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Tesla Unveiled a Bulletproof Pickup. Then the Window Broke.

By Tim Higgins and Heather Somerville (excerpt)

Elon Musk embraced unorthodox designs for Tesla Inc. TSLA +1.41% 's all-electric pickup to wow truck buyers and help differentiate it from popular gasoline-powered models that he knocked as boring look-alikes.

But the features he is promising could dent the commercial prospects of the vehicle Mr. Musk has dubbed Cybertruck.

Mr. Musk late Thursday unveiled the triangular, stainless-steel truck that evoked a science-fiction future. The unveiling outside Los Angeles focused on showing how robust the vehicle would be and how it would stand out from big sellers such as Ford Motor Co. 's F-150 or General Motors Co. 's Chevrolet Silverado and the GMC Sierra pickup family. The Tesla pickup is even bulletproof, Mr. Musk said.

But when it came to demonstrating the Cybertruck's toughness, things went ominously off script. Mr. Musk asked his head of design to throw a small metal ball at the vehicle's side window. The resulting crack of the window surprised the audience, including Mr. Musk.

"Oh my f-ing god," Tesla's chief said. "Maybe that was a little too hard."

The truck's unique appearance also caused a stir. The pickup looked like the love child of a DeLorean, the unconventional sports car featured in the Back to the Future movies, and a Pontiac Aztek, which was widely panned as ugly in the early 2000s and became an embarrassment for GM.

Early Friday, DeLorean was even trending on Twitter and some users were digging out past photos of the Aztek.

Tesla may have time for the Cybertruck's look to grow on consumers. The model isn't due out for a while, plus the electric pickup market is nascent. Research firm IHS Markit Ltd. projects electric vehicles will account for about 9% of the U.S. auto market in 2026, up from less than 2% today, and pickups would be a subset of that figure. ...

... David Kudla, founder and chief executive of Mainstay Capital Management and a short seller of Tesla stock, questioned Tesla's ability to make a profit on a vehicle with a bulletproof steel body, armored glass and such a low starting price.

"That's just reminiscent of a \$35,000 Model 3 that they really haven't gotten to in a very realistic way," Mr. Kudla said.