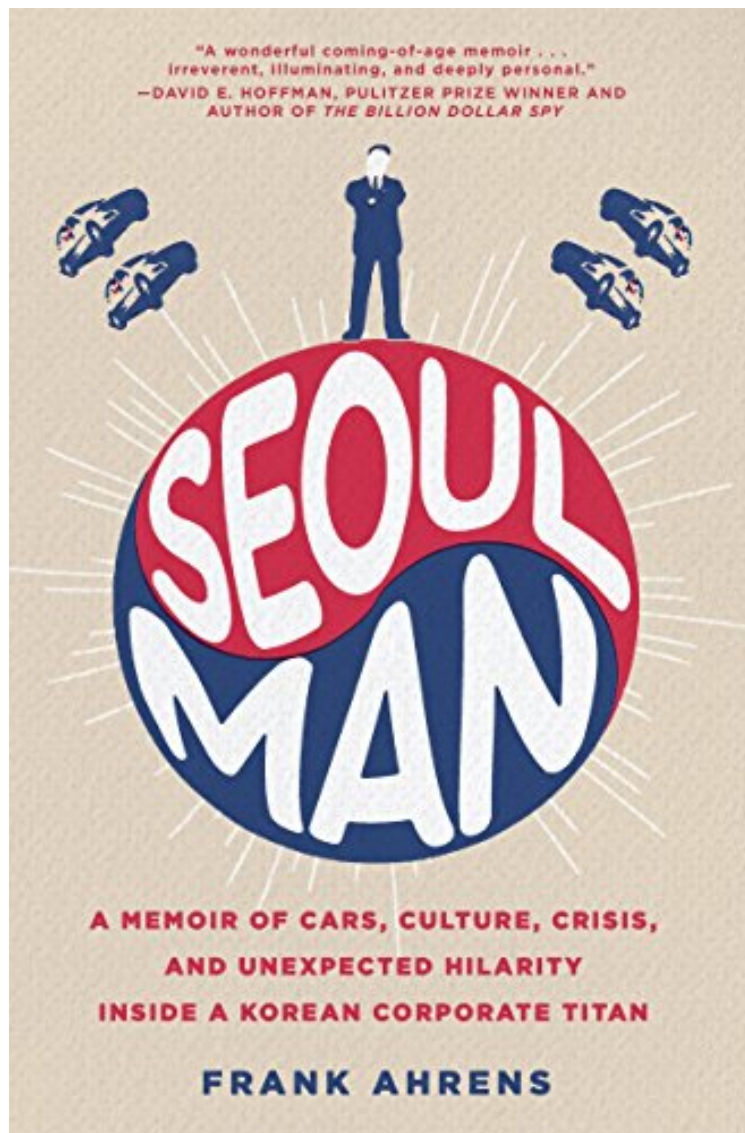


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## Seoul Man: A Memoir of Cars, Culture, Crisis, and Unexpected Hilarity Inside a Korean Corporate Titan

Frank Ahrens

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**Frank Ahrens : Seoul Man: A Memoir of Cars, Culture, Crisis, and Unexpected Hilarity Inside a Korean Corporate Titan** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Seoul Man: A Memoir of Cars, Culture, Crisis, and Unexpected Hilarity Inside a Korean Corporate Titan:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Entertaining insights into Korean business culture and car marketing By Jim in Oregon This is a readable, informative and entertaining volume that heads down several paths: the

