’s editorial in the Rodscene magazine on the 1973 Sydney Hot Rod Show:

What was once the biggest show in Australia has slowly gone down hill, especially over the past two years, to the point where it is now just a ‘car park full of hot rods’. [...] All of the enthusiasm that had hot rodders looking forward to the show for months before has gone. [...] The whole crux of the problem is one of promoter/entrant relations. At the moment it is almost non-existent. The average entrant feels that the promoter takes the money that he has helped generate, and turns it to fields that do not directly help him. His entire return consists of a paltry $50 reimbursement fee which doesn’t balance up well against money invested. (Cook 1973a: 6)
Cook continues in the editorial outlining the proposition put forward by Austin Arrowsmith representing a new association, the Associated Rod Clubs, for an alternative redistribution of show profits:

Their proposals for changes to benefit the hot rodder are far reaching and could herald a whole new approach from Australian promoters. To the entrant goes his proportion of 87.5 per cent of the gate-takings; 10 per cent is kept for the promotion of next year’s show and 2.5 per cent for contingencies. Each entrant will receive a statement of both income and expenditure so he will know that he is getting the right amount of money. An example of the return with 30,000 spectators, an entrant would receive approximately $200 back as his reimbursement. The first $50 of this return is guaranteed!

In later chapters I explore the economic dimension of how the enthusiast helps generate profit for promoters. This brief example indicates how radically different the relations of power are between entrants and promoters of hot rodding shows in the early 1970s. In 1973 a magazine supported the initiatives from enthusiast associations to mobilise against being exploited by show or event promoters. As I shall discuss over the next few chapters, in the 1980s the enthusiast magazines would be working in synergistic relations with event promoters.

Returning to Flynn’s editorial, Mason also accused him of “rush[ing] into print with inaccurate statements that give the wrong impression and are detrimental to the sport” (Flynn 1977: 4). (It is unclear from this particular

71 It is unclear if the Associated Rod Clubs became the Australian Street Rod Federation, but I have found no other mention of this association.
editorial what was allegedly wrong with the original event coverage that prompted such a scornful rebuke.) Mason uses the term 'sport' to describe the activities of the scene, thus valorising the competitive dimensions of the enthusiasm over others. ‘Sport’ in this context is less a question of the ‘sport text’ (Rowe 2004: 9-17), and more a question of the character of ‘sport’ as describing an event within which participants become implicated as their various affects are explicated and mobilised across the event (Massumi 2002: 81-88). ‘Sport’ in this context is interpreted as an abstracted shorthand way of referring to the complex of (sometimes competitive) ‘challenges’ that defines an enthusiasm where certain actors endeavour to meet and overcome compared to that of a text that has a meaning that needs to be read.

Flynn goes on to make an important point regarding the nature of the show scene. He justifies not mentioning what he calls “any behind the scenes hassles” by writing that:

After all it is show biz (isn’t it?) and the old maxim "the show must go on" really does apply whether you like it or not. Not so in Sydney though and the official ASRF letter states the "Bankstown show is organised by rodders for rodders" which is ok if you are not a member of the public. But the public has to pay to see the rods!

This is an interesting point because the Sydney Van Show held recently in mid-Feb had no commerical [sic] involvement and was essentially a van show for vanners. The difference was that it was open to the public - FREE! If the public are going to be charged to see rods, vans or anything else for that matter then they want a show - especially in Sydney.
We don’t think our comments are detrimental to the sport and if the public’s attitude and the fan in the street was considered then the opposite would be the case. The NSWHRA show offered a seven-day Gold Coast holiday for two, to the winner of a competition based on the Peoples Choice. The Bankstown show didn’t even have a People’s Choice.

Somebody just might have their priorities a little off-centre. (Flynn 1977: 4)

Flynn is writing as the editor of a magazine that exists in the space between different populations who share an enthusiasm on much more divergent scale than that of, for example, drag racers versus street rodders. In the example presented in Flynn’s editorial, there is a tension in the different sets of expectations involving the participation of different populations of enthusiasts. These different populations of enthusiasts are what Moorhouse (1991: 122) called the ‘interested public’ and the ‘enthusiasts’. Part of the problem was that Flynn knew very well that the AHRR simply would not survive as a niche-audience, but mass-produced magazine if it was only bought by members of the ASRF. The AHRR was

72 On one level, street rodders and drag racers were distinct on the institutional level since 1973, but on more of an inter-subjective level they are still ‘enthusiasts’.

73 Flynn’s editorial above also serves as a useful segue into the other dominant cultural formation of the 1970s: panel vanning. Flynn notes that the Sydney Van Show had no commercial involvement and was free to the interested public. A number of issues earlier the AHRR had published a special “Van & Truck Issue”. The panel vanning ‘craze’ was in full swing. The ethos of holding a free show that was ‘essentially for vanners’ and yet open to the interested public compared to the commercial and political machinations of the rodders captures some sense of why panel vanning was different. Panel vanning, although still emerging from the homosocial scene of enthusiast car cultures, was much more radical in the sense that it was organised around the technological embodiment of the ‘freedom
the leading magazine in the cultural formation at the time and came into conflict with ASRF, because the Federation – through its power to sanction – also mediates between different populations of enthusiasts.

In an interview article with the promoter of the Sydney Rod Show, Lyn Arrowsmith, in the December 1974-February 1975 issue of AHRR, Arrowsmith states plainly what is at stake:

AHRR: What part do you think shows play in the street rodding scene?
LYN: A big part. It's the main opportunity for the street rodders to give the public a look at the workmanship and the aims of our sport.
AHRR: Do you see public relations as an important part of the street rodding scene?
LYN: Of course. If you haven't good public relations in any business or pastime then you are in trouble from the start.
AHRR: I notice you said business there - do you look on street rodding as a business?
LYN: No, no. I wouldn't say it's a business, it's a sport. But let's put it this way, if you are going to promote the thing then you might as well do it the right way. If you just want to stick your head in the sand and be an ostrich you are not doing anyone any good. You have to go out of your way to see the right people, speak to them the right way and do the right thing by them. In the old days you

of the road'. It was a bohemian spirit that was largely at odds with the politico-cultural conservatism of street rodding. However, it is telling that panel vanning is now all but dead, and street rodding and the ASRF is still going strong in the new millennium.

74 The exact relation or if there is a relation between Lyn and Austin Arrowsmith is unknown.
could get away with being a bit of a roughie, these days you can't. People are more conscious of you and you are trying to promote the sport in a better light than it has been in the past. In the old days we weren't too interested in appearances - we were only interested in having a good time and roaring up the street - now we just can't afford to do that sort of thing. (Lyn Arrowsmith on Rodding 1974: 38)

Arrowsmith frames the show in terms of letting the public view the ‘workmanship’ of rod builders. ‘Workmanship’ is at stake in the discourses of the ‘modified vehicle’ and the valorisation of enthusiast skilled labour through the discursive practices of the enthusiasm. This is at odds with Flynn’s conception of a car show as an expression of ‘show biz’; that is, rather than exposing the public to something that would happen anyway as a “show organised by rodders for rodders” Flynn draws a distinction between a show organised for enthusiasts (in this case, rodders) compared to a show, or what I call a spectacle, produced for the interested public.

The street rod movement was organised around securing support from the state and enthusiasts to work out a compromise to ensure that the ‘sport’ survived. This produced a militant and conservative ‘sense of purpose’ to ‘save’ street rodding from two sides of the same problem: too much governmental intervention and the ‘stupidities’ of a ‘few yahoos’ (as Riggs puts it in his column). ‘Show biz’ and attention to ‘workmanship’ of rodders are separate, albeit related, ‘senses of purpose’ for cultural events of modified-car culture. The process by which enthusiasts affirm not only an ‘individual’ enthusiasm, but a collective event of enthusiasm of which they are part is through an
immanent relation of belonging. This belonging is not defined by identity but in the shared felt transition or “becoming-together” of enthusiasts (Massumi 2002: 88).

Brian Massumi discusses the collective becoming of the audience of the event of a football game that is transmitted through the mass media; he argues that “[m]edia transmission is the becoming of the event” (Massumi 2002: 88). The event is not the game, in the sense of rules and an outcome, but in the playing of the game and the shifts in potential experienced through the actions of various players in relation with each other, the ball, and the reconfigurations in the potentialised space between the goal posts. In modified-car culture, the potentialised space is often the street (but also includes the race track and space of the car show), and the reconfigurations follow the transitions in the capacity to affirm, in different ways, their enthusiasm. Therefore, the becoming-together of enthusiasm is experienced as the capacity to affect and be affected within the event of enthusiasm according to the dominant ‘sense of purpose’ just as the event is affirmed and differentially repeated within the cultural events of the scene.

Maurizio Lazzarato discusses the general conditions of this process in terms of the shift from the disciplinary society’s ‘confinement of the outside’ to the control society’s ‘modulation of the outside’: “To confine the outside, to confine the virtual, means neutralizing the power of invention and codifying repetition so as to drain it of all power of variation, thereby reducing it to a simple reproduction” (2006: 176). For disciplinary societies this means, in part, submitting the ‘temporality of the event’ to the ‘temporality of the clock’ (176). In control societies, the time
of the event is no longer regarded as an exception, “but must been seen as what needs to be periodically regulated and captured. Difference and repetition are not neutralized any more, but must be controlled as such” (178).75

The ASRF’s institutional capacity needs to be understood not only in the context of mediating power relations between the State and enthusiasts, but also in relation to enthusiasm.76 Working from Deleuze’s reading of Foucault’s work, Maurizio Lazzarato clearly defines the relation between power and institutions:

> Power is a relation between forces, while institutions are agents of the integration and stratification of forces. Institutions fix forces and their relations into precise forms by according them a reproductive function. (2006: 173)

75 Massumi makes a similar point, in the same example of the transmission of the football event through the mass media:

> Control is modulation made a power factor (its flow factor). It is the powering-up – or power-away – of potential. The ultimate capture, not of the elements of expression [for example, the appropriation or commodification of the elements of a subcultural style], not even of expression, but the movement of the event itself. (2002: 88)

76 To return to Straw’s concept of the scene and the example of ‘alternative rock’, the social institutions of the scene include “campus radio stations, independent record stores, and live performance tours” (1991: 376). Straw argues that by maintaining access to a wide range of musical practices these institutions “engaged in the valorization of [the] exhaustivitiy and diversity” of ‘alternative rock’; this trend towards catering to the most specific and diverse ‘taste formations’ resulted in a sense of crisis within the cultural of alternative rock music produced because “no particular stylistic exercise may be held up as emblematic of a collective, forward movement on the part of this terrain as a whole” (377).
The constituent forces of power relations are ‘developed’ through the sensations of a body and its capacities through what Clifton Evers (2004: 28) has called “felt processes of connection.” Hence, power is immanent to production and social relations (Negri and Hardt 2000: 33). The enthusiast body, configured by its habitus, is the “developer which disappears in what it develops: the compound of sensation” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 183). Sensations, in a general sense come into existence when “force is exerted on a body” (Deleuze 2003: 48); sensation is the “excitation itself, not insofar as it is gradually prolonged and passes in the reaction, but insofar as it is preserved or preserves its vibrations” (Deleuze and Guattari 1994: 211). The force experienced is the sensation of the felt transition in the capacity of a body to affect and be affected (Deleuze 1988c: 49-50; Massumi 2002: 15; Seigworth 2005: 166-167).

The final point I need to make in this chapter is regarding the relation between the scene and the social institutions and enthusiast culture industry. The relation is expressed through the cultural events of the scene. The multiplicities of the enthusiasm are produced in the felt transition of capacities of the enthusiast body differentially repeated in these cultural events. In the first chapter, I described in an anecdotal fashion a single cultural event of a ‘cruise’ and the various transitions between affective states as bodies were affected. In the second chapter, I described the situation of the gradual transformation of my enthusiast body in the transition between different degrees in its affections and its capacity to act with regards to a socio-technical problem. The respective examples of each chapter were different in their consistency of organisation. The

77 I discuss the immanent dimension of power relations in the process of the modulation of the event of enthusiasm in Chapter 6.
Bathurst cruise was organised through the Fordmods.com forums. The broken alternator belt was much more contingent. Yet, both involved different combinations of organisation and contingency; there is no final organisation to either event. The institutionalised cultural events organised by the cultural industry or amateur social institutions, such as the Street Rod Nationals or later Summernats, have a much higher level of organisation than the broken alternator belt events and a slightly more organisation than the cruise. The events are not determined by their (predetermined formal) organisation or the (accidental) contingency, but in the different orders of composition of organisation and the felt transition in the capacities of enthusiast bodies.\(^78\)

The cultural events of the scene serve as localised configurations of sensation shared and distributed across bodies; Sedgwick’s concept of homosocial desire is an example of this shared sensation within patriarchal social formations and institutions more generally. Control over and access to events is configured not only according to the outright (symbolic or actual) violence of exclusion but through the composition of affects that define events; this is the difference between the mode of power of disciplinary societies and that of control societies. Enthusiasts belong to a shared enthusiasm evident in the sensations developed through their enthusiast bodies and the contingent forces to which they are exposed.

\(^{78}\) Demonstrating this collective sensation here, in textual form, is extremely difficult, if not impossible. It is basically an assumption that the excitement evident on the cruise (first chapter) or other affective states of other cultural events that I participated in as an enthusiast involves a shared felt transition of enthusiast bodies.
The power of social institutions and the cultural industries of modified-car culture is to produce, organise or sponsor cultural events that capture and modulate the movement of the event of enthusiasm. Therefore, the reproduction of enthusiasm itself and the movement of enthusiasm is at stake in the cultural politics of events. This is not simply a question of the management of events, but their affective composition and therefore the capacity to serve as the locus for the ‘becoming-together’ of enthusiasts. Flynn’s editorial exemplifies the different ways of modulating the multiplicities of enthusiasm belonging to the participating populations into group identities and individuating the population into collectivities according to the social institution: 1) through the magazine; 2) through the rigid institutionalised segmentations of street rodding by the social institution of the ASRF; or 3) through the more supple segmentations of the panel vanning. It is precisely the difference between the two forms of organised ‘show’ – defined by the relations of mediation across different populations, i.e. for enthusiasts or ‘show biz’ for the interested public – that would split the street machining scene in the late 1980s.\footnote{It is in the commercial interests of the magazines to side with the ‘interested public’ rather than the ‘enthusiasts’ when they come into apparent intensive conflict between interests. It is not without some irony that Flynn later figures as a \textit{promoter} in a war against ‘promotion’ waged by the ASMF in the early-1980s where he accuses the NSW Street Machine Association of ‘black banning’ him.}

I have examined the larger event of the street rodding scene through the historical example of the formation of a particular discourse event of the ‘modified car’. The composition of power relations, or \textit{dispositif}, of the discursive formation in the scene of street rodding was also briefly explored. In the 1970s, the street rodding enthusiast institution of the ASRF worked with governmental State institutions to create an equitable
discourse that produced certain restrictions and freedoms on enthusiast practice through automotive engineering-based regulations. The organisational consistency of the street rodding scene is determined by the emergence of a particular socio-political representative structure between enthusiasts and the State mediated by the enthusiast institutions. Transformations to this consistency followed shifts in the character of the enthusiasm present at the time as different populations of enthusiasts sought to articulate and affirm divergent events of enthusiasm. Transformations in the organisational composition of the scene are indicated in those moments where the dispositif of the scene either changed to accommodate different enthusiasms (through reconfigurations in the discursive formation) and therefore reconfigurations to the dispositif of the scene, or the divergent events of enthusiasm were excluded and institutional power retained by way of excluding competing infrastructural elements of the enthusiasm (such as event promoters). The event of enthusiasm was captured and modulated by way of controlling the cultural events of the scene; the cultural events of the scene are the points at which the differential repetition of the event of the enthusiasm is expressed.

As I have already intimated, street rodding is from a different era, one where labour could successfully organise against what were perceived to be oppressive and unfair governmental regulations; not only regarding wage labour and the distribution of surplus value, but the protection of the leisure-time labour of enthusiasts. The biggest difference between street rodding and street machining is that street rodding has been far more militant than street machining in the way its institutional bodies and even commercial interests would not only support, but also lead street rodding through mediation with the State’s governmental authorities.
Street Machining is the key scene of modified-car culture in Australia and that is now where I shall shift my focus.
Chapter 4 Street Machining: the ASMF and Summernats

In this chapter I shift eras from the 1970s street rodding scene to engage with the street machining scene in contemporary modified-car culture in Australia. As I have outlined the street rodding clubs in part located themselves between enthusiasts and the state in a mediating capacity. However, the authority of street machining clubs was largely determined by the staging and control of large car shows and festivals. This authority was challenged and mode of control broken by the leading magazine at the time, Street Machine. I shall use the language of those who were primarily involved in this shift and frame it in terms of the production of a ‘professional’ level within the socio-cultural milieu of modified-car culture that correlates directly with what I am calling the spectacle of modified-car culture.

The development of the street machining scene in the 1980s does not follow a single axis of transformation; rather, there is a complex interplay between organisational consistencies of different dimensions of the scene. Each of the next three chapters engages with a different dimension of the scene and a different historical trajectory. The ultimate aim over these chapters is to describe the way enthusiasm is used as a resource by the enthusiast culture industry. This chapter outlines the development and then decline of theamatuer social institution of the Australian Street Machine Federation (ASMF). It allows me to draw out parallels with the street rodding scene. I also draw on the example of Chic Henry’s entrepreneurial role in the development of the Summernats event. The representative modality of power in the street rodding era between the three part network relation of the state-ASRF(-TAC)-
enthusiasts and the way events functioned within this network of relations changes with street machining with the rise of spectacular car festivals, such as the Summernats.

Chapter 5 introduces the notion of ‘performance’ and focuses on the role of the V8 engine in the street machining scene. This allows me to introduce the example of the ‘Pro-Street’ as the favoured style of modification for producing spectacular ‘head-turners’. Lastly, the third chapter in this series uses the notion of the ‘head turner’ to examine the composition of power relations that characterise the spectacular dispositif of street machining. I shall isolate the tension between the active affections of ‘know how’ and the function of the passive affections of ‘charisma’ to serve as a resource for the enthusiast culture industry.

The purpose of breaking up the history into three separate but related trajectories is to produce a tapestry of different developments, not to represent the complexity of these shifts as a teleological totality or historical ‘evolution’, but engage with the complexity itself in its contingency and partiality. Therefore, I shall again use a Foucaultian ‘eventalization’ method and extend it beyond a narrow focus on the archive to connect it further with Straw’s analysis of scenes.

The shifts in the street machining scene involve a process of the gradual transformation of the conditions of possibility for the enthusiasm. In Straw’s terminology, a different ‘sense of purpose’ came to dominate the scene; this is evident in the previous chapter in the tension between cultural events that showcase the ‘workmanship’ of rod builders versus those
events organised around ‘show biz’. In street machining there was an emergence of a new dispositif and transformation from a scene organised by street rodding’s representational social institution to a scene street machining’s dynamic architecture of the spectacle. Central to this process however, was the role of Street Machine magazine in articulating a sense of purpose and logic of the enthusiasm organised around the spectacle. The active forgetting and selective remembering that underpins Street Machine magazine’s account of the scene of street machining outlined in the third section of this chapter is not only a manifestation of a Foucaultian ‘discontinuity’ in history, it also indicates one of the singularities that defined the emergence of the scene itself.

The Australian Street Machine Federation

The mid-1970s through to the early-1980s saw the emergence of an amateur representative institution within the street machining scene, the Australian Street Machine Federation (ASMF). The mid-1980s spectacularisation of the scene triggered the decline of the representative organisation in street machining. To understand some of the shifts of the street machining scene it is useful to trace a brief history of the ASMF and Street Machine Nationals. I shall then examine a project initiated by the ASMF called ‘V8 Early’ as it allows me to draw comparison between the ASRF and the ASMF. The ‘V8 Early’ project is named as such because enthusiasts worked together through the ASMF.

80 In some ways the development of the spectacle extends the importance of ‘show biz’ in the scene to the diminishment of ‘workmanship’; yet, as I shall discuss in the next chapter, it is not this simple, because to a certain extent the ‘showmanship’ and ‘impact’ of elite vehicles became the spectacle.
to get early Holden vehicle legally registered with later-model Holden V8 engines.

The ASMF was the peak body for street machining in Australia for roughly the period from its creation in 1982 and incorporation in 1984 to the 1988 Street Machine Nationals event. The ASMF was roughly equivalent to the ASRF, but with important differences. In the early 1980s and before the creation of the ASMF, the national club-based structure (inherited or copied from street rodding and the ASRF) was basically split into two levels: the local car clubs and the state-based associations. With the development and formation of the ASMF from 1982 to 1984 a third level was introduced that brought the state associations together. The ASMF was allegedly a full time management team for street machining in Australia. Its basic role and reason for its formation was to run (and, later, promote) the Street Machine Nationals.

The Street Machine Nationals were initially similar to the Street Rod Nationals. The first and second Street Machine Nationals were held in the country town of Griffith, NSW, in 1975 and 1976 respectively. They were hosted by the Combined 55-6-7 Chevrolet Club of NSW (Figure 4.1). There were 75 participants at the first 1975 show and 250 at the 1976 show (Cook 1976). According to Dale Barnard, one of the members of the Chevrolet Club and organiser of the nationals, these events attempted to capture the spirit of the ASRF nationals.
Part of the enthusiast archive assembled for this research was one of the earliest video productions of any sort within modified-car culture in Australia: “Street Legal” an hour long film of the 1983 ASRF Street Rod Nationals. What is clear from the video is the ASRF events did not change anywhere near as much as the ASMF events in terms of scale. Indeed the early ASMF events of the 1970s were a far cry from what the event would become in later years. The changing fortune of the Street Machine Nationals over the decade 1975 to 1986 indicates the transformation of the scene and rapid rise in popularity of street machining. The difference between the ASRF event and the street machine events is that the ASRF always constructed and marketed the event as one primarily produced for an active enthusiast population, while the ASMF event eventually became a spectacle and developed its capacity to mediate between
different enthusiast populations: from the interested public to the committed enthusiast.

Car clubs and federations were still a very powerful influence in the early-to mid-1980s. They exerted control over the events of enthusiasts to such an extent that these groups, the state associations in particular, operated in a similar fashion to their street rodding counterparts. As I noted in the previous chapter, enthusiasts in the 1970s were paid by promoters or clubs to attend events and display their modified vehicles. Such events were normally held in shopping centre carparks or mall foyers and involved a very limited number of participants. The payment of enthusiasts indicated there was recognition of the enthusiast labour that was involved in modifying cars. The promoters or clubs paid their respective state association membership and sanctioning fees, and the associations paid the national federation. The tensions that emerged in the early-1970s over the status of entrants and promoters turned into a minor skirmish over control in the early to mid 1980s. At this stage it was simply control over the sanctioning and participation in events by enthusiasts. If a car club or individual participated in an event that was not sanctioned then the club or individual could and in fact normally did receive a ‘black ban’, which was basically a suspension from the organised part of the scene and all the sanctioned events run by clubs, associations, or the federation. There are a number of examples of state associations or the ASMF writing letters to magazines to inform readers that a car club had been ‘black banned’ from the scene. For example, the 1983 fifth issue of Supercar magazine appears a letter from the executive of the New South Wales Street Machine Association (NSWSMA):
The Executive Committee of the [NSWSMA] regretfully finds the need to make it known that the Waratah State Street Machine Club committee and members have been suspended from this Association for a period of two years from the 9th September 1983. This is a result of the clubs [sic] refusal to accept and pay the fine levied on the club in relation to the 1983 Blacktown Show. By the clubs [sic] refusal to accept the Association’s Rules and sanctioning of the event, together with the reasons for the fine, each of these reasons where [sic] inexcussable [sic] in themselves, but together they are deplorable. (Langhorne 1983: 7)

The power of clubs, associations and federations was not only directed towards sanctioning clubs or individuals, but also in less scrutable directions. One perennial issue was the accusation of bias in the judging. A letter printed in the December 1986-January 1987 issue of Supercar magazine complains about the 1986 First All Holden Day held at Penrith, NSW. After congratulating the NSWSMA on running a successful event, the letter says:

However, on the next occasion, a little less biased judging would make it fair for ALL entrants, not just those who are associated with the [NSWSMA]. I feel the [NSWSMA] is necessary to a get a fair deal for car modifiers, however, because a person is not a member, they should not be penalised at these events.

The editors reply:

I’m afraid that the personal views and personal friendships of some judges tend to wavier their abilities when it comes to judging a
vehicle and at the same time some judges can be easily influenced by their own associations [sic] members when it comes to judging a particular vehicle or areas of that vehicle, this approach is totally wrong and doesn’t give a true representation of the car in question. (Krammer 1986: 7)

A major difference between the ASRF and ASMF is that the ASMF never had the political clout won and wielded by the ASRF in its early years in the 1970s. The only case that I came across in the enthusiast archive of the ASMF functioning in a similar ‘representational’ capacity, or more accurately as ‘advocates’ of street machiners, is with the ‘V8 Early’ project. The ASMF tried to organise against the threat posed by registration authorities restricting access of enthusiasts and their cars to the ‘street’.

Most people, members included are waiting for someone else to do the dirty work. Wrong again, the ASMF is the last line of defence. It is up to us (that includes YOU) to get off our butts and get something organised, FAST[.] Otherwise the ASMF may soon become another “has-been” outfit without real purpose. Being able to organise shows is all very well (and a very important part of our sport) but without protecting the “Street” we are headed on the road to oblivion. (Walter 1987a: 6)

The reason for discussing this example of the ‘V8 Early’ project is twofold. First, it sees the emergence of a new version of ‘modified vehicle’ as a ‘statement’ in the governmental safety and legal discourse and that is in adjectival form ‘engineered’. Once a vehicle was ‘engineered’ then it gained the socio-technical ‘respectability’ that the ASRF had fought for,
but in such a way that by-passed the social institution of the Federation structures to control the scene. ‘Respectability’ refers to the state-based sanction of the modifications carried out to a vehicle. Secondly, it is a threshold moment in the transformation of social organisations in the scene away from *club-based structures* mediating the relation with the governmental institutions of the State. It shifted towards a mode of social organisation determined by a relation between the State and the *individual* enthusiast mediated by a professional engineer. The Engineering and Modification Committee (EMC) of the South Australian division of the ASMF sought the employ of a ‘couple of engineers’ in their ‘V8 Early’ project.\(^{81}\)

The V8 Early project commenced in January 1987 and it was the first task of the ASMF SA Division’s EMC. EMC Chairman, Steve Walter, wrote in *Street Torque* that the “EMC took on the challenge enthusiastically, considering that here was something that was worthwhile to try and if successful, would make people sit up and take notice of the ASMF” (Walter 1987b: 10). Note the use of ‘challenge’ to describe the ‘problem’ addressed, which in this case is articulated explicitly in terms of enthusiasm.

After a meeting to secure financial backing from the ‘rank and file’ members of the Federation came the development of some guidelines.  

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\(^{81}\) The principle texts of this account are slightly different to the magazines of the street rodding discourse in the previous chapter in that they are primarily provided by the ASMF’s internal newsletter, *Street Torque*, sent out to all members at the time. I managed to acquire seven issues of this extremely rare document. Luckily they cover the period in which the EMC of the ASMF SA Division was working towards its first ‘V8 Early’ project. I have one other article in a magazine, *Super Street*, about one of the ASMF SA Division’s completed ‘V8 Early’ project cars.
The guidelines roughly defined what was acceptable to the Vehicle Engineering Branch (VEB) and therefore what was socio-technically possible. The last stage in setting preparing the ‘project’ involved a submission to the VEB based on the vehicle in question. A consultant engineer to the project was appointed and prepared aspects of the submission. As Walter writes:

After an absence of some fifteen years an approval to construct a V8 Early Holden has been granted by the VEB. The message is clear, the challenge was given. The ASMF has answered the challenge, changes have been made in the corridors of power. This is only the beginning of a new era in Street Machining. There is one hell of a lot more work to be done but the future is looking pretty damn good. (Walter 1987b: 10)

Walter adds in the conclusion to the newsletter article that “[w]hat the EMC SA Div. has done is, in effect, created a precedent in how Street Machiners and their organisation […] can deal with the authorities” (Walter 1987b: 11). The political ramifications are described explicitly by Walter in terms of the ‘rulebook’:

The relationship between the Street Machiner and his representative (EMC) and the authorities (in SA the VEB) is not unlike a lawyer and a judge. The judge holds all the cards and it is up to the lawyer to prepare his case correctly. The rulebook is there and it is up to the lawyer to find the loopholes. It is our necessity, for survival, to understand the rulebook, and by using it properly, it can be to our advantage. (Walter 1987b: 12)
The precedent created by the SA Division’s EMC is that of the principle of negotiation with the State authorities regarding the technical regulations pertaining to modified vehicles. The process of negotiation required in producing a submission for the VEB is evidence of another iteration of the ‘modified vehicle’ and this is part of the function of the ‘consulting engineer’. The ‘modified vehicle’ is now ‘engineered’. To have a vehicle ‘engineered’ places the vehicle and owner in the particular power relations of ‘respectability’ with the governmental dispositif of the discourse of ‘modified vehicles’.

Steve Walter writes in the January 1988 *Street Torque* that the EMC hoped to have a V8 Early Holden registered by the end of the year. In the same article he introduces the problem of knowledge in the context of the role of magazines propagating the dissemination of knowledge:

Most Street Machiners do not work in the automotive industry and consequently have little idea of the effect of modifications on their vehicle’s performance. A large percentage of modified vehicles have performance markedly inferior to the standard car. The average Street Machiner gets his information from the various magazines. Unfortunately most of the vehicles featured are not well engineered and set a poor standard. The technical articles, although interesting deal with extensive and expensive operations that leave the younger modifier out in the cold. (Walter 1988: 19)

Walter is critiquing the discourse of enthusiast magazines on the grounds that it does not sufficiently correlate with the governmental safety and legal discourse of the ‘engineered’ ‘modified vehicle’. At the time that
this was written the head-turning ‘pro-street’ style of modification garnered the most attention in magazines and at car shows. I am assuming that Walter is referring to the vehicles modified following the ‘Pro-Street’ style, which is examined in the next chapter.

The series of articles in Street Torque articulated a discourse that placed the ‘workmanship’ as central to the sense of purpose of the enthusiasm. Part of this discursive process was the articulation of the ‘poorly modified vehicle’ as the negative outcome of a ‘sense of purpose’ that was not congruent with the enthusiasm advocated by the ASMF. In issue 13 of Street Torque there is a brief article by John Behnke of the SA Division’s EMC titled “Build a Street Machine – Fairy Tale or Horror Story” in which Behnke describes in detail the problem of the ‘poorly modified vehicle’. He presents the example of a “boy” from the “late Sixties” who wanted to own a Ferrari but couldn’t afford it. So this “boy” began building his own version from the biggest engine he could fit, the biggest mag wheels and tires, and the biggest sway bar (which is part of the suspension that controls or limits body roll). Behnke writes:

Well, a little knowledge is dangerous. Luckily the car never quite made it. [...] [T]his was me in the good old days. You know the days, no rules from government bodies, no readily available tech. information on building cars and no centralized body to help disseminate the available data to its members. Theoretically this has all changed BUT most of our cars are beautifully detailed coffins and not even very fast ones at that! (Behnke 1988: 47)
He goes on to introduce the basic technical specifics of the safety and legal discourse of the ‘modified vehicle’, and indicates the discursive connection made between the ‘sense of purpose’ of the enthusiasm and what is ‘appropriate’. The ‘poorly modified vehicle’ is repeatedly articulated through descriptions of the modifier as stupid, ignorant, economically poor, or a combination of these. Instead of a journalist simply writing that a car is ‘bad’ or that a particular style of modification is in poor taste, the generic type of car or modification pertaining to a style is discoursed as necessarily being poorly modified or a poor modification. This locates the deficiency not in the car as an object but in the capacity of the enthusiast to modify and a defective relation between the enthusiast, ‘know how’ and the ‘black box’ of the vehicle.

*Super Street* magazine featured an article on a successfully registered ‘V8 Early Holden’ project built through the SA Division’s EMC in the 1990 August-September issue, just over two and a half years after the project began. Part of the article illustrates how the process of engineering the vehicle and the role of the EMC had become integral to enthusiast discourse:

> “I wanted to build a street machine that I was able to show and legally drive anywhere,” said Neville [Phillips, owner of the vehicle]. “It’s common knowledge that the South Australian laws regarding modified cars are the strictest in the country, but the SMASA [Street Machine Association of South Australia] made things a lot easier.”

The SMASA’s EMC [...] has done all the research and testing involved with the installation of a V8 into an early Holden and offers a service where an engineer’s report will be issued after an EMC
engineer has conducted tests on the nominated vehicle. The report covers everything from body rigidity to engine capacity and overall power.

Neville took all of these things into consideration when planning his EH [an early model Holden] and the finished product has passed all tests with flying colours. (Raudonikis 1990: 30)

The other part of the article’s introduction is also very useful for indicating the tension regarding the shifting fortunes and status of the car clubs and federations within the scene from the near absolute power of the ASRF in the 1970s to the impotent state of affairs for the ASMF by the late 1980s.

One of the biggest divisions between street machiners has always been those who are involved with clubs and those who aren’t. Unfortunately not everyone agrees with the club scene, but one thing we should all be thankful for is the way major clubs have helped members with the registration of modified vehicles. (Raudonikis 1990: 30)

Within the street machining scene the clubs had shifted from emulating the power structure of the ASRF in relation to the street rodding scene to become a service provider that enabled enthusiasts to register their modified vehicles. The role of the ASMF in consolidating the street machining scene has largely been erased from the history of modified-car culture in Australia, and it is to this historical amnesia that I shall now turn.
Forgotten Histories

There are three key texts on the history of the street machining scene in contemporary modified-car culture of Australia. Two of these are part of the enthusiast literature produced by the cultural industry servicing the street machine enthusiasm; one is a DVD titled “The History of the Street Machine magazine Summernats 1988-2006, including the 1986 Street Machine Nationals”, and the other is a history-themed issue of Street Machine magazine. Street Machine’s brief history of itself in the August 2006 issue is a key document in comprehending the status of history within contemporary modified-car culture: there is no ‘official’ mention of the ASMF or the Street Machine Nationals. However, in a regular column called ‘Six Pack’, there is a minor mention of the Street Machine Nationals. The purpose of the column is to interview a ‘personality’ of the scene, normally a long time participant or business owner, about the ‘six cars that changed their life’. The first Street Machine Nationals is mentioned as the person interviewed for the column, Peter Fitzpatrick, won ‘Top Engine Bay’ at the event. Later in the same column there is a mention of the ‘ASMF Nationals’ and after which in parentheses the text reads “in many ways, the precursor to the Summernats” (25). The representation of the Street Machine Nationals on the Summernats DVD is similarly presented as a precursor to the Summernats.

The ASMF Street Machine Nationals could only be understood as the precursor to the Summernats if the existence of the ASMF is radically changed in character. It is not surprising that this historical struggle is absent from the official account of its history even though Street Machine played a very important role in both sides of the struggle. Street Machine magazine’s sponsorship of the 1986 ASMF-run 8th Street Machine Nationals should be considered the highpoint of the ASMF-lead
club structure in street machining. Less then two years later however, the magazine would join forces with promoter Chic Henry to orchestrate the first Summernats festival run over the 1987-1988 New Year’s period.

The third key text that is useful for gaining some sense of the period covering the emergence of the Summernats and the period of the ASMF Street Machine Nationals is the history of the ASMF represented as part of the ‘ASMF Rule Book’ that appeared as a ‘special section’ in the December 1988 issue of Street & Custom magazine. The Rule Book contains a very brief account of the history of the ASMF. What is clear from the document is that those who ran the ASMF at this particular juncture obviously understood there to be a direct continuity between the 1st Street Machine Nationals of 1975 (run by the Chev Car Club) and the Street Machine Nationals of later years (run by the ASMF). Indeed the sequential numbering of the events (the 1986 event was number 8 and the 1988 was number 9 and so on), clearly indicates that there was a serial continuity between the events even though they were run by different groups and nearly all in different locations.

The continuity of succession staked out between the ASMF Nationals and the Summernats in the brief representation as part of the Summernats DVD and the mention of the recent Street Machine magazine column through the use of the word ‘precursor’ however, is a re-articulation of street machining history. It is an explicit example where history has been remembered in a certain way that bestows one memory of events – the rise of the Summernats and the eventual collapse of the ASMF and Street Machine Nationals – with a certain glamour and allure. The Summernats DVD and Street Machine article produce an active forgetting, and this forgetting displaces the role of the ASMF Nationals and the entire history
of the ASMF from, at the minimum, being necessary in the conditions of emergence for Summernats and the current state of affairs.

The seriality of the first four (and maybe also to a certain extent including the fifth) Street Machine Nationals is defined by the character of the event principally organised according to a ‘sense of purpose’ that privileged the relations between active amateur enthusiasts. Active’ in the sense of expressing the active affections of ‘know how’. There was little in the way of a ‘spectacle’ and much in the way of club-based and group oriented activities, such as a ‘1950s rock and roll’ themed dance. Some of these events were more ‘amateur’ than others. Secondly, during the street rodding and early street machining eras the sacrifice of amateur leisure-time labour and associated sociality is discoursed in terms of the devotion evident in the ‘workmanship’ of the ‘build’.

