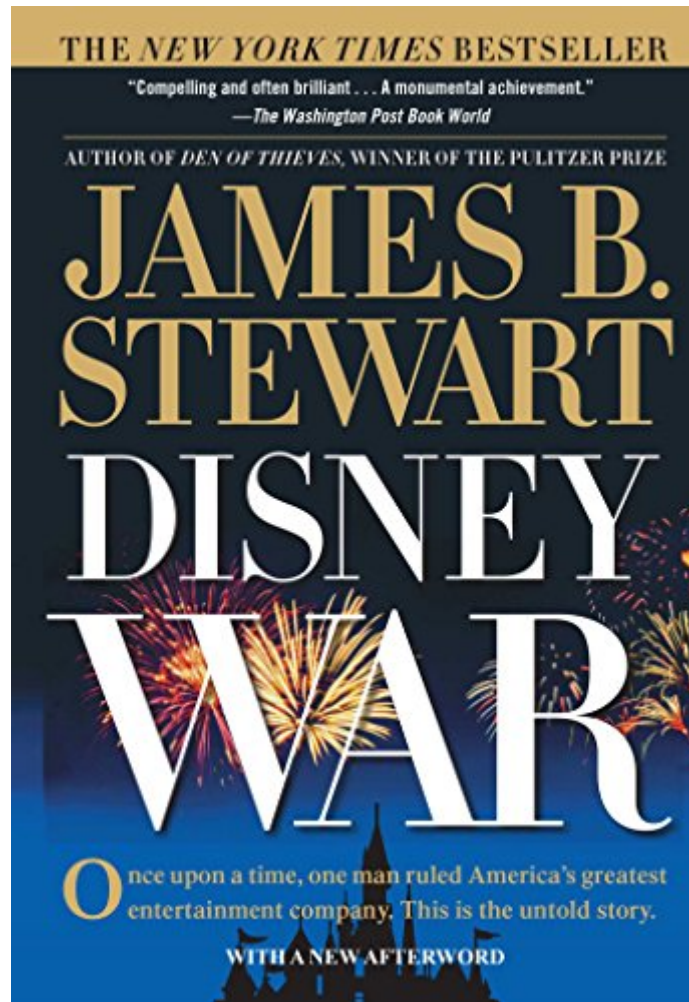


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# DisneyWar



## Synopsis

The dramatic inside story of the downfall of Michael Eisnerâs "Disney Chairman and CEO" and the scandals that drove Americaâs best-known entertainment company to civil war. "When You Wish Upon a Star," "Whistle While You Work," "The Happiest Place on Earth"âthese are lyrics indelibly linked to Disney, one of the most admired and best-known companies in the world. So when Roy Disney, chairman of Walt Disney Animation and nephew of founder Walt Disney, abruptly resigned in November 2003 and declared war on chairman and chief executive Michael Eisner, he sent shock waves through the entertainment industry, corporate boardrooms, theme parks, and living rooms around the world "everywhere Disney does business and its products are cherished. Drawing on unprecedented access to both Eisner and Roy Disney, current and former Disney executives and board members, as well as thousands of pages of never-before-seen letters, memos, transcripts, and other documents, James B. Stewart gets to the bottom of mysteries that have enveloped Disney for years: What really caused the rupture with studio chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg, a man who once regarded Eisner as a father but who became his fiercest rival? How could Eisner have so misjudged Michael Ovitz, a man who was not only "the most powerful man in Hollywood" but also his friend, whom he appointed as Disney president and immediately wanted to fire? What caused the break between Eisner and Pixar chairman Steve Jobs, and why did Pixar abruptly abandon its partnership with Disney? Why did Eisner so mistrust Roy Disney that he assigned Disney company executives to spy on him? How did Eisner control the Disney board for so long, and what really happened in the fateful board meeting in September 2004, when Eisner played his last cards? DisneyWar is an enthralling tale of one of Americaâs most powerful media and entertainment companies, the people who control it, and those trying to overthrow them. It tells a story that "in its sudden twists, vivid, larger-than-life characters, and thrilling climax" might itself have been the subject of a Disney classic "except that itâs all true.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I am a huge James B Stewart fan (loved The Prosecutors and Den of Thieves) and an ex-Disney exec (I was there for five of the years discussed) so I was looking forward to this book. My net feeling is that it was fun, not a bad choice for the beach bag this summer, but (a) it takes a relentlessly negative point of view, even more than I think is justified, (b) there are some weird gaps in the story which I attribute to rushing to out to press (but maybe there's some other reason), and (c) finally and most importantly, it fails to rise above the facts it portrays to make any larger point. What does it tell us about our times, about corporations, about America, about the people discussed...? Unclear. Somehow Stewart didn't get enough perspective on it or insight into it to make the narrative into something more memorable and insightful than a solid recounting of some important events in Disney's recent history. That's too bad. I hope that in Stewart's next book he finds some larger meaning. But, that being said, a lot of the events are nevertheless quite fascinating: It's unbelievable how Eisner burned Ovitz straightaway after hiring him. Just completely hung him out to dry when only weeks before he had been the most powerful man in Hollywood. Brutal and horrible. The details with Katzenberg were awful too. That must have been the worst deal ever made (next to the Ovitz deal). And Eisner's carping about Roth, Iger and Wells behind their backs? He really comes off as a psycho freak you wouldn't want to work for. Some of his problems were legitimate though. Katzenberg was equally psycho at least.

Having grown up in the eighties and remembering first-hand movies like "The Little Mermaid" and "Who Framed Roger Rabbit" and what's more gaining an affinity and admiration for their creators I

plunged into DisneyWar. Having landed a job while in college at The Disney Store just after the Ovitz fiasco I first learned of the darker side to 'Uncle Eisner' that Disney character that played himself on T.V. Sunday nights. Stewart's book is a juicy chunk of details involving Eisner and his (in his mind) bit players including Katzenberg, Ovitz, and Roy Disney. Each of these men in their rise within the Disney corporate structure and the chance at the coveted presidency threaten Eisner. A cycle of corporate double-speak and false promises ensues and with each one cost face and money. Michael Ovitz' record severance package, Katzenberg's infamous 2% clause that Eisner disputed and delayed to the tune of \$280 million. Ovitz' hiring was among scores of conflicts of interests of which include the offering of a seat on the board to a fundraiser for the Gehry-designed Disney Concert Hall. (Eisner wanted her to stop asking the company for money to help pay for it. Eisner himself never personally donated any money for it.) That none of the characters are infallible and essentially it comes down to battle of the millionaire's egos is not surprising. It is daunting to learn of Eisner's perception of power. True, he revitalized a dying brand but since then he has allowed pettiness or just plain lack of innovativeness to control his decision making. How else to explain not acquiring Pixar when he had multiple occasions? To pass on various projects such as 'Lord of the Rings'?

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