

Street Gang: The Complete History of Sesame Street

By Michael Davis

Street Gang, is the compelling, surprising and exclusive story of the creation and history of Sesame Street, the media masterpiece and pop culture landmark. This work of narrative non-fiction chronicles one of the great creative endeavors of our time, with novelistic storytelling and penetrating detail.

It traces the evolution of the show from its inspiration in the civil rights movement through its many ups and downs – from Nixon’s trying to cut off its funding to the rise of Elmo – via the remarkable personalities who have contributed to it.

Michael Davis reveals how Sesame Street taught millions of children not only their letters and numbers, but also cooperation and fair play, tolerance and self-respect, conflict resolution, and the importance of listening.

This is the unforgettable story of five decades of social and cultural change and the miraculous creative efforts, passion, and commitment of the writers, producers, directors, animators, and puppeteers who created one of the most influential programs in the history of television.

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Reviews

“Distilling scores of recent interviews, former TV Guide editor Davis spins his tale around two central figures: Joan Ganz Cooney, a founder and longtime CEO of the Children's Television Workshop; and the inimitable Jim Henson, an inspirational, enigmatic genius whose fuzzy creations are still familiar to nearly everyone who ever sat in front of a television as a child. Both receive heavy, deserved doses of idolization. They didn't work alone, of course; in fact, the author trots in so many supporting characters—some to play recurring roles, others just for a sound bite or two—that lines or scenes from the show itself seldom elbow their way onstage. No matter: Even behind the scenes there were full measures of comedy (a prank ad campaign pairing Cookie Monster with a brand of kielbasa) and tragedy (Henson's early death and Northern Calloway's severe, ultimately fatal, bipolar disorder).”

Kirkus

About Michael

The 56-year-old journalist has worked at an array of newspapers and magazines as both editor and writer. He was a senior editor and Family Page columnist for TV Guide from 2000-2007.

During the 1986-87 academic year he was a Nieman Fellow at Harvard University. Earlier he was an adjunct professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, where he earned a master's degree in 1976. His undergraduate work was completed in 1974 at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

In 1975, Davis dedicated a year of service to Head Start, teaching disadvantaged pre-school children in rural New York State. In 1970, he received a Congressional Medal of Merit for Leadership for service completed at Rogers High School in his hometown on Newport, Rhode Island.

Davis regularly contributes freelance writing and photography to regional and national publications, including The New York Times, The Washington Post and O: The Oprah Winfrey Magazine. Two of his enterprise features were published in “Best Sports Stories,” the hardbound anthology collections of the best in American sports writing and photography. He lives in Yardley, Pennsylvania.