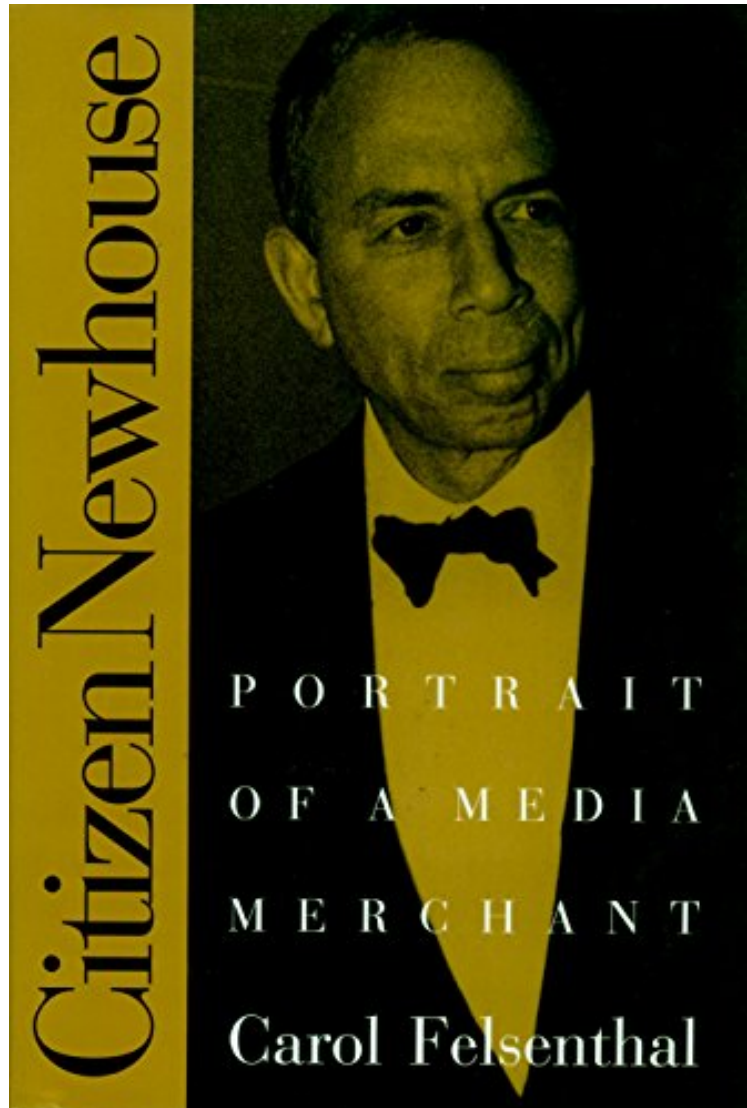


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Citizen Newhouse: Portrait of a Media Merchant

Carol Felsenthal

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Carol Felsenthal : Citizen Newhouse: Portrait of a Media Merchant before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Citizen Newhouse: Portrait of a Media Merchant:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Stranger than FictionBy A CustomerAn enormous undertaking, with awesome research, and a comfortable easy read doesn't improve either the personality of or the aura that has surrounded Si Newhouse since his college years. Ms. Felsenthal's portrayal of this self-concerned, thoughtless print media mogul is written with sharp, honest and precise clarity. Truth is indeed stranger than fiction, and this author has neatly recorded it all. The print fraternity will not like this one!4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A critical look at a man and his media empireBy A CustomerThis book tells a saga that engages its readers, enticing

them to read on and find out what happens next. I never cease to be amazed at the lives led by those with the resources of the world at their disposal. And these are the people who decide what you and I will read, hear, and see. Powerful people like Si Newhouse expose the lives of others in their magazines and newspapers, but they resist any attempt to shine that same light on themselves. I found *Citizen Newhouse* to be a real page-turner, a book I couldn't put down. I wanted to see: Would Si run the company into the ground? Would Donald again come to the rescue? Would hard-working editors get sacked as soon as Newhouse put his name on their companies? *Citizen Newhouse* is a fascinating read. Anyone who enjoys good nonfiction written in a clean, journalistic style will enjoy this book.⁷ of 7 people found the following review helpful. Honest Reporting Never Goes Unpunished By Fredric Alan Maxwell Carol Felsenthal has made all the right moves in research, writing and having published the excellent biography *CITIZEN NEWSHOUSE*. She interviewed hundreds of people, came up with a strong story line and kept it up hundreds of pages later. Alas, this readable study of a publisher broke an unwritten rule in the business of publishing writers: don't write about us. When finished, Viking accepted her work then, violating its contract, said it wouldn't publish it because "people we know are on every page." It was left to Seven Stories to pick it up. While Ms. Felsenthal didn't have a fatwa issued against her, any freedom-respecting reader should buy a copy to support those who challenge the powers that be simply by writing the truth.