In the late-street machining era enthusiasm is discoursed in terms of a certain kind of ‘craziness’ as a simple affective state, thus removing the

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\*Amatuer is meant here partially in the sense developed by Robert Stebbins in his influential work Amateurs (1979). Stebbins’ describes amateurs as the ‘marginal men [sic] of leisure’ (259-272). He writes:  
[A]mateurs of today, in all fields, to the extent they can be said to be guided by professional standards and share the same spirit of satisfaction, are the marginal men of leisure. They are neither dabblers who approach the activity with little commitment or seriousness, nor professionals who make a living off that activity and spend a major portion of their waking hours doing so - for whom it is an occupation. (40)

Like Stebbins’ amateur archeologists, baseball players and music makers, the activities of modified car enthusiasts are often marginal to the practices of everyday life. For example, cars are normally worked on after work at night or on the weekends, and activities such as cruising and racing happen on weekends too or late at night. There is a constant discourse throughout the last 30 years of making time-based sacrifices to work on cars.
separation of labour from that of amateur owner built vehicles and professional built. The key documents articulating this ‘craziness’ or sometimes as a ‘party’ atmosphere of events, are the series of annual publications that cover the Summernats event published by Street Machine magazine. That is, within the eras of street rodding and street machining and to a lesser extent the more contemporary cultures, working on cars was carried out through the performative in-action of ‘know how’. If amateurs are marginal to the recognised social domains of both a passive ‘popular leisure’ and the wage-based labour of work, then these events – the early Street Machine Nationals – could be understood as moments where the leisure activity of enthusiast labour expressed through the ‘workmanship’ of modified vehicles was highlighted as central.

The traditional date for the Street Machine Nationals was over the Easter long weekend. The three (or four) day Easter weekend is enshrined in Australian worker’s lore (and employment contracts negotiated by labour unions) as sacrosanct. If the religious associations of ‘Easter’ for the weekend lends something of a somber tone to proceedings (not that I can recall anything religious ever being mentioned in magazine coverage of the event), then the shift to the New Year’s break for the Summernats demonstrates one aspect in the change in priority from a ‘family’ event for committed enthusiasts, where worker-enthusiasts would necessarily all have the long weekend holiday, to a public spectacle advertised for everyone as a party and celebration. To put it simply there was a different social relation at the different events: at the Street Machine Nationals one ‘caught up with mates’, while at the Summernats one ‘had a good time’.
In charge of running the Street Machine Nationals were a number of State associations, which later joined forces to form the Australian Street Machine Federation (ASMF). The great ‘enemies’ of the state associations, and to a lesser extent the ASMF, were the show promoters. A war was waged throughout the early-1980s between various car clubs with and against the associations or promoters depending on one’s perspective. With the success of the 7th Street Machine Nationals in 1986 it seemed as if the federation and structured organisation of federation-association-clubs had won the day. In fact, Chic Henry (1985: 13) wrote in 1985 that the 8th 1988 ASMF Nationals had been accepted as part of the official celebrations of the Australian Bicentennial celebrations. The bicentennial committee regarded the Nationals and street machining as an “important activity in the Australian way of life.” However, this success made it clear to certain people that if such events were professionally run, then large amounts of money could be made from them.

Until the 5th Street Machine Nationals the ASMF had followed the lead of the ASRF in running their nationals as an amateur event. The 1986 6th Street Machine Nationals event indicated a tipping point in the organisation of the event and the scene more generally because for the first time the ASMF had the backing of a major sponsor, Street Machine magazine. The success of the event triggered a transformation where the nascent dimension of the event that could properly be called a spectacle was cleaved from the amateur organisation mediated by the ASMF and state associations and then sutured to the discursive media apparatus of Street Machine magazine under a different name, Summernats. It was a movement of the spectacle from one (barely) controlled by the ASMF and associated with the population of enthusiasts whose organisation was largely determined by the club structure to a
spectacle locked in to a relation with a magazine where the relation of the club-structure was expelled. This movement to a large extent mirrors the movements of Chic Henry, who went from being the inaugural National Director of the ASMF to become the owner of a company that ran and promoted the Summernats. It is clear from reading the magazines of the period that not everyone was happy with Henry for what was perceived to be the act of a ‘traitor’.

I shall now follow the trajectory of the event organiser of the Summernats, Chic Henry, from his involvement in the ASMF and amateur organisation of the scene through to his involvement in the spectacle of the Summernats and the rise of a quasi-professional social milieu of enthusiasts within the scene. This allows me to begin staking out the character of the complex transformation of the street machining scene from a sense of purpose directed towards ‘workmanship’ to one directed towards the ‘spectacle’ and ‘head turners’.

**Chic Henry: Traitor or Entrepreneur?**

Chic Henry’s progression from helping organise the Street Machine Nationals, to actively being involved in the ‘christening’ of the Federation in 1984 as the Director, to the sideways movement to being ‘Special Event Director’ in 1986, to finally splitting with the ASMF to help create the Street Machine-sponsored Summernats in 1987 captures the movement within the street machining scene away from the amateur status of the club-based events to the ‘quasi-professional’ status of mass-spectator events. A one-sided militant view of Henry as a ‘traitor’ to the scene fails to account for the way ‘big business’ (i.e. Street Machine) formed
synergies with other commercial interests (i.e. Chic Henry’s entrepreneurial business) to produce a form of cultural or discursive infrastructure that harnessed the dynamic energies of the scene not simply to exploit them, although the synergy was certainly organised to make money, but also translate them into ephemeral but memorable monuments of the enthusiasm itself. In part this was because the commercial interests that make up part of the scene and that advertised in the magazines needed a stable population of enthusiasts as a market. The spectacle of the Street Machine magazine and Summernats synergy served a conservative but stabilising role in the cultural formation.

As I have already noted, from roughly the early-1970s through to the early-1980s, street machining was organised as a network of local clubs. This network did not yet have an overarching form of organisation like the street rodding-based clubs had with their ASRF. Remember that the ASRF was formed in a split of the street rodders with the drag racers; in a sense it reorganised an already organised club structure. There were some clubs in the 1970s that self-identified as street machining clubs. One of these key clubs was the Combined 55-6-7 Chevrolet Owners Club of NSW that hosted the first two Street Machine Nationals. A member of the Chev Owners Club was Chic Henry. He first appeared in Street Machine magazine in the April-May issue of 1982. His blue 1962 Chev Impala was featured towards the rear of the magazine (Coates 1982). No mention was made of his involvement in various street machine clubs. It was a straight ‘feature car’ story. The Impala is an iconic vehicle for street machining (and, for that matter, the US-based subculture of ‘low riding’). Henry’s vehicle was photographed in a humorous setting at a dinosaur
Part of Chic Henry’s role in the formation of the ASMF and Nationals history is briefly outlined in the 1988 ASMF Rule Book. It states that along with Rowan Wilson from NSW he assisted Dave Ryan from Victoria in organising the 4th Street Machine Nationals in 1980.

The 1982 5th Street Machine Nationals were held over the Easter period at the same time as the issue of Street Machine featuring Henry’s Impala was on the stands. The next (1982 June-July) issue of Street Machine carried the coverage of the event. The coverage consisted of a huge 17 page feature article with various other amounts of pages space on related issues including the editorial, a letter to the editor critical of the event, an award and trophy table, and a two-page ‘profile’ of Henry (Paradise 1982a; Riggs 1982a; b; Vincin 1982). Henry was ‘profiled’ because he was the National Director of the ASMF and the organiser of the Street Machine Nationals. There are three key points in the coverage of the Nationals.

The first point is regarding the editorial on the presence of ‘yobbos’ or ‘hoons’ – the ‘fringe’ element of mostly young men who were involved in the process of ‘oiling down’ the roads around the National Exhibition complex as part of a process to do burnouts. Editor Geoff Paradise defends the enthusiasts and attacks the mass media representations that, in his estimation, ‘got it wrong’. The tone of the editorial is celebratory and it is clear that Paradise is happy for the magazine to be associated with the event.

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83 As shall be made clear when I turn to the more recent era of the rise of the imports, there would be a number of contemporary enthusiasts who would strenuously disagree with the assessment of the sub-heading, “Chic Henry’s 427 ’62 Impala ain’t no dinosaur, that’s for sure!”
Second, I think it is fair to say that the ‘profile’ article on Chic Henry is basically what is called a ‘fluff piece’, that is, an article with little critical content. In fact, twice in the article a defence of the ‘financial situation’ of the Nationals event is forwarded. This defence involves various statements that Chic Henry and his wife did not make any money from the event. Far more interesting is that way the article produces a sense of authenticity of Henry’s involvement in the event by focusing on the affective dimension of his involvement. Henry states that, “[m]y isolation [in the north-eastern state of Queensland] has made my job as director difficult, but I made the commitment.” Indeed this ‘commitment’ frames the affective dimension of his involvement. The article then continues, “[t]hat commitment could have proved expensive for Chic and wife Doreen, as more than their hearts went into the Nats.” The ‘heart’ is the affective dimension of their shared enthusiasm (Doreen was on the executive of the Queensland Chev Club).

Third, the article signals the beginning of a historical arc whereby the structure of the street machining scene begins to shift in slow almost decade-long tectonic movements towards a more ‘professional’ and ‘spectacular’ form. The intention is made clear in few comments in the article about ‘the show becoming bigger and better’. However, the nature of the discourse had not yet shifted to the spectacular form as the case was made in the article for explicitly supporting the club-based ASMF structure of the scene. This explicit support for the clubs comes after a comment from Henry signaling his desire to have the event run by a ‘professional group’:

"The main consideration will always be for our entrants. The difference between this Nats and the next one is that the next one
may be run by a professional group which will eliminate the things inexperienced people encounter."

That's only one idea. We at Street Machine magazine know the capabilities of many of the Federation members, and world not like to see them sell themselves short. Money is important and while this event has certainly made the Federation secure, but by no means rich, the more money in the Federation the more it can benefit the member.

Show your support at club level, get behind the Federation and help make the next Street Machine Nationals a successful event. Chic and Doreen Henry will sure as hell be in there working their butts off, as will others. But many hands make light work, so offer your support. (Riggs 1982b)
the cars, practices, enthusiast populations – became stratified around professional-amateur gradations.

In 1984, the 6th Nationals was hosted through the combined effort of the now five State Associations (QLD, NSW, ACT, SA, and VIC), using the name “Australian Street Machine Federation Inc.”. The ASMF Inc was incorporated in the ACT (where it was unincorporated in 2002). Chic Henry resigned as National Director in March 1984 so he could be installed in the newly formed position of Special Events Director. This is the first step in Henry’s trajectory away from the amateur organisational structure. At this stage Jim Wolf took over as National Director. From the narrative of the ASMF Rule Book:

The A.S.M.F. Inc. then raised STREET MACHINE NATIONALS PTY. LTD., this company would become the ‘professional arm’ to promote the STREET MACHINE NATIONALS in the future. The 6th Nationals (1984) were held and again proved to be a huge success. It showed that the Street Machine movement was advancing at a rapid pace. It was not until July 1984 that all state Associations finally came together under the National banner.

An event promoter was employed to run the 7th Nationals once again held in Canberra. What the narrative of the ASMF Rule Book fails to mention is that Chic Henry was this promoter. Henry has resigned as the National Director of the ASMF to move into the role and this is how it was reported in Street Machine.
No official explanation has been given for Chic's resignation but it is believed differing opinions on various matters between Chic and State directors prompted the move. Chic has been appointed to the salaried role of Special Events General Manager where he will organise and co-ordinate future events. (Paradise 1984: 11)

Before engaging with the 7th Street Machine Nationals of 1986 however, it is necessary to explore an important dimension of the 6th Nationals event. Indeed, as the ASMF Rule Book narrative indicates, a professional non-enthusiast promoter was hired for the 1984 event.

From all indications the coupling of the ASMF, an ostensibly ‘amateur’ organisation, with a ‘professional’ event promoter did not go entirely smoothly. A furore erupted over the finances of the event. There were alleged discrepancies with the proceeds of ticketing, the timing of deposits and the naming of bank accounts. The problems were all eventually resolved, but not until a Supreme Court writ was issued by the ASMF against the promoter of the event, K&B Promotions. Over a number of years, K&B Promotions had developed a relationship with the Victorian Street Machine Association (VSMA) and ASMF-sanctioned Victorian clubs and because of this Victorian connection the Victorian-based magazines – Supercar Magazine and, what would ultimately become its Graffiti Publication stable mate, Australian Street Rodding – served as the main site for the conflict.

The radical dimension of the ASMF was acknowledged in the comments made by Roger Gilroy, the Public Relations Officer of the New South Wales Street Machine Association (NSWSMA), in a letter written to Supercar magazine (published in issue 9):
If the leadership of a Democratically elected organisation is permitted to become either corrupt or negligent, the members of that organisation only have their own laziness to blame.
The current situation involving the ASMF, Street Machine Nationals Pty Ltd and K&B Presentations is a direct result of the apathy shown by far too many people within the various State Street Machine Associations.
It seems strange that the same people who might sign petitions or write protest letters when an outside body tries to stop them from registering their cars or tries to close their local dragstrip; will stick their heads in the sand when it comes to the administration of their own Sport/Hobby.
[...] The Apathetic Majority’s standard cop-out “I don’t want to get involved in that political bull shit” serves only to signal the rise of two types of very dangerous people; One is the fast buck merchant, who will rob your organisation blind, the other is the hot head radical who will eventually wreck your organisation because of his constant call for bans, boycotts, suspensions, etc.
It’s about time most of you out there woke up to the fact that STREET MACHINING IS NOW A VERY BIG BUSINESS, and that you are the shareholders in that business, if you allow it to become bankrupt, YOU, only have yourselves to blame! (Gilroy 1984: 6)

There are two main points I want to highlight in Gilroy’s letter. There is the obvious warning regarding the emergence of what Gilroy called ‘fast buck merchants’ and ‘hot head radicals’. He is isolating real, but caricatured representations of those with only a commercial interest
(‘fast buck merchants’) and those who want to exclude the commercial interests altogether (‘hot head radicals’). This is an articulation of the two dominant and divergent ‘senses of purpose’ of the ‘show biz’ of the spectacle and a focus on the ‘workmanship’ of modified vehicles. Although not entirely accurate, the shift I am indicating that occurred in the ASMF involves the elements represented in caricatured form as ‘fast buck merchants’ as eventually breaking away from the amateur organisation of ‘hot head radicals’. I understand the ‘radical’ dimension here is meant literally in terms of labour union-type acts of militancy organised in the domain of leisure rather than the workplace or factory.

The second point about Gilroy’s letter involves the subtle movement in his description of the ASMF. In the beginning of his letter he invokes the example of a democratically elected government and how it becomes corrupt as a result of apathy which he associates with the apathetic majority of ASMF members, but at the end of the letter he has begun talking about ‘big business’ and how ‘you’, i.e. ASMF members and enthusiasts, are ‘shareholders of this business’. Gilroy is advocating active participation in the administration of the ‘sport/hobby’ through the ASMF not because it needs to be run well for the sake of enthusiasts, but because it is a ‘big business’.

At stake was a balance between what was perceived to be the two extreme positions of the ‘fast buck merchants’ and the ‘hot rod radicals’ within the relations of power of the scene and correlating senses of purpose. The perceived role of good governance by the ASMF was not to simply occupy one position or the other, but to mediate between the
two. The problem as perceived by Gilroy is that there was an ‘apathetic majority’ who had little or no interest in the running of the Federation.  

If part of the definition of an amateur organization is that the organisers are perceived to be part of ‘us’, then the appearance of Chic Henry’s Impala in the pages of Street Machine would have certainly have encouraged such an understanding. However, Chic Henry’s words regarding the direction of possible future events after the 1984 Street Machine Nationals are ambiguous at best in terms of construing collective identity: “The main consideration will always be our entrants” (Riggs 1982b: 39). Henry is differentiating himself from the entrants, and therefore the average enthusiast ‘in the street’ or a casual participant (interested public). The use of the word ‘entrant’ implies a discontinuous temporal relation of engagement relating to the large majority of the public and not to a mode of participation which can be reconciled with a specific durable identity. The most logical group referred to by the use of the possessive adjective ‘our’ (of the pronoun ‘we’) is the group that organises the event. That is, Henry is acting as a spokesperson for the event itself. There is a difference between an organisation, such as the

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84 Gilroy’s observation differs from that of researchers who have investigated the social organisations of other ‘amateur’ endeavours. Reflecting on a large study of mutual aid in leisure, Jeff Bishop and Paul Hoggett (1986) note that:

> It would be mistaken to conclude that, because such organizations are formed by people freely associating to enhance each others’ pleasure, they resemble participatory collectives. [T]he organization of the group was undertaken by a small minority of the members. [...] [T]his sharp division of labour was very often the actual basis for a sense of collective solidarity, of a shared identity. How are we to make sense of this? [...] [W]ithin mutual aid the organization of the group is nearly always performed ‘by some of us, for all of us’ and not ‘by them, for us’. Here it is useful to think in terms of a continuum, rather than discrete categories. (99)
ASMF, which services the enthusiasm by acting in a mediating and representational capacity with the state and other institutions to register vehicles on to run events, compared to that of Henry’s subtle invocation of a mode of organisation premised on the conjunctural dimension of a certain event-based participation of the ‘entrant’. If he had said ‘enthusiast’ or ‘participant’ instead of ‘entrant’ then the meaning would change in equally subtle but important ways. Henry is locating his institutional capacity with the event and not with the specific organisational structure of the ASMF or the broader context of the scene itself. If his later actions are understood in terms of a relation to the organised event and the spectacular conjunctural dimension of this event, rather than a fidelity to the representational structure of the ASMF as an amateur organisation, then his movements are that of an ‘entrepreneur’ and consistent with this early work.

The 1986 7th Street Machine Nationals was sponsored by Street Machine magazine, it was run by the now experienced Chic Henry as the promoter and for all intents and purposes it was an absolute success with over 1300 entrants; a ten-fold increase from the first 1975 Street Machine Nationals. There were also a huge number of day spectators from the Canberra public, with some reports up to 40,000 people. This event is the highpoint of the representational structure of the ASMF as an amateur organisation. The issue of Street Machine magazine leading up to the event provided plenty of support for the event and for the ASMF.

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85 One participant – a magazine journalist at the time – relayed the observation to me that it was such a success that the volunteer ticketing and gate staff were unprepared for the massive influx of the interested public attending the event. Attendance numbers from a letter by Chic Henry to a magazine (Henry 1988b).
The event was a ‘success’ because from the amateur milieu of previous Street Machine Nationals the spectacle reaches a fully professional mode of organisation. A tipping point or threshold of organisation (singularity) is crossed where street machining went from the domain of the amateur leisure-time activity to producing an elite quasi-professional level within the scene. Through much work organising the event and then going on to create a new event, Chic Henry quickly consolidated on the opportunity (contingency) presented by the crossing of this organisational threshold. As he wrote in a letter to a magazine, “I don’t claim to represent the majority of street machiners, but I understand them” (Henry 1988b).

To illustrate this point it is necessary to imagine an amateur activity that involves massive amounts of time and commitment without there being
an actual professional milieu to the activity from which to differentiate the amateurs. There are, of course, motor vehicle trades people such as painters, panel beaters, all types of specialist mechanical technicians and, not least, automotive engineers, but these professions and trades are largely organised around servicing consumers of the car as a functional component of the system of automobility. Modified-car culture draws on a number of the same skill-sets but takes the application of these technical trades to the absolute limit and in a different enthusiast direction. In issue 10 (October 1987) of the ASMF’s club newsletter, Street Torque, director of the South Australian division of the ASMF, Mark Thomas, notes the professional basis of the organisation (each respective State and Territory division was represented in the small magazine by a column called “Director’s Dribble”):

I have now been at the helm for 12 months and I have not had a nervous break-down yet. It is hard to keep everyone happy but we have tried. In the process of advancing Street Machining in S.A. I guess I may have had to tread on a few toes but it is a case of “having to be Firm to be Fair”. These may seem "strong words" for a volunteer organization but everything our sport revolves around is purely professional, ie: Promoting Shows, Dealing with Authorities, Insurance, Public Relations etc. I hope in the following 12 months we can consolidate the work of the previous 12 months. (Thomas 1987)

Thomas isolates the paradox of running a volunteer amateur organisation when it has to relate and engage with professional bodies and situations.
Until the 1986 Nationals a professional milieu of street machining had not been properly consolidated. It is through this event that Chic Henry shifts from amateur organiser and breaks out from the rigid amateur club-federation structure to become an entrepreneur within the cultural industry. The ‘quasi’ professionals that I am describing are the enthusiasts that owned the ‘head turning’ modified cars that the interested public came to the event see. Paradoxically, it is at this point that the ASMF and Street Machine Nationals are at their strongest and most successful. They had sponsorship from the highest selling magazine in Australia – *Street Machine* – and blanket coverage in all the other magazines. After this however, everything changes. It is expressed in the ASMF Rule Book thus:

> “With the need for the A.S.M.F Inc. to become self reliant, a decision was made to promote the 8th Nationals and all State Show’n’Shines using our own resources, therefore the 8th Nationals was promoted, BY STREET MACHINERS FOR STREET MACHINERS.”

What actually happened is Chic Henry and *Street Machine* magazine had extricated the national’s event from the institutional structure of the ASMF and all the ASMF affiliated clubs to produce a Street Machine Nationals clone. An anonymous report in *Supercar* magazine (which I assume was written by one of the editors) states that the ASMF felt that “they have taken a firm stand in the belief that it would not be in the

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86 It is clear from various comments from 1982 that Chic Henry was pushing for the ‘professionalisation’ of an amateur activity, but this movement can not be identified with Henry alone as evidenced by even earlier comments by others in the street rodding press which recognised the importance as not being a ‘roughie’.
interest of members for ‘big business’ to move in and take over the events which are now so well enjoyed by members” (“Street Machine Nationals New Venue/Dates” 1987). This was expressed in a disagreement over how the respective logos of Street Machine Magazine and the ASMF should be presented, according to Jeff Brown, editor of Super Street magazine. He describes the Summernats as a “break-away bastard from everything the body of street machining has been trying to establish.” Furthermore, Brown adds that the Summernats “has changed the tone of street machining […].” He did not “consider the Summernats to be a family event. It was too rough, too rowdy and way too over the top in the streets of the fair city of Canberra” (Brown 1988).

The Summernats show was organised around the spectacle of street machining rather than the amateur activities of enthusiasts organised through car clubs and representative associations and federations. As Chic Henry wrote in a letter (replying to complaints about the event):

I’ve been given a bloody bad time last year by the organisation I used to be involved with. [...] That organisation will continue to attack me I’m sure, but whether they or anyone else will stop me trying to put on a big street machine event that attracts the best cars and the most prizes, is the most fun and the best value for money. (Henry 1988a)

Most editorial comment in the magazines understood the two-tier relationship that emerged between the professional-spectacle and the amateur club-based social structures, and is exemplified by Geoff Paradise (1988: 55) in Performance Street Car magazine:
The ASMF’s Nationals are reverting back to traditional values for this year’s event. National Director, Ray Arrowsmith, cites a gradual loss of touch with previous Nationals entrants and the ASMF having less say in the way the event was promoted and run following the arrival of Kerry Packer’s Street Machine publication as the major sponsor. “It was a case of bringing back the good times” says [ASMF National Director, Ray] Arrowsmith. “The camaraderie and fun was something that was lost at the last two events. These Nationals are meant to cater for the entrant.”

The 7th 1986 Street Machine Nationals and then the Summernats event were run ‘professionally’, that is, primarily without the input of amateur enthusiasts. My central point in this section is that this quasi-professional milieu within modified-car culture only existed as a tendency in previous eras, and is that it was not until the Summernats that it was inculcated in material infrastructural form. Henry’s progression from helping organise the Nationals, to actively being involved in the ‘christening’ of the Federation in 1984 as the Director, to the sideways movement to being ‘Special Event Director’ in 1986, to finally splitting with the ASMF to help create the Street Machine-sponsored Summernats in 1987 is a useful way to map the movement away from the amateur status of the club-based events to the ‘quasi-professional’ status of mass-spectator events. This is made exceptionally clear by Phil Scott in a 1991 ten year anniversary retrospective in Street Machine. Scott (1991: 34) writes, that “with Chic Henry, we invented the Summernats. But only after trying to get our message of professionalism through to the boys at the ASMF who didn’t seem to share our vision.”
To return to Geoff Stahl’s work on the Montreal ‘indie’ music scene, Stahl also draws on Landry’s concept the institutional thickness of the infrastructure defined as “what continues to stimulate entrepreneurship and consolidates the local embeddedness of industry while at the same time fostering relations of trust, exchange of information and urban ‘buzz’” (2000: 141). Indeed, Stahl’s essay is an explication of this enigmatic ‘institutional thickness’ in the context of Montreal’s music-making milieu. The ‘institutional thickness’ of the scene is defined by the events which populate it; not only events of enthusiasm, but events on a different scale including shifts in the composition of the scene.

Instead of assuming that a capitalist ‘entrepreneurship’ defines the institutional thickness of infrastructure however, it is necessary to indicate the different ways the events and event-structures of the scene relate to the organisational consistency of the scene. I shall again turn to the functional role of contingency. In the context of the cultural industry of the scene, entrepreneurship is the practice of translating historical and cultural contingencies into opportunities. Yet, not all institutions, especially those at the interface of amateur and professional agents, will necessarily work to translate contingencies into entrepreneurial opportunities, and may actually try to ward off this sort of practice. This is clear in the different tacks taken with the increased popularity of street

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87 Remarkably, in discussing the future of Australian subsidiary Holden in General Motors, the “boss” of General Motors, Rick Wagner, is quoted as using a similar language that I use here, “That means Holden is designing and engineering cars not just for sale in Australia, but for the global market – a far tougher assignment. That presents opportunities, but also challenges. It raises the bar – you’re not just designing to be competitive on the domestic market, but to be competitive in an open, global industry.” In chapter seven I discuss the failure of the Holden Monaro in the US where it was sold as he 2004 Pontiac GTO (Robinson 2007).
machining and the different ways of rearticulating the contingency of this popularity.

Within the scene of modified-car culture there are various social milieus that exist alongside each other and function in a symbiotic or synergistic fashion to reproduce the conditions of the scene itself. In terms of contingency, the different social milieus are defined by different orders of expectation for reproduction. The social institutions and businesses serve as the infrastructure of the scene while the enthusiasm serves as the infrastructure for the opportunities ‘exploited’ or ‘actioned’ by businesses and social institutions.\(^8\) There is therefore a tension between the various contingencies of the enthusiasm and the durability of the infrastructures arrayed around these contingencies. Stahl’s notion of a scene being both a “context for enactment” and a “point of contact” captures some sense of the in-action of the scene within the events that belong to it.

\[^8\] Here I am drawing on Deleuze’s work from the 1960s where he engaged with the structuralist movement that was popular in France intellectual circles at the time. In an extremely dense passage, Deleuze writes:

> Every structure is an infrastructure, a micro-structure. In a certain way, they are not actual. What is actual is that in which the structure is incarnated or rather what the structure constitutes when it is incarnated. [...] Perhaps the word virtuality would precisely designate the mode of structure [...]. For the virtual has a reality which is proper to it, but which does not merge with any actual reality, any present or past actuality. We would say of structure: real without being actual, ideal without being abstract. [...] To discern the structure of a domain is to determine an entire virtuality of coexistence which pre-exists the beings, objects and works of this domain. Every structure is a multiplicity of virtual coexistence. [...] All the elements, the relations and relational values, all the singularities proper to the domain considered [coexist in the structure]. (Deleuze 2004: 178-179)
That is, the ‘cultural events’ or ‘action’ of the scene are part of the larger event of the scene itself.89

The stabilising role of the Street Machine-Summernats synergy is different to that of the ASRF. Indeed, the status and visibility of car clubs and enthusiast organisations in the leading enthusiast magazines began declining throughout the 1980s and 1990s. I shall explore this in Chapter 6 when I examine the synergistic relation between magazines and event promoters in terms of the way enthusiasm becomes a resource. At stake was the ratio of passive and active affections of enthusiasm mobilised through the image and discourse of enthusiasts, and modulated by the magazines in their coverage of cultural events. On the other hand, access to and distribution of enthusiast labour and ‘know how’, once shared through car clubs, began to be restricted through the slow demise of the club structures of the scene. On the other hand, the passive affection of enthusiasm became central to the character of the scene.

89 Stahl’s invocation of the scene as a “juncture of various trajectories and vectors” also resonates with more philosophical conceptions of the event developed by Alfred North Whitehead. Whitehead argued that events are a concrescence of ‘prehensions’ as ‘actual occasions’. ‘Prehensions’ are vectorial perceptions of one prehension of another. An ‘actual occasion’ or ‘event’ is the immanent integration of prehensions. ‘Conceptual prehensions’ enable the perceptual extraction of ‘objects’ from the ongoing duration of ‘actual occasions’. ‘Objects’ are said to be ‘ingressed’ within events. Duration is a manifold of event particles. The scene is assembled from the trajectories and vectors between other trajectories and vectors. The temporal duration of the scene is the sum of indiscernible ‘event particles’ of what I am calling ‘action’ (Whitehead 1967; 1978; 2004).
The organisational structure of street machining changed through the 1980s. The change occurred not only in terms of the shifting status of social institutions represented by the amateur organisation, but the event-based nature of the relation between magazines and articulations of amateur and later quasi-professional social organisations. There was another historical front within modified-car culture where the shift from ‘amateur’ to ‘quasi-professional’ was occurring and this was in the actual form and style of modification of the cars. The shift in the organisational structures was from a structure organised around amateur participation in events to a structure organised around a certain kind of spectacle. Part of this spectacle was the large scale of the event itself, but another part was the spectacular style through which owners modified their cars during this period. The style was called ‘Pro-Street’. The emergence of ‘Pro-Street’ was a gradual process best framed in terms of the crisis within street machining as the quasi-professional social milieu came to be valorised over the ‘little guy’ of the ‘average’ amateur enthusiast. I shall argue that this was not simply a case of shifting identities but part of the same structural shifts in the scene that saw the demise of the Street Machine Nationals and the increased popularity of the Summernats.

In this chapter I began mapping the transformations from the collective representation of the street rodding era to the spectacular organisation of the street machining era. The character of enthusiasm changed in this shift from a ‘sense of purpose’ largely determined by an enthusiasm for the ‘workmanship’ of skilled enthusiasts building modified cars to a ‘sense of purpose’ determined by participation in the spectacle of large cultural events. I have not yet properly outlined the character of this spectacle, and this work shall be carried over the next two chapters. In the street rodding era the enthusiasm was organised around the affects of leisure-
time labour of enthusiasts and the protection of the products of this labour—street rods—so they could be driven on the street. The Australian Street Rod Federation facilitated this protection through a combination of sanctioning events, black-banning individuals and clubs, and negotiation over technical and registration details with State authorities. In the street machining era, the ‘street’ became a privileged space of modified-car culture, but in a different way to that of street rodding. Instead of the street being a space of display of the technical skill of enthusiasts, the street for the display of a spectacular style of modified car: the ‘head turner’.
Chapter 5 Street Machining Magazines and Technology
In the first two chapters I introduced and developed a notion of enthusiasm, and in the third and fourth chapters I shifted to examining the scene. So far ‘enthusiasm’and the ‘scene’have not been properly placed in relation to each other. In this chapter I begin to bring together the complex threads that these concepts represent. I shall still, in part, focus on the street machining scene, but shift slightly to an engagement with the function of the V8 engine as a key technology and locus of the enthusiasm belonging to the street machining scene.
As well as modified-car culture being defined in terms of the enthusiasm of enthusiasts, it is also characterised by the discourses and practices that are produced through the modification of the material and discursive attributes of a car’s mechanical and aesthetic qualities and the practical use of the car. There are may different practices of modification, but a core ‘sense of purpose’of the enthusiasm evident across all eras, from the proto-hot rodding era of pre-War and inter-War US through to the
most recent import enthusiasms, has largely been premised on the willful extension of the performance capabilities of automobile technologies (Balsey 1950; Goldberg 1969; Witzel and Bash 1997; Ganahl 2000; Thomas and Butcher 2003).

The movement from a ‘stock’ car to a modified car changes the potentiality of performance where ‘performance’ is understood here as a capacity to act, that is, to perform ritualised practices within events of ‘action’. It is not as simple as driving a car that can go fast and therefore expecting to experience enjoyment while being ‘king of the road’. The commodity produced as ‘performance’ is the phantasmatic technological capacity to translate contingencies. A tension therefore emerges around different valorising articulations of performance relating to different ritualised practices of ‘action’. The relational hierarchies of automobile technologies is organised by the relativity of ‘performance’ according to the valorising use of ‘performance’ as an indicator of worth within different dimensions of the scene. The technologies higher up in the hierarchies are discoursed as the privileged technologies of a scene.

The articulation of technologies of ‘performance’ produces an affectively valorised hierarchy of ‘performance’. The hierarchical distinction between different levels of performance is not new. In one of the earliest works on ‘modified-car culture’, Theodore Goldberg (1969) examined the ritualised practice of ‘cruising’. He suggests that cruising is a social gathering complementary to drag racing in the same way the

90 Another line of inquiry would be concerned with outlining how the contingencies of the system of automobility, what the road safety industry calls ‘risks’, are also translated into ‘challenges’ in a similar fashion to the practice of translating the contingency of a ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’. As I am interested in other dimensions of modified-car culture I shall not be engaging with this movement of translation here.
high school dance is a social spin-off of football or basketball games (1969: 165). Furthermore, he argues that “the most striking feature of drag racing’ is the massive predominance of cars modified according to ‘the competition aesthetic, the hot car look’” (1969: 165):

Wide racing tires, magnesium hubs, radically lifted suspensions, and air scoops are some of the more obviously visible signs of a hot car. For those who really know, they are only the prerequisites to a fully-clothed competitive car. Subtleties of engine sounds, brand name racing parts, and types of suspension sort out the higher status cars.

(165)

Even though Goldberg’s paper is more than 35 years old, some salient points are made that apply contemporary modified-car culture. His distinction between ‘hot cars’ and cars that look ‘hot’ highlights a distinction between an aesthetics of performance and the actual mechanics of technological performativity. Goldberg discerns the difference between cars that ‘look’ like race cars and cars of a ‘higher status’ that are actually built to perform in a technological sense by assessing the cars according to greater (and more specialised) level of modification.

Jon McKenzie (2001: 97) defines “technological performance [as] effectiveness in a given task.” This definition is complicated by the cultural meanings given to the different conceptions of performance. The discourses of performance that belong to the different poles of the enthusiasm function as valorisations of different events of ‘action’ or, as per McKenzie’s definition, ‘tests of effectiveness’. As ‘performance’ technologies are inseparable from their events of in-action,
‘performance’ ceases to be an attribute of technology and is distributed across corporeal and incorporeal dimensions of an event. Beyond the performance technology as an object, ‘performance’ is a valorising movement across the technological object and discourses of performance are in-acted in practice, and immanent to the in-action itself. Two dimensions of the event – between practice and discourse – are necessarily integrated according to the affects of enthusiast valorisations.

Performance is a complex concept within enthusiast cultures, and enthusiast valorisations of different technological compositions of performance have shifted over the last 30 years. A genealogy of ‘performance’ belonging to any enthusiast car culture in Australia must pass through an event of the 1970s known as the “Great Supercar Scare.” It has had a lasting impact on the mythopeia of enthusiast car cultures because the large V8-powered saloons and muscle cars of that era are romanticised as ‘real’ cars, and influence the Anglo-Australian, V8-based enthusiasms to this day.

“Supercar Scare”
The third issue of the contemporary magazine, Australian Muscle Car, had a feature article on the 30th anniversary of this moral panic. In 1972, tabloid newspaper, The Sun Herald, published a seed story that triggered an eight-day long moral panic about ‘supercars’ manufactured by Australia’s three major automotive manufacturers at the time. The ‘supercars’ were built to comply with the motor racing regulations of the
Hardie Ferodo 500 motor race at Bathurst.\textsuperscript{91} The regulations of the ‘Series Production’ motorsport class at the time required a certain number of homologated race-specification vehicles be built to the exact same standard as the vehicles raced. The model names of these cars – Ford Falcon GTHO, Holden Monaro GTS, and Chrysler E55 Charger – strongly resonate throughout enthusiast car culture.

The \textit{Australian Muscle Car} article republished all of the key articles of the moral panic with some limited commentary. Rather than simply being a story about ‘supercars’, the moral panic triggered changes to the social and technical safety discourse within the automotive industry discussed in the street rodding chapter in terms of the impact to street rodding with the impact of the ADRs. In other words, the moral panic is an event. The commentary, by editor Mark Oastler\textsuperscript{92}, in \textit{Australian Muscle Car} frames the moral-panic event thus:

To provide a well rounded story, Green had sought the opinion of NSW Transport Minister, Milton Morris, about the new Bathurst ‘supercars’. Morris, who was reeling from some pretty horrific road death statistics in NSW, felt he already had enough blood on his hands. Don’t forget, in those days wearing seat belts still wasn’t compulsory and cross-ply tyres were only just being superseded by radials.

There were no speed cameras, no open road speed limits and drink driving was still considered to be a worthy test of your manhood. Australian Design Rules (ADRs) and local development of active/passive vehicle safety features were also in their infancy,

\textsuperscript{91} This is the same racetrack visited by the Fordmods cruise as discussed in Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{92} Oastler was editor of \textit{Street Machine} in the early 1990s.
so there were no side-intrusion beams and crumple zones, no ABS, no SRS airbags, no active stability control or electronic traction control which we take for granted today. Morris was not inclined to talk positively about anything that could be seen to promote excessive speed on 'his' roads. Like all politicians, he needed to show the public that he was doing something - anything - to try to curb the carnage and in Evan Green's story, he found it. His 'horrified' response to news of the latest 'bullets on wheels' provided plenty of juicy quotes for the Sun Herald's editor, on what was otherwise a pretty slow news day. (Oastler n.d.)

