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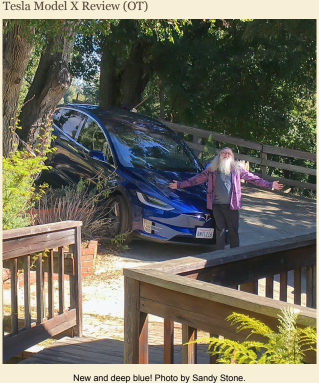
Thursday, 12 March 2020

Tesla Model X Review (OT)



New and deep blue! Photo by Sandy Stone.

Written by **Ctein**

I am really loving my new Tesla Model X. I guess I better when I spend close to $100K on a car, but it's nice when there's not any buyer's remorse.

The only thing Paula and I don't like about it is that it's larger than we're used to—it's a standard sedan chassis and we are used to compact cars, so it's taking a little bit to get adjusted to a car that's a foot wider and two feet longer.

A small disappointment—with all the high-speed freeway driving, the range is significantly less than EPA figures. I get about 80% of official. That turns out to be surprisingly significant with the kind of driving I do, but it is what it is. Can't really fault the electric for that; if I were driving an ICE [*internal combustion engine vehicle —Ed.*] at an average 70–75 mph, I wouldn't get EPA mileage either.

On the other hand, Tesla keeps rolling out software tweaks that improve the efficiency, which is *not* something that would happen with an ICE.

Quality control is everything you've heard about Tesla. That is, crappy. Fortunately, the D minus they get in manufacturing QC is offset by the A plus they get in servicing. Going in, we were prepared for that, and, yes, we've had two warranty fixes so far. The first was a wire harness obstructing the front camera. Not a common thing—the service manager had never seen that failure before—but one that should never have gotten out of the factory. If any kind of check were done on the cameras it would have been very obvious.

The second was that the actuator arm on the passenger side door popped off the ball joint. That is also uncommon but wouldn't show up in normal QC. I'm guessing the socket or the ball sleeve was slightly out of tolerance. That was something Tesla could fix in the field. Within 48 hours they had a technician out to the house who pulled the door apart and replaced the entire actuator motor assembly. Very probably the problem was only in the socket/sleeve, which would've taken five minutes to swap, but he agreed with me that it wasn't worth the risk of having to make another trip out, so he spent most of an hour replacing the entire assembly.

My unexpected-favorite things are the navigation system display and the heated steering wheel. I didn't imagine that I would care about the latter in California's mild climate, but I chill easily and my hands are what gets cold first. Heating up the steering wheel for a few minutes makes me a lot more comfortable. I know, wimpy Californians.

The navigation display might be the best safety feature in the whole car. It makes use of the in-dash display where the speedometer lives—the navigation map appears right next to the speed. It takes about one second to glance at it for driving instructions, as opposed about three seconds for an off-axis nav display.

The adaptive cruise control works extremely well and does the right thing 99+ percent of the time. It takes a whole lot of the stress out of driving in traffic and works perfectly in stop-and-go traffic. The autosteering/autopilot is not so good. Definitely reduces the stress of driving, and it's entirely reliable in stop-and-go, but normally I have to keep close tabs on it. Because it makes mistakes. Paula's description was to think of it like a horse: Most of the time it will do the right thing, but it lacks common sense and every so often it gets spooked or makes an entirely wrong decision. Me, I think student driver. Still, the two features make my driving a whole lot less difficult.

Also, the sound system, which seems to be the best way I have to listen to music in or out of the house. Sandy, my expert sound-engineer sweetie, says that it's Bose and it's top-notch. I was pretty happy with my Audioengine 5+'s until I heard the Tesla sound.

Ctein and his Tesla Model X in Daly City. Photo by Laura Majerus.

Getting used to everything being automated was disturbingly easy. When I walk up to the car, it unlocks the driver side door. When I get within about two feet of it, it swings it wide open, retracts the steering wheel, and moves the driver's seat all the way back to make it easy to get in. Once in the car, pressing the brake pedal moves the seat and the steering wheel back to the position I saved for them (I can save preferences for any number of drivers) and closes the door.

