

DOCTOR ON THE ROAD: TESLA MODEL Y



# Is Tesla running out of sparks?

It's a great package, but our motoring correspondent **Dr Tony Rimmer** (right) reckons Tesla has a job to do if it wants to stay in front



MEDICAL INVESTIGATIONS, diagnoses and treatments change over time as new knowledge, techniques and medications advance. Hopefully, each change also improves outcomes for our patients. Car makers must evolve too; there is too much competition around to remain complacent, even when you lead the pack. In the world of electric vehicles (EVs), Tesla has been the go-to brand for most buyers for the last few years. However, it now faces increasing competition from the big brands as a steady stream of new electric rivals hit the show-rooms.

The original Tesla Model S and Model X had the EV field to themselves, but remain niche products and are expensive to buy. In fact, Tesla has just withdrawn them from sale in the UK in RHD form. **Instant success** When the more affordable and smaller Model 3 went on sale here in 2019, it was an instant success. Many more buyers now had access to Tesla design and technology and could enjoy the benefits of access to the brand's Supercharger network. But it is a saloon and many families demand greater space and the

practicalities of a hatchback. So Tesla responded with the Model Y, a slightly larger hatchback evolution of the Model 3 that uses the same electric platform. Like its smaller sibling, there are three versions available. The entry-level £44,990 Standard Range has one 275bhp electric motor powering the rear wheels and WLTP range of 283 miles. The £52,990 Long Range has dual electric motors producing a combined 412bhp, four-wheel drive and a range of 331 miles. If you go for the £59,990 flagship Performance model, it has bigger dual motors producing



The Model Y gets up to speed really quickly with one long uninterrupted stream of acceleration



“Almost every feature of the car's controls is operated via the 15” touchscreen”



TESLA MODEL Y LONG RANGE	
Body:	Five-seat SUV hatchback
Engine:	Dual electric motor. All-wheel drive
Power:	434bhp
Torque:	493Nm
Top speed:	135mph
Acceleration:	0-60mph in 4.8 seconds
WLTP claimed range:	331 miles
CO <sub>2</sub> emissions:	0g/km
On-the-road price:	£52,990

473bhp, four-wheel drive and a range of 319 miles. All Model Ys share a full and impressive set of standard features, the dominant one being Tesla's unique in-car technology controlled via a huge and dominant 15” touchscreen. **Autopilot functions** Almost every feature of the car's controls is operated via this screen. As in the Model 3, there are no instruments, digital or otherwise, directly in front of the driver. Autopilot and autosteer functions also feature on all models, with

full autonomous driving elements available at significant extra cost. You enter the Model Y with a credit-card sized key or use the phone App that is downloadable. The driving seat is comfortable and the interior feels light and airy, but some of the interior trim feels cheap and of poor quality for a car of this price. Tesla has made the most of the packaging benefits afforded by the electric drive so there is plenty of space for all passengers. The hatchback boot is large and there is extra storage space below the boot floor. So does the Model Y drive differ-

ently from the Model 3? Well, as with all EVs, the instantaneous torque and minimal noise is impressive and the car feels just as sprightly. **Stream of acceleration** You get up to speed really quickly with one long uninterrupted stream of acceleration. The suspension feels firm and a little unsettled when dealing with urban potholes at low speeds. In fact, the ride quality is really too firm for most people for most of the time, probably the Model Y's biggest fault. The steering is very direct and contributes to an

almost go-cart feel in town; welcome when threading through busy traffic but a bit oversensitive for the open road. The handling on A and B roads is pretty good and helped by the low centre of gravity from those big batteries, but this is not a sports car. Strangely, the fast Performance model, which has had some suspension changes to suit higher speeds, actually rides better than the cheaper and slower variants. Perhaps Tesla should make these changes across the whole range. The model Y is better suited to motorways where the low aerodynamic drag helps economy and the driver aids are at their most helpful. Being a Tesla, it has access to the impressive Supercharger network with 1,000 UK stalls and 10,000 in mainland Europe. Beware though, because Tesla has opened up many of its sites to third-party use, so you may find yourself competing with a Mercedes or Audi.

I suspect that most medic families will charge at home for most of the time and with a real-world range of 200-250 miles, this may only be necessary once a week. So, the Model Y is a great package and I am not surprised that it is selling in big numbers. However, it is let down by a poor ride quality and does not feel as solidly put together as its rivals. Tesla needs to tackle these issues soon or it will lose out more and more to competitors from Europe, South Korea and China. ■

Dr Tony Rimmer is a former NHS GP practising in Guildford, Surrey