

'Raw, absorbing, stomach-punchingly funny. As I've seen first-hand, where Kris goes, chaos follows. He's the master of the blag and king of riding his luck, capturing his extraordinary and calamitous life on the road to F1 perfectly in this sensational tale. A much-needed feel-good book that will have you in stitches one minute and feeling his pain another. An awesome human being, with an incredible life story.'

**Lawrence Barretto**  
**Formula One writer, presenter and broadcaster**

'It's often said that in Formula One you meet a better class of person at the back of the grid. For all that Kris makes out he's the Mr. Bean of the paddock, he's actually a solid bloke and much appreciated. If you want a different take on the mad, mad world that is F1, this is the book for you.'

**James Allen**  
**President, Motorsport Business & F1 Liaison**  
**Motorsport Network Media**

'I first encountered Kris at BSKyB in London when his career was on a terminal downhill trajectory, so it was a huge surprise to meet him again in the Formula One paddock. Like a durable (but blistered and slow) hard compound tyre, he somehow kept going when he should have been black-flagged long ago. This book is an exhaustive compendium of how not to make sports television. Read it at your peril.'

**Craig Slater**  
**Formula One News reporter, Sky Sports UK**

'Kris may claim to have no idea what he's doing, but he somehow lasted this long, so I have my suspicions. This book shows that many of the F1 paddock's weird and wonderful personalities have hilarious failings and, like Kris, needed more than a few lucky breaks to make it. This book provides a unique angle on the glamorous, intriguing and outlandish world of Formula One.'

**Chris Medland**  
**Formula One journalist and broadcaster Racer/Motor Sport Magazine/SiriusXM**

'Formula One is a travelling circus with hundreds of people making the show happen. Having taken time to think back over the many characters I have met in the sport, I have no hesitation in saying that Kris, unequivocally, is one of them!'

**Will Buxton**  
**Formula One digital presenter, author, journalist and reporter,**  
**Liberty Media/FOM**

'Krysllexia: a learning difficulty that drastically impairs the skills required for the accurate reading, writing and speaking of Spanish, resulting in a hilarious vocabulary.'

**Diego Mejía**  
**Motorsport broadcaster, Fox Sports LatAm**

'TV crews in the F1 paddock work under extreme pressure and every second counts. When I am preparing my technical demonstrations, I am often working against the clock to get ready for the live broadcast. It's a relief to know that Kris is there solving problems with a smile and positive energy, even if he seems to be running around like a headless chicken. I hope you enjoy the book.'

**Albert Fabrega,**  
**Formula One presenter, technical expert and broadcaster**

'Kris is hard to keep up with as he zooms round the paddock at warp speed, but on the rare occasions when the job allows, he's outstandingly cool company too!'

**David Tremayne**  
**Formula One writer and author**

'Kris, the man with the cap, is one of the friendliest and most helpful people in the paddock. He always has time for everyone. No matter how hectic or stressful the situation, he is always calm and kind.'

**Mervi Kallio**  
**Formula One host, reporter and news anchor, Viaplay TV**

'Had I known half of what I learned reading these hilarious, hair-raising stories, I would have fired Kris years ago!'

