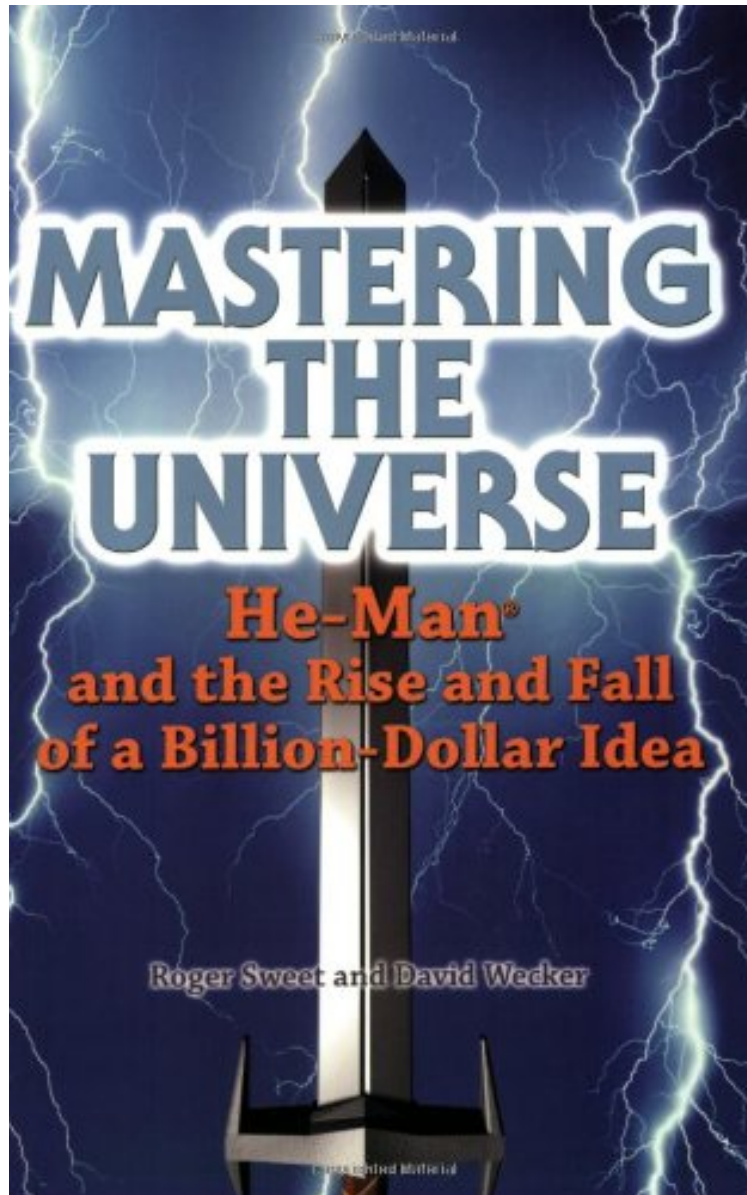


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Mastering the Universe: He-Man and the Rise and Fall of a Billion-Dollar Idea

Roger Sweet, Wecker David
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Roger Sweet, Wecker David : Mastering the Universe: He-Man and the Rise and Fall of a Billion-Dollar Idea before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mastering the Universe: He-Man and the Rise and Fall of a Billion-Dollar Idea:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Mastering the universe, but not the written word
By Lee
The existing reviews are generally on the mark and full of detail, so I will simply agree: Not a great read. For what it's worth, I believe Roger Sweet's basic claim and argument. What I don't understand is why he didn't take it seriously enough to insist on a better book. Hard to convince readers to take you seriously if you can't be bothered to have someone proofread or edit your manuscript before it goes to print. And there are factual errors that even an average Masters fan could point out, which obviously undermines the legitimacy of any claim Mr. Sweet makes. The book is easily twice as long as it should have been and is, in many instances, pointlessly repetitive. And while I understand that access may not have been granted to many documents, as well as that Mr. Sweet apparently discarded some critical pieces, a project like this cries out for photo illustration. If nothing else, Masters is rich with colorful and amazing imagery, and there is absolutely no evidence of that here; it's not just disappointing, it's unforgivable. Hardcore Masters fans would doubtless find this book an interesting anecdote to a classic toy line, but expectations should be set low.

