

The illusory repair powers of black electrical tape

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Raymond Chen

Back in the crazy dot-com boom days, I knew someone who was into high-performance automobiles. And since these were the crazy dot-com boom days, he had the money to satisfy his urge to drive high-performance automobiles. He bought a used Ferrari, but found that it spent more time in the repair shop than on the road. To solve this problem, he bought a second Ferrari. (Note: This is not a solution available to most people.) One of the many trips to the auto repair shop was to address an indicator light on the dashboard which had lit up. The mechanics studied the problem and concluded that the indicator light was a false positive. There was nothing wrong with the car aside from the light itself. “Just ignore it,” they told him. “We can’t disconnect the light for «some reason». If it really bothers you, you can put a piece of black electrical tape over it.” “I don’t accept that solution,” he replied, and told them to go and fix the problem for real. Some time later, he returned to pick up the car, and yes, the indicator light was off. Satisfied, he drove off.

The next day, he took a closer look at the dashboard. The repair shop had cut out a piece of black electrical tape in the exact shape of the indicator light and placed it over the malfunctioning lamp.