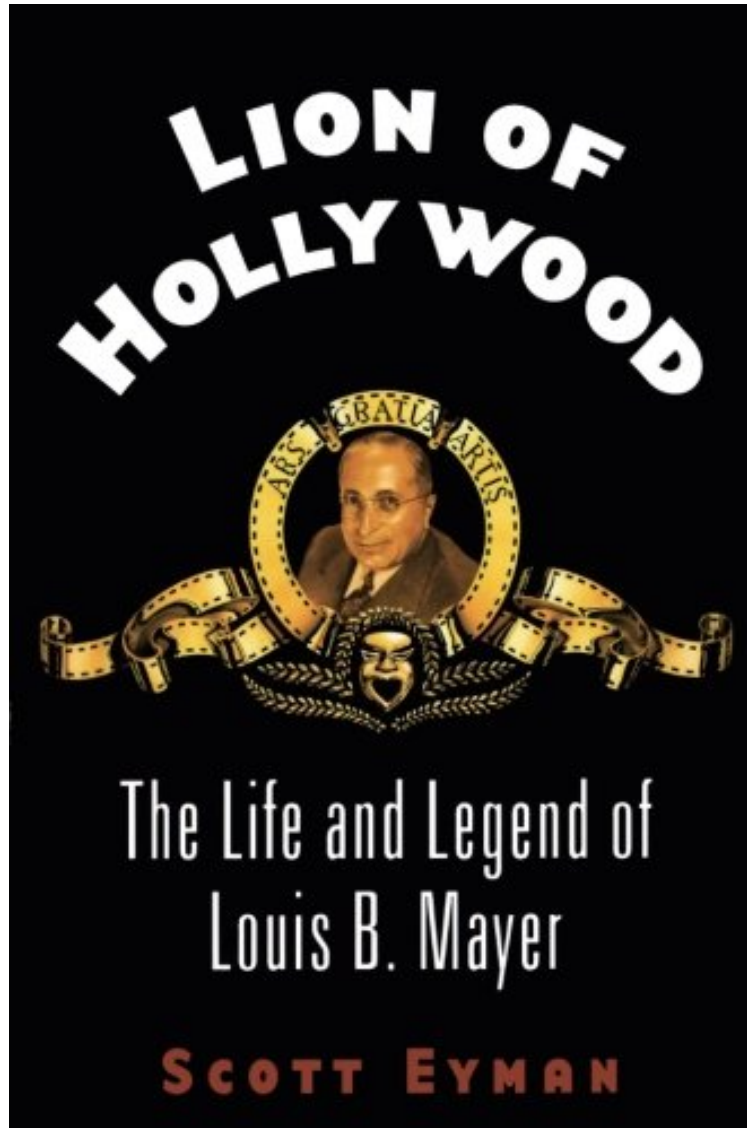


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## Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer

*Scott Eyman*

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**Scott Eyman : Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lion of Hollywood: The Life and Legend of Louis B. Mayer:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. He invented movie stars !By Chicago BurbsIn 1890, the Mayer family came from Ukraine to New Brunswick. The illiterate fathersupported a wife and three children by dealing in scrap metal in the street. Louis, bornin 1884, was educated till age 13. He spoke English but was not street-wise and

had no trade, money or connections. Thinking he could set up a junk business, he got himself arrested for having no license. The judge forced him to work for his father but Dad beat him to get respect. At age 19, he rented a room in a Boston push-cart neighborhood and worked for a scrap dealer. He met and married his wife, moved into her parents' apartment and stayed until their first child was born. With help, he bought a nearby burlesque theater and built an apartment inside to be his dwelling. He catered to female customers, reasoning that they decided family entertainment. He promised a more refined, strait-laced product than that of competing theaters and he installed an organ. His first program was, "The Passion Play", viewing religious slides to organ music. A success at last, he was invited to become manager of the New Bijou Theater which produced plays. He treated actors like royalty and they recommended him to New York investors. Generating profits now, he bought a hotel which catered to show people. By 1910, he owned a string of theaters and had brought in opera. He formed The American Feature Film Company to produce a few films. When he purchased the New England rights to Birth of a Nation, he invested \$50,000 and earned \$250,000. In 1912, he became a citizen. In 1924, he became the Mayer in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM). And, he was the man who invented movie stars.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Another excellent Eyman History of Hollywood By John Goff Good read on old Hollywood. It's always been a cesspool; just gets darker with the passage of time... If you like reading H'wood history, this is a good one for your library. Louis B Mayer was a mogul, possibly the original mogul with as much power as any so-called 'mogul' operating today. What he had that they don't was a sense of decorum and decency--skewed perhaps in some areas--but he knew what the country wanted from his product, films, and what he could give them. Time passed and he didn't move with it so he was ousted... But you do have to admire him and what he accomplished... Scott Eyman is very knowledgeable re: the history of Hollywood and its founding denizens and stars. His research is meticulous and his presentation of it excellent... You won't be disappointed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Much too long By M. Behrndt You could call this book everything you ever wanted to know about MGM and then some. I skipped much of the book as it was more than I needed to know. It was interesting as a history of the early Hollywood days but too detailed for my taste.

