





Around the Coffee Table with Dale Jodoin

SURVEILLANCE ON WHEELS: WHAT IS THE REAL PRICE?

By Dale Jodoin
Columnist

You shut the car door and think you have some privacy. Maybe you talk about money, work or something your family is going through. But what is your vehicle recording? And who gets to see it? Norwegian soldiers had reason to ask that question.

During a military exercise in September, soldiers discovered that cars rented through Hertz had stored video of their activities. At least two were Chinese Deepal vehicles, according to Forsvarets Forum, citing Dagens Næringsliv.

The footage reportedly showed soldiers getting in and out, their movements and security codes used at gates and doors. Soldiers deleted the recordings but could not confirm whether copies existed elsewhere.

That does not prove China received anything. It does not prove a spy operation. What it shows is troubling enough: sensitive information was recorded, and the people involved did not know where it might end up.

Now bring that question home.

Canada established an initial annual import quota of 49,000 electric vehicles from China, with the arrangement taking effect in March 2026.

Ottawa, what written guarantees will Canadians get that their vehicles will not secretly record them or share their private information?

And why stop with Chinese makers?

Demand the same guarantees from General Motors, Ford and Stellantis, the Big Three.

In January 2026, the American Federal Trade Commission finalized a settlement over allegations that GM and OnStar collected, used and sold drivers' location and driving data without proper notice and consent. The order required stronger controls and placed limits on sharing. That case does not establish wrongdoing by Ford or Stellantis.

Still, trust needs more than a familiar badge.

Then there is the other hand reaching into the driver's pocket: subscriptions.

Some charges are already here. GMC Canada advertises OnStar Connect at \$9.99 a month plus tax for access to selected connected apps. Ford Canada offers a connectivity package covering features such as streaming and navigation, with separate subscriptions required for streaming services. Plans and features vary by vehicle. Be clear about what that means. Ordinary AM and FM radio is not the same as paid streaming. OnStar says drivers can still use AM and FM without its connected service plan. There is no basis here to claim every maker will charge for ordinary radio.

But how many monthly bills will follow us into the driver's seat? You buy the vehicle. Then you keep paying to use certain connected features. How much of the dashboard will eventually depend on another payment?

That is a fair question before anyone signs. Chinese brands may attract buyers by offering more features for less money. A family struggling with bills could find that hard to refuse. Nobody should blame them.

But a lower price deserves the same hard questions as a higher one. What information does the car collect? Can you refuse? What stops working if you do? Who can access your travel history? Can the terms change after you buy? Cheap does not prove spying. Expensive does not buy privacy. Canada's privacy commissioner has warned that connected vehicle privacy risks reach beyond any single country.

So require plain written promises, independent checks and real penalties. Make companies explain recording, sharing, storage and deletion before the sale. Require a clear list of future subscription costs. No government can promise perfect security. It can demand proof that safeguards work. The price on the windshield tells us what it costs to take the car home.

It should not take years to discover what else we gave away.



"Free Palestine!" When Pop Stars Forget Why Their Fans Bought a Ticket

By Nick Kossov

Concerts are tribal gatherings centred on music, not political rallies or protests. When tens of thousands crowd into a venue like MetLife Stadium, they're paying hard-earned money to hear their favourite artists perform, not to be told how to think and feel. Live concerts have an innate tendency to bring strangers together, united by a shared love of the artist. The person swaying and dancing beside you might hold polar-opposite political views. Yet for two hours, you're aligned and bound by shared songs. Additionally, concerts offer a temporary suspension of reality, providing a respite from whatever geopolitical friction is currently unfolding. The last thing concertgoers want is for the artist they came to see to forget why they're performing and to deliver a divisive political statement to an audience peacefully united by their music.

When Macklemore took the stage at New Jersey's MetLife Stadium on September 4th, during Ed Sheeran's tour, he broke the unwritten rule that concerts should be politically free zones with a pro-Palestinian speech. Addressing the approximately 80,000 concertgoers, he declared: "One of the reasons why I wanted to come on this tour was because I wanted to stand up here on stages in stadiums across America and say two words that are very near and dear to my heart: Free Palestine. I said, Free Palestine!"

