

Am I Driving the Car, or is it Driving Me?



Help! I feel like I'm being run by the technological "marvels" built into so much stuff these days!

And it's all my fault! If one were to accuse me of having an addiction, it would not be the standard addictions to drugs, smoking, or food (but that runs a close second!). It would be having the newest and "best" device, which includes new cars, which are loaded with electronics and technological marvels.

My recent indulgences in my addiction began when I got the idea to sell the little Ram ProMaster City van to a family that needed it for its wheelchair capability. Its previous owner had had it customized for his crippled wife's wheelchair, with a ramp, straps, etc.

Selling it left me without a vehicle, so I became Debbie's Chauffeur in her Honda Fit, since she is reluctant to drive any distance due to vision challenges. I soon realized that the Fit was too small to fit this baby elephant. So Debbie and I went to look at the next size up, preferably a used Honda HRV at the Victorville dealer, with the intention to trade in the tiny Fit for a not-so-tiny-but-still-small HRV.

Hahahahaha. The Debbie-Linda combination is very risky, since we both are addicted to the latest and greatest technological devices, and when we get together to upgrade stuff, look out! All prudence and common sense go right out the window!

We looked at various used Hondas, finding several nice but slightly larger CRVs but no HRVs. A salesman came out and showed us the only HRV they had on the place, a brand new, fire-engine-red 2024 HRV, which had been recently redesigned and outfitted with Honda's latest bells and whistles.



Now I know that white is the best car color for the desert. Every car I've had since living up here has been white. But the shiny richness of that Honda's red was irresistible, plus the lure of the newest technology just completely bamboozled both of us. Somehow we just had to have that car!

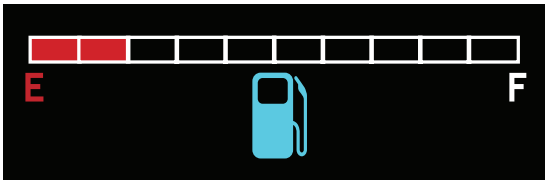
That was almost a year ago, and I still haven't learned about all of the neat little things it has and does. What I do know is that that little red car (thus its name Little Red) thinks it's boss and can tell me what to do. And actually, most of what it tells me is pretty helpful. And most of it is new to me, having driven simpler cars up until now.

Of course it has a backup camera with yellow and white lines on the screen, to show where the car is headed. The headlights



are set to "Auto" so that the car takes care of turning the high lights on and off, and headlights and daylights on or off as appropriate.

The little gas "gauge" is a set of 10 white squares in a line, and as the gas goes down, the squares change to empty boxes. At two white squares, they turn red and



issue the warning that you are low on gas. Helpful, huh? A few days ago I had let it run low on gas, intending to fill it at one of the lower priced stations in town, but I was late for my appointment and decided to wait.

After my appointment, I was going to stop at the Circle K at Nisquali and the freeway, but no pumps were available, so I kept going on Yucca Loma but got caught in their big road maintenance traffic jam at Apple Valley Rd. It took several cycles of the light to get across the intersection, where there was a Chevron station with higher prices. I decided to go on to Apple Valley for its lower prices, knowing that Little Red gets great mileage and the one square left meant I had more than 20 miles left in the tank.

Little Red had other ideas. It had been quietly signaling me to get gas, and then to GET GAS, and when I was going to pass by the Chevron, it actually screamed at me with its warning sound to "GET GAS, YOU IDIOT OR YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT HOME!!!" I decided to get a little gas at the Chevron so I could get to Apple Valley for the cheaper stuff! I don't know if Little Red has forgiven me yet or not.

A few days later, I travelled to Orange to see the audiologist about my hearing devices, and I was tired, not having slept too well the night before. But rather than do the sensible thing and stop for a 15-20-minute nap, I decided to tough it out and push for home. Little Red did NOT like that decision and expressed its displeasure.

The car's systems include cameras that give warning if you are too close to the white line on the edge of the road, by shaking the steering wheel and even taking control of the steering to steer you back into your lane. It also warns you of vehicles in your blind spot on both sides of the car, both with a flashing orange light on the rearview mirrors and with a loud sound if you get too close. Then it has a message screen in front of the driver, and I had it set on Driver Attention, which judges your level of attention with another set of bars. You are supposed to have four bars for full attention, but I guess all the warning functions let it know if you are driving at full attention or not.

Little Red gave me a score of two bars and on its message screen, gently suggested that I should take a break. After I

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ignored it and kept going, it finally ordered, "TAKE A BREAK!" Clearly it was quite upset with me! And I deserved it, as I fought

Driver Attention Alert

TAKE A BREAK!

sleepiness all the way home.

Isn't it nice to have such a caretaker along for the ride? I really do appreciate those features built into Little Red, and I will really love it when it changes its own tires! Wonder if it does.

And then there's the Victra Verizon Wireless store over in the Mall across from Walmart on Highway 18. That place is dangerous! But that's a story for another time, maybe next time.

Linda Gommel

On The Lighter Side of Serious Stuff . . . from the Web

