



Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism (New Edition)

By Walter LaFeber

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Walter LaFeber's timely analysis looks at the ways that triumphant capitalism, coupled with high-tech telecommunications, is conquering the nations of the world, one mind?one pair of feet?at a time.

With *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism*, Walter LaFeber has written a biography, a social history, and a far-ranging economic critique. From basketball prodigy to international phenomenon to seductive commercial ideal, Michael Jordan is the supreme example of how American corporations have used technology in a brave, massively wired new world to sell their products in every corner of the globe. LaFeber's examination of Nike and its particular dominion over the global marketplace is often scathing, while his fascinating mini-biography of Michael Jordan and the commercial history of basketball reveal much about American society. For this new paperback edition, LaFeber has added a chapter on globalization in a changed world, after mass protests and since September 11. "Bold, riveting....Brilliantly illuminates how hyper-US capitalism has spread its financial wings around the globe."?Douglas Brinkley "LaFeber brings an impressive intellect to bear on his subject."?Barbara Rudolph, *Chicago Tribune*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Not everyone embraces the "American Way." But as historian Walter LaFeber demonstrates in this highly original look at the effects of global capitalism, not everyone has a choice. Using powerful communications satellites in the 1980s and, later, unbridled capital, transnational corporations such as McDonald's and Nike and their media-mogul counterparts have infiltrated cultures from Paris to Beijing, understanding perfectly that what the world sees the world buys (in this case, Big Macs and anything plastered with a Nike swoosh). Of course, it helps when hoops legend Michael Jordan--the world's most idolized athlete--is pitching your products. His influence is pervasive: "McDonald's, blaring Michael Jordan's endorsement, operated in 103 nations and fed one percent of the world's population each day. 'Within the East Asian urban environment,' one historian of the firm notes, 'McDonald's fills a niche once occupied by the teahouse, the neighborhood shop, the street-side stall, and the park bench.'"

LaFeber transitions smoothly from Michael Jordan biography to socioeconomic commentary, first exploring Jordan as the great American hero, then turning a critical eye on Nike and its shoddy overseas labor practices. Jordan can certainly sell shoes, but at what cost? In the final chapter heading, LaFeber asks whether Michael Jordan is the "Greatest Endorser of the Twentieth Century" or "An Insidious Form of Imperialism." He presents evidence of both, but ultimately *The New Global Capitalism* becomes less about Jordan's marketing prowess than America's influence over the world's consumer habits, and, subsequently, the havoc that power can wreak. LaFeber's short (164 pages), lucid study gives readers a fresh perspective on the battle between capital and culture. Recommended. --Rob McDonald

From Publishers Weekly

What could be more awe inspiring than the image of Michael JordanAshaved head shining, tongue wagging, basketball cockedAhanging in the air as he glides in to dunk? Try global communication technology that allows kids in the Canary Islands to watch NBA games in real time and use the Internet to order Nike shoes so they can be like Mike. In assessing the recently retired star's ascent from basketball phenom to international marketing phenomenon, LaFeber (*The Clash*, etc.) views Jordan as the harbinger of a new kind of capitalism fueled by information-age media. It's a world in which American transnational companies like Nike have learned to establish brand consciousness with worldwide social and economic impact. Jordan's career corresponded with and was fueled by the emergence of CNN, the Internet and aggressive worldwide marketing. To put Jordan in context, LaFeber links the history of basketball with America's century of economic dominance and writes entertainingly about the development of the sport into a multi-billion-dollar business with licensing spinoffs. He also asks tough questions about Jordan's responsibility as a public figure ("politically neutered," in Arthur Ashe's phrase) and his muted, awkward reaction to Nike's much criticized labor practices in developing countries. Readers who thought that some necessary cultural criticism was missing from David Halberstam's *Playing for Keeps* (Forecasts, Jan. 18) will find that LaFeber, a Cornell historian, has written the chapter Halberstam neglected and has expanded it into a thought-provoking reflection on the relationship between Jordan and globalization. (Aug.)

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From Library Journal

This marvelously original cultural history by eminent historian LaFeber (history, Cornell; *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*) uses the development and growth of basketball to examine a broad range of issues, including globalization and the changing role of transnational corporations; the impact of Michael

Jordan as a global media star and the American dominance of global media; the nature of U.S. power in the post-Cold War era; and the probable consequences of American cultural imperialism at home and abroad. Along the way, he eloquently describes both the North Carolina legacy of Michael Jordan and the impact of David Stearn as National Basketball Association commissioner, examining how their links to transnational entities such as Nike have blown apart governmental regulations and traversed geographical boundaries on the feet of millions. A tightly written treatise on what is wrong in the world today that should find avid readers in both public and academic libraries.

-A Norman B. Hutcherson, Beale Memorial Lib., Bakersfield, CA

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