culture and history of Korea; fascinating material about the auto industry; making the leap from journalism to marketing; the mechanics of making a new marriage work; making sometimes hard decisions within the author's Christian faith. It all works. I bought the book because I have a family member from South Korea, but wound up being happy I read it for the insights I gained into how the auto industry works as well as the culture of Korean business life. The author, a former Washington Post reporter, spins an excellent story. Although it was a 5-star book for me, I gave it four because some people will be enchanted with some of the elements but might be just as happy to have missed some of the others. I was also disappointed that when faced with the hardest decision in the book -- how to discontinue a long-distance marriage -- the author didn't either make the obvious alternative decision or at least share some detail about why he didn't.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Indispensable Guide to Working in S Korea By B. Crosby What would happen if you had a Washington Post reporter embed in a huge S Korean Chaebol? (Chaebol being a government sanctioned and subsidized industrial oligopoly). While Ahrens was actually hired, this could well be a series of Washington Post articles, each chapter being an article. The only drawback is Ahrens' digressions into Christianity and the birth of his own kid as well as what I would say is a bit overindulgence in promoting Hyundai, but you can forgive him these three passions, because he does such a tremendous job analyzing and explaining all facets of Korean culture, history, mentality, and most important, corporate work culture. Ahrens comes crashing into his new job like a bull in a China shop, as I think most of us would. We are raised to believe that American culture is Number 1, and our Star Trek job is to explore new worlds, seek out new life, then spend an episode condescendingly exposing the flaws of their ways and the superiority of human culture. Ahrens quickly learns that he is both unprepared for not only Korean culture but corporate culture, and the combination of the two. I would also criticize the fact that Ahrens didn't get out much. He spent much of his time behind the literal and figurative walls of the US military compound in Seoul. So you don't get any culture outside of Korean work culture. You don't get the K-pop youth culture, the elderly culture, the anti-corporate culture, the entrepreneurial culture, the working class merchant culture, the government sector culture, etc. What you get is specifically the elite, Chaebol culture which is reflective of Korean culture but a little warped. While he states that Koreans have idolized Western beauty standards, I would argue, they have taken it one step further. If they truly idolized Western beauty standards, many would be getting nose jobs to make their noses larger. One thing the West has not embraced is the shrunken head or what the Koreans call, the CD face, a face so small, you can hide it entirely behind a CD. (That's a round storage device most often used for music for you youngsters out there.) As a journalist, Ahrens' style is extremely easy to read and entertaining with just the right amount of depth.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Great book, did an amazing job for only having been there three years By S. S. I think Frank Ahrens is a great writer and I would happily buy another book he wrote if he does so in the future. His book is entertaining, satisfying, and a wonderful personal memoir. His insights do not go so very deep. You can tell that by how little he writes about any relationships he had with any Koreans there. I don't fault him for this too much though. He was there to live his life as best as he could, not to write book. He did an excellent job and he is a very intelligent guy with a keen eye. I am sure if he had stayed longer, one might get better, deeper insights into the people. Instead his book is filled with "otherness" about his experiences with the people there and not much in the way of what is common to humanity across the board which is really one of the great benefits of travel and meeting people abroad. But the book is about his point of view and his experiences and he did an excellent job writing this book. There is a real sense that he is always a distant observer even in the face of him living and working amidst an iconic Korean company. But the language barrier and cultural barrier is so high, I suppose you would really need to be there half a lifetime to understand and write something more substantial. Overall I am impressed. Mr Ahrens, is like a corporate man's Anthony Bourdain.

Recounting his three years in Korea, the highest-ranking non-Korean executive at Hyundai sheds light on a business culture very few Western journalists ever experience, in this revealing, moving, and hilarious memoir. When Frank Ahrens, a middle-aged bachelor and eighteen-year veteran at the Washington Post, fell in love with a diplomat, his life changed dramatically. Following his new bride to her first appointment in Seoul, South Korea, Frank traded the newsroom for a corporate suite, becoming director of global communications at Hyundai Motors. In a land whose population is 97 percent Korean, he was one of fewer than ten non-Koreans at a company headquarters of thousands of employees. For the next three years, Frank traveled to auto shows and press conferences around the world, pitching Hyundai to former colleagues while trying to navigate cultural differences at home and at work. While his appreciation for absurdity enabled him to laugh his way through many awkward encounters, his job began to take a toll on his marriage and family. Eventually he became a vice president; the highest-ranking non-Korean at Hyundai headquarters. Filled with unique insights and told in his engaging, humorous voice, *Seoul Man* sheds light on a culture few Westerners know, and is a delightfully funny and heartwarming adventure for anyone who has ever felt like a fish out of water; all of us.

"Engagingly written and full of funny, intriguing probes into the quirks [Ahrens] discovers in his surroundings and himself. This is a nuanced look at a nation where an image of Western modernity is reflected and illuminated by an off-

kilter mirror." (Publishers Weekly)"[Written] with humor and warmth... Amid the author's personal journey reside priceless cultural and professional insights." --(Kirkus s)"In this charming and affecting book, Ahrens finds out what makes this small but courageous country strive so relentlessly to be better. His portrait of Korea, the shrimp between the two whales of China and Japan, is filled with insights, youthful enthusiasm, and a zest for discovery." --(Tim Clissold, author of the international bestseller Mr. China)"Lively, engaging and deeply personal, Seoul Man is at once a fascinating primer on the auto industry, a perceptive and often hilarious ex-pat adventure into 'Koreanness,' and the story of an ordinary man transformed through faith and the power of love." --(Brigid Schulte, author of the New York Times bestselling Overwhelmed: Work, Love Play when No One has the Time)About the AuthorFrank Ahrens was a reporter at the Washington Post for eighteen years before joining Hyundai Motor Company, where he eventually became a vice president. He lives in Washington, DC.