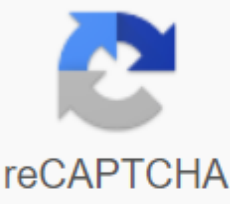




I'm not robot



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Cancer is happening right now, which is why I'm taking part in Race for Life to raise money and save lives. Every 2 years. Every pound you donate matters to cancer research UK's pioneering work. Nvidia's Drive PX 2 supercomputer is used as fuel for a new type of street race We travel to Cambridge Massachusetts, where an underground renegades scene tears a backwards. Millions of dollars of Bitcoin bets and a tetabyte data dump are fuelling a new street race. With the advanced driver assist of modern cars (ADAS) (e.g. lane keeping and self parking), autonomous driving has opened up to the masses. Standard ADAS, combined with open source software such as Comma.ai, Udacity and Baidun Apollo, gives hackers full control over their vehicles. A new breed of street racers is taking over, consisting of computer science majors desperate in the age of Snapchat dog filters, heartless Tinder dates and binge drinking. Like the slippery back hot rod culture of the 1950s, the unique subculture is getting its adrenaline fix behind the wheel. I met Sean on Sunday at 11:00. Sean's name has been changed for obvious reasons. He's a student with a CS degree, and I've been told, the mastermind behind the whole operation. He was going to show me a very illegal operation. He later told me that the risk was worth it: This is something no one has done before. Like Silk Road or Cryptocurrency, this is the technology that changes everything. A completely new species is emerging from the code lines of this unnamed group. Sean threw a cigarette outside an indetert building, driving down an industrial building in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He led us through the door next to the steel garage door. Daft Punk crashed through a dimly lit corridor, ending up in open space. It looked like an old mechanics' deal, the bulletin boards of the 1970s were now sporting pictures of cars and clips from Wired Magazine. Three cars in different configurations were glowing in front of me. Half a dozen students worked feverishly. Marijuana was found in the steam pen of the person coding next to the car. It took me five weeks to even get an introduction here, and engineering students barely noticed I was there. Sean kissed his girlfriend and showed me his Acura. Rockstar's energy and cigars littered the floor. The server rack covered the back wall. Ethernet cables of all colours littered the roof and slipped out of the server rack. He walked me past his heavily modified car. The hood was open, but otherwise you couldn't see anything unusual in the car. It was the ultimate sleeper. The guy who smoked hashish on the laptop was called Einstein. He wrote several machine learning algorithms that exported open source software and It. His black Macbook had a cable that crashed into a custom-made T-Box connected directly to the car's CAN interface. Any of these engineers can get 6-figure salaries at Google, Uber or any of the dozens of companies pouring billions into self-driving car racing. Instead, they did this, pushing AV technology much further than anyone else. Something happens when something is completely unpacked, Sean explained, it moves it at maximum speed. In his case, the group worked around regulation. By this time, a few engineers had looked at the alien oasis of code, cars and hashish. I asked him how Sean financed the project, and he kept quiet. I changed the tone and asked how this all started. It started with the release of AV source code to github, He explained looking down on Acura's rebuilt engine, the Damn Code working on the OnePlus 3 smartphone. It was too easy, I had to try it. Sean refers to the publication of Comma.ain openpilot. The controversial and classically cheeky San Francisco startup uses the smartphone's 820-GPU to capture data and control the car. The DO-IT-YOURSELF series connects to the vehicle's CAN connection, which controls acceleration and steering. So we're messing with it, pushing it to the limit, Sean explained, until some jerk in a Mustang shot me with 150, he kicked an empty emptying bottle of Rockstar to the floor, that's when this crazy idea hit me. What if we can drive better than any human could ever drive? Sean had a way of dragging you into words he couldn't care about. Over the past six months, he has assembled a crack team of CS majors, gearheads, drug addicts, bassheads and true innovators. They all happened to be pretty good at deep learning. After six months of reverse planning, translating other people's code and finally building their own, they were ready for their first race. Sean was sitting coded behind the wheel of his white Acura. He pointed to two cameras in the corners of the window, as well as an existing ADAS camera. You have to believe in the code, he said almost religiously, placing his hand on the steering wheel, He is a machine that is really self-conscious and must be treated with respect. In the trunk of the car were two Nvidia PX supercomputers with similar cooling systems. The control driver had to be replaced