I didn't realize how used I was becoming to these features until I had to drive the Chevy HHR (which we still have) a couple of weeks ago. I walked up to the car and it took me several seconds to remember how to make it work.

Overall, it's difficult to describe the driving experience. My general comment is that "Friends don't let friends drive Teslas." It's like crack on wheels. The Tesla engineers borrowed a big page from Apple design philosophy when they came up with their luxury models. They thought long and hard about how many things people find annoying about driving and how many of those they could fix with existing hardware and software. It's far from perfect but it must be way ahead of whatever is in second place.

If Tesla ever really does get fully autonomous driving, Paula and I will be in heaven—I paid for the full (nonexistent!) package when I bought the car in hopes for the future. We aren't counting on it, no matter what Elon Musk smokes. Based on the performance of the current software, it isn't remotely close, not even for freeway driving. But Tesla is closer than anybody else, so that's where I've put my money.

I'm still getting used to the performance—this is a luxury car that handles and accelerates like a sports car. It'll pull two thirds of a G and doesn't bank a smidge on tight turns. I've been doing a lot of runs down Highway 1 to Santa Cruz (where Sandy lives) which is two-lane highway for much of the way. South of Half Moon Bay, it's normal to be passing tourists and beach visitors who are driving the 55-MPH speed limit, which nobody trying to get from Point A to Point B observes.

The first time I passed a 55 MPH-er, I did what I would usually do—push the pedal to the metal to get past as quickly as possible. I passed them at 98 MPH! I suppose that's really nice for *my* safety, but I'm not trying to scare the crap out of other drivers on the road. I'm having to learn to moderate my reactions.

I'm still getting used to the car, climbing the learning curve and discovering customizable settings I didn't know about. Today I figured out that it was possible to set the passenger and driver temperatures differently. God knows what else is buried in the feature set. It's like buying a new computer system with an unfamiliar operating system and user interface...

...That can kill you.

I proceed with caution.

And that's about it from Daly City, where all the photographs are beautiful and all the cars are above average.

Pax,

Ctein

Ed. Note: *Readers notoriously ignore bylines, so please note that this review is of* Ctein's *new car, not Mike's! Mike will continue to drive his paid-fer, 30-MPG, manual-transmission 2014 Acura ILX, made by Honda in Greensburg, Indiana, until it dies, or 250k miles, or his ship comes in, or the cows come home, whichever comes first. (It's got 79k miles currently, at age six.) His next car, far off in the hazy future, is likely to be a hybrid. Ctein's next vehicle will be a spaceship, bound for other precincts of the solar system, or possibly beyond.*

(This review replaces "Open Mike" for this week.)

> **ADDENDUM by Ctein**: *The Tesla is an absolutely frivolous purchase for me—the one monstrous, frivolous purchase in my entire life. But that does not mean I entered into it frivolously. Paula and I have been looking at eVs since 2010, and we started looking seriously about four years ago. Not seriously in the sense that our Chevy HHR needed replacing, but in that when it did the odds were very high that our next car would be an eV, and there were workable options out there for us. Depending, of course, on money and needs and timing.*
>
> *But, oh yeah, we've been studying this. And by now you should all know that when I study something, I really study something. Most especially when looking at having to spend $40,000 or more, which is four times more than we spent on the Chevy. A great deal of consideration went into this purchase, not to mention no small amount of planning. Yes, it is a frivolous and an exorbitant luxury. Do not imagine, though, that it was entered into ignorantly. There are many pros and cons to buying an eV these days. They are not panaceas. I'm not asking you to think so. But please give me a little credit—I knew exactly what I was doing.*

(To see all the comments, click on the "Comments" link below.)

Featured Comments from:

Kirk: "Made me chuckle a bit. In Austin they are as common as pickup trucks and Honda Accords...."

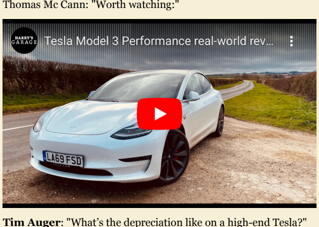
emptyspaces: "I have had a Nissan Leaf Plus for about five months now. Couldn't afford (or drive!) a Tesla during the buying process (Leaf Plus will be $10k less than the off-menu Model 3...*before* insuring it). Anyway, I love it. It's quick in that key 25–55 MPH range and can easily merge onto the freeway from any ramp.

