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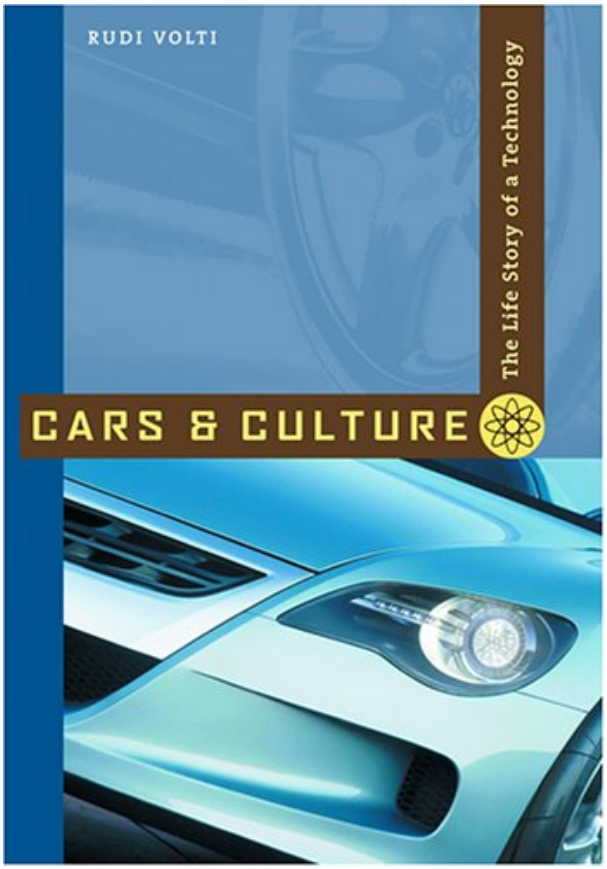

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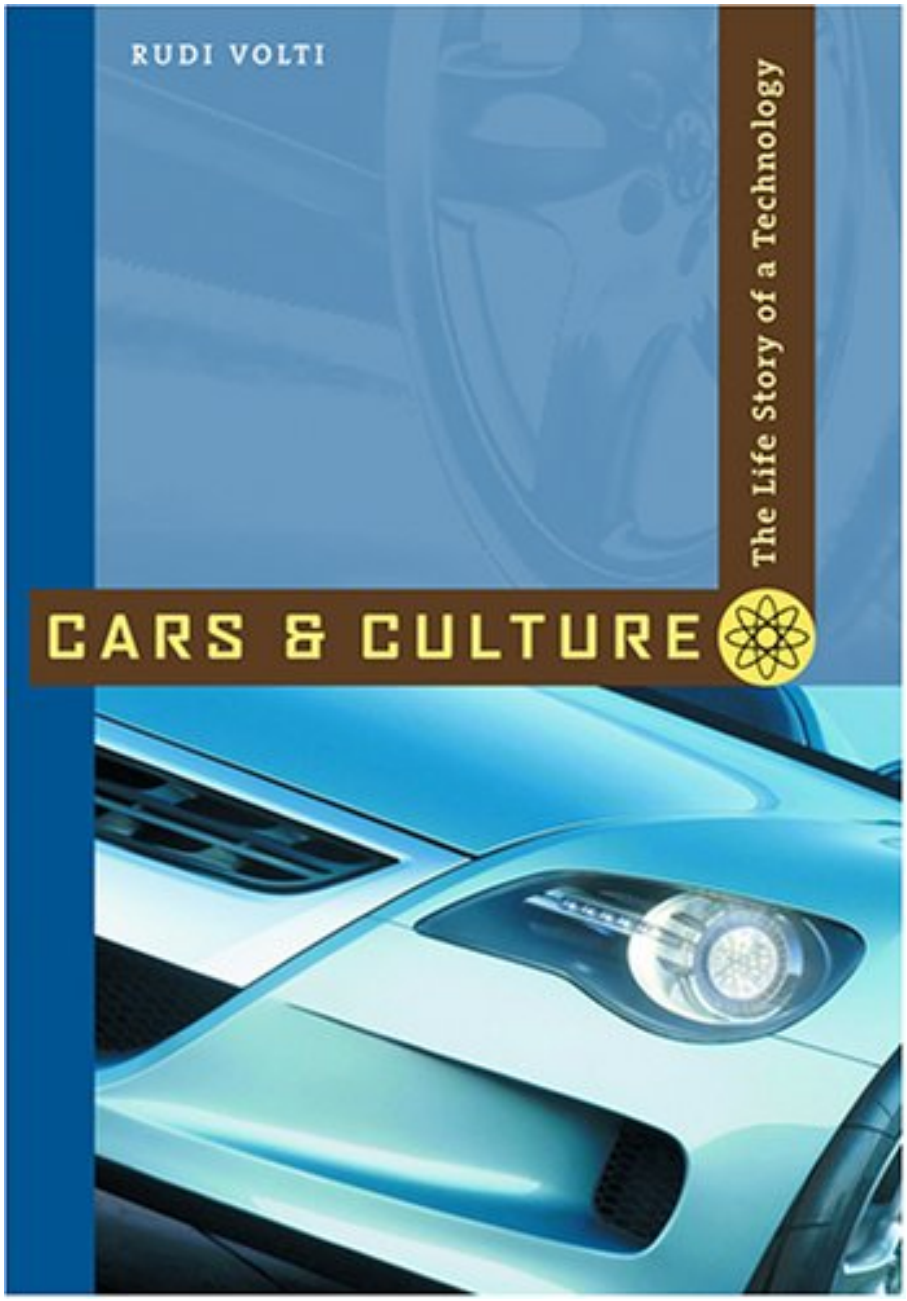

