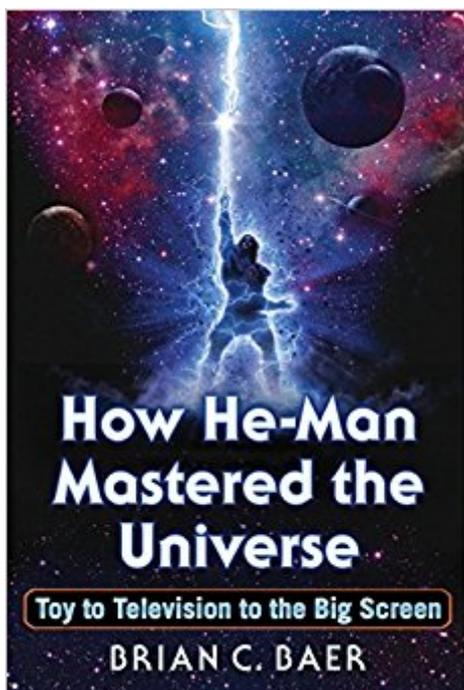


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How He-Man Mastered The Universe: Toy To Television To The Big Screen



Synopsis

Elaborate cinematic universes and sophisticated marketing tie-ins are commonplace in entertainment today. It's easy to forget that the transmedia trend began in 1982 with a barbarian action figure. He-Man and the other characters in Mattel's popular Masters of the Universe toy line quickly found their way into comic books, video games, multiple television series and a Hollywood film. The original animated series (1983-1985) was the first based on an action figure, and the cult classic Masters of the Universe (1987) was the first toy-inspired live-action feature film. But it wasn't easy. He-Man faced adversaries more dangerous than Skeletor: entertainment lawyers, Hollywood executives, even the Reagan administration. The heroes and villains of Eternia did more than shape the childhoods of the toy-buying public—they formed the modern entertainment landscape.

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Customer Reviews

Great book. Fun read

Every child of the 80s remembers He-Man--a toy and cartoon phenomenon that paved the way for dozens to follow. I'll say up front that I'm not a He-Man superfan, but I remember the characters fondly. To that end, the sections of the book I found especially interesting were those where the author discussed the market in general--the opportunities in the toy industry Star Wars inadvertently created, the new one in cartoon features He-Man INTENTIONALLY created and, sadly, the opportunity in film He-Man just missed. Some reviewers apparently expected the focus of the book to be on the good times--the He-Man heyday of cartoons and toys--because that seems to be the route other books on the subject have gone. I applaud the author for focusing on the bad times and speaking to the downfall of the franchise that was He-Man. And She Ra. And Man-at--OH MY GOD I STILL KNOW ALL THE CHARACTERS! Look, bottom line: if you like 80s cartoons, get this. It offers some great insight into what was going on in the toy and cartoon industry at that time. If you like He-Man, also get it--this is like the Encyclopedia He-Mannica for the movie. Heck, just buy for the unabashed author fanboying over He-Man--that comes through clearly and is pretty darn entertaining.

This is indeed a labor of love- it has everything about the ill-fated 1987 He-Man movie. It is well researched and cited. I learned about the production and how bad Cannon Films was. The author summarized the Masters of the Universe toys, cartoons, and comic books and created a chronological narrative. This book is underrated compared to the Dark Horse hardcovers, forum chatter, and podcast mentions. The bulk of the book is about the movie. Brian tends to stay factual and not insert his opinion, except that he really loves this movie and 1980s nostalgia. I finished the book quickly- the 224 page count is padded due to the citations and bibliography. This is not a complete in-depth history of MOTU, although he does cover all the franchises and eras.