The "Supercar scare" moral panic was formative in the history of not only modified-car culture, but Australian enthusiast car cultures in general. It was an event whereby a certain class of automotive technology was discoursed as being socially unacceptable. In the mythopoeia of enthusiast car culture this becomes an important historical development. It is used as a resource that affects the meanings with which such technologies are currently discoursed. The events of the 'V8 till 98' campaign (discussed below) need to be understood with reference to the social threshold of automotive performance that was discursively inscribed within this 'event' across complex assemblages of social, cultural and technological structures.

There are at least two ways to engage with the enthusiast archive and map the articulation of technological performance in the history of the street machining scene (and contemporary modified-car culture in Australia more generally). The first is through the series of statements of the 'street machine' in a similar fashion to the way I outlined the discourse of street rodding in Chapter 3. This method is useful for following
the power relations implicated in discourse events. The second is by mapping the way certain technologies are valorised over others in enthusiast cultures. One index of this valorisation is through the discursive survey function of the magazine. Instead of a historical method of ‘eventalization’ by uncovering the singularities of ‘statements’ in the archive, it means being attentive to finding the haecceities.

To assist in describing these complex event-based thresholds across social, cultural and technological structures I shall follow Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987: 260-265) use of the term haecceity to refer to the ‘thisness’ of events; the concept allows me to describe in a shorthand way the historically specific affective consistency of the scene created between the various dimensions of the scene.93 The affects of enthusiasm move across the bodies of enthusiasts within the scene and across the pages of enthusiast magazines. A media event, such as the “Supercar scare” moral panic, is assembled from affects that are derived from an enthusiasm and scene or the general public, and which are distributed through the media apparatus. The concept of the ‘media event’ does not refer to the notion developed in Dayan and Katz’s (1992) influential neo-Durkheimian model of media events. Dayan and Katz’s model of the ‘media event’ is defined by the participation of mass publics in the rituals of State and other traditional power structures.94

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93 Deleuze and Guattari explicitly refer to the ‘nonpersonal individuation’ of ‘assemblages’ which is expressed as an ‘event’ (Phillips 2006). For the sake of conceptual clarity, in this context, the ‘scene’ is an assemblage and ‘enthusiasm’ is the event of the nonpersonal individuation of the scene.

94 In the next chapter I shall develop a Deleuzian conceptualisation of the ‘media event’ that is assembled from the affective relations of participants within the event, not the symbolic form of rituals broadcast or distributed through the media.
The next section is a brief representation of early articulations of the ‘street machine’ in Street & Strip magazine to indicate the work of valorisation. In the following two sections I examine an example of the way the work of magazines to valorise certain elements of the scene over others is never total and is highly selective. Lastly, the chapter ends with an engagement with “Pro-Street’ and the concept of the ‘head turner’. ‘Pro-Street’ is a style of modification that exemplifies the how a magazine feeds the iterative spiral between enthusiast discourse and the enthusiasm in determining the *haecceity* of the scene. The ‘head turner’ is a conceptualisation of the function of ‘Pro-Street’ and it leads into the discussion in Chapter 6. Chapter 6 shall draw on both this chapter and Chapter 4 to outline and argue how enthusiasm becomes a resource for the enthusiast culture industry of a scene.

**Early Articulations of the ‘Street Machine’**

One of the first attempts to articulate the ‘street machine’ and an early street machining scene in Australia was through a magazine entitled *Street & Strip*. The first issue apparently published sometime in 1971 and later issues were published sporadically until 1981 with issue 14. The title would eventually be redeployed with a very different emphasis.95 This early articulation of the street machine is relevant because the magazine configured a particular cultural relation between enthusiasts and automotive performance technology.

95 *Street & Strip* in this later incarnation was a play on the word ‘strip’ as the street machining and drag racing content would be complimented with soft pornography involving semi-naked women draped over modified cars and race cars. The issue numbers were restarted with this second incarnation so it is valid to think of the different eras as actually being two separate magazines. Geoff Paradise stated that he wasn’t sure if the title was sold or if the later publisher simply started publishing with that title without any relation to the previous title whatsoever.
The first 1971 issue of Street & Strip was a landmark publication for a number of reasons. Firstly, on the front cover are three early Holden panel vans in their ‘natural setting’ on the beach (Figure 5.1). Secondly, the magazine articulates the discourse of ‘street machining’ for the first time in Australia using the discursive statement and actual term of ‘street machine’. That is, the ‘street machine’ was not articulated as part of street rodding discourse (as per the ‘classic customs’ example of Chapter 3); rather, ‘street machine’ emerged as a statement that defined a new discourse. This appears in two places, on the index page beneath the masthead (“Street & Strip: A magazine of Street Machines”) and on the inside front cover (Figure 5.2). The text beneath the image reads (reproduced in the approximate typesetting and arrangement on the page):

Do you groove on cars? Late model gear?
Mean, muscled, personal cars with
transplanted engines and modified mills?
If you do, then yours is the scene of  
The Street Machine.

These four and a half lines are very dense with meaning and direction. They capture the edge of the emergence of the street machining scene in its expression in discourse. It is not quite a discourse event because there is not a regularity (a necessary quality of statements) that follows from it in the following issues of Street & Strip magazine. The arrhythmic seriality of the next 14 issues of Street & Strip is indicative of the discontinuous, non-stratified street machining scene in the 1970s. As a discursive articulation, ‘street machine’ expressed through Street & Strip exists across the distributed channels of the media and the capacity of the articulation to incorporate particular subjectivities of enthusiasts.

There are three general aspects of this text which exemplify the work of enthusiast magazines in relation to scenes: the work of articulation, the subjectivisation of enthusiasts, and the reproduction of the conditions of enthusiasm.

First, the text articulates ‘street machining’. It is part of the magazine apparatus that gathers together the heterogeneous elements of modified-car culture and produces ‘street machining’ as a discursive articulation. The heterogeneous elements are the multiplicities of the scene. The text is a kind of discourse machine that operates to reduce multiplicities and transform them into functional elements of the magazine apparatus; this is a different emphasis than a representational model of communication-. That is, the magazine does not attempt to ‘cover’ the totality of the early street machining scene; rather, it abstracts certain elements from the event of the street machining scene and gives
them a discursive coherency and, as I shall argue below, an affective consistency. The magazine functions by selecting certain elements.

Second, the text posits an explicit subjective relation selected or posited and then abstracted from the scene. The question and answer rhetorical form seeks out a reader to occupy the position of an impersonal second-person ‘you’. This ‘you’ belongs to the collective enthusiasm of street machining. The ‘scene’ figures as a briefly sketched event for which the impersonal collectively individuated subjectivity of ‘you’ belongs. That is, the ‘you’ and the ‘scene’ is a dyadic array of the subject-object relations of the street machining event. The Street & Strip text is creative, in a performative sense, and demonstrates the social non-advertising role of magazines in the infrastructure of the scene. Its social role to articulate certain elements of the scene and its commercial role to produce a market for the commercial interests advertising in the magazine coincide here. By bolstering the scene of street machining, the magazine in effect cultivates its market, as its market belongs to the scene of street machining. This is the simplest representation of the role of the media in the iterative spiral of scene and market and the cultivation of singular enthusiasm in both. Even though the magazine may be understood as part of the cultural industry and simply regarded as an adjunct of commercial advertising demands, the text serves a social function of

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96 In the terminology of Maurizio Lazzarato (in part following Deleuze’s reading of Leibniz) the production of such an event involving the distribution of subject-object relations is the creation of a world. Instead of the production of a subject or the production of an object, contemporary advertising and publicity produce (incompossible) worlds to which subjects and objects belong. ‘Incompossible’ is a concept created by Leibniz to describe something between the possible and the impossible.
producing a scene. The magazine functions here by selecting and then performatively distributing or arraying certain elements within a discursive space, and thus arranging the scene in certain ways. The arrangement of elements is characterised by its operative effectiveness, rather than as an exclusive or inclusive representative totality.

Third, the use of the term ‘groove’ signals the qualitative dimension of this effectiveness, that is, the particular affective resonance of the text. According to the Street & Strip text, enthusiasts are the ones that ‘get’ the particular rhythm of an enthusiasm: they ‘groove on cars’. The use of the word ‘groove’ captures a sense of the enthusiasm as a rhythm with which an enthusiast must synchronise. I am interpreting such rhythms of enthusiasm as examples of what Deleuze and Guattari (1987) call ‘refrains’ (ritornellos). Refrains have a ‘catalytic function’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 348) that organise assemblages of material and immaterial elements so they have a particular territorial consistency; in the context

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  \item Through the example of advertising, delivered in a conference paper, Maurizio Lazzarato highlights the movement across the two dimensions of the event isolated by Deleuze – firstly, a state of affairs of bodies or passions of bodies, and secondly the incorporeal dimension of ideal events:
    Advertising – like every “event” – first distributes modes of perception in order to prompt ways of living; it actualizes modes of affecting and being affected in souls, in order to realize them in bodies. With advertising and marketing, the enterprise effects incorporeal transformations (the slogans of advertising), which are stated through bodies and only through bodies. The incorporeal transformations first produce a change in sensibility (or that is what they would like to produce), a change in our way of making value judgments. (Lazzarato 2003)
  \item As Lazzarato writes, in the context of advertising: The design of an advertisement, the concatenation and rhythm of the images, the soundtrack are organized like a kind of "ritornello" or a "whirlwind". There are advertisements that reverberate in us like a musical theme or a refrain. (Lazzarato 2003)
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of enthusiast cultures, assemblages of articulated elements are organised around the consistency of the enthusiasm. Enthusiasts within modified-car culture have specific refrains to which they belong. Refrains are territorialising machines that produce spaces of ordered territory. A refrain of enthusiasm involves an arrangement of heterogeneous elements that resonates with the enthusiasm. Some are literal sound-based refrains like the highly identifiable exhaust note of a particular model of engine or the particular engine in a particular car. Others are less sonorous, but no less affectively territorialising, such as the stylistic variation that connects a given situation with an entire population, including the airbrushed panel van of the 1970s compared to the airbrushed hatchback of the late-1990s, and other modes of driving and display, such as cruising (Thomas and Butcher 2003).

The intensive coordinates of the refrain are found in the sentence split over two lines referring to ‘mean, muscled, personal’ and ‘transplanted engines and modified mills’ It captures the affective relations of an enthusiasm between enthusiasts and technology. The use of ‘mean, muscled, personal’ is a list of qualities that herald particular arrangements within the ‘groove’ of the enthusiasm. The three terms relate to affective timbre of the relations that constitute an enthusiasm, between enthusiast and technology, between enthusiasts and their self-identity, and between enthusiasts amongst themselves and others, and so on. ‘Mean’ and ‘muscled’ are highly masculine complexes of affect, while ‘personal’ is the sort of state of relative individuality favoured within post-Fordist automotive cultural industries. ‘Muscled’ is an adjective, referring to the relations produced in the modification of technologies to make them

On the relation between articulation and assemblage see comments above on the relation between ‘articulation’ and Deleuze’s concept of ‘expression’ (see also, Slack and Wise 2005).
more powerful, and thus give them a greater capacity for certain forms of action; it is essentially the manipulation of technological potential.

The three aspects of the magazine apparatus evidenced by this brief example of the Street & Strip text all relate to the magazine’s operative effectiveness. First, the capacity to select elements from the scene as a technology of visibility. Second, it is to distribute these elements within the discursive space of the event of the enthusiasm modulated as the cultural events of the scene. For enthusiasts this means being congruently subjectivised according to the relations of the discursive relations articulated between technologies, practices and events. The capacity to harness refrains of the enthusiasm, so elements of discursive articulations are territorialised, or ‘valorised’, by the enthusiasm is a third aspect. The relation to the scene would be tautological (i.e., it is as effective as its effects) if there were not spirals of iteration produced through the gap between the actual multiplicities of the scene and the magazine-based discursive valorisations of the scene. This spiral of iteration follows a similar rhythm to the differentiating mechanism operative in the problematic contiguity of enthusiasm.

The problematic contiguity of enthusiasm produces an iterative spiral to the discursive valorisations of the scene. This is in distinction, for example, to Paul Hodkinson’s (2002: 107) notion of a circular movement of identity in the Goth scene. I suggest, in modified-car culture at least, there is always a gap and a tension of the dual movement between the selective, distributive and territorialising articulation of the scene and the propagative multiplicities of the event of enthusiasm differentially repeated through the cultural events of the scene, for the multiplicities of
enthusiasm always exceed the effectiveness of the enthusiast magazines’ discursive survey.

Magazines have limited direct economic power in the form of sponsorship, but as I argued above in the example of the Street & Strip text, the real power of magazines comes from the ability to discursively survey (select, abstract, and territorialise) the scene and then distribute particular configurations of the scene through the event of the magazine itself. As I have also noted, the discursive function of magazines is not total. There is not an absolute integration in the capacity of magazines to translate the haecceities of the scene into a commodified representation of the scene discoursed as ‘the’ scene. All enthusiast magazines valorise certain elements and events of the scene over others, and therefore affectively modulate the collective enthusiasm by stimulating and enabling the enthusiasm in certain ways.

Lastly, ‘late model’ refers to the year of manufacture and the contemporaneity of the year of manufacture. In the context of the Street & Strip text it basically refers to cars that are not hot rods in any straightforward stylistic sense and are ‘contemporary’ in the early 1970s. ‘Gear’ can be used to refer to any technical element, but it is also used to refer to the ‘running gear’ which is basically the engine, gearbox and drive train assembly or, in this specific example, the ‘transplanted engines and modified mills’ of the street machine refrain. In the next two sections I outline how ‘late model’ became problematic for street machining culture when the V8-based performance technologies articulated with a nationalistic and masculine enthusiasm were no longer haecceities of the scene in a strictly technological sense and were superseded by other technologies that were not congruent with the enthusiasm.
The Problematic of Performance in Early Street Machine Magazine

An excellent example of the simultaneous discursive valorising and affective modulating work of magazines is an episode in the history of Street Machine magazine in the very early period of the magazine in the early 1980s. It covers the emergence of Street Machine magazine under the editorship of Geoff Paradise. It appears as if Paradise left Street Machine magazine under a cloud (and Supreme Court action) due to the eventual establishment of other magazine titles (Performance Street Car in 1985 and Fast Fours & Rotaries in 1988). Paradise attempted to catalyse a relatively progressive ‘sense of purpose’ for street machining through the magazine. His efforts were organised around opening up modified-car culture in its guise as street machining to global trends in ‘performance’ automotive technologies and aesthetics. Paradise was trying to imagine a future for street machining in the wake of the big ‘shocks’ of the 1970s, such as the ‘oil shock’ (Flink 1975: 226-233), the introduction of ADRs discussed in Chapter 1, and the aforementioned media moral panic around ‘performance’ of factory-built ‘supercars’.

Paradise was brought on board as editor of Van Wheels magazine to transform it into a magazine that focused on ‘late-model’ modified car culture known as ‘street machining’. The shift from Van Wheels to Street Machine was flagged in the final issue of Van Wheels (that did not have the Street Machine masthead). From the editorial section:

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100 Geoff Paradise, 2006, interview.
In future issues of VAN WHEELS you are going to see vans so
customised they will resemble sedans, sedans with blowers, sedans
with turbochargers, sedans with fat tyres. I fink [sic] they call them
"Street Machines". You'll enjoy it, because if you don't you won't see
any more tits and bums, so naaah! (Paradise 1981b)

In the first magazine to carry the Street Machine masthead it appeared
underneath a larger Van Wheels masthead. This issue featured a panel
van as the main image on the front cover and a Pontiac GTO in a cover
insert.

In the editorial of the September-August 1982 “Special Pro-Street Issue,”
Paradise touted the publishing success of the then-new Street Machine
magazine. He says there have been over 5,000 copies of the first three
issues sold and a projected readership of 29,500. In the late 1980s and at
the peak of Street Machine magazine’s popularity, 120,000 or more than
four times as many copies were sold than this early readership figure. In
2006 the number of copies sold hovered steadily around 65,000 with a
readership between four to five times this number.

Paradise’s editorial is interesting for another reason as he wrote against
what he understood to be the prevailing misconception amongst
“industry people” regarding what was ostensibly the class composition of
the street machining scene:

Because the term (and subsequently the name of this magazine)
"street machine" is an all enveloping label, a large number of
people have misconceptions about street-machiners and STREET
MACHINE MAGAZINE.
I often take industry people to task over their misconceptions as to what sort of person is interested in street machines and where this magazine’s market lies. Many of these marketing and public relations people are under the impression that we are a bunch of yobbos who spend our dole cheques and basic wages on cars that should have gone to the crusher 10 years ago. How wrong they are.

Street-machiners are car enthusiasts, just like the circuit racing guys or followers of Grand Prix, and in order to rebuild and safely modify a car you not only need a supply of money but substantial grey matter between the ears. After seeing the standard of engineering at Canberra, I believe that street-machiners have these qualities. (Paradise 1982b)

Paradise discourses street machining in terms of a generic car enthusiasm shared with “circuit racing guys” and “followers of Grand Prix” both of which have traditionally been strictly middle-class pursuits. Paradise is writing for both the readership and businesses that might advertise in his attempt to orientate Street Machine according to an expansive market. He articulates the street machine in terms of the ‘engineering’ of vehicles at ‘Canberra’. ‘Canberra’ referred to the 1982 5th Street Machine Nationals held at the National Exhibitions Centre (Natex). The character of the cultural event is articulated as a function of the display of ‘engineered’ vehicles, and hence valorised according to the ‘sense of purpose’ of the 1970s street rodding-era focus on ‘workmanship’.

101 “Yobbo” is an Australianism similar in some regards to ‘bogan’ (Campbell 2002) or the British ‘hooligan’ (Pearson 1983).
The focus on a general enthusiasm was also indicated in the character of performance technologies selected for the magazine as there was not a focus on a single technology. The core problematic of the early-1980s street machining scene would be clearly articulated by Paradise in the editorial to the second issue of the new *Street Machine & Van Wheels*:

Now we are faced with the task of turning up more quick cars for future issues and quite frankly, that is easier said than done. What we need are fast, affordable Fords, Holdens and Mitsubishis, but there aren’t any. Not yet anyway. […]

The word ‘performance’ doesn’t exist at the factories anymore. It’s anti-social to have a fast car, the market is too small say the spokesmen, people don’t want fast cars anymore, they want comfortable, economical ones. Bullshit.

We are faced with accepting what the car makers want to sell us and nothing more. Performance cars are antisocial because that’s what the advertising propaganda has us believe. If Ford or GM-H had a fast car to sell - one that they would make money out of - it would suddenly become fashionable because the advertisements would say so. […] They have, in essence, put performance cars in the ‘too-hard basket’. (Paradise 1981a)

What emerges over the next 20 issues, up to and including the 1985 February-March issue, is a populist, if not paranoid, search for what Paradise calls ‘performance’. In my reading of these early 20 or so issues of *Street Machine* I have identified three potential sources of ‘performance’:
1) Firstly, there were the local car manufacturers of the time, Ford, GM Holden and Mitsubishi. Australia’s big three manufacturers were also combined with other smaller-scale producers, such as car dealers, motorsport race car driver identities, or speed shops that developed particular packages to modify new cars. The focus here was on locally produced new cars.

2) The second source was constituted by new cars produced elsewhere. Surprising in these early Street Machine magazine issues is the prominent position in the magazine of performance cars and technologies from Japan. The turbocharger is also located here, in this series of ‘performance technology’. It is largely configured in terms of what were called turbocharged ‘micro-cars’, with feature articles on the Mazda SS 323, the Honda City Turbo, and what Street Machine called their own ‘Café Racer’ a modified Mazda 323. Performance is articulated as a product of non-local, non-Anglo national contexts.

3) Third was a primary focus on late-1960s through to early-1980s Ford, Holden and Chrysler V8 and six-cylinder powered 2- and 4-door sedans or large family cars. Hence, the relevance of the “Supercar scare” moral panic, as the cars that were stopped from being built all belong to this type of ‘performance’. However, this third source is complicated by the connection to a US-based image of performance.

After an oscillation between these three different ways of articulating performance, eventually Street Machine settles on valorising the third type; this ‘settlement’ was not straightforward however.

102 I grew up in a scene were turbocharged cars and V8 powered cars were radically different, and Street Machine magazine was only associated with V8s.
In the final issue to feature Geoff Paradise as editor, February March 1985 (Figure 5.3), there were 21 pages of turbocharger related content. There was an interview with Howard Marsden an engineer from Nissan on factory-built turbo cars (pages 22-24); an article by engineer and journalist Brian Woodward on turbo tech (pages 29-33); an interview with speedshop proprietor, Graham Storah, on aftermarket turbos (page 38-40); a story on two turbocharged cars (page 50-52); an article comparing turbos to superchargers; and lastly an article on the Honda City Turbo (pages 90-92). For this issue, Paradise’s last, the Street Machine discursive survey of the scene articulates elements of technological performance that valorise the second type of automotive performance.

The next issue of Street Machine was edited by Paradise’s replacement, Phil Scott. In the editorial of this 1985 April-May issue of Street Machine, Scott writes:
Speaking of promises, your new crew here gives you a gilt-edged guarantee that you won’t be seeing 21 pages of turbo chat in any future issue of *Street Machine*. We reckon the last issue just about covered the subject and that it’s time, once again, to give some proper bent eights a decent run. With that in mind, there’s more cars than usual in this issue. We figured after the last effort, it was up to us to square the ledger. There’s a good selection of Aussie iron [...] and a mixed grill of Detroit cars. Some of ‘em are cruisers, but at *Street Machine*, we’re looking after a big range of readers and not everyone’s into 11 second animals. Promises are very easy to make but sometimes hard to keep. But we can promise the next issue will be one of the best yet - especially if your taste runs to Monaros, Falcons and high quality Chargers. (Scott 1985)

Before becoming the editor of *Street Machine*, Scott was a journalist for the *Sun Herald* newspaper, and would eventually (in 2002) come to occupy a very powerful position in the Australian magazine industry, the current ACP Magazines group publisher of men’s and specialist titles. As a motoring journalist for the *Sun Herald* Scott, with Paradise and racing driver Peter Brock were instrumental figures in an event known as “V8’s ‘till ’98”.

“V8’s ‘till ‘98”

The “V8’s ‘till ’98” media campaign of 1984 is an example of the role of the enthusiast media to influence the character of the scene. In some ways it is similar to the “Supercar scare” moral panic event, but directed
towards ‘positive’ outcomes (‘positive’ from the perspective of the enthusiasm) in that it had long-term material effects on the character of enthusiast cultures. The campaign to save the locally-produced Holden V8 engine contradicted the dominant globalising ‘economic rationalist’ trend, as it was organised around ‘saving’ an out-of-date 1960s technology only sold in any quantity in the very small Australian market. Ford stopped producing the so-called ‘Cleveland’ V8 at their Wollongong plant in 1982 due to environmental and fuel consumption worries. The Holden V8 was partially under threat because of the phasing out of leaded petrol, which would require the engine be expensively re-engineered.103 As Paradise noted in the pages of Street Machine, the logic of keeping the V8 was understood as a ‘pay-off’ for the cancellation of the ‘ancient’ Holden Straight 6 motor and its replacement by a Nissan-sourced Japanese-manufactured motor.

The so-called ‘Button Plan’ was unveiled in 1985 to the public as government policy after a year of discussion with the automotive industry, and it continued in effect for the next decade. In his history of automotive parts manufactures, The Button Plan heralds the first wave of contemporary globalisation in Australia. As part of the Hawke government’s ‘economic rationalist’ tendencies (comparable to US neoliberalism), Senator John Button, Minister for Industry, Technology and Commerce introduced a plan, based on that of the previous Liberal Government, to reduce ‘iron lung’ protectionist tariffs on automotive imports. J. D. Beruldsen (1989) notes the details of the ‘Button Plan’ aimed to “abolish local content plans and import quotas including penalty duties, and assist the car-making industry by simple tariff with a rate of

103 For example, the V8-powered WB model Statesman, a long-wheelbase luxury vehicle, was based on old chassis technology and was due to be phased out with leaded petrol (Scott 1984).
57.5 percent from 1992" (209). Beruldsen further explains that the government hoped that "its objective for the industry to cut down to three car makers and six models or less by 1992 [would] be achieved by natural market forces and voluntary agreements between the five car makers" (209). It eventually did force the once-protected local industry to 'rationalise' itself and become globally competitive.

To say that it was the first wave of globalisation would not be entirely correct as the gradual reduction in tariffs from the mid-1970s herald these much greater shifts in the mid-1980s (Beruldsen 1989). The earlier tariff-based industry protection was often covered in reports in the popular motoring press. For example, Steve Cropley, editor of the ‘Newsbreaks’ section of Wheels magazine, reports in January 1976:

[T]he latest Industries Assistance Commission [IAC] submission to the Australian [Federal] Government recommends that sales of imported passenger cars be restricted to the present 20 percent of total until the end of 1976 which means the present system of quotas remains. It also recommends that the present 45 percent tariff on imported cars be maintained until the end of 1977, when it foresees a drop to 35 percent. The report says quotas on imported light commercials should be dropped. The only slight piece of encouragement for lovers of imported cars and those alarmed by the speed of car price increases is that the IAC report stresses the very high cost of the present car plan to consumers and says the cost should be maintained only if it leads to a re-structuring of the motor industry to make local products more competitive with imports. (Cropley 1976)
The magazine also covered news of shifts to the impact of the introduction of ADRs on specialist car importers of cars and other vehicles that do not comply with the rules. Not only the impact of these global movements on a local level, but local movements that impact on a global level. This includes the coverage of General Motors to “[swing] into producing ‘world cars’ with a vengeance.” Cropley’s short news article ends with the provocation: “Imagine – your Holden after next could be a European…” (Cropley 1976).

These industry machinations locate the decision regarding the V8 in the context of the globalising post-Button Plan automotive industry and there is a distributed causality (or what Foucault called a ‘polyhedron of intelligibility’) in effect here that must include other local and global events. The Button Plan was only introduced in 1984, however it had been expected by the Australian automotive industry and it herald massive shifts to the material conditions of the industry. It is one of the opening salvos in the process of globalisation in Australia. As such, the “V8’s ‘til ’98” campaign is one of the first Australian mass anti-globalisation movements and considering the composition of the interests at stake this is somewhat bizarre. Various media outlets ‘got behind’ the movement, including newspapers, radio and magazines. 15,000 people participated in a letter writing campaign to Holden. On one hand, the event captures how material conditions of the automotive industry were transformed during these initial processes of globalisation, and on the other, the event captures how a given market can be consolidated around a particular immaterial relation of enthusiasm.

The historical link between national identity and a country’s automotive industry is also reflected in the era of globalisation with transformations to
the Australian automotive market. Australians were exposed to what is called ‘badge engineering’: the same basic car is sold by two separate manufacturers with different names (or ‘badges’). However this had begun much earlier than the Button Plan, it only accelerated this tendency. For example the 1983 Wheels Car of the Year (COTY), commonly regarded as the most prestigious award of its type in Australia, was awarded to both the Ford Telstar and Mazda 626. The Telstar and 626 were based on the Mazda platform and powered by Ford motors. It was an agreement that benefited both manufacturers as they could then meet local content rules (Robinson 1984). By the mid-1990s manufacturers found it was cheaper to import fully built vehicles from overseas, which radically changed the composition of the market again. The Button Plan also triggered some investment into Australia as the site for the production of ‘global’ vehicles or parts. The automotive industry is still adjusting today. Except now it is feeling the ultimate after-effects of globalisation with the threat of closure for many of the component part manufacturers.

‘European’ has a distinct meaning in the mythopeia of the Australian automotive market as a colonial and post-colonial nation. It is one differentiation from the first tier nation-Other distinction of ‘overseas’ which includes anywhere beyond Australia and New Zealand. ‘European’, ‘Asian’, and ‘American’ capture the three main qualifiers of region when it comes to automotive manufacturing in the mid-1970s through to the mid-1980s. ‘European’ refers to a certain kind of sophistication that may be expressed in a number of different ways. It is not until much later that permanent further differentiations occur, such as ‘Asian’ splits into ‘Korean’ and ‘Japanese’ (with ‘Chinese’ currently emerging); however, Europe had already split into ‘English’, ‘German’,
‘Italian’, and ‘Swedish’. ‘American’ has not really changed although ‘South American’ has emerged it is a separate region on a similar discursive tier to ‘Chinese’. These differentiations of region – from ‘overseas’ to ‘European’, ‘Asian’ and ‘American’, and so on – are ‘statements’ in the Foucaultian sense. They capture not only a region on a geographically stratified map of the world, but particular stratifications in the discursive articulations of national and regional cultures, automotive engineering, and automotive style. For example, ‘German’ involves sophisticated performance and overall engineering, while ‘Swedish’ is sophisticated safety engineering, and so on. ‘Australian’ has almost emerged on the global level as a region with the export of the Holden Monaro as the Pontiac GTO in 2004-2006 (Fuller 2005), but not quite yet.

It was not (only) these socio-technical reasons around which the anxiety regarding the V8 was centered however. There was also an abject ‘Aussie’ ethnocentricity regarding ‘foreign’ built vehicles such as the aforementioned flagrantly racist ‘Brian Plankkman’ columns in Street Machine.\(^{104}\) Below is a large edited extract from one of Plankkman’s columns where he publishes what is supposedly an open letter to the

\(^{104}\) The rumour that I have been told with a ‘nudge and wink’ (by two sources) is that Plankkman was actually motoring journalist, Brian Woodwood. However, I am not sure how long he wrote the column for or if he actually wrote the column for certain. Woodwood was something of a rarity amongst motoring journalists in that he was an accredited engineer. He also had a highly entertaining ‘gonzo’-style approach to journalism evident at least during his early days as a writer for Van Wheels. I think Woodwood ultimately understood the social dimension to automobility in a progressive fashion. This is exemplified by his work in the 1990s on the development of the Tread Lightly environmentalist movement for 4WD owners in Australia where he was a leading figure. Indeed, this work on Tread Lightly may have been an attempt to atone for the rubbish published under the ‘Plankkman’ name.
Managing Director of GMH, Chuck Chapman, during the “V8 ‘till 98” campaign:

It’s come to me attention that youse blokes are gunna kill orf your small block, the 308. Now mate, you’ve already made one big blue when you dropped the 186, so fer Chrissakes don’t make another one with the small block. Now I know a V8 is never-ever gunna be as good as a lumpy 186, but that 308 of yours is not a bad unit. […] Of course, you mightn’t realise it Chuck, but this is all part of a Nip plot. You see the Slopes haven’t got a decent motor between ‘em, so they’ve got their sneaky little heads together and come up with a plan to destroy the competition. Ford, the silly buggers, fell for it hook line and sinker - but what more could you expect from a mob that builds Jap cars and calls ‘em Australian names [i.e. the Telstar/626 vehicle]? That just leaves you blokes for the Nips to roll. Once they’ve done that, what’s left for the Street Machiners of tomorrow? What sort of motors are gunna power the [Holden] Belmonts of the future that me three boys, Kev, Trev and Brian Jnr., will one day buy and build? […] Chuck, take a tip from yer old mate Brian. You blokes owe a debt to society. Don’t be conned by this Nip plot. […] If you’d been at The Nats in Canberra you’d a seen blokes crying at the news of what you’re about to do. Anyway, don’t give in to the Slopes old mate. Bore it up ’em. […] Otherwise the kids of tomorrow are going to believe that two-litres is a bloody ”Big Block.” And if that happens, the Japs would’ve won, wouldn’t they? (Plankkman 1984)

The language and use of particular phrases captures the affective textuality of an iconic Australianism: “youse”, “gunna”, “orf”, “fer
Chrissakes”, “mob that builds Jap”, “Nips”, “yer old mate”, “You blokes”, “conned by this Nip plot”, “Slopes”, “old mate”, and “Japs would’ve won”. Each affective inflection effects a translation of the language from discursive ‘neutrality’ to a performative parochialism and nationalism. See the Holden advertisement below (Figure 5.4) where the ‘Australianess’ of the V8 is prominent.

![Figure 5.4](image-url)

The affects of nationalism are combined with anxieties regarding automotive technologies and the cultural effect of foreign, mostly Asian, but definitely ‘sinister’ cultural practices articulated through different automotive technologies. Some elements of the Brian Plankkman figure have been repeated in the recent 2005-2006 “Holden means a great deal to Australia” advertisement campaign featuring Australian comedian Dave Hughes. The advertisements run across television, radio, and print media. What is repeated is the set of affects captured in the cultural timbre of the Australian twang in Hughes’ voice; the same
cultural timbre is expressed in the affectivities of Plankkman’s language. Although the Holden adverts do not carry the vicious racist taunts of Street Machine’s Plankkman, they operate to tap into the same affective terrain of reactionary or ‘aspirational’ nationalism.

The ‘Plankkman’ column was dropped by Paradise but brought back by Scott in the first issue he took over as editor. In this issue Plankkman laments GM Holden dropping the WB utility models:

I hears a news broadcast on the bloke next door’s radio: [...] "Mr Chapman said rationalisation of company production facilities had prompted the move and that Japanese built Isuzu commercial vehicles would be sourced to fill the gap left by the demise of the WB Series ...." Readers, I know real blokes don’t cry, but your old mate Brian went bloody close. [...] The blokes at Holden had done it. After all me good advice, they’d been suckerpunched [sic] by the little blokes from Up North into giving away the best vehicle in the world. First the redmotor [sic] gets the chop, now the mighty WB Kingy ute. Readers, if there’d been a sharp knife handy I’d have considered slitit me wrists. [...] It’s all over readers - 34 years of loyal service and a classic collection of great vehicles. What are the street machiners of tomorrow going to drive, eh? Nip utes with backfire four motors? Not bloody likely! (Plankkman 1985)
A retrospective irony is that ‘lowrider’ utes based on Holden/Isuzu Rodeo-model vehicles and others have become extremely popular\textsuperscript{105} and quite a number of enthusiasts (such as Honda enthusiasts) see a two-litre engine as ‘big’. It is clear, however, that the Australian affectations in the textual tone of the writing continues, as does the explicitly ethnocentric and racist comments regarding being “suckerpunched [sic] by the little blokes from Up North” and “Nip utes”.

\textbf{Figure 5.5}

The question remains regarding the nature of the “V8 till ’98” campaign (Figure 5.5) and whether or not the entire event could merely have been a public relations exercise in manufacturing support for the V8 before the new model Commodore was released. That is, perhaps it was an attempt to cultivate and exploit the charisma of the V8 by capturing the enthusiasm and patriotic sentiment of consumers?

\textsuperscript{105} As a freelancer I wrote an article for the then-new now-defunct magazine, 2Dmax, was a feature article on the issue’s cover car, a lowrider ute.
One rumour that substantiates such a view is that money for the bumper stickers, which played a crucial role in the campaign’s public visibility, came from a Holden PR department. Plus it is no secret that the idea was hatched at a car launch by all those who would strongly profit (and indeed suffer otherwise) from a decision by Holden to maintain production of the V8. Regardless, if Holden had not kept producing the V8 until 1999, Ford would not have been pressured to reintroduce the V8 in the early 1990s, and there would not be HSV Commodores and GT Falcons currently on Australian roads and in Australian enthusiast magazines. Part of the mythopoeia of Australia’s masculine V8 car culture would have been radically different.

In 2005 Phil Scott is quoted in an ACP press release as saying, "More than any other publisher, we [ACP] continue to understand what Australian men want and deliver it to them." There is a certain truth to this, especially looking back to 1985. The literal expulsion of turbochargers and other non-Anglo and non-masculine non-Australian/US-based automotive technologies is apparently what readers of Street Machine in 1985 ‘wanted’. Or, rather, a certain kind of readership imagined by Scott and others at Street Machine could be produced by articulating performance in such a way. This early period of Street Machine magazine is relevant for understanding the congruence of the affective dimension of automotive technology and cultural meaning in discourse. By selecting and pursuing a line of editorial content across the entire magazine that focused on V8-powered cars, Street Machine magazine

tapped into a reactionary desire of a hyper-patriarchal masculinity and Australian nationalism. The connection between V8-powered late-1960s and 1970s cars with a reactionary masculinity and nationalism was developed during Geoff Paradise’s run as editor at the same time as he oversaw the coverage of diverse forms of automotive performance. When Phil Scott became editor, Street Machine simply stopped covering automotive technologies that did not conform to the congruence of masculinity with Australian nationalism.

‘Pro-Street’

A spectacularisation of this V8-based masculine and nationalist street machining enthusiasm occurred in the relation between the organisational structure of the scene and the popularisation of a particular aesthetic of modification: ‘Pro-Street’. That is, ‘Pro-Street’ is more than a spectacular style of modification; it is what connects the emergence of a quasi-professional social milieu with the development of the Summernats-Street Machine synergy. ‘Pro-Street’ takes the masculine enthusiast V8-based street machining culture ‘to the limit’.