4 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A Good Read But Not What You'd Expect
By Kent
Just like with William's Tsutsui's book: *Godzilla On My Mind*, I had waited a long time for this book to get published and to hit store shelves. But like Tsutsui's book (which does more injustice on Godzilla than justice I highly recommend you read my review of the book here at) the book fell kinda short of my expectations. Sure the description on the book says it will talk about the cutthroat toy industry, but what it doesn't tell you is that it takes up the biggest portion of the book and He-Man, and the creation of him and his cohorts, practically play second fiddle here. He-Man creator, Roger Sweet, provides us with an insightful look at Mattel during his nineteen years at the company. Telling us every little gritty detail from management changes to the behind-the-scenes look at how Mattel made their toys. He also clears up that he was the headman behind the creation of He-Man but also doesn't shy away from giving credit where it is due. He also goes into some details about the cartoon and some ideas for some the toys there were, or were not, released into the line for one reason or another. But the book does have its problems. As stated earlier, the creation of He-Man and the Masters is really, more or less, a backdrop for Roger Sweet to use to tell his story of working at Mattel. I consider it more of a small portion of an autobiography than anything else. One problem here is that Roger tends to go on and on about the people he worked with and describing people and how Mattel restructured its corporate ladder. Not to sound mean, but who really cares? We want the inside scoop on the creation of He-Man and how he was conceived. And that is another problem; Roger doesn't go into much detail about how he conceived certain characters nor how he came up with some of the character names; or how he coined the franchise name: Masters of the Universe. In the end, the book leaves more questions unanswered. Another problem was that he seemed to get some of his facts mixed up. For instance, he talks about how Courtney Cox played Teela in the 1987 Masters of the Universe movie. Courtney Cox did not play as Teela. Other screw-ups are such things like him saying Tri-Klops was a good guy. Now many Masters of the Universe fans have wondered if he was talking about the creation of the characters and ment for some of them to be good or bad, but ended up the other way around. It is unclear, but nevertheless, they are screw-ups. He tends to repeat A LOT of the same information throughout the book. This makes for a, somewhat, boring experience here and there. He also tends to use this repetition as filler, alongside a very boring Chapter 2 about the history of toy soldiers. What does the history of toy soldiers have anything to do with He-Man? Well, after you read the chapter, you will realize it has nothing to do with He-Man. It's just Roger trying to fill his book. There were some grammatical and spelling errors along the way as well. It's not a really big deal, but it's just annoying to see that so many errors got past the editors. For instance, I ran into several sentences that went along these lines, "In 1986, Masters brought in \$400, but 1987, it dropped to a measly \$7 million." He obviously ment \$400 million, but million was seemingly omitted several times for reasons I do not know. But the book does go into depth as to how certain ideas were conceived and how they were created. He also talks about some of the toys and vehicles in the appendix of the book and it offers some neat info. All-in-all, none of the information seemed groundbreaking, and I am by no means a Masters of the Universe genius. Although it was interesting as to how the public responded to Masters, but Roger tend to move through many of that stuff very quickly. He talks a little about the cartoon shows and about the revival of Masters of the Universe in the early 1990s and in 2002. But, sadly, this book suffers from lack of information on He-Man and his rise and fall from immortality. Roger spends too much time talking about the rough times he had at Mattel and how everyone was taking credit for inventing He-Man; while interesting in its own right, a whole hodge-podge of this kind of information isn't needed. I still recommend the book to Masters of the Universe fans despite the fact the whole story on the creating of He-Man is really a backdrop to Roger's story at Mattel. An interesting read to say the least but it definitely is not completely about the creation of He-Man. It's something that may be of interest to those of you who are Masters of the Universe fans.

1 of 2 people found the following review helpful. MOTU = Mordant, Overbearing, Testy, Uptight
By DJ MichaelAngelo
The author of this book, Roger Sweet, appears to be a psychologically deeply disturbed individual. I really wish I hadn't read the reviews of this book before buying reading it, but even if I hadn't I certainly would've noticed the bizarre references he makes to people's height, stature, and muscular strength. In recounting stories from his past at Mattel, literally every male he brings up he also gives their height, and describes their physique. It's not because he's gay, the guy's happily married from what I read. I think it's because Roger was so traumatized as a kid, being made fun of for his shortness, that it damaged him beyond repair, and now he's

psychologically in a "rut" of arrested development, always striving to be physically "better" than every other person he meets, describes, or even recalls. A person's height and physical strength is something that he has an unhealthy obsession with, and it continually creeped me out as I would read it and wonder how this guy got to be so warped and fixated on such trivial things. Speaking of petty, that's another word I'd use to describe this book - there was a HUGE amount of back-story left out, at the expense of him describing in minute detail every little "behind the scenes" office drama backstabbing that he feels slighted him 20-30 years ago. I don't even think he wrote this book with an audience in mind for people to actually read; he wrote it for HIMSELF so he could finally feel vindicated and victorious after all these years, against his co-workers who he believes were trying to steal credit for the He-man idea. I would've much rather read about the TV show, more details on the various characters, a timeline of how Filmation came to them and who paid who, etc. Instead the book "Mastering The Universe" rambled on endlessly about things completely irrelevant to the MOTU history. Again, I don't think Roger Sweet did this out of malice or ineptitude; I actually felt sorry for him while I was reading this - a short weakling of a boy growing up, abused by his father and taunted by bigger kids, all of which combined to make him the disturbed resentful man he is today. Was this an entertaining book to read? Yes, I learned a great deal of new information that I didn't know before. But the amateurish retaliatory prose made it almost impossible for me to take the author seriously.

Mastering the Universe illuminates the creation, rise, and fall of one of the top-selling product lines in what is arguably the world's most competitive industry, toys—and it does so from the perspective of Roger Sweet, the man who originated He-Man for Mattel. He-Man and the product line that grew out of it, Masters of the Universe (MOTU), created a fantasy world for boys that, at its height in 1986, reached \$400 million in U.S. sales, only to plummet to \$7 million the following year. During its six-year run, the MOTU line sold \$1.2 billion worldwide and spawned a syndicated cartoon series and a major motion picture—a feat not even the venerable Barbie can claim. Mastering the Universe explores the phenomenon of He-Man's popularity, as well as the shocking reasons behind the toy's rapid decline.

From the Publisher MASTERING THE UNIVERSE is a must-read for members of the "I-love-the-80's" generation as well as for toy collectors, pop culture enthusiasts, and anyone interested in the drama of business history—as bloody a battleground as anything He-Man ever faced. About the Author Roger Sweet has a Master of Science degree in Product Design from the Institute of Design in Chicago. He worked twenty years doing general consumer product and graphic design and twenty-five more years doing toy product and graphic design. Companies for whom he has designed products include Boeing, Procter Gamble, Rubbermaid, Hamilton Beach Scovill, Hoover and Mattel. He is currently researching and developing new product concepts. Roger resides in the Pacific Northwest. David Wecker is a columnist for both the Cincinnati Post and the Kentucky Post. He is also co-host of Brain Brew, a weekly on-hour radio program distributed by PRI, Public Radio International and co-author of Jump Start Your Brain. He lives with his wife and children in a 200 year-old log cabin in Kentucky.