



Strange Days Dangerous Nights: Photos From the Speed Graphic Era

Larry Millett

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Fat men's races and fall-out shelters, murder victims and loose women, cheerleaders and immigrants, celebrities and children in distress were just some of the urban curiosities splashed across the pages of city newspapers during the Speed Graphic era (1930s-1950s). Championed by acclaimed news photographers like Arthur Fellig (a.k.a. Weegee), the Speed Graphic camera produced a new visual style that was as blunt, powerful, and immediate as a left hook. Driven by the desire to fill newspaper pages with sensational images, press photographers shot everything, day and night: automobile accidents, fires, murders, all the cop news that fought for a hot spot on the Front Page. And they covered uncounted numbers of social affairs?pictures called "grip-and-grins" in the trade: school events, sports, celebrities, oddities both of nature and humanity. Veteran journalist and mystery writer Larry Millett has unearthed over 200 of the best photos from the archives of the St. Paul Pioneer Press and the St. Paul Dispatch for Strange Days, Dangerous Nights. Included are the sensational stories behind the photos and biographies of some of the top press photographers of the day. An evocative look at another time, this is a visual history like no other, a feast for fans of photography and photojournalism, crime buffs, and urban historians?and a testament to the craft of those photographers who documented their era one shot at a time. "A collection of vivid and sometimes spectacular photographs that throw new light on the not-so-distant past, a place that is a bit like home, a bit like a movie, and a bit like another planet. It is heartening to find such stuff so well preserved and so expertly annotated.? -- Luc Sante, author of Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York, Evidence and The Factory of Facts



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