



Walt Disney: Hollywood's Dark Prince

By Marc Eliot

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A creative genius, Walt Disney's films and characters brought love and laughter to children everywhere and inspired the great Disney theme parks. Now Marc Eliot presents the dark side of Walt Disney, revealing his 25 year association with J Edgar Hoover's FBI as an informant, rooting out Communists, subversives and Jews. His phobic behaviour is also examined in detail, as is his obsessive hand-washing, heavy drinking, sexual inadequacies, anti-Semitism and paranoia about having been adopted. Marc Eliot shows how these psycho-sexual conflicts drove Walt to despair and how they found expression in his animated characters.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

This book is called the first truly unauthorized biography, and in the case of Disney, unauthorized is important because all previous "authorized" biographies had to pass the scrutiny of Disney Studios. Without manuscript approval, the Disney archives were off-limits to Eliot (*Down Thunder Road: The Making of Bruce Springsteen* , LJ 8/92), although their contents could be gleaned from other works on his subject. This volume includes interviews--both anonymous and attributed--with former Disney animators. The darker side of Disney includes his cooperation with the House Un-American Activities Committee and the FBI, as well as "Uncle Walt's" strong antiunion campaigns. His troubled personal life is explored both as biography and as the source of his creative expressions. While not without flaws, this book is essential for any library that wants to provide an alternative to the sanitized versions of Disney's life.

- *Sherle Abramson, Williamsburg Regional Lib., Va.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Muckraking, unauthorized biography of Disney that nonetheless paints such a rending picture of his childhood and young manhood that one forgives most of his later lapses. Eliot (*Down Thunder Road*, 1991, etc.) thinks that Disney was a great artist--which may account for what turns out to be a largely sympathetic biography of the filmmaker's dark side. Disney's fundamentalist father, Elias, was such a monster to his sons, whom he beat mercilessly, that Walt came to believe he wasn't his father's child--nor would Walt's mother protect him from Elias's savagery. These trials, and especially the anxiety about his parentage, became the template for Disney's later cartoon stories, Eliot says, and account in part for the mogul's endless troubles with his stable of animators, whom he underpaid and refused to give any power to. Nor would Disney grant Mickey Mouse's real creator, fellow animator Ub Iwerks, his proper credit, though Iwerks was Disney's oldest friend aside from the filmmaker's brother, Roy. On his marriage night, Disney found himself impotent, Eliot says, a state that later recurred during times of stress, which were exacerbated by a drinking problem and bouts of depression. Meanwhile, Disney's father had instilled in the boy a hatred of Jews, and Walt never curbed his tongue about Jews among his animators--and especially not when talking about fellow studio heads. He felt cut out of the real money in Hollywood since he could only produce movies with his own money while other studios monopolized distribution and exhibition. Following WW II, Disney helped organize resistance to the studio monopolies and in many ways brought about the downfall of the studio system. Earlier, he had become an informant for the FBI--according to Eliot, Disney wanted J. Edgar Hoover to investigate whether he really was the son of his alleged father--and, here, the author draws from some 500 pages of Disney's reports to the Bureau. Very readable, actually quite laudable, work. (Sixteen pages of photographs--not seen) -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

About the Author

Marc Eliot spent four years researching the life of Walt Disney. He is the author of six other books, including *Down Thunder Road*, the best-selling biography of Bruce Springsteen.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sandra Lowe:

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