"I am happy for anyone who gets to experience an EV for basic driving...none of them are great for long trips but in five months my biggest day has been 85 miles. It's our second car, and my DD. Congrats on the Model X—I have a hard time believing the sound system is better than Audioengine, but glad to hear the sound doesn't suck like in my Leaf. Just got done replacing the speakers in it."

Malcolm Leader: "I want one!"

Daniel: "Meanwhile, the old '81 VW Rabbit diesel keeps on going with 50 MPG at highway speeds all day long. In-town driving is 46 MPG. Was made in Pennsylvania, USA. Roomy enough that Wilt Chamberlain (former NBA player) drove one. Parts easy to get and the vehicle still works well. Paid for decades ago and insurance cost is low. Why mess with what works?"

Thomas Mc Cann: "Worth watching:"



Tim Auger: "What's the depreciation like on a high-end Tesla?"

Posted on Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 12:01 PM in Ctein, Off-topic posts | Permalink

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Comments

Ah, the Ctein Dye Transfermobile sounds terrific! (Pun intended...they don't "sound" at all. A number of my neighbors have them.)

Good to see you having fun with a new gadget. If I was ever to buy a car (never) this would unquestionably be among the top three candidates. (Or maybe Mike would suggest I try ...*"five or six of the leading contenders."* [G])

Posted by: Kenneth Tanaka | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 12:19 PM

So now that the wiring harness isn't blocking the camera any more, how about reviewing the camera :-)

Posted by: Bill Tyler | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 01:40 PM

Oh boy how envious I am. The ideal car for a physicist, as I am, and if I remember well Ctein too.

Posted by: Roberto Carlin | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 03:30 PM

All this to get you from A to B?

Posted by: s.wolters | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 03:59 PM

Ctein, the Tesla X is cool, but has some quirks - Part 1. I'll post a couple I covered in my book "Delusional Management" regarding a trip I took with a business acquaintance in his Tesla X:
However, we did run into a couple of problems with his Tesla. The meeting was 40 miles away and 4,000 feet up into the mountains. By the time we got there, the Tesla was in need of recharging if he was going to get home. There was no charging station available in this small mountain town, but since it was downhill all the way, he figured we could make it to a SuperCharger charging station on the way home. We did.
When we arrived at the SuperCharger, it was in a shopping center parking garage on the third floor. He pulled into the parking garage where it was located and backed into a space to plug in. We got out to go have lunch while it recharged. Well, actually, they got out. I tried to get out, but I couldn't.
The Tesla has gull-wing doors in the back – the ones that caused so much trouble when the car was new. The parking garage had a low ceiling and the doors had a sensor that would prevent them opening fully and hitting the garage ceiling. That left me trapped in the rear of the Tesla. The only way I could get out was to get on my hands and knees and crawl out onto the floor. I was not amused. Did Tesla never park the prototypes in a parking garage?

Posted by: JimH | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 05:26 PM

Ctein, the Tesla X is cool, but has some quirks - part 2 - beware of Autopilot. Also from my book "Delusional Management"

It has been widely reported that several Tesla accidents involved a Model S running into the back of a stopped vehicle (including two which involved fire trucks responding to emergencies!) in a traffic lane at full speed. I have a theory about these accidents and some experiences that seem to verify it. For the accidents involving running into stopped vehicles, I suspect the Tesla was following another vehicle on Autopilot when the vehicle in front swerved to avoid the stopped vehicle and the Tesla plowed into the stopped vehicle. In several cases the Tesla actually speeded up after the vehicle in front of it swerved out of the lane and before ramming the stopped vehicle.
We've seen two examples of what we think was happening there ourselves. We had a rental car with adaptive cruise control that would speed up when a vehicle in front of us pulled over to another lane to pass a truck. When our vehicle got close to the truck, it would slow down to the speed of the truck. If the timing was right, it would get close to the truck and brake hard to avoid it. One supposes the Tesla's reaction time was slower, perhaps because of their equipment that measures distance to an object in front of the vehicle or the driver was following the car ahead to closely.
Another example was part of an experiment we ran on a freeway. We were in the carpool lane going a "normal speed" for the lane (about ten over the limit here in California) when a Tesla pulled up behind us and began following us a bit too close for our comfort – maybe three car lengths – assumedly on "Autopilot.". We tried speeding up and slowing down and it stayed exactly in formation. Then we started speeding up more and more. The Tesla stayed at exactly the same distance off our bumper until we reached a speed that I won't admit to but was way faster than any sane human would drive on a LA freeway. Doesn't Autopilot have a speed limiter? What would have happened if I moved over to pass a slower vehicle. At that speed it could have been a spectacular crash.

