

MUSK The New Documentary Thrashing a Narcissistic, Megalomaniacal Elon Musk Links Tesla's Autopilot to Over 60 Deaths and Exposes Him as a Stock Pumper, Not an Innovator

The Elon Musk Documentary Thrashing the Narcissistic, Megalomaniacal Tesla CEO Premiered to Rave Reviews at Venice.

Elon Musk called it a “hit piece” before he’d seen a single frame of it, fair enough, considering he himself knows there are not a lot of decent things one can say about him. Judging by the standing ovation it received in Venice, the critics currently disagree with him on the “hit” part of that description, but not by much on the rest.

Musk, the new four-hour documentary from Academy Award-winning director Alex Gibney, premiered at the Venice Film Festival to a four-minute standing ovation inside the Palazzo del Cinema, with one attendee reportedly shouting “Thank you!” once the applause finally died down. Given the film’s punishing runtime, some of that enthusiasm may well have been relief at finally being able to stand up and stretch. But the reviews rolling out since suggest the response goes considerably deeper than gratitude for a bathroom break.

Gibney, whose past subjects include Enron, the Catholic Church’s sexual abuse coverups, Scientology, and alleged Russian interference in the 2016 election, has built a career out of dismantling powerful institutions and the men who run them. He began working on Musk back in 2023, before, as he put it at the Venice press conference, “Musk became wrapped in the career of Donald Trump and the United States” turned what was meant to be a shorter film into something far more sprawling. In his director’s statement, Gibney describes the documentary as reframing “the story of the tech titan as the 21st century reincarnation of the confidence man.”

It is worth noting that Musk has long positioned himself as a “free speech absolutist,” a self-appointed champion of open expression. He famously purchased Twitter (now X) under the pretense of liberating it from heavy-handed content moderation. Hence, whatever the reviews have been like, we are sure he is totally fine with it and would certainly not throw a tantrum on his social media because of it.

The critical reception has been close to unanimous in its praise, and unsparing in its assessment of the man at the center of it. Owen Gleiberman of Variety called it “a

lacerating and important watch, grounded in Alex Gibney's supremely insightful but user-friendly mastery of the documentary form," noting how the film traces "how the Musk dream wasn't always so grandiose."

Robbie Collin of The Telegraph described it as an attack in the most literal sense, writing that "the Tesla boss's power over us has been revealed like never before in Alex Gibney's four-hour attack." Deadline's Matthew Carey didn't hold back either, describing the film's portrait of Musk as "petty, narcissistic, megalomaniacal, cruel, detached from humans at a personal level... while purporting to want to save humanity by colonizing Mars," adding, "a real prince." Carey called the film "engrossing from the start," arguing its considerable length is genuinely necessary "to confront Musk's immense impact on contemporary life and politics, sprawling businesses, and complex personal life."

Peter Bradshaw of The Guardian reached for an unexpected but fitting comparison, noting that Gibney "wittily compares him to the hero of the 1936 film version of HG Wells's The Man Who Could Work Miracles," a story about a banal, ordinary man capriciously handed god-like powers by aliens. And David Rooney of The Hollywood Reporter praised the film's density, writing that it "collates a ton of information in a very persuasive package that will leave many audiences chilled to the bone."

Musk himself declined to participate, but he's present throughout via an uncanny AI-generated avatar rendered like a video game character, set against real, on-camera interviews with people who actually know him: his first wife Justine Musk, his father Errol Musk, "Godfather of AI" Geoffrey Hinton, Tesla co-founder Martin Eberhard, LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman, and others, including Ashley St. Clair, an influencer who had Musk's 13th child last year and attended the Venice premiere alongside Gibney.

The documentary builds its case around five distinct threads:

Musk (the movie, not the free speech absolutist) argues Musk's (the free speech absolutist and self-proclaimed Tony Stark) real talent was never invention; it was stock-pumping, using his public profile to inflate the valuations of companies he didn't actually found. Tesla is the clearest case study: Musk is the company's largest shareholder, not its founder. Real co-founder Martin Eberhard sits for an interview and laments that most people assume otherwise, calling Musk's issue an "ego problem" and admitting that, given the chance again, he wouldn't have ceded so much power to him.

The film also links Tesla's Autopilot feature to more than 60 deaths and a wave of resulting lawsuits, arguing Musk's public "self-driving" claims created a dangerous gap

between perception and reality, illustrated with genuinely difficult footage from a fatal accident, including the 911 call and police and vehicle camera video. His “Occupy Mars” ambitions get the same treatment (according to his previous claims, we were supposed to colonize Mars by now; he has since pushed the date of his Mars colonization attempt multiple times).

The documentary points out the very real, currently unsolved obstacles- radiation exposure and a lack of oxygen chief among them- standing between Musk’s timeline and anything resembling reality.

Justine Musk’s interview is among the film’s most harrowing, recounting the death of their first child, Nevada, from SIDS, and her devastation over an X post in which Musk claimed he was the one holding their son when he died, when it was actually her. “I learned the term gaslighting through my relationship with Elon,” she says, recalling that he told her he was “the alpha in this relationship” during their wedding’s first dance.

Musk (once again, the documentary, not the alpha male) also covers his estrangement from his daughter Vivian, whom Musk has publicly said he lost to the “woke mind virus,” with Justine confirming he never attempted to reconcile with her. St. Clair’s interview adds more nuance to the kind of absent and deadbeat parent he is, describing Musk’s fixation on having more children, at one point referencing Kublai Khan’s 47 descendants and telling her they should build a “legion of children before the civil war.”

She reveals she was offered a \$40 million NDA, \$15 million upfront plus \$100,000 monthly for 21 years, to stay silent, and refused. Justine’s blunt summary of how Musk seems to view his partners: “The breeders are interchangeable.”

The film’s final major thread traces Musk’s political migration, from a COVID-era grievance over paused Tesla production, through his acquisition of X under the banner of free speech, to his financial backing of Trump’s 2024 campaign, a move the film frames as motivated as much by federal contracts and looming legal exposure as by ideology.

It also raises questions about Musk’s access to sensitive government data during his time leading DOGE, with Geoffrey Hinton warning plainly in the film that if someone wanted to corrupt the midterm elections using AI, “all you needed to do was get detailed information on U.S. citizens. And what DOGE did looked like just what you would do.”

Musk arrives in U.S. theaters October 16 via Bleecker Street, followed by a streaming release on HBO Max. Bleecker Street CEO Kent Sanderson called it “the most epic film Gibney has made to date... explosive in the way it was constructed,” adding that the studio is looking forward to the conversation it sparks once it reaches a wider audience.