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But Darling, I'm Your Auntie Mame!: The Amazing History Of The World's Favorite Madcap Aunt



Synopsis

Within weeks of publication in 1955, the novel AUNTIE MAME by Patrick Dennis was a bestseller. The subsequent stageplay was likewise a phenomenal success. Here Disney publicist Richard Jordan chronicles four decades of Mame-mania--the true backstage story of how one larger-than-life character rescued Rosalind Russell from career oblivion, catapulted Angela Lansbury to stardom, and nearly destroyed Lucille Ball. 40 photos. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

Auntie Mame indisputably belongs to the pantheon of modern theatrical creations who have ascended from character to archetype, the grand old dame who initiates her young nephew into the joys of life in the big city. Generations of fans are certain to delight in this slight but entertaining anecdotal history of Auntie Mame's theatrical journey from a bestselling novel by Patrick Dennis to stage play to film (Auntie Mame) to Broadway musical and then film version of the musical (Mame). Jordan, a senior publicist at Walt Disney Studios, takes readers through the birthing process of each of these productions, filling his pages with reminiscences from those who lived them. The original play revived Rosalind Russell's faltering career; later, the musical did the same for Angela Lansbury. Judy Garland was interested in replacing Angela Lansbury when she departed after 775 performances, but the producers feared that Garland, who was brilliant in her audition, could not manage eight shows a week. When casting the movie version of Mame, Lucille Ball, who had a

huge "Q" rating (public awareness level), was cast despite the apprehension of many theater and film people. Their fears were well taken: the reviews for the film in general and Ball in particular were scathing. Filled with wonderful anecdotes and backstage gossip, this is a colorful overview of how a now-classic play and musical, after some near-misses along the way, came to life. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This is a well written and interesting book that gives the reader an "insider's" view of the history of all of the varied productions, stage and screen, of both Auntie Mame and Mame. It's interesting to see the personalities and egos of the playwrights, the actors, producers, directors and choreographers interplay with the characteristics of the character herself. Auntie Mame always wins. She embraces those who are in tune with her and easily dispatches those who are not. Mame remains invincible.

Great product!

Good read for the beach

This book tells in nice detail about the trials and tribulations of bringing a wonderous madcap from page to stage and screen. The stories of how Rosalind Russell wanted it to be updated from the twenties (missing the wonderful chunk of how Mame manages after the great depression?) and how the musical almost missed having the ultimate Mame, Angela Lansbury, and how Lucille Ball wanted Bette Davis as Vera Charles and fired Madeline Kahn as Agnes Gooch--are all fascinating tidbits! The book is a fun read--it is easy going all the way. It makes one wonder about what a great film it would have been with Angela Lansbury in the musical, as she should have been. Rosalind Russell was great in Auntie Mame, the movie and the play. However, Eve Arden did a spectacular job on stage, as did Greer Garson. And Lucille Ball did a disservice to the great dame. She did nothing for her waning career and nothing for the film. The author mentions Ann Sothorn as a possibility for the musical on Broadway, but no mention is made of Miss Sothorn when she played it on stage in other venues or of Susan Hayward who played her so well in Las Vegas. All in all this was an appealing story about a fabulous book that became a fabulous play that became a fabulous movie that became a fabulous stage musical that ended up a fabulous letdown as a movie musical.

I have been in love with the movie "Auntie Mame" for the past 30 years. That said, I just watched it again a few weeks ago, then came to and found this book on the history of the play. I don't

understand the negative reviews of Mr. Jordan's work, I felt he covered a lot of ground with it. It's not the author's fault if Roger Smith chose not to respond to his request for an interview! Jordan **did** manage to talk to the play authors and one producer as well as Jerry Herman and many people in the cast of the films and the plays. The only thing that kept me from giving it 5 stars is that I wished there had been more about the original film included. What it does make me want to do is see if I can find the original cast recording of Mame with Angela Lansbury. I've only seen the Lucy travesty, but am willing to give the musical another shot. If you are an Auntie Mame fan, I highly recommend this book. And if you've never heard of her, this is a great introduction!

I don't know what edition of this wonderful book some of the reviewers had read, but in the current one I just purchased from , there are none of the grammar errors or typos mentioned in other reviews. For anyone who loves Auntie Mame in any of her creations, play, musical or R. Russell film, this is a must have book. (I won't mention the disaster film with Lucille Ball although it is also covered in the book). I was lucky enough to have seen Miss Russell on stage and Angela Lansbury twice on stage. They were so different yet so right as this wonderful lady. That is the clue to Mame, she is not a funny woman, she is an excentric LADY. Her humor comes from being elegant, beautiful and excentric. (The only real failure I saw was Bea Lilli in London.) This book is filled with terrific backstage stories, confirming some already told and stating new ones. It is a book impossible to put down once you pick it up. For a really fun and enjoyabloe read, a Mame fan could not do better.

I enjoyed this compendium of backstage lore, but other reviewers are correct in saying that Jordan provides little context for the phenomenon of AUNTIE MAME. But who cares about that really when you have all these wonderful stories of difficult people and the tantrums they throw to get their own way? Sumner Locke Elliott, the playwright and novelist originally hired to adapt Patrick Dennis' 1955 novel to the stage, gives a chiseled portrait of the late Rosalind Russell, depicting her as a sort of sacred monster who made sure everything went her way. Russell was never a great star but she knew how to adapt her act for changing times, and turned from comedy to drama to musical to farce to suspense to religion, whatever paid the rent. Her efforts at drama were pretty feeble, she was no Nazimova that's for sure, but in the annals of high comedy she will always have a shining place due to the sheer intensity of her performances in HIS GIRL FRIDAY, THE WOMEN, and of course AUNTIE MAME. Jordan shows us how Hollywood got it wrong, casting Lucy as Mame when the cognoscenti wanted Lansbury in the musical version of Dennis' play. After reading this book I felt

sorry for Lucy for the first time in my life, for reading the savage reviews attacking her physical appearance is actually painful, as though all the critics in the world had turned into John Simon for this one occasion. Lucy was 61, is that really 15 or 20 years too old to play Auntie Mame? Why? Not that Lucy was any good, I'm not standing up for her, but no one deserves the venom she got for playing in that one movie, shooting herself in both feet for her arrogance and pride and vanity. Jerry Herman wrote the foreword to this book, but could he really have read it? He comes off like a spoiled princess, scuttling plans for a TV remake of MAME with Bette Midler for no good reason, then lacing into a great screenwriter for daring to pen an adaptation of MAME with the temerity to cut two horrible Herman numbers (Saint Bridgette and That's How Young I Feel) which are, apparently, sacrosanct. Jerry Herman always seems so good natured and sweet, but now after reading this book I know he's a Teri-Hatcher style diva.

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