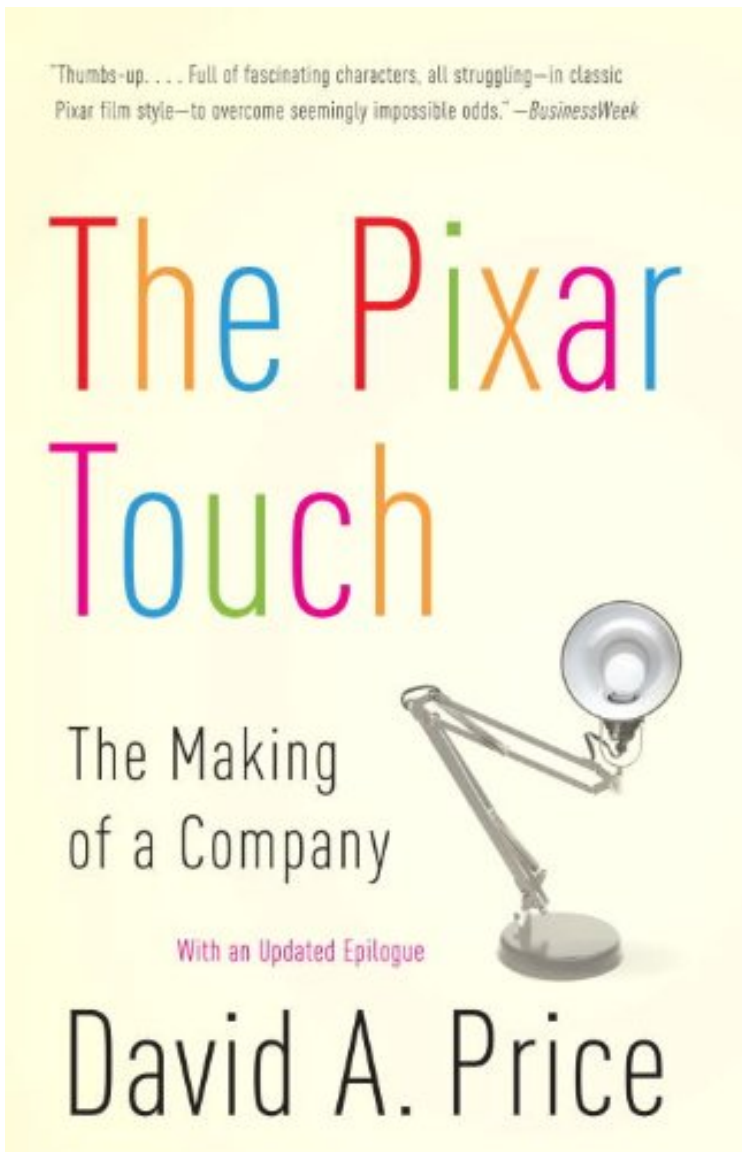


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The Pixar Touch



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurA Wall Street Journal Best Book of the YearThe Pixar Touch is a lively chronicle of Pixar Animation Studios' history and evolution, and the fraternity of geeks who shaped it. With the help of animating genius John Lasseter and visionary businessman Steve Jobs, Pixar has become the gold standard of animated filmmaking, beginning with a short special effects shot made at Lucasfilm in 1982 all the way up through the landmark films Toy Story, Finding Nemo, Wall-E, and others. David A. Price goes behind the scenes of the corporate feuds between Lasseter and his former champion, Jeffrey Katzenberg, as well as between Jobs and Michael Eisner. And finally he explores Pixar's complex relationship with the Walt Disney Company as it transformed itself into the \$7.4 billion jewel in the Disney crown.With an Updated

