

The Scion FR-S – A Review, Owner's Impressions, and Opinions

July 2012



It was with great enthusiasm and anticipation that I received my 2013 Scion FR-S right after Memorial Day. Since then, I have been studying the car intently and learning a great deal about it. It is highly unusual for me to have purchased a car sight unseen, without having driven it or even seen one in real life. I did thoroughly examine and sit in the Subaru BRZ at the Minneapolis Auto Show back in March, but still. The anticipation for this car was significant and I was fortunate to receive the very first one to be delivered from my Toyota dealership. It is a silver ("Argento", in Scion-speak), 6-speed manual. I'll provide a real-world review, starting with the outside of the car.

Proud Papa on delivery day, May 29, 2012:



An Introduction. The FT86 is the result of a joint venture between Toyota and Subaru with the mission to produce a lightweight, RWD, great handling sports car that is small, low, pure, beautiful, and legitimate. The car is being marketed by Toyota as the GT86 in Asia and Europe and as the Scion FR-S in North America, and by Subaru as the BRZ all over the world. The car, and its “86” name, pays homage to the **Toyota AE86** of the 1980’s – which was a light, pure, sweet handling RWD car that ignited the “drifting” craze that sustains to this day:



Toyota and Subaru have squabbled in public over which partner really is the “father” of the new ‘86. It’s probably a strong validator that the product is good, when large corporations fight over who gets more credit for it. But what is generally acknowledged is that Subaru did the chassis development and tuning. A fair amount of Impreza / WRX components were incorporated. Subaru supplied the boxer engine core. Toyota supplied the cylinder heads and engine control systems. Toyota did the design work, styling and interior. Toyota did the subsystems. Subaru is manufacturing the car. It is the product of a true partnership, taking the best of two very large and capable organizations and creating a car neither probably could have done themselves. (For example -- it’s a good thing Subaru didn’t style the thing, and it’s a good thing Toyota didn’t do the steering.) The designers aimed at incredibly ambitious benchmarks when developing this car – their principal one being the Porsche Cayman S. And it appears that they have succeeded. The automotive enthusiast world was in a frenzy of anticipation over the ‘86’s broad market release, and the high expectations seem to have been met as the cars have hit the market.

The ‘86 has a 200 horsepower boxer-4 engine and weighs about 2,700 pounds. The cars themselves (Subaru Toyota/ and Scion) are pretty much identical, except for front end styling, trim & equipment levels, price & pricing philosophy, and some suspension tuning tweaks.



Subaru BRZ

Scion FR-S (Toyota GT86)

Exterior. The design of this car is very appealing in person and speaks “sports car” very clearly and with great purity. It is fresh, modern, fluid yet tightly sculpted, and clearly athletic, with some interesting detail features tucked in, but without being overdone, or too-aggressively styled. The fender bulges, especially on the hood but also on the rear quarters, speak muscularity without being vulgar or frivolous. I love the cool “Corvette Stingray” effect created on the view out the windshield by the front fender crests. The car’s overhangs are very short, which emphasize the rear-set, blatantly RWD stance and profile.

I like that there is absolutely zero “ground effects”, body kit add-ons, spoilers / wings, moldings, or other encrustations on the car. There really are no embellishments that could have been left off, just a purity and cleanliness of execution, shape and design.



Maybe the only frivolous exception would be the small “fangs” on the FR-S grille opening. Probably those could have been left off (or toned down).



But overall, I think this is an overall design that will age well and look fresh for many years.

It is worthwhile to note that this is a very small car – in particular, it is very, very low in its stance and in overall height. It's nice to once again see a car that is not bloated or overly large for its sporting mission. Its tidy size enhances its legitimacy and purity of purpose.



A couple interesting design details:

The “pagoda” roof with deepset channeling looks really good. It is hard to convey this design element in pictures, but it is quite noticeable and looks great in person.



I also like the shape and the detailing of the exterior mirrors. Although it would have been nice if they included embedded turn signal repeaters, like many cars have nowadays.



