



Celebrity Drive: Comic and host of "101 Cars You Must Drive" Alonzo Bodden owns a [Mini](#) -- and a Hummer

Quick Stats: Alonzo Bodden Comic/Host of "101 Cars You Must Drive"

Daily Drivers: [2006 Hummer H2](#) SUT (Alonzo's rating 10 on a scale of 1 to 10) and 2003 Mini [Cooper S](#) (Alonzo's rating 9 on a scale of 1 to 10)

Favorite road trip: Los Angeles to Vegas

Car he learned to drive in: 1969 Chevrolet Nova

First car bought: 1967 [Chevrolet Camaro](#)



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It may sound like an odd choice for a comedian to host "101 Cars You Must Drive," but for Alonzo Bodden, it was in the stars. Or just chalk it up to Google.

The winner of Season 3 of NBC's "Last Comic Standing" is a gearhead, having been a jet mechanic and a motorcyclist since he was 18. But producers of the Speed TV show, based on "365 Cars You Must Drive" by Motor Trend executive editor Matt Stone and [auto](#) journo John Matras, did not know he was a car enthusiast.

"I found out after I got the show, how I got the show -- Stan Rardon and Bob Eisenstaedt Googled 'comic' and 'car' and Jay Leno and Adam Carolla's names both came up and they're

both doing shows, so they Googled 'comic' and 'mechanic' and my name came up," Bodden says.



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They went to see Bodden do standup and introduced themselves afterward. Bodden signed on. They didn't know Bodden from the NBC reality show. "You know who knew me? The producer's daughters. I don't think Stan has watched anything other than Speed Channel in the last five years," Bodden laughs.

Each episode of "101 Cars You Must Drive" has a theme and a creative title. "The Bird Is the Word" episode features cars such as a Thunderbird, a Studebaker Golden Hawk, and a [Chrysler](#) Turbine car.

The script gives Bodden facts like the car's design and production runs, but the whole point of having a comic is his flair for ad libbing. "I do a lot of improv," Bodden laughs. "Anything you laugh at -- that was mine, they didn't write it."



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On the episode with the edgy title "Wankels and Wankers," Bodden says, "I even made a joke about that, like, 'if you want to know the meaning of Wanker, ask a British guy.'"

As one of the comics who tried out for the coveted job that went to Adam Carolla on NBC's "Top Gear," a car show for Bodden is a happy coincidence. Car enthusiasts might think Bodden's gig is the top job -- getting to drive some of the world's most exotic cars. "My favorite is the Dino [Ferrari](#), maybe because it was the first Ferrari I've ever driven," he says. "It was fast, it was tight, and it has a feel to it -- like you're in a Ferrari."



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Bodden is a car connoisseur. "I love Porsches; whenever you drive a [Porsche](#), you know it's a Porsche -- they're very tight, very mechanical," Bodden says. "I think a [Ferrari](#) is sexy. I drove an Acura NSX -- phenomenal car, performance is great, but it's a [Honda](#), and it feels like you're driving the world's fastest [Accord](#). It's too refined -- like you're driving a supercar, but it just doesn't have a personality to it, whereas the Ferrari did."

The car that surprised Bodden most was the DeLorean. "It was just ridiculously under-powered," he says. "If the DeLorean had a V-8 in it, it would have been a phenomenal car. I was definitely surprised at how comfortable and modern it felt."

Daily Drivers

Bodden's sign is Gemini and he has a split personality when it comes to his daily drivers -- a 2003 Mini [Cooper S](#), which he rates a 9 on a scale of 10 and a [2006 Hummer H2](#) SUT, which he rates a perfect 10.



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"I have issues. I am a true Gemini," Bodden laughs. "Everyone talks about the gas mileage, which is no worse than any other full-size SUV -- we all get 11 or 12 miles per gallon. People are like, 'Why don't you sell the [Hummer](#)?' Well, try to sell a Hummer today. The \$15,000 I'll lose on trade-in will buy a lot of gas."

He recently drove it to Laughlin, Nevada, where he was headlining for a few days. "It rides really smooth. And I got a great deal on it, because even in 2006 GM couldn't give Hummers away, I walked in and they're like, 'Really, you're going to buy one?' So they gave me zero percent everything, so I'm happy."

Driving from [Los Angeles](#) to Laughlin took one tank of gas, and Bodden says he's in love with the Hummer. "Also, I can crush Prius [makes up his own word for [Prius](#) plural] because those little Prius drivers, they get cocky. You know a Hummer can run over a little Prius. And don't think I won't," he laughs.



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When he is on the road headlining, there are many days spent waiting to entertain audiences at night, so the Hummer recently helped alleviate boredom. "I drove it off-road yesterday, because everyone says people buy Hummers and never drive them off-road. So I did. See? See? That's why I have Hummer," Bodden states. "There's a trail near the hotel, it's called Christmas Tree Trail and it goes up in the hills. I drove up and down that. I'm doing another one tomorrow that leads to some mountain creek in Arizona."

Bodden bought [the Mini](#) to transport him to the airport, since he flies almost every week for work. "It's good on gas and easy to park. I'll use the Hummer if I have to tow my motorcycles. If I go into Hollywood, L.A., or Orange County, I use the Mini."

While the [Hummer](#) is automatic, [the Mini](#) is a six-speed manual, which he prefers for the Mini. "It's like driving a go-kart, it's fun to drive, you rev it, you shift it. I've only had a few cars that had automatics."



