

Noise has value

Noise is valuable to the motor industry. Customers need noise, but only the right sort of noise, a demand which has developed in an intriguing way over the last hundred years since Ford got going.

Once reduced below discomfort thresholds, noise and vibration have meanings, indeed their own language. They speak to us about the quality of the vehicle, what its primary purpose is and the logic of its design. For example, the laid back, squeeze-yourself-in seats of the youngster's two-seater sports car command a compatible noise.

The motor industry has progressed from the primary goal of reducing noise and vibration to the more mature aim of tailoring these to give the right effect, to develop the required sound quality. A recent development is to use active control to achieve a target noise, tailoring the noise to a goal determined

by listeners. And although there are objective measures of sound quality (Loudness, Roughness, Fluctuation Strength and Sharpness), we still rely on subjective listening tests to check whether the vehicle is speaking to us in the right "noise language".

But like all languages, the language of the vehicle has changed with time. Today's small family car speaks a different language from that of its predecessor of 40–50 years ago, when new cars had a waiting list and a Mini cost about the same as a B&K Level Recorder. Changing expectations have driven development along the route of "It may be small and cheap, but we don't want it to sound like that". We want a small vehicle to sound like a large vehicle sounds and a cheap vehicle to sound like an expensive one.

We may never own the vehicle, but we would like to own its sound.

Truck noise upsets new hotels guests

New Zealand city of Napier's \$22 million international hotel has been open only a matter of months and guests are already complaining about the noise of trucks on the city's Marine Parade. Hotel manager Kerry-Ann McKinlay confirmed she had raised the noise issue with Napier City Council. She said she could not understand why trucks were allowed on the Parade after the council and private enterprise had spent millions of dollars upgrading tourist facilities.

noise notes

Extra M4 Lane

The decision to add an extra lane to the M4 motorway junction at Tormarton has alarmed people living nearby. Residents in Hinton on the south side of the motorway say they already suffer from traffic noise and the addition of a fourth lane will make it worse. But Transport Secretary Alistair Darling said the steep hill leading to the junction had given it a poor accident record and the extra lane was needed on safety grounds. Deborah Moore, from Childs Farm, Hinton, said the noise from the motorway had increased considerably over recent years. She said: "When we moved in 12 years ago we could only hear the motorway traffic at certain times of the day. But now the noise is continuous.

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