"Lion of Hollywood" is the definitive biography of Louis B. Mayer, the chief of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer -- MGM -- the biggest and most successful film studio of Hollywood's Golden Age. An immigrant from tsarist Russia, Mayer began in the film business as an exhibitor but soon migrated to where the action and the power were -- Hollywood. Through sheer force of energy and foresight, he turned his own modest studio into MGM, where he became the most powerful man in Hollywood, bending the film business to his will. He made great films, including the fabulous MGM musicals, and he made great stars: Garbo, Gable, Garland, and dozens of others. Through the enormously successful Andy Hardy series, Mayer purveyed family values to America. At the same time, he used his influence to place a federal judge on the bench, pay off local officials, cover up his stars' indiscretions, and, on occasion, arrange marriages for gay stars. Mayer rose from his impoverished childhood to become at one time the highest-paid executive in America. Despite his power and money, Mayer suffered some significant losses. He had two daughters: Irene, who married David O. Selznick, and Edie, who married producer William Goetz. He would eventually fall out with Edie and divorce his wife, Margaret, ending his life alienated from most of his family. His chief assistant, Irving Thalberg, was his closest business partner, but they quarreled frequently, and Thalberg's early death left Mayer without his most trusted associate. As Mayer grew older, his politics became increasingly reactionary, and he found himself politically isolated within Hollywood's small conservative community. "Lion of Hollywood" is a three-dimensional biography of a figure often caricatured and vilified as the paragon of the studio system. Mayer could be arrogant and tyrannical, but under his leadership MGM made such unforgettable films as *The Big Parade*, *Ninotchka*, *"The Wizard of Oz"*, *Meet Me in St. Louis*, " and *"An American in Paris."* Film historian Scott Eyman interviewed more than 150 people and researched some previously unavailable archives to write this major new biography of a man who defined an industry and an era.

From Publishers Weekly Anyone who's heard one of the legions of tales about obstinate Hollywood founding father Mayer's tyranny over his stars (and the entire studio system) won't be surprised to learn Mayer grew up selling scrap machinery in the eastern Canadian port town of Saint John: "Junk dealing itself made [Mayer] endlessly resourceful and opportunistic," Eyman (*Print the Legend: The Life and Times of John Ford*) writes in this meticulous and engaging biography. But because Mayer (1885-1957) was a Russian Jew selling scrap metal and was looked down upon by many, he developed his "almost feral belligerence" early on. That ruthlessness may explain his unprecedented consolidation of power once he arrived in Los Angeles in 1918, but not his genius for packaging and selling the nascent and suspicious medium of film to audiences. Mayer's maudlin sentimentality about American values and the virtues of family life (despite major womanizing) surfaced in most of the films he oversaw at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and in what he did to get them made. Mayer's "mania for quality" drove MGM to the top of Hollywood's studio system, while his melodramatic fainting spells and crying jags would frequently induce fellow executives or stars to relent. Eyman's extensive knowledge of old Hollywood, his scrupulous research and his refusal to indict the often-pilloried Mayer make this biography an often revelatory delight. Agent, Fran Collin. (May) Copyright Reed Business

Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. "'Lion of Hollywood" is compulsive reading as well as thoroughly enjoyable. There is so much that is new, so much that surprised me." -- Kevin Brownlow, author of "The Parade's Gone By..." "Scott Eyman has accomplished the near impossible -- he's taken Louis B. Mayer, the comic goblin of so many Hollywood histories, and restored him to his rightful place as one of the great business executives of the twentieth century. Laughable no more, Mayer is a fascinating amalgam of vision, chutzpa, cunning, and sheer genius." -- James Curtis, author of "W. C. Fields and James Whale: A New World of Gods and Monsters" About the Author Scott Eyman has written fifteen books, three of them New York Times bestsellers, including John Wayne: The Life and Legend. His most recent book is Hank and Jim. He has been awarded the William K. Everson Award for Film History by the National Board of . He teaches film history at the University of Miami and lives in West Palm Beach with his wife, Lynn.