

seen TO BE green

Couple keen to set

A boy from Birkenhead who made a fortune creating DJ technology is pondering the health of the planet while building an "off the grid" house at Matakana.

When Steve West, 37, became a multi-millionaire he decided to make himself redundant, giving him the time to work on what he feels passionate about: tinkering with technology.

His Canadian wife Dee, whom he met in 2002 and with whom he has three children, describes him as a "mad scientist". The couple, who also own a lodge at Ohakune and a home at Greenhithe, bought land on the side of a steep hill at the end of Smith Road in Matakana in 2007. They have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars building a concrete bridge and driveway to get building consent.

They could have spent more to have power lines installed but decided to put in 15 solar panels instead. In sunny weather, the panels provide enough power for up to 10 days, but in winter they use a diesel generator.

The two-storey wooden eco-house has breathtaking views towards Omaha and is equipped with a wetback, heated tiles and wireless broadband.

Diana, 35, says the family will move there semi-permanently in 2015, once

son Daniel is ready to go to high school. They are planning a communal "food forest" and a garage with solar power to sustain their two electric vehicles: a Nissan Leaf and Tesla Roadster.

Steve says he dismantled every electrical thing he could get his hands on as a child and his parents would dread inorganic collection day. "I'd bring home so much junk. I always had a fascination with electronics."

He looked into electric cars as an adult and found they were a "viable thing that was going to happen".

He removed the petrol engine from a Toyota MR-S five years ago and replaced it with an electric motor. Although the car could "burn rubber" it was a "rolling science project" and couldn't be driven legally.

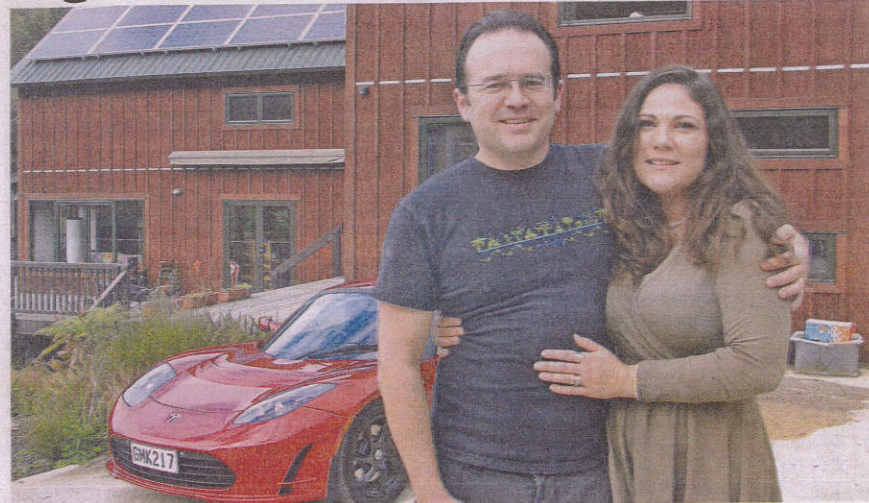
"At the time there was a very sexy electric car being marketed and sold in the US called the Tesla Roadster. I was lusting after it but it was impossible to buy here."

A small number eventually became available and Steve was one of two Kiwi buyers. The Tesla is based on a Lotus chassis, takes around 12 hours for a full charge on a household socket and goes from 0 to 100 in 3.9 seconds. "Particularly worth the price is driving past a gas station and giving



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a green example in Matakana



Steve and Dee West have made a conscious decision to stop over-consumption and be gentler to the planet.

them the finger," Steve jokes.

He is bothered by NZ's dependence on foreign oil and the fact we import up to three times the amount we export.

"If every single passenger vehicle went electric our total power consumption would increase by 10 percent – the

size of Tiwai Point. We could swap Tiwai point and go from \$10b of overseas oil to \$2b of locally produced electricity. It would cost one fifth of the price per km to drive electric than petrol."

Dee, who works in public relations, says she is constantly on a sustainability

soapbox but admits she doesn't use a compost bin in Auckland, and her frequent international travel leaves an "appalling carbon footprint". The Matakana property is a way to show to people she can walk the talk, she says.

"We've made a conscious decision to

Clever software a smash hit

Steve started Serato Audio Research with his friend AJ Bertenshaw in Auckland in 1998. The duo revolutionised the industry with a tempo-changing algorithm called Pitch N Time in 1999, vinyl-emulating software called Scratch Live in 2004 and an all-in-one DJ control kit in 2007. The equipment is used by the world's top DJs.

"Scratch n Live literally changed the club scene overnight," Steve says. The software, which mimics mixing, allows DJs to appear as if they are playing vinyl records, but they are really playing digital files.

The specially coded records surprised their creators by becoming a sought-after collector item with people trading them on eBay for hundreds of dollars.

Last month Serato launched an app that allows DJs to mix music remotely from an iPad. It became the top-grossing iPad music app in Germany and the UK within two days.

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Dee believes the planet has big problems. "CO2 has hit levels we haven't seen for two-and-a-half million years. We need 1.4 Earths to sustain life at its current level at current consumption but we don't have 1.4 Earths."