

Inside the Mouse: Work and Play at Disney World, The Project on Disney

By The Project on Disney

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This entertaining and playful book views Disney World as much more than the site of an ideal family vacation. Blending personal meditations, interviews, photographs, and cultural analysis, *Inside the Mouse* looks at Disney World's architecture and design, its consumer practices, and its use of Disney characters and themes. This book takes the reader on an alternative ride through "the happiest place on earth" while asking "What makes this forty-three-square-mile theme park the quintessential embodiment of American leisure?"
Turning away from the programmed entertainment that Disney presents, the authors take a peek behind the scenes of everyday experience at Disney World. In their consideration of the park as both private corporate enterprise and public urban environment, the authors focus on questions concerning the production and consumption of leisure. Featuring over fifty photographs and interviews with workers that strip "cast members" of their cartoon costumes, this captivating work illustrates the high-pressure dynamics of the typical family vacation as well as a tour of Disney World that looks beyond the controlled facade of themed attractions.
As projects like EuroDisney and the proposed Disney America test the strength of the Disney cultural monolith, *Inside the Mouse* provides a timely assessment of the serious business of supplying pleasure in contemporary U.S. culture. Written for the general reader interested in the many worlds of Disney, this engrossing volume will also find fans among students and scholars of cultural studies.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
What makes Disney tick? This theoretical cultural analysis is an alternative ride through "the happiest place on earth" that asks "What makes this forty-three-square-mile theme park the quintessential embodiment of American leisure?" Considering the park as both private corporate enterprise and public urban environment, the authors focus on questions concerning the production and consumption of leisure. Featuring more than fifty photographs and interviews with workers, this captivating exploration illustrates the high-pressure dynamics of the typical family vacation while taking the reader on a tour that looks well beyond Disney World's controlled facade.

From Publishers Weekly
If you're not an unquestioning Disney fan, this peek into "the happiest place on earth" is alternately illuminating, disturbing and, aptly, even a little goofy. Punctuated by Karen Klugman's photographs (decidedly not the stuff of Kodak Picture Spots), the Project on Disney (Klugman, of the Creative Arts Workshop in New Haven, Conn., and Jane Kuenz, Shelton Waldrep and Susan Willis of Duke's English department) offer anecdotes from their trips to Disney World before riffing on such trendy cultural-studies topics as Foucaultian surveillance, mall culture, tourism, postmodern architecture and the carnivalesque. In the chapter on "Working at the Rat," past and present employees dish Disney. We learn that the percentage of gay and lesbian Disney World workers is high (estimates range from 25% to 75% of the park's work force), that employees sneak in after hours to have sex and that many workers use amphetamines to accrue overtime (surprisingly, Disney does not test the majority of its park employees for drugs). The management structure, day-to-day operations and Disney ethos are detailed, as are the appalling, even stomach-turning, working conditions endured by the "head-wearers," which'll make you pause before posing for a grip-and-grin with Mickey.
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Review

"A very inviting combination of high theory and informal memoir, *Inside the Mouse* reworks some of the groundrules for writing cultural studies. Concentrating on issues of family, work, consumption, pleasure, and representation, it is original, highly thoughtful, and very engaging."—Eric Smoodin, editor of *Disney Discourse: Producing the Magic Kingdom*

Users Review

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Jocelyn Welch:

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