



Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age

Mathew Klickstein

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SLIMED! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age tells the surprisingly complex, wonderfully nostalgic, and impressively compelling story of how Nickelodeon -- the First Kids' Network -- began as a DIY startup in the late 70s, and forged ahead through the early eighties with a tiny band of young artists and filmmakers who would go on to change everything about cable television, television in general, animation, and children's entertainment, proving just what can be done if the indie spirit is kept alive in the corporate world. Get the real back story about all of your favorite Golden Age Nick shows: Everything from such classics as *You Can't Do That On Television*, *Out of Control* and *Double Dare* to early 90s faves like *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*, the original three Nicktoons, *Clarissa Explains It All* and more ... All from those who made it happen!

Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age Details

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From Reader Review Slimed!: An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age for online ebook

Ashley says

I've got a proper review and blog post coming for this one - I've just got to recover from being hit by the sheer awesomeness of someone writing a book devoted to the television of my childhood. Ahhh-mazing!

Edit Okay, link to the review on my blog here - <http://morwesong.wordpress.com/2013/0...>

The short version - loved it!

Disclaimer: I received a free copy of this book from the publisher to read and review.

Brian says

I grew up watching Nickelodeon. I loved Pinwheel and Today's Special. So I was more than excited to see a book about some of the shows I loved. But this is one of the poorest written books I've ever read.

The book is divided into chapters. Each chapter contains interviews with various people associated with the network; be it actors, writers or directors. The interviews are completely in a random order. The narrative has zero flow and it makes for a totally disjointed reading. At the end of the book there are a list of who these people are. But you have to flip back and forth. Would it have been so hard for the author or editor to put the characters or relation to the show before each entry ? Or at the beginning of the chapter. This book was literally unreadable. Do not buy this!!!!

Leajk says

Some more background info.

From another book by the same author:

"Some girls I hate so much, I have to see them naked."

(quote said by male main character who finds a comatose girl and rather than taking her to a hospital has her a the focal point of an erotic adventure)

From an interview with the author about diversity and Nickelodeon:

"I think that it does the culture a disservice. If I were Indian or Jewish, for example, and watched something where the characters are Jewish or supposed to be, and if it's not specific to that, then I start to wonder, "Why are they doing this?" It becomes blackface."

Phil Keeling says

As a child, there were few theme songs that carried as much emotional weight as those of The Adventures of Pete and Pete and Ren & Stimpy. This reaction wasn't so much based on the groovy melodies or the beat (though both contained a little of each). No--my blissful heartstrings twanging in harmony with those songs came entirely from the fact that they were the opening of the gates to a half hour of humorous insanity. Those were my two favorites. For other kids, it was Clarissa Explains It All or the dulcet tones of Doug, Rugrats, or Salute Your Shorts. Nickelodeon, with its initial "us versus them" attitudes of kids and parents held a very important place for people of my generation.

The belief that Nickelodeon defined us is no hyperbole. It was the first time that an entire television station was dedicated to children's programming. And the purity and earnestness of those first golden years is perfectly encapsulated in Mathew Klickstein's labor of love, *Slimed! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age*. More than just telling the stories as they objectively happened, Mr. Klickstein interviewed the people who made Nickelodeon possible: from actors to writers to animators, directors and producers. The immense amount of history here is impressive in and of itself, but Klickstein's care and tenderness for the subject makes this collection of reminiscences impossible to put down.

By care and tenderness, I don't just mean the mere ability to record and transcribe the dozens of interviews and put them together in some way that is comprehensible. That alone isn't enough for *Slimed!* Klickstein knows his audience, and has somehow found a way to ask questions of his interviewees that perhaps the reader didn't even know they wanted to know. A great example includes the droopy gibberish that makes up the lyrics to "Hey Sandy", the Miracle Legion-penned theme song to The Adventures of Pete and Pete.

If the lyrics seem incomprehensible to you?, it's probably because frontman Mark Mulcahy hasn't told anyone:

"I'm pretty sure, like anything, people would be pretty disappointed about the truth...No one knows but me, and that's a rarity, so I'm hanging on to it. Even the other band members aren't aware of it. I came close to telling somebody, but I didn't. So I haven't told anybody. Don't feel left out."

