

Review: Swann DriveEye in-car camera keeps watch over your driving

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There is an entire category of YouTube videos of car crashes and near misses.

Many of the videos come from Russia and Eastern Europe, where

dashboard-mounted cameras are common.

The cameras are not commonplace here, but they've become a topic in tech conversations with some of my car friends.

I've been testing the Swann DriveEye Ultra Portable 3MP HD Vehicle Recorder (\$179.99 at frys.com), and it's my first experience with any dash cam.

The camera is small, with a two-inch LCD screen and a wide-angle lens (160-degree field of view).

You'll want to take a little time in picking the right spot to mount it so it can look forward and stay out of your way (mostly) while you drive.

The DriveEye mounts to your windshield with a small suction cup. It's designed to be mounted high on the window and hang downward. The camera is powered by a microUSB cable that's included. So is a car charger for your vehicle's 12-volt power outlet.

The power cable is 10 feet long, so you can route it up and around the edge of the window for a better-looking installation.

I wish Swann had put the USB port on top of the camera so the power cord would not have to protrude from the side. It would be easier to hide if it were on top.

The DriveEye can be set to automatically begin recording every time you start your car.

Videos are shot in 1080p resolution (2304 by 1296 pixels). The camera divides the video into three-minute clips. You supply your own microSD card. The camera supports up to 64-gigabyte cards, which hold about 33

hours of video.

After the card fills up, the oldest video is automatically deleted as new footage is shot.

Audio is captured with the video (if you like). After listening to myself singing along with the radio and commenting on my fellow drivers, I opted to use the DriveEye without sound.

There is a motion detector that can record a minute of video each time it detects movement. This is handy for keeping an eye on your car or anywhere you point the camera.

There is a gyro sensor in the camera that can tell if you've been in an accident. If you've been hit, the camera will save the current video to a protected directory on the memory card for easy retrieval.

There's also a button on the camera that saves the current video to the protected directory, so if you see something you'd like to bookmark, press the button with the exclamation point on it and it will be easy to find in a separate folder called Emergency on the memory card.

Ideally, you'll set up the camera and forget about it until you want to extract a video.

You can either remove the memory card and take it to your computer, or you can connect to the camera directly.

The DriveEye has an HDMI port to play back videos straight to a TV, or you can connect the camera using USB to a computer and copy the video files to your hard drive.

You can also interact wirelessly, as the DriveEye has Wi-Fi and can

connect directly to a device, like a phone, through a free app for Android or iOS.

Once you make the Wi-Fi connection, you can see the video from the camera on your phone and control recording, options and playback videos.

Remote control is handy if you'd like to use the phone in Action Cam mode, which turns it into a standard video [camera](#) you can mount almost anywhere.

I am impressed with the video from the DriveEye and its ease of setup and the fact that it just does its job quietly and stays out of the way until you need it.

I'm not sure I'm ready to use a dash cam full time, but the Swann DriveEye Ultra performed well.

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Pros: Clear video, easy to set up and use.

Cons: On the expensive side.

Bottom line: Good-quality [video](#) in a small package.

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