Headlights are heavily sculpted and very cool. Lowbeams are the outboards (projector beams), high beams and daytime running lamps are inboard. The turn signals are below, in the top of the simulated air inlet:



I am really glad I got the color I did. Scion calls it “Argento”, but it is just a bright silver. The car’s styling and contours are really brought out by the shimmer of this highly metallic silver paint. The other colors I considered were dark gray metallic (which probably would show this well too) and Aquamarine (which I worried would have a little too much of an “electric blue” effect for my taste). I know some people think black really brings out the shape of a car, and it does, but I think a lighter color with some metallic in it does that best. Especially on a car this small.



Many online commenters have complained about the “Wheel Gap” of this car. That is, they think there is too much open space around the tires in the wheel wells, and that the wheel/tire combo should have been larger and/or the car should have sat lower on the springs. I disagree, and don’t see it. I think the car sits perfectly as it is. Given how low it is in “stock” trim, the proportions and stance of the car already look plenty right to me. I think putting bigger rims with “O-ring” tires on this car would just spoil the overall look and proportions. Not to mention that they would also wreck the finely tuned ride/handling/grip balance that the engineers have achieved. In my opinion. More on that later.



I did make one small “edit” on the exterior of my car, and that’s to simplify and clean up the rear visual of the rear decklid and its badging. I went from this:



To this, by purchasing and installing the same badge as the one on the side fender trim of the car:



Last step -- remove the “FR-S” emblem to complete the clean-up of the rear end. Here's another view:



I'm happy with the effect. To me it nicely simplifies, and visually cleans up, the rear perspective of the car. And I really like the bespoke “86 boxer” logo that the emblem provides.

The **trunk** is surprisingly useful. I cannot lie and call it large, but it will serve the purpose. Vertically, it is only about 14 inches high from floor to ceiling of the trunk compartment. But the opening is large, the cargo space is nicely wide and deep, and the shape is perfectly accessible and useful – all these elements are much better than a Miata can offer. Plus the fold-down rear seat makes it viable to load in longer items, or to easily carry two sets of golf bags. Under the trunk mat is the spare tire and tools. The spare wheel holds a removable molded plastic insert that serves to support the floor of the trunk, but if you remove it you can create extra storage space inside the “dish” of the empty wheel for towels, car care materials, and the like; and the floor still has adequate integrity.



Under the trunk mat: Compact spare tire, with removable storage / support tray inside the wheel.



A new definition of the "sports utility vehicle"? One that hauls ass -- plus 6 bags of mulch & 2 bundles of firewood. For the FR-S with its fold-down rear seat and flat loading platform – no problem!



While I'm still outside the car, the **hood** is made of aluminum, and feels almost impossibly lightweight when lifting it, yet it is rigid at the same time. Nice.

