

Tesla Model S Gets Consumer Reports' Top Score

Tom Krisher, AP Auto Writer

DETROIT (AP) — The Tesla Motors Inc. Model S electric car has tied an older Lexus for the highest score ever recorded in *Consumer Reports* magazine's automotive testing.

The Model S, which starts at \$62,400 after a federal tax credit, scored 99 points on a scale of 100 in the magazine's battery of tests.

"It accelerates, handles and brakes like a sports car. It has the ride and quietness of a luxury car and is far more energy-efficient than the best hybrid cars," Jake Fisher, the magazine's director of automotive testing, said Thursday in a statement.

The magazine tested a Model S that cost \$89,650 and was equipped with an 85 kilowatt-hour lithium-ion battery that's larger than the standard battery. The car went from zero to 60 mph (100 kph) in only 5.6 seconds. The magazine said it handled like a Porsche sports car, yet it was the quietest car it had tested since the Lexus LS. The interior, the magazine said, was beautifully crafted and reminded testers of an Audi.

Consumer Reports found that the Model S had a range of about 180 miles (290 kilometers) on cold winter days and 225 miles (362 kilometers) in moderate temperatures, far higher than other pure electric cars that go 75 or 80 miles (120 or 130 kilometers) on a single charge. Tesla says the 85 kwh battery-car can go 300 miles (480 kilometers) at 55 mph (88 kph).

Charging the Model S costs about \$9 at the national average of 11 cents per kilowatt-hour, the magazine said, making the car equal to running a conventional vehicle on gasoline that costs \$1.20 per gallon (3.8 liters), *Consumer Reports* said. The magazine calculated that the Model S got the gasoline equivalent of 84 miles per gallon (36 kilometers per liter).

The Model S, though, didn't get *Consumer Reports'* coveted "Recommended Buy" rating because the magazine doesn't have sufficient data to judge reliability of the car, which went on sale last year.

The car was not without shortcomings. *Consumer Reports* said its drawbacks include limited range, long charging times and coupe-like styling that hinders rear visibility and crimps passenger access. The magazine also was concerned about buying a car from a startup company with no track record of reliability or resale value and a "skimpy (although growing) service network."

The Model S tied a Lexus 460L full-size luxury car tested in 2007 for the record score.

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