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Review

An excellent and easily read encapsulation of major themes in automobile history.

(Neal V. Hitch Michigan Historical Review)

Briskly paced and well written narrative.

(Bruce Pietrykowski Journal of Transport History)

About the Author

Rudi Volti teaches sociology at Pitzer College in Claremont, California. His publications include Society and Technological Change (Worth Publishers, 2005), The Engineer in History (Peter Lang Publishing, 2001), and The Facts on File Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Society (Facts on File, 1999).

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One of the leading artifacts of modern technology, the automobile has shaped our physical, economic, social, and cultural environment. The history of the automobile demonstrates how the decisions of governments, entrepreneurs, and the general public influence technological evolution. A succinct yet comprehensive history, Cars and Culture highlights the technical changes that altered the appearance and performance of automobiles, along with the myriad forces that have shaped the car's development.

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8 of 8 people found the following review helpful.
Great for teaching quick and provocative history of automobiles

By HMSII
I've just finished using this book in a course on car cultures, and for a quick survey of how we got to today, it is fantastic. It's accessible and crams enough into each 20 page chapter to spark conversations in a million different directions, whether one wants to delve deeper into the social implications of innovation or springboard into the larger historical forces that are entwined with the development of the car. The material is interesting enough to engage even those completely uninterested in cars for their own sake.

As a teaching text, put this one high on the list for any anthropology/sociology/history class dealing with changes in the 19th-20th century (select chapters could also be of interest in politics or economics classes). The whole book can be covered in a week if you're driving your students hard, two weeks if you want more time to unfold the themes.

For readers who are interested in how the car changed our lives in different decades, or who are trying to get a grip on any technological innovation, this is a good overview with a useful bibliography for learning more.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.
Cars & Cliches
By Benn Pamphleteer
I was expecting too much when I selected this book. In 150-some pages, how could I reasonably expect more than a fairly shallow treatment of the automobile's history, let alone its impact on cultures worldwide? Still, a book that discussed the demise of Studebaker without mentioning the Avanti, that doesn't mention the muscle car revolution as a response to the foreign auto invasion, or discuss the successes and failures of the motivational research done by the auto manufacturers during the 50's and 60's, seems to me to have missed some important nuances of the most important influence, and the most important artifact, of the last five generations.
If you haven't read any automotive history, or just want the surface gloss (not unlike the paint technologies the author describes), this book may interest you. If you're more interested in the current deconstruction of the automotive culture of the last century and its complexities, I think you might be better served looking elsewhere.

3 of 4 people found the following review helpful.
the tale of cars,road, gasoline freshly written and accurately documented
By Koen Wastyn
"Cars and culture" is the first of the series 'technographies' I have actually purchased. At the start , I was a bit reluctant of the simplicity and didactic aspect of the work , but gradually I realised that these aspects were its very power. The book surfs without any effort bewteen facts, anecdotes, illustrations and unveils a strong history from the dawn of the car to the situation traffic finds itself trapped into .Timeline, graphics, glossary and bibliography are 'to the point' and highly effective .

The book is written in a clear and entertaining style ranging this fine little book on the shelves of documentary literature.

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