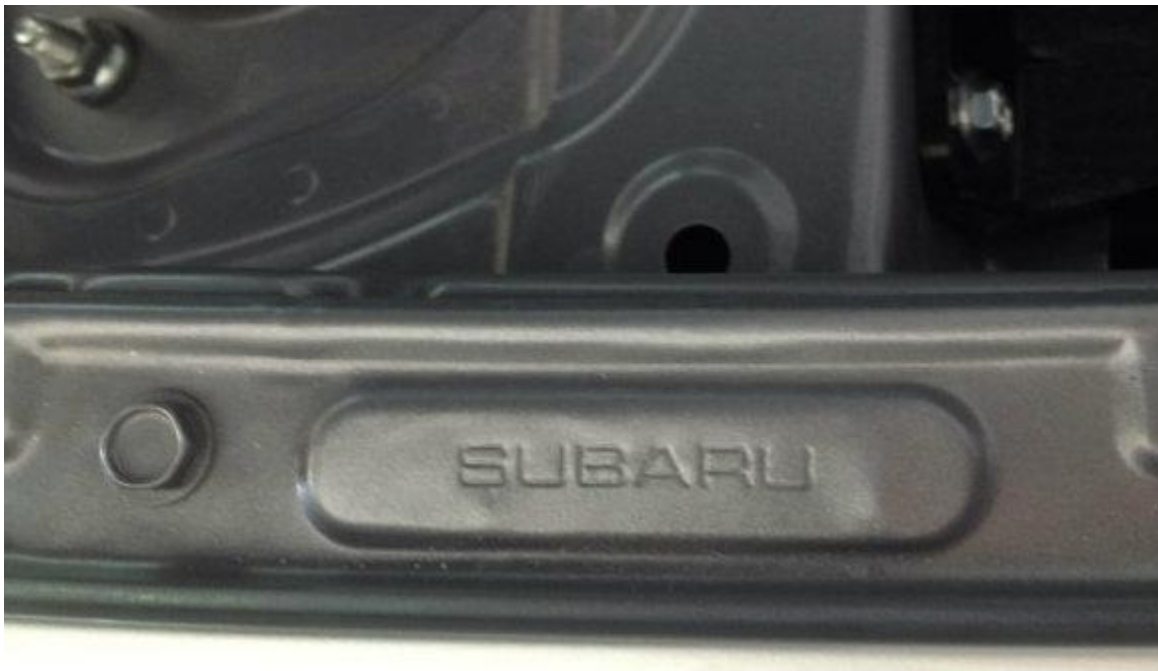


You can see that the boxer engine is inherently very low, and is installed very much set back to the rear, towards the firewall. All routine maintenance items are easy to access, and there is plenty of "working space" under the hood. The battery, in particular, is prominently located and easy to access. Note, too, the standard braces triangulating the strut towers to the firewall.

Check out the location of the oil filter circled above -- incredibly well placed, and thoughtful for the do-it-yourself oil changer. Front and center up top, it screws on "upside down", with a catcher tray for any drips. This is a car you on which you could change the oil in 5 minutes while wearing pressed khaki's and not risk spilling a single drop of oil. Very well done.



Another interesting aspect under the hood is how the word “Subaru” is stamped all over the place – you could see it printed on the oil filter, and in particular it is prominently embossed into many of the components around the car. You can visibly tell which partner did a lot of the structural work when engineering this car.



Moving to the **interior**. The seats feel perfect. Absolutely perfect. Comfortable, grippy, supportive in all the right places, and plenty of lateral bolstering without being confining. (I am 6'0"/ 175lbs). They look great, too. I love the shoulder bolsters, the no-nonsense high-tactile fabric, and the red stitching and red edging that relieve the all-black severity of the interior and add an element of jaunty verve to the ambiance.



The **seating position** is also just perfect. You know the tired old car-magazine saying that “everything just falls to hand?” Well, that’s the truth inside the FR-S. The car just fits and feels like it is molded to you, but without being the least bit cramped. There is plenty of space up front. In fact, even being a six-footer, there is probably an extra 4 to 6 inches of seat travel that I don’t need, and headroom is ample even when I vertically adjust the seat upwards.

As far as the location of the steering wheel, the shifter, the pedals, the angles, the views, and the access -- everything is correct, properly placed, and right where it should be. The shifter is only inches away from the steering wheel. The visibility out is excellent, with a large windshield that is well placed -- the previously mentioned “Stingray-style” fender crests make the view forward extra cool, plus they allow easy knowledge of exactly where your front wheels are located. I also appreciate that the windshield is not too steeply raked. On so many modern cars, the A-pillars are so thick, and the windshield angle is so steep, that it crowds the driver, blocks your view, and puts the sun visors right in your forehead. Not this car – and that really helps enhance the feeling of spaciousness.

An “A+” on front seat space and comfort.



A prominent, and very solid and sturdy feeling left-foot dead pedal is provided, to supplement a proper set of well-placed (and sporty-looking!) primary pedals.



The **back seat**, however, is not really suitable for actual people, and primarily should be thought of as an extension of the trunk, or a place for your briefcase, etc. It has been stated online that this car should not be referred to as a “2+2,” but instead a “2+tools”. That’s probably true. Anyone with legs will have to sit sideways, so maybe it’s really a “2+1”. When the front seats are set for normal-sized people, there are only a couple inches of rear leg room (meaning, essentially none).



Personally, I might just want to leave the rear seat folded down and enjoy the expanded cargo area. But, that means that when I look back into the opening I am staring at the silver painted interior of the trunk lid. I may find a way to address that, maybe with some black carpet material. Using the BRZ's inner trunk lid liner would help, but installing that part still leaves a good portion of the outer edges of the lid uncovered. I think painting the inside of the trunk lid black would be the ultimate answer, but I'm not quite ready to do that.