The entire tome of *Slimed!* is filled with beautiful tidbits like this one. It'd be nice to suggest that it's nothing but a wistful romp through the orange and green landscape of our childhoods, but as sure as a VH1: Behind The Music has a whiskey-soaked overdose halfway in, greed and infighting rear their ugly heads.

If the surge of show moms, lawsuits, and creative struggles sounds like something that would ruin your reception of Nickelodeon's history, that's only because you're straining to look at it with your prepubescent eyes. As an adult, I found watching the Emperor sans undergarments to be fascinating. The Pollyanna nostalgia bug chewing at my insides and begging to be satisfied with wholesome Willy Wonka-style antics is immediately silenced with the fantastic stories of fear and infighting between parties that genuinely seemed to care about the network.

The ousting of John Kricfalusi from his own creation of Ren & Stimpy is heartbreaking, but morally vague. The decision to side with the perfectionist, dragging-his-feet creator or the money-hungry corporate machine is entirely up to the reader, and no one side is polished to look better than the other. This is made all the more impressive during Klickstein's Acknowledgements, when it becomes clear that he's a dyed-in-the-wool John K fanatic. Just like any endeavor taken over by highly creative individuals, there are differences of opinion and feelings get hurt. To hear it told by so many different perspectives is utterly amazing.

The greatest and most unique moments in *Slimed!* had to come from the young actors who made up the eclectic casts of Nickelodeon's many live action TV shows. While *Salute Your Shorts* and *Hey Dude* inspired the childhoods of people like you or I, this select bunch literally lived out their adolescence on Nickelodeon's stage. Their various transitions into adulthood are as diverse as the people you went to high school with. Our earliest heroes, crushes, bullies and laughingstocks all make appearances, and their perspective is rich, varied, and ultimately satisfying.

Mathew Klickstein has done us a service with this book, feeding our whimsey-hungry baby birds with nutrient-rich slime. Expertly compiled and blissfully executed, *Slimed!* will probably take you four times as long to read as a book of a similar size, as you pop from the book to Google and back again. Though rich with childhood abandon, *Slimed!* still takes the time to remind one you occasionally come back to the ground for air, as Clarissa mom Elizabeth Hess perfectly summarizes:

"Sometimes now my students say, 'Let's have a Clarissa party!' And I'm like, 'Nooooo! No, no. For you, it's nostalgia. For me, it's a really beautiful time in my life I don't need to revisit."

And perhaps that's the greatest lesson Mathew Klickstein and *Slimed!* teaches you: for every whiff of your childhood, there was a crew member somewhere, mixing green food coloring into cream of wheat.

Sean O'Hara says

EDIT: Okay, I am retroactively deducting a star from this book for the author being an ass-hat of Biblical proportions. Seems the guy gave an interview where he ranted about how Nickelodeon used to be better when it was all white people in the shows.

No, seriously.

Sanjay and Craig is a really good example.... That show is awkward because there's actually no reason for that character to be Indian — except for the fact that [Nickelodeon President] Cyma Zarghami and the women who run Nickelodeon now are very obsessed with diversity.

Is there any reason for the character to be white instead? No. But in crazy racist white guy world, there never has to be a reason for a character to be white. That's the default, and shows should only deviate from the default if there's a reason for it. TV shows are supposed to be about white people; that's just the way things are, and other races only exist for plot-related reasons. Indian children have no right to see characters like themselves on TV in leading roles -- that's a privilege reserved for white people.

Yeah, well screw you Mathew Klickstein. You are a racist shit.

ORIGINAL REVIEW

This book is jammed full of information on Nickelodeon's heyday, compiled from interviews with dozens of key players. Everything a fan of the network's classic shows could ever want to know.

Too bad it's so badly disorganized.

The gold standard for a book like this has to be *I Want My MTV: The Uncensored Story of the Music Video Revolution* which wisely began with the founding of the network, covering the trials and tribulations of getting it financed, developing programming, hiring VJs, finding decent music videos, etc. Despite telling the story of MTV entirely through lengthy block quotes, the authors assembled a cohesive narrative that told you everything you needed to know about MTV in a manner that was easy to follow.

Here, on the other hand, we have quotes piled on top of quotes with little structure. Instead of discussing individual shows one at a time, the author groups everything by loose themes and jumps from discussing one series to another at will. And because speakers are only ever identified by name, never what they did, the reader sometimes doesn't know that the subject's changed from *You Can't Do That on Television* to *Clarissa Explains It All* until somebody mentions Melissa Joan Hart.

