



## IN THE NEWS

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### Tesla Model 3 EV Debuts

Nearly two weeks ahead of schedule, Tesla's first driver-ready Model 3 came off the production line on July 7 at the Fremont California plant. With a suggested retail price of about \$35,000 before incentives, such as a \$7,500 federal tax credit, the newest electric car from Tesla is slated for first delivery to customers on July 28.

Production for the new Model 3 will ramp up slowly, reports Philly Murtha for J.D. Power. Tesla owner and CEO Elon Musk suggested in a tweet that some 100 units of the new Model 3 will be built in August and that the number will ramp up to 1,500 copies in September. By December, Musk expects an average build of 20,000 units per month. However, many of the hundreds of thousands of customers who reserved their Model 3 with \$1,000 placeholder payments will have a long wait, according to most reports. Yet, the car already is so popular that there is an online Model 3 owners' club with its own forum.

2018 Tesla Model 3 "most affordable electric car yet" can seat 5 adults and accelerates from 0-60 mph in 6 seconds, according to the company. The hope is to achieve a NHTSA 5-star safety rating, according to Tesla. Fifteen-minute test drives to assess capabilities and performance will be available at all Tesla store sites with sign-up on Tesla's website. Currently, there are some 100 stores and that number could double by year-end with pre-order sales, according to Musk. Ordering the Model 3 with options and preferences for a delivery date can be done online at the Palo Alto, CA,-based carmaker's website. Contact information and a \$2,500 order payment are required. A delivery experience specialist will help with setting up purchase or lease financing arrangements, dealing with trade-ins, and installing home charging equipment.

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## New Car Quality at All Time High

By Joseph Dobrian

Customer satisfaction with the quality of new vehicles is at its highest level ever, according to the J.D. Power 2017 U.S. Initial Quality Study<sup>SM</sup> (IQS). In this year's study, quality improves across seven of the eight categories measured, with 27 of the 33 brands in the study improving their quality compared with 2016. Overall customer satisfaction with new vehicles is up 8% from last year's study.

Initial quality is reported as the number of problems experienced per 100 vehicles (PP100) during the first 90 days of ownership, with a lower score reflecting higher quality.

"Automotive manufacturers are responding to consumer feedback and producing vehicles of the highest quality," said Dave Sargent, vice president, global automotive at J.D. Power. "The industry has improved significantly in each of the past three years. Today's vehicles have more things that could go wrong but fewer things that actually do go wrong."

Audio/communication/entertainment/navigation (ACEN) continues to be the highest-problem area for owners of new vehicles. However, it's also the most improved category since 2016, with a score of 22.8 PP100 in 2017, down 2.7 PP100 from 2016.

The only category that experiences a higher problem incidence in 2017 is Features, Controls and Displays. The largest increases in problems are for cruise control (primarily adaptive cruise); lane-departure warning; collision-avoidance/alert systems; and blind-spot warning. These features comprise some of the building blocks of autonomous vehicles, and automakers and suppliers should take note of this increase in consumer-reported problems. Consumer acceptance of

autonomous vehicles will depend largely on a conviction that these systems are utterly reliable and foolproof.

The "Detroit Three" American automakers—General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler—outperform import brands for the second year in a row, but for only the third time since the study was first published in 1987. In 2017, domestic brands receive a score of 93 PP100, compared with 99 PP100

for import brands. Last year, domestic brands also had fewer problems (103 PP100) compared with import brands (106 PP100).

"The Initial Quality Study continues to demonstrate the critical importance of automakers responding to consumer feedback regarding vehicle quality," Sargent said.

"Any automaker that stands still will quickly start to fall behind. For consumers, the great news is that significant improvements are occurring in all model segments, meaning that you don't have to spend a lot of money to get a quality vehicle."

Kia ranks highest in overall initial quality for a second consecutive year. Genesis ranks second overall followed by Porsche. Ford and Ram tie for fourth.

Based on the study, J.D. Power offers the following consumer tips:

- ❖ Stay educated on new technological features and consider how problems with these features may affect your ownership experience.
- ❖ Be aware that the more complicated and feature-laden a vehicle is, the greater the potential for problems, but sometimes the features are worth the possible hassle.
- ❖ Drill deeper, when reading reports of problems with new vehicles, to pinpoint where the bulk of the problems are occurring.

