



CASTING A MEDIA SPOTLIGHT ON OUR INDUSTRY

BY **TIM KELLY**

It is time we took control of the narrative that consumers see and hear about the collision repair industry.

In the media, one of the few voices that is heard regularly comes from press releases issued by the Association of British Insurers (ABI), often jumped on by the likes of the *Daily Mail*.

While insurers blame consumers and everyone else for raising the price of premiums – all these “fraudulent whiplash claims”, “increases in insurance premium tax”, the “rising cost of repairs” – the truth is, they are mostly concerned about their profits and shareholder dividends.

Hopefully, you will have read my previous *Bodyshop Magazine* articles on media, marketing and the importance of “presence” and people finding you, especially when they were not looking for you.

I practice what I preach and by targeting people on LinkedIn and developing strong relationships, last year I had the pleasure of working with *National Geographic* and *Car SOS*.

I jumped at the chance to get my brand out in front of a huge audience. I have no control over what gets aired, but I wanted to show that repairing cars is not easy, that we need to understand the physics of how cars are damaged, and what is needed to get them straight again.

I wanted to show that bodyshops are clean environments full of expensive equipment and operated by skilled technicians with extensive knowledge, and I hope I did that. (Many thanks to the

repairer who let us take over his bodyshop but wants to remain anonymous. You know who you are).

I have worked hard to position myself as “the place to go” if you have a motoring, engineering, legal or insurance issue. Because of that, I work with a lot of researchers, investigators and journalists, and act as both a data source and reference point.

Tons of stuff I work on with these people will not get a mention, and I do it to make sure that they present the correct information to the general public rather than what, for example, the ABI might wish to present.

I have worked both in front of the camera and as a resource a number of times with *Rip Off Britain* and recently I was in line for a very amusing day at their studio, after being asked to provide an overview in answer to the question: “Why are there no courtesy cars available from insurers when you make a claim?”

I explained the background that it is not the insurer but the approved repairer who supplies a replacement vehicle at their cost, and that this was a “supply chain issue”.

I got the producers to interview the NBRA’s Chris Weeks, at Sapphire Bodyshop in Manchester. That was bundled into a VT clip and I was expecting my bit to be a quick piece-to-camera commenting on the interview.

They didn’t tell me they had changed the format, and that I would be on with the lovely Gloria Hunniford, or that it

would be a live recording. No cuts or edits.

The ABI was also invited but did not know I was going to be there or that I would have the opportunity to question their spokesperson. The instant they found out, they flat out refused to come on. Only after requesting sight of the VT, the script, and all of the questions, did they agree.

Make sure you watch it when it comes out on 1 June or on BBC iPlayer. Gloria was mischievous, she perfectly bundled an unscripted question to the ABI that allowed me to explain how insurers mistreat repairers and consumers. I love her to pieces, what a woman. I am sure she even winked at me as she did it.

Finally, I did an interview on East London Radio with Helen Dewdney of “The Complaining Cow” fame, and answered her request for a blog on her website. Scan the QR codes below to read the blog and listen to the interview.



BLOG:
The Complaining Cow



INTERVIEW:
East London Radio