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THE COOLEST THING I'VE EVER OWNED

(And Why Republicans Need To Erase Their EV Blind Spot)



Fun in the "Frunk"

Sometimes, new technology is so disruptive that it becomes a magnet for attention, even to those with no actual need or interest in the technology. Lately, I notice widespread curmudgeonry from some of my smart and perceptive friends and clients in the firearms community on social media. A startling number of people like us are suspicious of or even hostile to electric vehicles (EVs). There seems to an anxiety among level headed- conservatives that these newfangled devices are there to steal your personal freedom, and if environmental lunatics like them they must be bad. Who can blame them m- after generations of lies from environmentalists trying to steal our money and reduce our liberties, it's natural to be skeptical. The fiercest skeptics are typically the rugged individualists who load up the truck and drive 1000 miles in a day, avoiding all the indignities of the TSA and air travel. While I salute them, I'm about to help guide these electrical "resistors" toward a more informed state. And I think there are lessons for innovators in any industry to learn from the psychology and emotions that come from disruptive technology. (Note: this article is occasionally updated to remain current).

Did Driving a Ludicrous Tesla Scramble my Brain?

My wife insisted: "Get rid of the two-door, we have two kids heading in different directions for school and events." I don't drive much, and found few options that economically and emotionally appealed more than my 15-year-old BMW that originally cost some sucker $80k. My wife sweetly said I deserved a nice new luxury car but nothing really appealed (and since when did people talk seriously about paying $100,000 for a car?!) Thankfully, it all came together when a friend who's a

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serial Tesla owner decided to upgrade to the latest Plaid, and gave me a sweet deal on a gorgeous silver Model S P100d. I ended up with his 4-year-old Tesla that was outfitted exactly like Elon Musk's was four years ago (the same model Joe Rogan bought at Elon's suggestion).

I've never loved a car so much. I've never loved driving so much. I've never loved any *thing* so much! So am I a traitor to solid conservative principles and Republican common sense to jump on the whacko environmentalist bandwagon and go electric? The segment of Tesla enthusiasts among our community (we're as irritatingly enthusiastic as CrossFit, Amway, and vegans) tells me I'm not crazy. Judge for yourself:

Here's What You Need to Know About Why I Love it.

1. Look for the P on the rear panel. Performance, Plaid or P100. I've never been a street racer but 2.5 seconds to 60 – and knowing that you're faster off the line than any car on the road besides another Tesla (including Lambos, Ferraris, Porsches) – does something to the psychology. But to sprint off the line with 100% of peak torque and power (mine's "only" 750hp) available at 0 mph is, well, *ludicrous*. It may as well be infinite power and you simply help yourself to whatever you need. The other models (S,3,X,Y – another Elon joke) all have their performance variants at a modest upcharge from "long range". Note that stomping the throttle probably won't get any notice from a nearby traffic cop (no engine noise, no tires squealing) but literally may generate motion sickness in passengers and first time drivers – so squeeze the throttle, don't stomp – be careful what you ask for.
2. It's *different*. Start with the one-pedal driving, in which the car slows intuitively nearly to a near stop when you lift the accelerator. It's using your kinetic energy to recharge the battery, and it gets about 80% of the energy back if you're interrupted by a red light. It takes only a minute to get used to, and then you'll wonder how people drove cars for a century without this feature.
3. Looks and image. This is personal, but I like the cool tech edge in a tasteful conservative package that fits an upper-middle-aged professional who sometimes drops kids at the carpool line. As a patent attorney, I swim in the ocean of innovators, but still need to be taken seriously, so a fine Tesla is perfect. And the looks: Elon first hired the Aston-Martin guy to create the look, and after firing him presumably told the successor to make it look like an A-M. I like that look even 10 years later. The interior is more austere like an Apple product, and not like a Chanel handbag.
4. Comfort. It's quiet even under hard driving. No head bobbing with gear changes – you don't realize it until you compare the elevator-like smooth gearless acceleration. It has only one gear and never shifts. The simple drivetrain leaves immense room for passengers and cargo. Just a panel of batteries forming the floor between the axles, and a watermelon-sized motor at each axle. My current favorite comfort feature is being able to leave the AC on when

parked in the sun in 100F Dallas summertime (I wish it had a sound effect for that with Greta Thunberg scolding: "How dare you?!"). It's only a fraction of a cent per minute in recharge costs and no need to have ventilated seats or worry about the glass roof. And don't forget that you can do all that preconditioning in a closed garage at home in perfect safety. And you can control it all from your phone, anywhere in the world.