Posted by: JimH | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 05:31 PM

I'm surprised Ctein didn't comment about single pedal driving. For me it is the second most interesting and useful feature (after all the instant torque) of electric cars.

A fine car.

Posted by: Speed | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 06:55 PM

Dear Bill,

For a near-to-$100,000 camera, it's got unusually low resolution and exposure range, as well as a fixed lens with excessive barrel distortion. Also, the battery pack and camera body are serious overkill -- no one needs to be able to make millions of exposures on a single charge!

OTOH, a tripod is entirely unnecessary.

Still, for less (well, slightly less) money, you can get a Leica S3 system with a decent complement of lenses, which is arguably more capable. Although you'll have to buy a tripod as well.

pax / Ctein

Posted by: Ctein | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 06:56 PM

Wimp indeed! However ... Mike may have noticed that yesterday, at our lunch meet (which I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED - THANKS!) I kept my hat on. Not because I'm trying to be hip, but because I easily get chilled, and one's head is a huge radiator of heat. I wear a hat or toque around the house, even when the temps are mild. And most of the time I wear a sweater or hoodie with layers. This from a guy who has overheated easily. Mon dieu.

Posted by: Earl Dunbar | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 08:26 PM

One of the greatest Easter Eggs on Google Street View is to find Ctien standing in the window of his house looking like a wizard with a parrot on his arm. It had to be planned. Am I right?

(Mike feel free to delete this comment if it's too creepy. Don't want to look like a stalker. It's just such a cool street view that I had to mention it. I know the neighborhood. My dad and step-mom winter in Pacifica, just down the road from Ctien, and when I stay at their place I ride a bike up the big hill to Ctein's dead end street for excerise and then coast back down. There's a nice ocean view at the end of the road. My pic from Ctien's street: https://www.instagram.com/p/BjaHcCxAvxs/)

Posted by: David Raboin | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 10:12 PM

Dear empty,

The Leaf Plus has 60% of the range of the long-range Model X. It was one reason we didn't even have it on our e-car list (we have a neighbor who has a Leaf and justifiably loves it.) If one actually got "official" range at California freeway speeds, it would be one thing, but an under-200 mile real range just wouldn't cut it for us. San Francisco Bay area driving distances are simply insane (it's the thing I hate most about living here).

We wanted a car where we would almost never exceed the round-trip range. That was the point of buying a car with an "official" range in the mid-300s. Twice a month I'm doing drives that would push that uncomfortably hard. My straight round trip to Santa Cruz is almost 160 miles. I've had one weekend since buying the car where I absolutely pushed against the Tesla's range limit (and stopped to Supercharge, because why take chances).

Personally, I'd be fine taking the Model X on long trips, in fact one of the things that convinced us to buy it was talking to owners who have, under pretty extreme conditions. But not to everyone's taste. I don't get any range anxiety with the Model X, but one DOES have to pay attention more than one would with an ICE.

Regarding the sound system, please note that I was comparing it to my 5+'s, which are the "bookshelf" speakers Mike recommended some years back. They are excellent speakers for what they are, but it's not like owning a super high-end sound system.

The luxury Teslas used to come with a very mediocre sound system for the price. When I test-drove a Model S in mid-2015 (what got me hooked), the sound wasn't up to snuff. Tesla sold a premium sound package as an add-on. Somewhere between then and now, they decided to make it standard. This car actually cost me less than it would have if I'd bought it five years ago; they made all the things I wanted that were extra options back then standard.

