

Car Names That Should've Been Laughed Out of the Room

Some of the worst [car names in automotive history were not accidents](#). They were pitched in meetings, vetted by legal, pushed by marketing, and approved at the highest levels. Entire teams signed off on [names they thought sounded bold](#) or forward-thinking. What left the boardroom as a branding win often landed on the dealership floor as a joke. The car stayed the same. What changed was how people talked about it.

There's a difference between strange and stupid, and car companies cross that line more often than they realize. With the wrong name, a perfectly functional car becomes forgettable or mocked before it ever gets a chance. [One bad name turns a decent coupe into a punchline](#). The industry has done it over and over. These aren't rare slip-ups. They reflect how easily decisions get shaped by people too close to the process to hear how bad they sound to anyone else.

Ford Probe is still the benchmark for branding misfires

Ford didn't stumble into the name "Probe." It was a deliberate attempt to make a front-wheel-drive coupe sound sleek and high-tech. It borrowed its name from a line of Ford concept cars meant to showcase innovation. The car itself wasn't bad. Developed with Mazda under [Ford's global platform strategy](#), it offered respectable performance for the time. It wasn't fast, but it was agile and priced to move.

But none of that mattered once people heard the name. It didn't sound like a car. It sounded like a hospital procedure. Ford had even considered positioning [the Probe as the next-generation Mustang](#), a plan scrapped after backlash from purists and the public. Even drivers who liked the car had to grit their teeth every time they said what they drove. One awkward word on the trunk was enough to drown out every other aspect of the car's design or engineering. It might have been aiming for a futuristic import fighter. Instead, it landed with [a name nobody wanted to say out loud](#).

AMC Gremlin leaned into absurdity — and got away with it

AMC needed a subcompact, and they needed it fast. Imports were gaining ground in the early '70s, and the Big Three were scrambling to keep up. [AMC's answer was to rush a new design](#) to market and give it a name that sounded like a mechanical failure. It didn't sound mischievous. It sounded broken: fried wiring, stalling engines, and dash lights that wouldn't shut off. It was a joke name, except AMC wasn't joking.

The design didn't help. [The Gremlin looked like a Hornet](#) that had been rear-ended and left that way. From day one, the car had a cartoon mascot and leaned into its own weirdness. AMC tried to sell the weirdness as rebellion. But buyers don't want their car to sound cursed, and the name did more damage than the sheet metal ever could. [Despite years of decent sales](#), the Gremlin became a punchline. It's remembered less for what it was than what it was called. AMC went for bold in a market that was playing it safe. What they got was a car that people still talk about, just not the way they hoped.

The Mitsubishi Lettuce prove someone should've said no

Mitsubishi didn't just greenlight a weird name. They called the car Lettuce and leaned in. Technically, [it was a trim variant of the Mirage](#), but that didn't stop the company from branding it like a tossed salad. There was no lettuce-green paint, no garden-themed marketing, and no clever pun in Japanese to save it. The name was simply... Lettuce. No one stopped it.

What makes [the Lettuce so baffling isn't the car](#). It's that no one in the room said, "Hold on." Mitsubishi introduced it during the early '90s, a time when Japanese automakers were experimenting wildly with kei cars and niche subcompacts. Some names like Pajero Mini or Nissan S-Cargo had at least some charm or internal logic. The Lettuce didn't. It was plain, unremarkable, and best known for its name being memed decades later.

Unlike the Gremlin or the Probe, the Lettuce didn't provoke outrage or loyalist backlash. It just quietly existed with one of the most [mockable names in automotive history](#). The car faded. The name didn't. That disconnect between the utter blandness of the car and the surreal boldness of the name makes it feel less like branding and more like a dare.