

relevant at all. And nor was Hitler. And nor was Jimi Hendrix. Truth is, in four-hundredths of a second absolutely nothing that you do or say will make the slightest bit of difference. For 4600 million years you weren't born, and you'll be dead for even longer so it is therefore vital that you explode out of the womb like your hair is on fire. In real time, you've only got 600,000 hours and then you'll wind up on the wrong side of the flowerbed.

So what's the best course of action? Well you could watch *Pride and Prejudice* which manages to make an hour seem like a day, but prolonging a boring life is worse than not starting it in the first place. That's why you must also not drive one of the new Toyota Corollas. Certainly, it is not exciting to behold. Yes, it has a bobby-dazzler of a radiator grille and the sort of eyes that only exist deep in the ocean where light is at a premium. But from this point backwards, there is a styling vacuum whether you're talking about the saloon, the estate, the liftback or the hatch. However, this time round there is a sporty figure-head – the G6. (I always thought it was G7, but perhaps Japan got lobbed out for making dull cars.) Anyway, this has some definite sporting overtones, in the shape of alloy wheels, red instrumentation and a leather steering wheel. There is a nifty little six-speed 'box too, which beeps when you put it into reverse.

Excited? Thinking of getting one? Well whoa there, because it is powered by a 1300cc engine, the smallest of all the new Corolla's power plants. This means old people in their not-at-all-sporty 1.6 litre liftback will be able to blow you away at the lights. Toyota argue that by putting a small engine in the G6 they've kept insurance costs

down. But that's like choosing a mild curry in case your arse hurts in the morning. Life's too short to be bothered about insurance premiums. Or a fiery ring-piece. The G6 Corolla amazed me, time and again. No matter what I threw in its direction, it behaved like the school swat and refused to join in the fun. The engine is actually quite sweet and the gear change utterly delightful, but to take it through the gears is about as rewarding as eating flour.

One night, I sneaked it into a stubble field, knowing that any form of motorized transport is a laugh when there's 100 acres and a surface slippery enough to be an East End geezer. I did some handbrake turns and generally looned about and came home suffering from acute stupefaction. Honestly, I'd have been better off reading a book with an orange spine.

The G6 is, far and away, the most idiotic way of blowing £14,000. This is a car for people who see life as a chore to be undertaken, rather than as an experience to be milked. It is for a cardigan-wearing, non-smoking gardening fanatic who thinks 'E' is a vowel. It is for people who think that living to be 75, rather than 70, really matters. It is therefore not for you, and it sure as hell is not for me.

Spelling out the danger from Brussels

Last week I had to make the annual trudge to Germany, where I spent two days living on a diet of beer that tastes like chlorine and sausages that get up and walk home if you push them to the side of the plate.

The biggest trouble with Germany though, is that you feel duty-bound when on a derestricted and quiet piece of autobahn to travel as fast as the car will go.

This was a huge worry last week because I was in a 7.3 litre Brabus-tuned V12 Mercedes that had wormed its way into *The Guinness Book of Records* by doing 206mph and thus becoming the fastest saloon in the world. Incidentally, 206mph is classified by scientists as f***** fast.

Now call me a wetty if you like, but I chickened out when the clock wound its way round to 300kph, which works out, in English, at 186.

At this speed you see a truck and wham, you're in its cab, bleeding. You're covering ground at the rate of 272 feet a second, so that if you sneeze you can miss an entire country.

Everyone who reckons the 70mph speed limit in this country is silly and old-fashioned should be made to do 186 because I feel sure most would sing a different song afterwards. 'Radar Love' would be replaced with some happy-clappy gospel. 186mph puts you on the next table to God. 186mph is seriously scary.

But in Germany it is also legal. Now that's interesting in these days of Euro unity, because at the exact moment I was chanting Hail Marys in my supersonic Brabus Benz, a friend of mine was rubbing his rosary in a Norfolk courtroom.

