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Made By Hand: Searching For Meaning In A Throwaway World



Synopsis

From his unique vantage point as editor in chief of Make magazine, the hub of the newly invigorated do-it-yourself (DIY) movement, Mark Frauenfelder takes listeners on an inspiring and surprising tour of the vibrant world of DIY. The Internet has brought together large communities of people who share ideas, tips, and blueprints for making everything from unmanned aerial vehicles to pedal-powered iPhone chargers to an automatic cat feeder jury-rigged from a VCR. DIY is a direct reflection of our basic human desire to invent and improve, long suppressed by the availability of cheap, mass-produced products that have drowned us in bland convenience and cultivated our most wasteful habits. Frauenfelder spent a year trying a variety of offbeat projects, such as keeping chickens and bees, tricking out his espresso machine, whittling wooden spoons, making guitars out of cigar boxes, and doing citizen science with his daughters in the garage. His whole family found that DIY helped them take control of their lives, offering a path that was simple, direct, and clear. Working with their hands and minds helped them feel more engaged with the world around them. Frauenfelder reveals how DIY is changing our culture for the better. He profiles fascinating "alpha makers" leading various DIY movements and grills them for their best tips and insights. Beginning his journey with hands as smooth as those of a typical geek, Frauenfelder offers a unique perspective on how earning a few calluses can be far more rewarding and satisfying than another trip to the mall. --This text refers to the Audio CD edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If, however, you've never in your life had to be personally competent and you think it might be a lark to throw a bunch of money at half baked DIY projects, then by all means give this book a whirl. To be clear, though, you will find almost no instruction or valuable reflection. I don't think I've ever written a review on before, though I'm a hefty consumer of mostly non-fiction books. I don't enjoy being negative, either, as I feel that any earnest attempt at something is at least a little bit honorable. Truth be told, I did learn something in this book; there are a few pages about a man named Edward Bernays who is the originator of psychological based marketing in the early 20th century that I found very interesting. Beyond that, this book ought to have been condensed by 70% and turned into a passable pamphlet. This guy and his wife made money hand-over-fist during the dot com boom by being freelance writers. When the bubble popped, they found themselves with some vague sense of emptiness that couldn't be filled by their paid-off mortgage, sizable nest egg, or espresso so they logically decided to move to a small island in the middle of the Pacific where they'd vacationed for a short period a number of years prior. They sold the house during the grossly inflated real estate bubble and packed up only a big van load of the most important things to them. This included 13 pairs of shoes for his wife and an espresso machine worth as much as a used car. This well-thought-out plan turned sour when they were struck with the epiphany that it's difficult raising children without the support structure of friends + family and that living on a small Pacific Island isn't all up-side. After 4.5 months they admit defeat and fly all of their stuff back home.

I've been interested in DIY culture for most of my life and love Make magazine as well as the O'Reilly "Hacks" series. Like the author, I think I inherited these tendencies from my father, while growing up in California. I have a brother whose own experience has closely paralleled that of the author. Mark Frauenfelder's "Made by Hand" gives his readers permission to make mistakes while exploring the world of DIY (Do It Yourself, as opposed to HAP, or Hire a Pro) culture. A resident of Tarzana then Studio City, both suburbs of Los Angeles, he would seem like an unlikely choice for urban hillbilly. Frauenfelder's claims to fame include starting the popular blog "Boing Boing." and appearing in the first Errol Morris Apple commercial. This is one of those recently popularized "experience" books, in which the author sets out to try something different, like living strictly according to the Old Testament or eating nothing but cheese for a year. Frauenfelder begins the book by describing a desire to escape urban malaise by moving to Raratonga, and quickly discovers the difference between being a tourist and a resident of a community. From that experience he discovered that his favorite part of the journey was "coconut day," when he would extract coconut meat with his daughters and cook it into scones or other goodies. Upon his return to

what passes for "civilization," Frauenfelder embarks on a 1.5 year program to emulate coconut day by slowing his life down through a series of DIY projects, including killing his front lawn, growing his own food, modding his high-end espresso machine, raising chickens, fermenting Kombucha, yogurt and sauerkraut, making musical instruments, raising bees and ultimately learning how to learn. Oh, and carving wooden spoons.

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