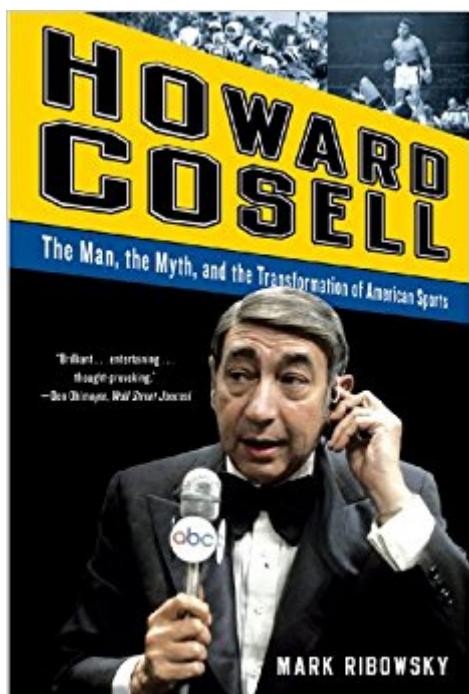


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Howard Cosell: The Man, The Myth, And The Transformation Of American Sports



Synopsis

“Brilliant . . . entertaining . . . a thought-provoking portrayal of the multi-faceted Howard Cosell in all his glory and enmity.”¹ Don Ohlmeyer, *Wall Street Journal* Howard Cosell’s colorful bombast, fearless reporting, and courageous stance on civil rights made him one of the most recognizable and controversial figures in American sports history.

“Telling it like it is,” he covered nearly every major sports story for three decades, from the travails of Muhammad Ali to the tragedy at the Munich Olympics. Now, two decades after his death, this deeply misunderstood sports legend has finally gotten the “definitive”² (Kirkus Reviews, starred review) and revelatory biography he so much deserves. With more than forty interviews, Mark Ribowsky has brilliantly presented Cosell’s endless complexities in the “first thoroughly researched and effectively framed biography of Cosell and his times.”³ (Huffington Post). 35 illustrations

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Customer Reviews

Ribowsky, who seems to have read just about everything on Cosell, is a deft narrator of the life of Humble Howard, taking his readers from the skinny kid in Brooklyn who yearned to spend more time with an absent father to the sportscaster who helped make an event out of “Monday Night Football” by being so very different from anyone else who had ever called a game.⁴ - New York Times Book Review⁵ “A sportscasting giant is interpreted for a generation that never knew him.”⁶ Mark Ribowsky’s clear-eyed take on the broadcaster

who built his career on "telling it like it is" reveals the insecurities that fueled Cosell's bravado, charting his ascension from growing up in a middle-class home in Brooklyn to a short-lived career as a lawyer before elbowing his way into radio and TV and becoming the most influential and controversial sports commentator in America. - Sports Illustrated "Mr. Ribowsky's book is an entertaining read and a thought-provoking portrayal of the multi-faceted Howard Cosell in all his glory and enmity. It is based on voluminous, well-sourced research into print and electronic material, coupled with numerous interviews with Cosell's contemporaries. ...the book vividly depicts Cosell as a brilliant meteor that soared through the electronic sky before ultimately fading, dimmed by controversy, age, exhaustion and perhaps his own obstreperous personality. Warts and all, there has never been, and may never be again, anyone quite like Howard Cosell." - Don Ohlmeyer, former president of NBC West Coast and producer of "Monday Night Football" from 1972 to 1976, Wall Street Journal "Bookshelf" "Ribowsky has deftly captured this complicated figure, and anyone who cares about sports and how we talk about sports will find this book well worth the time, no matter how off-putting its subject was to many." - Steve Kettman, San Francisco Chronicle "Ribowsky, who previously wrote a fine book on Satchel Paige, gives Cosell the treatment this controversial giant in sports journalism deserves." - New York Post "In Howard Cosell, author Mark Ribowsky reveals the obnoxious broadcaster who transformed sports reporting." - Sherryl Connelly, New York Daily News "...[T]he first thoroughly researched and effectively framed biography of Cosell and his times... Beyond its poignant depiction of a flawed, paranoid and narcissistic character with the uncanny talent to immerse himself entirely, almost supernaturally, into emerging events, Ribowsky's Howard Cosell makes crystal clear the entwined path of Cosell's epic career within the world of Big Time sports and its broadcasting partners, as they quite literally created the monstrosities they are today." - James Campion, Huffington Post "A powerful biography well researched and well written." - Jewish Journal

Mark Ribowsky is the author of fifteen books, including *Ain't Too Proud to Beg: The Troubled Lives and Enduring Soul of the Temptations*, the New York Times Notable Book *Don't Look Back: Satchel Paige in the Shadows of Baseball*, and, most recently, *Dreams to Remember: Otis Redding, Stax Records, and the Transformation of Southern Soul*. He lives in Florida.

