

[**ROADSIDE ASSIST**]

MIXED SIGNALS

My 2014 Hyundai i30's radio started playing up and the fault was listed with the dealer inside the car's five-year warranty. My warranty claim was rejected as apparently the head-unit came with only a three-year warranty. Who puts a different warranty on a head-unit and the rest of the car? I was told the fine print explaining this was somewhere in the owner's manual.

Terry Corcoran, email

Stereo head units having a shorter warranty than the rest of the car ... that's cheeky. Hyundai responded straight away, explaining: "Some of our previous models feature non-factory head units from Motrex and Cartronics, and these only come with three-year warranty. Hyundai's factory head units are five years." Good news is Hyundai's offered you a new head-unit. The manufacturer said you'd have to cover the labour charge for installation but your local dealer, McGrath Hyundai Liverpool, has come to the party and will waive the labour cost. Great result.



ROAD HITS THE RUBBER

My sister-in-law fitted four new tyres to her 2016 Ford Mustang before a road trip with her grandchildren from southern NSW to Darwin via country Victoria. They were the same Pirelli tyres as fitted to the car when new.

They were correctly inflated but wore out after just 4160km. She's a 56-year-old grandmother who doesn't drive hard.

The tyre guy at Coober Pedy said "Bloody Pirellis!" and charged her \$2000 for a full set of harder compound tyres. I know our sunburnt country has hot blacktop but aren't these tyres unfit for purpose and does she have recourse to make a claim with Pirelli?

Dave Andrews, email

A few things first. Over 4000km in a Mustang? To Darwin? With grandkids in those little seats? Must've been an epic adventure and, if it's a V8, the fuel bills must have been painful. I've looked at your supplied tyre picture and, yes, the wear is dramatic but far more pronounced on one side. This suggests improper wheel alignment. Was an alignment done after the Pirellis were fitted? As to recourse with Pirelli, that would be really difficult as it'd be impossible to prove how those 4000km were driven. Some owners on Mustang forums agree the model's fitted Pirellis wear out quickly and have fitted a rival brand. I'd do the same.

BACK YOURSELF

Re Bounce the Czech, congratulations on keeping your cool with some aggressive, near-abusive letters, defending your choice of owning a Skoda. We boys are protective of our toys and our buying decisions ... but fair dinkum, why shoot the messenger?

Denis Sime, email

Thanks, Denis, a bit of ribbing's always welcome, as long as it's (fairly) clean. It'll admit owning a Skoda wagon doesn't help my street cred as much as a True Blue V8 would but when the kids move out of home I'm sure the toy collection will be more hairy-chested.



EYES UP, SPEAK UP

Re Driven to Distraction. If you take eyes off the road for 15 seconds at 100km/h to fiddle with your car screen's radio or GPS, you may feel your wheels drop off the edge or face a head-on crash. Large centre dash screens also kill your night vision, even when dimmed down, so you don't see that 'roo in your path until it's too late.

Steve G, email

Fair points. Using centre screens, while certainly safer than trying to covertly use your smartphone in your lap, is distracting. It's up to the driver (or better yet, passenger) to use the screen responsibly to minimise time with eyes off the road. As previously mentioned, I'd compel drivers to master their car's voice assist technology (if fitted), or phone's voice assist (like Siri) if the car has smartphone mirroring. That way, your eyes never need leave the road.

HARD TO JUSTIFY

Could you please explain the advantage of owning a car that goes from standstill to 100km/h in, say, six seconds over one that does it in eight? Are these speeds achieved by "flooring it"? Is the objective to be first away from the lights?

John Donaghey, email

Sensible answer: you want that sort of response for safer overtaking and merging. The real answer:

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rapid acceleration is fun. Manufacturers typically boast about 0-100km/h times to signify sportiness, and most of us are suckers for that. Yes, "flooring it" is the way to get fastest times. A car hitting 100km/h in eight seconds is plenty quick enough – but it's when driving one that takes 12 seconds (think Honda Jazz) you realise it's sometimes hard to keep up with traffic. As for hypercars doing 100km/h in under three seconds ... Pointless. Only because I can't afford one.

COMING DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

Re using manual gears for braking. I'm 64 and was taught to come down a hill in the same gear you went up it. I drive up and down 1243m Brown Mountain (NSW) and the burning brake smell from other drivers using only their brakes is a give-away. They cook their pads and rotors and have no brakes by the bottom.

Ron Blackwell, email

Sage advice. Coming down mountain roads, best to use lower gears to save brakes. This applies to manual and auto transmissions alike.



FAITHFUL SERVANT

My father has owned Ford LTDs and Fairlane Ghias for more than 30 years, always fitted with LPG. He currently has a 2002 LTD, used as a chauffeur hire car, which has just ticked past 888,888km. It had a transmission issue 20 years back but dad's mechanic says it's still his best car. Does he sell it or will it increase in value?

Skye Shipman, email

I've seen your dad's LTD AU II in the classifieds

and it looks gorgeous. It hides its age and the distance it has covered. Personally I'd keep it, as it's been a loyal and reliable rig but I wouldn't expect a big bump in value anytime soon. LTDs from the mid-70s are on sale for \$30,000-plus but your dad's 20-year-old LTD with such high kilometres, thirsty 5.0-litre V8 and expensive rego sadly won't appeal to many buyers, especially as it can't go on cheaper historic rego for another decade.



Coming to grips with car buying

THE LEAST YOU SHOULD DO IS SIT IN THE VEHICLE FIRST

Geoff Gwilym VACC CEO



There's a lot of discussion in the automotive industry at the moment around methods of buying cars and, of course, buying them online is very topical.

That's all good, but there are some things the internet cannot provide: like the all-important aspects of how a car feels to sit in and how it drives.

Head room, audio quality, luggage space... There's a lot to think about. So it's still very useful to see a car 'in the flesh' before buying it.

Just sitting in a car is very important.

The main reason for this is that many vehicles have steering wheels and control pedals that are off-set. That is, they're not always in direct alignment to the driver.

Off-set pedals can be part of the overall vehicle design and build process. Often they're placed slightly to one side of the footwell due to the available vehicle space or the location of the mechanicals of the car.

This isn't generally a problem but it pays to check that a comfortable and safe sitting position isn't compromised by the location of the steering wheel or pedals.

This is especially important if you happen to be buying a car for your young adult children. It's probably something they wouldn't consider when they see a car online.

Steering wheels often have lots of adjustment but foot pedals less so. Either way, ask your licensed car dealer about pedal and steering wheel placement and make sure you spend a few minutes making sure your body and the car's ergonomics are compatible.

Prepared by the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce in the interest of better motoring.

Share your thoughts
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