



# Jim Henson: The Biography

*Brian Jay Jones*

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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***

“[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.*

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