

GROOVING WHILE CRUISING?

What do Busted, Blazing Squad, and Barry White all have in common? If played too loudly in cars they could be a big enough distraction to cause accidents on the roads, according to the RAC Foundation today.

The comments from the RAC Foundation follow the publication of new research by Canadian scientists, which showed that loud music can be a potential hazard to motorists, as it can cause significant increases in reaction time on the roads. The study found that reactions became slower by up to 20% when a person was subject to loud volumes – this is enough to cause a potentially fatal delay even for a motorist driving in good weather and at moderate speed.

In the study, people performed physical and mental tasks while listening to levels of noise varying from 53 decibels (about the level of an office environment) to 95 decibels (the equivalent of an oil rig). The results show that reaction times became significantly slower at higher noise levels for both physical and mental tasks. At the highest level, reaction times to tasks that involve decision making, slowed by 20%.

Previous research by the RAC Foundation also shows that as well as listening to music quietly, motorists should be careful to pick slower tempo music if they want to avoid an accident. The research found that drivers who were listening to music with a fast beat were twice as likely to go through a red light and have twice as many accidents.

The RAC Foundation has compiled a list of music to play while driving, albeit quietly:

1. Gary Jules – “Mad World”
2. Lemar – “Another Day”
3. Sugababes – “Too lost in You”
4. Blue – “Breathe Easy”
5. Norah Jones – “Come away with me”

Music to avoid includes:

1. Wagner “The ride of the Valkyries”
2. Prodigy – “Firestarter”
3. Basement Jaxx – “Red Alert”
4. Faithless – “Insomnia”
5. Verdi – “Dies Irae (Requiem)”

Edmund King, Executive Director of the RAC Foundation said:

“The findings of the Canadian study are bad news for decibel loving drivers, as they prove that not only is loud music a nuisance to others, it could also be the cause of accidents on the roads.

“Although the increased reaction time from playing loud music translates into mere fractions of a second, on the UK’s busy roads this Easter, this delay could mean the difference between a hit or a miss.

“We already know that continuous exposure to high levels of noise represents a real health risk, causing stress, hypertension and also potential hearing loss. Now this new research should make motorists think again before hitting the volume button on their car stereos.

“We would ask motorists to be responsible when driving and not put lives at risk for the sake of blasting out the latest tunes.”

Conrad King, Consultant Psychologist to the RAC Foundation, said:

“It is important that drivers choose their music carefully when driving, as uptempo music has been shown to cause drivers to have double the amount of accidents as those listening to slower music.

“In general, if music is above 60 beats per minute, listeners experience a faster heart rate and increased blood pressure. It doesn’t matter if you listen to opera, classical or the latest rave music. It’s the speed of the beat that counts.”

ENDS

Notes to editors:

The full title and contact details for the study are:

- **Contractile Activity and Noise Impair Simple and Complex Vigilance Tasks**
DUANE C. BUTTON, DAVID G. BEHM, and MICHAEL HOLMES
School of Human Kinetics and Recreation
Memorial University of Newfoundland
St. John’s, Newfoundland, Canada
- The Royal Automobile Club Foundation for Motoring Ltd is a charity which explores the economic, mobility, safety and environmental issues relating to roads and responsible road users. Independent and authoritative research, carried out for the public benefit, is central to the Foundation’s activities.