Epilogue

Extrait

Still another film was in Pixars pipeline during the making of *A Bug's Life*. Talk of a sequel to *Toy Story* began around a month after *Toy Story* opened, when Catmull, Lasseter, and Guggenheim visited Joe Roth, Katzenbergs successor as chairman of Walt Disney Studios. Roth was pleased and embraced the idea. Disney had recently begun making direct-to-video sequels to its successful feature films, and Roth wanted to handle the *Toy Story* sequel this way, as well. A direct-to-video sequel could be made for less money, with lesser talent. It could be priced cheaply enough to be an impulse purchase. Disneys first such production, an *Aladdin* spin-off in 1994 called *The Return of Jafar*, had been a bonanza, returning an estimated hundred million dollars in profits. With those results, all self-restraint was off; Disney would soon grace drugstore shelves with *Beauty and the Beast: The Enchanted Christmas*; *Pocahontas II: Journey to a New World*; *The Lion King II: Simbas Pride*; and still another *Aladdin* film. Everything else about the *Toy Story* sequel was uncertain at first: whether Tom Hanks and Tim Allen would be available and affordable, what the storys premise would be, even whether the film would be computer-animated at Pixar or cel-animated at Disney. As with *A Bug's Life*, Lasseter regarded the project as a chance to groom new directing talent. In early 1996, once Roth decided that Pixar would handle production of the sequel, Lasseter assigned directing duties. Stanton was immersed in *A Bug's Life*; Pete Docter, whom Lasseter regarded as the next in line, was already beginning development work on his own feature about monsters. For *Toy Story 2*, Lasseter turned to Ash Brannon, a young directing animator on *Toy Story* whose work he admired. Brannon, a CalArts graduate, had joined Pixar to work on *Toy Story* in 1993. The story originated with Lasseter pondering what a toy would find upsetting. In the world of *Toy Story*, a toys greatest desire is to be played with by a child. What, Lasseter wondered, would be the opposite of that worse, even, than being displaced by another toy? An obsessive toy-collector character had appeared in a draft of *Toy Story* and was later expunged. Lasseter felt that it was now an idea whose time had come. Thinking of his own tendency to shoo his sons away from the toys on his office shelves, especially a Woody doll that he prized for its Tom Hanks signature, Lasseter began talking about the notion of a toy collector who hermetically seals toys in a case where they will never be played with again. For a toy, it would be a miserable fate. Brannon then suggested the idea of a yard sale where the collector recognizes Woody as a rare artifact and distracts Andys mom to grab him. Out of those ideas, *Toy Story 2* was born. The concept of Woody as part of a collectible set came from the draft story of *A Tin Toy Christmas*, in which Tinny was part of a set in a toy store and became separated. The other characters in Woodys set emerged from viewings of 1950s cowboy shows for children, such as *Howdy Doody* and *Hopalong Cassidy*. We started looking at these canonical characters that you find in westerns, said Guggenheim, who was producer of *Toy Story 2* during the first year of development work. You would find a gruff old prospector. You would find other characters, like an Annie Oakley Calamity Jane sort of character, a tough frontier girl. The development of the cowgirl character, Jessie, was also kindled by Lasseters life; Nancy had pressed him to include a character in *Toy Story 2* for girls, one with more substance than *Bo Peep*. Jessie had started in a different form, as *Seorita Cactus*, a Mexican side-kick to the Prospector; she was to sway Woody with her feminine wiles. When the character of Jessie replaced her, the personality of the female lead became tougher and more direct. As the story approached the production stage in early 1997, there remained the question of where Pixar would find the people to make it, given the demands of *A Bug's Life* on the companys employees. Part of the answer would come from a production organization within Pixar devoted to computer games. The Interactive Products Group, with a staff of around ninety-five (out of Pixars total staff of three hundred), had its own animators, its own art department, and its own engineers. Under intense time pressure, they had put out two successful CD-ROM titles: *The Toy Story Animated StoryBook*, released in April 1996, and *The Toy Story Activity Center*, released in October of the same year to coincide with the videotape release of *Toy Story*. The games featured much of the voice cast of the film, except that the voice actor Pat Fraley took Tim Allens place as Buzz, while Woody was played by Tom Hankss younger brother, Jim. The company touted *StoryBook* as the first CD-ROM to deliver full screen, motion-picture-quality animation on home computers. Between the two products, the interactive group had created as much original animation as there was in *Toy Story* itself. Jobs had convinced himself that the games would sell ten million copies, like best-selling direct-to-video films. Kerwin, as head of the group, insisted that the market wasnt there on such a scale. We can make a good, profitable business out of them, she said. (The products had sold almost a million copies combined.) But they wont be a home run like *Toy Story*. If thats the case, Jobs said finally, then why dont we just turn all these people over to making another movie? Thus, in March 1997, while Kerwin took the assignment of building a short-films group, Jobs shut down the computer games operation and the games staff became the initial Core of the *Toy Story 2*

