

ELON MUSK'S CARS ARE THE MOST HATED CARS ON EARTH

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How the Tesla Cybertruck is fuelling Trump’s culture wars

Dubbed the ‘MAGAmobile’ and ‘Deplorean’, it may be the best thing to ever happen to electric vehicles, but not for the reason Elon Musk wants, writes [Anthony Cuthbertson](#)

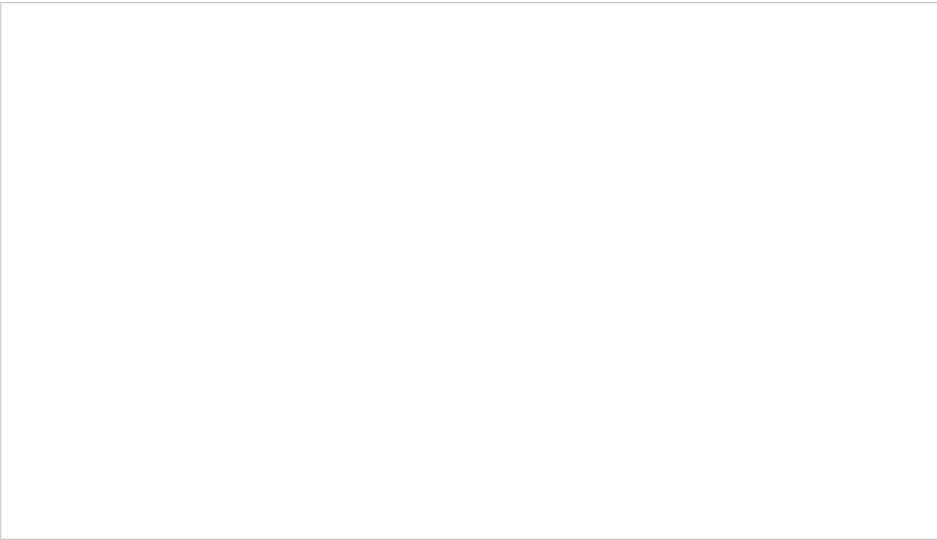
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Tesla boss Elon Musk introduces the Cybertruck in November 2019 (Getty)

On Christmas Day last year, while other political leaders were posting messages of peace and prosperity, Donald Trump took to [his own Truth Social app](#) to go on a festive rant against all that he thought was wrong with the world. Among those on his list were the “evil and ‘sick’ THUGS” pushing for “electric car lunacy” in the US. “MAY THEY ROT IN HELL,” he [wrote](#). “AGAIN, MERRY CHRISTMAS!”



Less than nine months later, and just two months away from the presidential elections, the Republican candidate is now publicly proclaiming his love for the technology. “I’m for electric cars,” he told supporters at a rally in Georgia last month. “I have to be because [Elon \[Musk\] endorsed me](#) very strongly.”

This sudden shift in sentiment was cemented when he was presented with a brand new Tesla Cybertruck, gifted to him by the controversial streamer Adin Ross. Emblazoned with his “Make America Great Again” slogan on the bonnet, the electric truck featured an image on the doors of Trump with his fist raised shortly after July’s assassination attempt. Trump appeared enthralled. “That is beautiful,” he said. “I think it’s incredible.”



Streamer Adin Ross gifted former president Donald Trump a custom-wrapped Cybertruck (Screenshot/Kick/Adin Ross)

While it wasn’t clear whether he was talking about the truck or the wrap, Trump’s pivot follows a broader trend of Republicans and those on the right shifting their allegiance to Elon Musk and his assorted companies. Having been a champion for environmentalists after supercharging the transition to electric vehicles, Musk has since staked his ideological flag in the MAGA camp, pushing far-right conspiracies and [radicalising himself on his own platform](#).



The move has drawn in those who had previously shunned electric vehicles – former Fox News anchor Tucker Carlson posted [an hour-long video](#) praising the Cybertruck – but it has also turned Democrats off Teslas. The polarising antics of the world’s richest person saw the portion of Democrat Tesla buyers fall from 40 per cent in 2023 to just 15 per cent at the beginning of 2024, according to figures from research firm Strategic Vision. In California – a Democratic stronghold and the former home of Musk and Tesla before they both moved to Texas – Tesla registrations fell 12 per cent between January and July, according to S&P Global Mobility.

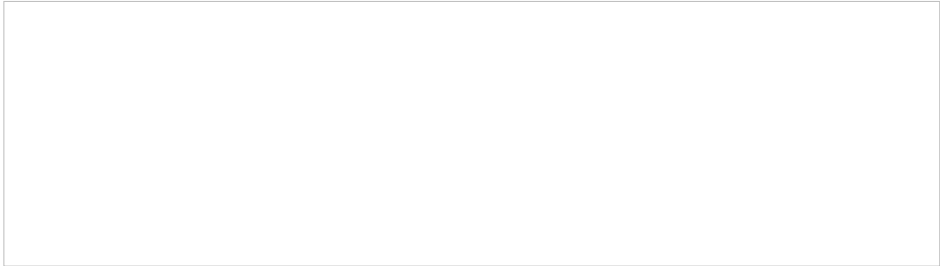
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Despite the rejection among Democrats, the latest figures show that the Tesla Cybertruck is currently outselling all other electric pickup trucks combined throughout the US, with sales shooting up 61 per cent in July – the same month that Musk first publicly endorsed Trump.

The new fanbase has seen the vehicle be dubbed the "[MAGAmobile](#)" and the "[Deplorean](#)" – referencing the "deplorables" phrase that Trump's 2016 presidential rival Hillary Clinton used to describe the Republican candidate's followers. In July, the *New York Times* described it as "a culture war on wheels".