One weird feature in the back is the auxiliary brake light. It is mounted on an odd-looking three-legged set of stalks, which not only looks awkward, but will make it very difficult to clean the glass above the light fixture and the parcel shelf below the fixture. I wish they'd instead just integrated a little row of LEDs embedded along the top edge of the rear window glass.



Getting into the car. I know I said it before, but I keep being struck by, and again I reiterate, how **low** this car is – and resultingly, how **low** you sit. You feel like your butt is about 8 inches above the pavement. It really adds to the absolute sportiness of the car, makes it feel like you're going fast even when you're really not, and it makes for a vivid contrast between a true sports car like this one and a "sporty" car that is based on a modified family car platform. For example, a current-gen VW GTI (a great all-round car BTW, and priced very closely to the FR-S) feels so tall, boxy, and almost van-like in comparison.

The feeling of lowness also reinforces that this is a car that will need to be driven defensively – like on a motorcycle, or in my Miatas of the past, it is best to assume that the housewife driving that Ford Expedursion in the next lane over won't see me.

Getting in, the doors shut with a solid “thunk” that would be fitting for a German car costing double what this one did. And then the frameless windows do that cool little “zip” of closing the last inch after shutting the door, to make for a perfect seal without having door frames.



The door sills have beautiful stainless steel trim plates standard, with studded black plastic inserts that match the pedals. And there are very nice textured floor mats included as standard, with red edging and brushed metal “FR-S” emblems. Great pieces of “kit”. On many cars in this price range these would be sold as optional accessories. Very nice.



The bluff, upright shape of the **dash** fits the character of the car well, and it would not look out of place in a Porsche. The design says “sports car” loud and clear, but without being overstyled or gratuitous. It blends in with the door panels and the center console well.



I particularly just love the shape and placement of the center air vents.



Love the instrument panel and **gauge cluster**. Before getting the car, I was not sure about the boy-racer look of the black and white tachometer in pictures of the FR-S, versus the all-black, cleaner and more businesslike look of the Subaru version -- but in person, this looks fine. It's not actually black & white; instead, what looks white in pictures is really light metallic silver. It's definitely sporty. The large central tachometer dominates the presentation, and there is a clever three-dimensionality to the gauge cluster that looks great. And at night it vividly lights up and looks really cool.

I like the digital speedometer that's inset into the tach, and frankly, that's the speed readout that I almost exclusively use when driving -- turns out the analog speedo is extraneous when you have a prominent digital readout front and center like this.



I do wish there were oil pressure & oil temp gauges, or even digital readouts for that information. There would have been room in the open space between the tach and the fuel / coolant temp gauges.

The trip computer is nicely configurable, offers mpg data and other info, including having a bright up-shift light that you can select the rpm at which it comes on (and a selectable chime as well). Finally, I've never driven a stick shift car that provides a digital readout for what gear you're in. Although that can be a useful feature on sequential shift motorcycles, it does seem extraneous in a car. The readout can be turned off, but I have left it on, because why not. It seems to be a "calculated" readout, versus directly sensing the gear you're in, because there is a little lag between shifting, releasing the clutch, and the gear number appearing in the readout. Interesting.

One weird element regarding the trip computer. I've owned cars before with mpg gauges, and it's a feature I appreciate. I usually leave the "instant mpg" feature up most of the time I'm driving my daily commute. I find it really interesting that when you're coasting along, the mpg gauge "maxes out" at 127.0 mpg. What is the significance of this number, I wonder? Most other cars, when they're getting "infinite" mileage, either show 99 mpg, 999 mpg, go blank, show dashes, or whatever. But to max out at such a specific number? Just seems odd.

Gauge cluster (stock picture -- automatic car; note the “D”, versus a numeric gear indicator):



Here's mine:



One little surprise feature I noticed. If your car is shut off and you want to check the odometer reading, just press the "ODO / TRIP" button. Not only will the multifunction display light up and show you your current mileage (and yeah, I know a lot of cars do this), but also the whole instrument cluster will illuminate, and as a small bonus, the fuel gauge will "wake up" and show you how much gas is in your tank. Nice! How very thoughtfully clever, and (dare I say) Japanese, of the designers.....

