

Can you believe it.....?

An American entrepreneur is marketing an auxiliary warning system for vehicles. Not to replace the original horn, but to supplement it with a high level of personalised sound.

Yes, it is a scaled-up version of the mobile phone ring tone. Whilst it might be argued that your wacky ring tone enables you to pick out your own phone from the melodies of the multitudes, the vehicle version is entirely for fun. Theirs, not yours.

The new Horntones FX550 permits those who can cover the \$250 price tag to customise the sounds of their cars, blasting out from a loudspeaker fitted under the bonnet. A power amplifier feeds this loudspeaker and a clever controller on the dashboard completes the system.

This control unit has a number of push button built-in sounds, but others may be added from your MP3, via a USB port. So you can add selections from your favourite music, or from whatever appalling audio clips you have recorded for yourself or of yourself, up to a total of 256MB.

Horntones is, of course, intended for the young driver and whilst not wishing to equate the young with the irresponsible, it takes little imagination to conjure up the kids driving home in the early hours, relaxed after a good night out, and doing a “mine is better than yours” on their Horntones.

The manufacturer will claim that Horntones are harmless if used responsibly, which is what the National Rifle Association says about guns. Horntones may be legal in the USA, but should be controlled to extinction before they become too widespread, whilst their introduction into other countries must be speedily banned. Is this the time to put away our liberal attitudes and look for tough politicians to say “No Horntones in my country”?

noise
notes

JHARKHAND

If a recent survey conducted by the regional office of the Jharkhand State Pollution Control Board (JSPCB) is any indication, noise pollution is on the rise in the Jamshedpur. The survey was conducted on World Environment Day. To measure the noise limit, seven points were identified across the city. The decibel limit in all the seven points, all commercial areas, was found to have crossed the normal limit of 65 decibel. The noise level at the seven points was recorded between 70 and 85 decibels. The noise level was monitored during the daytime (6 am to 6 pm). Assistant scientific officer of JSPCB, A.K. Sinha, who supervised the survey, confirmed that the noise level crossed the normal limit at all the survey points. "It's a matter of concern that the noise pollution indicates a rising trend in the city. The situation was better in the last survey," he said. "The rise in noise pollution is a great threat as it might lead to increase in cases of deafness, hypertension and blood pressure," he added.

SHANGHAI

City residents enjoyed a 20-minute respite from the normal noise levels associated with life in Shanghai recently to prevent distractions to the more than 108,700 students completing the English listening comprehension section of the national college entrance exam. From 3 pm to 3:20 pm construction workers took a break, drivers were banned from honking their horns in all parts of the city - not just downtown where it is always banned - and outdoor video advertising screens were turned off. While anxious parents were pleased with the rules, many locals wondered if students aren't being overly pampered. Sign boards telling drivers not to honk their horns were set up around 150 exam sites around the city at 2:30pm, 30 minutes before the comprehension section of the exam began. That part of the exam involves listening to English sentences and phrases, and then answering questions based on them. Construction projects within 100 meters of any exam site were also required to shut down for 20 minutes. Traffic police, urban management and environment inspection officials were also on duty outside every exam site to prevent any noise that might disturb students.

SCHIPHOL

The bonuses awarded to the directors of Amsterdam's Schiphol airport should be related to their success in complying with noise and environmental requirements rather than meeting financial targets, says Dutch MP Paul Tang. 'It would be good if Schiphol committed itself to targets other than money and growth,' Tang said during a debate on the airport on Thursday evening. Christian Democrat (CDA) transport minister Camiel Eurlings said he would consider the idea, now that Schiphol's much mooted privatisation has been put on hold. Such a step would not only show that Schiphol was involved in society but would be an investment in making the area surrounding the airport more agreeable to live in, Eurlings said. Much to the annoyance of green party Groenlinks, Schiphol's CEO Gerlach Cerfontaine recently called on the government to loosen noise pollution standards to allow for 100,000 extra take-offs and landings at Schiphol. Tang dismissed the idea as ridiculous, while Eurlings reassured the lower House that Schiphol will not be able to increase noise levels around the airport.