An acclaimed biographer takes on one of the world's most elusive media moguls in *Citizen Newhouse*. The harvest of four years and over 400 interviews, Carol Felsenthal's book is an unauthorized investigative biography that paints a tough yet even-handed portrait. Here is the father, Sam Newhouse, who developed a formula for creating newspaper monopolies in small metropolitan markets and turned it into a huge family fortune. And the sons: Si in the magazine business, with his crown jewels, *The New Yorker*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Vogue*, and Donald, who runs the family's newspaper and cable television companies. Focusing on Si's life and career, *Citizen Newhouse* takes the measure of one of America's most powerful yet unexamined figures. Felsenthal shows how Si's quirky behavior as a shy and awkward outsider has had a far-reaching impact on the properties he owns, affecting—and in the opinion of some, compromising—the quality of the Newhouse "product" across the country and the world. Felsenthal shines a light on the breathtaking changes that have taken place among Sirsquo;s top editors, and the fabulous perks available to members of this elite. She also lays bare the role played by Roy Cohn in the affairs of both father and son. *Citizen Newhouse* provides a fascinating account of powerful and glamorous lives—and their impact on the newspapers and magazines we read every day.

From *Publishers Weekly* Originally under contract to Viking, this searing biography of media titan Si Newhouse was canceled, claims Felsenthal (*Power, Privilege and the Post*) in her introduction, by Penguin Putnam chief Phyllis Grann because a friend of Grann's appears on almost every page. To be sure, Felsenthal's work is filled with unflattering descriptions of the men and women found in the top circles of New York's magazine and book publishing scene. She begins, however, with a lengthy history of the media empire—*Advance Communications*—assembled by Newhouse's father, Sam, a self-made newspaper tycoon born on Manhattan's Lower East Side. The elder Newhouse added *Conde Nast* to his holdings in 1959; it was these magazines that drew the attention of the younger Newhouse, who, after Sam's death in 1979, left the running of the newspapers to his younger brother, Donald. As Felsenthal charts Newhouse's rising influence in the world of publishing, particularly through his acquisitions of *Random House* and the *New Yorker*—trophy companies, she says, meant to increase his prestige among the media elite—she denounces his business style, reporting that under Newhouse's ownership the quality of both the publishing house and the magazine declined dramatically, as did their profitability. It is *Advance's* newspaper and cable holdings, she contends, that prop up Newhouse's side of the business. Felsenthal misses little in documenting the many hirings and firings that have taken place under Newhouse. Publishing insiders won't learn much here (indeed, most of her financial reporting comes from the *Wall Street Journal* and other secondary sources), but other readers will find her narrative brimming with dishy suspense. Felsenthal leaves little doubt about what she thinks of Newhouse and his top aides: she calls Alberto Vitale "vile" and Newhouse himself "vacuous and self-indulgent," comparing him unfavorably to William Randolph Hearst and Rupert Murdoch. This undisguised contempt for her subject blunts what is otherwise an often penetrating look at the Machiavellian politics that lie just beneath the ultra-sleek facade of the Newhouse empire. Pictures not seen by PW. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* The increasing conglomerate control of publishing and the media worries many critics. Felsenthal, whose most recent biography focused on the media empire of Katharine Graham (*Power, Privilege and the Post*, LJ 12/92), now turns her attention to S.I. Newhouse Jr. One of the richest men in America, Newhouse heads a family business that includes a string of newspapers, cable television companies, and the *Conde Nast* magazines. (He recently sold off *Random House* to the mighty German publisher Bertelsmann.) Newhouse guards his privacy closely, and this unauthorized biography struggles to reach beyond public information. While there are many details about hirings and firings at the magazines, including the recent changes at *The New Yorker*, there is little information given about the impact of the Newhouse family on publishing and journalism. This second recent biography of Newhouse offers some material not found in Thomas Maier's *Newhouse*

(LJ 10/1/94) and will appeal to readers interested in the inside scoop on the operations of the Conde Nast magazines. Judy Solberg, George Washington Univ., Washington, DC Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sThe elusive publishing mogul Si Newhouse is portrayed with much verve and little sympathy by Felsenthal, who has previously profiled Katharine Graham (Power, Privilege and the Post, 1993). The Newhouse media empire started with Sis father, Sam New house, who kept buying newspapers, most of them mediocre, until he gathered one of the most lucrative chains in the nation. He never dictated policy, never caved to unions, and never sold a paper; he just bought more. To teach them the business, he dispat ched sons Si and Donald from city to city on their ``paper route." When the family enterprise dropped into the laps of the boys, younger brother Donald ran the profitable papers. Si seemed to find his mtier in the byzantine culture of magazines when, in 1959, he bought venerable Cond Nast, publisher of Vogue and other valuable periodicals. Under his erring management, Cond Nast endures mercurial masthead changes and, Felsenthal establishes, continuously bleeds money. He bought the renowned New Yorker; si nce then, there's been internecine warfare and floods of red ink while, in Felsenthals view, the magazine lost its way under the guidance of Tina Brown (who recently and famously jumped ship). Si captured Random House, too; then, recently, he sold it to a foreign media conglomerate. Felsenthal has a jolly, gossipy time in the worlds of Brown, Diana Vreeland, and Sis old pal, the late Roy Cohn. Much of the text is based on interviews with fugitives from the land of hype and buzz, which lends it a certain a d hominem flair. The Newhouse visage, dcor, demeanor, and lack of appropriate philanthropic urgenone quite meet the author's standards (though according to one source, his wife ``knows how to seat people"). A former girlfriend compliments Si as ``very se nsual in his own wee little way." Here's a sly and occasionally catty story of publishingan occasionally feline businessand an absorbing study of a feckless billionaire. (8 pages photos, not seen) -- Copyright copy;1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All r ights reserved.