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Although the Mini is "phenomenal" the way it is, Bodden is looking into adding more horses to the Mini. In his past life as jet mechanic, he wrenched at Lockheed and McDonnell Douglas and worked on the Stealth Bomber as well as his own Camaro. But that's changed now.

"The only reason I'm not a gearhead mechanic today is because technology has passed by the backyard mechanic. Even with oil changes, there was a time when there were these \$19.99 Jiffy Lube oil changes and that was cheaper than doing it yourself."

Car he learned to drive in

Growing up in Queens, Bodden got his license as soon as he could. "I've always loved cars and bikes, and it's one of the reasons I knew I was leaving New York because you can't enjoy them the way you can in L.A. or anywhere in the West where there's room."

Bodden took two lessons at a driving school and practiced on his mom's 1969 Chevy Nova. "It was a straight-six with an automatic," he says. "The thing I always remember was her looking

for that brake pedal on the passenger side, because she always thought I was driving too fast. She would push her foot down out of habit and I'd be like, 'There are no brakes on that side. I got it.'"

He became the cool kid with a license. "I had a friend, Dana, and we were all part of the same group and her boyfriend couldn't drive; he was a friend of mine and she had a Mercedes SL -- the two-seat convertible, and her dad used to let me drive her around in it like she was a spoiled kid," he recalls. "That was fun. It was the first Mercedes I drove."



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First car bought

At 18, Bodden moved to L.A. to work at Lockheed in [Burbank](#); his daily driver was a 1977 [Honda](#) CB 400 motorcycle. He then bought his first car -- a 1967 Chevy Camaro small-block 350 with a Muncie four-speed.

"I wanted a hot rod, a musclecar, and I guess I was a Chevy guy, so I was set on my first car being a '60s Camaro," Bodden says. "I couldn't afford a '69 Z28, that's what everybody wanted and I couldn't afford a [Corvette](#)."

Favorite road trip

Bodden's favorite road trip is driving to Vegas. "I think it's because I grew up in New York, so the first time I drove through the desert I never realized there was that much nothing anywhere," he says. "It was the enormity of it, the emptiness. To this day I still love it. I love driving, so anytime I'm working in California, Nevada, Arizona, I'll always drive."

Past cars and the rotary engine

The 2007 [BMW](#) Alpina on one of the episodes was Bodden's own car, before he got rid of the supercharged 7 Series. "It's not very common. I am not a sedan guy. Every few years I'll see a sedan, like these high-performance sedans and I'll buy it. A month later I'm like, 'This is my dad's car. I don't like this thing,'" he laughs. "I've done that three times. I still may try the [M5](#). I don't learn."

Bodden has owned or leased up to 30 cars, but prefers to buy because he often doesn't keep a car for the duration of a lease. He bought a new [1996 Mustang](#) GT and had it for a year, trading it for a [Honda Civic coupe](#), "because all the kids were hot-rodding those and I wanted to see what that was about."



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[Mazda](#) RX-7s (a 1979 and a 1982) have also been part of his collection. "I used to work on them all the time because my buddy had a 280Z and we would do a little illegal street racing."

Bodden can't say enough about the wonders of the rotary engine and praises the third gen-RX-7, while panning the [Mazda RX-8](#), which he thinks is too big. "I love it, love it," Bodden says, about the rotary engine. "The mistake on the [RX-8](#) are those silly suicide doors and back seat. It's ridiculous. It should be a two-seater [sports car](#). They finally got it right around '92-'93 when they had the twin turbo. I still want one of those one day. It's hard to find a clean one because a lot of kids who street race, buy them and butcher them."

Americans still prefer musclecars and they don't get the rotary. "They're not torquey," Bodden says. "So you have to rev it, but the engine's a screamer. That's the fun of driving it. There's nothing like a V-8 when you get into an American car. Vipers do one thing and they do it really well -- when you step on the gas, it slams you in the feet and that is what Americans are used to. We're not used to high-revving, shifting a lot. That's why people love Corvettes."

When it comes to revving, Bodden says Porsches have differences, too. "The water-cooled Porsches are different, but if you drove an air-cooled [Porsche](#), that's a car that you would rev. It's just a different type of driving. People who like sports-car driving don't mind revving an engine verses musclecar driving, where you just have all the low end."



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Automakers

"[Cadillac](#) is making some great cars that can compete with BMW or Mercedes, really nice high-performance luxury sedans," he says. But he suggests GM should streamline, that some badges can be folded into others. "Like [Buick](#) -- you're building a car, with all due respect, for a customer base that's dying off. Nobody's buying Buicks. Take one or two out of the Buick line, make them Cadillacs and do away with Buick and save all that money. There is no need anymore to have [Chevrolet](#) and [Pontiac](#). Stop wasting money by building the same cars. Why have Chevy trucks and [GMC](#) trucks, the [GMC Yukon](#) is the Chevy [Tahoe](#). I would love to see American carmakers get with the program."

Bodden suggests this is the "golden age" for car enthusiasts, who can walk in and buy a 400-500-hp car. Better start collecting now, before CAFE standards change. "A lot of people talk about '60s musclecars, but now we have cars that are faster than the '60s cars -- more comfortable, more reliable," he sums up. "I think it's going to fall off -- because as economy and green efficiency becomes more important, we're going to lose the horsepower and speed."