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Just Out of Reach: The 1980s New York Yankees

Greg Prato
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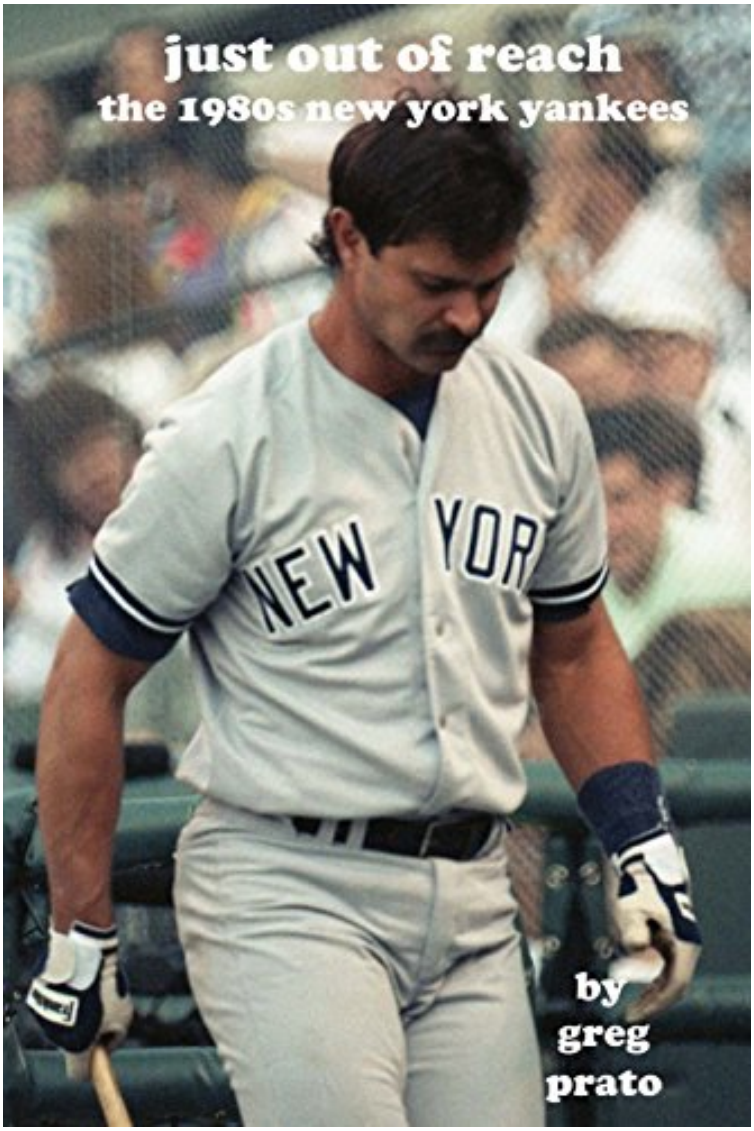

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Greg Prato : Just Out of Reach: The 1980s New York Yankees before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Just Out of Reach: The 1980s New York Yankees:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Underwhelming, but still very entertainingBy Jason A. MillerTwo of the biggest problems with "Just Out of Reach" can be revealed just by a careful reading of the product page. Under "Book Description" -- what the author and his publisher want to tell us about the book -- we learn that "Just Out of Reach", quote, "reads like a documentary, but in book form", end quote. Yes. Reading is what one does with a book, thank you very much. And then the first three "Editorial Reviews" are laudatory quotes from... three of the book's

