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Mr Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream

Steven Watts
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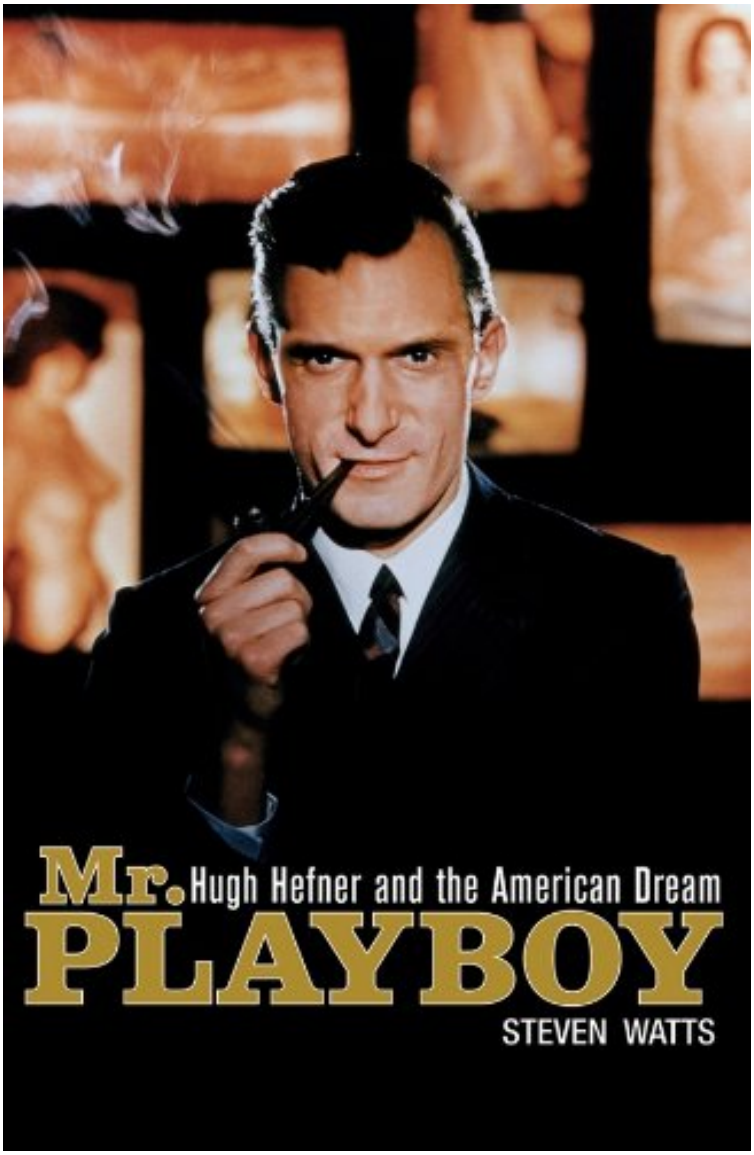

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Steven Watts : Mr Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mr Playboy: Hugh Hefner and the American Dream:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Deep and academic look at Playboy universe and Mr HefnerBy father dickAlmost an academic book about Playboy magazine and its editor. You fullly understand the personality of Hugh Hefner.Full of detailed info. With interesting essays about what suposed Playboy in western culture.Not a sensationalistic effort, just an in deep work on Playboy universe.Don't expect morbid stories about playmates running naked in the Playboy manor.A serious and excellent work by Mr Watts.2 of 2 people found the following review

helpful. Some pretty personal and shocking revelations about Hefner's sexual proclivitiesBy eric karell.Fairly comprehensive and balanced view of Mr. Hefner and his empire. Some pretty personal and shocking revelations about Hefner's sexual proclivities, indeed. The only are the where the book falls short is ignoring some some major figures in Playboy Enterprises such as Tom Staebler, the famous art director, and not mentioning the most popular and influential Playmate of the seventies, Claudia Jennings. I also think Mr. Watts fails to come right and say what Mr. Hefner was for much of his life- a more refined, intelligent combination of sugar daddy and pimp. All in all , however, a must read for anyone interested in this purely American Icon and indelible cultural stain.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. SnoreBy ChelstylesSo boring to listen to

