

ROOM 101

Everyone has their pet hates - and drivers probably have more than others. If you are famous you get the chance to go on Paul Merton's "Room 101" programme, and "vent your spleen" about what winds you up, and, hopefully, see them confined to the "black hole" that he calls Room 101 (but is actually the floor of the studio under the table!).

But for mere mortals like me I can only dream about what I would put into Room 101. So here are a few of my "pet hates" that given the opportunity I would confine to Room 101:

- people who crawl up your exhaust pipe in a 70 mph traffic jam on the motorway, when there's nowhere to go, even if they did overtake;
- people who insist on blocking your entry to a road, when they are not going anywhere, just to ensure there isn't one more car in front of them;
- people who drive up the left turn only lane when they want to turn right, just to jump the queue

and that's just three of them!

But I have found that since I had the Tiv, the number of pet hates I have has increased.

Poor parking - I was driving down the M5 to Devon last year, and called in at a services for a "loo break". I deliberately chose an area of the car park where there were no other cars around - two whole rows of parking spaces with not a wheel in site. I parked right in the middle - perfect! I'd only been in the services a few minutes and when I came out there was a van parked in the next space to me. Why? There was an acre of spare tarmac - why park within a few inches of me and chance damaging my car with his door?

I did the same again at our local garden centre a few weeks ago, and when I came back there was a people mover about 2 inches from my nearside, and a knackered old van equidistant from the offside - nothing else for miles! I got into the Tiv and moved it back to the same position in the row behind. I wonder what they thought when they came back to their cars: "Funny, I was sure I parked it next to that sports car - has my vehicle rolled forwards..?"

The most amazing parking I've ever seen was in Paris. A lady parked a Renault 5 end on to the pavement (normal in that road), but then a guy arrives about 10 minutes later, and can't find a space. So he parks behind the Renault and shunts it up the rear end, moving it a few inches further in. Out he gets, and instead of looking at any damage to both cars, reviews whether he is clear of passing traffic! Concerned that he is still sticking out too far, he climbs back in and has another go - moving the Renault another few inches further forward! Then off he goes to enjoy his evening, ignoring both damage and the fact that Rosemary Renault is now totally blocked in!

Well, should poor parking go into Room 101...? You decide!

Speed bumps - they're getting so common it's becoming difficult to find a road without them. But our local council is very helpful - they paint a yellow arrow head on them to show you exactly how to position your car to find the best place to ground your exhaust! There are some around us that are so high unless you take it at the right angle you can end up totally stranded, with all four wheels off the ground! Mind you – that does give you the opportunity for a quick wheel change without reverting to the use of jacks!

This makes me realise that speed bumps can have an advantage – I've discovered that if I park my S2 with the front wheels on top of the bump, I can fully open the bonnet without it grounding! This gives me the opportunity to check the oil and water – indeed give it a full service – if only I knew how!! So, if you see a TVR parked with it's front wheels on a speed bump, outside Woolies, and with the bonnet up – don't worry – it's not a breakdown – just someone doing some maintenance!

However, you do need to be careful doing “bonnet up” maintenance on the side of the road. A few years ago, when I had a car that was so old (and tatty) that it was insured against third party, fire and Viking attack, I broke down, and lifted the bonnet to have a look what might be wrong. Suddenly I felt the back being lifted, and when I looked round I was somewhat surprised to see a guy jacking it up at the back!

“What are you doing?” I asked, innocently.

“Well, if you're having the engine, I'm having the wheels!” he replied, and started to undo the rear wheel nuts!

But going back to speed bumps, if the authorities are going to insist on installing more and more of them, let's use them to our advantage. You will find that if you park with the real wheels on one you can get underneath to clean the back end of the stainless steel exhaust quite nicely!

I definitely think Speed Bumps should be relegated to Room 101. What do you think?

“Spiv Mechanics” – by those I mean the ones who are out to make a fast buck from drivers who know just about enough about a car to drive it, and nothing more. Like the one who told my sister in law that there was a lot of work needed on her Escort – for one thing her tyres were very quickly going black!

And then there was the one who told a customer, who discovered sawdust in his gearbox, that they had used it to “soak up the water”.

It's as if they can see an idiot coming a mile away, so much so that after I was “had” once, I checked the mirror to make sure there wasn't a sign on my t-shirt which said “This guy's a sucker – he'll buy anything!” If you think I'm joking, how many other people

would agree to pay the repair charges when they are told that the “side thrommit on their transverse wishbone” needs replacing!!

So “Spiv mechanics” really must go into room 101.

Smoking Drivers - and I don't mean “smokin'” as in fast and racey, I mean “smoking” as in “puff” (can I say that these days?). Why do people smoke and drive at the same time? It's bad enough following a smoking driver in a normal car with the air con on, at least you can turn it off and suffer recycled air for a few minutes, but in an open top Tiv, there's nothing you can do but breath in his or her cigarette fumes. Well, there is one alternative, and that is to overtake as quickly as possible – but the last time I did that, the other driver obviously though there was an wheeled ashtray passing, as he tried to flick his ash into my Tiv – or that's what it appeared to be!

Why do people light up at 70 mph on a motorway – when in practice they are sitting on 15 gallons of highly inflammable liquid?! And what happens when they drop their lighted fag into their laps – are they setting fires to their “ass-ets” or just potentially burning their futures?!

What do you reckon – should smoking drivers go into Room 101?

There are many more I could add, including hidden speed cameras, traffic jams (they really wind me up – especially on motorways when my lane ALWAYS goes slower than all the others!), and newly gritted road when I'm in the Tiv.

Definitely one candidate is the ubiquitous know-it-all. You often find them hanging round cars at shows and events – they are probably even some in the TVR Car Club. But they're not confined to car events. One of the people who works for me has just read this article, in draft form, and has informed me that “*Room 101 actually comes from George Orwell's novel 1984 – it's the place reserved for the worst things in the world*” - I hate know-it-alls who show me up as being not well read – he's definitely going into Room 101!

What, or who else, should be confined to this mythical room? Why not write in to Tony Connor with your thoughts? Maybe we could start a TVR 101 club!

Finally – my last suggestion - how about people who write ridiculous articles for car mags with no meaning whatsoever – and those people who read them – oops! there we all go then – into Room 101.....

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