

The never ending road of automotive technology

Written by Jason (Neutral)
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You don't have to review cars to appreciate the modern technology that comes standard on most cars today.

There is a lot tech in every car that is for sale nowadays from the obvious such as the in car entertainment systems, through to the unseen such as engine management and vehicle stability systems.

I'm sure that the Wright brothers never imagined that in just over 100 years after their first flight that high tech fighters and super sized jumbos would dominate the skies. This would also go for Henry Ford and his humble model T.

I remember my first car, a naturally aspirated engine without a computer to monitor everything; the most sophisticated electronics were the indicators and the cassette radio. Even back then as a young kid with an active imagination I couldn't have imagined some of the tech that is in modern cars.

Just last week while researching a car for an upcoming review I discovered yet more tech that I had never heard of.

In the last ten years ABS, traction control, electronic stability, auto wipers and headlights, keyless entry, electronic windows, climate control, cruise control and airbags have all become common place.

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One would think that at some point in time the amount of new technology must have to slow down. But we still see new features added all the time. You only have to watch a TV commercial these days, cars seems to be marked on the latest technology inclusions. Advertisers must think that people buy cars like they do smartphones.

Cars with voice controls, cars that park themselves even cars that do more driving than the driver. Features such as lane monitoring gives the driver feedback when they attempt to move into another lane that has another vehicle there.

I wonder if this creates lazy drivers, what ever happened to checking your mirror and looking over your shoulder before changing lanes?

Other tech includes adaptive cruise that adjusts the cars speed to match that of a car in front and now even cars that will prevent a nose to tail accident while you are too busy with your head in your smart phone.

The car I was researching has an intelligent head light system that has no less than 10 modes. I could have come up with three modes, on, high beam and off. There are other known systems such as those that can see around corners. This new system takes in environmental information and adapts the lights to various conditions. For example in the suburbs the left light illuminates more of the kerb and footpath so you can see pedestrians etc, on the highway it throws the light further down the road the faster you go.

Where will it all end? Well to my surprise it seems as though the tech is shifting to roads as well.

If you sat back and thought about what tech could be included in roads you may come up with one or two.

I came up with the idea of having speed zones interacting with the car and intelligent traffic lights that can work out congestion and act accordingly.

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Well it turns out that authorities are testing piezoelectric materials that use vibrations and pressure to harness electricity to power street and highway lights. Also photo –luminescent paints that charge during the day and glow at night making lane lines easier to see at night.

All this technology in cars leads me to pose a question. What will happen in the future if a young driver ever gets into a car like that I first owned. Would they be able to drive it?

It is likely that they wouldn't know how to start it because there is no big button with start written on it. Their iPod wouldn't work when they push it into the cassette slot, the brakes would lock up when they jump on them and they would spin on their first off camber bend.