Brian C. Baer focused his attention on the history of one of our childhood icons and cultural phenomenon in his book How He-Man Mastered the Universe. His book attempts to bring the entire story of the rise and transcendence of the Masters of the Universe franchise in their several forms from toys, TV, and film. As a lifelong fan of He-Man and She-Ra, I began reading this book with several questions and concerns. The casual reader might pick up this book and not question much of the material presented, but there is no casual fan here. I wanted to know if Mr. Baer was going to bring any new insights and information that the fans would love to read about. Was this book going to be the definitive history of Masters of the Universe? The author had to know he was going to face a hardcore group of dedicated fans and one is going to give you a straight review of his book. I give

the author praise for starting his book preface with the title of Man-E-Prefaces; he gets a thumb up for including one of the toy line's favorite characters. Baer explains where his love of Masters of the Universe originated. His story is pretty similar to our stories. In the first few pages of his book, I quickly realize that Baer is one of us:

"He-Fans and She-Ravers" as a certain podcast likes to call us. The preface then goes on to give us some examples of what he is going to be covering and pointing out the influences that eventually led to the creation of a cultural icon and how we now live in a current climate of fandom. In his introduction, Baer has a great line, "A toy isn't enough anymore." One of the best and most concise sentences explaining the current state of fandom. He alludes to how franchises build financial empires like Harry Potter and Fifty Shades of Grey(?). It's not just about a single product, but attached media, clothing, collectibles, and fan base dedication. His introduction is really an explanation of how cultural icons and fan bases form, but I found it really lacking when he doesn't acknowledge the impact Star Wars made on fandom. He does bring up Star Wars in sporadic passages throughout the book, but he fails to truly give the epic the proper credit. I am a little surprised how he glossed over the subject and yet, he brought up Fifty Shades of Grey again. In his first chapter, he focuses on the creation of Masters of the Universe. The secret origin of the toy line is a fascinating tale onto itself that has already been the focus of a few other books and documentaries that have yet to be widely released. The author does give a good basic coverage of the long battle between Roger Sweet and Mark Taylor on who created He-Man and the Masters of the Universe. If you are not familiar with this epic battle, the book does give an understanding on the very confusing controversy. The creation of the toy line itself has been covered by other books and some more recent from Dark Horse Publishing. He does conclude with the interesting side note of the lawsuit between Mattel and the Conan Properties, Inc (CPI) which has a note-worthy footnote in history of the toy line. I found it completely humorous that the author failed to include the famous mystery of Wun-Dar the brown-haired He-Man figure. The judgement and lawsuit may be the reason for Mattel's denial of the figure's existence. In the middle of the first chapter, he goes on with information on the minicomics and the authors works. In itself, this is vital information in the history of Masters of the Universe. Baer unnecessarily indulges himself by describing his favorite minicomics at length. The history and events that surrounded the minicomics and toys would have sufficed. Baer jumps to the second chapter with the history of Filmation and the much beloved Lou Scheimer and Hal Sutherland. The history of Filmation needed to be explained, but Baer doesn't

bring any new information. Again, Filmation has been the subject of a few books, including a few recent ones. Baer then makes some factual errors during his passage on Filmation. A glaring one is when he cites that the Star Trek franchise only received one Emmy from one of their Filmation episodes. Star Trek: The Next Generation, Deep Space Nine, Star Trek: Voyager, and Star Trek: Enterprise have all won numerous Emmy awards and received several nominations. The author seems to get distracted in telling anecdotes before he gets back into the subject of his own book. The second chapter eventually goes on to the creation of He-Man and the Masters of the Universe animated series. Baer jumps in and does include insight and interesting information that every fan of the Filmation series should know. The author does fine work in explaining the struggle Filmation had with producing an inherently violent universe and made it palpable to young viewers with moral lessons and well-written stories (for the most part). The third and next few chapters leads to the creation of the Masters of the Universe movie and the leading fallout from its financial failure. This is where Baer begins to really shine in his book. The subject of the film has been mired in tales of disappointment, lies, and failure. The author sorts out the stories with information from the actors, crew, and director. He does wander away from the subject material when he begins on the subject of the infamous producers and the business practices of Cannon Films. Their history does need to be covered, but Baer seems to divulge himself again. Baer really hits his stride when he writes about the pre-production work and onset filming. He provides the details and information that every fan should know. He provides the reader with a lot of interesting stories on the how the film was made among the adversity of a crumbling studio. The author spends the next few chapters of his book onto the matter of the Masters of the Universe movie. I don't know if he needs to retell the entire movie like how he did in chapter five, but he does give some thoughtful analysis of certain scenes and character portrayals. What the reader will find interesting is what was not put on film. The author provided a lot of great information from the director and others involved about what they originally intended and some interesting plot points that were changed. Baer also acknowledges that the film could have been something else if things were different. He spends the next few chapters on the fallout of the film and decline of the toy line. He continues with the great details and insider information until he jumps to the next stage of He-Man's history. Baer begins to falter in his descriptions of the later chapters. He does go into the next stage with The New Adventures of He-Man. He gives a good explanation on why Mattel decided to go a different direction. The reader can tell the author wasn't that interested in the animated series because he didn't indulge in specific episodes. There were a few episodes worth remarking, emphasis on few. The author only goes into the making of the series and some of