I'm no sound expert, I don't even have Mike's ear. But Sandy says it's a damn good sound system and she's been a professional sound engineer for over half a century, so I know I'm not entirely crazy.

Well, no, I probably am entirely crazy, just not about this.

- pax \ Ctein
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Posted by: Ctein | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 11:15 PM

Dear s.,

Welp, that's pretty much what a car does— gets you from A to B.

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Dear JimH,

That story about the gull wing doors in the parking lot made me laugh out loud. It is a common complaint that the car is overly paranoid about opening those doors. Seeing as it measures everything else in proximity to the body accurately to a fraction of an inch, I'd brand it a design oversight. There should be an override switch that says "Open as far as you safely can, REALLY!"

A design weakness is the frunk hood latch. It's a two-stage safety latch like you'd find on the front of any car but both stages are purely mechanical. Why they did that, I don't know, because the door and trunk latches are motorized grab-and-secure. There are safety reasons for the primary stage to be mechanical, but making both mechanical means you have to push down hard on the hood to secure the second latch. The hood is made of very thin, compound-curved aluminum. If you push it down at what would seem to be the obvious point, you can dent it. No kidding!

This is such a well-known design bug that it is called out in the user manual with pictures to show you exactly where it is and isn't safe to push down the hood, and the customer rep demonstrates this and warns you about it before you take delivery on the car.

I can understand the problem existing in the rev.1 models, but I don't understand why it wasn't redesigned years ago. They've made lots of changes and revisions to the body. Adding another grab-and-secure motor is entirely doable; it's an easy mod.

Life isn't perfect. Sadly, the Model X mirrors life. ("But 100K *should* buy me perfection, it really should! He whined.)

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Posted by: c | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 11:16 PM

Dear Speed,

I know other drivers who are totally enamored of the single-pedal thing. My reaction to it is that it's mildly amusing and nothing more. Different strokes for different folks. The majority of my driving is longer-distance freeway, so that may be a factor. On the other hand, I am completely in love with adaptive cruise control.

In reading the Tesla fora, I find it very interesting how differently we different drivers react to features and the behavior of the car. There was a very intelligent post from someone who found the "Autopilot" close to useless, and he explained clearly what the deficiencies were that made it so for him. I've observed exactly those same deficiencies; our objective experiences seem identical. Yet for me, it's a very valuable set of functions. Strokes, folks.

- pax \ Ctein
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Posted by: Ctein | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 11:24 PM

If I couldn't trust any self-driving feature such as Autopilot 100% in every situation, I wouldn't trust it for everyday use. It would be like riding with an untrustworthy driver. Your analogy of a horse is a good one. Consider the speed that horses travel, vs. freeway speeds. And the lack of distraction for a horse rider. They have to concentrate just to remain "in the vehicle!" In your Tesla's cozy, quiet isolation chamber, could I sense a steering problem and take over instantly, doing the right thing in one crisp maneuver? Only if I was anxiously gripping the wheel, frightened for my life every moment. Which I would be.

Before traffic and pollution, we used to take a Sunday drive to relax and unwind. We might had wound up at an amusement park, where we'd abandon personal agency and get sped through the guts of a roller coaster, moving fast and out of control. Autonomous driving, even at its best, would be like the second example.

Posted by: John McMillin | Thursday, 12 March 2020 at 11:59 PM

Dear JimH,

I'm writing a separate reply to your second post, because I think this discussion is a serious enough matter to be worthy of its own thread.

The problem with running into entirely stopped vehicles when the car in front swerves out of the way is not quite what you think it is. All anti-collision systems (not just "self driving" ones) start with the premise that stationary objects are to be ignored, that the default state of the roadway is to be clear. If they didn't, they would be completely overwhelmed by data from the stationary world they are driving past.

The hard part is then teaching them what NOT to ignore. The "sudden, stationary obstacle in the middle-of-the-road" is hardly a rare cause of accidents. Getting systems to parse a real hazard out of all the other stationary data seems to be a difficult problem. My *guess* is that when the Tesla engineers try to force the correct answer to that particular error on the neural network, others errors are cropping up that are even worse. Machine learning can be weird that way.

