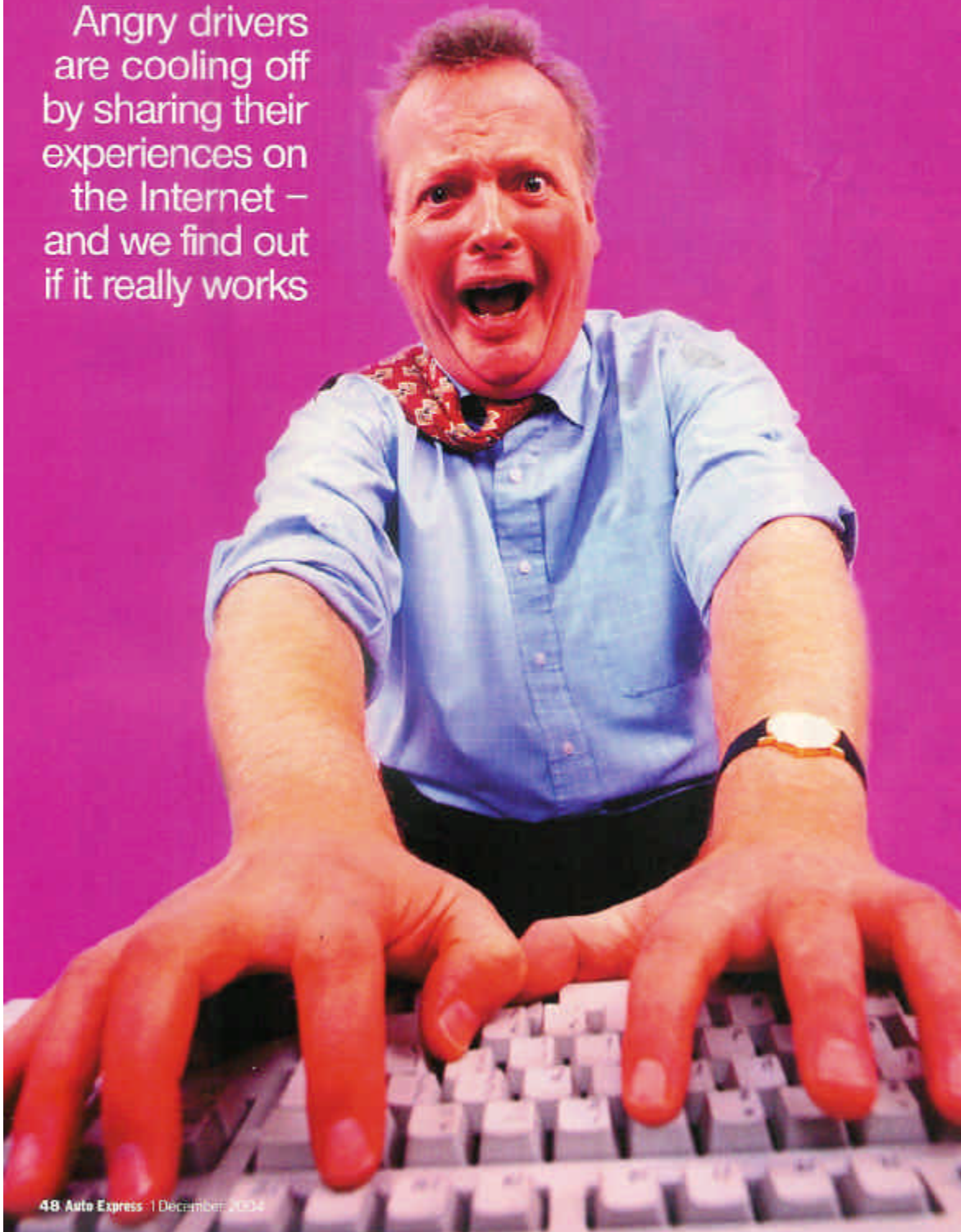


DON'T GET MAD GET ONLINE

Angry drivers are cooling off by sharing their experiences on the Internet – and we find out if it really works



DON'T get angry, get a website! That's the latest message from motoring enthusiasts across the UK who are using the Internet to highlight any number of car-related issues. Having problems with a new vehicle and can't get any help from the dealer? Set up

a website to vent your spleen. Fed up with roadside cameras or speed humps? Get creating online. There are scores of people with a burning desire to put right wrongs or place motoring issues before a potentially global audience – and here's a dozen of the best...

Disgruntled **Russell Hughes** decided to set up www.sparewheeltheftco.uk after Vauxhall showed no interest when he complained about his Zafira's spare being stolen for a fifth time. "Having paid the best part of £15,000 for the car I was disgusted at how the firm implied I was responsible," said Russell. "My MPV is locked at night with nothing left on view – but I was unaware I was supposed to take the spare from under the back end and put it in the boot every evening, too!"

Russell, from Ealing, West London, discovered he wasn't alone in suffering this kind of problem. He added: "The Internet provides a fantastic platform for talking to thousands of people. Monitoring contributors' reactions to their personal situations, which have ranged from sheer anger to physical sickness, has been a real eye-opener for me."

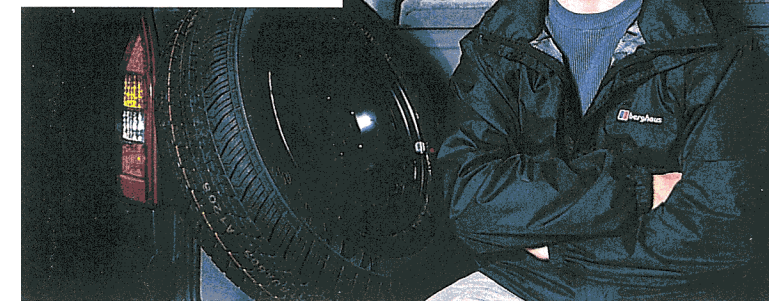
Suffering

Since June, 145 people have registered on Russell's website. "I'm pleased that I can provide a sounding board; I'm not 'healed' by doing it, but it's good to know I'm not suffering in silence," he told us.

