



The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company

By David A. Price



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A Wall Street Journal Best Book of the Year

The Pixar Touch is a lively chronicle of Pixar Animation Studios' history and evolution, and the “fraternity of geeks” who shaped it. With the help of animating genius John Lasseter and visionary businessman Steve Jobs, Pixar has become the gold standard of animated filmmaking, beginning with a short special effects shot made at Lucasfilm in 1982 all the way up through the landmark films *Toy Story*, *Finding Nemo*, *Wall-E*, and others. David A. Price goes behind the scenes of the corporate feuds between Lasseter and his former champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg, as well as between Jobs and Michael Eisner. And finally he explores Pixar's complex relationship with the Walt Disney Company as it transformed itself into the \$7.4 billion jewel in the Disney crown.

With an Updated Epilogue

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The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company By David A. Price Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Product Description

The roller-coaster rags-to-riches story behind the phenomenal success of Pixar Animation Studios: the first in-depth look at the company that forever changed the film industry and the "fraternity of geeks" who shaped it.

The Pixar Touch is a story of technical innovation that revolutionized animation, transforming hand-drawn cel animation to computer-generated 3-D graphics. It's a triumphant business story of a company that began with a dream, remained true to the ideals of its founders—antibureaucratic and artist driven—and ended up a multibillion-dollar success.

We meet Pixar's technical genius and founding CEO, Ed Catmull, who dreamed of becoming an animator, inspired by Disney's *Peter Pan* and *Pinocchio*, realized he would never be good enough, and instead enrolled in the then new field of computer science at the University of Utah. It was Catmull who founded the computer graphics lab at the New York Institute of Technology and who wound up at Lucasfilm during the first *Star Wars* trilogy, running the computer graphics department, and found a patron in Steve Jobs, just ousted from Apple Computer, who bought Pixar for five million dollars. Catmull went on to win four Academy Awards for his technical feats and helped to create some of the key computer-generated imagery software that animators rely on today.

Price also writes about John Lasseter, who catapulted himself from unemployed animator to one of the most powerful figures in American filmmaking; animation was the only thing he ever wanted to do (he was inspired by Disney's *The Sword in the Stone*), and Price's book shows how Lasseter transformed computer animation from a novelty into an art form. The author writes as well about Steve Jobs, as volatile a figure as a Shakespearean monarch . . .

Based on interviews with dozens of insiders, *The Pixar Touch* examines the early wildcat years when computer animation was thought of as the lunatic fringe of the medium.

We see the studio at work today; how its writers, directors, and animators make their astonishing, and astonishingly popular, films.

The book also delves into Pixar's corporate feuds: between Lasseter and his former champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg (*A Bug's Life* vs. *Antz*), and between Jobs and Michael Eisner. And finally it explores Pixar's complex relationship with the Walt Disney Company as it transformed itself from a Disney satellite into the \$7.4 billion jewel in the Disney crown.

Little-Known Facts from *The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company* by David Price



- Pixar, not Apple, made Steve Jobs a billionaire. Jobs bought Pixar in 1986 from Lucasfilm for \$5 million. In 1995, the week after the release of *Toy Story*, Pixar went public and Jobs's stock was worth \$1.1 billion.
- Ed Catmull, Pixar's co-founder, dreamed as a youth of becoming an animator, but decided in high school that he couldn't draw well enough. Instead, he became an early visionary of computer animation as a graduate student in the 1970's. "Computer animation was sort of on the lunatic fringe at that time," remembered Fred Parke, a fellow Ph.D. student in Catmull's class at the University of Utah.
- When John Lasseter joined Pixar—which was then the computer graphics department of George Lucas's Lucasfilm—he had just been fired from his dream job as an animator at Disney. He became the first person to apply classic Disney character animation principles to computer animation.

• Before it became an animation studio, Pixar went through years of struggle and multi-million-dollar losses. It started as a computer company and John Lasseter's short films, such as *Luxo Jr.* and *Tin Toy*, were promotional films to help sell the company's computers.

• Pixar was almost bought by...Microsoft? Yep: Jobs remained worried about the company's finances even after Pixar made a deal with the Walt Disney Co. in 1991 to produce *Toy Story*, Pixar's first feature film. *The Pixar Touch* details the effort to sell Pixar to Bill Gates's company while *Toy Story* was in production.

• When writing *Toy Story*, to find inspiration for the relationship between Buzz and Woody, Lasseter and his story department screened classic "buddy" movies, including *48 Hrs.*, *The Defiant Ones*, *Midnight Run*, and *Thelma & Louise*.

