

## Vroom, Vrooom!

Written by James Randi  
Friday, 09 January 2009 00:00

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Reader Matthew Kleckner sends us to [this site](#) to see a frightening item about superstition in Nigeria. He writes:

Motorcyclists sometimes get upset by laws requiring them to wear helmets, but in Nigeria people have gone off the deep end. According to an article on the BBC website, passengers fear:

...that the helmets could be used by motorcyclists to cast spells on their clients, making it easy for them to be robbed. "Some people can put juju inside the helmets and when they are worn the victim can either lose consciousness or be struck dumb," passenger Kolawole Aremu told the Daily Trust newspaper.

I admit, I would be curious to see a study comparing people knocked unconscious because they were wearing helmets vs. those knocked unconscious because they were *not* wearing helmets. Further, in response to the law requiring the wearing of helmets, some motorbike operators have begun wearing dried pumpkin shells instead. I would also be curious to know why a normal helmet can have juju "put inside it," while a dried pumpkin shell does not raise these concerns.

Randi comments: This may give deeper meaning to the old designation given to stupid people who are often referred to as, "pumpkin-heads." Just a thought... Matthew goes on:

Ultimately, though, I think this article highlights one of the real dangers of woo-woo, which is

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that it causes people to ignore effective precautions or treatments in favor of abject quackery. Belief in woo-woo now demonstrably causes people to believe that a protective helmet is more likely to cause head injury than to prevent it.

Thanks again for the many years of hard work and dedication to thinking clearly and critically.

As this item clearly shows, Matthew, I take much of my inspiration and information from those folks - like yourself - who care to inform me of the universal invasion of woo-woo and keep me abreast of the battle to bring reason to those who might wish to improve their lives by accepting rational and critical thinking as their way of life. It's never-ending, but it's gratifying to know that one's efforts are appreciated...