The real Hugh Hefner-the extraordinary inside story of an American icon "Riveting... Watts packs in plenty of gasp-inducing passages."-Newark Star Ledger "Like it or not, Hugh Hefner has affected all of us, so I treasured learning about how and why in the sober biography."-Chicago Sun Times "This is a fun book. How could it not be? Watts aims to give a full account of the man, his magazine and their place in social history. Playboy is no longer the cultural force it used to be, but it made a stamp on society."-Associated Press "In Steven Watts' exhaustive, illuminating biography Mr. Playboy, Hefner's ideal for living -- marked by his allegiances to Tarzan, Freud, Pepsi-Cola and jazz -- proves to be a kind of gloss on the Protestant work ethic."-Los Angeles TimesGorgeous young women in revealing poses; extravagant mansion parties packed with celebrities; a hot-tub grotto, elegant smoking jackets, and round rotating beds; the hedonistic pursuit of uninhibited sex. Put these images together and a single name springs to mind-Hugh Hefner. From his spectacular launch of Playboy magazine and the dizzying expansion of his leisure empire to his recent television hit The Girls Next Door, the publisher has attracted public attention and controversy for decades. But how did a man who is at once socially astute and morally unconventional, part Bill Gates and part Casanova, also evolve into a figure at the forefront of cultural change?In Mr. Playboy, historian and biographer Steven Watts argues that, in the process of becoming fabulously wealthy and famous, Hefner has profoundly altered American life and values. Granted unprecedented access to the man and his enterprise, Watts traces Hef's life and career from his midwestern, Methodist upbringing and the first publication of Playboy in 1953 through the turbulent sixties, self-indulgent seventies, reactionary eighties, and traditionalist nineties, up to the present. He reveals that Hefner, from the beginning, believed he could overturn social norms and take America with him.This fascinating portrait illustrates four ways in which Hefner and Playboy stood at the center of several cultural upheavals that remade the postwar United States. The publisher played a crucial role in the sexual revolution that upended traditional notions of behavior and expectation regarding sex. He emerged as one of the most influential advocates of a rapidly developing consumer culture, flooding Playboy readers with images of material abundance and a leisurely lifestyle. He proved instrumental-with his influential magazine, syndicated television shows, fashionable nightclubs, swanky resorts, and movie and musical projects-in making popular culture into a dominant force in many people's lives. Ironically, Hefner also became a controversial force in the movement for women's rights. Although advocating women's sexual freedom and their liberation from traditional family constraints, the publisher became a whipping boy for feminists who viewed him as a prophet for a new kind of male domination.Throughout, Watts offers singular insights into the real man behind the flamboyant public persona. He shows Hefner's personal dichotomies-the pleasure seeker and the workaholic, the consort of countless Playmates and the genuine romantic, the family man and the Gatsby-like host of lavish parties at his Chicago and Los Angeles mansions who enjoys well-publicized affairs with numerous Playmates, the fan of life's simple pleasures who hobnobs with the Hollywood elite.Punctuated throughout with descriptions and anecdotes of life at the Playboy Mansions, Mr. Playboy tells the compelling and uniquely American story of how one person with a provocative idea, a finger on the pulse of popular opinion, and a passion for his work altered the course of modern history. Spans from Hefner's childhood to the launch of Playboy magazine and the expansion of the Playboy empire to the present Puts Hefner's life and work into the cultural context of...

.com Exclusive: 10 Things You Didn't Know About Hugh Hefner and the Playboy Mansion 1. He has been keeping an exhaustive ldquo;scrapbookrdquo; of his life since adolescence, which now consists of over 1800 volumes and takes up much of the third floor of the Mansion. 2. His favorite weekly event is Mondayrsquo;s ldquo;Manly Night,rdquo; a gathering of longstanding male friends for an evening devoted to eating, trading friendly insults and stories, and watching old films. 3. Hefner became obsessed with backgammon in the 1970s, playing in tournaments at the Mansion that attracted world-class players and lasted for hours, sometimes days. 4. He was deeply traumatized during his college days when his fianceacute; confessed that she was involved in a sexual affair. 5. He nearly choked to death in the late 1970s after ingesting a small sex toy during a raucous lovemaking session with his girlfriend. She dislodged it with the Heimlich maneuver. 6. Hefner was a strong backer of the civil rights movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, contributing money and booking African American entertainers for his television show and the Playboy Clubs. 7. The Mansion library still prominently displays a large ceramic bust of Barbi Benton, Hefnerrsquo;s girlfriend from the late 1960s and early 1970s. 8. The Mansion staff is inundated with requests for invitations to Hefnerrsquo;s big parties. Some are from celebrities who want to bring their friends, and many are from young women who send photos