This is a very different case from the "slow moving vehicle" one. Anti-collision systems can do well with that, because that data gets through even if you filter out all stationary data. How adroitly they respond depends on how well the software is written, but it's not a detection problem. While you are unhappy with how your rental vehicle responded to the truck, it did not cause a collision. It just made you very nervous.

You didn't say what model and year of car it was. That can matter. Laura and I had a rental Toyota Corolla on a vacation about four years back. The adaptive cruise control and anti-collision braking on that car made us nervous. Even at the greatest separation setting it followed too close for our comfort and it braked too suddenly. We don't know that it was unsafe, but it felt unsafe. I had occasion to rent the same model, but a 2019 car, on a trip last year. It kept a decent separation at the intermediate distance setting, and its braking and accelerating were smooth and relaxing. I learned later there'd been one of the regular major revisions of the Corolla in between.

Regarding the Tesla that was following you, oh yeah, that sounds like the adaptive cruise control at work (it may not have been on full autopilot — you can engage the acc without engaging the steering control). There are many user-configurable settings for that. One is the following distance. A setting of 1 is good for stop and go traffic. I found that 3 is good for freeways. It goes all away up to 7, which I would presume is for bad weather conditions; I can't imagine needing anything higher than 3 on a dry road with good visibility.

This is easily adjustable on the fly by the driver, by twisting the acc/autopilot lever. More than once I've gotten on the freeway and not realized I had it set for 1. So it's possible the driver wasn't being an intentional jerk. The other thing is that the Tesla has insanely powerful braking and far faster reflexes than a human being. It doesn't need to stay as far back as a normal human-driven car. Which doesn't mean you shouldn't. As a courtesy. Vis, my passing someone at 98 mph. Just because one can doesn't mean one should.

The acc has several kinds of speed limiters. You can implement an absolute speed limit (which by default is set to 90 mph but is changeable), or you can set it relative to the local road speed limit, which the Tesla determines by a combination of factors — the

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mapped speed limit, roadside MPH signs (sometimes), and whether you are on a curve (at least in autopilot mode). Yes, it'll slow itself down on curves! It's actually more conservative on average about curves than I (and most drivers) would be. My biggest complaint about autopilot is that it is too timid. As I said, it lacks common sense and behaves like a student driver.

I can tell you with confidence that if you had pulled over to pass a slower moving vehicle, it is very unlikely the Tesla would've crashed. Although when it slammed on the brakes, someone might've crashed into it!

Or... y'know, the driver behind you simply could have been an ass! Like regular acc's, the Tesla's doesn't prevent a driver from stepping on the accelerator and going even faster than what cruise control is set for. In which case, they would have crashed!

- pax \ Ctein
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Posted by: Ctein | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 12:10 AM

Tesla markets this thing as an SUV, but if you've ever driven behind one you realize it has the ground clearance of a two-seater roadster, i.e., next to none. Maybe it's the apotheosis of citified pseudo-SUVs.

Posted by: Gary | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 02:22 AM

On the head losing so much heat. It is a myth. It loses no more body heat than any other uncovered body part of similar size in exposure to air. A hat or scarf will help keep you warm but the myth of just how much heat one loses without it is just that - a myth.

Posted by: Daniel | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 10:57 AM

I'll take a 911 flat6, air-or-water-cooled, any day over a golf cart freedom killer. I wouldn't take a Taycan either which is far better made than a Tesla.

Posted by: A. Dias | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 12:16 PM

Dear David R,

COOL!!! I thought this hadn't happened!

Back story. I often hold Elmo up to the front window in the morning so he can look out, especially when it's a nice and sunny day. On one day when I was doing that, the Google mapping car drove by. Believe me, it was not planned!

But when I checked back at Google Maps after they had done the street view update, the window was entirely blanked out. I figured it was one of their privacy measures, like the way they blank out license plates in peoples faces.

It was disappointing, But, you know, that's life. I never went back to check.

Thank you so much for alerting me to this. Elmo can now be famous on the Internet.

He will be so pleased.

pax / Ctein

Posted by: Ctein | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 02:48 PM

Dear Tim,

Resale values are surprisingly high. Five year old cars sell for more than half of new, ones in excellent condition with low miles go for more like 75%.

