

# 51. Cybertruck

Cybertruck emerged as one of Tesla's most ambitious projects, a vehicle that challenged every preconceived notion about what a pickup truck should look like and how it should function. In the late 2010s, while competitors focused on refining conventional designs, Elon Musk sought a radical departure from industry norms, driven by a desire to merge cutting-edge technology with extreme durability. His collaboration with Tesla's chief designer, Franz von Holzhausen, became an exercise in creative rebellion, rejecting the safe, incremental upgrades that defined the truck market for decades. Musk envisioned something akin to an armored vehicle from a sci-fi universe, an indestructible machine that could traverse both urban landscapes and off-road terrains with equal prowess.

Early design discussions explored a variety of inspirations, from the rugged Chevrolet Silverado to the sleek lines of the Lotus Esprit from *The Spy Who Loved Me*, a vehicle Musk had famously purchased at an auction. However, traditional designs felt outdated and uninspired to Musk, who wanted something that looked like it belonged in *Blade Runner* rather than a dealership parking lot. He and von Holzhausen found themselves drawn toward industrial minimalism, eliminating unnecessary curves and focusing on bold geometric shapes. They also sought a material that was both aesthetically striking and functionally superior to traditional truck bodies, leading them to stainless steel—specifically, the ultra-hard, cold-rolled steel developed for SpaceX's Starship program.

Using stainless steel as the Cybertruck's structural foundation meant rethinking standard automotive manufacturing techniques. Unlike conventional trucks, which rely on a body-on-frame chassis for support, Cybertruck's exoskeleton would bear the load directly, increasing strength while reducing the need for internal reinforcements. This decision, however, came with compromises. Stainless steel was so rigid that it couldn't

be stamped into curved panels like conventional aluminum or steel bodies, forcing Tesla's design team to embrace flat surfaces and sharp angles. The resulting aesthetic was polarizing—some saw it as a revolutionary step toward futuristic automotive design, while others dismissed it as crude and impractical.

Musk's personal struggles in 2018, including legal battles and media controversies, fueled his determination to create something unexpected and disruptive. He wanted a vehicle that defied convention, a truck that felt invincible, both literally and figuratively. His team took cues from video games, dystopian films, and even his young son's innocent yet profound question: "Why doesn't the future look like the future?" This notion became the guiding principle behind Cybertruck's design, leading to a vehicle that looked as though it had been transported from a cyberpunk fantasy into the real world.

Beyond its aesthetics, Cybertruck aimed to outperform traditional pickups in nearly every category. It boasted an all-electric drivetrain capable of out-accelerating sports cars, a payload capacity rivaling that of heavy-duty trucks, and a towing capability that exceeded expectations. Tesla also engineered it with bullet-resistant windows, a feature famously tested—albeit unsuccessfully—during its live unveiling in 2019. Despite the setback, the event only amplified Cybertruck's cultural impact, proving that Musk had once again captured the public's imagination, for better or worse.

The vehicle's unconventional nature extended beyond its body into its user experience. Unlike typical pickups, which catered primarily to construction workers, farmers, and off-road enthusiasts, Cybertruck was positioned as an all-purpose vehicle for a new generation of tech-savvy consumers. Its rugged design and advanced technology made it ideal for outdoor adventurers, while its electric powertrain and high-tech interior appealed to urban drivers looking for a futuristic alternative to gas-guzzling trucks. The Tesla brand's cult-like following further fueled its appeal, with pre-orders surpassing expectations despite industry skepticism.

Despite initial delays and production challenges, Cybertruck represented a bold step in Tesla's strategy to redefine automotive categories. Musk's goal was not merely to

create an electric alternative to traditional trucks but to reimagine what a truck could be in an era of technological transformation. His vision extended beyond electrification; it was about breaking conventions, inspiring innovation, and building a vehicle that felt like a glimpse into the future. Whether Cybertruck would achieve mass-market success remained uncertain, but one thing was clear—Tesla had once again reshaped the conversation around what was possible in the automotive industry.

