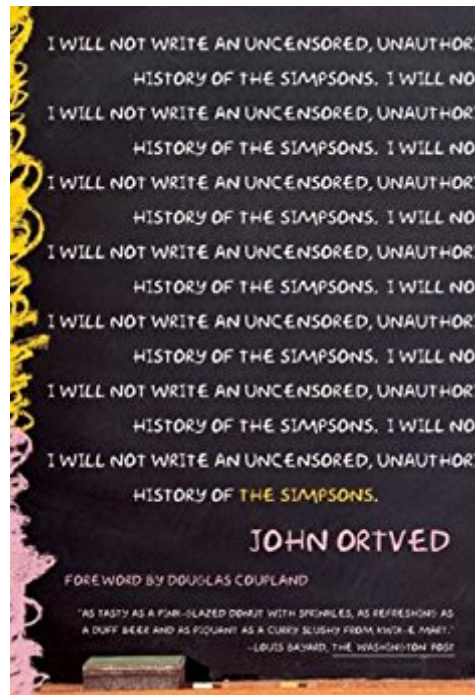




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The Simpsons: An Uncensored, Unauthorized History



Synopsis

The Simpsons is one of the most successful shows to ever run on television. From its first moment on air, the series's rich characters, subversive themes, and layered humor resounded deeply with audiences both young and old who wanted more from their entertainment than what was being meted out at the time by the likes of Full House, Growing Pains, and Family Matters. Spawned as an animated short on The Tracy Ullman Show—mere filler on the way to commercial breaks—the series grew from a controversial cult favorite to a mainstream powerhouse, and after nineteen years the residents of Springfield no longer simply hold up a mirror to our way of life: they have ingrained themselves into it. John Ortved's oral history will be the first-ever look behind the scenes at the creation and day-to-day running of The Simpsons, as told by many of the people who made it: among them writers, animators, producers, and network executives. It's an intriguing yet hilarious tale, full of betrayal, ambition, and love. Like the family it depicts, the show's creative forces have been riven by dysfunction from the get-go—outsized egos clashing with studio executives and one another over credit for and control of a pop-culture institution. Contrary to popular belief, The Simpsons did not spring out of one man's brain, fully formed, like a hilarious Athena. Its inception was a process, with many parents, and this book tells the story.

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Customer Reviews

I love The Simpsons. It is one of my all-time favorite shows. As a loyalist, I was holding out for an official and authorized history of The Simpsons but after reading The Fourth Network, I broke down and read this book and no regrets. I found this book to be as entertaining as it was insightful. I tuned the author out in the last few pages as I tune every one out who criticizes the quality of the series. I hope there is an updated version and/or official authorized account of The Simpsons. Thank you Sam Simon, James Brooks and Matt Groening!

Amazingly, considering that The Simpsons has been on the air for 20 years now, there has been no official, or authorized, history of the show written. Ortved may have set out to write an authorized history, but it is obvious that he was not getting the cooperation he felt was necessary. As a result he has created an unauthorized history of our favorite family, pulled together from what seems to be extensive sets of interviews with many key people in and around the Simpsons universe as well as pulled from various printed interviews and articles by others who may not have been willing to participate. What results is less of a story, and more of a magic window into the birth and formative first decade of the show. Told by a series of recollections and vignettes, we are taken behind the scenes of the Matt Groening being involved in creating interstitials for the Tracey Ullman Show, the eventual spinoff of the shorts into a full blown show, the show becoming a worldwide phenomenon and the resulting legal wrangling, staff changes and hurt feelings that a mega-success brings. The lack of participation by many vital players, including Matt Groening himself, necessitates the use of printed comments in the stead of interview comments. The lack of cooperation also frees Ortved from having to be objective in his writing, allowing others to present only one side of the story. It also probably limited his access to some areas, especially within Fox, that might have fleshed out pieces and give some heft to his story. This lack of objectivity allows the author to speak very highly of the first dozen seasons with high praise, milder praise for the next few seasons and then almost outright dismissal of work from the 9th or 10th season on. That said, the book is extremely entertaining, very informative and eye opening and just a great glimpse into the Juggernaut that is The Simpsons. It is the work of love of a fan who is trying to explain how lightning was captured in a bottle and the focus can be on the overall story, with varying amounts of attention paid to the details. It would have been nice to get a better overview of who everyone is and how they fit together (much of the conflicts that

appear involve people who are around for a year or two, are influential and then leave), but since the goal is to produce a history told in individual's recollections and stories rather than in a cohesive narrative, this is not a major issue. While not perfect, the book is a fascinating read of anyone interested in the history of The Simpsons as a show and how Fox became the House that Bart built.

An interesting oral history of one the greatest TV shows of all time. It's told from interview soundbites of some of the primary players. While it doesn't feature new interviews with the main cast, it does have some funny anecdotes, especially as it shows the WHOLE story of how "The Simpsons" became a phenomenon, it was more than some underground artist getting lucky, other than that it barely scratches the surface of the show, and it is a good read, but more library checkout than a collection on the bookshelf.

This never-dull oral history of The Simpsons is also slightly repetitive and loses steam about halfway through. Author/Editor John Ortved says in the opening that it will not be objective, and that becomes clearer and clearer as he says time and time again the best years of the show are 10 years behind us. Though this may be true, it starts to sound as if it's the ax he came to grind rather than the conclusion we're all arriving at together. Still, it's great to read eyewitness accounts about the genesis and continuation of what is undeniably a cornerstone of pop culture for the last twenty years.

I don't know why this book is gotten so many lousy reviews. I've been a huge fan since the early 1990s, and this book was a joy to read. I couldn't put it down.

I know it could have been more complete, but when you're a fanatic you take what you get. The writing isn't the best, but it's really a good read. When I say the best I mean my favorite writers, so please don't read this as a criticism of the author. If you LOVE the Simpsons and want to know more, this is one of the places you should visit.

Really relies on secondary sources, but a decent read.

Great book if you are interested in the coming of one of the greatest television shows ever. Highly recommend this organized book which takes you through the process of creating the show. The good and the bad experiences that made the show possible. Hilarious and hard to put down.

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