

Outlook on Lifestyle

Humor

Do you want to hear how your car's feeling?

As someone who is highly suspicious of any technological innovation more complex than the zipper, it goes without saying that I'm awfully leery about the latest wrinkle the automobile manufacturers have come up with.

I refer, of course, to the fact that they're now making cars that can talk.

Apparently these cars have been on the market for some time, and I just haven't been aware of it. This is undoubtedly because I am living in the past, and driving an outmoded automobile.

My car doesn't talk. At the moment, in fact, it doesn't even start, which just goes to show you how far behind the times I am.

("You mean you have a car that starts? Well, for goshsake! What'll them fellers in Detroit think of next?")

Personally, I have disliked cars ever since they got the idea that they have the right to buzz at you when you leave your seat-belt unbuckled. This is one heckuva liberty for a car to take, and any self-respecting motorist resents it.

But to go one long step further and drive a car which actually talks to you seems to defeat the entire purpose of owning a car — which is, after all, to enjoy a bit of peace and



Weir's View

By Ian Weir

quiet when you're travelling.

If you want to drive with someone who says "you're tailgating" and "slow down, for heaven's sake," you don't buy a car — you get married.

Well, perhaps this is a bit of an over-reaction. Apparently the talking cars don't actually nag you — they just provide a running commentary on their mechanical condition.

Still, even this violates a pretty fundamental rule of automobile-owning — never try to find out exactly what's wrong with your car, on the grounds that what you don't know can't send your mechanic to Hawaii.

"I need a valve-job."

"Sure, and I need a month on the

Riviera. It's a tough world, so shut up."

There's also the nuisance factor to consider. You are undoubtedly a caring and compassionate person, but do you really want to hear how your car is feeling?

It's bad enough when Aunt Martha starts in on the topic of her regularly, without your car going on about its sluggish carburetion.

And consider a further possibility. If the car manufacturers can build a car which complains about its health, are they not also quite capable of building a hypochondriac?

"Hot. Omgawd, I'm hot."

"You're just a little low on water."

"No. It's not the water. It's my pistons. I can sense it."

"There's nothing wrong with your pistons."

"That's what they told Uncle Fred two days before he seized up on a trip to the 7-Eleven. I see... I see little spots before my headlights, and my oil-pressure's down..."

Personally, it's my dark suspicion that we're looking at just the tip of the iceberg, here. Once cars start talking, they're not going to restrict themselves to their mechanical

condition.

Learning to talk is an insidious thing, as we learn from observing children. Married friends advise me that you can go virtually overnight from "she said her first word!" to "if she doesn't get off that telephone I will strangle her with the cord."

So once cars start talking, the next step is bound to be cars which inflict their personalities upon you.

Don't tell me that the people at BMW are not this very moment designing a car which will criticize your suit while refusing to take you to McDonald's.

At the other end of the spectrum, some twisted engineer is undoubtedly designing a Ram Tough truck which will mortify you by honking its horn and exclaiming, "Hey, check the gun rack on that Chevy!"

Nope. The more I think about it, the more I treasure my Datsun, the one which is currently impersonating a piece of art-deco in the driveway.

Each morning he makes a few feeble half-turning-over sounds before going back to sleep. I call him a few names, and then get on the bus.

It may not be an efficient relationship. But it's wonderfully peaceful.

POETS' CORNER

ENOUGH

In spending time searching for another place other companions other circumstances I've run up the bill of a lifetime Very little change left.

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