According to Geoff Paradise (n.d.-b) the ‘Pro-Street’ style emerged in the late 1960s in the pages of Car Craft magazine (formerly Honk magazine) in a series of articles on “Dragsters for the street.” My impression, from the limited number of issues of Car Craft I have been able to access of this period, is that the magazine was largely concerned with the congruence
in technical modification between the factory-built ‘hot rod’ muscle cars and the amateur-built ‘street machines’.107

Figure 5.6 Figure 5.7

107 The black 1955 Chevrolet in the 1971 film Two-Lane Blacktop is modified according to the classic ‘pro-street’ aesthetic. Two-Lane Blacktop was billed as an ‘existential road movie’ and follows the rather banal exploits of two street racers as they aimlessly race their way across the US. The two main characters of Two Lane Blacktop are represented as modern day nomads living off and living in the system of automobility. Along the way they meet up with another character (driving a Pontiac GTO, the iconic muscle car of the 1960s) and enter into a road race across the US. This larger road race across the US is never finished, hence the ‘existential’ description of the film. It represents a technocratic US culture that is in a ‘race’ that will seemingly never end. The 1955 Chevy in the film is set up and modified as a ‘pro street’ vehicle with fibreglass competition body panels replacing the heavy steel items, a flip-front bonnet and front guards assembly for easy access to the motor, and the classic “bigs ‘n’ littles” look of fat drag racing slicks on the rear and little ‘front runners’. The film also sets up a dramatic tension between the ‘street machine’ and the Pontiac GTO muscle car involved in the race.
New about street machining at the time was that the modifications required for drag racing were not applied to ‘hot rods’ in the traditional sense (Deuce coupes and the like) or the vehicles that emerged in racing evolution of ‘hot rods’ into drag racing vehicles (such as dragsters), but were adapted to a ‘contemporary’ or ‘late-model’ vehicle. (This is the same shift across vehicle types and styles that produced the ‘classic customs’ problem for the ASRF in the 1970s.)

The transformation of ‘Pro-Street’ from a technical category of drag racing into an aesthetic style of modified-car culture that followed the emergence and then development of a semi-professional social milieu within the show circuit. The emergence of ‘pro-street’ as a ‘show’ style of modification was noted after the 1984 6th ASMF Nationals in Supercar magazine. The editors suggested that “those qualifying for entry into the Pro-Street class will have to compete in at least three of the weekends driving events.” The reason provided for the suggestion would be so as to “eliminate the show class image in some areas” (Mullen 1984).

‘Pro-Street’ is a style of modification that borrows many technical and aesthetic techniques from drag racing, this includes the “big ‘n’ littles” wheel and tyre combinations (big wheel and tyres on the back with little ‘front runners’), engines with protrusions on the bonnet or coming out of the engine bay through the bonnet, and so on. Figure 5.7 shows the cover of one of the very early Street Machine magazines, so early it still had Van Wheels in the masthead. The yellow Holden ute in the foreground and perhaps even the red Chrysler Charger behind it could be considered ‘Pro-Street’. The ute has the wheels, the bonnet scoop, and the racing signage and advertising. However, ‘Pro-Street’ is more
than a particular style of modification that became popular in the 1980s. ‘Pro-Street’ is another iteration of the statement of ‘street machine’ in the discourse of street machining. As a discursive ‘statement’ it serves as a point of correspondence between discursive and non-discursive practices. That is, ‘Pro-Street’ articulates a particular field of possibility for street machining.

The ‘Pro-Street’ style of modification certainly did not last forever. Instead of raising the example of ‘Pro-Street’ to exemplify a certain style of modification, I am indicating a certain structuration of the scene. The next iteration of ‘head-turner’ came in the form of Howard Astill’s ‘Rock 4’ 1963 Ford Fairlane. It starred at Summernats 5 and featured as the cover car for the January-February 1992 issue of Street Machine. Due to the extensive modifications to the vehicle, Astill’s Fairlane had to be placed in the ‘Pro-Street’ category. The problem was that the car was heavily modified not to replicate the aesthetics or actual performance of drag racing, such as the case for ‘Pro-Street’, but simply so the car could be lowered further than was possible from a legal and engineering standpoint with the original chassis (Britten 1992). Ewen Page returned to the editorship for the July-August 1992 Street Machine and offers a general description of the next iteration of ‘head turner’ in his editorial:

What you are seeing right now are clever cars. People are no longer prepared to sink heaps of dough into a project that won’t get the nod from [registration] inspectors. Can you blame them? [...]

I’d need a lot of convincing to believe that the cars we’re seeing no aren’t significant and aren’t equal to those from the ‘80s. If street machining’s about being different, using your brain and
applying your skills, surely the new breed presents a greater challenge.
Building something that’s tough, innovative (outrageous, even) and able to draw a crowd – while staying within the spirit of the law – is an achievement. (Page 1992)

The more restrictive registration requirements were not seen as a problem, but as a challenge. It was another opportunity to differentially repeat one’s enthusiasm. Indeed, it would take approximately another 5–7 years for the street machining scene to recover with the ‘RetroTech’ movement, and I shall discuss this in Chapter 7.

The character of major cultural events changed in the shift from street rodding to street machining from events held for the sake of skilled amateur labour, such as the Street Rod Nationals, to events where different populations of enthusiasts were swept up in the alleged party-like atmosphere of events, such as the Summernats. The quasi-professional milieu of enthusiasts that built ‘elite-level’ ‘head turners’ is used to capture the enthusiasm of the much larger population of peripheral enthusiasts from the enthusiasm of the interested public. The arguments of the previous chapter and this chapter shall be extended in the next chapter where I discuss ‘enthusiasm’ in terms of how it is transformed into a resource for the cultural industry. My interest is in the correspondence in the role of ‘head turners’ in both sides of the Street Machine-Summernats synergy, and the capacity of ‘head turners’ and other spectacular styles and practices to be used to modulate the event of enthusiasm. On one side are the organised cultural events of car shows or festivals and on the other side are the media events propagated
through the enthusiast magazines and assembled from a composite of the same inductive effect of spectacular ‘head turners.’

In some respects, ‘head turner’ retains some of its general meaning; this is often associated with the sexualised comportment of a woman to ‘turn heads’. In the context of modified-car culture, vehicles modified following spectacular styles are discoursed as ‘head turners’. The first of these spectacular styles within the street machining scene was ‘Pro-Street’. The ‘Pro-Street’ style articulated a spectacular performance influenced by techniques of modification drawn from the race car technologies of drag racing and translated in the context of the ‘street’ (or institutional and ritualised rearticulations of the ‘street’, such as the car show). The ‘spectacular performance’ of the ‘Pro-Street’ style of modification is loosely organised around a key set of socio-technical elements of technological performance; these include large supercharged V8 engines that have part of the engine assembly protruding from the bonnet, large racing tyres and a distinct lack of a capacity to fulfill the requirements of State-based governmental registration authorities to be legally driven on the street. Although ‘Pro-Streeters’ often indicated a high level of race car engineering expertise and skill on behalf of modifiers, as a style of modification ‘Pro-Street’ is the direct opposite of the ‘engineered’ vehicles valorised within the ASMF-influenced institutionalised parts of the street machining scene. This is not because of the different sets of skills required, but because ‘Pro-Street’ is a style of modification organised around the production of ‘head turners’, not maintaining the ‘respectability’ of the scene.

More than a style of modification, a ‘head turner’ is a singularity within modified-car culture. Enthusiasts seek to modify cars to produce ‘head
turners’. The ‘head turner’ organises a number of qualitatively different spaces: the street, magazines, and enthusiast discourse. As I shall explore in the next section, it produces transversal relations between these separate but related spaces of the enthusiasm. A ‘head turner’ territorialises the social dimension of the system of automobility (Wise 2003: 108-109), transforming the space of mobility into a space of display; literally ‘turning heads’. In magazines a ‘head turner’ most commonly graces the cover of magazines so as to capture the attention of consumers browsing the news or magazine rack. There is an iterative dimension to the series of ‘head turners’ that feature as cover cars for they become a locus for enthusiast discourse and in part articulate the ‘sense of purpose’ of the scene; that is, until a new ‘head turner’ is produced.

‘Head Turners’
The pretence of Street Machine catering for a generalist or expansive car enthusiasm is dropped with the installation of Phil Scott as replacement editor for Geoff Paradise. However, what also changes in the discourse is the function of valorising which shifts from the skill of ‘engineering’ required to build or restore a modified car to a valorisation of the singularity of the car itself and how much it “stands out from the crowd.” This is not a new discourse; one dimension is evident in Paradise’s editorial:

Then there are people who are quietly putting around the streets of the nation in mini-cars like Lasers, Mazda 323s, Golfs and Honda Accords equipped with mag wheels, wide tyres, spoilers, aftermarket seats and steering wheels, ad infinitum. Although they probably couldn’t relate to the term "street machine" – and if they did they may not want to recognise it – they are nonetheless street-
machiners; people who individualise a car to suit their tastes and needs. (Paradise 1982b)

To individualise is to transform a car according to the personal ‘tastes and needs’ of the owner; it is a projection of the ego or self of the owner onto and through the car. The singularity of the car is something else. It is also individual, but in a radical sense. It pertains to a sense of rarity and the power of this rarity within the transversal spaces of the enthusiasm. The difference of modified cars from ‘stock’ cars and from other modified cars – their singularity – is of supreme importance in the culture. In certain circumstances stronger claims can be made about the cultural value of the aesthetics of modifications; for example, in the context of US Chicano identity and lowrider aesthetics (Chavoya 2004). ¹⁰⁸ The difference between the movements of simply changing a vehicle’s attributes from stock and that of producing singularity is one way to ascertain the intensive and extensive participation of an enthusiast within the culture. The interested public modifies vehicles from stock, enthusiasts produce singularity. By this I mean that enthusiasts assume the existence of an enthusiast culture and infrastructure of the scene within which the singularity is suspended by its effects. A singularity in this context of style is a performative intervention – an event – in the various spaces of the enthusiasm.

Enthusiasts (and magazines¹⁰⁹) do not use the term singularity; it is a term I am borrowing from philosophy. The performativity of modified cars is

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¹⁰⁸ See my engagement with the ethnocentric discourse of ‘rice’ within street machining culture in the last two chapters.
¹⁰⁹ Anecdotally, I once tried to introduce a feature car magazine article by describing the vehicle as ‘singular’ to see if the magazine would publish it. The sub-editor changed it to ‘unique’.
discoursed in enthusiast culture through their capacity to ‘turn heads’. Mandy Thomas and Melissa Butcher note, but do not remark on, the event of ‘head turning’ in their ethnographic foray into a particular part of the modified car scene in Sydney. They write,

> When the sound of a car with a big engine is heard in the distance everyone’s head lifts in that direction and keeps alert for who it might be. [...] The spinning mag wheels, the noise of the engine and the sound system, and the shimmer of the exterior, all catch the senses. They are designed to attract attention. (2003: 145-146)

Similar to Linley Walker’s (1998) assessment that the modified cars are built to attract attention as expressions of the protest masculinity of working class males, Butcher and Thomas focus more on the identity of enthusiasts rather than what this ‘attention attracting’ capacity actually does in the enthusiasm; such a discussion of ‘head turners’ as mere tools for ‘attention seeking’ without any cultural contextualisation is in danger of infantilising enthusiasts and is only relevant when it is used as a tool by politicians and moral entrepreneurs for political gain to individuate ‘mainstream’ populations against enthusiasts in moral panics about ‘hoons’. ‘Head turners’ within modified-car culture need to be contextualised in the cultural context and dispositif of the scene and enthusiasm in question.

A complication emerges when vehicles are modified for the aesthetic and not necessarily for the technological effectiveness. The performance of these ‘hot cars’ is not measured by their technical performance but by the cultural performativity. The modifications are functional or effective only if they successfully communicate and conform to the highly stylised
aesthetic forms of what Goldberg called the ‘competition aesthetic’. In this simple example of competition and non-competition vehicles performance is not a building block in the ‘objective reality’ intrinsic to particular technological objects and technical practices; it becomes a performance of a different kind. Through the modification of the aesthetic form of a car and its use in particular ritualised practices, performance is performed in a cultural or theatrical sense.

Robert Post uses this ambiguity of performance as one of his central themes in his engaging history of drag racing:

All of drag racing is saturated in the language of mechanical technology, naturally, but scarcely more so than with the imagery of the theatre. The race cars come out in pairs, then stage and prepare to perform. The very word performance has a delicious ambiguity, and I have taken that ambiguity as one of my themes. Some conceive of performance in the context of engineering; for others the crucial referent is entertainment. The show can be as scruffy as a small-time carnival, or it can be the stuff of high drama; call it "legitimate" theatre, perhaps, but it is still theatre." (Post 2001: xviii)

An obvious commonality between all the different dimensions of modified-car culture is an investment in a related technological object. The dragster developed from the hot rod over a 20 year period. Post identifies drag racing as an evolution of the street racing activities of the pre- and post-war subculture of hot-rodding (2001: 1-12). Drag racing has become a highly organised, commodified sport carried out in a specific space, the drag strip. The sport and business of drag racing overlaps
somewhat with modified-car culture, but modified-car culture, in its everyday conception, is centered around cultural practices derived from the modified car as it is used on the street.

Any type of car can be reworked as modified and any street space can become a social space through ritualised performative practices carried out by modified-car enthusiasts, such as cruising. The movement from drag strip to street shifts the nature of ‘performance’ from being one based around the rule-based regulative stage of the drag strip (itself a ‘sportified’ abstraction\textsuperscript{110} of street-based activities) to the ritualised stage of street space. The ritualised practices of the street also conform to certain social rules but these social rules only exist in their performative in-action. There is not a rule book for the street; only shifting trends and styles of modification and practice. From the drag strip to the street is a shift from a performance space with an explicit and legitimate ‘sense of purpose’ of the cultural performance of technological performance to a radically different context of a performative space that transforms the street into a social space.

The ‘street’ is a space of display and cultural performance of ‘performance’. The practices of the display of performance in the street space gain their own technical rationality, and the nature of modifications shift from centered on ‘authentic’ or ‘simulated’ competitive performance technologies, to technologies that are effective in their ability to perform the performativity of performance. Such technologies include exhausts made not for their increased flow so

\textsuperscript{110} Brian Massumi argues that “as with every collective formalization, the codification of rules follows the emergence of an unformalized proto-sport exhibiting a wide range of variation. The formal rules of the game capture and contain the variation” (2002: 71).
as to increase engine power, but to increase the aural presence of the car, which is similar to massively overpowered car stereos, and car body modifications based on the competitive aesthetic but valued for their visual intensity. This performativity of performance, where modifications are discoursed according to a technical rationality, but are carried out for the purpose of display, can not be so easily separated from other forms of performance. A car built to look like it goes fast, for the aesthetic, may actually go fast. Also, counter-styles have emerged where cars are modified to have a high level of performance, but are modified in such a way that is difficult for a casual observer, such as the police or non-enthusiasts, to notice any modifications (so-called ‘sleepers’).

A ‘head turner’ is a singularity within modified-car culture. ‘Head turners’ are the socio-technological inculcation of the haecceities (‘thisness’) of the scene at any given historical juncture. As I have noted, ‘haecceity’ is derived by Deleuze and Guattari from medieval philosopher Dons Scotus and used to “write about the uniqueness of things or events without resorting to the traditional Aristotelian genus/species/individual scheme” (see Deleuze 1994: 30-35; Bonta and Protevi 2004: 94). A haecceity denotes a ‘nonpersonal individuation’ of either a body or an environmental assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 260-265); an individuation is an event, which in this case is the event of enthusiasm. I am using it to describe the relations of composition which a ‘head turner’ makes not only with the street, but also the other elements that form transformative transversal relations with it. Another example is the ‘head turner’ selected by freelance journalists as worthy of appearing in a magazine and translated by the magazine apparatus so the capacity of the ‘head turner’ to turn heads in the street becomes the capacity to turn heads in a newsagent magazine rack.
The relation between the interpersonal, street-based event of the ‘head turner’ and the larger event of the scene can be deduced from Charles Stivale’s (2003) use of the concept of *haecceity* (and the refrain) to discuss Cajun dance. He writes that “refrains (*ritournelles*) contribute to the event by enveloping the dance performance within [...] the musical elements – lyrics, rhythms, instrumentation, vocal, and musical interpretation” (2003: 38). The event of Cajun dance is described by Stivale as occurring as a space of affects. Affect here is meant in more the sense of diminishing or multiplying the body’s capacity to act, but only to the extent that actual physiological affects – such as those involved in the complex of enthusiasm – are activated in congruent ways.

Stivale is seeking to illustrate the “diverse elements that create links between dancers and musicians” (2003: 39). He outlines the transversal movements and transformations of a particular Cajun musician, Wayne Toups and his first album, *ZydeCajun* (1986), across time (mid-1980s through till early-2000s) and place (across a number of US cities) and the different populations (audiences and dancers) who attend cultural events (his live shows). The conjunctural dimensions of the repeated event of the Cajun dance performance is produced through the “interchange between musicians and dancers and spectators in complex forms of visual and aural interplay [that] establishes the affective ‘rhythm’ or ‘refrain’ that underlies the event” (2003: 39-40). Stivale is referring to the dance-event itself, as in terms of ‘this’ Cajun dance event and the ‘thisness’ (*haecceitties*) of the event that exists on the scale of interpersonal relations. In addition, there is also an event of Cajun dance on a different scale of event. On this level the differential repetition of a constellation of individuating singularities as the ‘thisness’
of Cajun dance cut through the space-time of the dance-event, but also transversally connect with the music industry, the physical context of the dance space and its material and cultural history, the specific geographic and historical circumstances of Cajun identity and so on: this is the event of the Cajun dance scene.

The ‘head turner’ distributes the social and discursive space of the street, of the scene, and of the magazine around itself. The three levels of space intersect around the ‘head turner’ as a singularity. The haecceities of the ‘head turner’ in the street are also the haecceities of the scene and if the vehicle is featured in a magazine – where the magazine is another space of the enthusiasm – then the ‘head turner’ also serves as the haecceities of the magazine. It displaces a space by producing differences that, within the context of modified-car culture, make a difference.
Chapter 6 Enthusiasm as a Resource

The population of the enthusiast ‘market’ is determined by the enthusiasm which is shared across the bodies of enthusiasts. Magazines intervene in this enthusiasm through the power of translating elements and events of the scene into congruent circuits of desire and the affective modulation of the enthusiasm. The relation between the discursive survey of the scene by the magazines and the actual scene is not a direct ‘tracing’ is because affective modulation of enthusiasm is not an exact science (Massumi 2005) and there is a mundane logistical incapacity of magazines (through freelancers) to cover all facets of the scene. A calculated representation of an enthusiast population (that has various population-based regularities, rather than being regulated as such) is extracted from the total population of enthusiasts. The targeted population of enthusiasts defined by its regularities is used as a resource to sell to advertisers. Of course, I am making the rather large assumption that if such synergistic relationships between the media and businesses did not result in surplus value, i.e. a profit for the magazine businesses extracted from the enthusiasm, then the synergies would exhaust their utility, and the magazines and/or businesses would quickly fold. Various levels of this sort of ‘failure’ have happened many times over the last 30 years in the cultural industry servicing contemporary modified-car culture in Australia (such as Street & Strip magazine mentioned in the previous chapter).

The magazines form a circuit with the enthusiasm of a scene. This circuit is derived from the magazines’ capacity to discursively survey the scene and then distribute the singularities selected from the scene through the media. The key relay between the heterogeneous multiplicity of the
scene and the elements of the scene selected, distributed and
territorialised through the magazines’ survey is the shifting transversal
correspondence between the haecceities of the enthusiasm and the
regularities of the population that belong to the event of the scene. The
regularities of enthusiast populations are one dimension of the
haecceities of the scene. The elements of the scene selected, distributed,
and territorialised in the discursive survey of the scene correlate with
these regularities. Covering certain elements of the scene and publishing
them in magazines is therefore an experiment in cultivating an
enthusiasm by capturing a given population of enthusiasts from the total
population of enthusiasts in the scene. Magazines attempt to control the
direction of a scene by surveying these regularities of populations and
technologies and enabling and stimulating the enthusiasm. The simplest
way to represent this is to think of enthusiasm as a force; the magazines
attempt to give it direction by articulating the event of enthusiasm in
certain ways. The magazines are not the cause of this ‘force’. Different
magazines attempt to tap into the enthusiasm of different parts of the
scene.

There is a central tension to most forms of modified-car culture. The
tension is between the active affections of ‘know how’ and a sense of
purpose organised around the display of ‘workmanship’ versus the
passive affections of ‘charisma’ and a sense of purpose organised
around the display of spectacular ‘head turners’. The particular type of
encouragement favoured by market leader Street Machine magazine in
the 1980s always tended towards a spectacular form. On the other hand,
different magazines, such as Australian Street Rodding and Supercar
Magazine, related to the enthusiast scene in a non-spectacular manner,
and tended to valorise other dimensions of the enthusiasm, such as the
amateur work ethic and the high level of skill involved in this amateur labour.

In this chapter I shall outline a conception of the passive affection of charisma and argue that it is the transformation of enthusiasm into a resource for the enthusiast culture industry of a scene. To introduce charisma I shall return to the notion of ‘know how’ as an active affection of enthusiasm and note the tension produced in the late 1980s street machining scene because of the transformative effect of the spectacular dispositif of the Street Machine-Summernats synergy. Then I turn to the early work of Tom Wolfe as he briefly invokes Max Weber’s notion of charisma to describe US ‘custom car culture’ of the 1960s. This section argues that Weber’s notion of charisma is a useful concept for engaging with the passive affections of enthusiasm. Lastly, this allows me to draw several threads of my analysis together to argue that the power of the enthusiast culture industry is to modulate the event of enthusiasm as it is differentially repeated within cultural events. Within the spectacular dispositif of street machining – what I call the architecture of the spectacle – the event of enthusiasm is not determined by an expression of the capacity of the enthusiast to meet ‘challenges’, but to be charismatically ‘inspired’ by ‘head turners’.

**The Tension between Active and Passive Enthusiasm**

In Chapter 4 I outlined the organisational split in the promotion of events with the emergence of the Summernats from the Australian Street Machine Federation Nationals. Chic Henry is a key figure in this movement as he went from being the inaugural National Director of the ASMF to becoming the promoter of the Summernats. The shift from the
ASMF Nationals to the Summernats occurred because a quasi-professional social milieu emerged during the rise in popularity of street machining under the direction of the ASMF with support from enthusiast magazines. The ASMF Nationals had been organised in a similar fashion to the Australian Street Rodding Federation Nationals as an event for enthusiasts to display the ‘workmanship’ of their vehicles to each other and therefore demonstrate their respective levels of ‘know how’. The Summernats was a different type of event to that of the ASMF Nationals in that the ‘best’ vehicles – the ‘head turners’ – were used to individuate a much larger population of the interested public, rather than an event run for the benefit of committed enthusiasts. This shift is evident in the aesthetic transition captured in the style of the March 1986 cover of Street Machine (Figure 6.1) to the December 1987 cover (Figure 6.2). The 1986 issue is the last occasion that the ASMF Nationals received any substantial mention in the magazine, while the 1987 magazine is the first time the Summernats is covered.
Certain elements are repeated, such as the *Street Machine* masthead, the notion of ‘heat’/’hot’ in the numberplate of the image of the car from 1986 and the “heat on the street” cover line text of the 1987 magazine, and the advertisement of a competition to win a car across the top of both covers. The differences are far more important. The 1986 cover is a cartoonish image of what appears to be a two-door Holden Commodore: a configuration of a model never actually built. The front grille appears to be of a VC or later (early- to mid-1980s) model Commodore. The style of the cartoon is derived from the ‘Rat fink’ style of ‘gonzo’ illustration made popular in the 1960s by Ed Roth (Kerr 1999: 131-141). It captures a burnout being performed and accentuates the elements of the action: the oversized rear wheel spinning in a cloud of smoke and the ‘wedge’ shape all give the car an unhinged look. The motor also has ‘pride’ of place as exemplifying the techno-mechanical ‘know how’ of the modifier. The car is not simply doing a burn out; it is doing a burnout in front of an audience of spectators barely visible in the background behind a rudimentary pressed-steel safety rail. The two or three figures that can be made out from the ‘crowd’ all appear to have their arms laconically crossed. I read the image as an *invitation* to participate in the action (the burnout) as part the scene. Also certain practices of the ‘heritage’ of the scene are rearticulated in the present juncture of the scene; a line of derivation is produced with a much older dimension of modified-car culture through the ‘old’ hot-rodding style of the drawing that depicts a ‘late model’ vehicle.

The second cover is for the *Street Machine* issue that covers the first Summernats. It features a close up of a series of air ram tubes for a mechanical injection setup of a V8 motor. Mechanical injection is illegal for ‘engineered’ street cars in all states and territories of Australia. There is
no invitation to participate in the action of a historically configured scene; the invitation is of naked chrome. The image of the air ram tubes works as an incitation or a seduction. The first cover represents the imaginary relation of an enthusiast posited in the future action, the second cover does not represent a relation, but transmits one part of the relation between enthusiast and car from the future event of the differential repetition of enthusiasm within the cultural event of the Summernats. The first cover is a projection of the conditions of possibility that belong to the mode of social organisation of amateur enthusiasts and the active affections of ‘know how’ and a sense of purpose organised around displaying ‘craftsmanship’. The second cover captures the affects of the street machining spectacle: the affective cool, hard, and reflective singularity of naked chrome. Unlike the ‘amateur’ caricature of the earlier cover there is only a sense of looking, with no invitation to participate.

The transformation of the scene into one the spectacular dispositif of street machining created a problem in a culture allegedly characterised by sense of purpose organised around displaying the ‘workmanship’ of vehicles and the ‘know how’ of enthusiasts. This problem is clearly isolated by Street Machine editor, Ewen Page, in the editorial for the April-May 1988 issue. He begins by introducing a fictional character of the “average Street Machiner” named “Lennie.” Lennie, according to Page’s narrative, has built and modified his car through his own labour, spending most of his money and leisure time on it. Below is a very large extract from the editorial (that unfortunately has to be large to properly capture the way Page lays out the problem):

[Lennie] lives for his car – spends every available weekend and week night with his head buried beneath the bonnet. Shells out
every cent on a car the neighbours generously refer to as an automotive obsession. Once bought as a damaged, rusting wreck for $800, the HQ Monaro coupe has been transformed into something worth real value. Perhaps a show-winning proposition. The word to note here is street. Lennie drives his Holden on Friday and Saturday nights. Motors to the cricket or the football, but only where he can keep an eye on it. Occasionally, the HQ visits the shops with his wife and two kids. Why, this chrome and polish monument even has a child's seat strapped in the back for the youngest. Lennie really loves driving to car shows; enjoys cleaning the car for show 'n' shines and polishing madly for cruises. [...]
The problem with judging standards of workmanship and degrees of difficulty is the human element. To an extent, these decisions are based on the individual judge's personal opinion. So where is the line between street-driven and built-for-show? Think about it. No, really think about it - where is the line? Frankly, it doesn't exist. Any criteria used to select "street" or "show" is full of holes. Okay, let's ask the owner if his rig hits bitumen regularly. "Course it does, mate," says the bloke with the tube-framed, blown, injected, Nitrous-equipped and tubbed Falcon [i.e. a pro-streeter]. Oh, that must be a street driven car, then. See what I mean? The problem we have - and in a way this magazine has contributed - is that everyone aspires to owning the ultimate. We'd like to think that, through our coverage of the best cars in the country, we bring you the ultimate. Cars that potential builders can glean ideas and inspiration from. [...]

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The problem is, not everyone has a super expensive Pro-Streeter - but most wish they did! Something above the ordinary will always be popular and we won't ignore that aspect of our sport. It's this love/hate relationship that has everyone in a quandary.

We all drool over "those" cars. They're blatantly built to win trophies or run fast quarter times - not to ferry the kids to school. Radical cars like Pro-Streeters attract heaps of attention from blokes like Lennie, who get by with their budget-built street runner. But blokes like Lennie are the real street machiners. (Page 1988)

As suggested in Page's editorial, at stake was the capacity of Street Machine magazine to deliver the ‘ultimate’ to its readers. The cover of this May-April issue features another ‘radical’ supercharged ‘pro-streeter’ (Figure 6.3).

Page frames this in terms of ‘inspiring’ readers to build the sort of cars they apparently ‘wished’ to own. His description of the ‘love/hate
relationship’ may or may not be an accurate assessment of the state of the scene in 1988, but what matters is the way Page describes ‘something above the ordinary’ – the ‘head turner’ – as ‘always being popular’. Essentially, Page recognises the structure of the culture has largely become subsumed by the organisation of the spectacle and the spectacular media event of street machining.

The discourse of the ‘enthusiast’ is now presented as a tension between different dimensions of the single enthusiasm. There is a movement here; not simply from one enthusiast object to another, such as the street rod to street machine; nor simply is it a movement from one style of modification to another; lastly, nor is the movement one from a particular practice to another. Rather, there is a shift across relations of power, or dispositifs, that constitute the field of possibility of the scene of modified-car culture. The previous dispositif involved the distribution of the enthusiasm across the amateur labour of enthusiasts and their ‘know how’, the collective representational structures of the enthusiast social institutions (such as the ASRF and to a lesser extent the ASMF), and cultural events organised around a sense of purpose for the display of ‘workmanship’ and ‘engineered’ vehicles. By 1988 the now established spectacular dispositif of street machining was organised around the spectacular mediation of the modification style of ‘Pro-Street’ through the spectacular architecture of the magazines and car shows in a relation with a much larger interested public and amateur enthusiast population. The ‘promise of the ultimate’ is a tool in delivering a proprietary population of the interested public to the respective commercial advertisers and event promoters in the spectacular cultural architecture of street machining. The ‘inspiration’ is a charismatic induction of an enthusiasm that modulates the event of enthusiasm so it is affectively congruent with the affects of the spectacle.
Through the spectacular dispositif of street machining the enthusiast culture industry of modified-car culture was now defined by the character of synergies created between magazines and event promoters. I am drawing on Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer’s conception of the ‘culture industry’. Adorno’s central thesis is that the culture industry manufactures modern mass entertainment under conditions that reflect the interests of the producers and the market, and this demands the manipulation and domination of mass consciousness. For Adorno and Horkheimer, there is a ‘single’ culture industry correlating with a ‘single’ mass culture. To a certain extent the position developed here agrees with Adorno’s thesis. In modified-car culture there are not multiple culture industries that populate a scene, but a single culture industry that services and cultivates a single enthusiasm. If there is more than one culture industry belonging to a scene then there must be more than one enthusiasm within a scene or more than one scene that occupies a single urban or suburban space. Each enthusiast culture industry is defined by the enthusiasm around which it is organised and not the cultural commodities it produces. The cultural commodities of modified-car culture include magazines, videos and film, computer games, and the cars themselves. To differentiate between the two conceptualisations of the culture industry when it is unclear I shall call the culture industry of modified-car culture an ‘enthusiast culture industry’.

The tension between the different poles of enthusiasm within the street machining scene has roots that extend much farther back into the history of modified-car culture than the 1980s era of Australian modified-car culture. Post-War US sociologist Reuel Denney also notes a similar tension
that emerged in the practices of early hot rodders that raced on the salt lakes of Bonneville:

The leisure competence of the hot-rodders has been so perceptible in terms of their products and their race meets, as at Bonneville, that one might be tempted to let a favorable case for the fad rest on the excitement that goes with these gasoline fiestas. […] Prize money and other professional rewards in the sport are increasing; it is far more difficult now than in 1946 for a hot-rodder to know whether he is in the game for fun or for business. The sport has reached the point at which almost all respected competence is at a semiprofessional level, requiring greater investments of money and a compulsive attitude toward the achievement of a high status car. (ital. added, Denney 1957: 150, 152)  

A similar use of ‘hot rodding’ as an example is found in an earlier work by one of Denney’s colleagues, David Riesman. For Riesman (2001: 292-294), hot rodding is an example of a culture organised around ‘craftsmanship’ which has not yet succumbed to being assimilated into mass culture of the ‘inner-directed lonely crowd’. Riesman was influenced by Adorno’s work on mass culture and Adorno was likewise influenced by Riesman. Riesman and Denney both assume a continuity

111 Denney is operating within a theoretical paradigm of social research that emphasised ‘social status’ in a not dissimilar way to that of Sarah Thornton’s reworking of Pierre Bourdieu’s theories in the concept of ‘subcultural capital’.

112 Reuel Denney was one of Riesman’s collaborators on The Lonely Crowd.

between hot rodding and salt lake racing, and this assumption is due to the work of one of their students, Gene Balsley (1950), who wrote the first scholarly essay on modified-car culture (published the same year as the non-abridged first version of Riesman’s The Lonely Crowd).\textsuperscript{114} The link between hot rodding and salt lake racing is historically contingent and certainly does not incorporate the whole hot rodding scene in the US. Moorhouse (1991: 26-44) describes salt lake racing and ‘street racing’ as the ‘early sports’ of hot rodding, and by the late 1950s and early 1960s the hot rodding scene had shifted to be organised around drag racing, which had formalised into a motor sport. I defined the beginning of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia with the break at an institutional level between the street rodders and drag racers. The transformation of the ‘show’ dimension of modified-car culture requires a different type of analysis to that of formalisation of the drag racing practice into the drag racing motorsport. My analysis shall focus on, as Denney phrases it, ‘the excitement that goes with these gasoline fiestas.’

A charisma-based enthusiasm is still characterised by enthusiastic participation, but the shifting compositions of affects that define the event of enthusiasm changes. As Deleuze (1992: 231) indicates, passive affections “involve some degree, however low, of our power of action.” Indeed, the enthusiast culture industry requires enthusiasts to keep on being enthusiastic, building cars and spending money, therefore they require enthusiasts to have some degree of ‘know how’. Page writes that “blokes like Lennie are the real street machiners” and therefore invokes a model of authenticity. Firstly, from the perspective of the magazine as a commercial media institution, “blokes like Lennie” make up the major part of the readership, and not the ‘semi-professional’ enthusiasts who

\textsuperscript{114} Balsley thanks both Riesman and Denney in his essay.
built the ‘head turners’. In 1987 the ASMF had approximately 1200 members, while street machine had a circulation of approximately 120,000.

Secondly, Page’s statement may have been a cynical gesture of incorporation towards ‘blokes like Lennie’ to make them feel included in the scene (and the readership of Street Machine), but it is useful for exemplifying the constitution of enthusiast identity. On one level, ‘authenticity’ does not seem to be a problem in modified-car culture. In enthusiast discursive practice, a modified car either turns heads or it does not, or it is fast and powerful or not. The question of authenticity, however, extends beyond the objects of enthusiasm to the practices and ‘know how’ in-acted as part of cultural events. Authenticity in modified-car culture relates to the ‘reality’ of ‘Lennie’ not as an enthusiast who has attempted to ward off the ‘commodification’ of a style of modification; rather, the ‘reality’ is constituted by the topology of contingencies faced by an enthusiast that can be or have been translated from a ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’. From the perspective of a ‘sense of purpose’ organised around ‘craftsmanship’ and ‘skilled labour’ the authenticity of an enthusiast is not an identity that can be read according to a semiotics of enthusiast culture, but is determined by the challenges he or she has overcome. This requires a semiotics of force and of the capacity to act, not a semiotics of signified meaning.

When the skilled labour that is required to build and maintain a modified car does not belong to an enthusiast and is provided by professional trades people, then it can be interpreted as not ‘real’. Indeed, the authenticity of ‘know how’ and the capacity to ‘rise to the challenge’ is weighted within the scene by a subtle metric of ‘respect’; what Denney
calls ‘respected competence’ in the context of the becoming professionally organised, and yet ostensibly ‘amateur’, motorsport of salt lake racing.  

‘Respect’ is earned and given according to the felt or acknowledged recognition of the enthusiast capacity to translate the contingency of a ‘problem’ into that of a ‘challenge’. There is not a simply binary of authentic or real and inauthentic and fake enthusiasts, however, because a car built by a professional tradesperson may very well ‘turn heads’ and be very fast. Rather there are various gradations of respect determined by the character of the multitude of contingencies encountered by an enthusiast. The composition of contingencies and the efficacy in the in-acted ‘know how’ in translating these contingencies into ‘challenges’ is what determines the comportment of the enthusiast.

The question of ‘authenticity’ was framed differently for the classic Birmingham School conception of ‘subculture’. In Dick Hebdige’s influential analysis the authentic moment of counter-hegemonic refusal that spectacular subcultures represented is expressed through the signs of subculture. Hebdige (1979: 94) identifies two forms of ‘recuperation’ of the so-called ‘deviant’ subcultures into the ‘common sense’ hegemonic mainstream of capitalist post-War British culture:

1) The conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass-produced objects (i.e. the commodity form);
2) The labeling and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups – the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. ideological form).

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115 A brilliant representation of ‘enthusiasm’ in relation to the motor sport of salt lake racing is captured in the film The World’s Fastest Indian (Donaldson, 2006). The film is captures the affirmation and capacities of ‘enthusiasm’ extraordinarily well.
Hebdige adds that “the relationship between the spectacular subculture and the various industries which service and exploit it is notoriously ambiguous” (94). He explores this ambiguity in terms of the basic premise of his argument that defines subculture according to communication. Subculture “communicates through commodities even if the meanings attached to those commodities are purposefully distorted or overthrown” (95). Hebdige therefore makes a crucial point that indicates the locus of his analysis when he argues, that it is “difficult in this case to maintain any absolute distinction between commercial exploitation on the one hand and creativity/originality on the other, even though these categories are emphatically opposed in the value systems of most subcultures” (95).

Modified-car culture is different primarily because it is not subcultural ‘noise’ to the hegemonic mainstream. It is actually an affirmation of one of the key ideological relations through which social relations are reproduced in contemporary Western societies. Modified-car cultures are essentially subcultures of automobility; yet, they do not enact a refusal of the system of automobility. Enthusiasts affirm the structural socio-technical conditions of automobility every time they differentially repeat the event of enthusiasm. In Australia, enthusiasts are sometimes recuperated as ‘hoons’ but this relates more to the governance of public space and the road safety industry than it does with the (non/radical) social efficacy of the enthusiast culture itself (Fuller 2007).