5. The software updates automatically like your iPhone. Some days you get in the car and find a new feature. If they develop a new computer system and display, for a couple percent of the cost of a new car they can swap out the old and give you a current edition computer. Technology on the road involves the sensors checking motor and wheel position 2000 times a second (every half inch at freeway speed) to ensure that no wheel is slipping and the power is being instantly delivered where needed. A simple right turn is performance poetry in motion: as the outside wheels do the work to turn the car (something like a skid steer?).
6. Self-driving. This is too complicated to cover, but it's useful for long trips and for stop-and-go traffic jams. I like to invoke it when potentially distracted changing to sunglasses or finding a music station. It's less graceful than a skilled driver, more like having a very attentive and responsible teen driving the car. It's not popular with passengers, but continues to improve by leaps and bounds.
7. Smart economics. New cars are expensive to buy, and Tesla will change prices on the fly based on the market – never a despicable dealer markup because guess what: no dealers! Fuel is maybe a nickel a mile for supercar performance. Minimal maintenance cost. No transmission, no oil changes, no brake jobs (they get minimal use – no brake dust on the wheels either), no radiator flush. A couple hundred dollars a year for air filters and brake fluid that probably didn't need changing anyway. Insurance rates suggest cost to repair is typical. Service is more like the Apple store, and app based, but not as awesome of an advantage over the competition – Elon's focusing on getting factories built, and service will be nice to work on as a lower priority. I'll add that value – geting what you're paying for – is a presumed strength, because you're not paying for any advertising or dealer network. Prediction, in contrast to the past when EVs were the choice of rich folks, not far in the future only rich folks will buy new ICEs (internal combustion engines)
8. Superlative safety by all measures including in stability, crash avoidance and crash safety. Nothing but protective crush zone up front – no incompressible engine block.

The Dirty Secrets – Debunked

I've always disliked Priuses, and their pious snooty drivers, so I can understand some good healthy automotive bigotry – Bring it on! But let me dispel some of the big criticisms of EVs from my friends on the right wing.

"They aren't perfectly clean! They burn coal!"

Who cares? My car is fueled by whatever the free market has determined is the most economical fuel or system to generate electricity at that location and time. It might even be fueled by my natural gas generator if there's an extended power outage. Whatever the fuel, if it's only 20% the cost per mile, the economic presumption is that it has only 20% of the environmental effect. The burden is on the critics, and I know that a giant powerplant is far more efficient with fuel and emissions than a portable engine. And did you notice that nowhere in my list of things I love about my car was: "it's good for the environment"? I don't worship at that altar, and trust free market pricing to allocate resources more efficiently. If you look carefully, you'll see that the environmental left hates Elon Musk. Why? Because he made them irrelevant.

Do you remember when we were all hoarding incandescent bulbs as the enviro-authoritarians were mandating those awful, sickly, unreliable and poisonous CFL bulbs? Then LED lights were perfected and it's all we buy, because free-market technology solved a problem. Even Dad doesn't worry about lights left on any more. I invite skeptics to view electric vehicles that way – *just because they please the environmentalists doesn't mean they aren't terrific technology worth serious consideration*.

"Batteries!"

If you buy a new $50,000 (or $100,000) vehicle and don't agonize about the potential $15,000 cost to replace a blown engine in a couple hundred thousand miles, then you might better understand why EV buyers don't worry about batteries needing replacing any time soon. Range (but not performance) declines slightly over the years, and smart charging and use patterns minimize this (and rumored advancements may make this a thing of the past). And there are many competing battery technologies, so no evil nation can cut off our strategic supply, nor are we required to worry about the child slave labor the propagandists pretend is needed for some critical mineral. Note that the critics don't worry about the exotic minerals in every other product they buy. Also, "Lithium" isn't the bogeyman some think – it's so plentiful that the Romans choice its root to be the word for "rock." Lithium's a minor ingredient in a battery made largely of mundane materials like Nickel (note, the scarcity isn't the plentiful minerals, but the refining processes needed to purify them to make long-lasting batteries). As far as disposal, a battery pack that's past its prime for long range driving is still very valuable and useful for other things (like stationary storage for solar installations, or power backup for your computer). There aren't disposal costs, there are eager buyers for the packs, because they can be ground up and the minerals extracted for reuse.

"But I Haul Heavy Stuff and Drive Long Distances."

Then don't make *all* your vehicles electric. Or any. But if you live 75 miles from the nearest Wal-Mart, and occasionally buy new vehicles, I'll wager than in 5 years you'll own one EV, or at least be planning your next purchase to be electric. I predict that in 5 years the typical two-car suburban family that occasionally buys new cars will have one EV in the garage. Or maybe I'm wrong and the Cybertruck, expanded charging, and the 500-mile Tesla Semi will indicate a future when even long-haulers are happiest with EVs.

"The Grid!"

Suddenly, everyone's an expert about the power grid, and now worry that my car might limit their ability to cool their home or toast their bread. Yes, there are grid problems caused by environmental loons and the adults in charge who succumb to them (even here in Texas). But don't think it's a big "own" to point out when EV owners are asked not to charge their cars in a power crisis (probably in California – and the ask is to avoid off-peak, not never to charge as the deceptive headlines usually suggest.) Here's why the grid isn't a concern:

First: charging can happen any time, so off-peak charging has no effect on grid capacity. As needed, minor incentives can motivate charging at times other than summer afternoons and evenings. Even with rolling blackouts in mismanaged jurisdictions, the car can charge in the hours or minutes when there's juice.

