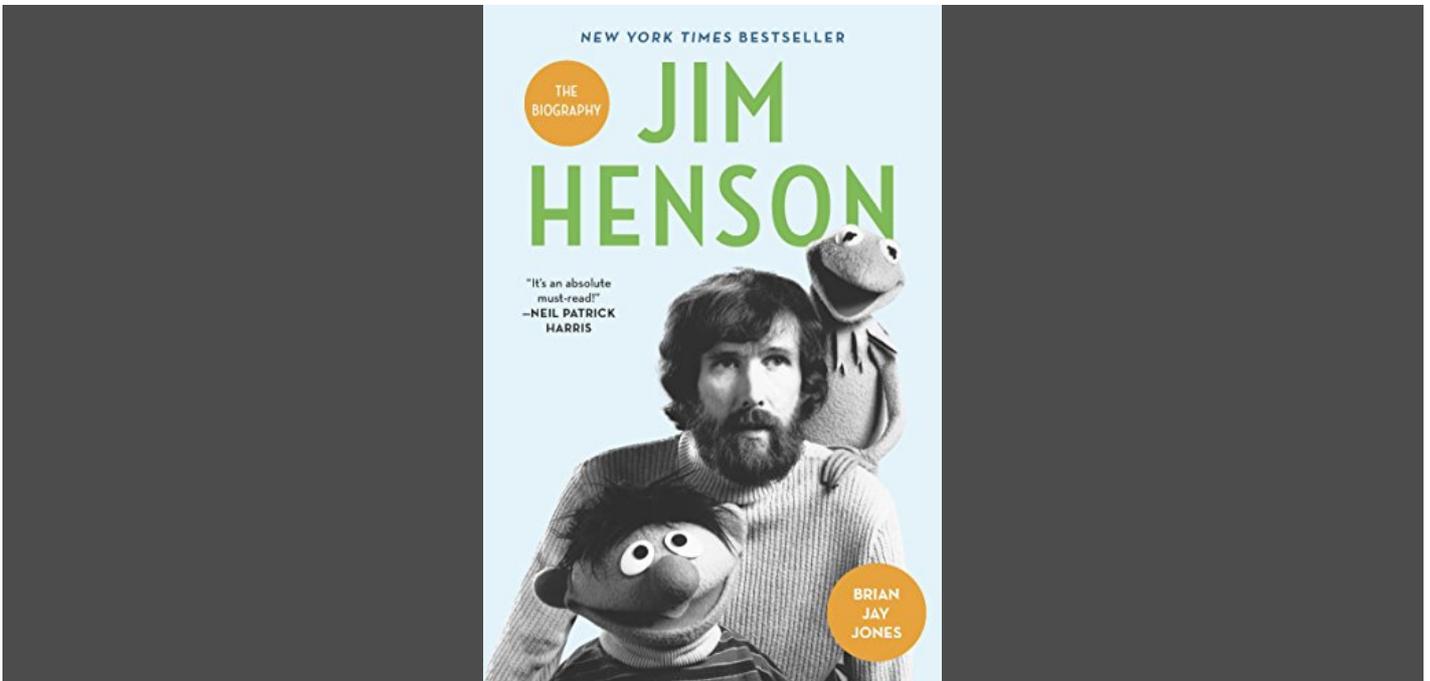


PDF | Jim Henson: The Biography

by Brian Jay Jones



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NATIONAL BESTSELLER • NAMED ONE OF THE BEST BOOKS OF THE YEAR BY BOOKPAGE

For the first time ever—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***

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From the Hardcover edition.

Amazon.com Review

Brian Jay Jones on *Jim Henson: The Biography*



Biographers have the unique responsibility—and privilege—of living with their subjects for the years they’re doing their research and writing. Frankly, I couldn’t have asked for better company over the last five years. Jim Henson has been part of my life—and probably part of yours—for nearly as long as I can remember. I was two when *Sesame Street* premiered in 1969, and nine when *The Muppet Show* debuted in 1976. That practically makes me Muppets Generation 1.0. Why would I choose to write about Jim Henson, then? Heck, *why wouldn’t I?*

For the most part, the bulk of the research for this biography was conducted the old-fashioned way: sitting in an archive—in this case, The Jim Henson Company archives in Long Island City, New York—and turning over documents one at a time. I read through Jim’s private diaries, examined handwritten notes—sometimes just scraps of paper with ideas for a character name or a slapdash drawing of a new Muppet—pored through business papers and receipts, and poked through innumerable TV scripts and film proposals, many of which never made it any further than Jim’s carefully typed notes. For the first time, you’ll read about many of these projects, and learn how hard Jim worked to bring programs like *The Muppet Show* to television.

I also had the pleasure of interviewing all five Henson children and his widow, Jane—who passed away earlier this year—as well as countless colleagues, friends, and collaborators. We spoke in living rooms in London, workshops in New York, and film studios in Burbank. We talked over breakfast in hotels and brunches in diners. And when we couldn’t meet in person, we talked on telephones and Skype, or wrote each other e-mails. Almost to a person, everyone was open, honest, and thoughtful about Jim and his work—and, as you can probably imagine, many were also very, very funny.

Finally, of course, there was the pure enjoyment of going back through Jim’s work, watching Muppets and *Fraggles* and *Skeksis* and *Storytellers* with a keener appreciation of how Jim wove his life into his art, and his art through his life. Any time you can watch episodes of *The Muppet Show*, or old footage of Jim blowing up his Muppets on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and call it work, you know you’ve officially got one of the best jobs anywhere.

It took five years to get here—and now, at last, it’s *your* turn to live with Jim Henson. I think you’ll find he’s pretty much exactly as you want him to be: genuinely kind, dazzlingly inspirational, immensely talented and—as Frank Oz said—“delightfully imperfect.” Not bad for a kid from the swamps of Mississippi.

“It’s a good life,” Jim once wrote. “Enjoy it.” And I hope you’ll enjoy *Jim Henson*.

A Look Inside *Jim Henson: The Biography*



Jim at the editing table in 1972 as performer John Lovelady, designer Bonnie Erickson, builder Faz Fazakas, and designer Don Sahlin look on.

[Click here for a larger image](#)



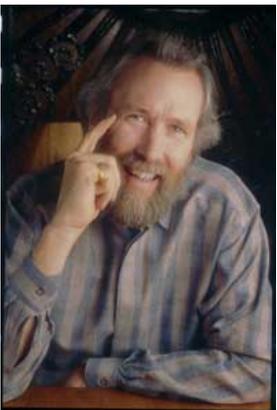
Jim and the cast of *Fraggle Rock* Airing on HBO from 1983 to 1987, the show was the network's first original series—the colorful ancestor to shows like *The Sopranos* or *Game of Thrones*.

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Jim loved performing the sage Cantus on the set of *Fraggle Rock*

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Jim Henson

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Product Description

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