



# TOM'S REGULAR RANT!

Every issue our resident grumbler Tom Whitehead-Clarke has a whinge about the latest thing that gets right up his nose. This month Tom has a major problem with what he terms:

## THE SUV (STUPID UNNECESSARY VEHICLE)

**V**iolent title you might think, but then again what is wrong with it? After all, these SUV's (best known for their popularity throughout America) not only guzzle more fuel, but are more likely to kill you, are less economic, noisier, and above all cause more pollution than regular sized cars.

Although the Americans have never been known for doing things on a small scale, it is now becoming rather ridiculous. Some companies have started to adapt the well known "HUMVEE" that the American military use in warfare, for use on the roads. Although you may feel safe in one of these immense juggernauts that the Americans so eloquently call "hummers", as though they are delicate creatures, you are in fact 25% more likely to be involved in an accident with one. This isn't just a heap of bull either. The fact that their bumpers are so much higher than other cars, means that they hit people higher on their body, meaning that they cause more chest and head injuries. Not only that, but the immense weight of them means that they cause more force on impact, fact... so pick the bones out of that all you escalate fans!

The federal corporate average fuel economy (CAFE) standards set the fuel economy goals for new passenger cars at 27.5 miles per gallon, but oh no! SUVs are not considered cars - they are characterized as light trucks! Light trucks only have to achieve 20.7 mpg, and therefore all those "gangstas" out there can kill people with their fumes, without even leaving their own pimped up, chrome plated, air conditioned, leather

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seated, base injected "pimp wagons". In fact, some SUVs, like the massive Ford Excursion, are so large that they no longer qualify as light trucks, and are not subject to any kind of fuel economy standards. They could be re-classified to have the fuel economy of a small passenger jet.

All these huge emissions cause our environment to fill with gases that cause global warming. Today a car that gets approximately 27.5 mpg, like a Volkswagen New Beetle, will emit 54 tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) from the burning of gasoline over its lifetime. An SUV that gets 14 mpg, like a Lincoln Navigator, will emit over 100 tons of CO2 over its lifetime. I'm not suggesting that we all drive Beetles, but I would ask what you are getting for those extra 46 tons of carbon? I hate to be pessimistic, but if we don't curb fossil fuel emissions, the damage will very soon be irreversible.

People that know me will of course know that I am not the most urban of people, therefore I had to consult with some more "streetwise" students in order to find out why you would buy one of these unnecessarily large cars. The replies consisted of: "They be sick man!" "Dey is Grimey!" and "They is well luxury." I believe that these can be translated to "They look nice" and that they are comfortable. In which case why not buy an Audi? ...but no! they say... because they just don't have the image!

I believe that people buy these huge cars...(that are meant for OFF ROAD use) because they want to look cool. I don't mind that, after all that's why people buy sports cars, however there are subtle differences.

A quarter of new cars bought in the world today are sports utility vehicles, A much smaller percentage are sports cars. The fact is that 4 wheel drive cars and SUVs, are comparatively cheap compared to sports cars, but are just as uneconomic with fuel, the power is used for the immense bulk rather than speed. I have no problem with sports cars (yet), because not only are they more economic, but also they are few and far between, rather than the massive amounts of SUVs that have taken over our roads.

The obsession with big cars has grown to the state whereby some BMW SUVs, don't even work off road! They are simply very large cars that flounder as soon as they reach mud or anything resembling steep. Possibly the most ridiculous reason that I've heard from some people is "They are more safe for the passengers". Despite the fact that they are more dangerous for others... they aren't less dangerous for the drivers.

**You may be keeping yourself safe, but what about the rest of the planet?**

On the NCAP safety register, only 3 large SUVs get top marks, these are a Volvo, a WV and a BMW (the one that doesn't work off road). In fact one of the classic SUVs, the Chevrolet blazer has a safety rating of...1 star. Ladies and gentleman, if you want safety buy a Renault Megane!

Safety is of course the key argument. If you drive SUVs for no reason other than to make yourself look "nang" or to keep yourself safe... think about the following. Every gallon of gasoline your vehicle burns puts 20 pounds of carbon dioxide (CO2) into the atmosphere. As well as this, sport utility vehicles can spew 30 %t more carbon monoxide and hydrocarbons and 75 percent more nitrogen oxides than passenger cars. You may be keeping yourself safe, but what about the rest of the planet? Finally, scientists believe that the earth's surface temperature will rise up to 2.5 degrees in the next 50 years. It means more rain, yet more drought in Africa, higher temperatures, and a more unstable weather systems, crop troubles...the list goes on.

My message to everyone is not to go out, hug trees and blow up as many SUVs as possible, but rather if your parents are thinking of buying a car, deter them, and when you buy a car, don't buy an SUV.

I know this is only Kingston, but let's make a start. Let's not follow the Americans. After all, they have George Bush as their leader. You may want to look cool, but not at the expense of the planet. Many believe these issues are off in the future, the **END** not, they're now and you are the next generation who are going

**Cheers  
P.s. To start with, bike to school!!!!**

