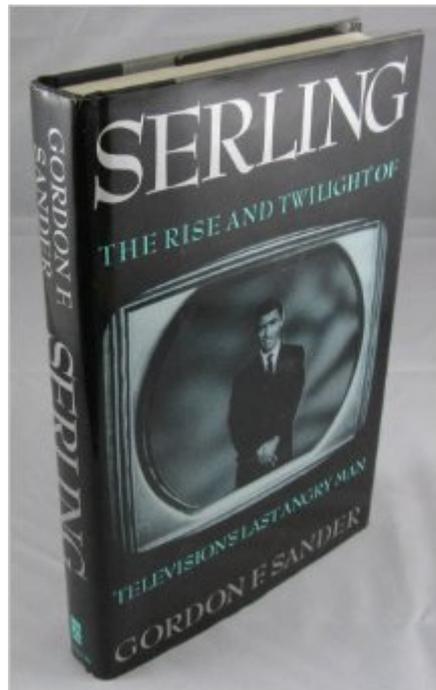


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Serling: The Rise And Twilight Of Television's Last Angry Man (1st Edition)



Synopsis

A biography of the creator of The Twilight Zone draws on interviews with more than two hundred of Serling's family and friends to trace his rise from scriptwriter at a college radio station to TV's ""golden boy."" National ad/promo.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book seems to have reviewers choosing up sides - either one agrees with the widow of Mr. Sterling and speaks negatively of this unauthorized biography, or another sees it as an unbiased attempt to tell the whole story of the one and only Rod Serling. The problem here is that there can never be the entire story - the full truth - to anything about the Twilight Man. Rod Serling was as complex as some of his scripts might have seemed to television viewers of the 1950s'; the angry young man was turning out weekly episodes about time travel ("The Last Flight"), nuclear war ("Time Enough At Last"), human nature ("The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street") and more, when other tv fare checked in with Lucy and Ethel getting locked in a meat freezer, or Beaver climbing into an oversized coffee cup on a billboard. Rod Serling was a high-strung, chain-smoking WWII veteran who'd seen horrors discussed in this book and other biographies that make it a wonder the man knew how to write his name, much less make a living. I don't mean to be flippant with that last statement, by the way - being a dyed-in-the-wool fanatic of Rod Serling, I know about his childhood, which the author Sander details simply and casually...there's nothing in the Serling household, during Rod's younger years, which forebode the darknesses that will visit themselves unto the writer. Indeed, his biggest problem during his pre-adult years is being too short to be taken seriously

as a quarterback for the school team; for the neophyte who may not know this little tidbit, the man who seemed massive in so many ways onscreen was, in fact, just under 5'5 in stature. Having known this fact as well for many years, I've always thought of just how convincingly Mr.

If you're seen Twilight Zone it's probably a good time to meet the man. And for its part this biography is a good history of that man, where he came from and just what powered his visionary genius. In terms of the mundane biography, Serling came from a middle class New York Jewish family and was raised just before World War II when it was more customary among American Jews to downplay their Jewish identity and background so they could more easily gain acceptance in what was still a more ardently Christian country. Not surprisingly Serling opted away from remaining Jewish in favor of becoming a Unitarian but he couldn't opt away from the rich tradition of thought provoking story telling from which he came. As is made clear in this biography, even as a child Serling loved telling stories and entertaining. This continued during his service as a paratrooper during World War II where Serling began service just before the end of the Pacific side of the second world war. Just like his small town upbringing, his participation in military service would be repeatedly mined for inspiration during his long career in TV entertainment. For those who only know Serling through either Twilight Zone or Serling's later Night Gallery, they won't be surprised to learn that Serling had already earned three consecutive TV Emmy's during the 1950's: in 1955 for Patterns, 1956 for Requiem for a Heavyweight and finally in 1957 for The Comedian. In each case, interested readers/viewers can sample Serling's early work product for themselves in a still existent collection from Criterion called Television's Golden Age. Significantly three of the six TV shows featured in that collection originated from Serling's not inconsiderable pen.

Unfortunately, there will probably never be a definitive biography of Rod Serling -- that kind of weighty tome is usually reserved for politicians, movie stars, or historic figures like Albert Einstein. A pity, because in his crowded 50 years on this earth, Rod Serling crafted nearly 200 scripts, the vast majority of them superior works that still resonate today. And one could do worse to examine the arc of Serling's life and career, and the workings of his psyche, than to read Gordon Sander's biography. Other works have covered at least some of this material, such as the wealth of biographical information that Marc Scott Zicree worked into "The Twilight Zone Companion." But although Zicree covered a lot of this same terrain, the focus in his book was on that show, and how Serling's life illumined much of what went on in "Twilight Zone." Sander's book takes a closer look at Serling the man, and he begins with a gripping if speculative little drama that picks up "in media

res," introducing our subject late on a September night in 1965 as Serling dictates a speech he was soon to give in his capacity as president of the National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences. Written somewhat in the style of a film script itself, Sander's introduction tells us almost as much about Serling as the rest of the book -- his habits as a writer, his vanity, his love of celebrity and the toys that his hard-earned wealth purchased, his underlying unhappiness despite his success -- and his ever-present cigarettes, which would contribute heavily to his death just 10 years later.

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