

Trapped with a Tesla: my dream car has become a living nightmare

The secret Tesla driver

I bought it to be part of a greener future, but that was before Musk proved so awful. I'd sell it now, but prices have dropped

After our children left home, my wife and I decided to treat ourselves and buy a new car for a driving holiday in Europe. We'd been driving a family estate car for years, loading it up with kids and making trips to and from universities, but we wanted something for ourselves.

As a surprise, she booked a test drive for the Tesla Model S for my birthday. It was unlike any car I'd been in before. I thought "Wow, this is amazing." It felt like the future: a computer on wheels that was constantly updating with new features. I can't say I feel that way now – and many people seem to share that view. Tesla sales figures **declined by 13% in the first few months of this year**. Others feel even more uneasy: **more than 200 demonstrations happened last weekend** outside company facilities around the world to protest against Elon Musk and the wrecking ball he has taken to the federal government.

I had no complaints about the car itself: it was quiet. It was large. And, importantly for us, as an electric vehicle it was environmentally friendly. Some people go for the sports car when they gain a new sense of freedom in later life, but I had done a bit of research and wanted to move away from diesel and petrol.

Despite people voicing concerns about a lack of charging infrastructure, I found Tesla's network to be wonderful. We drove all over Europe – driving to Switzerland one year, Italy another, and last summer to the south of France. At one point we even packed in five adults and all their suitcases after an airport pickup.

I would consider myself left-leaning, but buying an electric car wasn't a huge political statement for us at the time, but rather an acknowledgment of the way things are going to be in the future. Little did I know how our choice would be politicised for us six years down the line.

In the early years of owning the car I remember a neighbour saying: "What is it like to own a car built by a madman?" But I brushed it off. I had watched videos of Musk at Tesla events, and he seemed like a poor man's Steve Jobs. Much like the Apple CEO, I saw Musk as a frontman rather than the designer and didn't take much notice of the business owner.

Soon it was impossible to ignore him. My wife and I were horrified as he publicly adopted rightwing positions – with his endorsement of Donald Trump for US president and then for the **far-right AfD** in Germany, as well as his support for **Tommy Robinson**. It seemed so odd to us that a man who would champion electric vehicles would also hold such reactionary views.

I started to notice a shift in the Tesla owners' group on Facebook. Having not owned an electric car before, the group was a useful resource. People were very helpful and even recommended places to stop off during our European holiday. When Musk's politics began to grow more extreme, members

began to post that they no longer felt comfortable owning a Tesla. And then others would respond: ““We’re not interested in your politics.” I saw someone giving stick to the Guardian and even calling the BBC “BBC Stalin”, which was funny for me as I always personally felt it went too far the other way.

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Protesters demonstrate against Tesla CEO, Elon Musk, during a nationwide Tesla Takedown rally outside a dealership in Pasadena, California. Photograph: Mario Tama/Getty Images

I started to reflect on owning a Tesla and it was my daughter who made the case for selling it. But judging by people posting secondhand cars in the Facebook group, prices have been dropping. I feel trapped. I cycled to meet a friend recently, and he took one look at my reasonably nice bike and said “It’s probably worth more than your Tesla now.” Someone else said to me he was interested in buying a Tesla, but he was going to wait until they were virtually worthless.

It’s a shame as in every other way the car is a perfect match for our lifestyle. It’s cheap to run, easy to service and Tesla has a mobile repair service that dispatches a “ranger” to your house to fix any issues.

If I was buying a car from scratch I would boycott the company, but we are where we are. For now I am going to have to keep hold of it. Next time, maybe I’ll get a European electric vehicle. Who knew owning a car would prove so difficult?

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