

Stars in My Car: Uber Rider Encounters and Adventures

Steven Roy Grimsley

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This memoir shines a light on the growing gig economy and convenience culture, where getting from point A to point B is as easy as swiping one's phone.

Steven Roy Grimsley's *Stars in My Car* speeds into the burgeoning genre of Uber driver memoirs.

The author, an audiobook narrator and musician, decided to moonlight for Uber to pull in some extra income. He recounts nearly one hundred fares in Knoxville, Tennessee, where most of his customers were University of Tennessee students or alumni returning for football games.

The memoir features some vivid character sketches and offers an interesting behind-the-scenes glimpse at an incipient field, though it reads a little like a diary at times.

Grimsley admits to being the type of Uber driver many dread: a loquacious talker who tries to make fast friends with every passenger, claiming that they would take the bus if they didn't feel like chatting. Throughout the work, he often seems to grill his fares to an intrusive degree, though without that reportorial approach, he arguably wouldn't have had much of a book.

His vignettes sketch out riders such as aspiring performers, repentant drunk drivers, mixed-up strippers, and an autistic undergrad who insists on sharing the front seat. Grimsley often quotes riders directly, though in lengthy stretches that would be difficult to remember verbatim.

This straightforward rider-by-rider account is sprinkled with topical references to politics and personal updates. The book hums along because of its easily accessible prose and episodic structure. Grimsley strikes a friendly, conversational tone that makes *Stars in My Car* a breezy and compelling read.

The title is somewhat misleading; there are no stars to speak of, just the cast of characters that one would expect from a midsized Southern college town. Grimsley sometimes comes across as judgmental, which gets in the way of the storytelling, as when he says that a stripper is looking for a man to save her.

This is a work full of interesting and pithy anecdotes, though it also includes some less interesting riders. Quick, fun, and relatable, its parts don't necessarily add up to anything larger. While the work seems earnest in presenting every encounter as freighted with great import, this enthusiasm does not always transfer.

This memoir shines a light on the growing gig economy and convenience culture, where getting from point A to point B is as easy as swiping one's phone. *Stars in My Car* gives a great idea of what driving for Uber is like and brings to life a menagerie of interesting riders. Sensationalistic and sometimes moralistic, the book is never boring.

JOSEPH S. PETE (June 22, 2017)

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