Paul Smith started www.safespeed.org.uk as a hobby to explain why he believed the Government's attitude to speeding is wrong. Now, 18 months later he's working on the page full-time. "I have spent 1500 hours setting up and expanding the site, and to date it has around 350,000 words on it," revealed Paul, from near Inverness. "I was touched by stories I read of people losing their jobs because they got caught speeding by cameras. The resulting penalty points on their licence meant they were banned from driving, which they needed to do for work. I started researching the issue. I believe the UK is going down a route based on the false assumption that having cameras monitoring our roads will reduce speeding."

Thinking about buying a new motor? There's a wealth of material on the Web about models, but how much of it can you trust? That's what led to www.peachorlemon.co.uk being set up. Ken Gardner started the site after struggling to get problems on his VW Golf sorted out. "I said to my son, Kevin, 'let's create a website on car comments', without really thinking where it would end or who would bother to write to us." "At first, my contribution was the only one but steadily the site has grown. All we want is for consumers to have knowledge and confidence to stop garages from saying those immortal words: 'never heard of that problem, guv.'"

If you're fed up with traffic regulations that make your life harder you might want take a look at the www.pooks.fsbusiness.co.uk website. The man behind it, mobile refrigeration engineer **Des H Marcus**, from Liverpool, explained: "I was sick and tired of trying to find a parking space just so I could do my job properly. I felt that not enough was being done to highlight the problem." Des



Vauxhall's response over five Zafira spare wheel thefts led Russell Hughes to start website



Ed Gillespie has used Net to try to give a balanced view on London's £5 congestion charge



Urban check? Sian Berry condemns city-bound 4x4s online, and by 'ticketing' them on street

reckons action is needed now, or – as his site says – Liverpool will become "the capital of culture that flushed itself down the toilet".

Not everyone who sets up motoring websites is a car fan. Congestion charging enthusiast **Ed Gillespie** created www.wiseupandpay.co.uk to explain the positive aspects of road tolling. He told us: "When the scheme began in London, I thought most of the media coverage was negative and no one would trumpet the success it might bring. "I wanted more debate on the issue. The website has a sense of humour and isn't at all preachy. It received a hostile reception at first, but since then we've had loads of support." Website developer **Marc Kranat** started his www.freelanderheadgasket.co.uk page after the engine failed on his low-mileage Land Rover. But it was the subsequent poor relations with the dealer and manufacturer that really got him mad. "When I received a call from the managing director of Land Rover demanding I take the website down, I felt better," he revealed. "I guess the healing process will be complete when I buy a Mitsubishi!" Needless to say, the page is still live.

Sian Berry is someone else who's not a fan of cam – well, not of SUVs, anyway. Their increasing popularity led to www.stopurban4x4s.org.uk – her stand against the vehicles. "People who buy off-roaders don't fully appreciate how dangerous and dirty they are for cities," she explained. There has been plenty of interest in Sian's site, although not everyone's happy with the 'parking tickets' she's been leaving on 4x4s to make her point.

Message

An impressive 500 people a month are using the www.greatwyrley.org.uk website, which was created by Wyrley Residents Against The Humps (WRATH). It has information about the roads in the tiny Staffordshire village of Great Wyrley – and is the work of former IT lecturer **Joseph Gregory**. "Our group backs properly planned traffic calming, but we're opposed to speed bumps," he said. "The site aims to get this message to a wider audience." Had your motor nicked? Then let off steam and try to find it at the www.twoc.co.uk page. "Two of my family's cars were stolen, and neither was recovered," said the man behind it, who asked to remain anonymous. "It's a general failing of the police, and the response has been overwhelming. "I have received nothing but support from the motorists who have suffered in a similar way. I have even e-mailed all the police chief constables in the country, although only one has bothered to come back to me. His reply? 'We do not endorse commercial ventures'. Great!"

And finally, it's not only the Brits who are Mr or Mrs Angry when it comes to car issues. After a few minutes of searching on the Internet, we found several websites where the Americans are sounding off about... well, you can probably work that out for yourself! Simply visit www.dontbuyford.com or www.myauditsucks.com – and what about the <http://kia.in.for.repairs.itgo.com> website, if you've got a few minutes to spare..?

Paul Smith
www.safespeed.org.uk

Site is a sounding board for anti-Gatso campaign



Ken Gardner
www.peachorlemon.co.uk

Make good or negative comments about your own motor



Des H Marcus
www.pooks.fsbusiness.co.uk

Have your say about parking or city traffic regulations



Marc Kranat
www.freelanderheadgasket.co.uk

Off-roader owner lets off steam on trouble with maker



Joseph Gregory
www.greatwyrley.org.uk

Residents' site calls for speed humps to be ditched



Anonymous creator
www.twoc.co.uk

Car theft victims can find support online



US Kia owner
<http://kia.in.for.repairs.itgo.com>

American site slams firm over its quality problems



I said to my son, 'let's create a website for people's comments about cars', not really thinking where it would end or if anyone would write in, but it has steadily grown. All we want is for consumers to have knowledge about motoring problems

Ken Gardner, co-creator of car faults website www.peachorlemon.co.uk