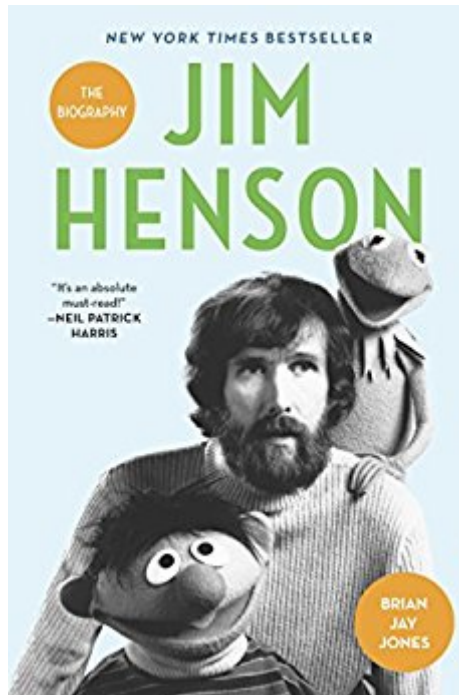




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# Jim Henson: The Biography



## Synopsis

NATIONAL BESTSELLER **THE NEW YORK TIMES** NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY **BOOKPAGE** For the first time ever **THE NEW YORK TIMES** • a comprehensive biography of one of the twentieth century's most innovative creative artists: the incomparable, irreplaceable Jim Henson. He was a gentle dreamer whose genial bearded visage was recognized around the world, but most people got to know him only through the iconic characters born of his fertile imagination: Kermit the Frog, Bert and Ernie, Miss Piggy, Big Bird. The Muppets made Jim Henson a household name, but they were just part of his remarkable story. This extraordinary biography • written with the generous cooperation of the Henson family • covers the full arc of Henson's all-too-brief life: from his childhood in Leland, Mississippi, through the years of burgeoning fame in America, to the decade of international celebrity that preceded his untimely death at age fifty-three. Drawing on hundreds of hours of new interviews with Henson's family, friends, and closest collaborators, as well as unprecedented access to private family and company archives, Brian Jay Jones explores the creation of the Muppets, Henson's contributions to Sesame Street and Saturday Night Live, and his nearly ten-year campaign to bring The Muppet Show to television. Jones provides the imaginative context for Henson's non-Muppet projects, including the richly imagined worlds of The Dark Crystal and Labyrinth as well as fascinating misfires like Henson's dream of opening an inflatable psychedelic nightclub. An uncommonly intimate portrait, Jim Henson captures all the facets of this American original: the master craftsman who revolutionized the presentation of puppets on television, the savvy businessman whose dealmaking prowess won him a reputation as "the new Walt Disney" and the creative team leader whose collaborative ethos earned him the undying loyalty of everyone who worked for him. Here also is insight into Henson's intensely private personal life: his Christian Science upbringing, his love of fast cars and expensive art, and his weakness for women. Though an optimist by nature, Henson was haunted by the notion that he would not have time to do all the things he wanted to do in life • a fear that his heartbreaking final hours would prove all too well founded. An up-close look at the charmed life of a legend, Jim Henson gives the full measure to a man whose joyful genius transcended age, language, geography, and culture • and continues to beguile audiences worldwide. Praise for Jim Henson "Jim Henson vibrantly delves into the magnificent man and his Muppet methods: It's an absolute must-read!" —Neil Patrick Harris "An exhaustive work that is never exhausting, a credit both to Jones's brisk style and to Henson's exceptional

life. **•The New York Times** "[A] sweeping portrait that is a mix of humor, mirth and poignancy. **•Washington Independent Review of Books** "A meticulously researched tome chock-full of gems about the Muppets and the most thorough portrait of their creator ever crafted. **•Associated Press** "Jim was one of my closest friends. And yet I found out things about him in *Jim Henson* that were new to me. Brian Jay Jones has captured the layers of Jim's genius and humanity, as well as the flaws that made Jim, like all of us, so delightfully imperfect. I thank Brian for giving Jim life again. This book has captured the spirit of Jim Henson. **•Frank Oz** From the Hardcover edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The many positive reviews about this book say it all, so I'll just throw in my general opinion...I rated the book highly because I really enjoyed it. I specifically liked the author's writing style, the pacing of the book, the amount of information, the included pictures, and the subject himself. I grew up with Jim Henson's creations, whether on Sesame Street, The Muppet Show, or elsewhere. This book gave me insight on the man behind the characters who gave me some of my happy childhood

memories. I'm glad to have been able to get to know Jim Henson a little bit better.