interview subjects. The equivalent to this would be if the first editorial review for Joe Torre's "The Yankee Years" was from Joe Torre himself.Apart from that, this is an entertaining Kickstarter-style book. The author reminisces about his first games at Yankee Stadium -- a memorable August 1982 doubleheader loss to the Chicago White Sox which got the Yankees then-manager, Gene Michael, promptly fired. He then explains how this experience led him to write a book about the 1980 through 1986 Yankees, seven very talented teams that never managed to win a title. However, the author's input is largely editorial: 99% of the book is comprised of interviews with Yankee players from that era, along with Billy Martin's son, and sportswriter Steve Jacobson. The players (and Martin Jr., and Jacobson) tell their own stories, with minimal text added by the author. The players (particularly Tommy John, George Frazier, Dave LaRoche) are very funny, and they make this also-ran era of Yankee history quite fun to read about.The player interviews are about as good as their memories. It's usually a feature of baseball biographies that most player anecdotes about their most memorable games can be quickly proved wrong with 45 seconds of research on Baseball Reference and Retrosheet. While there are some such scattered errors here, most of the details are surprisingly accurate, particularly Steve Balboni and Andre Robertson describing their eventful first games in the major leagues, and Dave LaRoche describing a famous strikeout of Gorman Thomas (a popular clip which can still be viewed on YouTube). While the author does correct some factual errors in brackets during the quoted interviews, he allows other whoppers to stand uncorrected; Ron Davis brazenly asserts that Ken Griffey Sr. had a better year in 1982 than Reggie Jackson, which.... no. Not in real life; not even in Nintendo RBI Baseball.The choice of interviews is also very telling. Prato only manages to land two Hall-of-Famers, Phil Niekro and Goose Gossage, for his piece. That means that you don't hear from the Yankees' top-line stars of that era: no Guidry, no Winfield, no Randolph, no Don Baylor, no Rickey Henderson, no Don Mattingly, no Reggie. However, there are plenty of Steve Kemps, Ron Kittles, Rex Hudlers, and Brian Fishers. Which actually works to the book's benefit, as you typically get a lot more insight and self-reflection from the has-beens and second-stringers than you do from the big names. Andre Robertson in particular is given much focus, as the effective ending of his career in an August 1983 motor-vehicle accident is retold at length. However, the author doesn't engage in much critical statistical analysis; he merely allows others to ruminate as to what a wonderful player Robertson might have been ("He had the makings of being a superstar", asserts Frazier), while the limited statistical evidence of Robertson's career totals really doesn't justify such conclusions.On the whole, I found "Just Out of Reach" very enjoyable. Like the author, I'm a Mets fan who grew up in Yankee territory, and knew most of the stories in this book by heart before I even read the thing. It was a funny trip down memory lane, and led me to look up a lot of old game results on Retrosheet and Baseball Reference that I hadn't thought about in years. It's not quite as exhaustive or well-researched as it could have been with more time, money, and access, but it certainly was never a dull read.2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Prato Does It AgainBy D. I. KlebanA great look back at Yankees from 1980's. Using same format that he used in "Sack Exchange" (Jets) and "Dynasty" (Islanders), Prato tells the story of the 80's Yankees through the players and others surrounding the team. This is the perfect format for this type of book as the reader gets an inside perspective that would not be seen if it was just the author recounting various games and events. Prato does a masterful job letting the story be told while staying out of the way which many writers fail to do. What is great is that even though Prato interviewed stars from those teams (Gossage, Righetti), it is the tales from the lesser celebrated players (Kemp, Fischer, Kittle, Pags, Balboni, Andre Robertson) that really add color to the narrative. What really struck me was how big an honor it was for these guys to put on the pinstripes even in some leaner years. I loved hearing about Steinbrenner and some of the charitable things he did that were not reported. To a man, the players seemed to love playing for George which is not the impression I had when I was growing up in NY in the 80's following these teams. Great stuff on Billy as well. For anyone who grew up rooting for these Yankee teams, this is a must read.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Trip Back in Pinstripe HistoryBy Malverne EdAnother good book by Greg Prato. If you lived thru the 8o's in New York followed the baseball scene, this book is for you. I am a die-hard Mets fan. The 1980's for me always represented the rise of the Mets. The Yankees seemed to be just close enough to make the postseason only to fade away in September. They surely would've been helped by a wild card berth if it was in effect then. The Yankees then were always one step in utter chaos created by the owner, George Steinbrenner. I felt those interviewed in the book alluded to that but pulled their punches a bit. The popular sentiment now is that George is a Saint all the wackiness he exuded during the 1980's is forgotten. Those of us who remember those times, don't forget the constant changing of managers, trading away of prospects for over the hill free agents, the empty stadium, etc. My brother the die hard Yankees fan still racks his brain over how Steinbrenner was able to retain ownership. I rack my brain over how the Wilpon family still own the Mets daily. A blast back in time makes this a good read.

