



## Work in Progress

*Michael Eisner*

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## **Work in Progress** Michael Eisner

Scores of books have been published about business, but rarely has a CEO as prominent as Michael Eisner of The Walt Disney Company written so intimately about his life and work. In **Work in Progress**, Eisner describes the daily challenge of a rapidly changing marketplace, countless creative choices, painful setbacks, and dramatic triumphs.

For more than thirty years, Michael Eisner has lived and worked at the center of American popular culture. At ABC, as a young executive, he helped bring to life shows such as Happy Days and the miniseries Roots. As president of Paramount Pictures, he was responsible for films ranging from **Beverly Hills Cop** and **Raiders of the Lost Ark** to **Terms of Endearment** and **The Elephant Man**. As chairman of The Walt Disney Company for the past fourteen years, he has orchestrated the transformation of a beloved but struggling company into a multimedia giant in movies, television, radio, theme parks, theater, and even cyberspace.

Having spent his life helping other people to tell stories, Eisner now tells his own—with humor, insight, and unflinching honesty. He recounts such significant events as the extraordinary revival of Disney's animation business and the negotiations for one of the largest acquisitions in corporate history—Cap Cities/ABC—which began in an Idaho parking lot. He is just as forthcoming about the early struggles of Disneyland Paris and the fierce opposition that finally helped to derail Disney's America. Blending the personal and the professional, he tells the stories of the tragic death of his partner and closest confidant, Frank Wells; his own emergency quadruple bypass surgery; the high-level personnel changes that followed; and the emergence of a new generation of young leaders at Disney.

Throughout **Work in Progress**, we watch Eisner grappling with the often paradoxical choices that he faces each day in managing a creative company. What is the proper balance between art and commerce, tradition and innovation, short-term profit and long-term growth, pragmatism and excellence -- the company's good and the greater good? Like no other business memoir, **Work in Progress** is a riveting tale of high-pressure life at the top—an ongoing drama about risking failure and surviving success.

## **Michael Eisner...**

### **- On Disney -**

At a certain level, what we do at Disney is very simple. We set our goals, aim for perfection, inevitably fall short, try to learn from our mistakes, and hope that our successes will continue to outnumber our failures. Above all, we tell stories, in the hope that they will entertain, inform and engage. These are mine.

### **- On a Gurney -**

I felt unsettled, close to panic. Moments later, I experienced intense pain, not just in my arms, but also in my neck and chest. My anxiety was making the pain worse. The next thing I knew, I was being wheeled into the emergency room. All I could think of was ER, the pilot I'd just watched. Suddenly, I was living it.

### **- On Ideas -**

When an idea can't be articulated simply, crisply, and accessibly, there is usually something wrong with it. When I hear a good idea, it has an effect on my mind and body. Sometimes, I feel it in my stomach, other times in my throat, still others on my skin-a kind of instant truth detector test.

### **- On Diet -**

I grew up thinking vegetarians were weird and that special diets were for old people, like my Aunt Mannie and Cousin Ida. I began my special, nonfat vegetarian diet at half their age. Now I wish my kids would follow suit-just say no to drugs, unsafe friends, and unprotected saturated fat.

### **- On an Acquisition -**

There was something extraordinary about the whole scene. I had run into Tisch, Buffett, and now Tom Murphy literally as I was prepared to leave Herb Allen's Sun Valley gathering. Murphy was about to head off with Buffett and Gates, two of the wealthiest businessmen in America, to play golf. In the meantime, here we were, standing together in a parking lot in the middle of Idaho, talking about a \$20 billion transaction.

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#### **Melvin Lucero:**

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#### **Todd Voss:**

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#### **Donald Noble:**

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