Photo with the car switched off, but the ODO / TRIP button having just been pressed:



The **fit and finish** of the interior is excellent. The soft touch materials are not overly sumptuous, but are of high quality and seem appropriate for the mission and station of the car. Certainly better than the plastics in the current Camry or Corolla interior, in my opinion. The rich, textured-rubber-like material on the dash top is especially nice, as are the softly padded toppers on the door panel and the door arm rest area. Some have criticized the dash trim as being a fake-carbon-fiber lookalike, but in person you can see that it is actually a matrix of thousands of tiny Toyota "T" emblems embossed on the satin black plastic, so I give them credit for not just doing the usual "faux" fiber, or please no, fake wood. It looks great to me, appropriate for the mission of the car, not luxurious but not frivolous either, and in my opinion it looks a whole lot better than the painted silver expanse in the Subaru version of this car.



I also really like the plain vanilla, totally manual, three-knob HVAC control, versus having electronic-climate-control. I feel like with an auto-climate setup, I'm oftentimes fighting with the system to get it to do what I want, and hey -- this is a small car, so I think I can manage it myself just fine, thank you very much. Plus, a bonus -- you can feel that the HVAC control knobs are actuating cables that move actual air control flaps, versus being an all-electric system. Simple and reliable -- nice.



The **steering wheel** is surprisingly small in diameter, and is delightfully chunky and grippy. It's perfectly placed, yet still adjustable in reach and angle. The leather is textured for grip, feels good, and has nicely done red stitching. There are no stereo buttons, bluetooth controls, or gadgety distractions on the steering wheel whatsoever. This key tactile contact point with the car is 100% pure -- solely meant for steering the car. And it is perfectly executed. Well done.





So, the interior **ergonomics** are excellent for what this car is intended to be – a driver’s tool. While it is comfortable, functional, pleasing, and aesthetically sound, this is not a luxury car nor a boulevardier. Frankly, I like the compromises the designers have chosen – in the hundreds of decisions they had to make when executing this car, they always went for the path that reflects a “pure driver’s car” mission, versus watering down the experience to prioritize luxury or frills. Substance, versus frivolity. Perfect.

One example of this philosophy is the cup holders. They hold the drinks securely and adequately. They work. But they are not ideally placed for holding the drinks in the most convenient location; they are instead placed farther aft, to not be in the way while shifting and driving. Good choice. Another example is the lack of a cushy center armrest. Which doesn't seem like an omission in this car – would it just get in the way, given the low seating position? A final example is that there is not overabundant interior storage space – just a traditional in-dash glovebox, plus the open center console bin that is mostly taken up by the cupholders, plus a small cubby in the dash, plus an open well in each door shaped to hold a water bottle. It is adequate, but not excessive. It is like the designers are saying “have some discipline to leave your junk at home -- this car is for drivin’!” As opposed to my Chevy Suburban, which has a center console bin about the size of a Coleman cooler.



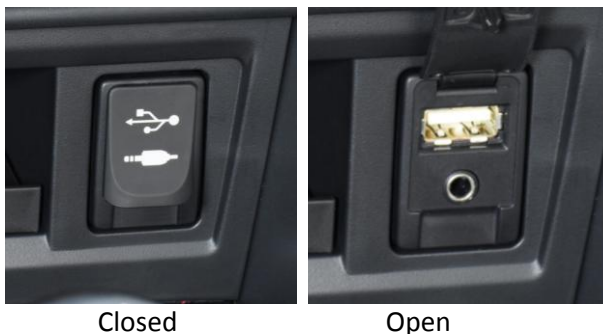
Meanwhile, the standard Pioneer-branded **stereo** is a pleasant surprise. Sound quality is excellent and powerful, and it's easy to use. Its looks are relatively plain, and the display window is kind of "old-tech" looking, with segmented LEDs for text versus a more modern dot-matrix display:



So I was not expecting much. But the stereo is fully featured, with bluetooth for phone, wireless bluetooth audio access to your ipod/iphone music library as well, plus HD radio, XM satellite, and full iPod integration. And everything works well and is logical to figure out without needing to consult the manual.

I especially like that it has a big ol-fashioned knob for the volume and big, individual buttons for the music presets and the phone send/end buttons. Which means you can operate the most-needed functions completely by feel, versus using a touchscreen, which I generally hate because it makes you take your eyes off the road.