the style changes. Baer then goes into proposed ideas that never happened. Readers will be fascinated by what directions Masters of the Universe could have gone, but didn't. The author appeared to be running out of steam at this point, but so did the toy line. Baer moves on about how Masters of the Universe and generally all the 1980s pop culture moved into its own form of rejuvenation in the new millennium. Again, he skims before the 2002 era of Masters of the Universe and the time when there was essentially nothing. This was the time that Baer needed to be writing about what kept Masters of the Universe going, the fans. This was the time that fans were moving to the world-wide web and found each other on e-mail groups and eventually the He-Man.org. He doesn't acknowledge this part of the He-Man history. There was essentially a lot of individuals and groups that needed to be acknowledged, but the author just skips it all. Baer's descriptions become static and reduces himself to just giving facts, while looking back at the earlier 80s incarnation with fondness. The 2002 era had an impact on the current status of the toy line that the author just didn't seem to appreciate. Mike Young Productions did produce some ground-breaking episodes that Baer just didn't indulge like how he did with Filmation. The Power of Grayskull episode broke ground and is often regarded as one of the greatest episodes in the He-Man mythos, but Baer just ignores it. At this point in 2002, toy designers The Four Horsemen are barely mentioned, but their impact on the toy line and modern interpretations of the characters feel like they were under appreciated. Again, Baer just seems to ignore the infamous collapse of the 2002 line or the struggle of getting the last waves of the toy line. In the end, Baer barely acknowledges the Masters of the Universe Classics toy line and modern comics. He mistakenly implies that all the classic figures came with modern minicomics. As a controversial individual, Scott Nietlich did have a role worth mentioning in resurrecting Masters of the Universe toy line and history. The book fails to even mention him or his accomplishments. Baer focuses more on modern Transformers film and how movies based on toys have become more mainstream than when the Masters of the Universe was released in 1987. The classics line has achieved more than what the original toy line ever did. The line created figures that were never made in the original. For example, the create-a-figure contest winner from the 1980s, The Fearless Photog, was finally made into plastic form. As the DC comics were released, again, Baer just gives them some acknowledgement. He doesn't go into greater detail than what he did in the beginning with the 1980s toy versions and Filmation. Baer barely achieves his goal by giving us a complete history of the Masters of the Universe. He provides insight and great details that many nostalgic fans might not be aware. At best, it serves as supplemental material to previously and future publications and documentaries.

Because of his lack of attention in the later years, Baer did not write the definitive book on the history of Masters of the Universe. The author indulges with his favorite material too much, but just seems to skim over other parts. He completely ignores the live show Universal Studios once held and even the touring stage show with Songster. The book does feel incomplete and more attention should have been given over to the current material. We are in a second resurgence of the toy line with graphic novels, high-end action figures, and statues, but the author feels like it is not. He continues about pop culture and hopes to see the return of He-Man in film and TV. (As do we all.) He should have collaborated with others to complete sections he fell short on. The book has potential and it is worth a reading for the fan and nostalgia toy fans, but I do hope the author will eventually return and supplement his material.

Really enjoyed this one! It brought back a ton of childhood memories and is well-written and interesting. In fact, I like it so much that I'm giving my copy to a friend and will buy myself a replacement. :)

I'm a mild He-Man fan, but this book opened up the sheer amount of credit the franchise deserves for giving us the kind of movie universes we currently have. There would be no Marvel Cinematic Universe if He-Man didn't pave the way for the franchise model. I liked that the book wasn't solely about the history of He-Man, but the overall effect it had on the business.

Very bare bones release. Concentrates mostly on the movie of the Masters of the Universe. By the way I see now why there are no previews on Amazon and online in general. How can potential readers buy a book blindly?!

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