

# Tesla has become the world's most hated car – Maga loves it

Elon Musk's controversial pick-up is turning into a symbol of divided America

James Titcomb

New Orleans' Mardi Gras festival celebrates weirdness, but among the costumes, masks and bacchanalian partying, one newcomer at this year's festivities was not welcome.

During one parade, five Tesla Cybertrucks transporting the event's marshals were incessantly booed, surrounded and pelted with beer cans, rubbish and a barrage of Mardi Gras necklace beads.

Despite their tough reputation, two of the vehicles' windows were cracked.

“It was boos and attacks from start to evacuation,” one marshal wrote, saying they had kept the cars' doors locked for fear of being dragged out. Police eventually diverted the vehicles away from the parade, with the marshals resorting to walking on foot.

This is the guy that hit Amanda upside the head with the beads and shattered the B-Pillar glass trim. We are absolutely pressing charges. Unhinged hate and violence. He also berated the passengers and tried to break the windows and dent the truck. The latter which he failed to... <https://t.co/FRIImkuJTap> [pic.twitter.com/xsOW8YJoha](https://pic.twitter.com/xsOW8YJoha)

— Josh "Pappy" Hazel (@JEHazel75) [March 7, 2025](#)

The response was predictable. New Orleans is a liberal outpost in Louisiana, an otherwise heavily Republican part of America. The Cybertruck – an angular, stainless steel monster that is part pick-up and part tank – has become a dividing line in an increasingly divided America, and a symbol of Tesla boss Elon Musk's radical shift to the political Right.

To many on the Left, the vehicles have come to symbolise a Maga hat on wheels.

Sales of the car have been disappointingly modest – at around 40,000 last year, they represent just 2pc of Tesla’s total deliveries. But they have served as a target for Musk’s growing ranks of opponents, or a middle finger to the liberal resistance.

“Never owned a car that generated so much hate,” one owner wrote on a Facebook group for Cybertruck owners. “I f---ing embrace it.”

Another wrote: “I would have never guessed five years ago when I ordered my [Cybertruck] that when at last I received it, it would be viewed as a rolling embodiment of Elon himself, or maybe [Donald] Trump.”

Owners report other motorists repeatedly gesturing at their cars and driving discourteously. In one case, a passer-by relieved themselves on a parked Cybertruck. The cars have a sentry mode that collects video evidence of such disrespect.

“It takes a big personality to drive a Cybertruck, and it’s not for everybody because it just stands out so much,” says Gene Munster, a managing partner at Deepwater Asset Management and a close follower of the company. He says owning the car is like driving “an exclamation point”.

As Musk has become one of Trump’s most trusted lieutenants, discourtesy has turned to vandalism amid a wave of anti-Tesla protests around the US in recent weeks. Cybertrucks have repeatedly been spray-painted with swastikas, and in at least three cases, targeted at car dealerships in suspected arson cases.

In the latest incident on Tuesday night, several vehicles were set alight in Las Vegas at a Tesla facility, with the word “Resist” spray-painted on the door.

The US attorney general, Pam Bondi, called the act “domestic terrorism”. Musk said Tesla was a victim of “hatred and violence from the Left”.

None of this would have been in Musk's mind in November 2019, when he unveiled the Cybertruck to a crowd of fans. The billionaire was seeking to crash America's lucrative pickup truck market, dominated by stalwarts such as Ford's F-150. He believed only a bold, unconventional design would suffice.

"It doesn't look like anything else," Musk told the audience, a fact everybody could agree on. He claimed the car could outrun a Porsche 911 and out-tow an F-150, and was bulletproof-tough. The assertion was quite literally shattered when a stunt to show off the windows' resilience by throwing metal balls at them led the glass to break.

This did not appear to put off potential buyers, who were tempted by the promise of a \$40,000 (£30,760) retail price. More than 1m people put down a refundable \$100 deposit.

The swell of interest has not turned into a sales boom, however. When the Cybertruck finally arrived in late 2023 – two years after Musk originally promised – the cheapest model cost \$60,990, more than 50pc above what had been advertised.

This coincided with a wider plateauing of interest in electric cars and growing competition for Tesla, which had dominated America's electric vehicle market.

Production has been beset by challenges. Tesla has employed a series of unconventional manufacturing techniques, including "gigacasting" large parts of the chassis in one piece, rather than welding together smaller pieces. While the manufacturing process in theory promises lower costs, the Cybertruck has been subject to a series of recalls after issues including dislodged accelerator pedals and malfunctioning windscreen wipers.

In the last week, prospective buyers have been told that orders are on hold because of a problem with the car's metal trim flying off the vehicle.

Sales may have already peaked, hitting more than 5,000 a month in September last year but falling below 3,000 in February, according to Cox Automotive.

Used prices have slumped, and the company has reportedly seen inventory pile up. It has reportedly removed the laser-etched "Foundation Series" badges from some of its expensive, limited-edition initial models so that it can sell them as cheaper, regular Cybertrucks.

Nor are international markets likely to come to the rescue. Tesla took the Cybertruck on a showcase tour around Europe last year, but the vehicle is not road legal in Britain or on the Continent, since its sharp edges do not comply with European safety regulations.

In January, Greater Manchester Police seized a Cybertruck being driven on UK roads, saying "legitimate concerns exist around the safety of other road users or pedestrians".

Even if the Cybertruck has not set Wall Street alight, it has become a cultural phenomenon. Its brash uniqueness has made it a favourite of celebrity owners including Katy Perry and Kim Kardashian, who posed with the car in a photo shoot for Perfect Magazine last week.

The vehicles has become a must-have statement car for everyone from Shaquille O'Neal to Jay-Z, as well as more unsavoury characters.

The Chechen warlord Ramzan Kadyrov kitted out an illegally imported Cybertruck with a machine gun (the car was later remotely disabled) while the car was also rented by Matthew Livelsberger, the US army member, who blew it up outside Las Vegas's Trump hotel in January. Some scholars have drawn comparisons between the Cybertruck and the Casspir, a heavily armoured military vehicle used to enforce apartheid in South Africa, where Musk grew up.

For good and bad, the car, like much of what Musk does, generates attention – a precious commodity for a company that has resisted advertising.

The Cybertruck has appeared in hugely popular online video games such as Fortnite and Rocket League – a testament to its status as a meme as much as a motor vehicle.

Marketing-savvy tradesmen have bought them to replace their boring vans and decorated them in their businesses' logos, making the cars moving billboards.

Recently, Musk was backed by the biggest celebrity of all: Trump. The president stood with the Tesla boss in front of the White House and vowed to buy his own Tesla, as well as revealing that he had bought his 17-year-old granddaughter Kai a Cybertruck.

Trump has urged Republicans to support Musk by buying Teslas as the carmaker's share price slides.

Instead of disrupting the pick-up truck market, the vehicle has become a status symbol and a political statement – albeit a more expensive one than a red hat.

“Many brands succeed by attracting some customers but repelling or excluding others,” says Ike Silver, an assistant professor of marketing at the University of Southern California.

“In this case, the fact that some customers on the Left oppose what [Musk] is doing politically likely makes the brand more attractive to other customers.”

While Cybertruck sales are modest for now, Silver says Musk's alliance with the president could lead to a surge of interest in Tesla's entire range of cars.

“Tesla sold roughly 600,000 units in the US last year,” he says. “Trump got 77m votes.”