Kaethe says

"I'm starting to do stand-up comedy now and it's hard to go up there and talk about how hard it is to be a guy. People don't wanna hear it!"

The author on Flavorwire <http://flavorwire.com/480990/pete-pet...>

" I would be offended if one of the friends on *Clifford the Big Red Dog* had a friend who was in a wheelchair."

Um, yeah, Mary is her name. She appears in multiple episodes. My daughter loved Clifford.

Amber Ross says

Nickelodeon is engrained in my childhood. The shows that were on in the early 90s to the year 2000 were wonderful, weird and unafraid. I went into this book expecting to get some great insights into the behemoth that is Nickelodeon and get some fun Intel on a few of my old favorite shows. That's not what I got.

This book is not really an oral history. It's one question posed at the beginning of a chapter with a bunch of random people answering. Half the time, the answers morph into new subjects altogether. I grew bored, I had no idea who was talking and couldn't remember some of the shows they were discussing - like Roundhouse.

I really anticipated something different with this. Would've loved it to be more chronological instead of this bizarre mish mash of sound bites. Give this a skip.

Mark Simon says

I work in TV production, and love books about how TV is made...

The pluses of this one are

** It was an easy read (was done in 2 days)

** The thoroughness of the interviews was great. The writer did his homework and then some.

** The stories of the battles between creativity and corporate were interesting.

** If you grew up on You Can't Do That on Television/Double Dare, it's really cool to read about those ... I loved the little behind the scenes details.

Similarly: if you liked The Adventures of Pete & Pete, Ren & Stimpy, Rugrats, Are You Afraid of the Dark, Clarissa Explains it All, you will find it entertaining (one of the issues for me was that while I knew of these shows, I didn't watch them)

The reasons I "only" gave it 3 stars

** I saw this complaint in a few places ... the author doesn't give you a capsule on the people he interviewed until the end of the book. This necessitates checking the bios in the back every 2 minutes to figure out who was who

** There's an element of "what the heck are they talking about?" on some of the issues (particularly with the cartoon shows) where there was a lot of airing of grievances and an assumption that the reader understood what was going on.

** I LOVE oral histories ... but all the good ones I've read have narratives of some sort to break up the quotes and provide transitions . This one needed them and didn't have any ... it was just quote, quote, quote, quote quote. This made for some weird transitions from subject to subject.

Nonetheless, despite the complaints, I gave it a solid 3-star review. If you are my age or younger and remember Nickelodeon well, there are at least parts of this book that you'll really like.

Valerie says

This was a fun book, and I had a major squee episode when I got the email from First Reads that I'd won it. I'm 31 years old, so I spent a good portion of my childhood in Nick's Target audience. SNICK was an Event in my home, I subscribed to Nick magazine, and I wanted nothing more in life than to someday compete on Double Dare.

The book isn't exactly what I expected it to be. It's an oral history, so it's a series of quotes from cast, crew, production staff, everyone involved in the various projects. Rather than being organized by the interviewee, it's organized by topic. This keeps topics from being repeated, but it did make it a little difficult to understand at times. I would have preferred if after the interviewee's name, there was some kind of credit to tell me who they were or at least which show(s) they were associated with. Either that or some sort of narrative thread from the author tying the interviews together. Most of the time, the context is there, but I still ended up flipping to the appendix an awful lot which got annoying.

That said, I learned a lot about the network that basically defined childhood for me and most of my friends. It's a great nostalgic look back at this time without having to see the stars now, recognize how old they are and by extension how old I am. They contradict each other left and right, so you really get to see all of the

challenges from every angle. *Kids loved being slimed! We all hated the slime!* etc... The only time I found this frustrating was during the bits about Ren & Stimpy. I really hated this show, and listening to the people who made it talk bitterly about it all these years later... well, maybe that's some of the reason why. The people associated with my favorite shows seemed a little more positive except for those canceled in their prime (yes, my family was the only one around who watched Roundhouse. What? It had a mobile La-Z-Boy!).

I love children's television, and I still spend a lot of my time today analyzing it and seeing what values we are imposing on our kids. The last chapter reflects a lot on this, and I really feel that in those early days, Nick was one of the few that put kids first (except with Ren & Stimpy... God, I hated that show). They were using real kids playing with real kids, and I was sad when they got bigger and more and more corporate input started making its way onto the show. I hope that some of those folks will read this book and remember that, "What's good for kids *will* be good for business."