Furthermore, the relation between a scene of modified-car culture and the cultural industry that services and exploits an enthusiasm has a different relation than ‘recuperation’ through the ‘commodification of
subcultural style’. Modified-car culture is an example of an affective economy organised around what are experienced mostly as the positive affective relations of enthusiasm, instead of the negative affects of anxiety, fear and anger. There has been much work recently on certain “affective economies” – to use Sara Ahmed’s (2004) phrase – that are organised around negative affects, such as fear, hate and anxiety (Massumi 2005), or organised around negative events, such as media scandals (Urry 2003) or moral panics (Cohen 2002: xxxiii-xxxiv). Lawrence Grossberg noted in his study of the “rock formation”, citizen-consumer subjects are not only “mobilised” by negative affects, but also through the mattering maps of what Grossberg describes as the investment of affects. As I shall discuss in the eighth chapter, however, negative affects can certainly serve as a mobilising force within modified-car culture.

Adorno fully realised the affective dimension of the consumption of cultural commodities. The burden of exchanged-based valorisation versus aesthetic efficacy implicit in his infamous critique of commercial jazz – that “it is fine for dancing and dreadful for listening” (1991: 49) – needs to be inverted by combining it with another of his observations in the same essay. He writes that in “American conventional speech, having a good time means being present at the enjoyment of others, which in its turn has as its only content being present” (39). Adorno acknowledges in a dismissive fashion to necessary role of affect in its

116 In part this chapter is a response to Manuel DeLanda’s (DeLanda, Protevi et al. 2004) provocation from an interview that he finds the “[expression] ‘commodification’ worse than useless.”
117 Grossberg (1992) seeks to account for the disarticulation of ideology and affective investment in the popular culture of the rock formation.
movement across the bodies of others as being colloquially realised as ‘having a good time’.

An enthusiasm-of-the-other is already assumed in the marketing/reporting on the commodity-event. To tap into an enthusiasm as a resource necessarily demands the reproduction (for a sustainable relation) or exploitation (for a non-sustainable relation) of the passive charismatic relation as a biopolitical relation through the orchestration of this amplificatory affective biopower of enthusiasts. To put it slightly differently, Adorno prefigures work on the so-called experience economy by focusing on the conjunctural use of cultural commodities in cultural events. Commodities are not merely a static ‘thing’ (object or image), but events that happen in time and which are determined by the capacities of the ‘thing’ in question; Maurizio Lazzarato (2003) argues the event of the commodity is herald by the incorporeal attributes or discursive character of the commodity.

The enthusiast culture industry of modified-car culture is characterised by the way it uses enthusiasm as a resource. Instead of a ‘mass production’ or ‘mass consumption’ model of cultural diffusion as the suitable image of the culture, it is closer to a cottage agricultural industry where the biopower of enthusiasm of a scene needs to be cultivated.

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118 My use of ‘biopower’ is derived from but is not the same as Foucault’s use. I am focusing more on the contingent cultural dimension of the body through the affective system, i.e. the habitus, compared to Foucault’s examination of life or death biological functions of the human species. Understanding the biopolitical function of the affect system has been gathering urgency since the emergence of post-industrial capitalism in developed Western economies during the post-war period. John Urry (2003: 113-118) uses the notion of ‘biopower’ in a similar way to analyse the affective dimension of mediated ‘scandals’.
Biopolitics of Charisma

Tom Wolfe’s brief invocation of Max Weber’s notion of ‘charisma’ is a useful way to engage with the passive affections of enthusiasm. The aim of this section is to develop a conception of the cultural industry as a mechanism for the modulation of enthusiasm and the cultivation of enthusiast populations as a resource. Wolfe focuses on ‘car customising’ of the mid-1960s as an emergent esoteric art form. He focuses on the principle figures, such as George Barris and Ed Roth, associated with the development of the ‘baroque, streamline-style’ that belongs to car customising. This style can be found in the various techniques of customising from minor modifications and production of completely new cars to the t-shirts and model toy cars produced as another market-based dimension of the culture.

Wolfe was writing in the midst of the transformations of postwar US society. The changes he notes are registered in the lifestyles and leisure time practices of the young people that he observed. His essay opens with a ‘distracted’ account of a ‘Teen Fair’ held at Burbank, a suburb of Los Angeles beyond Hollywood. His account of the Fair is ‘distracted’ because he jumps from detail to detail in a vivid and dynamic representation of a highly energetic event. He never concentrates on one particular element but surveys the scene with a ruthless eye for quirky features. He attends the ‘Teen Fair’ with Tex Smith, a journalist with Hot Rod magazine, who acts as Wolfe’s guide around the event.

Smith directs Wolfe to a tent housing the ‘Ford Custom Car Caravan’, but along the way Wolfe’s attention is troubled by and drawn to a giant
swimming pool full of teenagers. He reflects on the importance of teenagers and the function of the ‘Teen Fair’ event:

[T]oday these kids – especially in California – have money, which, needless to say, is why all these shoe merchants and guitar sellers and Ford Motor Company were at the Teen Fair in the first place. (77)

Indeed, if his general point was about the artistry of car customising, his argument explores the problematic intersection of what he calls ‘form’ and ‘money’ within the cultural practices of teenagers and how these practices produce a ‘formal society’. In the terminology used here, the cultural economy of what Wolfe calls ‘this teenage netherworld’ is one of the central issues in his essay.\footnote{119} He recognises a key function of the ‘Teen Fair’ is to connect producers of popular culture to the consumers of popular culture. Ford’s sponsorship of the ‘Custom Car Caravan’ is exemplary in this regard:

I can see that Ford has begun to comprehend this teen-age style of life and its potential. The way Ford appears to figure it is this:

\footnote{119} Paul du Gay’s definition of the ‘economic’ and ‘cultural’ dimensions of the term ‘cultural economy’ serve as a useful introduction to the term: ‘Economic’ processes and practices - in all their plurality, whether we refer to management techniques for re-organizing the conduct of business, contemporary strategies for advertising goods and services, or everyday interactions between service employees and their customers - depend on meaning for their effects and have particular cultural ‘conditions of existence’. Meaning is produced at ‘economic’ sites (at work, in shops) and circulated through economic processes and practices (through economists’ models of how ‘economies’ or ‘organizations’ work, through adverts, marketing materials and the very design of products) no less than in other domains of existence in modern societies. (Du Gay 1997: 4)
Thousands of kids are getting hold of cars and either hopping them up for speed or customising them to some extent, usually a little of both. Before they get married they pour all their money into this. If Ford can get them hooked on Fords now, after the kids are married they’ll buy new Fords. Even the kids who aren’t full-time car nuts themselves will be influenced by which car is considered ‘boss.’ […] A lot of the professional hot-rod and custom-car people, adults, will tell you that now Ford is the hot car, but you have to discount some of it, because Ford is laying money on everybody right and left, in one form or another.

Wolfe announces his skepticism, but is not explicitly critical of Ford for their blatant attempts to ‘buy’ into the culture, either through sponsorship of a custom car show or simply ‘laying money down on everybody’. As something of a contradiction, however, Wolfe introduces Robert Peterson, founder of Peterson Publishing Company and publisher of Hot Rod magazine, as an exploiter of customising and hot rod culture:

[C]ustomising is beginning to be rationalised, in the sense that Max Weber used the word. This rationalisation, or efficient exploitation, began in the late forties when an $80-a-week movie writer named Robert Peterson noticed all the kids pouring money into cars in a little world they had created for themselves, and he decided to exploit it by starting Hot Rod Magazine, which clicked right away and led to a whole chain of hot-rod and custom-car magazines. (89-90)

Wolfe is describing the relationship between the emergent culture and the cultural industry that has organised and continues to organise around
it. His invocation of Weber’s concept of rationalisation captures some sense of the organisational development of the enthusiast magazine industry. Wolfe later writes:

[The ‘Detroit’] manufacturers may be well on the way to routinising the charisma, as Max Weber used to say, which is to say, bringing the whole field into a nice, safe, vinyl-glamorous marketable ball of polyethylene. (102)

Polyethylene is a form of thermoplastic plastic used in the mass-production of consumer goods, such as children’s toys. Wolfe was not to know in writing his mid-1960s essay that the big ‘Detroit’ manufacturers were about to unleash the ‘muscle car’ era upon the US consumer public (Gartman 2004). In this era it would be possible to purchase fully-blown drag cars, as they say, ‘over the counter.’

Although this is a very brief reference, it appears that Wolfe is not referring to Weber’s conception of ‘charisma’ in the straightforward received understanding of the concept. ‘Charisma’ is commonly understood as ‘the gift of grace’ a notion taken from the vocabulary of early Christianity (Weber 1947: 328). It can relate to a variety of different types of charisma; for example, the manic ‘war-like’ passion of the ‘berserker’ (which in Medieval Byzantium was used as a weapon of war) or a type of intellectual “who is carried away with his own demagogic success” (Weber 1947: 359). Weber uses this conceptualisation of ‘charisma’ along with ‘legal-rational’ and ‘traditional’ in his typology of ‘three pure types of legitimate authority’.
Charismatic grounds [for legitimate authority] – resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual; person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him. (328)

Weber’s definition of ‘charisma’ appears to be problematic in the context of Wolfe’s use of ‘charisma’. In Wolfe’s use, there is little sense of an ‘authority’ of charismatic sovereignty. ‘Routinising the charisma’ in the context of Wolfe’s analysis did not mean a transition from one type of authority (charismatic) to another (legal-rational). Rather, the ‘Detroit’ manufacturers would modify the character of enthusiasm and incite the culture in such a way that many enthusiasts regard this to be its ‘heyday’. Arguably, Wolfe is drawing on a different meaning of ‘charisma’, one that has not received much attention relative to the related primary definition. It is this different sense of charisma that I want to unpack here.

More useful in trying to understand Wolfe’s use of ‘charisma’ is Weber’s passing reference to the “corporate group that is subject to charismatic authority [which] is based on an emotional form of communal relationship [germeide]” (Weber 1947: 360). It is in this passing reference to ‘communal relationships’ that the other meaning of ‘charisma’ becomes apparent:

A social relationship will be called ‘communal’ if and so far as the orientation of social action – whether in the individual case, on the average, or in the pure type – is based on the subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong
together. [...] Communal relationships may rest on various types of affectual, emotional, or traditional bases. (Weber 1947: 136-137)

The social relationship of a communal relationship principally involves social action of what Weber would call an ‘irrational type’, both “in terms of affectual orientation, especially emotional, determined by the specific affects and states of feeling of the actor [...] [and] traditionally oriented, through habituation of long practice” (115). Thomas Dow calls this ‘impersonal charisma’ of “the presence of a charismatic relationship in the absence of an extraordinary individual” (1969: 312).

Dow is critical of interpretations of impersonal charismatic relations that do not satisfy the requirement of ritualised religiousity as an explicit foundation of ‘charisma’. He writes that a “more balanced interpretation would be Weber’s use of impersonal charisma to refer only to those offices [of authority] that have made successful use of various practices and rituals to demonstrate or legitimise the charismatic qualities of the office” (1969: 314). Interpreting charisma as a function of an ideal-type of transcendental quasi-religious authority ignores the other interpretation of ‘charisma’ as a certain type of impersonal affective relation. If Wolfe is

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120 Emotional and affective forms of social relationships are problematic for Weber’s sociological theory. As Talcott Parsons states in his introduction, ‘affect’ is understood by Weber as simply being ‘irrational’ (Weber 1947: 16). This is problematic, however, as noted by Parsons:

The isolation of rationality and the treatment of affect as only a factor of deviation from rational norms is clearly incompatible with the findings of modern psychology, which point definitely to the integration of affective and rationally cognitive elements in the same action. (27, ital added)
interpreted as using the notion of ‘charisma’ to isolate this impersonal affective relation, then, in the conceptual vocabulary developed here, he is engaging with ‘enthusiasm’. Furthermore, what Adorno (1991: 39) called the "specific cohesive function" of the affective dimension of commodities should be broadly understood as congruent with Weber’s ‘communal relationship’ and therefore a dimension of enthusiasm.

The distinction between charisma as the subjective feeling of parties and enthusiasm as an impersonal event actualised as an affective complex is useful for isolating the work of the cultural industry in transforming the enthusiasm that belongs to a scene into a resource for the cultural industry that services the scene. Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt suggest that a “Neo-Weberian perspective" is useful for engaging with a “rationality defined by the 'event' and 'charisma'” (2000: 41). This functionalist approach takes as its object the “biopolitical economic and institutional system" of ‘Empire’. They argue that Foucault lays the groundwork for an investigation of the material functioning of imperial rule in two ways.

The first is found in the shift from ‘disciplinary societies’ to ‘societies of control’ (2000: 22-23). ‘Disciplinary society’ is organised around the production and regulation of customs, habits, and productive practices. On the other hand, the ‘society of control’ involves the intensification and generalisation of normalising apparatuses of disciplinarity, but extends beyond social institutions through flexible and fluctuating networks; it “organises brains (communication systems, information networks) and bodies (welfare systems, monitored activities)” toward “a state of autonomous alienation from the sense of life and the desire for
creativity" (23). In the case of enthusiasm, ‘control’ alienates enthusiasts from the affective complex of enthusiasm by solely focusing on, and organising the scene around, a charismatic relation between enthusiast and object of charismatic enthusiasm. This is evident in Page’s editorial above where ‘inspiration’ is a charismatic induction of an enthusiasm, which I discuss below in terms of the ‘media event’ of the magazine and different discursive modes for surveying the scene of modified-car culture. Secondly, Negri and Hardt argue that Foucault’s work allows recognition of biopolitical nature of the new paradigm of power (23). Biopower is a form of power that regulates social life from its interior, following it, interpreting it, absorbing it, and rearticulating it (23-24). Negri and Hardt argue that only the ‘society of control’ can adopt biopolitical context as its exclusive terrain of reference (24). Disciplinarity fixed individuals within institutions, not in a dissimilar way to those who were sanctioned by the ASRF and ASMF within modified-car culture. Power in the ‘control society’, however, becomes entirely biopolitical; the whole social body is comprised by power’s machine and developed in its virtuality [...] . Power is thus expressed as a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousness and bodies of the population – and at the same across the entirety of social relations. (Negri and Hardt 2000: 24)

Moreover, unlike Marx’s critical engagement with capitalism and the real subsumption of labour or the Frankfurt school’s critical engagement with the cultural industry and the real subsumption of culture, Foucault’s work, and that of Deleuze and Guattari, deals fundamentally with plurality and multiplicity, what Negri and Hardt call the “milieu of the event” (2000: 25).
They provide the ‘communications industries’ as an example; similar to Negri and Hardt, Paulo Virno has also argued the communications (and service) industry produces producers (Negri and Hardt 2000: 32-33; Virno 2003: 59-61). For Negri and Hardt, [“l]anguage, as it communicates, produces commodities but moreover creates subjectivities, puts them in relation, and orders them” (2000: 33). The biopolitical relation between enthusiasm and biopower is key to understanding the function of enthusiast media in mobilising enthusiasts, not in a negative sense, but through enabling the production of cultural events so as to modulate the event of enthusiasm. By modulating the event of enthusiasm to accentuate certain passive affects over others the cultural industry transforms the enthusiasm of a given population of enthusiasts into a resource.

**From Cultural Commodities to Cultural Events**

The enthusiast culture industry does not turn non-enthusiasts into enthusiasts, or at least this is not its primary purpose. The ‘customers’ of the culture industries of modified-car culture are already enthusiasts. Indeed, the power of the culture industry is not to somehow cajole enthusiasts to consume mass-produced commodities on offer. It is more subtle than, for example, the power of the amateur social institution of the ASRF in the way it ‘black banned’ clubs and individuals and sanctioned cultural events. The real power of the enthusiast culture industry is to modulate the event of enthusiasm as it is differentially repeated within cultural events so the event of enthusiasm is not determined by the capacity of the enthusiast to meet ‘challenges’, but to by ‘inspired’ (as Page put it) by ‘head turners’. There is a shift in the
composition in active affections of ‘know how’ to the primarily passive affections of ‘charisma’.

The clearest example of the power of the enthusiast culture industry to modulate the event of enthusiasm is the different discursive modes of enthusiast magazines. A comparison between two magazines shall serve to indicate the different ways elements of the scene were represented. The first represented by the now-defunct Melbourne-based Supercar magazine of the mid-1980s; it attempted to capture the contingencies of the process of modification and the scene more generally, thus exposing enthusiasts to the active affections of ‘know how’ in both its socio-technical and scene-based modes. The second is Street Machine magazine around the period of the mid- to late-1980s; as I have already discussed Street Machine worked in synergy with the Summernats festival to produce a spectacle, and circulate the passive affections of charismatic relations between enthusiasts and ‘head turners’.

Supercar emerged from a “photocopied facsimile [sic]” called Machiner’s Voice that its creators, Robert Mullen and Lindsay Gunston, described as being more like newsletter than a magazine (Mullen 1987). They initially distributed the newsletter through speedshops and car clubs in Victoria. The title change to Supercar signalled a shift in focus and scale of the magazine to that of a national publication. In late April 1988 the magazine was sold to Graffiti Publications operated by Colin Hall and Larry O’Toole. Graffiti also published Street Rodding magazine bi-monthly and the intention was to alternate between the two magazines according to a monthly schedule (Hall 1988).
Supercar magazine was organised much more around fully integrating with the club, association and federation structure of the scene in a way not dissimilar to 1970s street rodding magazines or early issues of *Street Machine*. Supercar had a comprehensive letters section where readers could express views or ask questions about all facets of the scene. It had a “Club Notes” section where clubs could have notices published regarding upcoming events or information about changes to the composition of club or federation executive. Coverage of the scene included many small-scale club-run events and advertorial “shop tours” where a story was written on the nature of a speedshop or similar business servicing the scene. There was also a “Parts Mart” section towards the rear of the magazine where readers could “sell, swap or buy.” The page layout included a high percentage of text, normally captions underneath photos. The magazine was mostly black and white with limited colour pages.

Of key interest is the nature of the businesses advertising in the magazine. The type of businesses advertising in the magazine indicates the character of the imagined ‘virtual audience’, but it is based on the actual population of enthusiasts that attends the different type of cultural events covered by the magazine. The advertisements in *Supercar* were mostly for smaller workshops and speciality manufacturers that directly survived off the scene and enthusiast cultures.

*Street Machine* emerged from *Van Wheels* magazine, which in turn emerged from the *Australian Hot Rodding Review*. I have already described much of the changes that occurred over the 1980s in the character of *Street Machine* in previous chapters. My interest is in the period of transition that saw the creation of the Summernats and the
emergence of the Street Machine-Summernats synergy. There was no coverage of federated club events at all. Importantly, very large companies advertised in the magazine, such as tyre manufacturers, cigarette companies (and in the 2000’s the current moral equivalent are advertisements from mobile phone porn providers), and, most interestingly, new car manufacturers, such as Ford and Holden. Judging by the advertisements, Street Machine reached a far wider audience than the specialist Supercar.

A second difference is the coverage of what enthusiasts called the ‘political’ dimension of the scene. This is basically the dimension of the scene that I have concerned myself with. There was no discussion of the troubles faced by Chic Henry in setting up the Summernats in the context of parting from the ASMF. There was no discussion of the ASMF as a social institution or of the ASMF events. In the pages of Street Machine it was as if the ASMF had disappeared from the scene.121

The third difference is far more subtle. Supercar magazine helped the established social institutions of the function by circulating coverage of small-scale events and reporting on federated club news. Street Machine magazine’s coverage of the scene was not so much representational, as it was performative. Street Machine covered the Summernats and then mostly wrote feature car articles on the best cars from the Summernats, and this is clear enough. Supercar covered the federated club structure events and thus enable the clubs to gain exposure in a much wider enthusiast audience. Supercar, as well as a number of other magazines,

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121 There is a mention of the ASMF Nationals in the June-July 1991 Street Machine. Editor, Tim Britten writes “the ASMF reportedly only just scraped through on the right side of the ledger with is ambitiously-conceived Calder Nationals” (Britten 1991).
therefore served as a form of advertisement for the club-based structure of the scene. It was through the clubs that enthusiasts would be exposed to ‘know how’ and therefore have a conduit through which to affirm the active affections of ‘know how’. ‘Know how’ remains a constituent element of those parts of the scene covered by Street Machine, however, the nature of the ‘know how’ becomes far more passive. Street Machine had to furnish its readers with enough ‘know how’ to participate in the scene, and feel like they belonged, but without relying on the clubs for the circulation of ‘know how’. As I have already referenced (in the ASMF section of chapter four) Steve Walter was critical of the role of magazines in disseminating knowledge to enthusiasts:

   The average Street Machiner gets his information from the various magazines. Unfortunately most of the vehicles featured are not well engineered and set a poor standard. The technical articles, although interesting deal with extensive and expensive operations that leave the younger modifier out in the cold. (Walter 1988)

Essentially, Street Machine reproduced the discursive conditions of an enthusiasm based around a charismatic relation of passive affections. The purpose of Street Machine was clearly not to support the established federated club social structure of the scene, but to enthuse enthusiasts into participating in the scene in such a way that is congruent with commercial outcomes.

Ien Ang has argued that audiences are unknowable and imaginary, inferred from an institutional perspective only by the existence of audience feedback. These ‘virtual audiences’ are an “[abstraction] constructed from the vantage point of the institutions, in the interest of
the institutions” (Ang 1991: 2). Street Machine therefore had to mediate between the population of semi-professional enthusiasts who had emerged from the ranks of the federated club structure of the ASMF and built the elite ‘head turners’ that featured as the content of the magazine. I am framing Ang’s concept of the ‘virtual audience’ less in terms of the consumption of media texts, and more in terms of the function of the magazine to mediate between populations within the scene. I am extending Ang’s concept in two directions however. Not only modifying the notion of ‘audience’ so it relates to the evident actual population of enthusiasts of a scene, but also modifying the notion of ‘feedback’ along commercial feedback loops of the market. The actual population of enthusiasts that attends events is therefore imagined as the ‘virtual audience’ which serves as a resource for media enterprises to sell to advertisers. ‘Feedback’ does not have to be of the sociological or media studies version of actual audience feedback, along the lines of ‘reader-response’ theory, but can be inferred from second order effects of the commercial success of advertising businesses within a scene, or the failure of business and social institutions, such as the ASMF.

Street Machine sought to circulate the ‘inspiration’ of ‘head turners’ and reproduce a charismatic induction of an enthusiasm between enthusiasts and the object of their enthusiasm, this modulates the event of enthusiasm so it is affectively congruent with the affects of the spectacle. ‘Modulation’ is the mode of control that Deleuze (1995) associates with the ‘society of control’. The event of enthusiasm is transformed as it is modulated. It ceases to be defined by the challenges (and correlative sacrifices, failures and ‘know how’) of building modified cars that display the workmanship inherent in the ‘build’ and becomes characterised by a relation of charisma between the enthusiast and the object of his or her
enthusiasm. The charismatic relation of enthusiasm is ever present, and existed before the spectacular dispositif of the street machining scene and synergy between Street Machine and Summernats. Street Machine exploited the enthusiasm by capturing the charismatic dimensions of the scene and increasing the ratio of passive affections expressed in the event of enthusiasm. ‘Elite’ level vehicles built by highly skilled ‘semi-professional’ enthusiasts following spectacular ‘head turning’ styles of modification are used by event promoters and magazines to collectively individuate a population of the interested public. The ‘head turner’ is an event and the singularity of which organises the social spaces of the street and car shows and the discursive space of magazines. The emergent synergistic relation between magazines and event promoters is organised around the capacity of ‘head turners’ to mediate relations between different populations of enthusiasts so that enthusiasm is reduced to a charismatic relation; the ‘head turner’ is a tool of modulation.

**Architecture of the Spectacle**

The “felt processes of connection” (Evers 2004: 28) between the enthusiast body with other enthusiasts, the modified cars, spaces and ideas present within every cultural event of the scene express the event of enthusiasm as the capacity to affect and be affected of enthusiasts is reconfigured. Enthusiasm is immanent to the bodies of enthusiasts and all the other elements of the event, but it is the incorporeal transformation of the body of the enthusiast and the elements of the event that defines the cultural events as events of enthusiasm. The transformation of a street into a cruising space is a perfect example. Indeed, there many types of cultural events, and the main three events that require nearly all
elements of the culture are the ritualised forms of practice, such as cruising, racing, and modifying. Each more or less requires and draws on the material and institutional infrastructure of the scene to exist. Cultural events are therefore a composition of temporalities as the infrastructure of the scene normally has a much more durable existence within the scene than, for example, affective states, such as particular periods of excitement or anticipation, for they are manifest as the dispositions of the enthusiast habitus and the enthusiast habitus is necessarily reconfigured as part of each event of enthusiasm.

The shift from the street rodding scene to the street machining scene involved the emergence of a new dispositif. Instead of the amateur social institutions of the militant ASRF set in a representational relation with the State and enthusiasts as defining the character of the scene, there emerged a synergy between Street Machine magazine and the promoters of the Summernats festival. The direct impact of the emergence of this new synergy saw the decline of the amateur social institution of the ASMF due to the gradual recharacterisation of the Street Machine Nationals, the cultural event that the ASMF had be created to organised and promote. Instead of the premiere national cultural event of the scene being the Street Machine Nationals, which was organised to display the ‘workmanship’ of enthusiasts evident in their modified cars, it became the Summernats. As I have discussed, the current culture industry remembers the transition between the two as a progression. The Summernats is not primarily organised around the display of enthusiast-built vehicles to display the workmanship, although this certainly remains a dimension of the event, and the status of this function in the composition of the event is a complex matter. The Summernats is primarily an event that draws on the spectacular ‘head turning’
capacities of modified cars to capture the enthusiast of an interested public.

Enthusiasm is a resource for the cultural event on two levels. Firstly, the enthusiasm of the interested public is directly realised in the economic expenditure of participating. The interested public do not build the head turners on display, although they may attend and display a less spectacular modified car. The distribution of labour within the cultural industry is ‘federated’ in both circumstances. I am drawing on the concept of “federated labour” from Maurizio Lazzarato’s (2007) work on the enterprise of Benetton. Lazzarato argues that the “enterprise” is an emergent form of commercial entity different to both the factory and corporation. An enterprise does not actually make any material goods but controls the media as a ‘communicative apparatus of capture’. Lazzarato’s example is organised around the publicity campaigns of Benetton that function as a communicative apparatus of capture for a certain fragment of the fashion market and industry. In modified-car culture, the enthusiast literature is basically a continual publicity campaign for certain events, again exemplified in the Street Machine magazine-Summernats synergy. However, the synergistic relation is also distributed across non-sponsoring magazines that cover the event and amateur enthusiasts who attend and participate in the event as part of the scene.

Secondly, by requiring the inductive and catalysing effect of ‘head turners’ to function, the Summernats therefore requires that ‘head turners’ are built by enthusiasts within the scene. Except for limited cases of prize money, the labour of committed enthusiasts to build so-called ‘elite’ level vehicles is not remunerated beyond the joy of participating in the event
and social recognition of their efforts. Part of the necessary work of the ‘head turner’ is to be different as it is the difference that makes a difference that defines a ‘head turner’ from other modified cars. The concept of the ‘head turner’ captures the transversal movement across these different registers.

1) There is the ‘head turner’ in the street that literally ‘turns heads’ and it is in this sense that the term originally emerged. The space of enthusiasm extends beyond actual space of the street however, and necessarily includes the spaces of events that constitute the scene; that is, where the event of enthusiasm can be differentially repeated.

2) The singularity of the ‘head turner’ also exists in these events of the scene, but instead of transforming the actual space of the street by way of ‘turning heads’ it territorialises a given topological space of the scene. Captured in the term ‘head turner’ is not only the ability to warp the social space of the street but the ability to warp the territorialised space of the scene that exists as an ephemeral dimension of the actual spaces of enthusiasm, such as the street.

3) The singularity of the head turner is one type of singularity captured by the freelancer for distribution through the magazines. The media space of the magazine is a patchwork woven between singularities. ‘Head turners’ are the cars that appear on the front cover of magazines.

The potentiality of singularities inculcated in ‘head turners’ to territorialise the transversally connected spaces – of the ‘street’, of the ‘scene’, and of ‘media’ – and to produce a mobile correspondence across them is
not an effect of an essence contained within a particular car that is expressed as a ‘head turner’. As I have already noted, head turning is an event that is distributed across the object of the head turner, the subject turning his or her head and the space where the interaction takes place. The ritualised practice of cruising is assembled from a number of these ‘head turning’ events. As such, head turning is one of the principle sites of action for the cultural events of modified-car culture.

Part of the scene of modified-car culture is a singular expression of an affective cartography of action: the head turners, the people turning their heads and the spaces in which the interactions occur. These relations of the head turning event must be cultivated and produced for they are not ‘natural’ or timeless. The repetition of particular motifs or technologically embodied mannerisms (‘refrains’) in the form of ‘head turners’ across the various spaces in which these motifs are reproduced (street, scene, magazine) produces a structurating expectation amongst the relations of interest of enthusiasts. The peak of expectation is reserved for the magazine masthead; Street Machine both organises and is organised around the expectations of repeated singularities.

Magazines produce a discursive survey of the action and cultural events of the scene. The ‘discursive survey’ function of the enthusiast magazines selects and reports on only certain elements of such events and only on certain events within the scene. The different responsibilities in the production of magazines correlate with the different functions of the magazine. Freelancers are burdened with the responsibility of being immersed in the scene and reporting back to the magazine on the
Freelancers are an essential component of enthusiast magazines. I have already raised the Foucaultian notion of magazines being a ‘technology of visibility’ (in chapter three); this is directly related to the function of freelances and their capacity to produce a discursive survey of events. A discursive survey produces a map of the scene according to the coordinates of the enthusiasm through which various enthusiasts and enterprises invest in the scene. It represents a dimension of enthusiast interest that often coincides with commercial interest, where both are part of the event of enthusiasm. Freelancers act as translators between the multiplicities of the scene and the consolidating and integrating function of magazines. They go out into the spaces of the scene and find out what is ‘happening’ normally by entering in a relation with this ‘happening’. It is important to remember, however, that magazines certainly did not work in isolation and the true synergistic capacity to capture relations of attention through the event of ‘head turning’ was not fully realised until it became commodified as part of the architecture of a spectacular cultural event – Summernats – in the style of modification called ‘Pro-Street’.

122 The theoretically inflected definition of what a freelancer actually does offered here is quite different to the version constructed in introductory journalism texts, such as The Magazines Handbook by Jenny McKay. McKay does not focus on the function of freelances in (sub)cultures serviced by so-called ‘specialist’ publications, but on the freelance journalist as an occupation. She does, however, suggest that if a “freelance has an unusual hobby or interest she should capitalise on it by trying to write about it for the relevant magazines.” McKay (2006: 41) also suggests that “[m]any publications depend on freelances to contribute copy, some on a regular basis,” but does provide possible explanations. My suggestion that freelances serve a structural function for magazines in relation to the scenes or populations of readers that they service.
The aesthetic unleashedness of ‘Pro-Street’ vehicles was used as part of organised events, such as Summernats, to construct a dynamic ‘architecture of the spectacle’. Jonathan Crary’s (1999) remarks on relations of attention in the context of Guy Debord’s concept of the “spectacle” are useful here.

Spectacle is not primarily concerned with looking at images, but rather with the construction of conditions that individuate, immobilize, and separate subjects, even within a world in which mobility and circulation are ubiquitous. In this way attention becomes key to the operation of noncoercive forms of power. This is why it is not inappropriate to conflate seemingly different optical or technological objects [in a discussion of Foucault’s and Debord’s respective works]: they are similarly about arrangements of bodies in space, techniques of isolation, cellularization, and above all separation. Spectacle is not an optics of power but an architecture. (Crary 1999: 74-75)

Crary traces the historical transformations and shifts of the problem of attention. He focuses on examples from screen-based media such as television and computer screens that are “part of a continuous process of feedback and adjustment within what Foucault calls a ‘network of permanent observation’” (Crary 1999: 76). The problem of capturing and holding attention for magazines is different. There is a much more rudimentary and slower process of feedback largely determined by the figures of sales and circulation. It is a question of the distribution and array of actively or passively affected enthusiast subjectivities that constitutes the dynamic architecture of the spectacle.
In Crary’s terminology, *Street Machine*, along with the Summernats and ‘Pro-Street’ vehicles, belongs to an ‘architecture of the spectacle’. The ‘head turner’ has a central function in the architectures of the spectacle for modified-car culture. There is a complex interaction between the material infrastructure of the magazine as an institution of the scene and the incorporeal and discursive structure of the scene as a durable coalition of ideas and affects. These two elements are directly represented in this case in the title of the magazine (*Street Machine*) and the organised and often commodified spectacular events of the enthusiasm (such as Summernats). The function of *Street Machine* magazine in the spectacular dispositif of the scene is to translate the qualitative distribution of singularities in the ‘head turning’ event into the passive charismatic affections of enthusiasm.

The enthusiast culture industry changes the composition of affects by investing in the scene in certain ways so that only certain cultural events can be run, or are established and promoted at the expense of other cultural events, and this allows and encourages the modulated differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm. The emergence of the Summernats festival skimmed off the semi-professional enthusiasts who built elite-level ‘head turners’. This deprived the enthusiast federations and clubs with the necessary financial resources to maintain their infrastructure. The sociality of these older federation-style clubs was controlled through disciplinary modes of power through the exclusion of undesirable participants. It was through the cultural events, however, that enthusiasts exchanged ‘know how’ through simple acts like telling stories about builds and more extensive forms of co-participation including
helping each other work on cars. As the synergy between Summernats and Street Machine took over the street machining scene the federation and club structure mode of distribution of ‘know how’ was stifled. This reduced the capacity for the circulation of active affects.

Without a substantial social structure underpinning the spectacle, to ensure the continual iteration of the scene through the differential repetition of the event of enthusiasm organised around active affections, the street machining scene begins a slow decline. Not until the impact of the internet in the late-1990s, with online-based groups, do the depleted amateur social structures of the spectacular, populist and post-ASMF street machining scene recover.

The first wave of difference springs off from the spectacle of street machining in the form of an enthusiasm for ‘small cars’. It came in the form of the ‘Fast Fours’ movement that originally began as an offshoot of street machining, but focused around a different style of ‘performance’ than that articulated through V8-based enthusiasm of street machining. It was organised around more common and smaller-sized cars powered by four-cylinder engines, which, for example, were not congruent with the haecceities of performance that characterised enthusiast car cultures in Australia since the “Supercar scare”. Two magazines led this shift on an organisational level, Fast Fours and Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries. They had slightly different ways of discursively surveying the movement, but it is through these magazines that much larger shifts would emerge away from street machining.
Chapter 7 ‘Fast Fours’ and the Emergence of New Enthusiasms

Modified-car culture is a technological culture. The technological assemblages associated with the different enthusiasms are suspended within different configurations of class, gender and nationalism. My way into these different configurations and their complex relation to enthusiasm has been through the discursive articulation and affective valorisation of performance technologies. As I described in Chapter 5, ‘street machining’ in the 1980s was articulated through the V8 engine and Australian-based manufacturers, such as Holden and Ford, with a strong predominately-Anglo Australian identity. The identity of enthusiasts is not determined by signifiers or a semiotics of meaning; rather it is determined by what an enthusiast and his or her car can do. The changing character of available technology in the late-1980s and early-
1990s enabled the production of new dimensions of the scene as an expression of equally emergent non-V8-based enthusiasms based around these new technologies. The changing character of available technology in the late-1980s and early-1990s enabled the production of new dimensions of the scene as an expression of emergent enthusiasms based around new non-V8 technologies, and cars and engines imported from other regions, predominately Asia, and are known as ‘imports’.

In enthusiast discourse, ‘imports’ are mostly cars imported as second-hand vehicles from other countries. They are vehicles manufactured for these other national domestic markets. The rise of import culture involves both ‘sides’ of the process of globalisation: the reactionary or ‘closed’ opportunistic and the ‘open’ opportunistic (not necessarily ‘progressive’) tendencies to change. Globalisation is not an ephemeral process but involves processes of the transformation on ‘local’ scales of sociality through translations of contingencies on ‘global’ scales. There is a correspondence between different localities through the distribution of singular contingencies across these localities. For example, most of the vehicles that come into Australia (and New Zealand) are from Japan. The Japanese vehicle registration laws are relatively unique in that they become more expensive as the vehicle gets older. The registration cost increases in two-year tiers, therefore most vehicles imported into Australia are one year or three, five, or seven (or more) years old.

The production of new dimensions of the scene as expressions of an import-based enthusiasm begins with the ‘Fast Fours’ movement related to smaller but heavily modified 4-cylinder cars. Even though ‘Fast Fours’ emerged from within an Australian modified-car culture largely dominated by the street machining scene and discourse, it nevertheless
represented a different discursive and material space, evidenced by the reporting on cars with the new style of imported rotary engines, or 'rotaries'.

Import culture developed from the freedom of new enthusiasm produced by this new discursive and material space, and emerged over a number of iterations of the enthusiasm and scene. As I shall explore in this chapter, the process of iterative change begins with the 'Fast Fours' movement and then shifts in subtle, but important ways as 'import' and 'hi tech' engines were retro-fitted into bodies of older 'Australian' and 'import' cars. This then allowed the next shift evidenced by an embracing of newer 'import' cars, such as the Suzuki GTI, and then the Nissan 200SX and Subaru WRX. Eventually, these changes created enough of an enthusiasm for cultural events tailored to the 'fast fours'-and-then-'import' enthusiasm to be successfully organised and run. Finally, changes to the material conditions of the scene – including the available automotive technologies, the design features of newer engines, the material conditions of workshops and speed shops – also fed back into changing the street machining scene, where enthusiasms came to valorise the 'import' and 'hi tech' styles and vehicles that had previously been differentiated from it.

