



## The War for Late Night: When Leno Went Early and Television Went Crazy

By Bill Carter

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**A dramatic account of the politics and personalities behind NBC's calamitous attempt to reinvent late-night television.**

When NBC decided to move Jay Leno into prime time to make room for Conan O'Brien to host the *Tonight* show—a job he had been promised five years earlier—skeptics anticipated a train wreck for the ages. It took, in fact, only a few months for the dire predictions to come true. Leno's show, panned by critics, dragged down the ratings—and the profits—of NBC's affiliates, while ratings for Conan's new *Tonight* show plummeted to the lowest levels in history. Conan's collapse, meanwhile, opened an unexpected door of opportunity for rival David Letterman. What followed was a boisterous, angry, frequently hilarious public battle that had millions of astonished viewers glued to their sets. In *The War for Late Night*, *New York Times* reporter Bill Carter offers a detailed behind-the-scenes account of the events of the unforgettable 2009/2010 late-night season as all of its players—performers, producers, agents, and network executives—maneuvered to find footing amid the shifting tectonic plates of television culture.

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#### **About the Author**

Bill Carter joined *The New York Times* as a national media reporter in 1989. He is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *The Late Shift*, two other books on the television industry, *Monday Night Mayhem* and *Desperate Networks*, and has written numerous articles for *The New York Times Magazine* and other publications. He has been a guest on *Nightline*, *Today*, *CNN*, *Charlie Rose*, *NBC Nightly News with Brian Williams*, and many other shows. A graduate of the University of Notre Dame, he lives in New Jersey with his wife. They have two children.

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