

Elon Musk Exposed As Horrific Asshole

By [Matthew Carey](#)

What sort of billionaire criticizes another billionaire for giving tons of money to charity? The same kind of billionaire who would gleefully gut USAID, calling it a “criminal organization,” a move that has cost hundreds of thousands of lives, according to multiple estimates.

What kind of entrepreneur falsely claims to have founded Tesla, when it was really two other men? The same kind of man who would claim to have held his dying infant in his arms, when it was actually his wife who did (a wife he later dumped). That’s the Elon Musk portrayed in the documentary Musk, which just held its world premiere at the Venice Film Festival.

The film depicts the world’s richest man as petty, narcissistic, megalomaniacal, cruel, detached from humans at a personal level (including various ex-partners and many of his children) while purporting to want to save humanity by colonizing Mars. A real prince. *Musk*, in my view, gives Elon the takedown he richly deserves.

At 225 minutes, some will deem it too long a haul, but I found the film engrossing from the start and a necessary length to confront Musk’s immense impact on contemporary life and politics, sprawling businesses, and complex personal life. The documentary’s most brazen and innovative technique is to turn Musk into a CGI avatar, enthroned in the purple glow of a digital background, eerily mouthing words that, as the film says, Elon has said in real life. He’s dressed in a tough guy leather jacket, dispensing self-justification and deep thoughts like, “I wanna be out there exploring the stars... I just want to know what’s going on.” He also speculates that we humans might be in a simulation created by some other being (to my mind a bizarre flight of fancy which subtly gives him license to ignore suffering on Earth. Hey, if we’re just characters in some grand intelligence’s video game, why be bothered by what happens to individuals even on a mass scale?).

Gibney, who has applied investigative rigor to Enron, Scientology, Casino Jack Abramoff and other targets in previous films, digs particularly deep into Tesla and its safety claims associated with self-driving technology. The documentary asserts Musk has vastly overstated the capacities of Tesla vehicles, dazzling 60 Minutes’ Lesley Stahl and other journalists with displays of his electric cars proceeding under their own guidance, while hiding a frightening reality. It explores cases of

Tesla owners who let the car do the driving, only to die in accidents or kill others on the road (like a 2019 incident in Florida when a Tesla S model ran through a T-intersection, killing 22-year-old Naibel Benevides Leon and injuring her boyfriend).

The film suggests Tesla lied about not being able to access data from its vehicle that struck Leon. Experts in the film also say Tesla has lied about the true range of its vehicle batteries and that it fraudulently promised to create a network of roadside ports where drivers could easily swap batteries, extending range (this dodge allegedly allowed Tesla to pocket millions in government subsidies predicated on the viability of the program). More darkly, Musk implies Elon wants the vast data a Tesla can accumulate on its owners to feed his AI ambitions.

The documentary spends considerable time exploring Musk's checkered romantic relationships, including with Justine Musk, his first wife who bore him six children (including the ill-fated Nevada, the boy who died at 10 weeks old from sudden infant death syndrome). He has rejected his trans daughter Vivian, one of his kids by Justine. The "pro-natalist" Musk has also sired three kids with the singer Grimes (aka Claire Elise Boucher), a baby mama relationship that has also soured.

One of the most absorbing parts of the film involves Ashley St. Clair, the conservative influencer, who bore a son by Musk in 2024. She chillingly describes encounters with Jared Birchall, a man often described as Musk's fixer/enforcer, charged with muscling people like St. Clair under control. She refused to accept a financial settlement after her split with Musk that would have required her to sign a non-disclosure agreement; in lieu of an NDA, she freely speaks with the filmmaker about Musk in very unflattering terms.

St. Clair was involved with Musk during the time of the 2024 presidential election when Musk, as we all saw, threw his arms around Donald Trump and leveraged his vast wealth to help get Trump reelected. In the film's most sensational claim, St. Clair says Musk told her he would exploit "an anomaly in the matrix" to affect the outcome of the race, citing his access to space lasers – an apparent reference to his network of Starlink satellites. Gibney lets it hang that Musk might have nefariously determined the winner of the presidency. I found this less than completely convincing, though I would love to see definitive proof.

Musk, to my mind, is most successful at painting a psychological portrait of the multi-billionaire. Musk's father, Errol Musk, is interviewed in the film and relates a telling incident in which the family drove by the scene of a man who being resuscitated by the side of the road. Errol stopped the car and he recounts how

Elon, then a boy, kept reading his comic book, completely ignoring the life-and-death drama in front of him.

His childhood in South Africa is explored, one where the potential for violence in the country's Apartheid era seems to have traumatized young Elon. He comes to Silicon Valley in his 20s and in short order has made millions from startups, including Zip2 (a kind of digital yellow pages), and X.com (not to be confused with his later acquisition, Twitter), a financial services and internet bank that merged with PayPal. In interviews back then, Musk comes off as awkward, a geek in pleated khakis with a receding hairline and uneven teeth. Before long, his wealth and his hair would expand, and the teeth would be straightened.

This insecure Musk dwells within the adult who craves constant attention through his social media platform and reacts with fury to perceived slights (the film suggests Musk turned on Democrats in part because President Biden didn't invite Tesla to an electric vehicle exhibition at the White House).

All this leads to Trump 2.0 when the reelected president handed vast power to Musk by appointing him chief of "DOGE," the spurious Department of Government Efficiency. There, Musk's disturbing lack of empathy would glory in slashing jobs and spending, including on the vital USAID. The full catastrophe of DOGE hasn't been written, but Musk goes some way in exposing its arbitrary nature, grotesquely inflated claims of cost-cutting and utter failure as Trump negated any savings by handing a gigantic tax cut to the wealthy, ballooning the national debt.

Most sinister of all, the documentary suggests Musk's real goal in getting into the White House was to access data on all Americans, once again to feed his pernicious AI dreams. The Musk of this film is unscrupulous, power-hungry and narcissistic, the child of a distant, difficult father. No wonder he and Trump bonded – until they didn't, but then they did again, realizing they needed each other: Trump to get access to that colossal wealth and Musk to avoid government investigations into his enterprises and to maintain access to the federal piggybank and untold troves of data.

Gibney has made a lot of vital documentaries. This is his most important.