

# Radium Audio sound out silent but deadly electric cars



A new breed of silent but deadly electric cars threatening to knock cyclists and the blind for six has prompted EU lawmakers to consider legislating that such vehicles must generate sound - even if artificial.

Using sonic waves to locate vehicles might not be as batty as it sounds for a new breed of artificial sounds offer scope for manufacturers to tag particular brands with specific audio but will the result be harmonious or a cacophony? Already many manufacturers are already steering away from drab engine noises toward appropriately sci-fi staples such as the podracers of Star Wars fame.



Radium Audio are conducting pioneering work in the field in a bid to elicit what most impacts upon pedestrians whilst steering clear of the irritating bleeping noise which accompanies reversing trucks. But is there an opening here for canny marketers to co-opt the legislation for advertorial purposes? The Drum sounded out Radium's Andrew Diey to find out.

"Take cash till registers at Sainsbury's or Tesco's, they have the legacy bleep. That's the bleep that happens when you put a barcoded item through the till. That's been designed by engineers and is purely functional. When you incorporate the functional with design then you start to get interesting things happening.

"The way we're hearing this is there is a massive opportunity for brands to do a couple of very important things. First of all it's very important to make sure that the safety aspect is there because when the car is below 20mph it becomes silent and people have grown accustomed to audio cues from cars because your brain picks up certain engine sounds. When those sounds are not there your brain sometimes doesn't make the correlation between the car approaching and impacting.

"The challenge for car manufacturers such as Lotus is how to create a sound that's both functional in very bad weather conditions but also creates a branded sound experience where each car has its own tonality."

Though still in development expect to see (and hear) electric cars make an appearance on our roads in the years ahead as motorists cure their petrol addiction.