

Jim Henson's Magic



Jim Henson was one of the most well-known puppeteers in the world. He made memorable contributions to puppetry, television, movies, and technology. Henson studied at the University of Maryland, College Park. He enjoyed puppet theater, and he realized that there was a place for puppets on television.

Henson started his career in 1955 in Washington, D.C. His show, *Sam and Friends*, aired after the local news. It featured puppet characters, one of which was named Kermit. Originally, Kermit looked like a lizard; he was made out of Henson's mother's old green coat and a ping-pong ball sliced in half for his eyes. Today, Kermit the Frog is one of Henson's most recognized puppets. Henson won an Emmy award in 1958 for *Sam and Friends*, and people were beginning to notice his ingenious talent.

Henson's puppets were different from the carved wood puppets that most puppeteers used. His puppets were made of fabric-covered foam rubber, and rods were used to move the puppets' arms. Henson called his puppets "Muppets." He once told a reporter that he developed this name by mixing the terms "marionette" and "puppets." He later said that he made up the story, and he just liked the sound of the name. During the 1960s, Jim Henson's Muppets appeared on many television shows.



One of Henson's most noteworthy accomplishments was his involvement with the children's television show *Sesame Street*, which began in 1969, and included Muppet characters such as Grover, Bert, and Ernie, who was voiced by Henson. *Sesame Street*, an

educational program, is one of the longest-running shows on television and is broadcasted internationally.

In 1976, *The Muppet Show* premiered. During its five-year run on television, this variety show won three Emmy awards and was viewed by millions of people in over 100 countries. The Muppets even went on to star in their own movies.

In the 1980s, the hardworking Henson continued to work in television and film, creating the show *Fraggle Rock*. He established the Henson Foundation, with the goal of promoting and developing interest in puppetry. He also started the Creature Shop, a puppet studio.

Sadly, Jim Henson died in 1990 at the age of 54. Henson's absence from the world of theater was mourned by many; however, his creativity continues to inspire people, and the magic of his art lives on. In 2003, the University of Maryland honored one of its most famous graduates. A life-sized statue of Henson and Kermit engaged in conversation on a bench is located in a garden on the college campus. It's an inspirational tribute to a talented and influential man.

