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EDITORIAL

Are the New Zealand drivers really the worst in the world? Maybe not, but they are certainly pretty bad if you compare them with yourself according to a little known but very ingenious formula which goes like this:

ANY SLOW DRIVER THAT HOLDS YOU UP ON THE ROAD IS OBVIOUSLY AN IDIOT AND EVERY FAST DRIVER THAT PASSES YOU MUST BE A MANIAC.

This means that the only driver with any common sense on the road is of course YOU. This makes you some sort of an expert in driving and as such you are entitled to voice your opinion about your fellow drivers and to look critically at their deficiencies.

No doubt that, in your mind, you will have put your fellow drivers into various categories. So let us have a quick look at some of them. (Note from the Editor: To simplify this exposé, only the masculine gender has been used, not because we are sexist, but simply because it takes less space to write "he" than "she". So throughout the text please read "she" for "he" and "her" for "him" if you are a female driver).

The SPEEDSTER and the SNAIL. Strangely enough, they have much in common. They are both egoists, think-

ing that the road should only be there for them and no one else. Neither can stand to see a car in front of them. The Speedster reacts by trying to pass as quickly as possible anyone in sight, often with complete disregard to any traffic regulations, whilst the Snail keeps slowing down so as to leave a huge gap between himself and the car ahead of him. Both are a pest.

Beware of the MAN WITH HAT driver (the urban type, not the farmer). He is invariably a very slow driver. He is most likely a bald-headed pensioner with plenty of time on his hands, a man who has probably already forgotten what he is doing on the road, where he is going and why. So he is obviously not in a hurry to get wherever he is supposed to go.

The LOST driver is a dangerous species because you have no idea (and neither has he) what he is going to do next. He has lost his way, he is desperately looking for a road sign, a street name or perhaps just a house number. He is likely to stop at any time in the middle of the road, turn right when his left indicator is blinking or even reverse in the face of oncoming traffic if he has overshot a turn off or a house number. While he is trying to find what he is looking for, he has totally forgotten about other traffic on the road.

A master of confusion is the WEEK-END driver. He tries unsuccessfully to combine the driving of a car with sight-seeing, but achieves neither. But he is a master in creating chaos on the road wherever he goes. Let a few hesitant and wavering Weekend drivers loose in the centre of a city and they will soon create bigger traffic jams, mayhems and commotion than thousands of week-day commuters could ever produce.

The JACK-IN-THE-BOX driver is an upsetting element in city traffic. First you do not see him, next second he sits right in front of you. His unnerving trick is to sit in a parking spot or by a side street, waiting nervously to slip into the main traffic stream. He is unable to judge distances and so he is more likely than not ready to make his move when you are almost on top of him. The sudden realisation that you almost rammed him because of his erratic move, robs him of all his energy and while he is trying to regain his composure, he will sit in front of you for the next few hundred meters at a maximum speed of 20 km per hour, leaving you hot and frustrated in his wake.

A peculiar driver is the SLOW TO FAST driver. He drives along quite contentedly at 80 km on the motorway until you pass him at a 100. The next thing you know, he sits on your tail and then accelerates to pass you at 150 km per hour. The smaller your car is compared to his, the more aggressive his manoeuvre will be. Now, please ban the nasty thought from your mind that

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all he wanted to do was to show off his fast car. The reason was probably that he just remembered an almost forgotten but urgent appointment with his dentist or that he suffered a sudden severe attack of diarrhoea and was speeding off in search of the nearest public toilet. That sounds much more plausible, doesn't it?

The FAST LANE HOGGER is a curse. He sits there at 80 km in the fast lane of your motorway, not giving a hoot about the frustrated drivers behind him who desperately try to pass him on the inside lane. (New Zealand must have the biggest percentage of such drivers in the world. In other parts of the world, such drivers would be pulled out of the traffic in no time by the police, but not so in New Zealand).