with a torque for a larger controller, and the VCU completely re-mapped it. I asked Sean again sitting in the passenger seat how he financed everything. He looked at the server rack and then came back to me: Let's just say... I made a lot of money from Bitcoin. The savings from this are enough to invest in a race that is bigger than anyone before. He looked me in the eye: That's enough. We live in the eras of unscripted Bitcoin millionaires. Children Mined or coded for something stupid smart in your teens, and end up fully set when they're in college. He climbed out of the car: Now that you know we're not full of it, I'll email you when we're racing. I asked when. Sean laughed and glanced back at the server rack: When the rest of the bets are made. I led me out, I looked at the coded cars in the store one more time. They looked almost dull on the outside. I asked one more question about why he let me see all this. Sean was going to open the door to the street when he stopped for a while because, thinking, we're making history. These vehicles are regaining consciousness, and I want the world to see it. I didn't even know the cars behind me were unique. It wouldn't be for a few weeks for an email to arrive from a random address in my inbox. It said only the time and place that turned out to be the library, as well as Don't Miss :)Nous's next flight from the SFO to Logan, leaving the South Boston AirBnb just over 3am. It was July in Boston, and the summer nights were warm and pleasant. It reminded me that I was messing around in high school, jumping on barbed wire fences and drinking stolen alcohol. We met at a library on the outskirts of Boston. Sean was waiting for me in Acura. A few small cameras had been added to the rear windows, as well as a police cruiser-style laptop holder: Man your Lyft driver is slow. Get in the car. On his Macbook, Google Earth was open, showing a traced route from my taxi ride, which stretched about a mile from where we were sitting. Don't be offended, I grabbed IMEI when we met weeks ago. The British call them IMSI Catchers, the FBI, the Stingrays. We use them to track the police. Sean explained that every police car has either a radio repeater or a police officer with a cell phone. The radio (SDR) specified by the software needed to track IMEI could easily be purchased in China for a few hundred dollars. Every race car had an SDR, and their signals were triangularized to locate the police. I didn't ask, but quickly enough the SDR could be used to jam most police signals, including their mobile phones. Sean turned down the brightness of the screen and checked his watch, the glowing Rolex GMT. Acura started without touching the controller, the headlights were turned on, the engine turned. We were on our way. A map appeared on the Macbook with two other cars as well as a view around the car. It was eerie and surreal to watch the car's sensors put together a 3D view around us into the night. We're going to Vermont, Sean said quietly, he pressed a motorola radio button hidden near the ignition. Einstein, did you push the latest structure? I want to give it a chance before the 4G drops. Sean grabbed the wheel when his car was upgraded to the latest firmware, and he back in his seat. We didn't talk much, just a few radios. Radio. Like he said, 4G became spotty, and in the end we were on our own. When we were in Vermont, we joined two other cars. They flashed their driving beams behind us with a tense flash. Sean turned off the car's headlights, the other cars followed. Our world was an eclipse, driving at over 80mph, we hadn't even reached the first light. Sean started laughing at the radio: Einstein, the Five-Eight link works great. On screen, awareness of our vehicle had tripled. He looked at me in the light of his macbook and kept his eyes away from the thenious of the invisible road ahead: Who needs headlights when you have RAW camera data? The Macbook looked like a huge road before and behind God's gaze. Each car shared data via a 150Mbps V2V Wi-Fi link, pulling enough data to drive in the dark. The cars didn't even flinch. At first light, we were deep in the woods of Vermont. For some reason, my Verizon phone didn't get a signal. Lush forests and hills surrounded the highway, the sun peeking across the horizon. Everyone stopped, jumped in their cars and sipped coffee from thermos. Sean's gold Pixel phone was outside. Four guys and three girls stood around cars hugging campus hoodies and their lovers. Ladies and gentlemen, he looked at every camera in the front vehicle. He paused and looked on in surprise as he read his phone: Bets are set! He looked into the eyes of every member of his team: 4,200 Bitcoins, one of the engineers spit out his coffee, will be the prize for this competition. We have people all over the country betting over 150,000 Bitcoins on this! He interrupted: This is unheard of. By comparison, in July 2017, BTC 150,000 is worth well over \$1 billion. A little less if it's washed properly. Everyone was silent for a while. The funds, Sean continued, have been raised, mixed and waiting to be distributed. He turned off