I enjoy being able to listen to my music library, and to make & take calls, while my phone is in my pocket -- just get into the car and go, with no wires or plugging-in necessary. Yet, if I want to, both USB and aux-audio-in jacks are conveniently located in the lower console with a covered port.



So I call the stereo system a pleasant surprise, because I hadn't given it much advance thought or expectations, and it really works easily, performs well, and sounds great.

One thing that could have been improved inside is the interior lighting. An all-black interior (including the headliner) is prone to feeling pretty dark in the first place. But this one is not helped by the fact that there is only one (1!) interior light. It's a plain-Jane overhead light right behind the rear-view mirror. It's reasonably bright, but it would have been nice to have another light fixture behind the shoulders, and / or maybe footwell lighting as well:



I do appreciate that this car has a real key, that you put into a real keyhole, and you twist it to start the car. To me, that's the way things ought to be. I had the electronic keyless fob thingy, with pushbutton start/stop, when I owned an '09 Prius -- I never warmed up to it. It always felt like that gadget was a "solution looking for a problem" -- and that the thing was trying to outsmart me. I wasn't as in-control as I wanted to be. Gimme simple, traditional, and effective, please!



I hate the federally mandated “safety” labels intended to warn us of the dangers of the airbags. (Wait. Aren’t airbags there to “protect” us?) All new cars have these garish labels nowadays – our government requires them. These ugly things are painted on, not stickers, so they will most definitely not peel off.



So, I used some commonly available sticky-back sheets of felt available at any craft store (this is "Presto Felt" brand), used a metal ruler and a sharp knife to cut 10cm x 12cm rectangles, and rounded off the corners with a scissors.

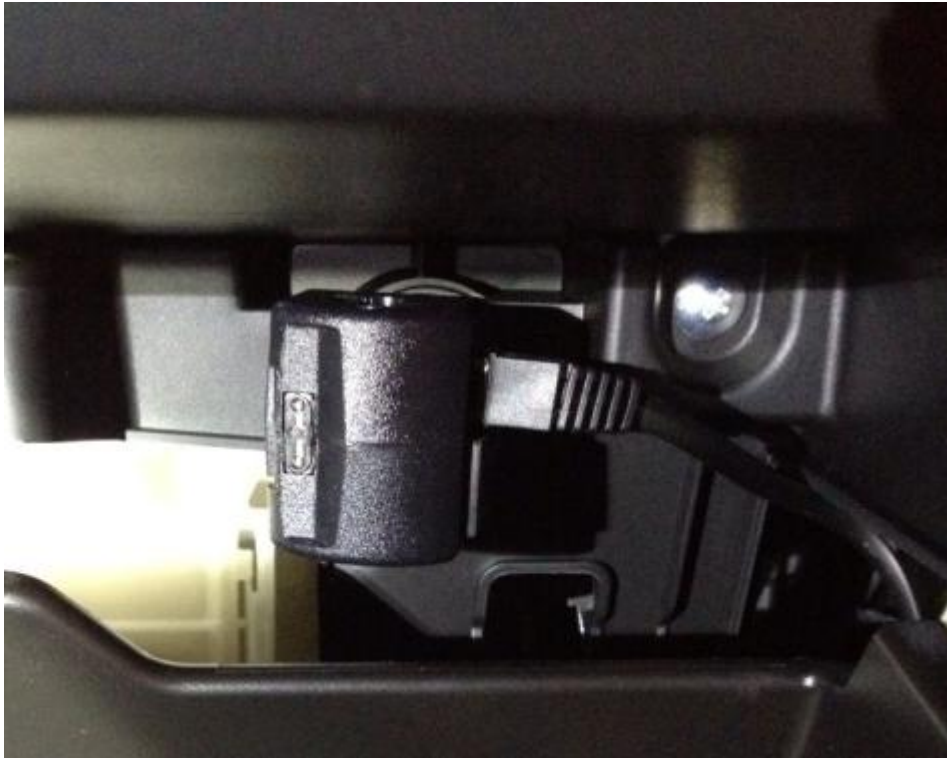


And now I have this:



Much better, eh?

