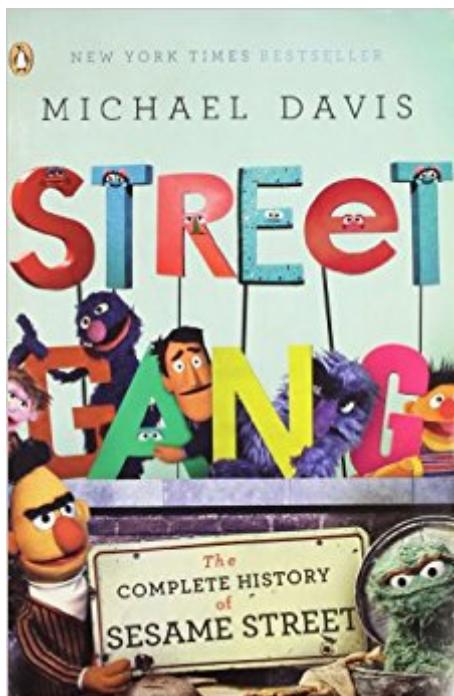


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# Street Gang: The Complete History Of Sesame Street



## Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling account of the story behind one of the most influential, durable, and beloved shows in the history of television: Sesame Street, moving to HBO this fall. Davis tracks down every Sesame anecdote and every Sesame personality in his book . . . Finally, we get to touch Big Bird's feathers. • The New York Times Book Review Sesame Street is the longest-running-and arguably most beloved- children's television program ever created. Today, it reaches some six million preschoolers weekly in the United States and countless others in 140 countries around the world. Street Gang is the compelling, comical, and inspiring story of a media masterpiece and pop-culture landmark. Television reporter and columnist Michael Davis-with the complete participation of Joan Ganz Cooney, one of the show's founders-unveils the idealistic personalities, decades of social and cultural change, stories of compassion and personal sacrifice, and miraculous efforts of writers, producers, directors, and puppeteers that together transformed an empty soundstage into the most recognizable block of real estate in television history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Caroll Spinney ([carollspinney.com](http://carollspinney.com)), the voice of Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch and winner of the Library of Congress's Living Legend Award, here narrates journalist Davis's gentle yet often surprising look at Sesame Street, the world's longest-running (40 years) and widest-reaching (120 countries) children's show. This will be a sure-fire hit in just about every

library; highly recommended. [Includes a bonus interview with Davis and Spinney; the Viking hc was recommended "for all reference and browsing collections," LJ 12/08; visit [www.streetgangbook.com](http://www.streetgangbook.com) for a bonus chapter profiling Roscoe Orman, who played Gordon on the show.] •Ed.] •Joseph L. Carlson, Vandenberg Air Force Base Lib., Lompoc, CA  
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In this history of *Sesame Street*, Davis writes that when the show debuted, in 1969, the goal of its creators was nothing short of righting the inequities in our society through the education of lower-class preschoolers. Such populist choices as an urban setting, a multiracial cast, and a catchy brand of edutainment reflected both the mood of the era (it should jump and move fast and feel and sound like 1969, a producer said) and painstaking research: a series of seminars held in the summer of 1968 was attended by developmental psychologists, television-industry insiders, and children's authors and entertainers (Maurice Sendak endured boring sessions by making X-rated doodles; Jim Henson's sandals and beard sparked fears that he was a Weatherman). The book's strongest sections are culled from extensive interviews with Joan Ganz Cooney, who oversaw production for more than twenty years, but the narrative loses steam once the show hits the air.  
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It's neat when you read a behind-the-scenes story about a television show and it turns out not to be a "True Hollywood Story." At no point did I feel that Michael Davis was whitewashing or purifying the tale. It's a detailed, well-told story of people who liked each other and cooperated to put together a wonderful show. People's faults and foibles are mentioned (The songwriters was hypercompetitive, one of them was a notorious name dropper, Northern "David" Calloway had too many problems to list) but even then, you find that nobody on the show is truly disliked. The hypercompetitive behavior is somewhat justified because of the nature of the business, the name-dropper seemed to be doing it more out of a sense of joy than a need to impress, and Northern Calloway is spoken of with incredible reverence. Your heart breaks as his story unfolds because you take note of how, no matter how much he screwed up, and no matter how blatantly he put himself into a position where he HAD to be fired, everyone still deeply cared for him and hoped things would get better. As an unexpected bonus, the book includes some mini-histories of children's shows that preceded

"Sesame Street." This may seem extraneous at first, but you come to appreciate the way the author is setting the scene. Many TV shows were assembled by people who looked at children as little cash machines ("Howdy Doody") and others had noble purposes but still managed to be corrupted somehow ("Ding Dong School"). It helps you appreciate what a miracle "Sesame Street" was when it finally arrived.

Got this as a gift for my girlfriend, who loves Jim Henson and the Muppets. She'd heard some of the stories before, but loved reading this and went through the whole volume in a day!

A few weeks ago, I rented the documentary "The World According to Sesame Street". I had caught bits and pieces of the show on PBS every now and then, but never really saw the whole thing. Thoroughly enjoyed the video and it prompted me to visit to see if it was available for purchase and to check out what else was available on the subject. Didn't find the DVD, but I did find this book - "Street Gang: The Complete History of Sesame Street" so I ordered it instead. I also ordered the DVD set "Sesame Street - Old School, Vol. 1 (1969-1974)" to watch as a companion to the book. It was a great decision, many of the early first year videos discussed in the book are in the set, as well as the original sales pitch film. I had just turned nine when the show started, but I remember watching it with my sister who was four at the time. I thought the show was great, the animations especially - but I liked the Muppets most of all. Later the "Muppet Show" was one of my favorite shows of all times (I have all three DVD sets). The book is a great read. I spent nearly every free minute I had this week reading it and just finished late last night. It covers the history perfectly IMO. I noticed there are a few reviews that drop a star or two because they thought it wasn't in-depth enough. I'm sure that there could have been more information included, but given that the book is 384 pages and covers a cast of people whose body of work spans more than 40 years - I'd say that there was more than enough covered for this one book. Hopefully someone will one day write a book solely on Jim Henson - it would be something I most certainly would buy.

Great followup on the movie i got / or watch from . The movie was great but the book added some of the detail a movie just could not include.

Street Gang is definitely worth the money and time to read. Being a first generation Sesame Street fan helped me to put much of the history of the show into perspective. Being an educator who always believed that education integrated with entertainment made for a winning combination for all

parties concerned, Street Gang showed me where the emphasis on combining the two came into being. My only dislike of this book was the timeline. Otherwise, it was a most enjoyable read.

excellent historical review of public television and children's educational programming. highly recommend. entertaining also!

Totally facsinating book. Lots of behind the scene "secrets" to the inner workings of Sesame Street. Some humerous, some suprisingly brutal, all worth reading about. It reads well and quickly. You come away with a whole new respect for the process of making such a gifted show,which I did not think that was possible.

Man, this book took me back to my childhood, excellent book and excellent condition. Perfect transaction with seller.

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