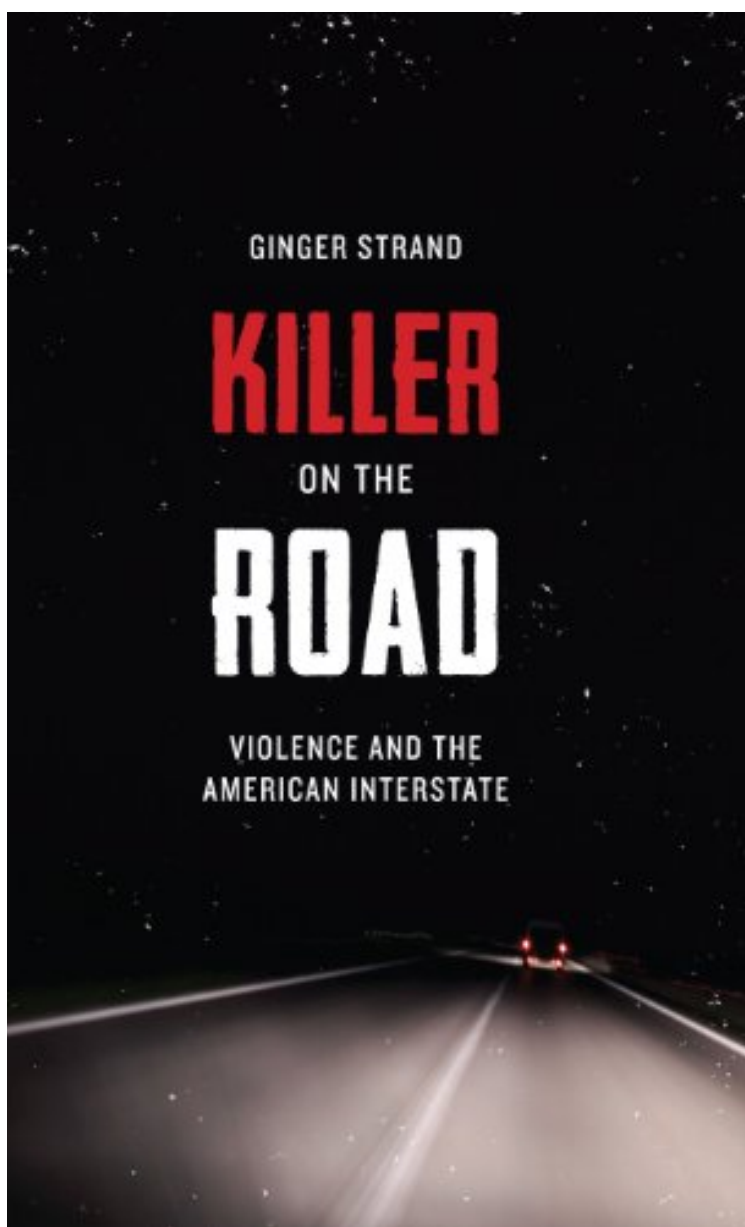


(Ebook free) Killer on the Road: Violence and the American Interstate (Discovering America (University of Texas Press))

Killer on the Road: Violence and the American Interstate (Discovering America (University of Texas Press))

Ginger Strand

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Ginger Strand : Killer on the Road: Violence and the American Interstate (Discovering America (University of Texas Press)) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Killer

on the Road: Violence and the American Interstate (Discovering America (University of Texas Press)):