Dear Gary,

The Tesla automatically adjusts ground clearance with speed and road condition. One option, which is on by default is to have it lower the car at freeway speeds for better handing and aerodynamics.

Or your can set this stuff manually.

pax / Ctein

Posted by: Ctein | Friday, 13 March 2020 at 02:55 PM

Given the current situation (pandemic, economic uncertainty, etc.) I thought this review of the $100,000 car to be in questionable taste.

[*That's on me. It was an email from Ctein filling me in personally, and I asked him if I could publish it. He reviewed it to make sure it disclosed no overly personal information, and gave me permission.*

However, I could not disagree more with you. Last year we passed the FORTIETH anniversary of the first World Climate Conference, and scientists were sounding the alarm (calmly, with confidence that governments would respond) in the 1970s. We should all have been driving electric cars—powered by solar—for decades at this point. Teslas (and Priuses and other hybrids) are baby steps, but the trend is tragically late and cannot possibly be encouraged too much. --Mike]

Posted by: Steve Gillette | Saturday, 14 March 2020 at 12:49 AM

Dear Jim,

Misspelling my name once... or even twice... is understandable. Three times suggests you're not paying enough attention. [grin]

pax / whatshisface

Posted by: Ctein | Saturday, 14 March 2020 at 05:01 AM

Have a dear friend who owned an S Tesla but sold it for a loss after a few years of use;it never met expectations for mileage and it died a few times on short trips. He spent almost $100k plus electrical upgrades for home charging station- Now claims there isn't an extension cord long enough to get him to purchase another.

Posted by: Howard | Saturday, 14 March 2020 at 08:54 AM

In my few years working in auto insurance claims, I found that the largest group of owners who were difficult to deal with (read: delusions of entitlement) were Tesla owners. Note I'm talking about the proportion of bad customers, not the population of Tesla owners. It usually manifested as a sense that they belonged to a special cohort that deserved more than what was agreed in their policy. Next biggest were the BMW owners, then the S-Class Mercedes owners. Leaseholders were bad regardless of marque.

One thing to be aware when buying a Tesla is the difficulty working with the aluminum body parts, as well as Tesla's slow delivery of same in many cases.

Patrick

Posted by: Patrick Perez | Saturday, 14 March 2020 at 02:51 PM

I just can't get my head around spending $100K on a car that will most likely depreciate as fast as a laptop computer and eventually be disposed of because of obsolescence.

Posted by: Jeff M | Sunday, 15 March 2020 at 12:35 AM

Dear Howard,

I'm very sorry to hear about your friend's experience, but I love his parting shot. I'm going to steal it!

Where does he live, by the way?

Something prospective eV owners have to think about is that the mileage characteristics of eV's are very different from ICE's. eV's just love stop-and-go/slow-and go driving. They use almost no juice when stopped, and regenerative braking is very efficient under those conditions. The best mileage I ever got was going to the East Bay in annoyingly heavy traffic conditions, 25% better than "official" rating. That'd be 400 miles on a charge.

Conversely, they hate cold weather, because both the battery packs and the passengers have to be kept warm to stay functional. Heat is not free in an eV the way it is with an ICE. In severe winter conditions, the real range may be half of official, especially if one doesn't preheat the car while plugged into a high power charger.

I've seen quite a few Teslas in Minneapolis in the winter. In fact, I have a friend there who owns a Model S. At the worst times of year, he can't be getting much more than 130 miles of range. On the other hand, we're talking about a city where people think 10 miles is a long drive — heck, the distance from westernmost Minneapolis to easternmost St. Paul is less than 20 miles.

People who haven't driven these cars worry all the time about "range anxiety." By and large, people who drive them don't. To some extent, we are a self-selecting group, but it's also about buying the car that actually fits your needs. I'm sure there are people here in the Bay Area for whom even my 260-mile real "75 MPH" range would leave them begging for electrons. And others, like our neighbor, for whom a Leaf is entirely adequate.

- pax \ Ctein
[Please excuse any word-salad. Dragon Dictate in training!]
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-- Ctein's Online Gallery. http://ctein.com
-- Digital Restorations. http://photo-repair.com
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Posted by: Ctein | Sunday, 15 March 2020 at 12:52 AM

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