The shift from street rodding to street machining involved a transformation in the composition of power relations – dispositif – that organises the scene and the various social institutions and events that constitute it. A different kind of shift occurs from the street machining era to the rise of the imports. Instead of one population of enthusiasts, an enthusiasm and a scene-dispositif – the spectacle of street machining -- replacing another – the militancy of street rodding – as the predominant
composition of the scene within Australian modified-car culture, another enthusiasm emerges within the scene and is best described as emerging alongside street machining. The rise of the imports involves a displacement to the side (addition), not a displacement from above or below (substitution). That is, rather than a whole new configuration of the scene emerging and replacing the old scene, a new pole of the enthusiasm emerges within the established configuration of power relations of the scene. Street machining may eventually be displaced by import culture, but due to the different relations of class, gender and nationalism of street machining and import culture this is unlikely.

The ‘Fast Fours’ movement, at least initially, belonged to the street machining scene as the enthusiasm and performance technologies were articulated in terms of street machining discourse albeit through new magazines that targeted the market of ‘Fast Fours’ enthusiasts. After the initial period of the ‘Fast Fours’ movement the relation to the street machining enthusiasm changes and shifts away as an enthusiasm for imports begins to emerge. I shall plot the gradual emergence of import-based performance technologies and correlative transformations to the ‘Fast Fours’ movement.

**Street Machining Discourse and ‘Fast Fours’**
Towards the end of the 1980s and early-1990s a stable of magazines and ‘one-off’s were marketed at a population of enthusiasts who were moving away from or never actually belonged to the hyper-masculine, nationalistic V8-based enthusiasm of street machining. The two big titles are the aforementioned *Fast Fours & Rotaries*, originally published by Paradise, Hannington and Associates, and *Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries*,
published by Express Publications. It is clear that *Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries* was explicitly targeting the same market as *Fast Fours & Rotaries* evidenced by the nature of the letters to the editor published in the second issue of the magazine where a number of letters reference “that other fours and rotaries magazine” ("Hot Words" 1988). Both magazines would eventually drop ‘rotaries’ from their respective titles. Like *Fast Fours & Rotaries*, *Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries* was originally published within the era of street machining.

If the discourse of modified-car culture is used to measure where and when ‘discontinuities’ emerge in the archive (following Foucault’s method of ‘eventalization’), then although this ‘Fast Fours’ era constitutes a variation, it is not yet a discursive break with street machining; rather, it is a discontinuity internal to street machining discourse. The editorial of the first issue of *Fast Fours & Rotaries* by John Wright (Figure 7.1) clearly demonstrates this new focus that is nevertheless expressed in the familiar terms of street machining discourse:

> Over the past few years more and more four-cylinder cars have been finding their way into the pages of *Performance STREET CAR*. No, the V8 is neither dead nor dying. And the sixpack is as strong as ever. But out there in the wide world of performance cars, there has been a resurgence of enthusiasm in smaller capacity hotshots. A Fast Four can be as much a street machine as a massaged V8 or a sizzling six. Escorts, Geminis, Celicas, SSS Datsuns, Minis, Vee-Dubs, Alfas, the list is long indeed...

[...]
We reckoned it was high time that somebody put out a specialist street machining type magazine that catered for owners of cafe racers, hopped up four-cylinder models and refurbished rotaries.

You've only got to look at any typical busy Australian street to see that these machines outnumber the more expensive to buy and more expensive to run V8-powered tyreburners.

[...]

This is the first time an Australian publisher has produced a motoring magazine aimed specifically at what might be called the junior street machiner market. In using the term "junior" we're referring to size rather than quality. (Wright 1988a)

Wright is signaling a break with or, more accurately, return from the model and enthusiasm of ‘performance’ isolated and cultivated by Phil Scott during his time at Street Machine magazine towards a broader conception of enthusiast culture as inhabiting “the wide world of performance cars”. As I noted in Chapter 5, Phil Scott focused solely on V8 (and, to a lesser extent, 6 cylinder engine) powered cars when he took over from Paradise as editor of Street Machine magazine.

Wright indicates that the magazine is attempting to tap into the market of modified-car culture not captured by the established V8 and ‘sixpack’ titles. Performance Street Car was the publication that Geoff Paradise started up after leaving Street Machine magazine. Paradise is listed as managing editor of Fast Fours & Rotaries for this issue. Furthermore, some of the language of this new magazine is the same language used by Paradise at Street Machine half a decade earlier. This is evidenced by the Street Machine June-July 1983 issue (Figure 7.2), which featured an article on a “café racer” built ‘by’ Street Machine.
The similar focus on non-V8-based performance indicated by the magazine coverage may indicate that this resurgence in popularity of ‘small fours’ was in fact a ‘return’. There are important differences in the 5 or 6 years that had passed between Geoff Paradise’s 1983 article on the “café racer” to Wright’s editorial. The rationale forwarded by Wright in the *Fast Fours & Rotaries* editorial is different to the rationale for the ‘build-up’ of the 1983 “café racer” explicated by Paradise:

Okay, so it’s not a rocket ship, but then, what is in this automotive wasteland called Australia? Mazda was the first importer in this country to actually put some performance into its cars by way of an extra carby, trick cam and reworked head [all relatively simple modifications to the performance of the engine]. The company has in essence, built a very suitable starting point for people who dig little cars and get a buzz out of making them go faster and look faster. We are among that group.

In case you haven’t realised, the vee-eight is dying an agonising death in this country. We recently reported on Ford’s decision to axe the small block and GM-H will be following suit (see next issue) by 1986 and replacing the eights with Japanese sixes, probably with fuel injection. It is an unfortunate situation, but an unavoidable one and performance car freaks will just have to adjust, particularly those who out of either desire, convenience or necessity, choose to build up a street machine from a new car. (Paradise 1983)

Wright (in 1988) framed the shift away from V8-centric enthusiast culture in terms of the costs involved compared to owning and maintaining a V8, while Paradise legitimises the café racer (in 1983) in terms of what
appears to be the impending end of V8 culture in Australia. In both situations the haecceity of ‘V8-ness’ of the street machining is largely the measure and expressive point of distribution for the valorisation of all elements of modified-car culture. Additionally, the ‘V8-ness’ as a statement is the singularity (or composite of singularities) that organises the discursive formations of the time.

The period of ‘Fast Fours’ (roughly 1988-1992) straddles across the period of absolute dominance of V8-based enthusiast culture and the forthcoming ‘rise of the imports’. There is a delay between the actual impact of imported cars, the effects of which on the market and the automotive industry could be felt back in the 1970s and then accelerated throughout the economic rationalism of the 1980s, and the consolidation of an enthusiast culture actually organised around imported cars. In the first issue of *Fast Fours & Rotaries* are many articles explicating the range of new and old cars that are available for modification if one was ‘into’ four-cylinder or rotary-engined vehicles, many of which are non-Australian European and Japanese cars. Yet, this ‘fast fours’ discourse still expressed a resolute Anglo-Australian nationalism:

> It is often said that Australia is (or, at least used to be) a land of six-cylinder and V8 cars. But the truth is that numerous four-cylinder machines captured the Aussie imagination before the flood of Japanese cars changed the face of Australian motoring forever. ("Fours that Roared" 1988)

Indeed, this early period of ‘Fast Fours’ does not quite belong to the import culture because suitable cars were discussed in spite of the “flood of Japanese cars.” It would be easy to suggest that the rise of the imports
is another way of talking about the effects of globalisation as if ‘globalisation’ was a monolithic social force that infected everyday actions of enthusiasts or commercial decisions. However, there is not a monolithic social force of something ‘out there’ shaping what is happening on a local level. Globalisation has often been understood as a large, world-scale process that transforms nation states. For example Simon During (2005: 24) writes:

Globalization has both undermined the autonomy of nation states and reduced state intervention in society and the economy – sometimes as a cause, other times as an excuse. It has also drastically transformed and punctured the old metropolitan/colony, center/periphery, north/south divisions, enabling new regions to invent themselves alongside new cosmopolitanisms, elite and popular. Because it unifies the world and divides it, the problem of how to evaluate the consequences of globalization or transnationalism has become a central cultural studies issue.

Bruno Latour (2005: 186-190) is critical of such interpretations of globalisation. Latour’s method of ‘tracing the social’ takes pains to follow the actual connections made between different sites, rather than assuming a monolithic global force impacts itself on local contexts (159-160). To a large extent the events involving imports were first circulated

\[123\] Latour actually uses a cooking magazine as an example to discuss what he calls ‘plug-ins’ to describe the necessary function of a practical competence, which is similar to what have called ‘know how’. He writes: Without the avid reading of countless fashion magazines, would you know how to bake a cake? And what about putting on a condom, consoling your lover, brushing your hair, fighting for your rights, or picking out the right clothes? Magazines help here as well. If you take each of the rubrics as the mere ‘expression’ of some
through magazines like *Fast Fours & Rotaries* and *Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries*. The ‘rise of the imports’ is certainly an effect of the process of ‘globalisation’ but it is lived out on a local level and connection between localities.

The ‘Fast Fours’ movement emerged from within the street machining scene, was expressed through street machining discourse, and was valorised largely under the distributive influence of the Anglo-Australian-V8 haecceity of street machining, however it did constitute a new space within which a new enthusiasm could ‘condense’ (or ‘take’ in Althusser’s notion of the emergence of consistency within an aleatory materialism). The principal difference between the enthusiasm associated with the V8-based, Anglo-Australian street machining scene and the ‘fast fours’ movement is represented by the valorisation of the ‘rotary’ engine. The rotary is the ‘other’ of V8 street machining culture and much more so than technological variations such as ‘hi-tech’ electronic fuel injection (EFI) or turbochargers that would eventually be incorporated into street machining.

**Rotaries**
The rotary was not only a ‘foreign’ engine, in the sense of being manufactured in Japan, but the design itself was ‘foreign’. Instead of a reciprocating crank with connecting-rods (‘con rods’) and pistons attached within a conventional combustion engine, the common ‘12A’

dark social force, then their efficacy disappears. But if you remember that there is nothing beyond and beneath, that there is no rear-world of the social, then is it not fair to say that they make up a part of your own cherished intimacy? We are now familiar with what should no longer appear as a paradox: it’s precisely once the overall society disappears that the full range of what circulates ‘outside’ can be brought to the foreground (209).
and ‘13B’ model rotary engines had twin triangle-shaped rotors that spun in a housing. The valorisation of the rotary engine as ‘foreign’ is evidence of one of the first salvos in the cultural politics that emerges with the clash between ‘imports’ and ‘street machining’ in modified-car culture.

The provocative cover line “Rotary Refugees: Neighbourhood Watch OUT” on the cover of the Fast Fours & Rotaries September-October 1992 issue is congruent with the timing of the first major contemporary changes to immigration policy. The Federal Labor government of the time made changes to the Immigration Act to render immigration camps exceptional space to the rule of law, hence making detention centres basically unable to be reviewed by a court of law. Subsequent Federal Liberal governments (1996-present) have built on this change through further intensive and extensive modifications to immigration policy and legislation. Enthusiasts of rotary powered cars were often from Southern European and Middle-Eastern backgrounds (and remain so to this day, as...
the Queen Street Smash Repairs quad-rotary powered M3 BMW discussed in the next chapter exemplifies).

There were two periods of rotary enthusiasm determined by a focus on different types of engine modification. The first period is now called ‘old school’ by ‘Fast Fours’ and rotary enthusiasts. The first type of engine modifications favoured by rotary enthusiasts and workshops involved opening up the ports through which the air-fuel mixture entered the rotational combustion chamber. The two main types of ‘porting’ involved were ‘peripheral’ and ‘bridge’ porting. These engines were naturally aspirated, which meant they were not turbocharged, supercharged or ‘chemically supercharged’ (with additives to the combustion process, such as nitrous gas).\textsuperscript{124} The technical information article on rotaries published in the first issue of \textit{Fast Fours & Rotaries} did not mention turbocharging at all (\textit{Rotaries} 1988). The effect of the changing availability of second hand motors from Japan meant that turbocharged rotaries soon became the norm and a focus on turbocharged rotaries constitutes the second period of rotary enthusiasm.

In the context of rotary engined vehicle, turbocharged motors are much quieter and easier to ‘live’ with. Indeed, one of the main traits of the rotary engine is the sound that such engines make especially when modified. Heavily modified naturally aspirated rotaries can be extremely loud and they have a very distinct exhaust note commonly written (in magazines or on online forums) as a variation of sharp repetitive ‘\textit{brap brap brap’}.

\textsuperscript{124} All forms of ‘charging’ increase the amount of oxygen in each combustion stroke and thus allow for a greater amount of fuel to be combusted and hence more power to be produced.
Rotaries were not just foreign; they challenged the hegemonic dominance of the V8-based automotive performance cultures because they were foreign and fast. For example, the first article on a rotary-powered car in the first issue of *Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries* still compares the rotary to the V8 (as it is expressed from within street machining discourse), but it attempts to valorise the rotary on its perceived strengths:

The rotary engine is undoubtably [sic] the best, most powerful power-plant (relating to its size) to have ever made its way into a car. Wearing parts are limited, dramatically when compared with a push rod V8, their weight and size is negligible, (over the years various people have tagged them as a four-gallon drum) and yet they are capable of producing stinging power. [...] These same [Mazda 12A and 13B] engines work very well in road registered racing and various other forms of motorsport. In their favour is the relatively low build cost, particularly when compared with a thumping V8, and yet those cars graced with the little rotary are usually of such a small size and weight, that the majority of V8 powered cars find it very hard to compete. Of course the V8 will probably rule supreme over street scene for some time to come - or will they? Within the next 12 months rotary enthusiasts will be able to purchase the Mazda 20B triple rotor engine, an engine that should, if treated to the right preparation, punch out as much as 450 horsepower. Once this happens the V8 brigade will find the going a lot tougher. (O'Neill 1988b)

Rotary-powered cars were the antithesis to that haecceity of automotive performance that characterised the circulation of affect within cultural events through which the street machining enthusiasm was
differentially repeated, particularly at Summernats. In the letters to the editor section of issue 6 of Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries one reader comments on how a rotary was not appreciated at the Summernats and how the Four Cylinder and Rotary Nats will become popular:

I think the 4 Cylinder and Rotary Nats will really take off. Rotaries copped a lot at the Summernats, even the commentator in Brute Horsepower 5 [video] commented about [a 1970s Mazda] R100 being awful, they don’t really appreciate the work gone into these cars. (Nats the Best 1992)

In terms of the enthusiasm, this is framed as a lack of ‘respect’. Note the way the rotaries are valorised according to the ‘work’ that had ‘gone into them’, and the commentator in the video failed to appreciate this ‘work’. The ‘work’ here is the labour of skilled enthusiasts. The letter writer is complaining about the absence of a capacity to ‘respect’ the ‘know how’ of enthusiasts expressed through the build quality of the Mazda R100.

‘Hi Tech’ Fast Fours
The next iteration of the enthusiasm and scene that move away from an enthusiasm organised around the haecceities of V8-based street machining came in the form of ‘hi-tech’ engine transplants. This dimension of the enthusiasm was present from the first issue of Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries as exemplified by an article on a turbocharged Mitsubishi Cordia. Yet, the performance technologies were discoursed in terms of the dominance of the V8-based enthusiasm. The author of the article suggests that “by performing a few simple changes to a Cordia’s engine
and turbo, you can quite reasonably expect to bring the performance level up to almost V8 standards” (O’Neill 1988a). The V8-based automotive technologies were not simply the popular; they were the measure of what was popular. The style of the cars was also heavily influenced by the street machining culture.

It would not be for a number of years until ‘hi-tech’ cars could be valorised within the enthusiasm in terms of the emergent ‘import’ discourse. In a 1996 issue of Fast Fours & Rotaries the new editor, Dean Evans, comments on these transformations to the scene:

Looking over the majority of four cylinders and rotaries at recent shows, events and drag meets, it seems the most obvious evolution is the trend towards late model EFI and/or turbo engines. With the large number of Japanese imported engines arriving by the crate-load every month, resellers keep competitive by offering these engines at prices comparable to an engine rebuild. Where once a bridge port/Weber or cam/carby/compression combo was the only option for performance in a four or rotary, engines like Nissan’s FJ20 or Mazda’s 13B turbo are awakening all sorts of sleepers nationwide.

At drag meets and even on the street, it’s harder to find a peripheral port, than an EFI turbo-swapped car. Looking at the leading fours and RXs in the club car championships, finding a carby is becoming increasingly difficult. (Evans n.d.)

The transition for simply focusing on ‘Fast Fours’ to ‘hi tech’ four-cylinder and rotary powered cars was a gradual one. The January-February, 1990, issue of Fast Fours & Rotaries features a replica of the Bathurst race
Group-C Nissan Bluebird and a cover line announcing “hot hi-tech transplants” (Figure 7.4).

The featured Bluebird is a replica of the Nissan Bluebird Turbo that raced at the hallowed motorsport track of Bathurst in 1984. The Bluebird, driven by appropriately named George Fury, set a lap record during qualifying that still stood in 1990. The Bluebird featured in Fast Fours & Rotaries has been fitted with the same model engine of the racing Bluebird, a ‘hi-tech’ Nissan Z18 turbo. It is described as a “tribute to Nissan’s all-time king of the mountain” (Factory Flyer 1990). At the time of this magazine issue’s publication the later R32-model Nissan Skyline GTR was on the brink of dominating Group-A racing in Australia in 1991 and 1992. It dominated to such an extent that it would force the demise of the racing category and
the creation of a new category in 1993 – called ‘V8 Supercars’ – that excluded all non-V8-based vehicles.125

The same issue of Fast Fours & Rotaries also featured an article on a Holden Gemini, which is derived from the Isuzu vehicle of the same name. The Isuzu/Holden Gemini was a General Motors ‘world’ car sold in a number of national markets. The Gemini was a very popular car in the early ‘Fast Fours’ movement because it had a striking similarity to the larger Holden Commodore favoured in the street machining scene. A common engine transplant in this second iteration of the ‘fast four’ movement within Australian modified-car culture of the early 1990s was to swap the early carbureted Gemini motors for later-model electronically fuel injected twin-cam motors from Isuzu models. The shift in technology from carbureted engines to ‘hi tech’ electronically fuel injected engines is one of the first major shifts away from older style V8-based cars and modifications, because electronic fuel injection was closely aligned with the newer ‘import’ vehicles and technologies. The Fast Fours & Rotaries article on the Isuzu-powered Holden Gemini begins:

For some reason the rash of Japanese high-tech engine imports doesn’t appear to be matched yet by an equivalent number of enthusiasts ready to take advantage of their performance potential and willing to swap them into the engine bays of their small scale street machines.

125 ‘V8 Supercars’ is a category of racing that is different to the ‘supercars of the “Supercar scare” of the 1970s in that there were only Ford and Holden cars raced in the later ‘V8 Supercar’ class. There is an important parallel in that the later ‘V8 Supercars’ tapped into the same enthusiasm for V8-powered cars that configured the street machining scene in the 1980s.
Perhaps it's the conservative nature of the sport, the majority of enthusiasts waiting in the wings and letting the more adventurous types take the risk. There's no doubt that embarking on an uncommon swap in an effort to be original can hold hidden traps though, as the cost of custom fabrication can spiral catastrophically and keep a pet project pegged. (High Tech Transplant 1990)

The cars in question were mostly older street machine-vintage vehicles that had engines from later model vehicles swapped into them. Normally the engines were of a second or third 'generation' of the same model or at least the same make. The movement towards transplanting 'hi-tech' engines into older model vehicles also became a trend in street machining in the early-1990s and is now part of the accepted modifications within the street machining scene. Within street machining this became known as 'retro-tech' as I discuss in the final section of this chapter. However, rather than Japanese or 'foreign' engines being transplanted into street machines, later-model Ford and Holden (GM) engines were transplanted into earlier Fords and Holdens.

The second iteration of engine swaps move beyond electronic fuel injection to incorporate the turbocharged versions of engines such as the aforementioned rotaries in early Mazdas and FJ20DET motors in early Datsuns, as featured on the cover of Fast Fours & Rotaries (Figure 7.5). An example of this shift towards 'hi tech' engine transplants into older cars in the January-February, 1990, issue of Fast Fours & Rotaries is a 1981 Nissan Skyline that had its carbureted straight-6 motor swapped for a turbocharged four-cylinder DR30 motor. The company that imported the two-door Skyline from Japan, Scuderia Motorsports, allegedly had close
connections to the Japanese motorsport arm of Nissan, Nissan Motorsport (NISMO). According to the ‘International Manager’ of Scuderia, “Nissan market research indicates Australians don’t want two door vehicles but we’ve had nothing but favourable comments on this car” (Scuderia Skyline 1990). In the last paragraph the article mentions that Scuderia has installed a ‘Dyno Dynamics’ dynamometer and “plans to do some more testing." As I shall also discuss in the final section of this chapter the rise in popularity of dynamometers in the material infrastructure of the scene transformed fed back into the street machining scene.

The Rise of the Imports

Issue 13 (Figure 7.6) featured a reader survey that allowed Paradise and the rest of the magazine to get some idea about the state of the scene and the correlative nature of the market. In addition, Paradise discusses his trip to the Tokyo Motor Show. The Tokyo Motor Show is one of the largest car shows in the world and most of the Japanese car and parts manufacturers and so-called ‘tuning shops’ feature some sort of display of currently available cars and modifications. The mention of the Tokyo Motor Show is one of the first indications of a non-street machining-based enthusiasm that can emerge around ‘import’ automotive technologies and culture:

When I was wandering around the Tokyo Motor Show I was overwhelmed by the imagination of the Japanese - although my mates from the straight car magazines were of the opinion that the 1993 event was tame compared to others and one magazine editor was moved to ask what drugs the Japanese designers were on - there was so much gizmology and technology that it was hard
to comprehend. So much of the stuff is pure dream time but a lot will see production in a diluted fashion over the next few years. […] This was borne out at the recent Small Car Sunday in Sydney. Mixing it with the Gems’, early RX’s, Minis and the like was a trick Eunos and a swag of current model Hondas and Toyotas. They were cool and everyone liked looking at them. (Paradise 1993b)

![Figure 7.6](image)

The magazine functions here to transmit the haecceities of cultural events and the scene of different localities or different scenes. In terms of the ‘Small Car Sunday’ car show, Paradise recognises the singularity of these ‘imports’ (the Eunos [Mazda], Hondas and Toyotas) by noting their ‘head turning’ capacity (“everyone liked looking at them”). Furthermore, in the article on the Tokyo Motor Show, Paradise (1993a) mentions the Nissan Silvia and Subaru WRX and these soon would become extremely popular ‘cult cars’ in Australia. Paradise describes them as being ‘trick’
and how ‘everyone was looking at them’; in other words, they were ‘turning heads’.

Proximity to these ‘import’ singularities is purely an effect of the event of non-Anglo-Australian non-V8 enthusiast car cultures being transmitted between bodies within events of action or through various media, including magazines and later the internet. There can be no ‘import’ car culture without the transmission of these events. The transmission of these events is not an ideological trick or symbolic interplay but a material process across three dimensions. The first dimension is the transmission of events as words and images of the action from other scenes in the material networks of magazines and online sites. The second dimension of this material process is a change in the way cars are used in terms of practices and modifications and in relation to the enthusiast bodies, indicated by the actual changes to automotive technology valorised in the scene. The third dimension of this process is a change in material infrastructure of the culture, exemplified by the increase in popularity of dynamometers.

To put it in historical terms, there is a transformation underway evident in the ‘Fast Fours’ dimension of ‘street machining’ discourse which is precipitated by the emergence of another dispositif and this is the dispositif of the current situation of modified-car culture. New cultural events could therefore emerge that catered to the differentially repetition of non-V8-based enthusiasm for ‘Fast Fours’ and imports. Mentioned in the coverage on the Small Car Sunday event (run in Sydney’s western suburbs) is Paul Brell from workshop BD4’s (Small Car Sunday n.d.). BD4’s specialises in ‘VTEC Hondas’ and ‘performance engineering’ as noted in the advertisement strategically positioned in the
last page of the event coverage. Of course, the positioning of the
advertisement in relation to the event coverage is not an accident.
Beyond the economic synergistic relations between the culture industry
and the material dimensions of the culture found in the workshops, in the
functioning of the economies of modified-car culture, is the importance
of the existence of such workshops as part of the infrastructure of the
scene. In general, without such workshops as part of the scene the
necessary material conditions of the culture would simply not exist. The
role of Crescent Motorsport as part of the necessary infrastructure of the
dyno day event mentioned in the second chapter is an example of this
infrastructural capacity to support cultural events and therefore enable
the differential repetition of enthusiasm.

BD4’s is worth mentioning here because it specialises in ‘import’
automotive performance technologies. Not only is there a cultural shift
evidenced in discourse but the existence of the workshop demonstrates
a shift in the material conditions of the culture. Another workshop
mentioned in the Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries article on Small Car Sunday,
Croydon Autosports, was also discussed in one of the interviews I carried
out during my fieldwork with the owner of a 1992 Honda Prelude. The
subject was given the pseudonym ‘Accordboy’.

Accordboy: I was about 2 weeks away from dropping that engine
in, getting the H22a conversion done. Then I decided to go the
turbo. I got all the work done at a place called Croydon, in
Silverwater. You know, I paid the price there. [...] They’re pretty big.
[...] The owner of Croydon, about 15 years ago, he started this
huge, like, movement with the, umm, I think it was the [Suzuki] Swifts,
the old Swifts or I can’t remember what type of car it was. He kind
of, his workshop basically just did that. You know, the old turbo Swifts?

Glen: The GTi?

Accordboy: Yeah, the GTi…

Glen: So they weren’t turbo’d, and then they used to turbo them…

Accordboy: Yeah, that’s right. That’s what his workshop basically did. Apparently if you went in there 15 years ago, it would just be all Swift GTis. And, umm, I think that’s where it all started. People just kind of got more knowledgeable about it and learnt how it all work and that kind of thing. […]

Glen: So what kinds of cars were there before these then?

Accordboy: I dunno really. I suppose I’d say the ‘eights’. Commodores and that.\textsuperscript{126}

Accordboy belongs to the most recent social organisation of modified-car culture that is almost completely constructed through the online forums. We discussed all elements of what it meant to belong to an online forum and the different forums that were organised around different enthusiasms. I shall return to this in the next section.

Accordboy’s sense of history is determined by the cars and workshops of the scene. The first Suzuki GTi was released in 1986 in Australia, however it was not until the second generation model was released with a less angular body shape that its popularity took off. It was closer to 1992-1994 when the GTi popularity massively increased with the 1989 mk-2 model of the GTi. The reason for the slight difference in historical timing was that the early GTi was burdened with high import tariffs and Suzuki only expected to sell 200 per year as what is known as a ‘specialist importer’

\textsuperscript{126} Accordboy, 20 year old male, university student, 2004, interview.
Ateco Holdings (Leach 1986). The popularity of the GTi was aided by Fast Fours & Rotaries sponsorship of a Mk 1 GTi in the Group E production vehicle class of motor racing. There are articles about the GTi in Fast Fours & Rotaries issues 1, 2, a mention editorial issue 3, a news article issue 4, and then issue 5 has an article on the ‘new’ Mk 2 GTi. The ‘new’ Mk 2 GTi was the model that created the cult-car mythology and boom in enthusiasm. In fact, most ‘used car’ reviews now published on the GTi do not even mention the Mk 1 and begin with the Mk2 as the model that ‘Suzuki’ released in Australia (Smith 2007).

Accordingly recalls a popular history of the scene and an early incarnation organised around a particular type of car. However, this ‘movement’ around the GTi is closely associated with the workshop and the owner of the workshop, ‘Croydon’. In this case, the workshop’s long history in the scene works to its advantage in the political economy of workshop labour and different styles of modification. Not only does the workshop do material labour and provide a service to enthusiasts to modify cars, but its function extends into the social and cultural infrastructural capacity, too. This is evident through its early sponsorship activities at the Small Car Sunday event as noted by the magazine of the time.

In the first issue article on the Group-E racing GTi, editor of Fast Fours & Rotaries, John Wright (1988b) writes that the “Suzuki represents the new breed of Fast Fours.” The sentiment of a ‘new breed’ of ‘Fast Four’ was also shared over at Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries although it was expressed a little later than 1988. Issue 12 of Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries clearly demonstrates the forward vision that the magazine had of the scene and the type of cars that were going to be popular. There is an article on a
‘hi-tech Honda’ and it is described as a “sneak preview of the street machines of the future” (Donnon N.D). It is a hi-tech Honda for two reasons. Firstly because the “carbureted 1500cc engine was replaced with a ZC EFI [electronic fuel injection] 1600 DOHC 16 valver” and, secondly, because Martin Donnon, proprietor of a company Fueltronics and owner of the car, reprogrammed the Honda’s factory engine management system. Even though it is called a ‘street machine of the future’ the nature of the technology has changed from the older traditional street machining technologies. This is acknowledged by Paradise (n.d.-a) in his editorial for the issue:

One of the good things about this facet of street machining - I’m talking the small car sector here - is the availability of modern technology and the willingness of the players to accept it and indeed welcome it. Could you imagine asking a 45 year old hot rodder if he can re-programme his Deuce hi-boy's engine command module? In all likelihood exponents of hot four cylinder cars are computer age children, and that probably means you. You take computers - no matter how small and insignificant or large and complex - for granted, they don’t daunt you at all. […]

Check out the Honda Civic in this issue. The owner has a modern car that responds to all the whiz bang tricks, looks the part, won’t attract the attention of the po-leece and it could drive around Australia with no dramas. Try achieving that in a slick and small mid-’70s car.

The time has come chaps and chapettes, we are rapidly approaching the 21st century and our modes of transportation must change with the times.
Paradise is making an explicit connection between the ‘computer age children’ and the then new ‘fast fours’ forms of enthusiasm. The connection exemplifies the gradual emergence of new forms of ‘know how’ organised the manipulation of the ‘hi tech’ dimensions of automotive technology. A confident technological and historical determinism pervades Paradise’s discourse regarding the nature of change. The same confidence was apparent a decade earlier when editor of Street Machine. The difference over the decade is not only evident in the quality of the cars on the Australian market but the changes of the so-called Button Plan to the import tariff and local content rules.

**Post-V8 Street Machining and the Year of the Pump**

Perhaps relating to his earlier experience at Street Machine magazine, in the same editorial where he mentions the Tokyo Motor Show in issue 13 of Hot 4s & Wild Rotaries, Paradise (1993a) adds an insightful piece of commentary on the scene:

> The appealing thing about the "small car" market is that the participants are more worldly than the older generation whose habits are hard to break.

This also relates to the comments about engine transplants being for ‘more adventurous types’ versus the more ‘conservative nature of the sport’. In Fast Fours & Rotaries transplant article it is framed in terms of money and the (sometimes costly) risks of doing something different. However, Paradise describes it in terms of a “more worldly” disposition of the “‘small car’ market” which implies a willingness to experiment on a
non-economic, cultural level of the enthusiasm. Essentially Paradise is arguing that there is a cultural difference between the generations of enthusiasts. The invocation of a “more worldly” disposition is framed in terms of habits. The enthusiast habitus is in part constructed through the interaction of contingency with a dynamic regime of expectations as enabled by the infrastructure of the scene. There is no doubt that the events of the 1980s in street machining culture – such as the tendential fascination with V8 automotive performance technologies and the condensation of the cultural economy around the Summernats-Street Machine synergy – affected the way enthusiasts related to other emergent enthusiasms and new haecceities of performance technologies.

Some enthusiasts have habits that, as Paradise writes, are “hard to break”. The move to ‘hi-tech’ engine transplants in older vehicles or vehicles that did not have the same options as a similar model in an overseas market. Very few of these vehicles looked different to street machines, and those that did (such as the Bluebird) drew inspiration from the accepted masculine domain of motorsport. A similar transition from older forms of technology and valorised haecceities of performance technologies eventually occurred in the V8-based street machining scene. In his editorial to the April-May 1997 issue of Street Machine, Mark Oastler, valorises the Lexus (Toyota) 4.0 litre V8 engine:

There’s real race breeding hidden in there – all alloy 90 degree, quad cams, 32 valve, six bolt mains, forged steel crank, electronic fuel injection and a safe redline cut out at 6200 rpm. Manual shift the leather-bound auto stick, ram the throttle to the firewall and this Oriental really gets up and boogies. Lexus claims its
latest spec is pumping out 205kW (275bhp) at 5400rpm with 375 Nm (277ft/lbs) of torque at 4600rpm. […]

Now those are mighty impressive figures, but what makes this kind of new-age production V8 so attractive as a street machine, custom or rod engine is how affordable it can be. Guys running fours and rotaries have been importing and adapting high-tech twin turbo Jap small-bore stuff for a while now, and the same can easily apply to bigger capacity engines. (Oastler 1997)

An “Expression Session” published a few months later in Street Machine featured an early-1970s Toyota Crown and the 4.0 litre Lexus V8 was the suggested power plant. The comments by the consulting engineer, Werner Ihle, only mention that the “Lexus V8 is manufactured to ADR 37/00, this standard must be maintained. All emission control equipment for this engine must be retained” (Ihle 1997).

Eventually high performance Japanese-sourced motors were installed in ‘Australian’ cars. The December 1998 issue of Street Machine featured an article on a VL Holden Commodore that had an engine conversion from the Commodore’s original 3.0 litre Nissan-sourced RB30E to a second-hand Japanese-import RB25DET engine from a Nissan Skyline. Julian Edgar (1988) writes:

Because the VL Commodore six is already equipped with a Nissan-sourced overhead cam six as standard, there’s quite a few high performance ex-Japan sixes that will bolt straight into the same engine bay. Here we check out the installation of an ultra smooth, twin cam turbo RB25DET 2.5 litre six into a Commodore. This engine
is also tweaked to 390hp with a new turbo, intercooler and programmable EFI system.

Turbocharger upgrades, bigger intercoolers, programmable electronic fuel injection systems, and, as in this case, whole motors, became the norm for a new “Plug ‘n’ Play” style of modification. Automotive component parts have become much more modular and it has resulted in a style of modification closer to the “Plug ‘n’ Play” connection technology of gaming systems than the craft-based skills developed from carrossiers and mechanical engineers. These modifications are described as ‘bolt-ons’ and can involve any modification that does not require the engine to be ‘opened up’. The ‘hi tech’ technological development of automotive performance technologies meant that, to a certain extent, modification practices were made easier. A knowledgeable capacity to use “plug ‘n’ play” technologies is an expression of a new ‘hi tech’ ‘know how’ in the scene.

One of the first types of “plug ‘n’ play” modification to become popular in the street machining scene was the ‘underbonnet supercharger’. The first article on ‘underbonnet superchargers’ in Street Machine was published in the June 1996 issue.

The beauty of the supercharger making all that power [277 hp at the wheels] is that Air Power Systems designed it as a bolt-on accessory to any Holden EFI 304ci V8. “It’s intended to be installed by the home user,” says Peter [Luxon]. […] Instead of using a straight-fin impeller wheel (like you’d find in a Paxton [supercharger]), APS with assistance from a turbocharger manufacturer designed a rolled-fin impeller wheel like you’d find in
a modern turbocharger. Peter claims, “This gives it the aerodynamics of a turbo in a supercharger.” (Hallenbeck 1996)

Turbocharger technology had been adapted for the V8-based enthusiasm of street machining by incorporating the impeller technology of the turbocharger with the mechanically driven belt-system of the supercharger.

Although Street Machine magazine covered the cross-pollination of import performance technologies into the street machining scene there was actually a continuum of practices and expressions of the haecceity of ‘hi tech’ performance technologies covered in a range of magazines. A chief example of the way other magazines tapped into different parts of the continuum between ‘hi tech and ‘traditional’ performance technologies is Zoom magazine. From the editorial of the April-May 1996 first issue of Zoom, Julian Edgar frames the relation between the magazine and the contemporary haecceities of performance:

Welcome to Zoom, the magazine which will keep you up with current technology while covering all types of cars. Zoom is about EFI and turbos, power-house fours, sixes and eights, do-it-yourself car sound and good handling.

Each issue of Zoom will bring you heaps of modified cars – cars with lots of grunt and handling – and mostly with brain under the bonnet. Chips are where it’s all happening and Zoom will keep you right up to date.

We won’t restrict ourselves to just fours and rotaries or big sixes and V8s. With Mazda producing a 1.8 litre V6, with 2 litre fours putting out over 200 horsepower and with Ford and GM selling OHC quad-
cam V8s in the US, the old demarcation lines between engines are no longer relevant. If it performs, you’ll see it in Zoom. (Edgar 1996)

Edgar notes the collapsing of boundaries between dimensions of the scene organised around different technologies. Other magazines also attempted to survey what was ‘happening’ in the scene during different periods of contemporary modified-car culture in Australia in such a way that did not conform with the dominant configurations of enthusiasm and technology.  

127 All of these developments indicate there is more to contemporary modified-car culture than simply street machines or ‘Fast Fours’ and imports. However, my interest here is in plotting the shifts in the composition of power relations due to the changing character of available automotive technology. Thus, even though turbocharged cars have existed in the scene from the early 1980s as indicated by Geoff Paradise’s attempted valorisation through the early period of Street Machine, they were not properly included as constituent elements of the scene until the 1990s and later.