A gentle but frustrating driver is the DREAMER. His mind is miles away from the road, in a world of his own, where no other traffic exists. Red traffic lights put him into a trance from which only harsh honking will revive him when the lights turn green and, by the time his brain is back on the job, his hand has released the hand-break and pushed the gear lever, the traffic light is red again.

The STARER is another peculiar breed, easily recognisable. He sits hunched forward on this seat, hands gripping the steering wheel so tightly that his knuckles turn white, his eyes sternly focused on a spot some 3 meters in front of his car. He certainly drives every meter of the road. For him, no time to look around for other traffic, no time for a glance in the rear-mirror, all his attention is solely concentrated on one spot and one spot only: the spot

on the road 3 meters in front of the bonnet of his car.

The TAIL-ENDER is a very unnerving driver. He sits on your tail, 2 meters behind your car and no matter whether you slow down or speed up, he will sit there as if glued to your car. Your blood pressure goes up as you keep glancing in your rear mirror and noticing his menacing presence like a shark pursuing its prey. There is only one way to shake him off: pull over and stop your car and the Tailender will at long last pass you, because the fun stops for him the moment you stop your car. For him, there is absolutely no fun in parking his car a meter behind yours. Like sharks, he has to keep moving and his kind of weird amusement is to stalk his victims, sit on their tails and drive them out of their minds.

Another driver who plays havoc with your blood pressure is the MISCHIEVOUS driver. He loves to trundle along at slow speed when he spots a green traffic light in the distance. Sitting behind him, you wish you could kick him along because you can see that you are both going to miss that green light. And sure enough, the light turns yellow which is the signal for your driver in front to take off like a shot and pass the light just as it switches to red. You feel in your bones that the guy must be laughing at you being stuck and fuming at that traffic light which seemingly will not turn green again for an eternity.

The LATE RISE driver is a common sight in the morning rush hour traffic. He is the guy who got up too late and did not have time to get all the usual chores done at home before jumping into his car. So, while driving along, he has his breakfast, he reads his morning newspaper or has a shave, using the rear mirror of his car as his bathroom mirror. Instead of shaving, the woman driver will use the rear mirror to apply lipstick and mascara, powder her nose or glue on her false eyelashes and all this while driving in heavy traffic.

Another driver who is totally oblivious to other traffic is the TALKING driver. He either has a lively conversation on his mobile phone or possibly a solid argument with his girl friend next to him. In either case, his mind is obviously not on the job of driving his car and you are well advised to keep away from him.

And finally there is the CHINAMAN, truly a driver in a class of his own. He is invariably a slow and erratic driver, likely to change lanes

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without warning. And as he is usually accompanied by at least another 4 to 5 drivers, all members of his family, all sitting in the same car, neither of whom seeming to be able to see above the dashboard, but all obviously having different ideas as to where their car should go, the Chinaman is a formidable obstacle in any sort of traffic.

But where the Chinaman really comes into his own is in front of a Chinese shop. For him there is only one single spot to park and that is right in front of the entrance to the store. But as this spot is usually taken by a likewise thinking Chinese driver, our Chinaman has no other solution than to stop his car and to wait until the spot becomes free. And so he double or treble parks for as long as it takes, totally oblivious to the fact that the 3 lane rush hour traffic behind him suddenly has to squeeze into the one and only remaining lane in order to pass him. And no amount of honking, blinking of lights or swearing at him will ruffle his stoic composure as he sits there, treble parked, an immovable rock awash in swirling traffic, his eyes sternly fixed on the one spot which he will eventually get within the next hour or so.

Of course there are many more types of erratic, stupid, inconsiderate, slow and fast drivers and your list could go on and on. As indicated at the beginning of this article, one thing is absolutely crystal clear: YOU ARE NOT ONE OF THEM. You are the only driver in total control of your car at all times, a no nonsense driver who will never do anything wrong. Think of that next time you hit the car behind you when you try to get out of a tight parking spot. It will do wonders for your ego...

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