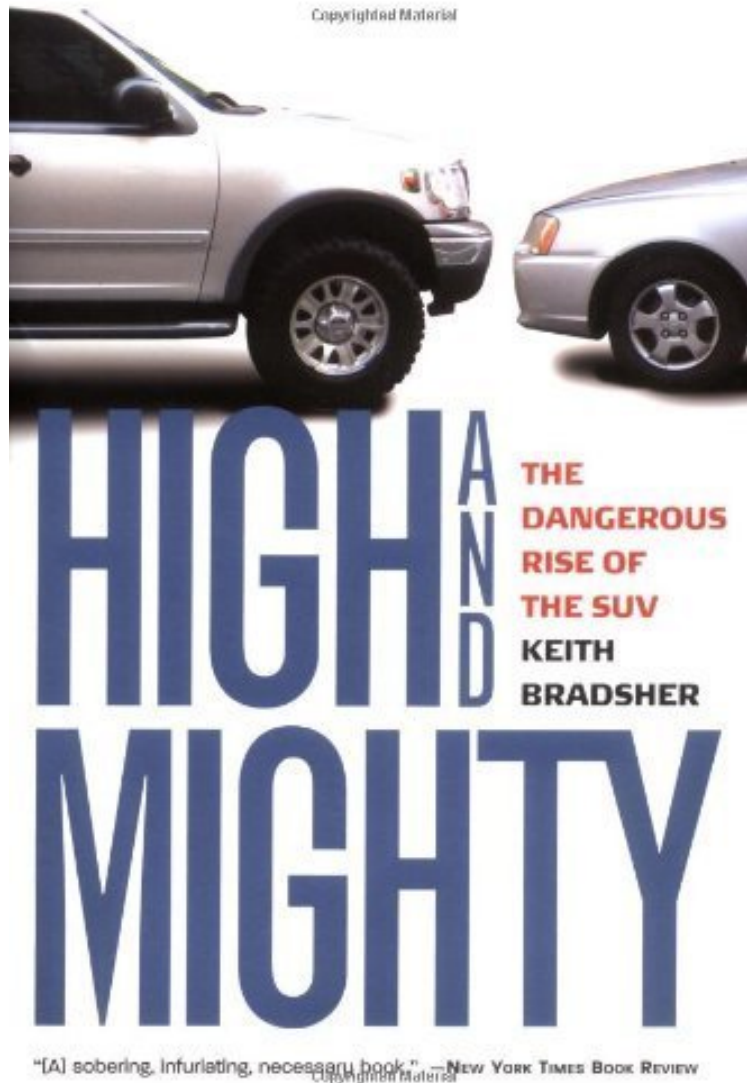


(Free) High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV

## High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV

*Keith Bradsher*

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**Keith Bradsher : High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised High and Mighty: The Dangerous Rise of the SUV:

24 of 24 people found the following review helpful. Excellent; covers all the aspects of the situation By Brian Curtis Bradsher's only arguable flaw in this book is that he was SO exhaustive in his research and documentation. Reading the history of the auto execs who designed and developed early models of SUVs can be a bit dry, but you can't say he didn't do his homework. The book addresses every angle of the SUV "experience" in our society: \*The legislation loopholes that tacitly support and subsidize them; \*The marketing campaigns that \*imply\* safety without promising anything specific (and actionable); \*The design teams that focused on a more "aggressive" image with

wasteful, unnecessary features to sell to fearful, self-indulgent consumers;\*The engineering and crash tests that prove how unsafe they really are;\*And the pollution stats that prove how wasteful and environmentally damaging SUVs have been. Any one of the chapters on these topics makes for fascinating reading, but I was especially interested in Ch. 6: Reptile Dreams. In this section on marketing, Bradsher discusses how marketing and advertising execs cynically estimated the insecurity and self-doubt of their target audience and made plans to exploit it. He describes how the image of taller, more "powerful" vehicles was used to generate record sales of a vehicle that's provably less safe... all the while getting the suckers--err, \*consumers\*--to claim that they were buying an SUV for its SAFETY factors. Which is a lie; they buy it largely for status. The SUV makers and marketers know this, and they exploit it: why else design a vehicle that explicitly says "Buy this so you can look like you don't care about fashion and status"? The so-called legitimate reasons for owning an SUV are diligently picked apart, one by one. No, they're not safer (minivans are). The four-wheel drive isn't useful (that's for offroad driving, which--despite the ads--90% of SUV owners never do). The cargo capacity isn't that great--in fact, many SUV interiors are awkwardly designed and arranged to have LESS carrying capacity than comparable trucks, minivans, and even station wagons. The bottom line is simple: SUVs are not safer in collisions, rollovers, or impacts. The data proving this is widely available... but SUV owners don't want to hear it. They crave the illusion of power and control; they want to feel intimidating; they want to indulge their selfishness and callous indifference for the sake of pretending they're Powerful Adventurers; and no mere facts are going to get in their way. The owners gleefully fork over huge shovelfuls of cash in exchange for pure image--all form and no substance. And as we should all know in this cynical consumerist society, image beats reality every time.

4 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An excellent book ... I assume

By P. Meltzer

A few random thoughts and observations about this book and about some of the other reviews.

