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Eric Clark

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Eric Clark : THE REAL TOY STORY: INSIDE THE RUTHLESS BATTLE FOR BRITAIN'S YOUNGEST CONSUMERS before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised THE REAL TOY STORY: INSIDE THE RUTHLESS BATTLE FOR BRITAIN'S YOUNGEST CONSUMERS:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Study of topic continuesBy M. RobinosI recently purchased, read

and enjoyed a companion book, *Toy Wars* from the late 90s. This book picked the ball up and kept my research on this topic updated to about 2009. Not too shabby. Very enjoyable read. Recommended. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Great review of the toy industry - But this is only the tip of the iceberg of the "real story" By C McAEric Clark offers a robust review of the American Toy Industry. With such a large industry it is no surprise that there are limitations (little to no mention of the worldwide toy industry, limited historical information in favor of 1990+) but things flow well and avoid getting overly detailed in any one area. The anecdotes in each chapter help to provide the fun expected of a book on play things while Clark still provides plenty of insight into the business challenges, ethics, and financial issues of the industry. Published in 2007, the anecdotes are starting to be a bit dated and major changes have happened in the industry (Lego exploded between 2007-2014, Web presence has created pressure for the big box retailers) but most of the workings of product development, inventors, and companies still follow many of the same practices outlined in the book. Other books for those interested *Toy Monster: The Story of Mattel* <http://www..com/Toy-Monster-The-World-Mattel/dp/0470548584> *Toyland* a similar expose written in the 1990's (interesting to contrast/compare what is the same and different between the two) http://www..com/dp/0809245205/ref=pdp_new_dp_review 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. solid journalistic treatment of the evolving toy industry, but not deep By Robert J. Crawford This is a pretty good snapshot of the present toy industry. It is a quick read, very well written, and well researched, but it does not probe enough for me. Clark writes that the toy industry has evolved from a cottage industry (to the 1950s) into the realm of mega-corporations. Once toys and games were supposed to be good play experiences that had time to enter the popular mind, he says, but now they have become fashion conscious, short-lived, and reliant on gimmicks such as tying them to film characters. They are now less about play than acquisition and even status, depend on sexual images and violence, etc. Rather than a calling to please kids, he concludes, it is about cold cash and power. Finally, because they are manufactured in China, they also take advantage of sweat shops and hence are inherently immoral. To a degree, this picture is true. The toy industry has consolidated into a few giant publicly traded companies (Mattel and Hasbro on top). Because kids have more choice (with video games, PCs, etc.), the market is shrinking and hence has become brutally competitive. While the companies seek innovation, which is risky, they also want proven success, its opposite. Indeed, as Clark writes, the biggest hit toys break rules rather than obey them. The market has come to resemble the fashion industry, in that fads explode into popularity and then disappear quickly, but because of the need to create costly molds and marketing campaigns, are more risky in terms of investment. In addition, the power of retailers has increased pressures: they want cheaper toys (hence the reliance on Chinese manufacturers), but also guarantees they will sell - if they don't, losses can be catastrophic. Finally, the need to market toys as part of a life-style package or within a narrative (e.g. Star Wars figurines) is also costly. These trends work against the smaller producers, those whom the author believes are more innovative. Where I differ with the author is in his inferences and ultimately where some of his reasoning leads. Sure, there are plenty of gimmicky toys and stupid ads - any parent knows this. What I wonder about is if this is so bad, particularly in light of the fact that there are other companies that still produce very high quality play experiences - look at LEGO: after recovering from a bad period, it now occupies the top niche in imaginative toys and is in fact doing better than its biggest competitors during the 2009 recession. I also don't see what is so bad about kids getting into certain fashionable toys - it seems to me to be the worry of overly concerned baby-boomer parents. Is it worse than when I was a kid in the 1960s? Seems to me there was plenty of junk back then. One of the things Clark particularly laments is the development of narratives connected with toys as a marketing tool. Rather than free play, he says, kids follow a story. This is an interesting phenomenon, but again I think he over-generalizes and judges too glibly. I see the stories as a starting point, but my kids don't slavishly follow them - they use the characters, but make up their own stories, missing characters from separate films. Does that damage their imaginations? There have always been mythologies, these are just new characters. Moreover, with the PC connection, they are also developing skills: to hack his Nintendo DS, my son (at 7) searched for and found cheat codes on the internet, and then discovered that the bugs that codes created would block it. It was an interesting lesson. While Clark covers some of this new area, it is more with vague disapproval and not systematic. Finally, Clark badly undercovers the electronics game industry. He mentions it, says it is bad from young kids, and that is about all he says. I wanted more than that and will have to seek it elsewhere. In an area that I have some experience in as a reporter, Clark also lambasts the globalization of production, in particular in China. To do so, he trots out all of the old arguments about the inhuman treatment of Chinese laborers. While I do not mean to say that abuses don't exist, I think that the picture requires far more nuance beyond a simple condemnation as you find in the book. Some companies are more conscientious than others in this arena, as I have witnessed in the apparel industry, and they try to respond to consumer criticism - if they fail, activists have every right to beat the snot out of them and damage their brands. All power to them, if you ask me! But Clark only presents only the down side and assumes corporate efforts are window dressing. It shades into an ideological critique of global capitalism that lacks both accuracy and subtlety. All these critiques notwithstanding, this book is a good intro to some very complex issues. Recommended. It gets you to think, which means the book is a success.

