

(Free) Merchant of Dreams

## Merchant of Dreams

*Charles Higham*

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**Charles Higham : Merchant of Dreams** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Merchant of Dreams:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Is This Book Accurate? By G. Ratcheson Like the previous reviewer, I also have some questions/concerns about Higham's accuracy. I've read at least 5 other books about Thalberg, Shearer MGM, several things here are new to me including allegations that the Thalberg Shearer marriage was shaky (I've always read the exact opposite previously), that Thalberg had a tendency to scream at people when he was angry (I've previously read that his persona tended to be quite mild mannered). I'd be very interested to hear other Mayer/Thalberg/Shearer biographer's opinion of this book's accuracy. I also question the allegations that Walt Disney was a Nazi sympathizer amongst others. My 2 star rating is with the assumption that the book is factually inaccurate. To me it pretty much reads as one scandal after another..... there may be SOME truth in that! 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. The Dream Factory By Carolyn Kingsley I very much enjoyed this biography of L.B. Mayer and his dream factory, so much so that I read it twice. It contains a lot of rich historical information. I love history and I love the movies. This book was right up my alley. (Pardon the cliche.) A must read for people who love stories about famous men and how they made their fortune. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Well-written and lively, but highly biased for and against various classic Hollywood figures (Garbo fans take warning!) By Joseph A. Admire I like this book quite a bit though, as other reviewers have pointed out, it has some inaccuracies of fact. This is a problem which is unfortunately quite common to mass-market Hollywood biographies, it

seems, possibly because many authors who don't have access to their subjects for one reason or another have to rely on mass-media sources which are often of highly inconsistent reliability. Higham, though, does appear to have done extensive research, including interviewing many people who knew and worked with Mayer. A more subjective, your-mileage-may-vary issue that some readers will have (as has been brought up in other reviews) is that Higham is not what you would call perfectly unbiased in his approach. He's fundamentally friendly and sympathetic to Mayer, though from what I can see he doesn't try to paper over Mayer's more questionable actions and double standards (though he does his best to provide explanations for those that don't put Mayer in a totally negative light). Readers who are partial to certain classic Hollywood stars and figures - for instance, John Gilbert, Greta Garbo, Norma Shearer and her husband Irving Thalberg, and Joan Crawford - need to be warned that Higham *\*does\* \*not\* \*like\** those people at all. In particular, he appears to positively hate Garbo, who's slammed as a complete monster of selfishness, inconstancy and unprofessionalism (he even criticizes Garbo for standing up Gilbert, whom he also doesn't like very much, at the altar not once but several times). In candor, I'm not particularly keen on Garbo myself - I don't hate her by any means but I've never really gotten her mystique - so I didn't mind Higham's slams on her, but others may. It's more perplexing in my opinion that Higham is sharply critical of Irving Thalberg, very much a minority opinion among those who believe that Thalberg was nearly as crucial as Mayer himself to establishing MGM as one of Hollywood's great studios. All that having been said, though, this book moves along at a nice clip, being well-written and quite entertaining with lots of anecdotes about Mayer and the people he knew in old Hollywood. Just be prepared to have your blood pressure go up if you're a fan of Greta Garbo.

A look back at Mayer's Hollywood discusses his birth in the Ukraine, his boyhood in Canada, his entry into show business, his early years as a film pioneer, and his legendary stars and star system. 50,000 first printing.

From Publishers Weekly  
Movie mogul Louis B. Mayer (1885-1957) is often depicted as a lecherous ogre, but film biographer Higham ( Errol Flynn ) humanizes the M.G.M. titan in this revelatory, wonderfully vivid biography based on archival files and interviews with the Mayer family and surviving M.G.M. executives. The multifaceted Mayer is portrayed as a hypochondriac haunted by his mother's painful death, an absentee husband whose extramarital romances pushed his mentally disturbed wife to multiple suicide attempts, and a stern yet loving despot who protected his homosexual stars and covered up alleged acts of manslaughter by John Huston and by Clark Gable. Higham reveals how director Victor Saville, a British intelligence agent in WW II, swayed Mayer to make anti-Hitler movies. He offers new details about Mayer's close ties with Herbert Hoover, his betrayals of and by Irving Thalberg and his detestation of Greta Garbo, for whom he provided a cover when she worked as a British agent fighting Hitler. This star-studded, gossipy bio is packed with indelible anecdotes and on-set lore. Photos. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.  
From Library Journal  
Ukrainian-born Lazar Meir graduated from Canada's St. John High School as Louis Mayer in 1902 and by 1912 was a successful film exhibitor in the northeastern United States. In Hollywood he helped create and drive the classical studio system by supervising productions, while finding and nurturing talent. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer became a great studio under Mayer's regime. By turns callous, empathetic, vulgar, and loving, Mayer hobnobbed with government figures at many levels, including the presidency. The wealth of information here is en grossing because Higham ( Elizabeth and Philip , Doubleday, 1991) balances the often shocking personal habits of stars and executives with nitty-gritty filmmaking details. Merchant of Dreams deserves a place beside Ethan Mordden's *The Hollywood Studios* ( LJ 5/15/88) and Neal Gabler's *An Empire of Their Own* (Crown, 1988).- Kim Holston, American Inst. for Chartered Property Casualty Underwriters, Malvern, Pa. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.