

Protecting Your Custom or Classic Car from Theft with New Tech

If you have an extraordinary car, it makes sense to take extraordinary measures to protect it — both by deterring thieves and by actively foiling their attempts at stealing the automobile.

That said, most classic and restoration car owners also want to balance deterrence against being discreet and preserving the original condition of the car.

Aside from the obvious precautions like keeping your car locked and stored discreetly, here are some of the most effective devices and concepts that can help you protect your high-end custom, classic or hot rod automobile.

Steering wheel, brake pedal and wheel locks

These are quality, visible deterrents to theft that will thwart all but the most determined and prepared car thieves.

They are inexpensive, and they are removable for car shows and competitions. You don't need to drill any holes in the dash, and they don't require stickers on the windows to provide a significant deterrent.

In addition, you can try some basic mechanical tricks:

- Disconnecting the battery cable.
- Pulling a critical fuse, such as the fuel pump fuse.

Electronic immobilizers

These are electronic devices that send a signal to key components to lock or shut down unless you the car owner, flip a "kill switch" or use a special key.

In recent years, RFID technology has enabled advanced kill switches that detect when your RFID- or Bluetooth-enabled key fob or wallet is inside or within a few feet of the vehicle. If someone tries to start your vehicle without your external device, they won't succeed.

Ravelco

If you want a state-of-the-art car ignition system and you're willing to make a semi-permanent installation in your car, then the Ravelco anti-theft device might be for you.

The Ravelco comes with a hidden armored steel cable into the engine compartment, and all connections are camouflaged and hidden from thieves. Different installations can disable different circuits — the fuel pump, starter circuit, or even the computer can be disabled, unless the driver connector is present and properly connected.

Installation on exotic cars runs from \$750 and up. And thus far, experts are not aware of a Ravelco car that's been successfully stolen.

Tire and wheel locks

You can defeat these thieves in two ways:

- A locking lug nut, which you can install for as little as \$10 (though the \$50 to \$70 ones are a lot tougher).
- A wheel lock, or "boot."

If you're defending some high-end custom rims and maintaining authenticity of a classic car is not a consideration, you might consider something like The System, from Gorilla Auto. It costs some money, but every single wheel lug is a wheel lock — which should be enough to confound and frustrate most professional thieves, who would much rather be on their way within a few minutes.

Tracking and recovery systems

If a thief is able to defeat your front-end systems, or circumvents them by simply towing your classic car back to the chop shop, chances are you'll want a GPS tracking device to alert you to the theft, alert law enforcement, and lead them directly to the location of your car.

Other vendors, like [Fleetminder](#) and [Tracknstop](#), have created Web-enabled devices and apps that enable you to remotely disable your vehicle's engine from your cell phone within seconds of discovering a theft.

The best protection

Most law enforcement experts recommend a multi-layered anti-theft strategy. Start with vehicle location: Don't park in poorly lit areas, behind buildings or other places thieves can find concealment and darkness to do their work.

Also combine different countermeasures to defeat against a variety of threats, from crooks who try to hot-wire vehicles to rim and wheel thieves to tow-truck operators.

So, you may want to use a combination of mechanical and electronic countermeasures, along with a solid tracking system to help recover your vehicle when other measures fail.

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