

Cast Member Confidential: A Disney Book Review

by Cheryl Pendry, PassPorter Featured Columnist

Let's be clear at the outset, Cast Member Confidential: A Disneyfied Memoir is not for the faint-hearted.

It's very much an adults-only book, and not something you want to leave lying around for the kids to find. There's a fair bit of swearing in it, which reflects the story being told. It's not out of place, but it's worth knowing in advance, if that's likely to offend you. There are adult themes running throughout the 258 pages, but it's never gratuitous or out of place. It's just how things are in the story.

So what's the story about? Well, you know it's going to be something a bit juicy when the back cover screams at you that, 'This is the story that Disney would never tell you,' and that's a pretty accurate description. This is an autobiographical tale from Chris Mitchell, who heads to Walt Disney World as a complete cynic. He gets a job there, and the next year sees him change his viewpoint on Disney magic; more than once, I'd say. It's always interesting, and certainly never dull, and by the time I reached the end of the book, I was genuinely sad to see this trip come to an end.

□ Each chapter is very cleverly titled with a famous Disney phrase, like 'Something There That Wasn't There Before,' 'A Spoonful of Sugar,' and, 'I just Can't Wait to be King.' Each title gives you a rough idea of what's coming up, as it should, but each chapter seamlessly blends a number of things together. As well as exploring the author's journey while working at Walt Disney World, it also explores his world view, which I found really interesting. I'll be honest, I bought this book to learn more about Disney behind the scenes, but in the end became more fascinated by what was happening to him outside of his work. That's something I never thought I'd say, and says something about the quality of the story being told.

□ I don't want to give too much away about Mitchell's journey, but it's fair to say that when he starts at Disney, he's the type of person that all Disney fans know, the type who roll their eyes whenever the 'D' word is mentioned. It's intriguing that he chose the job, but there is good reason, and before long, he finds himself being sucked into the magic.

Although this a relatively recently-published book, it's obviously taken some time to see the light of day, as he ends his time with Disney working as a photographer, but before the days of PhotoPass. As such,

it means much of his focus is on the characters at meet-and-greets, the people behind them, and their interaction with guests. I've heard some horror stories in the past about the guest behavior the characters have to endure, but my goodness, this was much worse than anything I was aware of before!

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□Something else that raised my eyebrows were the descriptions of how Cast Members treat each other, with those fortunate enough to play the characters, according to Mitchell, regarding themselves as much better than everyone else. Even among the characters, there was a definite hierarchy. Whether that's still the case now, I have no idea, but it's certainly a change from the happy Disney family that you imagine Cast Members to be a part of.

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□That happy family image also goes out of the window with the description of some of the parties that go on. Perhaps the observation that sticks most with me was that a lot of Disney Cast Members were leading a double life, with a Disney role to play during the day, but an alter-ego appearing outside of hours. It was also interesting to read about some of the characters that Mitchell came into contact with. On more than one occasion, from his descriptions, I'd made my mind up about that person (and by the way, all of them have false identities to protect their modesty), and then something happened that changed my mind completely about them. This book certainly has a lot of twists, and turns in it.

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□If you have a desire, as I do, to hear the whole truth, warts and all, about life working at Disney, then this is the perfect book for you, but be warned, it doesn't draw a veil over anything. You will learn things that will shock and surprise you. All I'm going to say is that I'm never going to look at Pooh Bear in the same way again; if you dare, read the book and see what I mean! Provided none of this review has put you off, I would thoroughly recommend this book. It's a really gripping read, and provided me with laugh-out-loud moments, tears of both joy and despair, and wonder, as I read it. It's certainly a wonderful Disneyfied memoir, and I'd love to read more such memoirs in the future.

About The Author: Cheryl and husband Mark live in England and love to travel, particularly to America. They are in the process of visiting every Disney theme park around the world, having already been to Disneyland Resort Paris, Hong Kong Disneyland and both American Disney resorts. They are now planning for their trip to Japan in the spring to visit the Tokyo Disney Resort. [Click here to view more of Cheryl's articles!](#)

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