

'Dream It! Do it! My Half Century Creating Disney's Magic Kingdoms' by Marty Sklar: A Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

As soon as I heard the "Dream It! Do It!" book would be coming out, I knew I had to get a copy of it.

Why? Because the author is Marty Sklar!

For those who aren't familiar with him, Marty Sklar is a Disney Legend and Imagineering Ambassador, who started with Disney in 1955, just a month before Disneyland opening. The stories in the book date back to those days, and include his memories of Walt Disney, as he was responsible for Walt's annual reports, messages, and publicity material. Marty was instrumental in creating Epcot, and also supervised the design of every theme park that's opened since then. Think about it, and that's quite a roll call, including Disney's Hollywood Studios and Animal Kingdom in Florida, Disney California Adventure, Hong Kong Disneyland, both parks at Disneyland Paris, and Tokyo DisneySea. As such, I couldn't wait to read all about his experiences with these amazing projects over the years.

□ I think the first thing I need to say about this book is that I went into reading it with very high expectations, and that was probably a mistake on my part. I was bound to be a bit disappointed, and I was. It wasn't the writing style, which was wonderful, and it wasn't the stories, which certainly captured my attention. The issue I had with this book is that Marty Sklar has simply done so much that it's almost impossible to go into enough detail to satisfy a Disney fan on all the projects he's worked on. I'd almost have preferred for this to have been produced in a number of different volumes, as I could quite happily have read just one book about Walt and Disneyland, and another couple of books on all the parks he was involved in.

□ For Tokyo Disneyland, there's one chapter that's 14 pages long, while Disneyland Paris gets the same treatment in 19 pages. I got to the end of each chapter and desperately wanted to carry on reading about the creation of the parks, as I was fascinated by the work that went into them, and the issues that the design team encountered along the way. For example, there were some references to why parts of Tokyo Disneyland were created the way they were -- the covered World Bazaar at the entrance to the park, and the expansion of the hub in front of the castle -- but I'd love to have seen similar stories for Tokyo DisneySea. With the

Disneyland Paris chapter, I really enjoyed Marty's frank look at the perceived mistakes made with the park, and it was fascinating to read his take on whether they were mistakes or not. It certainly made me think, as I've been a critic of some of those "mistakes."

What this book does really well is lift the lid on the characters behind the Disney name, highlighting the sometimes fractured relationships between those characters. Considering the book is published by Disney, I was concerned when I started reading it that this might be a watered-down, sugary version of events, and I was relieved to see that it wasn't. Marty tells it how it was, particularly with his tales of Michael Eisner. I don't know about you, but I tend to find that people either loved or loathed that former President of the Walt Disney Company, and that generally colors how they talk about him. Marty is completely down the middle when he talks about incidents with Eisner, setting out what happened, and how people felt as a result. By the time you finish the chapter, you're very well aware of Eisner's strengths and weaknesses, and he's very much been portrayed in three dimensions, so you get the feeling that you know Eisner better than before you started reading the book.

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□The most detailed part of the book goes all the way back to the days of Walt Disney, and this section was a really satisfying read. Unlike the section on the theme parks, by the time I finished each chapter, I felt the stories told were complete. At times, I could just hear Walt speaking the words on the page. As you read it, you realise how different things were back then. My impression was it felt more like a family than a company. I wanted to find my own personal time machine, and head back to the 1950s and early 1960s to experience that for myself.

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□Something else that comes over very strongly in this book is Marty's family. The photos of them were lovely to see. But to be honest, the photos I loved the most in the various spreads were those taken at work. Some of them were staged for the camera, but some aren't, and the way people were captured while they worked is lovely to see. I admit to staring at them for some time, taking in all the detail.

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□All in all, Dream It! Do It! was a very enjoyable read, and I would thoroughly recommend it to any Disney fan, as it takes you through decades of Disney history from a first-hand perspective. However, don't expect it to go into the amount of detail that I hoped it would. If you go into it with that expectation, then I think you'll avoid my disappointments. I'd love to see another book from Marty Sklar, one focusing on the development of the theme parks alone, as I'm sure there's plenty more to say about the creation of each of them.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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