Author Mark Ribowsky has treated the readers of this book with an in-depth biography of the

much-maligned sportscaster Howard Cosell. To those of us old enough to remember Howard he was involved in a number of noteworthy events during his four decades of being a public figure. I remember his Speaking of Sports program on WABC radio in New York City. When Milwaukee Judge Elmer Roller briefly suspended the Braves' move to Atlanta Howard came on like gangbusters with, "Hello again, everyone. Howard Cosell Speaking of Sports. In the headlines this morning the National League meets in New York with feelings raging from chagrin to chaos. Details after this message." The things that stick in my mind. Howard Cosell is primarily remembered for his role in boxing and Monday Night Football. His relationship with Muhammad Ali was something very special, and author Ribowsky does a very commendable job in bringing that to the forefront. Howard's call on George Foreman's decking of Joe Frazier with, "Down goes Frazier, down goes Frazier, down goes Frazier" is often imitated, and his final three words spoken on the death of John Lennon, "Dead on arrival" during a Monday Night Football game is equally memorable. Howard took the advice of fellow announcer Frank Gifford to make the announcement. The Monday night trio of Howard, Frank Gifford, and Don Meredith turned Monday night into a special event that often upstaged the game itself. The travails that involved this trio are also included in the book. In addition to boxing and football Cosell was involved in the 1968 Mexico City Olympics along with the Olympics of 1972 in which eleven Israeli athletes were murdered by a faction of the PLO in Munich, Germany. ABC announcer Jim McKay spoke the legendary words, "They're all gone." ABC Sports boss Roone Arledge made the correct call in denying Cosell's insistence of going on the air to vent his feelings. Cosell called the continuation of the Olympic games "obscene" when Olympic Committee chairman Avery Brundage insisted the games continue. Cosell also occupied a number of lesser roles such as when ABC telecast major league baseball, and gives his opinions regarding Jackie Robinson and Curt Flood. He ventured into an Ed Sullivan type of variety show which mercifully had a short life of its own. Howard Cosell was a bitter man near the end of his life, and the loss of his beloved wife Emmy was a devastating blow to him. A psychologist may have said that Howard was an insecure individual who masked these insecurities with his blustering personality. He was described as an individual who people loved to hate, but his contributions were not to be denied during his heyday. Whatever your thoughts are on Howard Cosell you will find this to be a thorough biography of this controversial individual. I enjoyed it, and it brought back a lot of memories.

5 Stars for the vendor. Totally happy with the product. The 1 star is for the book. I only read two chapters. But the author is so relentlessly insulting of Howard that it seems like he had a personal

vendetta rather than a desire to write an unbiased portrayal. It got to the point that the insults were rude, petty and redundant. After two chapters I got the picture, "Howard compensated for his insecurity with ego." I'm pretty sure that since that was singular point of the first two chapters that the next 200 pages would just be more of the same.

I grew up during the height of Cosell's career and really enjoyed his interviews and foolishness with the like of Ali. I think he was a one of a kind, the likes of which we're not likely to see again in the sanitized world of corporate sports networks we now live in. Besides providing every little detail of Cosell's life, the book makes it clear that Cosell was an insecure, self centered, ego-maniac. One thing I didn't know about Cosell was just how crude and inappropriate he was with women. In spite of this, he and his wife managed to stay married for decades. In the end, Cosell's wife died before he did and he later died alone, feeling like the sports industry he felt he was largely responsible for building had rejected him. A very sorry ending for such an iconic figure in American sports history.

Either Howard Cosell is extremely boring or the author doesn't know how to convey the interesting things in Cosell's life. I tried hard to read this book and only made it about 5 chapters before I gave it to the local library. In Al Michael's book, he told some interesting stories about Cosell but I couldn't make it through this boring book. I guess I will read Wikipedia so I can get some info on him.

Ribovsky does an amazing job here, a fair biography of an unlikeable man. Yet he does it with nuances and sympathy. I grew up in Cosell's time and share Cosell's first name. I remember many of the things that Ribovsky wrote about. It is neither a hagiography or a bashing. It tries to explain the man, his words, his deeds. Not very easy considering the vast contradictions. Time after time, Ribovsky takes Cosell's public statements about himself and proves them false or exaggerated. This goes to Cosell's childhood, and his rejection of his religion. Ribovsky then wonders why a man who so obviously rejected his religion, choosed to identify with it as an excuse for everything else. This point is hammered across to great effectiveness throughout the book. Cosell's relationship with Ali is done well, though not as well as in Kindred's joint biography of him and Ali. Much is made over Cosell's "support" of civil rights but how much was it real and how much was it for career advancement. For all his talk, we still do not know Cosell's political views. The section about Cosell during the 1972 Munich massacre is simply superb. Here is one more time that Cosell's drinking caught up with him to ill effect. But these are minor quibbles. It is quite a task to deal with such a complex man in such times. A worthwhile read.

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