The 2017 U.S. Initial Quality Study is based on responses from nearly 80,000 purchasers and lessees of new 2017 model-year vehicles who were surveyed after 90 days of ownership. 

*'Today's vehicles  
have more things that  
could go wrong but  
fewer things that  
actually do go wrong'*



## Bending Nature to Our Will

Are cute vegetables easier to swallow? A Chinese company has developed fruit and vegetable molds that form growing foods into little Buddhas, hearts, stars and skulls. Farmers affix the plastic molds over the stems of growing plants, and the fruit fills the mold as it grows. Some designs include words, and the company also offers custom molds.

List this and the following among the many things we didn't know we needed. 🌴



## Samurai Pets

Japan's Samurai Age store, which (naturally) offers novelty samurai apparel, is featuring a new line of samurai armor outfits for cats and dogs. The body armor is sized for small pets, but custom orders for larger sizes are possible, and can include a helmet and mask. Armor for your pet will run somewhere between 4,040 yen (\$125) to 16,416 yen (\$146). 🌴

## Frontiers of Marketing

According to the Associated Press, male baseball fans attending the June 15 Jacksonville Florida Jumbo Shrimp minor league game were treated to a novel promotional giveaway: pregnancy tests. The "You Might Be a Father" promotion was conceived to help fans decide whether they should return for the Father's Day game on June 18. 🌴

## Calling the Bluff

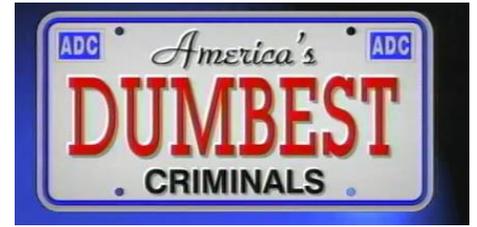
- ❖ In May, Charles Nichols III, 33, facing charges in Cheatham County, Tennessee, of sex with a minor, originally was tagged with a \$50,000 bail – until he told Judge Phillip Maxie to perform a sex act upon himself and dared Maxie to increase the bail. That led to a new bond of \$1 million, then after further insubordination, \$10 million, and so on until the final bail ordered was \$14 million.
- ❖ Jose Chacon, 39, was arrested in Riviera Beach, Florida, in May after allegedly shooting, fatally, a 41-year-old acquaintance who had laughed at Chacon's first shot attempt (in which the gun failed to fire) and taunted Chacon to try again. The second trigger-pull worked. 🌴

## The Left Coast

Trendy restaurants have offered customers dining experiences amidst roaming cats (and in one bold experiment, owls), but the art house San Francisco Dungeon held a two-day event on July 1 and 8 – an experimental "Rat Cafe" for those who feel their coffee or tea is better sipped while rats (from the local rat rescue) scurry about the room. Pastries are included for the \$49.99 price, but the rats will be removed before the food comes. (Sponsors promise at least 15 minutes of "rat interaction," and the price includes admission to the dungeon.) 🌴



## The More Things Change...



- ❖ Sheriff's deputies in Dade City, Florida, nearly effortlessly arrested Timothy Brazell, 19, for trespassing in May. Brazell (high on methamphetamine, he said) attempted to commandeer a stranger's car by hot-wiring it, but only by uselessly connecting the wires of a voltage meter while not noticing that the key was already in the car. According to the owner, the door lock was jammed on the inside, and Brazell could not figure out how to open it.
- ❖ Philome Cesar decided to represent himself in court against charges of robbery. But his legal skills were on par with his larceny skills. During the trial, he asked a witness to describe the robber's voice. The response: "He sounded like you." Ironically, the jury's decision sounded a lot like "guilty."
- ❖ A California woman facing nearly five years in prison for forging drug prescriptions brought to court a doctor's note that suggested her case be postponed for medical reasons. Her request was rejected – the note was a forgery.
- ❖ Devin Gesell and two accomplices broke into a Missouri home in March and took, among other things, a box containing what they thought was cocaine. Turns out, it was the homeowner's father's ashes. And even worse, the woman, Debora Matthews, claims that two of the unnamed teens were the deceased man's grandchildren. That's gonna make for an awkward family reunion.
- ❖ Don't you hate it when you suffer a heart attack and think you're going to die, so you confess to a 17-year-old murder, only to find out you're not going to die and then get sentenced to life in prison as a result? Yeah, so does James Washington, of Nashville, because it happened to him. 🌴