



# Walt Disney: The Biography

By Neal Gabler

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## Walt Disney: The Biography By Neal Gabler

His classic films illuminated everyone's childhood. The theme parks are on every tourist itinerary. The movie empire is one of Hollywood's biggest. Walt Disney is one of the few men who unquestionably changed our culture. And Neal Gabler is the first author to have had complete access to the Disney Archives, enabling him to write the definitive biography of this remarkable man. Gabler charts Disney's journey from running a fledgling studio with short cartoons featuring Mickey Mouse and Donald Duck, to the reinvention of animation with full-length films like Snow White, Pinocchio, Bambi and Dumbo. Chronicling Walt's profligacy and expansionism, as well as his obsessive perfectionism when working on the briefest of sequences in Fantasia, Gabler describes how it was left to Walt's brother Roy to keep the business solvent. The successes speak for themselves - Disney then moved beyond animation with huge hits like Mary Poppins, and mixed utopianism and merchandising to conceive the world's first modern theme park, Disneyland. In addition to the towering achievements, Gabler shows the dark side of Walt Disney - ruthless towards long-serving staff, cavalier with contracts, neglectful of his family - but also the vulnerability, born of loneliness and ill health, in an admirably balanced portrait.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Mesmerizing . . . there's nothing Mickey Mouse about this terrific biography of Walt Disney (1900-1966), arguably the most influential figure in 20th-century American culture. The research is astonishingly detailed . . . . About this superb biography, one can hardly be temperate. Gabler's only obvious flaw is also his great strength-the sheer amount of detail and material he presents to the reader. But his engaging, unobtrusive prose, his passion for his workaholic subject (whom he regards as both genius and monster), and his steady march through an amazing career all inspire trust and gratitude. Here, then, is the definitive portrait of Walt Disney, the Dream-King."-Michael Dirda, "Washington Post Book World "(December 3, 2006)

"Illuminating . . . engrossing . . . Gabler paints a vivid portrait."-Bruce Handy, "New York Times Book Review "(December 3, 2006) "A thoughtful, incisive and largely straightforward account of Disney's life and career."-Michiko Kakutani, "New York Times "(November 14, 2006) "Masterly . . . Gabler conveys the limits of Disney's personal life with sympathy and objectivity. He gives a very careful analysis of the labor strike that changed the mood of the studio irrevocably as well as a nuanced discussion of Disney's alleged anti-Semitism. By conveying the odds against which Disney struggled, Gabler makes his triumph all the more impressive."-Howard Kissel, "New York Daily News" (November 5, 2006) "Gabler has put forth the kind of protean epic that Theodore Dreiser or John Dos Passos might have written with their all-encompassing vision, if in a less strident gear. It isn't just the immense amount of detail Gabler deploys to give density and shadow to Disney, but the frames he uses to contain such detail that brings this biography perilously close to being its own work of art . . . . His previous books . . . ring with pitch-perfect intuitiveness about popular culture buttressed by scrupulous research and judicious tactics."-Gene Seymour, "Newsday" (November 5, 2006) "[A] tremendously researched and eminently readable biography . . . at once vast and intimate, a skillful act of juggling enormous amounts of fact with equal amounts of rumor, myth, gossip, adulation and hype. Gabler sorts through the contradictions and gives us a coherent image of the man . . . ."--"St. Petersburg Times" (November 5, 2006) "A richly detailed, often poignant, psychological profile of a visionary . . ." --"The Baltimore Sun""Neal Gabler's "Walt Disney: The Triumph of the American Imagination" is a standout . . . [Gabler's] vision of Disney and of Disney's vision of America is far more complex and shaded than most other authors', and far more objective and reliable . . . He is a lively, thoughtful writer, easy to stay with over hundreds of pages . . . one of the most readable, enjoyable, and satisfying books of this year." --"Kansas City Star""A poised and admiring portrait . . . [Gabler offers] rich detail and exhaustive combing of sources." --"Boston Sunday Globe""Delightfully addictive" - John Hartl, "The Seattle Times" (November 3, 2006) "Revealing . . . Fascinating . . . Fans of compelling biographies and of Disney himself will be thrilled to have this in their collection."-"Library Journal" (starred review) "A revelatory portrait of a visionary . . . Disney "examines its subject with a balance of insight, awe and empathy."-Pat H. Broeske, "Bookpage" "Magnificent . . . an exhaustively researched and beautifully written work that is among the finest biographies I have ever read . . . Speaking of classics, this book is one. It should capture every award worth giving."-Cal Thomas, "Gwinnett Daily Post" "Gabler's remarkable biography lends Mickey's creator new dimensions and sets the standard for future biographies." -"Kirkus Reviews" (starred review) "[A] formidable achievement . . . Gabler's restless eye invigorates each page."-"Los Angeles Book Review" "Gabler has boiled down his years of study brilliantly . . . Walt Disney has been resurrected, not by medics, but by an extremely intrepid author."-"Entertainment Weekly" "Masterful . . . his book is not simply a recitation of facts. Rather, it offers clear-headed analysis."-"USA Today" "Every period of Disney's life is depicted in exacting detail . . . [Gabler's] portrait is so engrossing that it's hard to picture the entertainment mogul playing with his toy trains and not imagine him building Disneyland in his head."-"Publisher's Weekly" (starred review) "We've all been waiting for the perfect book on Walt Disney; it has finally arrived and Neal Gabler's done it. Wonderful!"--Ray Bradbury

### About the Author

Neal Gabler writes often for the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times. He is currently a senior fellow at the Norman Lear Centre for the Study of Entertainment and Society at the University of Southern California. His books include *Walt Disney: The Biography*, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood*, *Life, the Movie: How Entertainment Conquered Reality* and a biography of the journalist Walter Winchell. He lives in Amagansett, New York.

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