• John Lasseter has instilled an intense commitment to research in the studio's creative staff. To prepare for the scene in *Finding Nemo* in which the fish characters Marlin and Dory become trapped in a whale, two members of the art department climbed inside a dead gray whale that had been stranded north of Marin, California.

• To learn how to make a realistic French kitchen, the producer and first director of *Ratatouille* worked as apprentices at an elite French restaurant in the Napa Valley.

• Pixar deliberately avoided making the humans in *The Incredibles* look too realistic. They knew that as animated human characters became too close to lifelike, audiences would actually perceive them as repulsive. The phenomenon, known as the "uncanny valley," had been predicted by a Japanese robotics researcher as early as 1970. Thus, the details of human skin, such as pores and hair follicles, were left out of *The Incredibles'* characters in favor of a more cartoonlike appearance.

• The signature of most Pixar feature films is characters who appeal to children (toys, fish, monsters...), but who have adult-like personalities and are dealing with adult-like problems.

• Prior to the acquisition of Pixar by Disney in 2006, Lasseter loathed the idea of Disney making sequels to Pixar films without Pixar's involvement—as Disney's contract with Pixar allowed it to do. "These were the people that put out *Cinderella II*," Lasseter remarked.

- Pixar is more than an animation studio. Pixar's innovations in computer graphics technology pervade movies today. Special-effects houses like Industrial Light & Magic (*Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*, *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe*, *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix*) use Pixar's software to create out-of-this-world places and characters.

(Photo © Simon Bruty)

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Pixar animation studios, the company behind such blockbuster movies as *Toy Story*, *A Bug's Life*, *Monsters Inc.*, and *Finding Nemo*, started in the late 1970s as a project in a garage on Long Island by a soft-spoken former missionary named Ed Catmull. The computer-graphics researcher possessed the tenacity to follow through on the painstaking process of making 3-D computer characters come to life on the screen; he accidentally fell into the role of business leader when his creations took the world by storm. Price, author of *Love and Hate in Jamestown* (2003), writes for the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, among others. He charts the course of Pixar from obsession to its relationship with LucasFilm, the purchase by Apple Computer's Steve Jobs, and finally the Disney buyout. It's an eye-opening account that pulls back the curtain to reveal the process of evolution, the labor of love, and all the business dealings behind the magic of 3-D animation. --David Siegfried

Review

"Thumbs-up. . . . Full of fascinating characters, all struggling-in classic Pixar film style-to overcome seemingly impossible odds."

—*BusinessWeek*

"You don't have to belong to the computer-animation generation to enjoy **The Pixar Touch**. . . . An entertaining look at digital derring-do."

—*The Dallas Morning News*

"Price, a tough, unsentimental reporter, ferrets out lots of backstage drama from fresh sources, weaving a commendably unvarnished history."

—*Entertainment Weekly*

"Unprecedented detail about the notoriously press-shy company's workings, a story that abounds with lessons for business people and creative artists alike."

—*The Wall Street Journal*

"Inspiring.... Price is a smart reporter and a solid writer. He deftly makes computer arcana palatable, even interesting."

—*The New York Times Book Review*

"It's quite a story, and David Price has finally got it right, it's details and the players. This is the definitive history of Pixar."

—Alvy Ray Smith, co-founder of Pixar

"[A] brisk history of an entertainment juggernaut that is also the history of computer animation...a heck of a yarn, full of vivid characters, reversals of fortune and stubborn determination: Pixar should make a movie out of it."

—*Kirkus Reviews* (starred)

"A tale of our times, and David Price tells it with page-turning drama, total veracity, and wonderful wit."

—Mark Cotta Vaz, author, of *The Art of Finding Nemo*, *The Art of The Incredibles* and *Living Dangerously: The Adventures of Merian C. Cooper, Creator of King Kong*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mildred Yen:

In this 21st century, people become competitive in every way. By being competitive at this point, people have to do something to make themselves survive, being in the middle of the crowded place and notice by surrounding. One thing that sometimes many people have underestimated the item for a while is reading. Yes, by reading a book your ability to survive increases then having a chance to endure than others is high. To suit your needs who want to start reading any book, we give you this particular *The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company* book as a basic and daily reading guide. Why, because this book is more than just a book.

Steven Simon:

Precisely why? Because this *The Pixar Touch: The Making of a Company* is an extraordinary book that the inside of the publication is waiting for you to snap that but later it will surprise you with the secret idea inside. Reading this book close to it was a fantastic author who also wrote the book in such a wonderful way that makes the content on the inside easier to understand, entertaining technique but still conveys the meaning fully. So, it is good for you because of not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of positive aspects than other books have got such as help improving your expertise and your critical thinking approach. So, still want to hesitate having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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