Orsolya says

Like most children of the 80s/90s; I was fascinated by Nickelodeon. My eyes feasted on such programs as: "Welcome Freshmen", "Fifteen", "You Can't Do That on Television", "Salute Your Shorts", "Roundhouse", "Clarissa Explains It All", "Nick Arcade", "Wild and Crazy Kids", "Legends of the Hidden Temple"... Need I go on? One can imagine my excitement with the release of a behind-the-scenes exposé of THE channel for children in, "Slimed! An Oral History of Nickelodeon's Golden Age" by Mathew Klickstein. The question is whether the work is a slam dunk or a gooey pie to the face...

The subtitle to "Slimed!" doesn't exaggerate when describing the book as an oral history. In fact, this should be italicized and in bold print as the format of "Slimed!" consists merely of quotes/interviews from key players involved in Nickelodeon (producers, directors, actors, animators, etc). Although Klickstein successfully included and received the cooperation from this large and eclectic group; "Slimed!" is a jumbled mess.

"Slimed!" is organized by topic interview questions where the said individuals answered questions which were then compiled to form a strand. It would be overstating to call this a narrative, as there is no text aside from the quotes: no introduction, no background, nothing! The "Cast of Characters" (as dubbed by Klickstein), is located at the book end versus the beginning; requiring constant flipping back-and-forth. Plus, each section's topic isn't answered by all the cast and crew from one show but jumps from show to show with each line resulting in choppiness, confusion, and a lack of chronology.

Also disappointing is the subject matter, itself. One will **not** learn about how or why Nickelodeon was created, how it got off the ground and was run, etc. Instead, expect gossipy tidbits which are mostly revolved around inter-relationships dramas versus the business end of the channel. Not to mention, each individual seems to remember events differently, causing a loss of credibility instead of a well-rounded view which was probably Klickstein's intent.

"Slimed!" narrows the audience greatly due to the lack of a narrative as you have to be of a certain age to remember the shows and actors being mentioned (or to even care). The piece is not meant for a general audience and is suggested for readers aged late 20s/early 30s. Despite these issues with organization and content; "Slimed!" does feature some notable blurbs which will heighten the levels of nostalgia with the

target readers. It should be noted, though, that Melissa Joan Hart's memoir was released around the same time as "Slimed!" and therefore both books contain similar "Clarissa Explains It All" tidbits.

"Slimed!" improves with its 'storytelling' (term used loosely) and topics as the pages turn, capturing more reader attention. However, there continues to be an absence of expansion and thus interesting notes are never elaborated leaving the reader with unanswered questions and many "why's". Similarly, the reader doesn't truly learn about Nickelodeon or the players involved because most of the time one is flipping to the directory to figure out who is being discussed.

The conclusion of "Slimed!" wraps up the work well in the sense that it asks the interviewees to discuss the current state of the channel and also highlight how their lives were effected/are now. Again, this doesn't go into detail but it is interesting how these people are living today. Also included is a poem/after word by "Artie" from "Pete & Pete" which is another nostalgic highlight but the actual poem makes no sense at all (I don't think it is trying to, though).

Overall, "Slimed!" is a quick read (1-day) but it is hardly a book at all and it is insulting to other authors to have Klickstein be included in their bunch. He didn't write ANYTHING. He merely recorded some interviews and compiled the answers. It is evident that Klickstein is a fan and wanted to satisfy his own fanboy excitement. The problem is that the reader barely learns anything with the exception of a few tasty, gossip bits. "Slimed!" is suggested for readers about 25-35 with deep childhood nostalgia and searching for a fast read. Otherwise, "Slimed!" can be skipped.

John Lamb says

Growing up, a lot of my time was spent watching *The Adventures of Pete & Pete*, *Hey Dude!*, and *Double Dare*, so I was interested in reading the background on these shows and see how they were created. However, this book is greatly disappointing. Rather than organize the book chronologically or through each show, a bunch of people are quoted, which results in a very large dinner party in which no one is heard. There is no context for the stories and the reader has to keep shuffling back to the list of characters to figure who is talking and what show he or she is referring to. Such a great opportunity ruined.