The American toy business is massive, world dominating, cutthroat, exciting, and increasingly willing to sacrifice our kids in its frantic rush for profit. And yet, for all its rapaciousness, the industry is in the business of delighting and fascinating our children. Toys are one of the most emotive subjects in the world. We all remember our own toys; we care desperately about those we choose for our kids, knowing these objects help shape children's lives. They are also a constantly newsworthy item: every Christmas, which toys are hot -- and the scramble by parents to grab them before the stores are empty -- is front-page and TV bulletin news. *The Real Toy Story* tells the tales of these toys and of the vast, world-dominating \$22 billion American industry that creates them. The rewards for success are enormous: a top toy can earn billions -- H. Ty Warner shot into Forbes's World's Richest People list with his creation of Beanie Babies. The price of failure is just as huge -- the battlefield is littered with the corpses of once-successful toy companies whose multimillion-dollar gambles did not pay off. It is a world of contrasts. *The Real Toy Story* looks at both sides: at Slinky, Elmo, Barbie, Transformers, and their creators, but also at the dark side of an industry that leads the way in cold-blooded marketing targeted at children. Parents will want to learn about how this seemingly benign industry exploits, sometimes surreptitiously, the many new media: cable television, the internet, CD-ROMs, sometimes even invading the playgrounds to peddle their wares to unsuspecting young people. Perhaps more disturbingly, this hard-hitting book examines the vast gap between the cuddly image of toys and how almost all toys destined for America are actually produced in China under sweatshop conditions. Today the toy industry is in the midst of rapid change. Tapping into the concern millions of adults have about the toys they choose for the children in their lives, this riveting expos is essential reading for everyone who cares about kids.

From Publishers Weekly London journalist Clark begins by invoking the magic of playtime, but the bulk of the book is a more prosaic snapshot of today's toy industry a straightforward look at struggles and obstacles ranging from store closings and kids' ever-shorter attention spans to the dominance of Wal-Mart and China. Though the book is far from comprehensive Clark scarcely mentions computer and video games and pretty much ignores the world outside the U.S. and England almost any reader will find delight in his lively anecdotes, quotes and life stories from inventors, shop owners and toy-company executives. The subtitle's hint of darkness is here, too: Clark notes the "contrast between the industry's hard, often pitiless pragmatism and the cozy, lovable image of what it's selling." He sets the brutal closing chapter, "Santa's Sweatshop," in China's Pearl River Delta, the "workshop of the world." But this is no Fast Food Nation style polemic intended to rouse readers to action; when the author's prose edges into commentary, he's more wistful than outraged. Too many of today's toys, he laments, "preach sex and violence" and are too closely linked to TV and film spinoffs. Anyone raised on Erector sets and Legos will relate. (Jan.) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "A fascinating expos of the \$20 billion-a-year toy industry, in which...executives jockey for market share with alarming bloodthirstiness." -- Atlantic Monthly About the Author Eric Clark, acclaimed investigative journalist formerly with the London Observer and the Guardian (Manchester), now specializes in marketing and advertising, on which he writes and lectures worldwide. *The Want Makers*, his major study of the advertising industry, was published in twenty countries. His nine other books include five novels. Father of three (and custodian of countless toys over the years), he lives in London with his wife, the author Marcelle Bernstein.