

WHAT ARE WE DOING ABOUT EXHAUST NOISE?

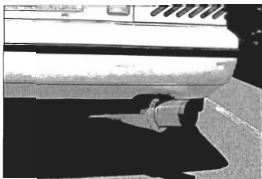
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One of the more intrusive noises heard in most cities is that produced by the exhausts of "hotted up" cars and motor cycles. Some of the worst examples are large motorcycles of the Harley Davidson type, small high-revving motorcycles, and cars that have been fitted with large-diameter modified exhaust systems. All of these can (and often do!) produce noise levels greatly in excess of those of buses or heavy trucks, and the bikes usually carry only one person. Is there something that the Society can and should do?

In the July/August 2005 issue of the NRMA magazine *The Open Road* their New Vehicle Evaluation Specialist, Tim Pomroy, is quoted as saying "The whole aim [of modified exhaust systems] is to reduce the restriction in the exhaust to maximise performance, but the reality is it doesn't deliver huge gains and it's more about noise than anything else. What's the use of having a V8 if it doesn't have the noise? It's partly an ego trip, partly personality and partly the show-off factor." The effect is then greatly magnified by the "hoon" habits of those driving these vehicles, who like to use maximum acceleration whenever possible and to produce maximum noise.

According to the article, the current statutory limit for exhaust noise is 90 dB(A), and this has not been reduced for many years. In addition, compulsory vehicle inspections have now largely been abandoned, so that non-complying vehicles are not identified except by their long-suffering neighbours.



Is it perhaps time for the Society to pressure government agencies to undertake more random roadside noise checks? The procedure for such checks is not complex, but is it currently adequate? The cost of sound level meters of adequate sensitivity and accuracy is almost trivial. Perhaps it is also time to tighten the noise emission standards by around 10 dB – surely acoustic muffler technology has progressed in the past twenty years! And while we are about it, let's do something about exhaust noise from lawnmowers – a mower rated "75 dB(A)" is still awfully loud!

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