production team. Press Release TIM ALLEN AND TOM HANKS RETURN AS BUZZ LIGHTYEAR AND WOODY March 12, 1997 The Walt Disney Studios and Pixar Animation Studios announce today that a sequel to the groundbreaking Academy Award-nominated feature film TOY STORY is underway and being created exclusively for home video. The all-new, fully computer-animated sequel will feature the voices of Tim Allen and Tom Hanks, who reprise their enormously popular roles as Buzz Lightyear, the space ranger, and Woody, the pull-string Cowboy, respectively. Production on TOY STORY II reteams Disney's Feature Animation team and Pixar's Northern California studios. . . . Toy Story II is the latest production to be announced in our growing made-for-video film category, Ann Daly, President, Buena Vista Home Video, said. With Aladdin and the King of Thieves and the debut of Honey We Shrunk Ourselves next week, we are now bringing both animated and live-action films into this pipeline with great success. . . . Disney soon became unhappy with the pace of the work on the film and demanded in June that Guggenheim be replaced as producer. Pixar complied. He looked back on his seventeen years with Pixar and Lucasfilm and concluded that he had most enjoyed working with groups that were venturing into new directions, like the EditDroid digital editing project and the original Toy Story effort; with Pixar shedding of everything but feature films, he believed the company's strategy left few entrepreneurial opportunities. Guggenheim, now financially secure thanks to the stock offering, left the company.* Karen Jackson and Helene Plotkin, who had been associate producers on the sequel, moved up to the role of co-producers. Jackson recalled using the enticement of greater responsibility—the chance to be a big fish in a smaller pond—to compete with A Bug's Life for the production people they wanted. You could go to A Bug's Life and be one of two hundred, or you could come to Toy Story 2 and be one of fifty or sixty, she said. To fill the spots on Toy Story 2, we did a lot of recruitment outside. But there were certain key positions on Toy Story 2 where we wanted to get experienced staff on board, and the way to get them on board was to say, Well let you run this department, or, Well let you be the directing animator. In November, Disney executives Roth and Peter Schneider viewed story reels for the film, with some finished animation, in a screening room at Pixar. They were impressed with the quality of the work and became interested in releasing Toy Story 2 in theaters. In addition to the unexpected artistic caliber, there were other reasons that made the case for a theatrical release more compelling. As it turned out, the economics of direct-to-video for a Pixar film weren't working as well as hoped. The logic of direct-to-video hinged on low production costs, but low-budget and high-budget projects could not readily coexist under Pixar's umbrella. The creative appetites of Pixar's leadership made it anathema to produce a film at less than the highest level visually—one in which corner-cutting could be seen on screen. In computer animation no less than in live action, production values cost money. More prosaically, Pixar wanted the efficiency of moving crew members from one production to the next, whatever the next one might be, so Catmull and Lasseter deemed it unacceptable to create a second, lower-wage staff for low-budget projects. Since labor costs added up to 75 percent or more of the production costs, it was unrealistic to try to make a significantly lower-cost production as long as all the films were to come from the same pool of employees earning the same salaries. Lastly, animation salaries had gone up across the board. For Toy Story, Pixar had been able to hire people relatively cheaply on account of the excitement of working on a milestone in animation, the first fully computer-animated feature. Pixar remained attractive to potential hires by virtue of Toy Story's quality and Lasseter's reputation, but Pixar also had new competition for talent; not only was DreamWorks producing traditional and computer-animated features, other studios were opening their own animation units following the success of The Lion King. After some negotiating, Jobs and Roth agreed that the split of costs and profits for Toy Story 2 would follow the model of the new five-film deal of 1997—but Toy Story 2 would not count as one of the five films. Disney had bargained in the contract for five original features, not sequels, thus assuring five sets of new characters for its theme parks and merchandise. Jobs gathered the crew and announced the change in plans for the film on February 5, 1998. Lasseter would remain fully preoccupied with A Bug's Life until it wrapped in the fall. Once he became available, he took over directing duties and added Lee Unkrich as co-director. Unkrich, who had just come off A Bug's Life as supervising editor, would concentrate on layout and cinematography. Brannon would also be credited as a co-director. Up to then, the Toy Story 2 team had been on its own—not just figuratively, but literally, having been placed in a new building that was well separated from the rest of the company by railroad tracks. We were the small film and we were off playing in our sandbox, Jackson said. That was about to change. To make the project ready for theaters, Lasseter would need to add twelve minutes or so of material and strengthen what was already there. The extra material would be a challenge, since it could not be mere padding; it would have to feel as if it had always been there, an organic part of the film. Unkrich,

