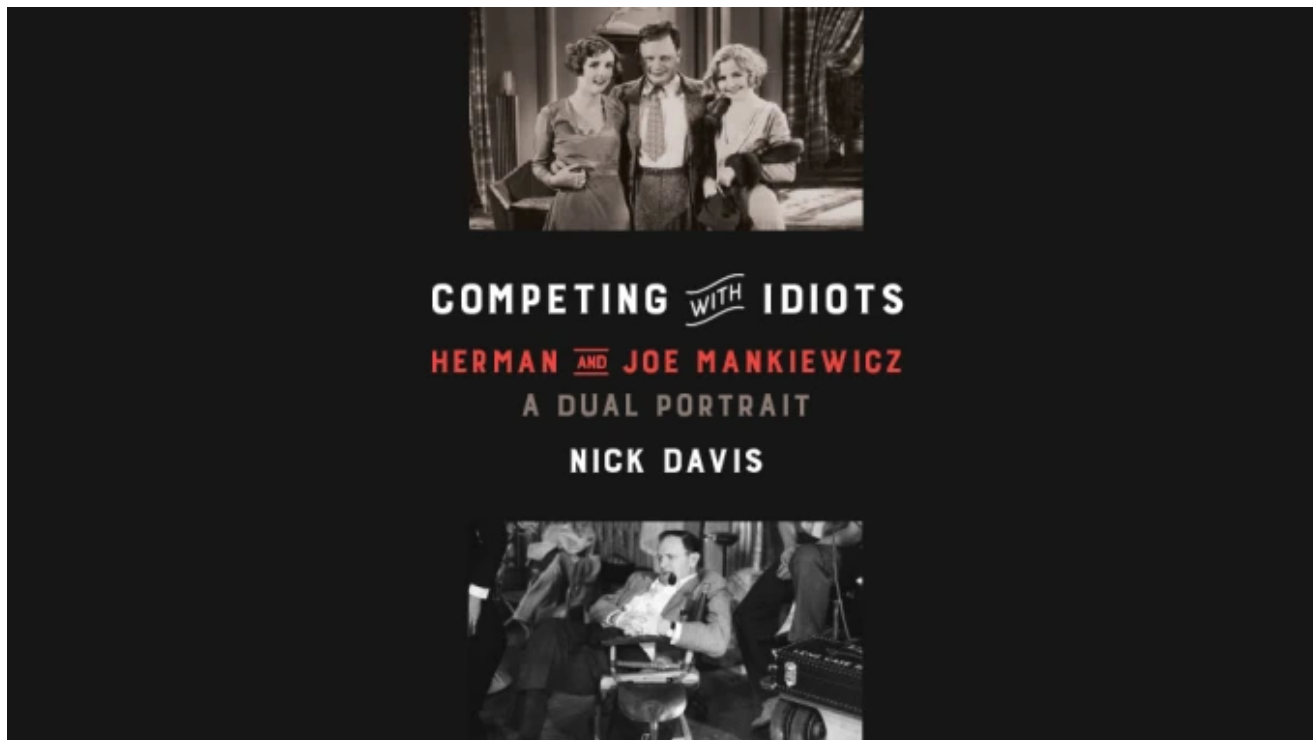


# Herman And Joe Mankiewicz Biography By Relative And Filmmaker Nick Davis Looks To Ride ‘Mank’ Wave With 2021 Publication Date

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December 29, 2020



With David Fincher’s film *Mank* reviving the legend of screenwriter Herman Mankiewicz, a descendant of the *Citizen Kane* scribe and his equally fabled brother, Joseph, will have his dual biography published next summer by Knopf.

*Competing with Idiots* by Nick Davis takes its title from a telegram Herman Mankiewicz sent after he left his career as a New York theater critic for Hollywood in 1926. “MILLIONS ARE TO BE GRABBED OUT HERE AND YOUR ONLY COMPETITION IS IDIOTS. DON’T LET THIS GET AROUND,” he wrote to Ben Hecht, who would soon join the Westward migration of writing talent.

Davis, who is the grandson of Herman and great-nephew of Joe, followed in the family line and has accumulated a number of writing, producing and directing credits for television and film work. He is directing a multi-part documentary under ESPN’s *30 for 30* banner about the 1986 New York Mets and has also done projects for PBS’ *American Masters* and CNBC.

The book has been in the works for nearly two decades. In 2003, an initial proposal for the book, repped by Bill Clegg. then with Burnes & Clegg, sold at auction to Knopf’s Vicky Wilson.

In addition to co-writing *Citizen Kane*, Herman Mankiewicz earned screenwriting credits for films like *Dinner at Eight*, *Pride of the Yankees* and the Marx Bros' *Monkey Business*, *Horse Feathers* and *Duck Soup*.

Joe Mankiewicz won Oscars for writing and directing *All About Eve* and *A Letter to Three Wives*. He also produced 20 films, including *The Philadelphia Story*. His career was derailed for a time in the 1960s after he directed the infamous flop *Cleopatra*, though he rebounded in 1972 with an Oscar nomination for directing *Sleuth*, which starred Laurence Olivier and Michael Caine.

Knopf, an imprint of Penguin Random House, describes the book as an interweaving of the brothers' similar yet distinct stories as they blazed paths through the film business in its formative decades. Herman "only wrote screenplays but believed himself to be a serious playwright, slowly dying of alcoholism and disappointment," in the publisher's summation. Joe, 11 years younger, was a "director, auteur, sorcerer, and seducer of leading ladies, one of Hollywood's most literate and intelligent filmmakers."

*Competing with Idiots* won't be the first to tell the brothers' tale, albeit minus the familial connection. In 2019, the University Press of Mississippi published *The Brothers Mankiewicz* by Sydney Ladensohn Stern.