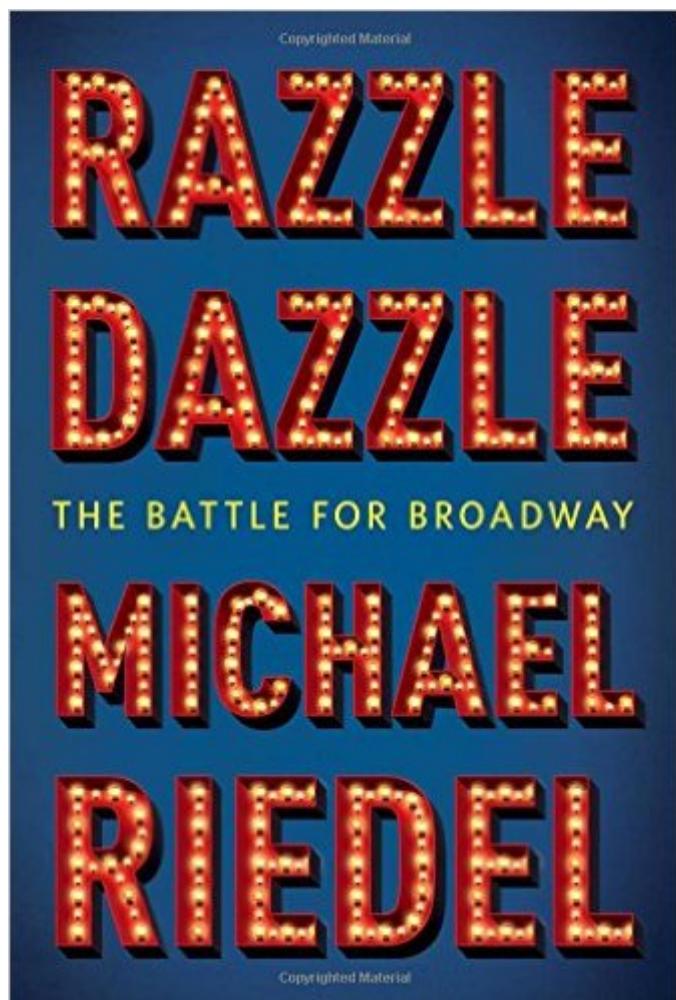


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Razzle Dazzle: The Battle For Broadway



Synopsis

Broadwayâ™s most respected (and feared) commentator pulls back the curtain on its stars, its producers, and its mega-hits to reveal all the shocking drama, intrigue, and power plays that happened off stage. *Razzle Dazzle* is a provocative, no-holds-barred narrative account of the people and the money and the power that re-invented an iconic quarter of New York City, turning its gritty back alleys and sex-shops into the glitzy, dazzling Great White Wayâ™ and bringing a crippled New York from the brink of bankruptcy to its glittering glory. In the mid-1970s Times Square was the seedy symbol of New Yorkâ™s economic decline. Its once shining star, the renowned Shubert Organization, was losing theaters to make way for parking lots. Bernard Jacobs and Jerry Schoenfeld, two ambitious board members, saw the crumbling company was ripe for takeover and staged a coup amidst corporate intrigue, personal betrayals, and criminal investigations. Once Jacobs and Schoenfeld solidified their power, they turned a collapsed theater-owning holding company into one of the most successful entertainment empires in the world, ultimately backing many of Broadwayâ™s biggest hits, including *A Chorus Line*, *Cats*, *Les Misérables*, *Phantom of the Opera*, and *Mamma Mia!* They also sparked the revitalization of Broadway and the renewal of Times Square. Now Michael Riedel tells the stories of the Shubert Organization and the shows that re-built a city in grand style, revealing the backstage drama that often rivaled what transpired onstage, exposing bitter rivalries, unlikely alliances, andâ™of courseâ™ scintillating gossip. This is a great story, told with wit and passion.

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Customer Reviews

Razzle Dazzle: The Battle for Broadway is written by New York Post theater columnist Michael Riedel. The book is full of stories about the Shubert Organization and the Broadway shows that they were involved in. The later chapters also give us some insight into the Nederlander theaters and their shows. I love musical theatre. So I was super excited to read this book. The book looks in details at all of the key players on Broadway. There is a lot of information about Broadway in the 1960s, 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. I was unaware of so much that is told. And it was really fascinating reading. If there is anything that you want to know about Broadway then this book is fantastic. I really enjoyed reading about Schoenfeld and Jacobs. And I loved seeing how things evolved with them at the helm of the Shubert Organization. I especially enjoyed reading about their decision to go from being a landlord to producing again. And I loved reading about all the various musicals, especially everything to do with *A Chorus Line* (and how it reversed the fortunes of the Shubert Organization). Much of this book is super interesting. But there are a lot of pages full of details about people's childhoods. I am more interested in the stuff that relates directly to Broadway. My biggest issue with the book is that the timeline is all over the place going back and forth in time. A person dies at the end of one chapter. But then is mentioned in the next chapter. Many chapters seem to focus on a specific person. So the author starts their story at the beginning. I just found it a bit confusing and would have preferred to have the book told chronologically. There really was much to like about this book.

Look, I am a Midwesterner. Broadway is only tangentially a part of my life through touring shows, shows made into movies, local productions of shows, and television used to show more excerpts from Broadway than it does today. I also grew up in a home that loved musicals and I listened to albums of the famous shows (until I discovered Classical music as an adolescent – and that was that for me). But I understand its impact on our culture. I went to London to see shows such as *Les Misérables*, *Tommy*, *Grease*, and a few others. Mostly because my daughter wanted to see everything but *Tommy*. I wanted to see *Tommy* because I grew up with the Who album. Can I admit that even though I think *Les Misérables* is really bad musically, it is still a very moving show and works quite well as an evening's entertainment. Yes, in a few places, I was moved to tears despite my misgivings. And I have seen it several times. Twice in London and once in Detroit with my family. I saw *Rent* at the Fischer Theater in Detroit and hated it. I would much rather see and hear *La Bohème* that *Rent* rips off so badly. In fact, I have performed in the chorus in local productions of *La Bohème*, *La*

Traviataâ •, and â œDon Giovanniâ •.But that isnâ ™t this book. This book begins with the 1960s scandal that revealed the corrupt book keeping, the skimming (called ICE in the trade â “ because the skimmed money melts away like ice and leaves not a trace), the payoffs, and the cheating of investors and the taxpayers. Shocking, huh? Anyone remember the James Garner lawsuit of Hollywood a decade later over his share of the profits of the most popular show in television that somehow did not show much or any profit because of the corrupt accounting of Hollywood? I do.

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