‘Hi Tech’ performance technologies were valorised in Street Machine magazine after a new term was invented for street machining discourse. The development of new styles of modification was heralded in Street Machine in Mark Oastler’s last editorial, and was given the term ‘RetroTech’:

But we all got smarter and moved with the times. Whiz kids started moving into the scene, trained from a young age on computers and not afraid of leaping into the dreaded black box technology

127 A very early example is the failed Turbo magazine from the 1980s and the robust and technical Performance Build-Ups magazine. More so that the other titles, these magazines were extremely narrow in focus.
that had struck so much fear into their technophobe predecessors. 

Ten years ago, who would have thought that 500 rear wheel horsepower could be squeezed from a blown Holden small block V8, using a supercharger undetectable from the outside in an air-conditioned luxobarge so well behaved that even your granny could drive it. That's progress.

Lovers of older streeters have also tapped into the EFI vein – RetroTech. Late model mechanicals transplanted into early street classics is another modern day industry set to boom and – unlike the Pro Street days of the late 1980s – has a future with no apparent use-by-date. Hot rodding continues to prosper, the small-bore ['Fast Fours' and import] market has never looked stronger and, judging by the huge number of people who attend Summernats each year, the modified car scene in Australia is ready to boldly move into the new millenium [sic]. (Oastler 1999)

‘RetroTech’ attempts to combine *haecceities* of different eras; the styling of older 1970s era vehicles with the modern performance capability of current cars.

In the March 2002 issue of *Street Machine*, Mark Arblaster, in his regular “Urban Warfare” column (that covered the drag racing side of the street machining enthusiasm) reflected on the changing composition of performance technology trends in street machining. The previous year he had stated to the editor, Geoff Seddon, that 2001 was “The year of the Pump” and he was referring to ‘bolt-on’ ‘underbonnet superchargers’ and older style ‘Roots style’ superchargers (that protrude over the bonnet line and were extremely popular in the ‘Pro-Street’ era). “But it seems,” he
writes, “aside from the street machine factor, that all of us with Roots blowers may have missed the boat when it comes to making real horsepower.” He provides the example of the winner of the ‘dyno’ competition, Rob Vickery, who had entered the previous year and made 673 hp at the wheels with a centrifugal ‘underbonnet supercharger’, but this year he entered with twin turbochargers instead and made 1023 hp.

Similar to the ‘dyno’ day I attended as part of my fieldwork with Fordmods, a ‘dyno comp’ involves car being strapped down to a dynamometer to measure how much is produced ‘at the wheels’. The difference between the club event and the competitions is that the cars that are entered into competitions are specifically built to compete in the competitions. Like the evolution of drag racing vehicles from the original hot rods in the 1950s and 1960s with the development of drag racing, or the ‘show cars’ that emerged with the development of massive car festivals, such as the Summernats during the ‘pro-street’ era of street machining in the late-1980s, the late-1990s and 2000s saw the emergence of a new type of vehicle built for ‘dyno comps’. These vehicles were designed to exploit the rules of the competitions. For a number of years some of the engines of these ‘dyno’ vehicles were lucky to survive the two ‘runs’ required during each ‘round’ of the competition. Central to the development of these motors was the turbocharger. They were known as ‘grenade’ motors because they ran so much turbocharger boost there was a very high risk of catastrophic engine failure during competitions.

Arblaster’s valorisation of turbocharger technologies within the street machining enthusiasm is not simply a selection of a particular technology over another: it is the selection of a haecceity to which the technology of
the turbocharger in part belongs to the scene as part of the enthusiasm. That is, the turbocharger performance technology is part of a particular ‘thisness’ of the scene. It is at this point that the haecceities of import technological performance, once banished from Street Machine magazine by Phil Scott in the mid-1980s, will be folded into street machining culture as street machiners come to embrace ‘hi-tech’ automotive performance technologies, such as the turbocharger and fuel injection. In other words, not only will enthusiasts build turbocharged V8s, which has happened since the 1970s, but within street machining discourse, turbocharged V8s will now be valorised.

In this chapter I have outlined the gradual process of the emergence of an enthusiasm for ‘import’ culture. The first shift that occurred was on the level of enthusiasm for those technologies excluded from the V8-based street machining scene. First smaller four-cylinder powered cars, and then other forms of engine technology, such as electronic fuel injection and turbochargers. This created a space for the emergence of a non-street machining discourse through which non-V8-based technologies could be properly valorised. The emergence of a new discourse and valorisation of non-V8-based technologies also transformed the material conditions of the scene in Australian modified-car culture. The street machining scene also eventually changed to incorporate some facets of the import performance technologies.
Chapter 8 Politics of Valorisation and Online Sociality

The discursive and material conditions of the emergent ‘Fast Fours’ and import enthusiasm condensed into new compositions of power relations. With the emergence of a new import-based enthusiasm, and correlative discourse used to valorise the haecceities of import performance technologies, developed a new form of inter-enthusiasm cultural politics. The conflict is between enthusiasts of the new import enthusiasm (and associated ‘hi tech’ performance technologies) and the enthusiasts of the street machining enthusiasm (and associated ‘traditional’ V8-based performance technologies). This is a politics of enthusiasm, and the respective valorisation of different haecceities of the scene was at stake. I have already noted this conflict in the anecdotal fieldwork example in the Introduction between the traditional street machiners that squared off against the younger ‘Fast Four’ and import enthusiasts. The major tension in the politics of valorisation is in the generational conflict aligned with ‘domestic’ or ‘import’. ‘Domestic’ and ‘import’ refer to locally made vehicles compared to those manufactured elsewhere, and are therefore largely determined by national boundaries. To exemplify these tensions I shall turn to the example of the US film, The Last Ride (2004), in the context of the failure of the Holden Monaro, which was very successful in Australia, when ‘rebadged’ as the Pontiac GTO in the US. The failure of the GTO and the intergenerational tension over the valorisation of performance technologies is useful for identifying the general discursive and cultural coordinates of the politics of valorisation.

128 Following Deleuze and Guattari’s definition of haecceity, the politics itself, and affective relations of such a politics, would necessarily have to be constituent relation of the respective haecceities of the scene.
‘Domestic’ versus ‘import’ is the major tension in the politics of valorisation, yet there are various subtleties over the shifting character and status of ‘know how’ and performance technologies. The second section draws on an example of a debate carried out in the correspondence pages of *Speed* magazine to explore some of the complexities that emerge in the politics of valorisation. At stake is the de-legitimation of traditional V8 technologies as performance technologies and their aestheticisation compared to the higher technological performance capacity of ‘import’ performance technologies.

The condensation of power relations cross the import enthusiasm, through the media and event promotion apparatus, reproduced the spectacular dispositif of the street machining scene within the import enthusiasms. The ‘spectacular’ distributions of power within street machining are repeated with import culture, and this impacted on established forms of valorisation, and the function of new forms of online sociality. Even though the dominant power relations of the scene have not changed, in the sense of the same spectacular dispositif of street machining is repeated in import culture, the actual power relations, i.e. organised through *Street Machine* magazine and Summernats, are not the same. The ‘spectacular’ configuration of power relations and distributions of power are repeated in the ‘enterprise’ synergy of the Cabin group between the Autosalon car show series and *Autosalon* magazine.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{129} To differentiate between the various referents of ‘Autosalon’ I shall italicise *Autosalon* when referring to the magazine, not italicise it when referring to the car show series of the same name, and use ‘Cabin group’ when referring to the commercial entity that runs both the show series and the magazine.
Finally, the spectacular configuration of the enthusiasms of street machining and later import culture is further bolstered, and not substituted, by a ‘grassroots’ form of organisation facilitated by online social networks. I shall compare the online club-based activities of Fordmods and the activities of clubs in the street rodding era in the federated-club structure of the Australian Street Rod Federation.

The Last Ride: Muscle Cars and Rice Burners
To outline the failure of the Pontiac GTO in the US domestic automotive market when the same car was a ‘success’ in the Australian market where it was known as the Holden Monaro. The failure of the Monaro/GTO in the US is useful for framing the cultural politics of the established street machining enthusiasm and the import enthusiasm. The exemplary text that dramatises how wrong GM Pontiac ‘got it’ when they attempted to rearticulate the 1960s ‘muscle car’ for the post-millennium generation of ‘import’ enthusiasts is the made-for-television movie, The Last Ride (2004). The Last Ride was an attempt to cultivate a charismatic enthusiasm for ‘traditional’ Pontiac GTO muscle car and translate this into an enthusiasm for the ‘new’ Pontiac GTO of the ‘import’ era. However, the Holden Monaro failed in the US as the Pontiac GTO because it was received amongst enthusiasts as an ‘import’ and is clearly demonstrated in the contradiction between the way ‘imports’ are represented in the film The Last Ride and the fact that Pontiac sponsored a GTO drift car.

130 In 2005, GM Holden announced the cancellation of the Holden Monaro and hence the Pontiac GTO. The continued production of the Monaro was dependent on the sale of the GTO in North America. There have been roughly 10,000 sales in Australia and 40,000 to North America and Europe. The failure of the GTO in US-based markets has led to the production of the Monaro being discontinued. Pontiac and Holden are both subsidiaries of General Motors (GM).
The basic plot of the film involves Ronnie Purcell (Dennis Hopper), chasing after evidence hidden in his 1969 Pontiac ‘Judge’ GTO that he can use to gain revenge against the man, Daryll Kurtz (Fred Ward), who killed his wife. Along the way he gets assistance from his grandson, Matthew Purcell (Chris Carmack). To retrieve the GTO Matthew and Ronnie go to a GM-sponsored classic car show. While at the car show Matthew has to make a quick getaway and steals a new 2004 GTO at the very moment it is being unveiled to the crowd of classic car enthusiasts. The classic car show scene serves as a metonym for the role of The Last Ride in the automotive cultural economy. The logic of the car show is homologous to the logic of The Last Ride: the relevant enthusiast market is introduced to the new 2004 GTO by the watching/attending The Last Ride/classic car show. Through the inter-generational divide, the film serves as an intersection between muscle car and import generations of car enthusiasts and the cultural economy overlap between the automotive industry and popular culture.

The film is the next iteration of ‘product placement’, for the new GTO and GM products are not merely filmic window dressing, but are essential to the structure of the storyline. The Last Ride is a more elaborate development of the logic and function to the “Little GTO” pop song released concurrently with the original 1960s ‘Goat’ GTO.[31] In the 1960s, fans of “The Little GTO” were introduced to the car through the song. However, rather than merely advertising the new GTO to a demographic

[31] ‘Little GTO’ was an unabashed attempt at using the popular music form to advertise the then new Pontiac GTO. It exists at the intersection of the automotive industry and popular culture and its lyrics are constructed from the language of enthusiasts of the time. ‘Little GTO’ reached number 4 in the charts in 1964.
that might think it was desirable, Pontiac now had the slightly trickier proposition of marketing the new GTO to a demographic that thought the old GTO was cool.

As well as the film, Pontiac invested in a ‘factory’ drift team to promote the GTO. The problem for Pontiac is that in the US and Australia drifting is considered as the motorsport of imports. Similar to the emergence of drag racing in the United States, drifting developed in Japan from street racing activities. It was called touge, and emerged in the Japanese mountainsides sometime in the 1960s (the exact date being unclear). The racers (called ‘rolling zoku’) were intent on covering the distance between two points in the shortest possible time. To do so, they adapted some of the driving techniques from rally drivers. The techniques started to appear in official racing circles almost 30 years ago. In its current form – as an official organised motorsport – drifting is practiced in most countries and its popularity has grown exponentially over the last 5 or 6 years. Drifting is a form of competitive motorsport unlike any other. Unlike its legitimate and street racing origins, and for that matter almost all others forms of motorsport, drifting does not necessarily involve racing directly against competitors, or against the clock. Described as ‘the art of sideways,’ it is based on style. Unlike drag racing, where than maximum useable grunt could be regarded as the determining factor in winning competitions, successful drifting stems from the skill of the driver to hold his or her car in a series of high-speed sideways slides around a relatively tight track. Drift cars are set up for driving poise, not brute horsepower.

132 The new GTO has been very successful in US-based drifting competitions. At the time of writing, Rhys Millen in his race-prepped Pontiac GTO is currently leading the 2005 Formula Drift competition. See the GTO Drift team’s website: http://www.gtodrift.com/index.html [accessed 7 October 2005].
and competitions are not won or lost against an opponent according to elapsed times, but judged in a method akin to that of figure skating or platform diving.133

There is one scene that perfectly captures the generational divide between enthusiasts of the muscle car era and the more recent import-based enthusiasms. In this scene, Matthew Purcell is picking up his grandfather, Ronnie Purcell, from prison:

Ronnie Purcell: Are you telling me a grandson of mine drives an import? [pause] What is this rice-burner? A four banger?
Matthew Purcell: It’s a six.
Ronnie: You kids today don’t know how to handle a V8?
Matthew: We don’t need it. This one’s got quarter-inch lines, Hotshot 4-2-1 headers, Tenzo intake and a NX NOS system.
Matthew: You’re speaking a dead language, man.
[...]
Ronnie: The first thing we gotta do is find the Judge.
Matthew: Your old GTO? It’s a relic.
Ronnie: You just help me find it, and along the way maybe you’ll learn something about real cars.
Matthew: Oh yeah?
Ronnie: Yeah.
Matthew: Fire this rice-burner up.

133 On the subjective nature of drift judging see the online article “Judging a Drift Event” http://www.drifting.com/article.php?threadid=3866&goto=newpost&show_Title= [accessed 7 October 2005]
The false note struck by Matthew’s assertion that his car ‘is a six’, i.e. a six cylinder powered car, when he then says it has ‘Hotshot 4-2-1’ headers, which indicates he has a four cylinder motor, would cause enthusiasts with sufficient ‘know how’ to wince at the blatant artifice of the dialogue.

GM’s error of judgement was to imagine they could tap into the burgeoning ‘import’ demographic by creating a market that was something of an overlap between the ‘muscle car’ and ‘import’ cultures. Why Pontiac would make a movie that was obviously derisory towards the ethnic-coding of the import scene (‘rice-burners’) when at the same time making the investment of a factory Pontiac GTO drift team is difficult to imagine. Until the new GTO appeared, ‘import’ was mainly used to describe cars originally built for the Japanese or European domestic markets. This is clearly evidenced by the derogatory ethnocentric term used by enthusiasts of traditional muscle cars and street machines and given to imports and their owners, ricers. The relationship between the GTO and drifting is problematic because the new 2004 GTO is itself considered an import.

The paradox is that the GTO was not imported from Japan or from the European markets, but was built according to Australian design trends, which, in turn, are heavily influenced by trends in the United States. The influence of the US on Australia in the example of the GTO/Monaro can be seen in the choice of the US-designed LS1 V8 engine to power what was originally an Australian designed car. However, the V8 engine of the GTO/Monaro becomes a problem if the GTO is understood as an ‘import’ because enthusiasts of the import scene champion so-called ‘hi-tech’ automobile technologies, such as multiple overhead camshafts and
turbochargers, as it is these technologies that primarily differentiate ‘imports’ from other forms of enthusiast car culture. The near-vintage technology of the pushrod activated camshaft of the LS1 engine that powers the GTO/Monaro means that it will and has been snubbed by ‘proper’ enthusiasts of the import scene. In other words, the GTO fails in both enthusiast markets.

The irony is that makers of the film, at least, are apparently aware of the importance of perceived enthusiast sentiment in marketplace reception of the GTO. In The Last Ride the new GTO is ‘unveiled’ at a classic car show; of course, people who attend such cultural events are nearly all enthusiasts. As I have noted, a homological relation is produced between the function of The Last Ride and the car show through the diegetic repetition of the enthusiast culture industry’s attempt to capture the enthusiast population (of the film audience, and of the participants in the car show) by modulating the enthusiasm.

The next section uses a debate that occurred in the letter to the editor section of a car magazine to explore some the complexities of the politics of valorisation. The example is derived from the correspondence pages of the recent, but now-defunct, enthusiast magazine, Speed. A conflict played out between enthusiasts of street machining and enthusiasts of the new and ascendant import enthusiasm. The Speed debate draws on a similar set of intensive movements (haecceities) within the social milieu of the scene to The Last Ride and the problematic of performance in the early 1980s issues of Street Machine noted in Chapter 5. The difference is that the articulation of the ‘street machine’ (as V8-powered, ‘domestic’ or US-manufactured modified vehicle) in Street Machine served as a positive valorisation of the street
machining enthusiasm, while in the Speed debate almost the exact same articulation of the 'street machine' serves as a denunciation of the street machining enthusiasm and a positive valorisation of certain elements within the ascendant import culture and enthusiasm.

**Complexities of the Politics of Valorisation**
Beyond ethnocentric epithets and a general disdain for alternative valorisations of performance is the complex meshing of different sets of practices and new forms of 'know how' determined by “plug 'n' play" styles of modification. The debate in the letters to the editor or correspondence pages of Speed magazine occurred during the first period of the magazine’s existence. The debate was distributed across practical axes of valorisation. An ‘axis of valorisation’ is a line of differentiation that extends beyond the discursive field into the affective dimension of enthusiasm. The axes of valorisation are 'practical' because the discursive politics of valorisation needs to be understood as emerging or assembled from the affective complex of enthusiasm and the extra-discursive events of the enthusiasm, and not simply as a product of the rules of discourse and the conditions of enunciative possibility correlating with these rules. The haecceities of performance that served as the locus for the axes of valorisation are multidimensional in the sense that they exist as singularities within various discursive formations of different enthusiasms which nevertheless belong to the same scene.

In Chapter 5 I isolated and introduced the three main sources of automotive performance. In summary:

1) New cars made for a domestic Australian market.
2) New cars and other performance technologies derived from ‘foreign’ domestic markets and imported into Australia mainly from Japan.

3) A historical focus on late-1960s through to early-1980s Ford, Holden and Chrysler V8 and six-cylinder powered 2- and 4-door sedans or large family cars.

All magazines of Australian modified-car culture focus on some aspects from these three sources of performance. This does not mean that a particular type of performance was the sole focus of the respective magazines; rather the haecceities of performance were nested in the immanent ‘logics’ (to use Will Straw’s terminology) across which different elements of car culture were distributed. As I have indicated, Street Machine focused on the third source when Phil Scott took over as editor, and, for example, in the Australian market, Wheels and Motor magazines concentrate on the second source of performance. A number of magazines emerged at various moments over the last 30 years surveyed the scene organised around the second source of performance, including Speed magazine.

However, Speed magazine attempted to be more than a magazine about cars. Content and layout mixed the boundaries between fashion magazine and car enthusiast magazine. It captured a slightly different dimension of the scene than previous car enthusiast magazines by attempting to capture some aspect of the lifestyle, through clothes, music and other consumables, rather than a fetishisation of particular objects or practices as constituent elements of events. This involved a different business model than the normal car enthusiast publication as advertisers came from businesses other than those related to the
automotive industry. In part this meant that the cars and automotive technologies were not only the objects of the enthusiasm but operated as gatekeepers for the entire commodified lifestyle. To wear the advertised sunglasses or the shoes meant you were ‘into’ a particular type of car and vice versa.

Speed ran for 22 issues and the debate over valorisations of performance and the cultural composition of the scene played out in its correspondence pages ran from issue two to issue nine. Studies of ‘letters to the editor’ of newspapers are not relevant for understanding the function of letters to the editor in enthusiast or ‘special interest’ magazines, because letters to the editor in newspaper are written by readers who are not (allegedly) enthusiasts. That is, the problem is the explicitly partisan nature of enthusiast discourse. For example, Karin Wahl-Jorgensen (2001; 2002b; 2002a), working through a broadly ‘communicative’ (i.e. Habermassian) framework, examined the letters to the editor section of a San Francisco Bay newspaper through an ethnographic project involving the editorial team. Editorial orientations were found to challenge the ideals of rationality and deliberation and favoured what Wahl-Jorgensen (2001) calls an “exhibitionist publicity”. Similarly, the Speed debate was in no way organised around an interest in a dialogic process of communication; rather, the printed letters framed the intensive field of discourse (haecceities) across enthusiasms through which both ‘sides’ of the debate could belong. The magazine colonised the intensive field of this belonging. The intensive field of the enthusiasm was distributed across enthusiasts of ‘traditional’ automotive performance technologies and enthusiasts of the ‘import’ performance technologies that increasingly became popular through the early- to mid-1990s.
The discursive valorisation of different automotive performance technologies needs to also be read alongside the editorial discourse of Speed itself. The editorial discourse was slightly different to either position of the debate as it was played out and it allows me to contextualize the debate and Speed magazine with the earlier ‘Fast Fours’ period.

Speed magazine was marketed directly against the Fast Fours and Hot 4s style of magazine. That is, Speed was produced from a discursive survey of different elements (mainly cars, practices of modification, and cultural events) of the same scene. In his editorial to the first issue editor Curt Dupriez is explicitly critical of the established titles:

> Speed has been created for no better reason than to fill a gaping void left by magazines that many hard-core tuning enthusiasts consider to be too narrow of focus, too superficial and misdirected. Or too firmly entrenched in a decade-old formula while the real world moves forward. We're definitely not Dodgy Bodykits, Soft Fours or Tarterd-Up Shitboxes Monthly. These are plenty of other magazines around that are happy to tell you about Bob pulling 400kW from his turbocharged Gemini, but neglect to mention that the six-figure death trap drives twice as poorly than when it rolled out off the factory floor. (Dupriez 1999)

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134 Even though I am drawing on the Speed debate as a resource to represent the different discourses of valorisation in condensed form, I am under no illusions that the debate was in part artificially stimulated by the selective publication of certain letters over others.
The turbocharged Gemini could be considered a haecceity of the ‘Fast Fours’ enthusiasm from the ‘engine-swap’ Gemini I mention in the previous chapter (where the ‘hi tech’ Isuzu engine was retro-fitted into the Gemini) or the Datsun 1600 with the turbocharged Nissan SR20DET from the Youth Festival. Not coincidentally, at the same time as ‘engine-swap’ Geminis were indicative of the ‘Fast Fours’ valorisations of performance.

Dupriez valorises the “hard core tuning enthusiast” over the ‘narrow focus, superficiality and misdirection’ of the other magazine titles in the ‘Fast Fours’ and import enthusiasm. ‘Tuning’ emerged as the next iteration of ‘know how’ in enthusiasms organised around the ‘hi tech’ import-based performance technologies. At stake was the aestheticisation of street machining performance when compared to the performance of imports; what Arblaster called the ‘street machine factor’ when describing Roots style superchargers in the previous chapter. The more ‘advanced’ turbocharged import vehicles have a higher capacity for technical performance than the vehicles of street machining. Street machining performance discourse was stripped of the legitimating discourse of technical performance – basically that the V8-powered vehicles could compete in technical ‘tests of effectiveness’, such as dyno comps and drag racing, more efficiently – so that the affective valorising dimension of the discourse was laid bare.

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135 Roots style superchargers or ‘blowers’ are the large mechanical air pumps bolted to the top of engines so they protrude over the bonnet line. A cinematic representation of this style of supercharger is found in the ‘last of the V8 interceptors’ the black XB falcon from the Mad Max series of films.
The challenge was not simply to the symbolic hierarchical dominance of V8-powered performance technologies, but to the masculine capacities to translate contingency and affirm an enthusiasm through the in-action of ritualised practices. The rise of the imports and import enthusiasm is therefore also a movement within the scene of contemporary modified-car culture that sees the displacement of street machining performance and eventual incorporation of some of the once much-maligned performance technologies of import culture into the practices of street machining.

The debate in part started with a provocative email from a reader “Andrew Scott” denouncing the magazine and the elements of the scene he thought the magazine was attempting to capture. The rest of the letters flow on from this point as responses or further provocations. Two of the early differentiations valorisations deployed throughout the multi-thread argument were:

1) Engineering and enthusiast labour versus ‘bolt-on’ commodified ‘know how’. Andrew Scott (1999: 12) states he “developed his own car and not just paid (someone like) APS, MRT, C&V et al to make it faster.” Furthermore, he wants the magazine to take a pedagogical role in “[explaining] that bolting on those bits makes the car illegal without an ADR engineering certificate.” This is an iteration of the discourse introduced in the ‘Know How’ chapter. Scott is referring to ‘bolt-on’ modifications. ‘Bolt-on’ refers to modifications that only need to be literally ‘bolted on’ to a car. A ‘bolt-on’ modification is a commodified ‘black box’ and therefore problematic in relation to traditionally valorised practices of ‘know how’. I shall explore this further in the next chapter.
2) Street versus racetrack-based spaces of performativity. Andrew Scott argues that “[anyone] can build/make a quick car, but the real test is a track or course, motorkanah [sic], etc.” This valorises particular technological performance by valorising the effectiveness of such technologies in particular motorsport-based tests. Against this conception of technological performance is the ‘street’-based forms. He mentions iconic cruising spaces of Melbourne and Sydney in a derogatory and dismissive fashion, “Or maybe you really are targeting the Lygon Street, Rundle Street, Brighton-Le-Sands DOOF DOOF brigade.”

The reader, Scott, is isolating a number of divergent tendencies within the event of the scene. He valorises an individual owner’s technical skill over the economic exchange of shop-bought parts or services and valorises motorsport competition over the street-based ritualised practices of enthusiasts. These are some of the central practical axes of valorisation by which an enthusiasm attains the durability of the event of the scene. The durability is not eternal, but ebbs and flows with the rhythm of events that populate the scene.

Alongside Scott’s email was another email from reader, “Dominic Arena.” The email was titled “COMMODORESARECRAP.” The Commodore is a popular vehicle model manufactured by Holden. The Ford Falcon and Holden Commodore are the iconic vehicles of ‘late model’ street machining as they are the only two locally mass-produced V8-powered vehicles. Arena (1999: 22) writes,

\[136\] “DOOF DOOF” is a reference to the bass produced in cars by those enthusiasts who cruise with a large car stereo system playing loud bass-intensive dance or R ‘n’ B music.
Fantastic work. You have just filled a massive void in the supply of media to real car enthusiasts. I adore import cars but not import magazines, which have been the only way to get decent info and pictures of drop-dead sexy GT-Rs, Stageas and Evo VIIIs on steroids.

First, Arena’s distinction between ‘import cars’ and ‘import magazines’ is not simply a distinction of taste but a distinction between different magazine apparatuses and their relations to and as part of the scene. This is another way of articulating the distinction between different tests of performance between motorsport-based and street-based tests of effectiveness and correlative cultural differences of different enthusiasms. The debate shifted across discourse into slightly different affective terrain of different practical axes of valorisation. The differentiations in-acted through valorisation involve the distinction between an enthusiasm for ‘local’ vehicles manufactured for the Australian domestic market and ‘imported’ vehicles originally manufactured for other national domestic markets, and the configurations of technological performance associated with the different enthusiasms. These connect more with the central argument of my dissertation regarding the transformations of scenes and enthusiasm that are part of processes of globalisation.

Second, Arena makes reference to ‘real enthusiasts’. As I argued in the first chapter, ‘enthusiasm’ is a complex of in-acted affective relations arrayed by the contingencies of events and the ‘know how’ of enthusiasts. An actual enthusiasm is one assembled from the series of affective relations produced through events, it is not an identity measured against a representative model of enthusiasm. Arena is not discussing actual ‘real’ or ‘unreal’ enthusiasts, but using the concept of a ‘real enthusiast’ to valorise the enthusiasm he shares with others over
other enthusiasms. This was the central practical axis of valorisation through which the debate was carried out. At stake was the valorisation, not simply of technology or certain practices over others, but of enthusiasm itself. Indeed, as enthusiasms came into question so did the very capacity to valorise elements of the scene over others.

In the third issue was published a letter by “Grant Hilder.” Hilder’s letter attacked the three basic practical axes of valorisation of import culture and it served as the locus of counter-attacks by letters published over the next several issues:

1) Valorisations of enthusiasm. The various intensive coordinates (haecceities) of the import enthusiasm are lambasted by Hilder according to:

a) Practices of modification. Technical skill versus commodified ‘plug and play’ technologies such as “‘fulsik’ blow-off valve and the six-inch exhaust,” and “‘individual’ body kit (sold in the thousands).”

b) Motorsport competition-based practices versus ritualised street-based practices, such as “doing laps around suburban streets”, “accelerating between the lights so everyone can hear the ‘fulsik’ blow-off valve,” “hanging around shopping centres” and “Macca’s drive through”.

c) Ethnocentric and racist discourses of ‘import’ technologies, such as cars as “Asian rubbish” and thinly veiled ethnocentric epithets (”Kababanese” for Lebanese) versus Anglo-American technologies, such as, “real cars like the 426 Hemi Dodge Charger, Boss 302 Mustang, Falcon GT and Tickford Falcons instead of the automotive equivalent of plastic surgery that infests this magazine.”
2) A critique of the role of the magazine in the enthusiast cultural industry. Hilder writes, “why not get a bunch of people who are heavily involved in a promoting car shows to set up a magazine that gives subjective opinions about cars and advertisers in that magazine.” He isolates the function of magazines since the transformation of the scene in the late-1980s into a spectacular dispositif involving synergistic relations between the cultural industry and event promoters. The only difference between ‘objective’ magazines and non-sponsored car show events that nevertheless cover car show events or are covered by magazines is that the synergies are not yet sponsored or commodified.

3) The commodification of a certain lifestyle through ‘advertorial’ discourse, which renders an enthusiasm as a feminised fashion versus enthusiasm as a masculinist sacrificial commitment. Hilder writes, “Throw in some clothes, shoes and aftershaves and the false pretenders that read this hype will think they look cool to the other cretins they hang around.” Speed attempted to cultivate more than an enthusiasm for a particular type of car or automotive performance by featuring advertisements and advertorial sections on commodities unrelated to car culture. The logic was to use the car enthusiasm to tap into a largely middle-class social milieu.

The ramifications of this debate extended beyond an enthusiasm for cars into the arrangement of heterogeneous elements of a lifestyle with a consistency determined by the enthusiasm. The position that was eventually arrayed as the preferred and assumed position of Speed itself appeared to target ‘traditional’ conceptions of automotive performance, i.e. those associated street machining, but also against the more
spectacular forms of other import-based enthusiasms, such as those associated with Autosalon and the Cabin group. Towards the end of his editorial in the first issue Dupriez adds:

A huge undertaking like this requires firepower, and the writing and photographic talent we've pooled together have contributed, in one form or another, to almost all car titles published in Australia. Still, like most good car projects, we'll continue to tinker with Speed until it's tuned to perfection. A magazine should reflect the scene and relies on feedback from you, so tell us what you like and don't like at [email]. (Dupriez 1999)

Dupriez makes a connection here between the scene and magazines. Contrary to Dupriez's statement, a magazine should not simply 'reflect' the scene, if it did then according to his own logic the magazine would necessarily have to feature turbocharged Geminis and the like as such cars and their owners and the workshops that help make them are part of the scene. Rather, the editorial direction of a magazine is determined by those elements selected from the scene as part of the discursive survey of the scene. In an ideal world (for immaterial labourers like Dupriez), the scene should reflect the magazine. However, the reality of the scene is that it is always fragmented and determined by the nature of the action (events) participated in.

Speed magazine is useful because it represents the partially successful commercial development in the enthusiast cultural industry of a different dimension of the 'import' enthusiasm to that of the Autosalon group synergy discussed in the next section. They are otherwise connected in part because the inaugural editor of Autosalon magazine, Damon
Dupriez, is the brother of the inaugural editor of Speed, Curt Dupriez. Pertinent at this stage is the fact that Autosalon has survived while Speed has not. I suggest that Autosalon has survived in part because it cultivated a charismatic enthusiast relation in import culture in a similar synergistic fashion to the V8-based charismatic enthusiasm that underpins the synergy of Street Machine magazine and Summernats festival.

**Autosalon and the Spectacle of Import Culture**
The character of the ‘spectacle’ also changed with the rise of the imports and it moved away from the V8-based valorisations of the scene. A new synergy emerged, this time contained within a single corporate entity: Autosalon. Autosalon emerged from the entrepreneurial activities of a car club called ‘The Cabin Boys.’ ‘Cabin’ is an acronym of Club Automotive Built International, a Sydney based car club founded in 1990 by 19 year old Wahyudi Loefti.

![Figure 8.1](image)

Victoria Namkung, a journalist and academic from California, wrote her Masters thesis on what she calls ‘Import racing’. There are some parallels
with her research subjects and the emergence of import culture in Australia.

This form of racing is unique because participants “fix up” or modify sub-compact, import cars in order to make the vehicles lighter, faster, and visually exciting. […] Import racing is a reconstruction of a cultural form. When a few Asian American youths felt excluded by the V-8, Anglo dominated muscle car culture of the seventies and eighties, they decided to start their own events with their own cars. (Namkung 2001: n.p.)

Namkung views the import culture as primarily a ‘racing’ culture, even though she states that many “participants use their cars day to day, just ‘showing’ rather than racing.” ‘The Cabin Boys’ club were more focused on car shows and began to organise car show events under the Autosalon banner.
In the editorial to the first issue, Damon Dupriez outlines the role of the magazine explicitly in relation to these events in terms of the scene:

> **Autosalon** magazine's roll [sic] is to tie all these events together, as well as to give us the much needed mainstream voice that we’ve lacked to date. Sure, we’ve enjoyed substantial support from the established motoring publications to date, but while each of them has had a vested interest in covering our scene from the outside looking in, none of them has ever truly encompassed our entire scene in one publication before. I also think that none of them truly understands or appreciates our scene as well as we do. It is a scene that is by the people for the people - a celebration of modern car culture and lifestyle. (Dupriez 2002b)

The ‘scene’ that Dupriez refers to here is that entirely determined by the mapping of the commodified events run by the Cabin Group. Indeed, it makes perfect sense following the logic of the relation between magazines and the scene for a magazine to be started by those that run particular events (compared to forming a synergy between of separate corporate entities in the case of Summernats and *Street Machine*).

The slogan espoused in the last line of the editorial signals that modified-car culture has almost come ‘full circle’. The ASMF’s slogan for the Street Machine Nationals the year after the creation and intervention of the Summernats was “For Street Machiners by Street Machiners”. Now it is a more general ‘people’ who occupy the subject position. However, the primary change that has taken place is that Dupriez is discussing this particular mapping of the Autosalon events as a ‘celebration’ of ‘culture
and lifestyle’. This contrasts with the ASMF’s valorisation of the technical skill of enthusiast-modifiers that it inherited from the ASRF and street rodding eras or the Summernats-Street Machine synergy as valorising the Summernats as a ‘party’ of the spectacular street machining era. Autosalon is targeting the enthusiast-consumer in a similar fashion to the way Speed magazine would later attempt. This is clearly indicated in Dupriez’s Autosalon editorial:

> Autosalon magazine also allows the Cabin Group to offer a truly unique marketing outlet for the aftermarket dress-up, car audio, and performance industry. With one phone call they can now deliver their products and/or services to their prime audience through the largest car show series, the most exciting new drag racing series, and the most up to date publication that represents it all 100% accurately. We reckon that’s a first for Australia - if not the world! (Dupriez 2002b)

The functional dimension of the magazine, and enthusiast magazines in general, is made explicit here by Dupriez. The magazine services the enthusiasm by selecting certain elements of the scene and discursively surveying of the cultural events of the scene: it services commercial interests by providing them with a market. A distinction is made in the identity of the Cabin Group as the corporate identity servicing the commercial interests and the magazine as functional element within the scene servicing the enthusiasm.

The Cabin Group, Autosalon car shows and Autosalon magazine are important because they repeat in a different cultural context the synergistic relation first produced between Street Machine magazine and
the Summernats. The magazine articulates another dimension of the spectacle produced at the car show, and operates as a discursive machine that gives the enthusiasm a particular consistency. The architecture of the spectacle is produced through the transmission of the Autosalon events in Autosalon magazine. It is not simply a question of representation, but of the distribution of elements of the event to increase participation by building relations of charismatic enthusiasm.

Autosalon was originally pitched as a fortnightly magazine, which was a publication schedule unheard of amongst enthusiast publications. The fortnightly experiment did not last very long and the magazine soon became a more conventional monthly publication. Comments by publisher, Jon Van Daal, indicate the importance of technological changes to the publishing industry in allowing such a high frequency of issues:

On the subject of technology, what you hold in your hands is one of the most advanced products in the print industry. I actually started my full time career working at another fortnightly magazine - Dragster Australia back in 1983. In those days you had typesetters who transferred the word from our typed pages to the printed page. Galleys of typesetting had to be cut up and stuck on to boards with a pot of glue, along with bromides of the photos we took - very time consuming indeed.

These days we have awesome programs that can turn a bunch of words and images into a minor masterpiece. However the biggest advance has been the direct "digital to plate" printing method now used by our printers [...]. This saves us huge
amounts of time, and is the main reason why we can provide you with the very latest news and gossip of what's happening in our scene. [...] The whole intention of the magazine was to provide an espresso version of your favourite magazine. [...] [It] isn’t a four-cylinder magazine and it isn’t like any other magazine out there [...]. (Van Daal 2002)

Indeed, *Hot 4s* and *Fast Fours* magazine largely snubbed the Autosalon dimension of the import scene as it emerged. *Autosalon* magazine introduced a section for a brief period of time that gathered together the ‘top competitors’ in their show series. One of the questions Damon Dupriez asked the competitors was regarding the restates of Autosalon with regards to establish magazines, and the relation between magazines and the show dimension of the scene:

ASM [Dupriez]: The rules and regulations of how we compete haven’t really been supported. You can’t pick up Fast Fours or Hot4s and find out how to compete. Do you think the established magazines have largely ignored how important the scene is?

