

Look out for the 125mph electric car (because you won't hear it)

By Michael Savage

Friday, 22 August 2008

It looks as stylish as a Lotus, can outpace a Porsche 911 and is coveted by Hollywood A-listers such as Brad Pitt and George Clooney. But unlike the average super car, the Tesla Roadster is electric.

The £92,000 car, made in Britain and test-driven here for the first time this week, is being heralded as a breakthrough for the humble electric car, which has been lumbered with a reputation for being distinctly slow and unsexy in the past.

Designers of the Tesla, which has a top speed of 125mph and can accelerate from zero to 60mph in 3.9 seconds, hope it will appeal to moneyed motorists currently cruising around in Aston Martins, Porsches and Ferraris.

And motorists need not fear running out of power after a quick trip to the shops. Once a three-hour charge has been completed, the Tesla can travel up to 220 miles – enough power to cover a trip from London to Plymouth.

But though its sleek and speedy image has impressed those who have taken it for a spin, road safety campaigners fear that the Roadster's almost silent running could pose a threat to vulnerable pedestrians who may not be able to hear it coming. The blind and cyclists are thought to be particularly at risk of being caught unawares.

Drivers climbing behind the wheel of the vehicle this week said there was "the slightest whirr" when the car was running, but no other noise.

Duncan Vernon, a road safety campaigner with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, said: "Technology is now out there that can boost running noise of these electric cars and we would encourage its use in all new electric models.

The car in action



"There are going to be more and more electric cars of different types on our roads in years to come, so we need to be considering these issues now."

Tesla said it would not be installing technology designed to replicate the sound of a car engine in its Roadster, despite the fact that Lotus Engineering, which is building the model at its Norfolk plant, has already designed the gadget.

"The car is not completely silent when it is running as it does generate some road noise," the company's spokesman, Darryl

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/green-living/look-out-for-the-125mph-electric-car-because...> 25/08/2008

Siry, said. "Drivers of cars such as ours have a responsibility to take care when they are driving and be aware that they do not put pedestrians at risk. I have been driving this car for two years and have never had an accident with it."

About 1,100 orders have already been received for the car in the US, but those in Europe who want one will have to act fast – only 250 are being shipped here and 60 of those have already been snapped up.

Hollywood stars such as Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Matt Damon are all itching to get their hands on one. Californian governor, Arnold Schwarzenegger, once associated with the gas-guzzling Hummer, is also understood to have submitted an order.

Praise for the car has poured in since its arrival in Britain. Former F1 world champion Damon Hill was impressed by it when he test drove the car last month. Former Jamiroquai frontman Jay Kay is also a fan.

The car will feature on the BBC's Top Gear programme in the autumn, but programme insiders were staying tight-lipped about what Jeremy Clarkson would make of the world's first green super car.

Those unable to meet the £92,000 price tag may soon be able to climb behind the wheel of new models from Tesla, which said it was also working on a four-door model and a more affordable version.

By the numbers

125mph Top speed of the Tesla Roadster electric car.

220 miles Range of the Roadster after a three-hour charge.

3.9 seconds Its 0-60mph time.

©[independent.co.uk](http://www.independent.co.uk) [Legal Terms & Policies](#) | [E-mail sign-up](#) | [RSS](#) | [Contact us](#) | [Syndication](#) | [Work for INM](#) | [Advertising Guide](#) | [Group Sites](#) | [London Careers](#)