of themselves in skimpy clothing and provocative poses. Nearly all are turned down. 9. Every bathroom at the Mansion is equipped with a bottle of baby oil, bottle of aspirin, and Jergens cherry-almond skin lotion. During big parties, many of them also have bowls filled with condoms. 10. Hefner has all of his meals brought to him in his bedroom suite at the Mansion. Even when the Mansion is filled with dozens of guests enjoying an elegant buffet meal for movie nights on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, he eats in his room before joining the crowd. From Publishers WeeklyWatts, a history professor turned biographer, analyzes the life and times of Hugh Hefner in this fascinating biography. Relating Hef's departure from Esquire magazine and subsequent role as editor-in-chief of Playboy, the story offers readers new insights into the life of one of the most renowned entrepreneurs of the 20th century. Ray Porter gives a rousing, commanding reading that exercises his captivating voice. His strong voice contains a certain journalistic integrity that holds the listener's attention, and his unbiased tone allows listeners to draw their own conclusions about Hefner. A Wiley hardcover (s, July 28). Copyright copy; Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. * Just past the round rotating bed, beyond the hot-tub grotto but before the pajama-draped walk-in, lies hellip; what? If wersquo;re to believe this book, itrsquo;s the Truth about Hugh Hefnermdash;and, by proxy, about American life since the 1950s. Of course, the larger legacy of Playboy has been considered long and well (in these pages a couple of years ago, and elsewhere). But Watts, a history professor prone to interpreting American Dreamers (he has written stellar works on Henry Ford and Walt Disney), is wise to draw a narrow bead on Hef qua Hef, dividing his life into tidy quadrants of postwar influence and iconography: as sexual liberator, avatar of consumerism, pop-culture purveyor, lightning rod for feminist ire. He also succeeds in identifying and exploring raging personal paradoxesmdash;hedonist and workaholic, libertine and romantic, provocateur and traditionalistmdash;while resisting the urge to attempt reconciliation. The Horatio-Alger-with-a-libido case he makesmdash;where else but in America could a repressed midwestern boy rise, and fall into so many sacks, while creating and brand-managing a multimedia empire?mdash;is only intermittently convincing. Still, therersquo;s plenty to enjoy here, from the factual wealth (Watts was granted access to the vast Playboy vaults and draws heavily on his subjectrsquo;s compulsively kept scrapbook collection) to the photographs aplenty (some offer revelatory glimpses; others give off the whiff of stale cheesecake) to the fundamental pleasures of watching a larger-than-life figure scuttle social norms and satisfy his own lavish urges. (The Atlantic, March 2009)""Riveting... Watts packs in plenty of gasp-inducing passages."" (Newark Star Ledger)""Like it or not, Hugh Hefner has affected all of us, so I treasured learning about how and why in the sober biography."" (Chicago Sun Times)""This is a fun book. How could it not be? Watts aims to give a full account of the man, his magazine and their place in social history. Playboy is no longer the cultural force it used to be, but it made a stamp on society."" (Associated Press)""In Steven Watts' exhaustive, illuminating biography Mr. Playboy, Hefner's ideal for living -- marked by his allegiances to Tarzan, Freud, Pepsi-Cola and jazz -- proves to be a kind of gloss on the Protestant work ethic."" (Los Angeles Times)When Hugh Hefner quit his job at Esquire to start a magazine called Playboy, he didn't just want to make money. He wanted to make dreams come true. The first issue of Playboy had a Sherlock Holmes story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, an article on the Dorsey brothers, and a feature on desk design for the modern office, called ""Gentlemen, Be Seated."" Hefner wrote much of the copy himself and drew all the cartoons. But the most memorable part by far was the set of pictures he bought from a local calendar printer of a scantily clad Marilyn Monroe.In this wise and penetrating biography, intellectual historian Steven Watts looks at what Hugh Hefner went onto become, and how he took America with him. Hefner became one of the most hated and envied celebrities in America, dating a long list of his magazine's beauties and always standing just barely on the wrong side of decency and moral uprightness. He also, at one time, had 7 million subscribers to his magazine. Though in time he would lose readers to more explicit magazines on one side and ""lad"" magazines on the other, the Playboy brand never lost its luster.""...highly-readable and thought-provoking biography written by academic historian, Stephen Watts"" (Desire, November 2008)Hugh Hefner started Playboy magazine in 1953 using purchased photos of Marilyn Monroe, and including the article ""Miss Gold Digger 1953"" about women who ""manipulate the legal system for alimony."" Hefner positioned th