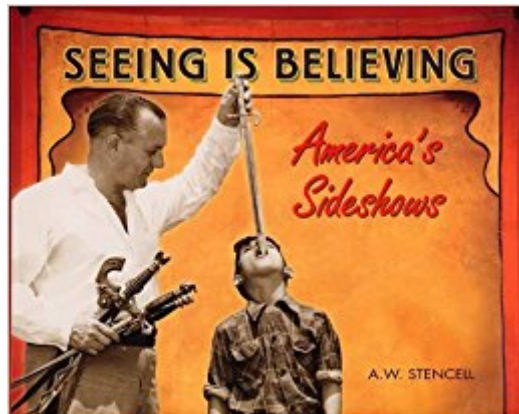




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Seeing Is Believing: America's Sideshows



Synopsis

Seeing Is Believing is a history of midway attractions and the showmen who have presented them on American midways from the 1870s to World War II. Find out who manufactured the Polly-Moo-Zuke, the Two-Headed Giant, and the Devil Fish. Hear showmen's stories of hoochie coochie dancing bears, monkeys racing miniature racecars, and the strange people who made a living eating snakes. See war criminals, wax outlaws, and papier mâché torture victims. Learn about illusion on the midway and how "free" Iron Lung and Wildlife shows were anything but; who suspected you had to pay to leave? Hear the barker say: Come in! Trained fleas, people exhibited in ice, and girls that change into gorillas are all inside! Under canvas, the hottest black nightclub acts perform for you in black revue shows. Many attractions are alive. Hundreds more are dead, stuffed, or mummified. Never has so much been on show for so little a price! Attractions you may never see again … Take a twisted journey with the last of America's real showmen, from an age when performers earned every nickel of your 25 cents.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A. W. Stencell, the "P. T. Barnum of Canada," has spent a lifetime in the circus business and is vice president of the Circus Historical Society. He lives in Toronto, Ontario.

I love the old side shows and 10 in 1's, but this book wanders into too many of the smaller and not so great presentations.

Interesting book. Although what I was looking for was not in the book, it covered some fascinating history of side shows.

This is an excellent book covering just about all aspects of the Sideshows that travelled America and Canada for generations. These shows, with every type of act that the operators could find were the height of entertainment whether one lived in a city or a small town. The book goes into amazing detail about the acts and displays which were offered and how they were acquired. The thing that has to be realized is that there was no TV where people could sit in comfort in their homes and have the most amazing things brought to them. To see such amazing things, the operators of these Sideshows, spent their lives putting together their exhibits, then going through the arduous task of taking them to the people, no matter where they lived. There was great financial risk to the operators; and rather than make fortunes, most struggled to keep their shows on the road; often having great difficulty keeping ahead of financial ruin; which unfortunately was all too common. The book is authored by Stencell, who was a rather latecomer to the Sideshow business. Born in 1946, he started his own show in 1973, and toured 135 Canadian towns annually from 1983 to 1991. Since the era of Sideshows was already behind him, the book shows the great love he must have had for the business and the great amount of research he must have done to come up with all the material in the book. Anyone who remembers the sideshows that accompanied the Fairs and Circuses, will really enjoy this book and all the reminders of the shows they themselves saw. Stencell gives great detail on how the shows were put together, where and how the operators obtained their exhibits. He also covers the whys and wherefores of the disappearance of Sideshows and why "their likes will never be seen again. If you were a fan of Sideshows you will want to get this book.

This is a great book for anyone who would like to capture the spirit of the carnival sideshow, grind show, oddity attraction, etc. There is a ton of great historical information with loads of photos. If you've ever enjoyed a giant animal show - or more - at your local carnival, get this book and see how many traveling wonders were once out there - and still are, here and there. If you're already a collector, this is a must-have book. You'll get great pictures you've not seen before AND learn a lot - I did.

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