



**Once Upon a Car: The Fall and Resurrection of
America's Big Three Automakers--GM, Ford, and
Chrysler**

Bill Vlasic

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Once Upon a Car is the fascinating epic story of the rise, fall, and rebirth of the Big Three U.S. automakers, General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. Written by Bill Vlasic, the Detroit bureau chief for the *New York Times* and acclaimed author of *Taken for a Ride*, this eye-opening, richly anecdotal work is more than a riveting and insightful business history. It offers a clear-eyed view of the present day automobile industry and of Detroit, the city that spawned it, going far beyond the corporate and federal maneuverings to explore the impact the car companies' failures have had on the overall economy, and more importantly what they have done to people's lives. Relevant and thought-provoking, *Once Upon a Car* is an unforgettable journey deep inside this quintessentially American industry.

Once Upon a Car: The Fall and Resurrection of America's Big Three Automakers--GM, Ford, and Chrysler Details

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From Reader Review Once Upon a Car: The Fall and Resurrection of America's Big Three Automakers--GM, Ford, and Chrysler for online ebook

Wenhui Zhu says

Gossip about what happened during the economic crisis from 2005 to 2010. Ford is the only one of the Big Three who survived without government money.

Denise says

Essentially an opera in 3 act. I was quite familiar with act 1 (reason for the fall of the auto industry) act 2 (how it has fallen) and I finished 27 chapters in record time. It was fun to read about behind the scene juicy bits. Act 3 (the bailout and resurrection) was quite short (chapter 28-32) and left me unsatisfied.

Peggy says

loved this non-fiction book about the big 3, from 2004 to present/buyout . . . currently living in Detroit and familiar with many of the names, this book delves into the behind the scenes strategies and personalities, and how close it all came to dissolving

(not a book club choice but recommended to me by my husband)

Delhi Irc says

Location: PTI IRC

Accession No: DL028548

Ross says

I was disappointed with this book because I was seeking some detailed analysis of the condition of GM and Chrysler when then finally went into bankruptcy under the control of the Obama administration. Instead of financial detail about the companies and the labor rates they were stuck with from the UAW, the book was 90% interview notes of the author with company and union people. This ran along the lines of so-and-so said this and then the other so-and-so responded thus and so. Stories about the people and their personalities which were of zero interest to me.

Also, the subtitle of the book mentions the resurrection of the "Big Three" but the book has no actual coverage of anything that could be called resurrection. The book ends with GM and Chrysler coming out of bankruptcy.

Max says

Loved, loved, loved this! I was always a Chevy fan but after reading this (although I still would never buy a Ford) I have utmost respect for how the economic downturn (or really just the threat of it) Made Bill Ford Jr. prepare. He knew what was needed, knew he wasn't capable, and found himself Alan Mulally. This is the story of why Ford didn't need a government bailout, what GM did before and after their bailout, and a little insight into the ride Chrysler was taken on during the turmoil (check out Taken For A Ride for a deeper delve into that subject).

Joline Godfrey says

This was a page turner, really. The behind the scenes story of what happened in and to the car industry as the economy was tanking post 2008, could only be told by an objective insider--and NYT reporter, Bill Vlasic, writing for the Detroit Bureau, is just that. This is a story that covers both the foolhardy and the wise; the prescient and the blind. And the inside the story story of Bill Ford's actions are such I've almost decided to buy one of his cars. We'll see:).

Rachel says

It was an interesting look into how the Big 3 saw the challenges facing them with the economic downturn in 2008 and reacted (or ignored) per their company heads. It was also interesting to compare my experiences at work with what was happening with those companies. In some ways they were very similar and in others, they were radically different. A good read for those who would like to see how not to react to an economic downturn.

Socraticgadfly says

A good overview of how Detroit got to the location where GM and Chrysler both had to go through bankruptcies, with both rising gas prices gutting the market for trucks and SUVs and the Great Recession drying up credit.

A good one but not a great one. Way back in the 1980s, the UAW, as well as the Big Three, resisted building greener cars. The UAW's Douglas Fraser invited Japan, in the persona of Honda, to come over; so why didn't the UAW unionize plants outside of that one, the plants outside the Midwest/West Coast? Years before the two bankruptcies, the Big Three all knew that healthcare costs were an albatross around their necks vis-a-vis the Japanese plants back in Japan, so why didn't they push for national health care? Why didn't the UAW earlier, for that matter?

There's tentative to complete answers to much of those rhetorical questions, but Vlasic's book doesn't have a long enough time line to look at some of them. Others, though, fit in the time frame he has, and he opts not to dig deeper.

So, while it's a good book, it's not a great book. It's also not great for ending so soon after the bankruptcy filings, with no prediction/analysis for the future.

CHAD L MCLEISH says

Reads like a novel

Captures your interest and tells a story that you don't want to stop reading. Tells us the emotions, thoughts and feelings of the players. Written almost in the format of a TV program with scenes that cut in and out. Great read.

David says

This book is totally in my wheelhouse -- a well researched, nonfiction business narrative written by a respected journalist. This along with Steve Coll's book about Exxon Mobil ("Private Empire") are among two of the favorite books I've read recently. Fascinating insider account of what went wrong with America's Big Three auto companies and how they turned around (Ford), or were turned around against their will (GM, Chrysler).

John says

Subtitle well encapsulates what this book is about. Going into the 21st Century American automakers amounted to a dinosaur industry, making gas-guzzling vehicles that few people wanted to buy. Lots were full of cars and trucks and too many factories were cranking out even more. Hourly labor costs and associated benefits were high compared to Japanese transplants. It's a fascinating story about transformation in management styles: stodgy bureaucratic dysfunction to focused competitor GM), overwhelmed leadership to energized new culture (Ford) and confused direction to dynamic new partnership (Chrysler).

Tim Timberly says

I enjoyed this book. The author did a good job bouncing from company to company, stating the issues that faced them each individually and also collectively. He also skillfully showed the numerous issues that led to the economic catastrophe for the Big Three. I wish he would have spent more time on the "resurrection" of the auto industry as a balance to the downfall. I suspect that the author did not say as much about the recovery of the auto industry because it wasn't complete when he published the book.

Sicofonia says

This is a comprehensive story about the demise of the 3 American automakers during the last years of the 2000s. You will discover why GM and Chrysler bankruptcy was an event that did not happen overnight.

Years of self-indulgence and bad planning and decision-making put the industry on the verge of collapse. Bill Vlasic did a good job of compiling the information, basing his resources on extensive interviews with the people directly involved in the matter.

In my opinion it feels a little bit rushed by the last two chapters, covering the years 2009 and 2010 briefly. However, the bulk of this book talks about the previous years, starting back on 2004. When the systemic problems that brought crisis to the sector started to be too evident to be ignored. After reading this, you will realize it is no wonder the industry could not cope with the financial crisis that burst in 2008.

Karen says

This book covers the Detroit car industry from about 2001-2010 including the bailouts of Chrysler and GM and the restructure of Ford. These three companies all started with the same problems (a rise in gas prices, higher than projected payments to employees and former employees, declining sales, poor quality cars) but took three different approaches to solving them. It sounds really dry, but it's a very readable book that brings the auto executives and other major players to life.