1. I thought the book was a very compelling argument against SUV's. However, giving somewhat of a nod to the 1-star reviews, I confess that I am in no sense a car expert (nor, I suspect, are the vast majority of reviewers of this book), so I suppose it is possible that some of Bradsher's arguments might be disproved or debated by someone who is an expert. By way of analogy, a well-written legal brief on an issue can make almost any untrained reader believe that the sky is green. It is only when one sees an opposing, but equally well-written brief on the other side, that one sees that there are two sides to a story. However, having only read Bradsher's "brief", I can only say that I was pretty darn persuaded. That is why I "assume" it was excellent.
2. Some reviewers commented that Bradsher's tone was shrill or strident. I didn't find that to be the case at all. I thought that it was rather measured.
3. My one complaint about the book is that it could have EASILY been one-third shorter without any decline in the forcefulness of the argument or the impact of the message whatsoever. The combination of Bradsher's prodigious effort in writing the book combined with an absence of streamlining of the results of that effort, made for a book that was much longer than it needed to be.

11 of 12 people found the following review helpful. There is a clear difference

By Kelly

After doing as much extensive research on SUVs as Bradsher does, how can you NOT hate them? The only times I hear the popular myth: "SUVs are safe," are when the people who own them try to validate their reasons for endangering MY life. Bradsher's research and conclusions are NOT one-sided, they are FACT. Bradsher's character definition of SUV drivers (which by the way, he clearly states is the auto industry's own view) is CLEARLY evident through all of the 1-star reviewers. The only arguments against this book are from the auto industry, auto journalists PAID by the auto industry, and the mindless yuppies wasting their money on these monstrous vehicles (their over-active defensiveness certainly validates my suspicions).

**I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK.**

SUVs have taken over America's roads. Ad campaigns promote them as safer and "greener" than ordinary cars and easy to handle in bad weather. But very little about the SUV's image is accurate. They poorly protect occupants and inflict horrific damage in crashes, they guzzle gasoline, and they are hard to control. Keith Bradsher has been at the forefront in reporting the calamitous safety and environmental record of SUVs, including the notorious Ford-Firestone rollover controversy. In *High and Mighty*, he traces the checkered history of SUVs, showing how they came to be classified not as passenger cars but as light trucks, which are subject to less strict regulations on safety, gas mileage, and air pollution. He makes a powerful case that these vehicles are even worse than we suspect--for their occupants, for other motorists, for pedestrians and for the planet itself. In the tradition of *Unsafe at Any Speed* and *Fast Food Nation*, Bradsher's book is a damning expose; acute; of an industry that puts us all at risk, whether we recognize it or not.

From Library Journal

Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs) have become the fastest-growing market segment in the automobile industry. They have an image of being safer and easier to handle in bad weather than traditional passenger cars. But in this new exposé, New York Times reporter Bradsher delivers sobering facts about the conveyances: they protect occupants poorly, inflict horrific damage in crashes, guzzle gasoline, spew emissions, and are, in fact, difficult to control in bad weather or panic situations. He traces the checkered past of SUVs and how they came to be classified not as cars but as light trucks, which are subject to softer federal regulations regarding safety, gas mileage, and air pollution. The recent recall of tires and SUVs by Ford and Firestone after scores of roll-over deaths is apparently only

the tip of the iceberg. Bradsher makes a powerful case that SUVs are inflicting great damage on their occupants, other motorists, pedestrians, and the earth. While the information has been available for some time in bits and pieces, this book is the first to put it all together with documented facts and figures. In the tradition of Ralph Nader's *Unsafe at Any Speed*, this should be read by drivers of SUVs and all those who must share the roads with them. Eric C. Shoaf, Brown Univ. Lib., Providence Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Booklist The behemoths among autos, SUVs are dangerous gas-guzzlers exempted from the safety and environmental rules that apply to other autos because they are classified as light trucks. Bradsher, an award-winning journalist who reported on the Ford-Firestone rollover controversy, details how SUVs came to enjoy such protection and such enormous popularity. From its precursor in the 1930s, favored by the funeral business, through the twist of fate that saw trade protection for frozen chickens morph into protection of SUV manufacturers, to the irony that the baby boom generation that championed environmental safety is also responsible for the huge popularity of the SUV, Bradsher offers compelling reading. The author interviewed the auto executives and engineers behind the SUV and documents the danger to occupants, other motorists, pedestrians, and the environment of a car model that continues to grow in size and heft. This fascinating history and troubling analysis of both the politics and the design of the SUV should appeal to readers on both sides of the debate. Vanessa Bush Copyright copy; American Library Association. All rights reserved "...Damned if Bradsher doesn't make a point. In fact a fusillade of points...[This is a] sobering, infuriating, necessary book." -- New York Times Book , October 6, 2002 "A chilling expos on the danger of SUVs." -- Toronto Globe and Mail, August 24, 2002 "An intelligent reader will conclude from this meticulous and sober investigation that the [SUV] makers...have exploited a lucrative market." -- Atlantic Monthly, October 2002 "Certain to raise public awareness of the many societal problems exacerbated by the proliferation of SUVs... a fascinating book." -- Toronto Star, September 23, 2002 "Dazzling...Bradsher writes with knowledge and confidence...A masterpiece of its kind, splendidly combining reporting, analysis, and indignation. " -- The New Republic, January 20, 2003. "Not since [Nader] has there been such a critical look at the U.S. auto industry, or one that is more timely." -- John Marshall, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, September 30, 2002 "The growing grass-roots movement against the sport-utility vehicle now has a bible." -- Washington Post, September 22, 2002 "[A] marvelously told book...How [the auto market] came undone is Bradsher's menacing story, and I think he has it cold..." -- New York Times, November 26, 2002 "superb for many reasons...fascinating historical material is presented with narrative panache...Every engaged citizen...ought to read this book." -- Newsday, October 6, 2002