Whole communities have emerged that are dedicated to actively mocking Tesla's latest vehicle and its association with Musk. More than 160,000 people have [joined the Reddit forum r/Cyberstuck](#), which aims to mock the stainless steel polygon and anyone who buys it. Popular images and videos shared on the subreddit – which has more members than there are owners of the Cybertruck – include "humiliated" owners breaking down or having to deal with [yet another recall](#) for the "apocalypse-proof" truck.



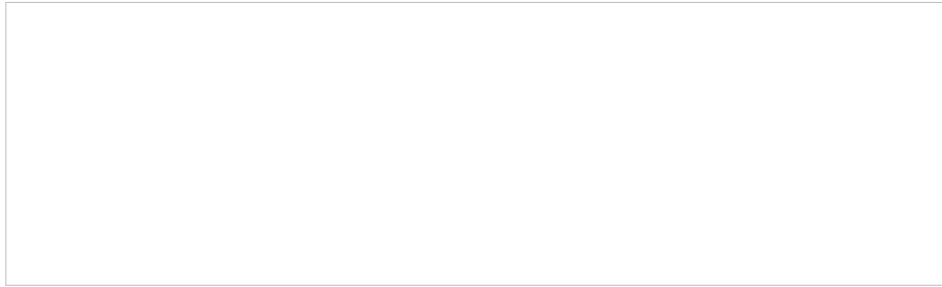
Less than a year after launching, the forum is now among the top 2 per cent of subreddits on the site, with dozens of posts and hundreds of comments each day, showing that the truck has become as controversial as Musk himself. And with Trump's new pro-Tesla stance, the Cybertruck has become the latest symbol of American division.

Cybertruck owner forums have generated hundreds of posts discussing the phenomenon, with many lamenting the unwanted attention their vehicle choice has attracted.

"At first I didn't care but now it's starting to get annoying," wrote one owner. "It's my first time owning an EV and this attention is crazy."

I've never seen car fandom/hatedom quite like this ever before, and I sincerely hope this is an inane phase we'll get past, because at this moment, we all seem kind of nuts

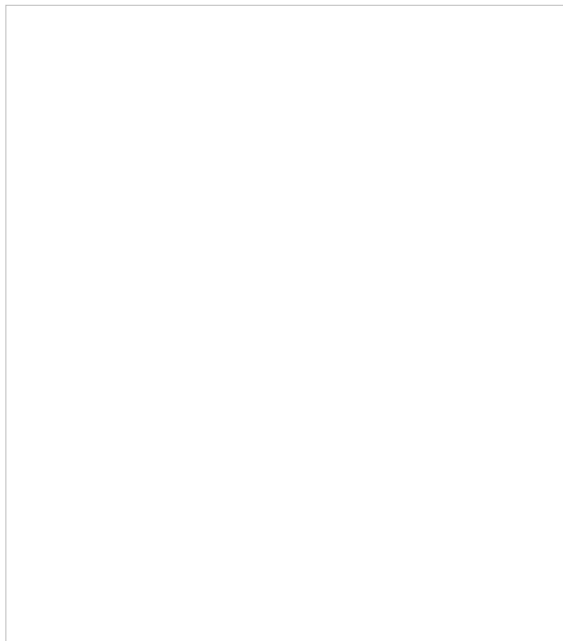
Another [noted](#): "Many are vehement anti-Trump/Musk and post in anti-conservative subreddits. I am guessing folks who hate Trump and see Musk's support extends to anyone who supports Tesla is an instant villain... I will note, I think the term w*nkpanzer is quite hilarious and have caught myself referring to my Cybertruck as the w*nkpanzer."



Musk's takeover of Twitter, now renamed X, has supercharged his own transition from an apolitical moderate a few years ago, to [a far-right instigator](#) raging against what he perceives as woke culture and social justice activists. Musk has driven the division lines even deeper in recent weeks, claiming that anything other than a vote for Trump in November's presidential elections will be catastrophic for the US.

The world's richest person is lined up to be a governmental adviser for Trump, which would further entrench him within the MAGA camp, and would likely increase controversy around the Cybertruck. As a political and cultural statement, ownership of a Cybertruck is increasingly being seen as an endorsement of Musk, and by extension, Trump.

Unlike other Teslas, which conform to conventional automobile design, the Cybertruck is deliberately contrarian – much like the Tesla boss himself. It is therefore impossible to separate the man from the machine: if you hate Musk, you won't like the Cybertruck.



Automotive journalist and editor in chief of *The Autopian* David Tracy wrote in June: "The Tesla Cybertruck should be renamed the Tesla Powderkeg, and reviewing it is totally pointless... While I think both groups – those who love Tesla and those who loathe it – have good intentions, oftentimes neither can think clearly. One is blinded by hatred, one is blinded by admiration."

Tracy's review attracted hundreds of comments, with one admitting: "There are some people (myself included) that consider Musk a large enough problem that they will judge a person's character when that person uses or praises his work."

A note from *The Autopian*'s co-founder Jason Torchinsky added: "I've never seen car fandom/hatedom quite like this ever before, and I sincerely hope this is an inane phase we'll get past, because at this moment, we all seem kind of nuts."

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Those who first bought Teslas due to Musk's commitments to clean energy may no longer be buying his cars, but they'll likely still be driving his rivals' electric vehicles – the likes of Lucid and Rivian. His new acolytes may have never before considered an electric vehicle, and now they're drawn to the Cybertruck to support a person who they see as a warrior against woke culture, and potential saviour of planet Earth. This could make the Cybertruck the best thing to ever happen to electric vehicles.

Or maybe not. It's been more than a month since Trump was gifted his own bulletproof Cybertruck, and despite the assassination attempts, he still hasn't been pictured riding in it.