concerned about the dwindling amount of time left, asked Jobs whether the release date could be pushed back. There was too much to be done. I was sitting in Steve Jobs's office and I said, I'm utterly convinced that we can make a great movie here. I just don't think we can do it in the amount of time that we have, he remembered later. Steve basically said, Well, we have no choice. There are too many things lined up presumably in reference to the films' licensees and marketing partners, which were getting toys and promotions ready. Jobs buoyed Unkrich's spirits. When I look back on my career, Jobs told him, it's the things that were made under these circumstances, under these conditions that were not the best, that I'm the most proud of. With the scheduled delivery date less than a year away, there was no time for months of noodling over the story. Lasseter called Stanton, Docter, Ranft, and some Disney story people to his house, a half-dozen blocks from Sonoma's nineteenth-century town square, for the weekend. There, he hosted a story summit, as he called it, a crash exercise that would yield a finished story in just two days. Back at the office that Monday, Lasseter assembled the company in a screening room and pitched the revised version of Toy Story 2 from beginning to end. Everybody was totally entertained, animator Mark Oftedal remembered. It was a dramatic turn of events for the movie. It became something that was great and that everybody wanted to get in there and start animating. The summiters found parts of the story in ideas that Pixar had discarded from Toy Story. The opening sequence of Toy Story, at one point, was to be a Buzz Lightyear cartoon showing on television. Lasseter had dropped it from Toy Story in favor of a sequence showing Andy's relationship with Woody, but the concept of a Buzz Lightyear cartoon evolved into the Buzz Lightyear video game that would open Toy Story 2. In a draft of Toy Story, Woody was to suffer a nightmare after Buzz displaced him as Andy's favorite toy, a nightmare in which Andy was to throw Woody into a trash can and Woody was to become covered with hundreds of crawling roaches. That nightmare, in a milder form, would appear instead in Toy Story 2 as a device for showing Woody's fear of rejection after his seam rips. The idea of a squeak-toy penguin with a broken squeaker also resurfaced from an early version of Toy Story. John has got a real eye for story, said Floyd Norman, a veteran Disney artist who had worked there during Walt's day, starting with Sleeping Beauty, and whom Pixar hired for story work on both versions of the Toy Story sequel. He [Lasseter] came in with a fresh eye and gave the film a nudge forward and raised the bar a little higher. I think our good film became a great film under John's direction. He'd see things like Woody becoming too much of a jerk in a scene. I remember we had a sequence in the film where Woody dreams of being lauded as this valued collectible, where he's a big shot. He's arriving by limousine and people are taking photographs. He's imagining this fame and hero worship. John looked at that and said, Yeah, it's a funny idea, but it makes our character not as likable because now he's even more vain. And he cut that sequence. Other changes included the luggage-belt chase scene at the airport, which became a bigger set piece than in the direct-to-video version; the concept of having the Prospector still in the box (mint condition, never been opened); and the addition of Jessie's song to tell her haunting story. Lasseter also looked closely at every shot that had already been animated and called for tweaks throughout: a different expression on a character in this shot, a different camera angle or lighting setup in that shot, a handful of extra frames at the end of another. *

He subsequently went to the game company Electronic Arts, where he headed content development for the online game Majestic (2001), and later co-founded an independent animation studio, Alligator Planet.

From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* Thumbs-up. . . . Full of fascinating characters, all struggling-in classic Pixar film style to overcome seemingly impossible odds. *BusinessWeek* You don't have to belong to the computer-animation generation to enjoy *The Pixar Touch*. . . . An entertaining look at digital derring-do. *The Dallas Morning News* Price, a tough, unsentimental reporter, ferrets out lots of backstage drama from fresh sources, weaving a commendably unvarnished history. *Entertainment Weekly* Unprecedented detail about the notoriously press-shy company's workings, a story that abounds with lessons for business people and creative artists alike. *The Wall Street Journal* Inspiring.... Price is a smart reporter and a solid writer. He deftly makes computer arcana palatable, even interesting. *The New York Times* Book Its quite a story, and David Price has finally got it right, its details and the players. This is the definitive history of Pixar. Alvy Ray Smith, co-founder of Pixar [A] brisk history of an entertainment juggernaut that is also the history of computer animation a heck of a yarn, full of vivid characters, reversals of fortune and stubborn determination: Pixar should make a movie out of it. *Kirkus* s (starred) A tale of our times, and David Price tells it with page-turning drama, total veracity, and wonderful wit. Mark Cotta Vaz, author, of *The Art of Finding Nemo*, *The Art of The Incredibles* and *Living Dangerously: The Adventures of Merian C. Cooper*,

Creator of King Kong