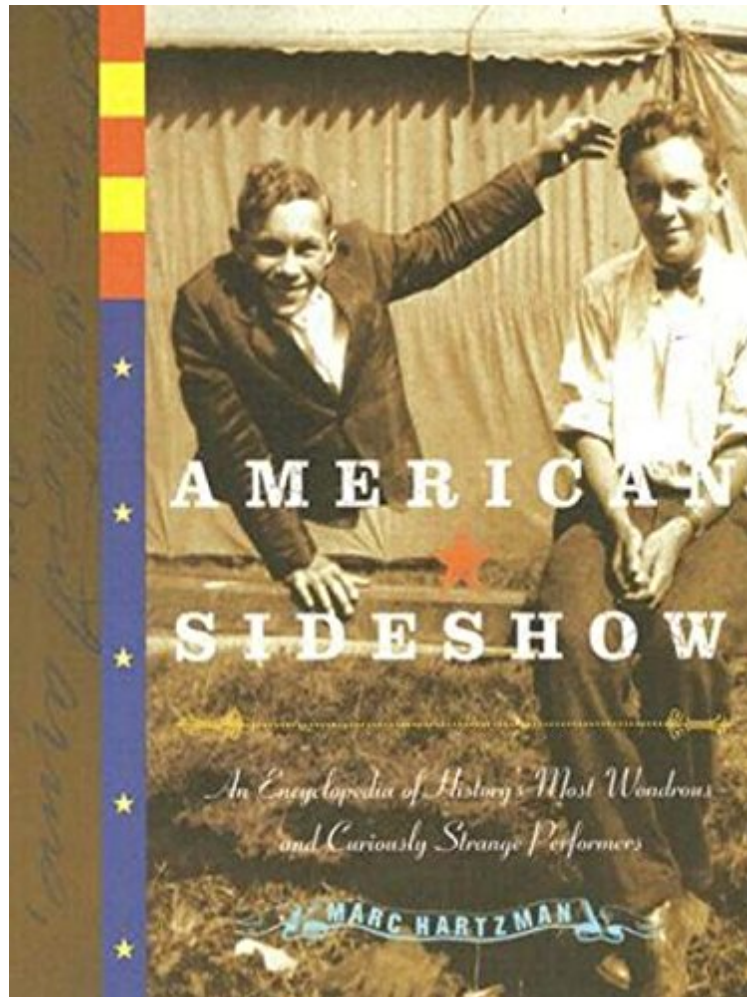


(Free) American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers

American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers

Marc Hartzman

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Marc Hartzman : American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised American Sideshow: An Encyclopedia of History's Most Wondrous and Curiously Strange Performers:

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16 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Alive on the Inside
By James G. Mundie
Marc Hartzman has undertaken an ambitious project: a chronicle of those showfolks who performed in

America's sideshows from circa 1830 to the present. Starting with the golden era under P.T. Barnum, Hartzman gives the reader brief biographical introductions to these unusual performers. Hartzman's prose offers a good humored look at the place where truth and hype converge in the lives of these human oddities. The text is accompanied by rare photographs from the author's and other collections (including that of yours truly). I find it gratifying that whereas most books focus on sideshow's illustrious (or dubious) past, Hartzman also takes time to acknowledge the contemporary performers and showmen keeping the tradition alive out there on the sawdust trail. The short, the tall, the fat, the tattooed, the conjoined, the hirsute, the limbless: they're all here to discover inside Hartzman's tent.

A fascinating look into the history of the American sideshow and its performers. Learn what's real, what's fake, and what's just downright bizarre. You've probably heard of Tom Thumb. The Elephant Man. Perhaps even Chang and Eng, the original Siamese twins. But what about Eli Bowen, the legless acrobat? Or Prince Randian, the human torso? These were just a few of the many stars that shone during the heyday of the American sideshow, from 1840 to 1950. *American Sideshow* chronicles the lives of truly amazing performers, examining these brave and extraordinary curiosities not just as sideshow performers but as people, delving into the lives they led and the ways they were able to triumph over and even benefit from their abnormalities. *American Sideshow* discusses the rise and fall of the original sideshows and their subsequent replacement by today's self-made freaks. With the progress of modern medicine, technological advancements, and the wonderful world of body modification, abnormalities are being overcome, treated and even prevented: Siamese twins can now be separated, and in addition to this, tongues can be forked, horns surgically implanted, and earlobes removed. There are also, of course, modern-day giants, fire eaters, sword swallows, glass eaters, human blockheads, and oh, so much more. These fascinating personalities are celebrated through intimate biographies paired with stunning photographs. Approximately two hundred performers from the past one hundred and sixty years are featured, giving readers a comprehensive and sometimes astonishing look into the history of the American sideshow

From Publishers Weekly From the bearded women and half-men of the P.T. Barnum era to the bug-eating denizens of contemporary Coney Island, Hartzman leaves no circus tent unexplored in his history of freakish sideshow performers. The human curiosities, many of whom made a good living, are listed alphabetically within each chronological section and are accompanied by brief bios-based on sensationalist publicity for the older cases, and interviews with those still living-that include everything from anatomical details and medical explanations to minutiae about performers' social lives: Myrtle Corbin, the four-legged woman, for instance, "had five children-three born from her own body, and two from her twin's." "Insectavora," Coney Island's resident facial-tattooed bug-eater, "walks up a razor-sharp ladder of swords and is currently working on a whip-cracking act. During the off-season she works in a tattoo and body-piercing shop, and probably eats a more balanced diet." Hartzman's book succeeds as a curiosity-quencher, but not as a reference, as his source material, particularly for the early performers, is sketchy, but the book-and its marvelous collection of photos-will shock and amaze offbeat voyeurs. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Marc Hartzman has been writing professionally since 1996. He is the author of *Found on eBay: 101 Genuinely Bizarre Items from the World's Online Yard Sale*.