



The Sopranos, The Vanity Fair Oral History

Graydon Carter, Sam Kashner, Jim Kelly

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First airing in 1999, *The Sopranos* may be the best television show of all time, forever changing the public's expectations of what a television series can be and winning 21 Emmy Awards during its eight-year run. On the fifth anniversary of the show's hotly debated series finale, in 2007, *Vanity Fair* releases a 20,000-word e-book, the untold, behind-the-scenes story of *The Sopranos*.

With this oral history, expanded from the article in the magazine's April 2012 issue, *The Sopranos* cast and crew—from creator David Chase and James Gandolfini (Tony Soprano), to Edie Falco (Carmela Soprano) and Lorraine Bracco (Dr. Melfi)—give their unexpurgated thoughts on the show's ambiguous ending and the possibilities of a *Sopranos* movie. Sam Kashner and Jim Kelly lead readers through the writers' room where *Mad Men* creator Matthew Weiner and *Boardwalk Empire* creator Terence Winter cut their teeth, through the grueling shooting schedules during which the late Nancy Marchand (Tony Soprano's mother, Livia), behind the cameras, slapped herself with pepperoni to try to lighten the mood, and through the “whackings” of Big Pussy, Adriana La Cerva, and Bobby “Bacala.” The book discusses the show's soundtrack (which ranged from Bruce Springsteen to Britney Spears, from Journey to The Rolling Stones) and influences (from *Goodfellas* to *The Three Stooges*) and, above all else, how much it is the creation of a singular genius, David Chase. Much more than a show about the Mafia, *The Sopranos* is an American cultural phenomenon—as much about the domestic family as the Mob family—that succeeded against all odds. As Edie Falco recalls, “After we shot the pilot, David [Chase] said, ‘Well, that was a lot of fun. Unfortunately, no one will ever watch this show, but you guys have been great.’ And that was the end. Or so we thought.”

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