What can I say that will do the man justice? A true saint for our times. He lived his life to bring the world joy and he succeeded. This book is written so well I honestly feel like I knew Jim Henson intimately and I cried when reading about his death and subsequent memorial services. There came a point during the story when I actually dragged my feet reading it because I hated for the book to finish. I have never read a book so gripping as this one. I know a large part of that is because of who Jim Henson was - his life, his personality, his work - but a good portion of that feeling can be attributed to excellent story telling on the part of the author. I am so glad I bought this book because I will read it again and again...

If you can judge the quality of a book by the amount of time you spend afterward on YouTube looking up clips of the subject matter, then "Jim Henson: The Biography" must have been a perfect book. Jim's life story seems like something you'd be able to guess without doing much research. He was a kid who was fascinated by puppets, probably made his own, and decided to pursue fame and fortune as the world's greatest puppeteer, right? Wrong. He actually wanted to work for advertising agencies when he grew up. He became a puppeteer because when he came of age and went hunting for his first job, it was the only job opening he could find. And for years afterward, even after his characters became variety show and talk show mainstays in high demand for TV commercials, Jim repeatedly insisted that it was just a temporary stop on the way to what he really wanted to do with his life. It was a perspective-altering vacation in Europe (where puppetry is taken VERY seriously and regarded as art) that Jim came to realize that the work he was already doing was something of value, and worth pursuing. The book is very willing to discuss flaws, personal and professional. On a personal level, Jim had a strangely emotionless way about him. We learn of "arguments" he had with his wife where Jim registered no reaction and walked away without firing anything back. Professionally speaking, we learn of Jim's tendency as the years went by to fall in love with technology and build projects around it without putting enough thought into actual substance. Numerous members of Henson's staff, who otherwise spend the text speaking of him in glowing terms, bluntly admit that they strongly disliked "The Dark Crystal" and "Labyrinth," blaming the problems with both productions on Jim's preoccupation with new technology developed for the films. The book leaves out nothing and no one. By the time this is over, you'll feel like you knew Jim Henson, and you'll feel like you were awfully fond of him. And he probably would have been fond of you, too.

This very detailed biography of Jim Henson, from his birth through his death and beyond, is lovingly written and very well researched. You really get a feel for the man, Jim Henson. He was extraordinarily creative and driven, with a sort of innate inner strength and conviction, and compassion, excitement and faith in his fellows and the world. I'll warn you, the end is a tear-jerker. He died so unexpectedly and without warning and we'll never know what he might have created had he lived longer than 53 years. As it was, he created more than 3 53-year-olds put together and his creations shaped a whole generation or two, perhaps changing the world forever.

I loved this book. It is an enjoyable "read"... speaks of a wonderful man with incredible imagination, from which he was actually able to implement an "empire" and a legacy. He was, while not a saint, a very wonderful man in every respect... and it was heartening to find that his creatures are a strong reflection of his fabulous talent, and more importantly, his humanity. The end will bring tears to your eyes...! Do not miss this book if you like Muppets characters and exceptional human beings who have made a real difference on societies for centuries to come.

Not only is this book a joy to read for someone who has grown up watching/worshipping everything Jim Henson has ever made, you can look up pretty much anything in this book on YouTube as a great supplement to your reading! This is why it took me months to finish. It's a really well written and researched book on Jim Henson's work and it was a joy to read. It will make you laugh and cry. Kudos to Brian Jay Jones!

There are two great things about this biography. The author, and the narrator. This is an extremely well-written and easy to read (or listen to) book, so compliments to Brian Jay Jones for his excellent research, thorough interviews, and easy and understandable writing style. The second great thing about this audiobook is the narrator, Kirby Heyborne. Heyborne not only makes this biography interesting by his comfortable, natural narrating style, he also gives "voice" to Jim Henson, as much of the book quotes Henson from interviews held throughout his life. Heyborne also brings several of the Muppet characters alive - very believably - as they appear in the text. The freshness and vitality of this story and the vocal characterizations by the narrator make it even more hard to believe that Jim Henson has been gone from us for almost a quarter of a century. This audiobook is the perfect marriage of a good author and a great narrator. I highly recommend the audio version of this book for anyone who has ever (or who will ever) enjoy the comic antics of the Muppets and their talented

creator.

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