All: Yep.

ASM: So why do you think they’ve done that?

David [Sobbi]: You look at every Autosalon and the features that subsequently get published by those titles. It’s one or two pages and they get it over with, it’s not very important to them. The only thing that’s important to them is just having a car featured to fill up their pages; they don’t know that those people are motivated from
these shows. This scene should be the main focus of those magazines.

ASM: What is the greatest motivator for people to build great cars, to turn up at shows or to be featured in a magazine?

Jamie [Kochaniewicz]: It used to be that being in a magazine was the ultimate and shows were secondary, but know [sic] it is the opposite. At shows there are 300 cars to see and you can use your imagination and you look at every car and get ideas from people.

(Dupriez 2002a)

Mandy Thomas and Melissa Butcher’s (2003) ethnographic research on the cultural practice of “Cruising” in Sydney amongst young people from non-Anglo Australian backgrounds is located at this historical juncture where the ‘import’ culture has spectacular cultural events. They describe cruising with its “heightened emphasis on the modifying of the car and its place in demarcating belonging and social status, is not a cultural tradition, but it seems to be a phenomenon of the migration process” (154). Furthermore, they add that “young people are not learning the car culture from their parents, but rather actively creating it as a generational migrant experience” (154). The cars that Thomas and Butcher discuss mostly belong to the Autosalon show series and magazine, and are indicated in the discussion of number plates as nearly all of the number plates mentioned are of cars featured in Autosalon. Thomas and Butcher open their book chapter with a quote from a research participant, Hiba (21 year old woman, Lebanese background), who says:
Having something unique done to your car will make you the envy of all the other car owners. Usually the most original car will win the car shows and be in the best magazines. (142)

The ‘uniqueness’ of a build is not the same thing as the ‘skill’ in a scene organised around a ‘sense of purpose’ directed towards the workmanship and display of workmanship required for modifications. The ethnocentric negative valorisation of a sense of purpose that attempts to build cars according to their ‘uniqueness’ is called ‘rice’. This is slightly different version of the ethnocentric epithet ‘rice burners’ deployed in The Last Ride. In the interview with Accordboy, he talked about his transition from ‘rice’ to ‘performance’.

Accordboy: I don’t really agree with it or whatever, but it’s just basically modding a car to make it look... change the tail-lights and that sort of thing, to make it look really good and having the stereo. It’s kind of ‘show’ before ‘go’ if you know what I mean? That’s how I would describe ‘rice’.

Glen: Is there a strong push towards one or the other?

Accordboy: You see, that’s what I’ve found... there’s two different leagues. Like if you want to go on the Fast Fours forums, and this is what I don’t agree with, if anyone posts anything saying, “Where can I get neons?” or “Where can I get, you know, tail-lights?” or whatever, then everyone’s like, “Ahhh, you’re a ricer” and full on flame them and everything. And that’s what I don’t agree with. The Fast Fours guys argue that that is a Hot 4s scene and they just always bag out the Hot 4s scene...
Glen: So what’s ‘Fast Fours’ and ‘Hot 4s’?

Accordboy: Fast Fours would ideally be performance kind of cars. [...] The tendency seems to be that in Hot 4s you seem to have more pleasing to the eye and that kind of thing and the priority really isn’t on performance. It’s more on having your stereo, having it look nice, sitting it low.

Glen: Do you reckon that is a real tension in the scene?

Accordboy: Definitely. Definitely. I mean the Fast Fours guys are kind of like... think they are all superior and they are anti-Hot 4s and stuff. Personally I don’t mind if a car looks good, but my focus at the moment is just on performance.

‘Rice’ is not simply a question of the aestheticisation of automotive technology, but an ethnocentric label that also serves to ward off anxiety about the character of modification. This is slightly different to the anxieties around the valorisation of ‘traditional' V8-based street machining performance technologies. In the Speed example the anxiety was over the capacity of different technologies to compete in ritualised performance practices, and the valorisation of these practices in relation to the performance technologies. Thus, ‘real’ cars did not have an essence of ‘authenticity’ about them, but were judged as such by enthusiasts because they performed in ‘real’ tests of the technology’s capacity for effectiveness. With the import spectacle, evidenced by Autosalon, there is a tension over the different ‘head turning’ capacities. An understanding of large sections of the street machining and
emergent ‘Fast Fours’ scenes having a sense of purpose that expressed an enthusiasm for ‘head turning’ aesthetics was a threat to the conception of an enthusiast determined by a masculine capacity for ‘know how’.

The “Plug ‘n’ Play” style of ‘bolt-on’ modifications, whether ‘performance’ or ‘aesthetics’ based, shifted the character of valorisation away from traditional configurations of ‘know how’ and skilled labour. That is, the different technologies of ‘imports’ created a problem for the way valorisations of ‘know how’ and skilled labour functioned within the scene. Previously, if a car had been extensively modified then it required a minimum of custom modification work, particularly when it came to performance. With the rise of the imports and the emergence of relatively cheap “plug ‘n’ play” performance technologies for all types of vehicles, the practices of modification themselves were commodified.

Similar to the way Moorhouse described how electronic fuel injection was not perceived to be a ‘problem’ for hot rod enthusiasts but a ‘challenge’, an early pioneer of turbocharging in Australia, Peter Krefel, describes the impact of ‘bolt-on kits’ in the 1985 issue 8 of Turbo Australia magazine:

Turbo [Australia]: Will the availability of high-tech kits offering bolt-on installations eventually force ‘tinkerers’ out of the turbo arena?
Krefel: Well actually I don’t completely discourage tinkering in any form. Some of the people getting involved with turbochargers are quite bright mechanics or engineers, and the more people you have trying to do the right, in many ways the more chance you’ve got to contributing to the overall advance of pressure induction [i.e. turbocharging]. So I encourage that, and give people all the
information I can... I'm quite happy to do that. [...] In a world of generally conservative engineering forced induction enjoys a sense of pioneering spirit almost akin to race-car development – it's the same challenge to succeed. (Krefel 1985: 41)

A focus on ‘performance’ and ‘tuning’ retained at least the appearance of an enthusiast engagement with automotive technologies that approach the practical cultural knowledge in-actioned as ‘know how’.

Therefore, ‘performance’ was valorised over ‘rice’, clearly indicated by Dupriez’s valorisation of “hard core tuning enthusiasts” in the editorial to the first issue of Speed magazine, even though in both cases cars are modified for their singularity, and both were implicated in movements towards “plug ‘n’ play” forms of modification. Instead of the sacrificial labour of the committed enthusiast, modified-car culture became part of broader social milieu and ‘lifestyles’. Modified-car culture itself probably has not reached the status of a ‘lifestyle’, at least not in a general sense although some enthusiasts certainly live and breathe their enthusiasm; rather the culture becomes implicated in other social milieus as a resource for the performative display of gender and a class- and ethnic-based sophistication. Hence, Autosalon and Speed respective attempts to capture some of the advertising market for these connected social milieus.

A consequence of the shift towards ‘hi tech’ and “plug ‘n’ play” styles and technologies of modification was that barriers to entry into the scene were reduced. It meant that the relatively steep learning curve required to participate in the scene was reduced, particularly in the context of the role of online sociality, which is explored in the next section.
Another shift occurs in the composition of the scene, related to the rise of the imports, but separate at the same time, involving the development of online social groups of enthusiasts. The online sociality of enthusiasts exists across a number of more or less popular online forums. Each forum has a particular technological or practical focus. The forums largely organise around the different enthusiasms and different infrastructures of scenes. The sociality of online forums are commonly organised into four different ‘types’ of discussion (or versions of these): ‘technical’, ‘organising events’, ‘for sale’ section, and ‘off topic’. Every single person I came across during my research who spent time participating in online forums had some practical involvement in the scene; their offline and online activities coalesced. The forums are an extension of the scene and not a separate cultural domain. Hodkinson’s (2003) work on the British Goth scene is again very useful for introducing some of the common qualities of online sociality with regards to offline activities. Hodkinson (2003: 285) argues that “online networks of communication can [...] function to enhance and intensify the boundaries that separate cultural groupings.” This is an extension of the argument developed in his earlier work, where in a similar fashion he argues against an interpretation of online activities as somehow promoting the “ability of anonymous Internet uses to participate in limitless divergent cultural practices from the comfort of their homes” (2002; 2003: 285).

I decided to focus the more formal dimension of my fieldwork on the online forum known as ‘FordMods’. The duration of my active
participation with FordMods was relatively brief. I still check the online forums a couple of times per week to see what’s been going on, but I don’t go on cruises, participate in organised activities, or even meet up with some of the friends I made in the group anymore. Part of this was because I have simply been too busy, however, the main problem is that to a certain degree I feel like I am a traitor to the enthusiasm they have for their cars and for the group and for which I once had for my cars and associated practices. ‘Traitor’ is a strong word but my enthusiasm has been polluted by a scholarly disposition that engages with the affects of enthusiasm in a different way. I can still speak the speak and to a certain extent walk the walk (or drive the drive), plus I can appreciate the coolness of a ‘head turner’, but I no longer spend all my spare time or money on my cars or wishing that I could. My enthusiasm has been somewhat annealed.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, the first event of my research was becoming part of the ‘scene’ in Sydney. It involved the process of choosing and then acquiring a car to be able to do the car-based fieldwork and becoming an active member of the FordMods online forum and group. The choice of car was crucial as it would determine the nature of my fieldwork. Unlike Linda Forrester (1999) who was acutely aware of the difference between her Mitsubishi Colt “runabout” compared to the “gleaming street machines” she observed when researching youth cultures in Western Sydney, I actually wanted to participate as a participant. My own ethnicity impacted on my final

137 I have not come across similar feelings in studies of other cultural domains such as with popular music scholars who turn their fandom into an academic career. Maybe this is because music is accepted more readily as appropriate for scholars to be interested in, and not just interested ‘about’?
decision as certain styles of car and modification are closely associated with particular cultural backgrounds. As a relatively young, masculine Anglo-Australian the options were more open than if I had been of a different ethnicity and definitely of a different age or gender. Class also impacted to a lesser extent, however, in Australia male Anglo enthusiasts are most commonly of the working class or at least from middle class suburbs once associated with the working class. I fit this general profile. The type of car for male working class Angle enthusiasts is the street machine or production (ie factory built) muscle car. Indeed, I eventually chose this type of car.

The main choice was between a street machine type vehicle and an import type vehicle. The following is a list of the five main vehicles I investigated and considered purchasing with a short summary of my reasoning for or against their purchase:

1) The Toyota AE86, or as it is known in enthusiast circles as the hachi roku (Japanese for 86). The hachi roku has been made famous around the world because of the influence of the Initial D manga, anime, and, very recently, live action film. Initial D is a cultural franchise organised around the story of a young man who works as a tofu delivery driver for his father’s tofu business and gradually becomes the most revered ‘drift racer’ of Mt Akina. Drifting in the Initial D dijective universe is an element of what is known as touge or downhill racing. In reality, drifting is a motorsport more like figure skating than racing, as I discussed in the previous chapter. My intention here was to buy an AE86 and participate in drift-style events and other common activities of modified-car enthusiasts including cruising and so on. Some of the negatives of
an AE86 include the prohibitive costs, especially when the cost of actual racing is included. I simply would not have had enough money to go drifting. Another problem is that because of the massive popularity of this type of car other costs would be included such as spare parts and so on. Lastly, the increased visibility of this model because of its popularity would be noted by police and I did not want the hassle of dealing with police when out doing fieldwork.

2) The Nissan S13 Silvia. The next two models of the Silvia, the S14 and S15 were sold in Australia as the Nissan 200SX. The S13 models are ‘grey imports’ brought in from Japan as second-hand vehicles. I had owned an S13 in Perth for a number of years and had modified it rather extensively, including rebuilding the motor just before coming to Sydney. I had also been involved in the SilviaWA car club. I was familiar with both the car and the particular social milieu with which it is often associated. Again there was a similar set of motorsport and social activities associated with the Silvia as with the AE86 (drifting). I could have brought my vehicle over from Perth. Again the main problem was with the registration and licensing issues when dealing with police. Because of the modifications it would be unlikely that it would get passed through NSW registration authorities. If I did not get it re-registered in NSW then it would obviously stick out when I was doing fieldwork as it would have different number plates. Lastly, again the costs of running such a car where all the parts have to be sourced from Japan, either meant I would have to do all the maintenance and mechanical work myself, for which I had no room even though I was reasonably competent as an amateur mechanic (as discussed in chapter two),
or I would have to pay someone else to do such work, for which I could not justify the expense.

3) Toyota Hilux. At the time Autosalon magazine had just run a series of articles on the new editor’s vehicle a Toyota Hilux modified into what is called a ‘minitruck’. Although I would have been happy with this vehicle as everyday transport it was a little too obscure to help me with my fieldwork so as to get to know other enthusiasts and so on. It would have been within my price range to buy and to maintain, plus the modifications would have also been possible. Only the social dimension of the enthusiasm associated with the vehicle was a drawback.

4) 1970s muscle car. I was contemplating either a Holden LX hatchback made to look like the famous A9X muscle/racing car, or an early 1970s Ford Falcon. The Falcon option was attractive to me as I had another car in Perth – a 1981 XD Ford Falcon – that had a suitable motor and drivetrain which could be swapped into the 1970s Falcon. However, both these options were not very user friendly and would’ve required prohibitive amounts of money to maintain. With the Falcon I would be mostly participating in drag racing.

5) Early 1990s Ford Falcon. I knew that these model Falcons responded well to a few simple engine modifications and that they were certainly within my price range in terms of purchase price and maintenance. Plus they would actually be nice to drive as a ‘daily driver’ unlike the earlier models, which were more suited to racing. These were also very popular on the FordMods forum and
club so I knew that there would be a definite social milieu with which to engage.

If I had a different budget then my options would have changed again. My purchase was largely being funded by the sale of my Silvia in Perth. However, the final choice was quite clear after I had worked through all the options regarding online forums and the like. The type of car for male working class Anglo-Australian enthusiasts is the street machine or production (ie factory built) muscle car. Therefore, I settled on the fifth option and began looking for an EA, EB or ED series Ford Falcon.

There were a number of options regarding this model. The ‘plain’ models would have been very cheap to buy, but would require some extensive modification. Another option was to find one of the variations of either the EB or ED model known as an XR6. Along with the V8-powered XR8, the XR6 was the sport or performance model Falcon of the era. It would
not need many modifications to be relatively ‘cool’. Plus as a ‘factory’ modified vehicle it would not draw as much attention from the police. The ED model XR6 had visible body modifications that differentiated from the regular models (Figures 8.4 and 8.5). On the other hand, the earlier EB model, where the XR6 was introduced, did not have such body changes. I looked at a number of vehicles across Sydney in car yards, from newspaper advertisements, online advertisements on forums and word of mouth. In the end I settled on a relatively high priced ED XR6 model that had already received some modifications by a previous owner. I thought it was a good start.

Hodkinson (2003: 289-291) found that users of online Goth sites created a subnetwork of sites that they would frequent. As my research was not, in the end, interview based, the only enthusiast website I know for certain that FordMods members would also frequent is FordForums.com.au, The Australian Ford Forums site was created as a breakaway from the US-based FordForums.com. By far the overwhelming majority of users on the US Ford Forums were Australian. Apparently there were disagreements over sponsorship and the hosting costs, so some of the more committed members with the start-up capital required created new forums.

In Hodkinson’s research the subnetwork of sites belonging to the subculture functioned to reproduce cultural boundaries between Goths and non-Goths. Hodkinson argues that a “highly committed learning process was necessary in order effectively to participate [sic], something liable to induce a hasty exit on the part of those unprepared to exert such effort” (292). In modified-car culture the ‘effectiveness’ of enthusiasts is determined by their ‘know how’; in that, the challenges that force the production of ‘know how’ differentially repeat the event
of enthusiasm as an effect. The practical knowledge of the scene is expressed in all sections of the forums, except for perhaps ‘off topic’. In his study of skateboarding culture, Iain Borden notes how information on practical skills and knowledge is circulated online through skateboarding sites, “from these sites skaters represent skate moves through textual descriptions, choreographic codes using the ASCII character set, still photographs and movie clips” (2001: 118-119). The general function of the modified-car enthusiast forums is similar to the skater websites in the way Borden observes they provide a channel for “incessant conversation on a myriad of topics from how to perform tricks, equipment, phrases, ramp design, drugs, the existence of God, general abuse, to (most popular of all) skate shoe design” (118).

To experiment with the relation between different elements of the online forums, and to carry out an actual modification to my vehicle, I thought I would carry out one of the ‘mods’ that had a ‘technical document’ on the FordMods site. I chose a very simple modification of changing the side indicators from orange lenses to clear lenses. When first acquiring the vehicle I did have much bigger plans for modifications, however, I never had the necessary funds or time required to carry out the modifications. The more extensive modifications were largely organised around the engine and updating the inlet manifold of the motor to the variable length inlet manifold of a later model Falcon. The nature of the process would have been very similar to the example of the indicators but with a much greater outlay of money and time. The reason for the modification

\(^{138}\) ‘Off topic’ is best understood as a space created through the folding of the outside non-scene dimension of cultural life into the infrastructure of the scene. The identity of different groups of enthusiasts participating on different online forums is best indicated by the performative cultural values and affective tonality of ‘off topic’ discussion.
was not any particular interest in having clear indicators, but was instead presented by the ‘problem’ that one of the original indicators on my car was smashed. I translated the ‘problem’ of the smashed indicator in the ‘challenge’ of the modification, and an ‘opportunity’ for my research. Below is the finished product.

Figure 8.6

The document was published online on the 15 February 2006 by FordMods member, ‘Chicken’.\(^\text{139}\) It begins thus:

This document takes you step-by-step through the process of fitting clear side indicators to an EA, EB or ED, the CORRECT WAY AROUND (that is, not back-to-front). Clear side indicators can greatly 'modernise' your car, and update it from the look of orange

\(^{139}\) “Falcon/Fairmont/Fairlane - EA-ED - Clear Side Indicators”
side indicators. This modification takes roughly 40 minutes to complete.

‘Modernising’ a vehicle means updating the aesthetics or mechanics with later model features or technologies. The Falcon, like other mass-produced vehicles, is released as a model belonging to a series manufactured for only a length of time. My ED XR6 is an ‘E-series’ and the clear indicators are from the later model AU-series Falcon. I discovered that the lenses and globes with the correct part number were available to buy from eBay. As I mentioned in the third chapter, I am a familiar user of eBay as I had purchased almost all the magazines I used to construct my enthusiast archive from enthusiasts selling their collections. I bought the lenses that came with orange globes. The instructions in the ‘technical document’ were straight-forwardly set out in a number of steps with accompanying images.

‘Modernisation’ is one of the simplest ways to modify a vehicle as the parts between different models of the same series or even across series (as in this case) are often compatible. It relies on a critical appreciation of the ‘planned-obsolescence’ of mass produced automobiles. In his famous ‘pop-sociology’ text, The Waste Makers, Vance Packard (1964: 58-59) defines three types of planned obsolescence: obsolescence of function when an “existing product becomes outmoded when a product is introduced that performs the function better”; obsolescence of quality when “it is planned, a product breaks don or wears out at a given time, usually not too distant”; lastly, obsolescence of desirability when a “product that is still sound in terms of quality or performance become ‘worn out’ in our minds because a styling or other change makes it seem less desirable.”
Planned obsolescence produces complex relationships between primary (i.e. new cars), secondary (i.e. second hand cars) and tertiary (i.e. spare parts and ‘wrecked’ vehicles) automotive markets. Enthusiasts exploit the engineering or aesthetic compatibility between different series and models of vehicle as the move into and out of different markets. In the previous chapter I raised the example of ‘Retrotech’, which is a good example of enthusiasts taking advantage of the first type of obsolescence by updating older style vehicles with newer mechanicals. Changing the indicators is clearly of the third type; as Packard (1964: 71) opines, planned obsolescence through desirably worked to “make it old-fashioned, conspicuously non-‘modern’.”

Beyond the capacity of forums to serve as part of the discursive infrastructure of ‘know how’, there is a crucial connection between the online and offline dimensions of the scene in contemporary modified-car culture in Australia; many cultural events are instigated through online clubs and this constitutes a large (albeit unspecified) component of the activity of the scene. Hodkinson found a similar situation in that the links between various online Goth sites in the subnetwork were “no more important than equally extensive in less instantaneous ‘links’ between the subnetwork and the “predominately offline world of Goth events, music and style.” Furthermore, the result of these links “was often to enhance offline involvement, whether in the form of ownership of consumables, or attendance at gigs and clubs” (2002: 293). Hodkinson frames this enhancement in terms of enthusiasm.

The interactive conversations on discussion groups also ended to generate a collective enthusiasm about events, bands or products.
As well as increasing social enthusiasm in general terms, online communications often helped to cement individuals to the subculture through establishing and maintaining specific social bonds and friendships. (294-295)

Hodkinson is using ‘enthusiasm’ here in the normative sense that is less durable than the differential repetition of the event of the enthusiasm I have discussed. That is, the online interaction that I participated in did not seem to so much generate enthusiasm as provide the opportunity to differentially repeat an already existing enthusiasm. In the terminology of Sylvan Tomkins, Hodkinson seems to be identifying the existence of an activation contour of interest to excitement.

The sociality of online forums is in some ways the same and others different to the militant federated club-based sociality of street rodding and early street machining. First, the difference is due to the rhythm of sociality no longer being determined by structured weekly, monthly, or annual face-to-face meetings or other cultural events, but is instead facilitated in the ‘real time’ environment of online forums and other communication technologies such as mobile phones. Secondly, there is a continuity in the way online forums organise discussion and the different forms of cultural events that were once organised through the auspices of the federated club structure. The federated club structure organised rod runs and car shows, and exchange was largely facilitated by regular

140 Indeed, Hodkinson argues that due to the “compulsion to choose” is not “conducive to the continual discovery and adoption of brand new pursuits or roles.” Furthermore, he suggests that “such tools explicitly encourage the individual to stick to existing tastes and affiliations” (288-299). Beyond the substantive instantiations of such ‘existing taste and affiliations’ would constitute a large part of a differentially repeated event of enthusiasm in the argument developed here.
‘swap meets’. Thirdly, the capacity to organise cultural events in a much more fluid way has lead to the emergence of new types of events that are much smaller in scale than the organised street rod events and exist alongside the spectacular commodified events that emerged in the street machining era. These new types of events include smaller scale cruises, such as the Bathurst cruise discussed in the first chapter, and event days, such as the dyno day briefly mentioned in the second chapter.

The development of online sociality does not supplant the spectacular dispositif developed during the 1980s street machining era, nor do the forums somehow render enthusiast magazines obsolete as the principle form of enthusiast media. The online sociality of forums is nested within the architecture of the spectacle in relation to the major cultural events, and this increases the efficacy of the commercial synergies between magazines and event promoters. In fact, there has been an increase in the number of professionally-run large-scale cultural events in the yearly calendar of the scene of contemporary modified-car culture.

The function of valorisation within enthusiast cultures is important for understanding how, even with the rise of online-based sociality of online car clubs, the enthusiast magazines and spectacular synergies maintain their privileged position in the scene. The magazines and car shows remain powerful loci of the enthusiasms because they are the primary conduits of institutional valorisation in the scene. If any enthusiast can discuss anything about modified-car culture in anyway they please through online forums, then the power of discourse (as a discourse of power) to valorise is severely disabled by the increased communication of the online car clubs. Through the discursive survey function of
freelancers, magazines have the authority to select certain elements of the scene, distribute them, and valorise these elements. As I have discussed in previous chapters, a discursive survey requires a social technology of visibility on the scene (through composite media distribution networks, extending from freelancer to magazine editorial staff to magazine rack) and by using enthusiast discourse to (re)produce extensive hierarchies of enthusiast value. The capacity of magazines to discursively survey the scene and, hence, valorise certain elements over others becomes even more important for the maintenance of differential structures of value as the scene is transformed through online car clubs and the corresponding increased democratisation of the capacity to socially organise. Not only do enthusiast magazines tap into the enthusiasm as a resource, but the enthusiasts of the scene need the magazines to do so.
Conclusion: Many Enthusiasms

This dissertation has endeavoured to account for the way an enthusiasm, understood as having real meaning and providing direction in the lives of participants, is caught up in power relations that configure it in such a way to be profitable for the enthusiast culture industry. In Cultural Studies ‘power relations’ have often been thought of as part of a politics of symbolic meaning and the agonistic struggle to create a space within culture for marginal voices. Ideological relations have been the frame through which such a politics and struggle has been analysed. Enthusiasm is a concept that enables a post-ideological analysis of power relations and to understand how, even when the outcomes of practice are exactly what enthusiasts ‘want’, they cannot escape the sometimes exploitative infrastructural conditions that enable the enthusiasm to exist. It is not a question of enthusiasts having a mystified understanding of their own practice, which produces an ideology of enthusiasm, but of understanding the force of enthusiasm that translates the contingencies of practice into opportunities and how the infrastructure of the scene enables enthusiasts to do this in historically specific ways.

Modified-car culture is a domain of contemporary cultural life in Australia where the participants are expected to perform their enthusiasm and enjoy doing so. Although I have drawn on some of my own experiences during fieldwork, I have not focused on the subjective perspective of enthusiasts to understand what this expectation and enjoyment mean for them in a general sense. In some ways, this is a deficiency of my research project. Instead I have developed a concept of enthusiasm as an event
within which are arrayed certain affective relations between subjects and objects that change over time. An inverse complement to my research is Kevin McDonald’s work that investigates the ways young people mostly do not have the capacity to produce opportunity because of structural inequality. McDonald (1999) calls this the “struggle for subjectivity.” He frames it as a tension between the structural inequality of the working classes, youth and uneducated in the context of postmodern society defined by the fragmentation of self and the crisis of identity. Where our respective research agendas coalesce is around the demand for subjectivities to ‘perform’:

As individuals are called upon to turn their lives into a project free of social determinism, they disengage for social roles; autonomy and self-creation increasingly replace socialisation and internalised norms. As a result, as older forms of social hierarchy are less legitimate and accepted so is the culture of redistribution that grounded the postwar welfare state. (122)

He draws on the work of French sociologist Alain Ehrenberg, and similar to the way I have argued that enthusiasts are judged according to their capacity to translate the contingency of problems so they ‘meet challenges’, Ehrenberg argues that individuals are increasingly called on to be ‘entrepreneurs of the self’ (McDonald 1999: 6). In this ‘cult of performance’, McDonald argues, at work we are not asked to fulfill a function, but “to mobilise our singularity or uniqueness” (122).

On the other side of the enthusiast relation of subjectivity is the object of the car. Moorhouse’s (1991) work on hot rodding moved away from the mostly enthusiast-based literature that focused on the car itself. By
engaging with enthusiasm or the scene of hot rodding it provides a different way of framing the enthusiast relation not as a product of some innate quality of the car as an object but in the broader context of the institutions of the scene and the populations of enthusiasts. To a certain extent, I have followed Moorhouse’s analysis, but built on it in critical ways. Enthusiasm is primarily an affective state that in part constitutes enthusiast relations, but the affects that are expressed in events are autonomous from the relations themselves. They move across bodies, increasing or diminishing the capacity for action as the event unfolds.

The autonomy of the individual enthusiast is intrinsically tied to the autonomy of the scene itself. That is, autonomy is relative to the capacity of the enthusiast to act and the distribution of capacities across the infrastructure of the scene. This is similar to the ‘autonomy’ of the Goth subculture in Britain as outlined in Hodkinson’s work. His notion of ‘(sub)cultural substance’ is defined in part by a level of autonomy dependent on a “complex infrastructure of events, consumer goods and communications, all of which [are] thoroughly implicated in the media and commerce” (2002: 32). Autonomy in this view is not the capacity to express an identity, but the capacity to act. By moving away from a focus on the symbolic dimensions of practice that frames practice as a pursuit of identity and shifting towards the role of affect and the complex movement of affect expressed as events, this dissertation has provided new ways of engaging with contemporary culture and the importance of cultural scenes.

Let us summarise the results of this investigation in terms of the five main areas of engagement:
1. Enthusiasm

Enthusiasm is an event differentially repeated in the cultural events of the scene. There is a shared, social dimension to the subjective experience of enthusiasm as the affects of enthusiasm circulate across the bodies of enthusiasts in complex ways within cultural events. Enthusiasm is not simply an expression of libidinal desire, but the analogue gradations that give desire its flexibility. The pre-personal, but subjectively experienced event of enthusiasm exceeds the interiority of the ‘enthusiast’ subject and is distributed across the heterogeneous elements of the event. The affects of enthusiasm modulate within the cultural events according to the contingencies of events and the capacities of the enthusiast bodies. The differential repetition of enthusiasm in cultural events is an affirmation of the enthusiasm and the conditions of possibility of the enthusiasm itself.

2. ‘Know How’

‘Know how’ is a practical cultural knowledge that is in-acted as a constituent element of the event of enthusiasm. Socio-technical ‘know how’ enables the enthusiast to learn through experience of translating the contingencies of a ‘problem’ into that of a ‘challenge’. The ‘experience’ of practice is not determined, in the first instance, by what the practices means, but by the action and what it does.

‘Know how’ of the scene enables participants in navigating the cultural events of the scene transforms the nature of the cultural events. The efficacy of ‘know how’ of the scene is not to reproduce status hierarchies, but to modulate the way the event of enthusiasm is differentially
repeated. Identity here becomes a question of performative efficacy and is gauged according to the ‘challenges’ that have been met. Those enthusiasts with a high degree of ‘know how’ therefore garner ‘respect’ amongst their fellow enthusiasts.

3. Scene

The scene constitutes the necessary infrastructure of enthusiasm. The event of the scene and the event of enthusiasm are a single event thought from two perspectives. Different interests of various parties coalesce in the affirmation of enthusiasm and the reproduction of its conditions of possibility. Social institutions are crucial for the maintenance of the scene and the circulation of ‘know how’. The enthusiast culture industry taps into an enthusiasm and translate it into a resource by valorising certain elements of the scene over others. Together they represent that largest part of the infrastructural dimension of the scene.

The scene, however, is also where the ‘action’ is, where it’s ‘happening’; it is a cartography of action. The character of cultural events is determined by the capacities of enthusiasts and the institutional supports that support the events. ‘Action’ is a multiplicity expressed through the differential repetition of enthusiasm. Through the deployment of social ‘know how’ certain cultural events are valorised over others and are affirmed, this affirmation of the scene is also an affirmation of enthusiasm. As the scene changes so does the composition of enthusiasm. One way to think about this is in terms of a ‘sense of purpose’. A scene is not defined by the objects or subjects that populate it, but the ‘sense of purpose’ that defines the character of cultural events. The ‘sense of purpose’ gives enthusiasm a consistency and coherency.
4. Enthusiast Culture Industry

The enthusiast culture industry cultivates an enthusiasm so it becomes a resource by modulating the event of enthusiasm. The labour of enthusiasts is both practical, in the way cars are modified and events attended, and affectively communicative, in the way objects, practices and configurations of relations are valorised as expressions of the enthusiasm. The culture industry cultivates the enthusiasm of enthusiasts to direct their labour in ways that are congruent with the commercial investments in the scene. Enthusiasm is transformed from a composition of active affections into the affective relation of charisma composed of passive affections. Enthusiasts become ‘inspired’ in certain ways through the work of the enthusiast media and event promoters. Instead of an enthusiasm defined by the capacity to translate the contingencies of a ‘problem’ into a ‘challenge’, it becomes defined by the passive subject-object relation formed with ‘head turners’.

Magazines are central to the composition of enthusiasms in relation to the scene. Magazines translate what is happening in the scene – the ‘action’ – and circulate this happening across a consuming audience. The magazine can be thought of as separated into editorial and freelancer functions. Freelancers belong to the scene and use their own ‘know how’ to select and valorise certain cultural events over others. Commercial synergies are formed between the event promoters that run and organise the spectacular cultural events of a scene and the magazines that select the ‘head turning’ elements of these events for circulation and valorisation through the magazine.
5. Globalisation

Globalisation is a process that has been lived through enthusiasm in contemporary Australia modified-car culture since the mid-1970s in affirmative and reactionary ways. Globalisation is best thought in this context as a relation between localities that allows for a movement of technologies and practices. The enthusiasm of the street machining scene of the mid-1980s until the late-1990s largely attempted to rebuff the connection of such localities and the influence of the flow of technologies and practices. Other enthusiasms emerged around such a flow however, such as the ‘Fast Fours’ and later import enthusiasms. The movements of technologies were literally facilitated by small-scale importers of second hand cars and parts, but the materiality of technologies needed the materiality of discourse in the form of enthusiast magazines to valorise the ascendant ‘hi tech’ technological configurations.

An engagement with the way enthusiasm functions in the context of the processes of globalisation and the multi-cultural character contemporary Australian modified-car culture is different to engaging with the multi-cultural character contemporary Australian modified-car culture itself. The focus of this dissertation has always been the enthusiasm of enthusiasts. The politics of valorisation that emerges from different enthusiasms is a different way of engaging with the multi-cultural character of the scene compared to first establishing the cultural identity of enthusiasts and then understanding the power relations between different identities that simply work to negate the efficacy of opposing
enthusiasms. Engaging with the politics of valorisation demands an account of the emergence of different enthusiasms and the discourse events that indicate the emergence of discursive infrastructures through which elements and practices of the enthusiasm can be affirmed.

Beyond modified-car culture, these concepts are useful tools for engaging with the way other enthusiasms, both as equally focused as modified-car culture and more diffuse, are harnessed by the culture industries in various scenes. The culture industries rely on the labour and creativity of enthusiast consumers to valorise the commodities and events. Various cultural endeavours that involve passionate consumers or ‘producers’ rely on the enthusiasm of participants.

Firstly, the active affections of enthusiasm are useful for understanding the role of enthusiasm in the cultural economies of new media and the internet. Tiziana Terranova (2000) has investigated the “free labour” in the cultural economy of the Internet. She writes:

> The volunteers for America Online, the NetSlaves, and the amateur Web designers are not working only because capital wants them to; they are acting out a desire for affective and cultural production that is nonetheless real just because it is socially shaped. (36-37)

The traditional Marxist analysis of labour is that workers were alienated from the means of production and could only hope for ‘authentic’ moments during their leisure time. The central paradox for Marxists in attempting to account for the labour of enthusiasts is that enthusiasts are not alienated from their own labour. Terranova observes that “in the
digital economy the worker achieves fulfillment through work and finds in
her brain her own, unalienated means of production” (37). A post-marxist
analysis would not only account for the labour of ‘affective production’
such as in the service industry or the home), but also the affects of
labour itself. ‘Enthusiasm’ is one way to conceptualise the capacities of
workers within formal or informal workplace arrangements.

Secondly, the passive affections of enthusiasm are useful for
understanding the role of enthusiasm in the cross-platform, cross-media
media events of the popular culture industry. Daniel Dayan and Elihu
Katz’s (1992) influential thesis of media events as the ‘live broadcasting of
history’ seeks to engage with the role of the mass-broadcast media in the
distribution of highly symbolic rituals so the audiences of these broadcast
media events can participate in them.

The media landscape has changed, however. The mass-broadcast
model seems out of touch of the contemporary experience of the media.
Media companies do not produce cultural commodities but cultural
events sustained with an infrastructure of media products that captures
the charismatic relation and virtuosic labour of the spectator. Cross-
media ‘vectors’ (Wark 1994) or ‘remediation’ (Bolter and Grusin 1999)
between television shows and film, or film and magazines, or magazines
and the internet, and so on, has produced a media-based cultural
ecology that is different or even alien to the mass-broadcast model. The
discursive formations of such media are multidimensional. There are
resonance and dissonance effects between the various vectors
circulating as they cascade across multiple platforms of the media. The
spectacularisation of a given multi-dimensional media space striates such
cascading events through the affective modulation of an audience-spectator population.

The spectacle of cultural events based on cross-platform media are ‘cultural franchises’. The franchise is not constituted by a commodified series existing within a single genre of ‘type’ of commodity. There are no longer just films constituting a franchise. In the normal sense of a commodity there are the computer games, books, DVDs, ‘spin-offs’, cartoons, and so on. Endorsements use the ‘image’ of the commodity, but have nothing to do with the actual commodity, such as fast food chain ‘happy meals’, soft drink promotions, mobile phone promotions, and so on. A political economy of the franchise emerges determined by the distribution and differential repetition of the enthusiasm of spectators for the franchise and the catalysing effect of the event on diverse populations; what Brian Massumi (2002) calls “becoming-together.” As enthusiasm is distributed through the mass- or niche-media, however, the catalysing effects also continue in increasing levels of granularity.

Controlling the population of enthusiast-spectators means modulating the event of enthusiasm; controlling the circulation of catalysing images through the media affects the distribution of affect across the bodies of spectators. Maurizio Lazzarato (2007) concept of the commercial entity of the ‘enterprise’ is a (networked) site of production and location of the immaterial labour that harnesses the enthusiasm of spectators within these franchises; in the practice of the enthusiast spectator, the labour of looking (Beller 1995; 2003) joins with virtuosic communicative labour (Virno 2003). The real power of the cultural industries is therefore not to harness enthusiasm and cultivate it for commercial gain, but to produce an enterprise-based scene upon which an enthusiasm survives.
I have wondered far from modified-car culture atop of the vector of my own enthusiasm as it was differentially repeated in the context of other cultural domains. What a critical analysis of a scene cannot dent is the dignity that participants find in their endeavours. I only hope that my enthusiasm in carrying out this research is worthy of the enthusiasm of the scene that it investigated.
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