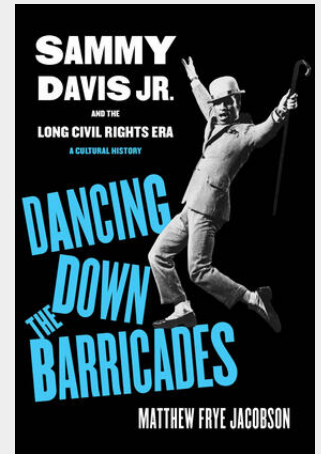


Jacobson

Dancing Down the Barricades

Sammy Davis Jr. and the Long Civil Rights Era

A deep dive into racial politics, Hollywood, and Black cultural struggles for liberation as reflected in the extraordinary life and times of Sammy Davis Jr. Through the lens of Sammy Davis Jr.'s six-decade career in show business—from vaudeville to Vegas to Broadway, Hollywood, and network TV—Dancing Down the Barricades examines the workings of race in American culture. The title phrase holds two contradictory meanings regarding Davis's cultural politics: Did he dance the barricades down, as he liked to think, or did he simply dance down them, as his more radical critics would have it? Davis was at once a pioneering, barrier-busting, anti-Jim Crow activist and someone who was widely associated with accommodationism and wannabe whiteness. Historian Matthew Frye Jacobson attends to both threads, analyzing how industry norms, productions, scripts, roles, and audience expectations and responses were all framed by race against the backdrop of a changing America. In the spirit of better understanding Davis's life and career, Dancing Down the Barricades examines the complexities of his constraints, freedoms, and choices for what they reveal about Black history and American political culture.



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