Macklemore's words triggered an immediate chain reaction: he was quickly removed from upcoming tour dates. Supporting acts Finneas, Lukas Graham, and Aaron Rowe, along with Ed's band Beoga, also left in solidarity, disrupting a major global pop tour.

Uproar followed, predictably causing a rift among those who publicly engaged in virtue-signalling and manufactured outrage. Despite the polarization, both sides refuse to acknowledge a truth: performance artists—musicians and actors, though comedians certainly get a pass—are fundamentally in the business of entertainment, not government policymaking and free speech always comes with responsibilities and consequences.

Admittedly, musicians have used their concerts to make polarizing political statements—such as Roger Waters flashing anti-war slogans or Madonna, whose sense of public relations is unapologetically provocative, hanging from a mirrored crucifix wearing a crown of thorns to deliver a staged sermon during her highly controversial 2006 Confessions Tour. However, a glaring difference exists between a headliner risking their own tour capital and an opening act hijacking a shared, multi-artist stage. Treating a stadium tour like a personal soapbox violates a basic professional boundary. When you're a guest on someone else's bill, using concertgoers to promote your personal political views isn't bravery; it's parasitic hijacking.

There's a staggering absurdity in treating celebrities, as many do, as moral sages and philosophers, as if private jets, security details, and multi-million-dollar paychecks give them a perspective on the world that a fan singing along in row thirty-four doesn't have. Looking to recording artists, whose livelihoods depend on mass commercial appeal, to validate what's right and wrong in the world is utter lunacy. Conversely, when an artist delivers partisan or geopolitical rallying cries on a stage provided by promoters and set up in venues rented from billionaire owners, they commit a fundamental error in professional judgment: mistaking a commercial transaction they've contractually agreed to for a public forum. While concerts are indeed kumbaya tribal gatherings, they are also, more so, commercial enterprises governed by capitalist realities and contractual obligations. When Macklemore used his time on stage to wade into one of the most volatile geopolitical conflicts on earth, he didn't offer a nuanced critique of foreign policy; he breached the social contract implied by the ticket stub. Fans paid to hear music, not to serve as a captive audience for an unvetted lecture.

Herein lies the backlash's hypocrisy. Critics love to accuse "censorship" whenever the consequences of free speech catch up to celebrities who use the stage as a personal soapbox, conveniently misunderstanding what free speech actually means. Free speech protects citizens from government tyranny; it doesn't guarantee a megaphone in a privately leased stadium. Ed Sheeran didn't invent the inescapable truth that, when push comes to shove, a massive entertainment infrastructure that exists to make a profit will always protect its bottom line over an artist's political activism.

The artists who walked out in solidarity with Macklemore likely have the self-righteous ego and the financial privilege to believe they're standing up for artistic freedom, when in actuality they're indulging in a luxurious worldview. They acted as if stadium concerts take place in a vacuum, detached from the promoters, venue owners, roadies and security teams who share the same objective: to ensure a safe and profitable event.

If civil, uncompromised political discourse is truly the goal, we should seek out media pundits, public intellectuals, and advocates who have dedicated their lives to drawing attention to human rights crises or legislative reforms, rather than pop stars whose livelihoods depend on mass consumption, for robust debates that shape our thoughts, beliefs, and values.

Art, in all its forms, is at its best when it transcends what divides us and offers a rare, agnostic sanctuary where people from diverse backgrounds and with differing beliefs, values, and ideologies can stand shoulder to shoulder in shared joy. But when multi-millionaire artists hijack that sanctuary to peddle their own unvetted geopolitics, they don't raise awareness, contribute to culture, or motivate action. Instead, they undermine the unity their art can create and turn the one place we can take a break from the stress and anxiety of everyday life into yet another exhausting battleground.

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