27 of 28 people found the following review helpful. Worth reading
By C. M. Helm
I have just finished *Killer on the Road*, which I read from cover to cover without stopping. It is a rather short book given the nature of its thesis and I was worried that the brevity would mean that it lacked depth. I bought a copy for two reasons: first, I read a lot of books in the True Crime genre because of being close to five murdered people, because I want to understand the act of murder better; and second, because of the review of this book by the New York Times yesterday. Now that I am done with it, I am pleasantly surprised how it covered a rather wide array of threads and pulled them together to make a coherent and believable narrative. I put it down wishing that it were longer - something I can not say about a lot of books these days. As a retired academic, I am very impressed by the work. The author presented and supported her thesis well, and wrote just enough to do that and not a word more. As someone who has suffered the torture of grading undergraduate essays and peer-reviewing journal articles, I am impressed at this feat of prose construction. This is superlative writing. The book also contained insights into already-familiar serial killers that this jaded consumer of True Crime books did not expect. For example, the saga of Edmund Kemper is one I have encountered several times. I expected that the author would have little new to add to all the Kemper reporting already published. I was wrong. The author engaged my interest and kept it by presenting Kemper within the context of America's car-centric culture in a narrative that eschewed sensationalism. I do have some quibbles. I'm not sure that examples like Kemper really belong when compared to more mobile interstate killers. Kemper's crimes never crossed State lines whereas some truck-driver murderers often cross the continent. In the author's shoes, I think I would have discussed only killers with transcontinental reach. Next, there are annotated end notes at the back of the book; however, I can find no corresponding end note numbers in the text. Last, I had problems reading the quotes printed on the occasional photo though that may be an artifact of the itty bitty screen on my laptop. But these are small quibbles and not enough to convince me to give out 4 stars.
17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. *Killer on the Road* is a Strangely Beautiful Book
By Customer
I think the mark of great nonfiction is to deliver a content that validates something people have always suspected, but have never taken the time to think through. This book does that to an impressive degree. Strand, who admits she is a research freak, shows us (through relentless digging for the facts), how the interstate road system created a fertile playground for serial killers. It became a killing field where they could ply their trade. She says that certainly serial killers had long existed, but the road system provided them with what they most needed - anonymity, mobility, and huge numbers of trusting hitchhikers. Strand has actually two books here. She has a history of the the highway system and how it came to be. She dispels myths about their being built for military purposes, that they were built to move military hardware from one side of the country to the other and to make one mile of every five was straight to accomodate the landing of planes. Not true. It first failed to pass because of the huge price tag. When they converted it to a "defense bill" it passed. So there is a marvelous education on just how highways were planned and constructed and how they affected both cities and small town America. She discusses sociological impacts, too, and the reflection of all of this in pop culture, from James Dean to The Doors' song, "Killer on the Road," which inspired the title of her book. She tells the full story of many serial killers who worked along these highways, many of whom killed hitchhikers and then blamed their victims, saying "they shouldn't have been out there on the road like that." This is a beautiful book in that it provides a nostalgic look at how roads were sold politically and socially. She helps us see how General Motors had a huge stake in getting roads built so they could sell more cars. It was packaged as part of the American Dream. And then she weaves the serial killer phenomenon into the mix. The horrors of their killings and their insane justifications for those killings make for far more captivating drama than anything Dexter has produced. This book is impressively researched and fluidly written and structured. I recommend it without hesitation.
W. F. Strong
Good Books Radio [...] 10 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Terrifying truths
By Emelia
This book, based on facts, was terrifying! And makes more sense out of my own mother who used to caution ME, a child of the 60's, against traveling alone. No wonder she worried! This book will help readers choose the next location of their home, where to not stop and eat when traveling our great highways. And remember - keep your doors locked.

Starting in the 1950s, Americans eagerly built the planets largest public work: the 42,795-mile National System of Interstate and Defense Highways. Before the concrete was dry on the new roads, however, a specter began haunting them the highway killer. He went by many names: the Hitcher, the Freeway Killer, the Killer on the Road, the I-5 Strangler, and the Beltway Sniper. Some of these criminals were imagined, but many were real. The nations murder rate shot up as its expressways were built. America became more violent and more mobile at the same time. *Killer on the Road* tells the entwined stories of Americas highways and its highway killers. Theres the hot-rodding juvenile delinquent who led the National Guard on a multistate manhunt; the wannabe highway patrolman who murdered hitchhiking coeds; the record promoter who preyed on ghetto kids in a city reshaped by freeways; the nondescript married man who stalked the interstates seeking women with car trouble; and the trucker who delivered death with his cargo. Thudding away behind these grisly crime sprees is the story of the interstateshow they were sold, how they

were built, how they reshaped the nation, and how we came to equate them with violence. Through the stories of highway killers, we see how the killer on the road, like the train robber, the gangster, and the mobster, entered the cast of American outlaws, and how the freeway conceived as a road to utopia came to be feared as a highway to hell.

". . . part true-crime entertainment, part academic exegesis, part political folk ballad. . . . Strands cross-threaded tales of drifters, stranded motorists, and madmen got its hooks into me. Reading Ms. Strands thoughtful book is like driving a Nash Rambler after midnight on a highway to hell." (New York Times)". . . draws startling parallels between the inexorable advance of the Interstate System and the proliferation of killers who were pathologically stimulated by that long, open road." (New York Times Book)". . . a hybrid of cultural historian and indefatigable roving reporter, who can't help taking quirky pleasure sometimes in what ought to be an utterly grim story." (Newsweek)"Ginger Strand is in possession of a sharp eye, a biting wit, a beguiling sense of fun and a magnificent obsession." (Bloomberg)"Strand proves herself to be a first-rate storyteller." (Booklist)"The grim stories of murder on the highway may do for road trips what Jaws did for surfing." (Kirkus s)"Who knew that these marvelously engineered clover-leafed roadways would not just drive the economy but also create a deadly combination of social transience and personal anonymity, destabilizing sociopaths and psychopaths while making them feel invulnerable to legal consequences? . . . Killer on the Road merges the chilling appeal of true-crime stories with compelling social history." (American History)About the AuthorGinger Strand is the author of *Inventing Niagara*, a *Borders Original Voices* choice, and *Flight*, a novel. Her nonfiction has appeared in many places, including *Harpers*, *OnEarth*, *The Believer*, and *Orion*, where she is a contributing editor. She grew up mostly in Michigan and now lives in New York City, but spends a lot of time on the road.