



Vinyl Leaves: Walt Disney World and America (Institutional Structures of Feeling)

Stephen M. Fjellman

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Walt Disney World is a pilgrimage site filled with utopian elements, craft, and whimsy. It's a pedestrian's world, where the streets are clean, the employees are friendly, and the trains run on time. All of its elements are themed, presented in a consistent architectural, decorative, horticultural, musical, even olfactory tone, with rides, shows, restaurants, scenery, and costumed characters coordinated to tell a consistent set of stories. It is beguiling and exasperating, a place of ambivalence and ambiguity. In *Vinyl Leaves* Professor Fjellman analyzes each ride and theater show of Walt Disney World and discusses the history, political economy, technical infrastructure, and urban planning of the area as well as its relationship with Metropolitan Orlando and the state of Florida. *Vinyl Leaves* argues that Disney, in pursuit of its own economic interests, acts as the muse for the allied transnational corporations that sponsor it as well as for the world of late capitalism, where the commodity form has colonized much of human life. With brilliant technological legerdemain, Disney puts visitors into cinematically structured stories in which pieces of American and world culture become ideological tokens in arguments in favor of commodification and techno-corporate control. Culture is construed as spirit, colonialism and entrepreneurial violence as exotic zaniness, and the Other as child. Exhaustion and cognitive overload lead visitors into the bliss of Commodity Zen—the characteristic state of postmodern life. While we were watching for Orwell, Huxley rode into town, bringing *soma*, cable, and charge cards—and wearing mouse ears. This book is the story of our commodity fairyland.

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