The 1980s New York Yankees were loaded with talent - their always-outspoken owner made sure of that. But somehow, someway, it did not all add up - resulting in one of the few decades in Yankee history that did not include at least one World Series championship. However, the '80s weren't a complete washout, as it contained quite a few classic Yankee moments, including a no-hitter, a 300th win for an eventual Hall of Fame pitcher, welcoming two of the biggest stars in all of baseball aboard, and the emergence of a popular, homegrown first baseman. 'Just Out of

Reach: The 1980s New York Yankees' is the first-ever book to focus solely on this decade of the team. Featuring nearly 30 all-new, exclusive interviews with players and those close to the team, the book is a fly-on-the-wall view of what was going on behind the scenes and on the field. Set up in the oral history format, 'Just Out of Reach' reads like a documentary, but in book form.

"I thoroughly enjoyed reading 'Just Out of Reach' by Greg Prato. A true insight from players of the Yankees during the 80's. This book is a must read." --Phil Niekro, Yankees pitcher 1984-1985, Baseball Hall of Fame Inductee 1997 "'Just Out of Reach' brings back many forgotten memories aboutthe great times we had back then withgreat friends and teammates. I think 'Just Out of Reach' is a great read that not only Yankee fans butbaseball fans will enjoy, also." --Rudy May, Yankees pitcher 1974-1976 1980-1983"The parts of the book I have read I found very enjoyable and interesting. Brings back lots of memories." --Dave "La Lob" LaRoche, Yankees pitcher 1981-1983"I think 'Just Out of Reach' is a great read for Yankees fans and baseball fans alike. It's also a really nice trip down nostalgia lane for anyone who grew up as a NY sports fan in the 80's." --Demetri Adarahtas, sports radio talk show host (WFAN)"Whether you are a fan of the New York Yankees or not, this is a fantastic read. As a baseball fan and a Mets fan, I learned so much about the Yankees and a time period in which I grew up in. It's another great job by Greg, and extremely informative about a period of time in Yankee history you do not find a lot of material written about." --John Panarese, SportsTalkNY (WGBB)"Greg's book signifies the 1980's to a tee. The compilation of interviews describes an ego-filled, frustrating time for Yankee fans that turned in the 90's, but unfortunately, didn't get our hero Don Mattingly a title in the 1980's." --Mike Lindsley, PinstripePassion.com"An absorbing recollection of now-it-can-be-told, behind-the-scenes flashbacks organized loosely by years and individual personalities. More than 25 observers, ranging from Hall of Famer [Goose] Gossage to role players such as Barry Foote and Brian Fisher, as well as a broadcaster, newspaper reporter, sports memorabilia store owner and a stand-up comedian who's a Yankees fan share their stories of an era that has been largely overlooked. Until now." --Paul Hagen, MLB.com"Prato trains his literary focus on the 1980s-era New York Yankees and the decade that almost was. The author is a master at seeking out little wrinkles in the great and exalted fabric of professional sports. Using the oral narrative, he stitches, sews and stretches the cloth until he's created an historic blanket without a single loose thread." --Steven Rosen, Curledup.com"There is a clear nostalgia sweet spot for the book, namely Yankees fans younger than me who don't clearly recall the teams of the mid-to-late 1970s and those old enough to know Yankees history did not begin in 1996. Prato has assembled an impressive array of players from the era, many of whom don't mind being honest about those times now that enough years have gone by." -Neil Best, Newsday