Bob Mackey says

If Slimed! had the organization of MTV's recent oral history "I Want My TV," it could have been amazing. Instead, it's a collection of anecdotes more than it is a history of the network's golden age, and while it was a breezy, entertaining read, I was hoping for something a little more thorough. I can forgive the author, since he's made it clear that he had a problem contacting certain important figures from Nick's history, but this lack of information creates some major gaps in the narrative, including the very creation of the network. Still, this is the best source of information on Nick's history to date, and the book wisely drops off as the network became much less experimental and more of a bland corporate force in the late '90s. And any book that points out the creepiness of those nightmare puppets from Pinwheel gets bonus points with me.

Cara says

Though I enjoyed this book, I found the format difficult to read as I constantly had to flip back to the list of interviewees & Google who people were. This is essentially just a collection of quotes & would get confusing when each person was talking about a different show. I would have given this 2 stars, but gave it 1 extra just due to the nostalgia factor & behind the scenes information about Nickelodeon. Chapters are divided into different themes instead of a timeline or by show. The best parts were the longer chunks about Pete & Pete and the chunk about Ren & Stimpy's creator getting fired, as those were longer chunks & more of a narrative than 10 different actors from 10 different shows talking about growing up & shooting schedules.

Joe says

It's cool to read about this network that I feel such nostalgia for, but it's not quite a good fit for those of us in our early 20s. Most of the book is focused on what was produced in the mid-late 80s -- things like Salute your Shorts or Hey Dude -- rather than the stuff made in the mid-late 90s. They do talk quite a bit about Rugrats, The Adventures of Pete and Pete, and Clarissa Explains it all, but not much is mentioned about All That or Keenan and Kel or Rocko's Modern Life or Hey Arnold or anything else that I'd feel more familiar with. Still, interesting. Just might be more interesting if you were 27-35.

Kelsey Hanson says

Actual Rating: 3.5 (Half Stars. Make it happen goodreads!)

Like many kids born in the late 80s and early nineties, I'm still in that rough stage of life about four years out from college where you realize that things are not going entirely according to plan and there's lots of responsibility... and debt. I honestly think this is part of the reason why 90s nostalgia is so intense right now, because we're looking back on our childhoods with wistful nostalgia. One of those key points is Nickelodeon. Oh my GOD! I loved this network and spent most of my childhood being its target audience. My sister and brother and I were flipping cartwheels when we finally got cable because it meant we could watch Nickelodeon. In fact, The BIG Help came to my hometown and every kid under thirteen lost their freaking minds.

Nickelodeon has a rich history with SO MANY good shows! This book focuses on a ton of different Nick-related topics including interviews with past stars, behind the scenes looks at the production process for many popular shows, and the impact that it had on the kids who loved it.

That being said, this was not the book that I wanted. It was totally engrossing and I devoured it in a day and I learned a ton of new things about the network, but the format of the book was frustrating. What I was hoping for was a history about the rise and fall (yes, I do believe Nick has indeed fallen) of Nickelodeon that focused on the origins of the company, the addition of the popular shows (both live action and animated), how these shows were made, what it was like on the studios/stations and how it compares to what it is today (PS. If anyone knows about a book of this sort PLEASE let me know I will love you forever. If this book doesn't exist yet SOMEBODY PLEASE WRITE IT). This book is really more of a collection of interview answers loosely wrapped around a topic. This format is a bit hit and miss. It did provide a lot of insight into

the Ren and Stimpy fight and the production issues with Rugrats (I had no idea that Klasky and the rest of the Rugrats team had such a tumultuous working relationship). But it didn't cover a lot of info about how the network was created and doesn't touch on a lot of the shows that I really liked (Rocko's Modern Life, All That, Hey Arnold!, Rocket Power, CatDog etc.) I was also a bit surprised on how little it touched on Spongebob Squarepants. Even though many people view Spongebob as the yellow menace who destroyed 90s era Nickelodeon, it has had a major impact on the network (whether good or not is debatable).

The general gist of this book is that Nickelodeon's Golden Age ended when Viacom *thunderclap and lighting* quit letting the highly creative show creators do what they do best and let the network go corporate. I felt a bit depressed reading this book realizing that the best years of the network are probably in the past. It's pretty crushing knowing that the studio where these shows were produced and/or filmed, which used to be painted bright blue, orange and green with a slime fountain, is now just another office building. However, I am happy that I was able to witness and appreciate Nickelodeon's finest years.