One final piece of kudos for the interior. The car thoughtfully provides a 12V power socket mounted on the firewall, accessible from inside the glovebox, that's obviously meant for plugging your hardwired radar detector into. Power to this outlet is switched with the ignition, so my Valentine radar detector turns on and off automatically with the car. It took me all of five minutes to run a hidden power cord from there, up the pillar and tucked into the leading edge of the headliner, over to my preferred spot next to the inside rearview mirror. A measure of preventive medicine, made easy.



The drive (finally!). Well, there is not much I, an amateur, can add to all the wonderful professional reviews we've already all seen, read, and watched. The car magazines ([here's my favorite magazine review](#)) and the key online sites ([here's my favorite online video review](#)) have said so much and praised the car almost unanimously already. The car drives divinely. And as many have already said, this car is all about "BALANCE." The power is good, the grip is good, the throttle response is crisp, the steering is delectable, the ride is firm but supple, the shifter is perfect. That this is a finesse car, not a brute force car. Yada yada, you've been reading all of this for months. And I agree with them. But I do have a few more observations.

- First of all, you can absolutely feel the **low center of gravity** in this car. I think this is the defining element of the car's personality. It corners low, flat, and fun, and feels just super playful. The steering delivers rich feedback and instant response to inputs. The whole car is centered around delivering feel to the driver.
- Secondly, **power**. Some have written that there is not enough. But I have found that there is plenty for me, plenty for the car, and given that the lowness of the FR-S makes it feel super fast, fun, and nimble already, that the car just feels so balanced -- in that having 300 versus 200 horsepower would honestly probably throw the feel out of whack, and make it easier to get into situations that are more scary & risky than fun. The car has kind of a mixed personality in its power delivery, not dissimilar from the first-generation S2000. It is docile and easygoing when driven normally and unaggressively at low revs, yet the engine awakens and transforms (turns angry and growly) when carrying a big throttle angle across the 4,000 rpm threshold. Power noticeably increases when passing through the 4,000 to 5,000 rpm range. Acceleration becomes more fierce, as does the engine sound. The boxer engine's growl gets deeper & louder -- a guttural bass-toned bark. It's really fun. Will I get bored of the power quantity? I doubt it; I have owned three Miatas in the past (including a first-gen '91 model with all of 116 hp) and honestly never thought "this car's underpowered" when having fun with one of those. If you want more power, just add more revs, and you'll be fine.
- Third, the **sound** of the car is just great, and adds to the fun and the feel. My car was delivered initially without the stereo installed, so I got a good chance to learn the music of the car without distraction. The boxer engine's thrum is distinctive, enjoyable, and very apt for the personality of the car. I love the engine sound, and find it to be more of an earnest and eager low-pitched growl - - scrappy and throaty -- versus the exotic or romantic high-pitched scream of how a Ferrari or a Honda S2000 sounds. The engine's aural tone perfectly fits the character of the car, and I would not change it one bit.
 - Overall, when driving, the interior volume of this car is surprisingly loud, in this age of predominately super-insulated quiet cars -- but it is all the right kind of noise. In addition to the engine sound, all the other sounds seem to have been clearly "designed in" thoughtfully, versus an uncontrolled cacophony. A blend of road noise and bump noise (which there is some), tire noise (which there is very little) and wind noise (of which there is almost zero).
 - Personally, I think the mixture of sounds is perfect and fun -- pleasant, sporty but not intrusive, and I would not suggest needing to "enhance" it with an aftermarket exhaust or intake system that the ricers like.

