



# JAY'S GREEN GARAGE

Leno operation is more fuel-efficient than your mom's Prius

BY LOGAN KUGLER

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EVERYBODY KNOWS Jay Leno loves cars. He loves working on them, looking at them and, most of all, driving them. But these days, more than 300 cars and motorcycles in a cluster of four adjoining garages totaling more than 25,000 square feet mean he has a whole lot of CO<sub>2</sub> to answer for.

Or so you'd think. When Leno took the initiative to green his Big Dog Garage in 2006, it wasn't because he's a hippie tree lover who thinks the glaciers are melting but because he wanted to be self-

sustaining. "To me, it's a matter of living your life more efficiently," he said, "and if you want to sustain this hobby, you've got to come up with more efficient ways to do it."

Leno said that when he was a kid, he was told that "if you take the oil and you dig a hole and pour it into the ground, it goes back into the earth where it came from."

Times have changed, and Leno has changed with them, embarking on a significant ongoing effort to green the space where he stores, maintains and renovates his collection.

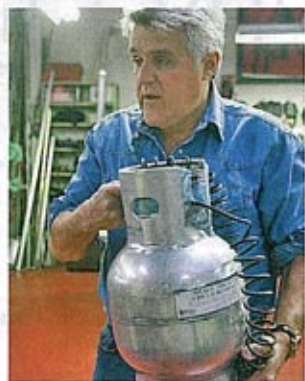
"The first really big change was about three or four years ago with the solar panels," he said. "And then we added the wind turbine." Between the Southern California sunshine and the breezy evenings, the turbine and 270 roof-mounted panels cover almost all of the facility's power needs, even feeding power back into the grid during hot fall days when the Santa Ana winds pick up. "My electric bills have dropped by three-quarters," he said.

But it's not the financial rewards that motivate this car enthusiast, it's the thrill. "We

just started to get into it. It's like anything else, you become competitive and try to figure out ways to become more and more efficient." The same gear-head instinct that drives Leno's car obsession expanded to making his garage more environmentally sound.

For example, alongside early cars such as a 1906 Stanley Steamer and a Baker electric car, Leno is renovating a circa-1900 natural-gas-engine generator that was used to make power in Malta a century ago.

At the other end of the spectrum, Leno invested in the lat-



Leno and his solar panels bask in the sun on the roof of the Big Dog Garage, opposite. The comedian's green tech includes, from top, a water-jet cutter, waterless hand cleaners, the MX Factor canister system and a wind turbine.



est environment-friendly technologies for running his shop. For instance, aerosol cans are out. In their place is an air-powered device called the MX Factor. "Basically," Leno said, "you fill it with compressed air and put your cleaners in it and use the same one over and over again, so you're not throwing away 15 or 20 cans that have propellant in them."

No more dumping the oil back into the ground for Leno, either. A BioCircle cleaner uses bacteria that literally eats the oil, grease and other hydrocarbons off of dirty engine parts,

converting them to water and carbon dioxide. Other cleaning tasks are handled with an ultrasonic cleaner, which uses high-frequency waves to scour the dirt from filthy engine parts.

Even hand washing is done in an environmentally conscious way, using waterless cleaners that don't wash toxic oils, solvents and other workshop chemicals down the drain and into the water system.

"I think it's a fascinating time to live," Leno mused. "The technology is limitless.

I remember one of the first fuel-cell vehicles I ever saw. It was a Mercedes SUV-type vehicle towing a huge trailer—that was the fuel cell! And now they've managed to put that under the hood of a car."

Where some see stricter environmental regulations and rising fuel prices as the end of enthusiasts' love affair with performance cars, Leno is optimistic. "It's a good time to be a car enthusiast, not a bad time. We're seeing these incredible breakthroughs in technology. I mean, I have a Corvette that has 505 hp and gets almost 30 mpg on the highway. That was unheard of when I was a kid! When I was a kid, a car with 500 hp got 6 mpg. Maybe."

Is the man whose friends include prominent politicians across the spectrum concerned about taking a stand on an issue as controversial as global warming? Not at all.

"It's not a matter of global warming for me; it's a matter of living your life more efficiently. It doesn't really matter why. Whatever the reason, the final end product is good. I tell people, 'Whether you believe in global warming or don't believe in global warming, do it to be self-sufficient.'"

And Leno has one more argument up his sleeve: "If you don't believe in global warming, do it to screw the oil companies." 🌱