He'd been caught doing 107mph in a county where people still point at aeroplanes. Astonished magistrates who had only read of such speeds in Isaac Asimov books took away his licence for three weeks and fined him £600 plus costs.

They're right, of course. We can't have people doing 107mph on dual carriageways, and the punishment needs to be severe. The whole of Western Europe is clear on that, but what would happen, I wonder, if a pan-European speed limit were to be mooted by the European Union? For once, I suspect, Mr Kohl's Helmut really would turn purple.

The Germans like the idea of ultra-high-speed travel. It means they can get home faster and therefore have more time to eat sausages. They don't want to be told by a bunch of meddlers that they must slow down, and that's fair enough too.

There are age-old customs in each European country and we can't bulldoze them away in a pointless quest for uniformity. That's why I'm so pathological about this drink driving business. As regular readers of this column know, Kinnock wants our limit brought down from 80 mg in a vat of blood to just 50, so that we stand alongside the French.

Thus, if you are caught driving home after drinking a pint, you will lose your licence for a year and be fined until you're urinating lemon juice. You will then lose your job and your wife will run off with a fitness instructor who has a Porsche.

But in France things are somewhat different. If you're over the 50 mg limit, you get three points on your licence and an on-the-spot fine of 900FF. If you break the 80 mg barrier – the current British limit – you get six points and a slightly bigger fine. You need to be hog-whimperingly drunk before they'll take your licence and, even then, you can get it back if you go on a two-day road safety course.

So, we may end up with the same limit as France but

the punishments could not be further apart, and this is just one more example of Britain being kept in the dark and kicked around by the Continental bullies.

The only shred of dignity Britain will have left after Europe becomes an amorphous blob is the English language, which most experts agree should become the official Euro-tongue.

However, a secret document allegedly found in a BMW communiqué to Rover suggests that even this might be tweaked a bit.

It says that English spelling does leave room for improvement and that a five-year plan has been drawn up to develop EuroEnglish. In the first year, 's' will be used instead of the soft 'c' and 'k' will replace the hard 'c'.

Not only will this klear up konfuzion and make the life of sivil servants easier, but also komputer keyboards will need one less key.

There will be growing publik enthusiasm in the sekond year, when the troublesome 'ph' will be replased with an 'f'. This will make words like 'fotograf' 20 per sent shorter.

In the third year, publik akseptanse of the new spelling kan be expekted to get to a stage where more komplicated alterations are possible. So double letters will be removed to inkrease the likelihood of akurate speling. And the horrible mess of the silent 'e' wil be banished.

By the fourth yar, peopl will be reseptiv to steps like replasing 'th' by 'z' and 'w' by 'v'.

During ze fifz yar, ze unecesary 'o' kan be dropd from vords kontaining 'ou', and similar modifikations vud of kors be aplid to ozer kombinations of leters.

After zis fifz yar, we wil hav a sensibl riten styl. Zer vil

be no mor trubls or difikultis and evrivun vil find it ezi tu understand ech ozer.

Ze drem vil finali kum tru.

Dog's dinner from Korea

All week, I've been watching newsreel footage from South Korea of International Monetary Fund bankers trying to sort out what economists call a big financial mess.

It seems that most of the banks are technically insolvent, having been forced by the government to finance massive growth in the industrial sector — growth that just didn't translate into sales.

Now of course, it would be easy for fat Westerners to sit back over a glass of port and laugh, saying they grew too fast and now they've fallen over. *Filthy little yellow nouveaus. Got what was coming.* But when the people of a country are having to fill a van with money every time they want a pound of rice, that country is weak. And sitting right on South Korea's border is North Korea, a country that spends all *its* money on plutonium and mad German scientists. If the West does nothing, the Far East could become mushroom city.

And then you've got that oriental dignity to deal with. Analysts seem to be saying South Korea really needs a loan of \$40 billion yet they've only asked for £2.50.

So, all things considered, it can't have been much fun this week for the IMF Shylocks. All that political and economic turmoil to worry about, and nothing to look forward to at night except another plate of roast dog.