Second: the grid saviors invariably assume the absurd hypothetical that suddenly everyone buys an EV. The reality is that adoption is gradual – a couple percent per year. Far more gradual than the era when residential AC went from rare to widespread. The grid can keep up as demand grows.

Third: If you worry about fueling all those off-peak power plants due to the added demand, recall that EVs might have 1/5 the fuel cost of ICEs (internal combustion engines). So there's a bunch of unused fuel. That unburnt gasoline can be used to generate 5 times more EV miles than it could have in ICEs.

"Subsidies! – Not a Free Market"

I'm on your side here, conservatives. Congress once took a ton of our money and gave it to Elon Musk to do things they wanted him to do. He successfully did those things, then he paid the money back with interest. The Taxpayer made money off of Tesla (unlike most other automakers who have received bailouts). There used to be subsidies for purchasers, and recently Congress has just passed more needless subsidies including tax rebates and adding charging stations (Tesla's have doubled in the last two years without taxpayer help). Congress and the environmental left are like roosters taking credit for the sunrise (in 10 years they'll tell you with a straight face that their policies deserve credit for the switch to EVs, even though they probably actually slowed progress and wasted mountains of our money.

I'll also grant that electrics avoid fuel taxes that pay for roads. Tesla knows exactly how much I drive, and it would be simple and affordable to pay the penny a mile (more or less) that everyone in normal states pays for roads.

Predictions!

1. The Cybertruck will be the pin that pricks the bubble of resistance on the right. It will be like an infantry flanking maneuver that overwhelms the core strength of an adversary: truck owners who culturally identify with their vehicles (as I now do with my Tesla). The number one reason I believe this is because many confess they have one on order. The Model Y may end up as the most popular car on the planet (other than future low cost subcompacts or robotaxis), but the Cybertruck will be the battle that turns the tide in the EV's war against ICEs.
2. The Cybertruck will be the most profitable vehicle ever made. As an old engineer before I became a patent attorney, I can tell real technology from BS. Here's what I see: from gigacastings, to folded metal exoskeletons, to flat glass, to being paintless, that truck *isn't* designed to look amazingly distinctive (why do other automakers think they need to make their EVs look stupid instead of good?). No, it's designed to be CHEAP to build. Great engineering and advancing technology will increase Tesla's profitability per vehicle even as the competition sells at a loss.
3. Speaking of the lack of paint, I predict that the era of painted cars is nearly over. The factory "paint line" takes up a major portion of space and resources (I like to say that Elon doesn't make cars, he makes factories – think about that). Paint defects and damage before delivery are an expensive headache. Limited paint choices are frustrating to consumers buying a popular car that becomes part of their identity. Watch for cars to be delivered without a glossy coat, but only the coatings needed for corrosion protection, and surface finish

smooth enough to "wrap." The factory might wrap at delivery, or you might find your own wrapper locally. Used buyers won't need to filter by car, and will probably get a fresh wrap. If I could invest in the "wrap" market, I would – tell me how if there's a good play there. Think art cars and celebrity- and luxury-branded wraps.

4. Tesla stock ($TSLA) is probably the most promising investment opportunity one can find. They have an unassailable and *widening* lead over the automotive competition. They attract the most talented engineers. The EV market they lead is inevitably growing (EVs will be at least 50% of new vehicles sold in 2030, 80% not long after – this is color TV adoption rate stuff here). But cars are only the tip of the Tesla iceberg…
5. Tesla will grow in value in the long run largely for reasons other than making cars (the developments funded by the billions in car profits left over after building many giga factories): AI (self driving systems licensed to others, and a mountain of other applications). Robots (same tech as self driving cars but with feet instead of wheels) who will clean your house, run errands, cook, replace realtors, replace most boring and dangerous labor, and speak the local language, transforming the immigration and border picture. Insurance (they know exactly how Tesla owners drive, and can offer attractive rates to the good ones, and leave the risks to the competition). Power generation (solar, household battery packs that profitably feed utilities during peaks). Semi trucks. Robotaxis (replace Uber drivers, maybe replace car ownership by middle income people – like vacation condos, normal people rent, only rich people keep them unoccupied and pristine for their own use, and smart people buy them as income properties).

My advice to Republicans: demonstrate your power of free thinking by looking at this objectively. Find a friend with a Tesla and check it out. Judge for yourself. If you're impressed, talk to your broker about TSLA. Just as we in the firearms community invite our open-minded but gun-hesitant friends to try a visit to the range with us, my best advice to anyone weighing the matter is to hop in and drive one. You might have some fun, and if you're a serious car guy/gal you'll add to your knowledge base that underlies your own opinions. If you're in DFW, maybe come by and take a ride with me!

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