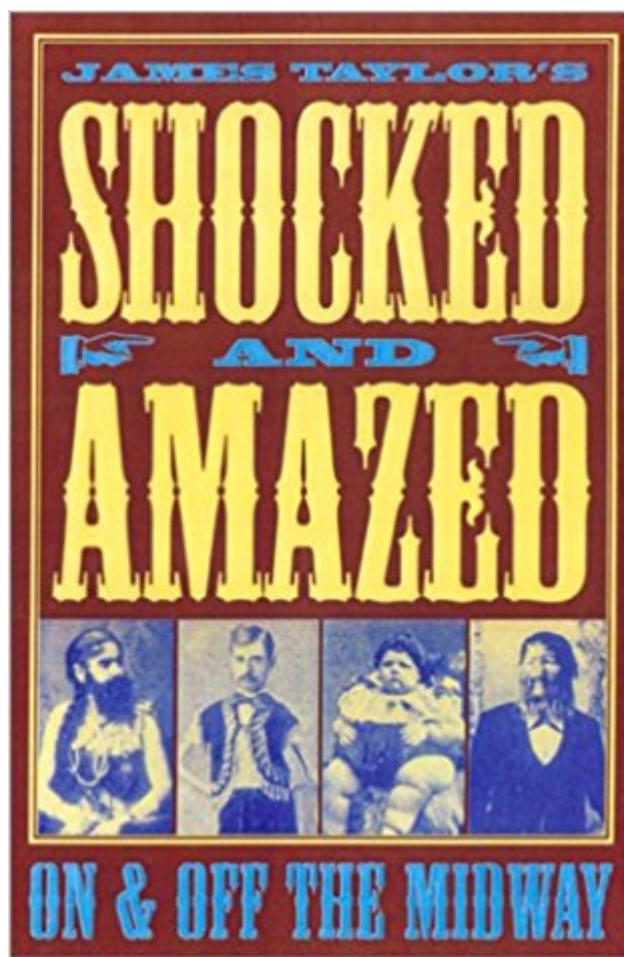


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# James Taylor's Shocked And Amazed: On & Off The Midway



## **Synopsis**

The planet's foremost sideshow authority takes you on an unforgettable tour. (SEE QUOTE.)

## **Book Information**

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: The Lyons Press; 1st edition (October 1, 2002)

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## **Customer Reviews**

"James Taylor knows more than anybody else about sideshows."--Lynn Dougherty, Sideshow: Alive on the Inside

As the world's only publication devoted to sideshow, James Taylor's Shocked and Amazed! On & Off the Midway is chock-full of carnival and circus midway madness and mayhem. Hear the truth behind this uniquely American art form from the lips of the human marvels themselves! Shocked and Amazed! invites you to explore and satisfy your curiosity for the strange, the weird, the bizarre, the odd and the unusual. Witness never-before-seen photographs from the personal collections of sideshow superstars from yesteryear! Marvel at the sideshow stories presented personally for your pleasure by sideshow performers! Thrill to these titillating tales of laughter and woe on the sawdust trail from the likes of: Frank Lentini, who could kick a football the length of the midway with his third leg; Melvin Burkhart, the Human Blockhead who could pound six-inch spikes into his head; Harold Huge, the sideshow fat man who needs "Six Gals to Hug Him, and a Boxcar to Lug Him

Mr. Taylor does not address the photos shown in his book. It reads like a personal memoir to me. I have purchased a couple of his other books in the past in which he specifically addresses the individuals depicted. I expected more of the same dialogue.

good

My shelf is loaded with books on the history of the Sideshow. Until this book joined them it was far from complete.

You wouldn't know it on the East Coast due to all the rain, but summer is upon us. School's out, the days are longer, the nights are hotter, the beer goes down a little easier and in some parts of the country the fairs and carnivals are starting to roll through town. The fairs and carnivals of today are filled with shaky rides, artery clogging concessions, grifted games and not much else. Maybe you'll be graced by the occasional handpainted sideshow banner or, if you're lucky, perhaps you will come across an animal curiosity act, but the days of the old shows are long gone. The days of the ten in one, the talker working the tip, the days of THE SHOW have passed us by. The midway today is dominated by Bobo the Clown taunting passersby from his perch in the dunk tank. And while Bobo is a good show, he'll never replace the "good old days." Thankfully James Taylor and Kathleen Kotcher have been documenting the days of yore in the journal "Shocked and Amazed: On and Off the Midway" since 1995, and thankfully Lyon's Press has graced us with what is basically a Best of "Shocked and Amazed." Lyons Press has included 21 pieces that they deemed most representative of the six earlier issues of the "Shocked and Amazed" journal and placed them together to form the bulk of this book. However, this book should not be looked at as simply a reprint of the journals of the past. Lyons, Taylor and Kotcher have added a number of never before seen photos, an introduction and an index, as well as updated some of the interviews to create a classic of sideshow lore and legend. Included in this volume are pieces on the three legged man, the Human Blockhead, a sideshow fat man, the Monkey Girl and her husband the Alligator Skin Man, the Half Girl and her husband the American Giant, the Human Fountain, the Man with Three Eyes among others. Also included are pieces on P.T Barnum, Ward Hall, known as King of the Sideshows, Girl Shows, and Bobby Reynolds, the self proclaimed "greatest showman in the world." There are other books that cover these topics on the shelves of your local mega bookstore/Starbucks, but "Shocked and Amazed" has one distinct advantage over those titles: it treats its subjects with respect and as people, and that comes through in the interviews. When reading this book you never get the feeling that Taylor is there to exploit his subject. Instead you get the feeling that Taylor has a genuine affection for, and interest in these people and is just there to document their stories and histories. The interviews are all very well done and offer the reader a

candid look into the lives of these people and performers. Taylor does an outstanding job in this book of letting his readers get a candid and revealing glimpse into the world of the sideshow. If you decide that this is a book that you should read (and it is!), then set aside a day in which to read it, because once you open it up you'll be hard pressed to put it down until you have devoured every piece of information contained in its pages. "Shocked and Amazed!" is a must have book for anyone interested in the lore, legend and myth of the sideshow.

I couldn't put this series down. The stories are wonderful bits of American history. Great pictures, beautiful art work. This is perfect for anyone interested in the sideshow, the circus, fairs, magic, tattoos, theater, art, performers, oddities, etc. etc. When I was little we used to go to the sideshow and these books are a wonderful reminder of those times. The sideshow is a very important part of American history and the Shocked & Amazed series is helping to keep alive the art and performances of this very unique group of people. Hurray!!! It looks at the past, present and future. The stories, by a wide range of authors, are very well written & interesting to read. The old photos are a blast. The words of many of the performers are inspirational. Thanks to creator James Taylor and all involved. Keep up the good work.

Finally, those who have been outbid on eBay trying to acquire the long out-of-print early issues of James Taylor's sideshow magazine can read all fascinating articles in this book, which acts as a sort of "Shocked and Amazed" greatest hits collection. Over 250 pages of memories, history and humbug straight from the carnie's mouth are compiled in one handy volume, generously illustrated with unusual photographs. One can only hope that this is the first in a series of volumes to collect articles from the fabulous magazine.

James Taylor's writing is as interesting and colorful as his subject matter. He really loves the sideshow business and it shows in his writing. He gives the reader an intimate, insider, look at the shows, their operation and their performers. The photographs alone are worth the price of this book. "The shows about to begin...get your ticket and go now!"

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