- The **primary controls** are delicate, responsive, alive. Even driving residential streets at a sedate pace is a treat.
 - The steering is on the light side at parking lot speeds, but firms up with velocity and is rich with feedback and vitality. The steering wheel really feels alive. This is another defining characteristic of the car. One magazine reviewer said “There's more information coming through this single Toyota steering wheel than is available in the rest of the Toyota lineup combined.” Ha!
 - Turn-in is immediate, and there is no slack, anywhere. Transitions are tight, lively, and fun.
 - You can stimulate oversteer reasonably easily, and can reel out as much as you want and then rein it in just as easily. The car is beautifully controllable around a cloverleaf ramp, for instance. It is not at all twitchy or darty, and not as overly tail-happy as some writers have stated. It is very neutral. Yet – with VSC off – you can easily generate a lurid, fat & juicy powerslide at low to medium speeds if you want one. Luscious. Fun. I have not driven it aggressively in slippery conditions yet, but I predict it will definitely need minding in the slick.
 - The car tracks straight ahead very well on the freeway, with good stability -- which is very impressive considering its agility and quick turn-in. This is a major advantage over a Miata, which tends to be darty and flighty on the straight-ahead and needs constant attention to tend its lane.
 - The shifter, clutch, and throttle are perfectly coordinated, and the shifter snicks from gear to gear with a short throw and a direct, mechanical, delightful feel. I would call the shift feel about 95% as good as the two best shifters in the business – S2000 and Miata. Both of those cars have shorter throws, where you shift with a flick of the wrist and enjoy a “bolt-action” feel. This one has slightly longer travel and slightly more “plastic” feel. It’s still very good, but 5% short of awesome.
 - The clutch has smooth takeup and medium-short travel. It is sporty, but not demanding. And there is no “rev hang” – the revs drop immediately upon release of the throttle. I taught two of my teenaged kids to “drive stick” in one easy session with the FR-S.
 - It’s a car that rewards you in all driving situations. You absolutely don’t need to drive fast or aggressively to enjoy it.

- The **ride** is definitely firm, but it’s supple. Never rough. You feel the road, and feel connected to the road, without ever being punished by the road. Combined with a feeling of lightness and nimbleness that a heavier sedan-based “sporty” car just can not duplicate. This car has about the most perfect ride/handling balance I’ve ever encountered. Again, another area where I would not change a thing.
 - The “tuners” have already released spring/shock packages, lowering kits, etc, but I struggle to see how they could possibly improve on this carefully engineered stock setup for a street car?? I believe they are premature, and selling to those who are determined to mod the car without regard to experiencing its balanced street perfection “as-is” first. Unless people are building dedicated track cars -- or are just going for looks or for bragging rights.
 - BMW would do well to study this car closely, in that this is how the best of their cars used to feel (I’m thinking the E30 M3 as an example). Now that their cars (along with most other

brands) have become so heavy, over-powered, over-featured, and over-insulated, the ride/handling balance of the FR-S is a revelation.

- Finally, the **efficiency**. I'm impressed. Through the first thousand miles (break-in period, where I kept the revs down) I averaged 32.8 miles per gallon. Excellent! Since then, with a little more use of the rev range, (plus 100% use of Air-Conditioning given our constant temps in the 90's to 100's,) the average has come down to 32.0 mpg. Still, very good! That's better fuel efficiency than the EPA rating, and better than I expected. Especially when I consider that the car is taking the place of a 6,000 pound Chevrolet Suburban as my daily commuter – it almost pays for itself!



One last point. I have found that this car presents an interesting **status image**. To the enthusiast who “knows” and “gets” this car, it carries tremendous legitimacy and desirability. But to the person looking for brand prestige, this car is a nothing. A total zilch. If you are buying a car to impress that kind of person, you should get a Cayman or a TT (and spend double while you’re at it). To illustrate the point: I posit that a car like a Porsche is purchased not just as a performance car, it is also a signifier of wealth; an outward indicator of spending ability. In contrast, the FR-S is not a signifier of wealth. It is instead a signifier that “I love to drive.” You do not need wealth to own this car; if you can afford an Accord or a Camry, you can afford an FR-S. Instead of wealth, you just need the will to choose it. (and, I suppose, the lifestyle to accommodate it.) The car, accordingly, carries an encoded, stealthy appeal, one that is almost anti-prestige and class-independent. I like that – very much.

In conclusion. The Scion FR-S is a perfect car for me. At my stage of life (44 years old with one kid grown and the other two almost gone), it fits my lifestyle as a daily driver. This car is delivers immense pleasure and enjoyment -- with no downside. The pleasing design and aesthetics, the feel of the controls, the sound, the lighthearted, playful handling and ride, the awesome seats, the view out, the connectivity to the road, the low and cozy stance – all combine to create a really special driving experience. An experience that frankly meets the super high expectations that waiting over two months, for a super hyped-up car, can only naturally create. The car just feels absolutely sporty, fun, and refreshing to drive, and I don't think that feeling is going to get old. The car is a knockout. It's just plain brilliant.



(Photo credits: The good ones were generally copied from Scion's website or from magazine test reports like MotorTrend or Edmunds. The bad ones were all taken by me.)