the screen, held up his phone and checked his watch: For those watching this live by satellite, the time is 10:17 UTC, he stared at his car's camera now, and this might be the biggest bet in the history of car racing. Sean was dangerously alive with energy. He said quietly, calmly and quickly: Let the competition begin! Einstein lit a joint and gave it to a girl with dread threads. Sean kissed his girlfriend, who was driving another car. Everyone was silent for a while. The next moments are hard to remember. I remember climbing Sean to code for Acura and thinking this was absolute madness. I tightened my racing skein. All lined up on the highway. Sean's car was the last to stand, and he calmly did a radio check, a police scan, and checked the satellite internet connection. Synchronizing clocks.... Markus! He hit me in. A the timer appeared at the command prompt of our vehicle. There are moments in your life when reality is distorted and you are pushed into a whole new world in incredible acceleration. A huge sound erupted from everywhere. The road was turned on when the three tricked out, with coded supercars passing between 0 and 60mph in less than 4 seconds. I looked back at the blurred tan smoke as my body pressed into the racing seat. The laptop screen in front of me was cut in half, showing a 3D map around the car and a hypnotic code vortex. Billions of opportunities were analyzed and thrown away. The results considered acceptable were converted via fibre into petrol explosions, pressing the seat on my back. Before I could blink, the cars were up to 100 mph. I rocked from side to side in my 5-point harness seat. Sean was ecstasy with his hands behind his head. We zoomed in at 150mph, drifting into a hilly turn. If the code failed now, it would be too late to do anything. Why take care of yourself? Other cars would literally drive a few inches ahead. At every moment, it looked like we were plunging into our deaths, but computers found that risk perfectly acceptable. Maybe the engine noise was the most hypnotic. Every gear shift was artistic, the way the vehicle committed to its shift was enigmatic. I wanted more. The map on the screen showed several possible trajectes, one turned green. We shot past the cars in front of us, around the blind turn. The mini-car was driving with its head on and driving headlights! Our car swerved, lost traction and fixed it without a hitch. I started to feel sick. Sean swore out loud that this is what he lived for. This is also why he would die, at least at this rate. Trying to hold my stomach, we're going to be in deadly hairpin turns at over 100mph. I noticed computers can drift. The engine started to reddish when we got excited right away. Something strange happened. Sean's car was centered across the dotted line. The car in front moved to the right. Behind us, the last car moved into the space next door. Instead of blocking the road, Sean's car let the others pass. The cars were not programmed to compete with each other, but work together, pushing their specifications to the maximum. They made way for each other to see which car could be pushed the hardest. A wild vibration shook our car. In addition to us, the cars struggled to stay straight as the wheels vibrate from side to side. The speedometer reading was 160, the satellite link was closer to 200. A translation appeared on the map. The car began analyzing millions of trajectes, and it took longer than usual to choose the path. Sean breathed heavily, sweat ran down his face: What are you going to do, honey? What are you going to do about it? It was a game of chicken, to see which car would make way for another turn first. The computer did, threw our bodies. I met a couple of weeks after the race for Philz coffee in Palo Alto. Oddly enough, the building was owned by Palantir, a symbol of for-profit mass surveillance. Sean felt cozy, si si si si si si sipming, wearing reflective Ray-Ban sunglasses. The group had been disbanded, most of the members had graduated. Sean moved as far as he could from the icy winters of New England. In addition to the winning prize, each member took a significant cut of bets made worldwide. No person has to work another day in their lives, but almost all of them had either joined the company or built their own. I knew it would be my last meeting with Sean. We joked about the race and talked about where the technology was going. He explained that most of the current AV software was based on rules. Systems that would learn for themselves, without human input, would eventually win. It's not a rule game, it's learning. I asked him what was next. I have more coins than God. And the algorithm is better than Google. What am I going to do now? Sean was sipping his coffee. He looked at me with a grin, then all the way to the security camera on the corner: Find a way to make it look like I'm paying taxes! X Garrett Kinsman writes technology from San Francisco and Bangalore India.This is unfortunately fictionJoin Hacker Noon Create a free account to unlock your custom reading experience. Experience.

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