**Juan Fossaroli**  
**Formula One presenter, producer and reporter, ESPN Disney**

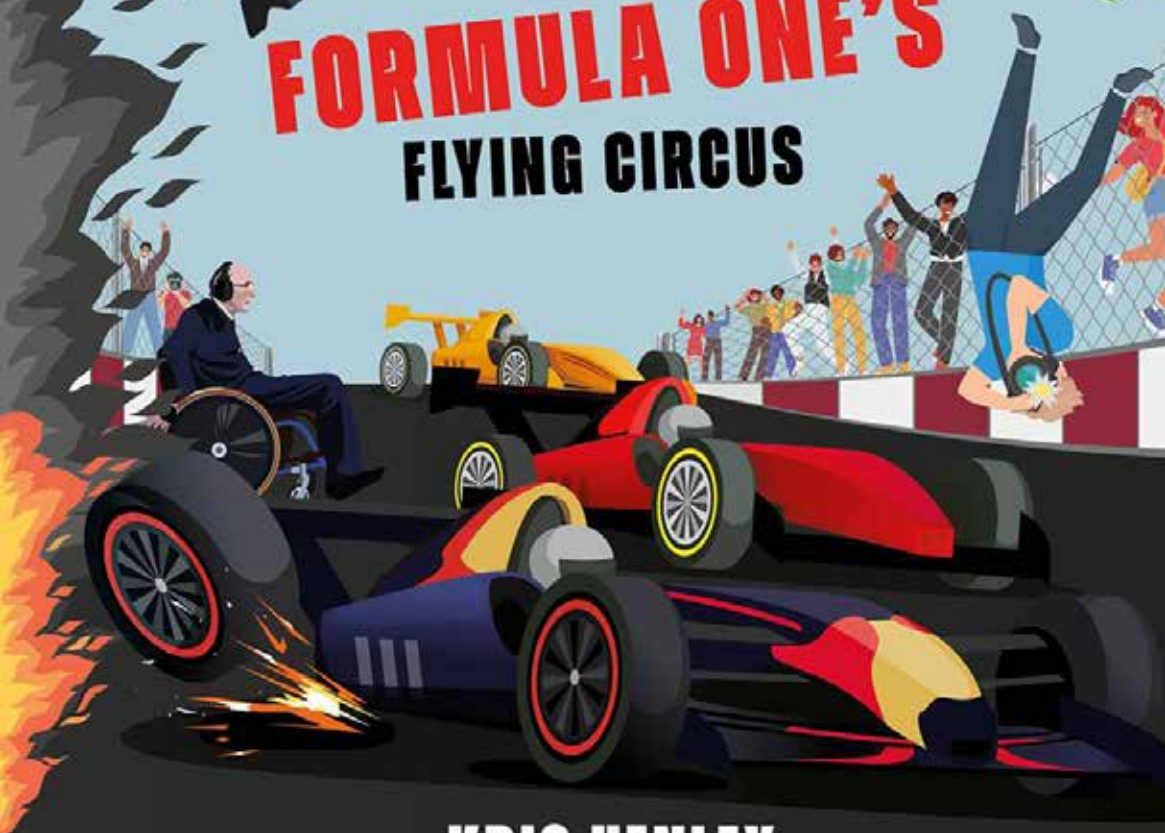
**STARTING FROM THE BACK OF THE**

# **HARD**



**MISADVENTURES  
INSIDE**

**FORMULA ONE'S  
FLYING CIRCUS**



**KRIS HENLEY**

**FOREWORD BY GUENTHER STEINER**

# Contents

Foreword by Guenther Steiner . . . . .	8
Latin America, We Have a Problem!. . . . .	9
Red Bull Gives Me Wings . . . . .	14
A Clown in the Formula One Circus. . . . .	24
How (not) to Become a Formula One TV Producer . . . . .	29
Searching for a Seat. . . . .	32
Why We Can't Be Formula One Drivers. . . . .	41
Useless Business Cards . . . . .	48
Diamond Geezer at Silverstone. . . . .	54
Paddock Survival Skills. . . . .	61
Track Slide Camera . . . . .	68
Joker in the Hole . . . . .	76
Money, Money, Money! . . . . .	80
Creative Writing Crash Course. . . . .	88
Finding the Fun in Formula One . . . . .	92
Cowboy Meets Cowgirl . . . . .	97
The Engineering Edge . . . . .	105
Prime Time. . . . .	112
Charlie and Walter . . . . .	117
Black-Flagged. . . . .	126
Racing's In My Blood. . . . .	133
F! . . . . .	138
Crash Test Dummy. . . . .	143
Four Steps to Heaven. . . . .	150
Snappers . . . . .	153
Monte Carlo or Bust . . . . .	162
In a Different Dimension. . . . .	166
Moroccan Black . . . . .	173
Crashgating the Party . . . . .	180

Restricted Access . . . . .	184
The Pride of Venezuela . . . . .	193
Animal Farm . . . . .	198
Gooshbumpsh on the Grid . . . . .	204
The Art of Silence . . . . .	212
Lost in Lewis's Eyes . . . . .	216
Rubbish Performance . . . . .	222
Sebastian's Slowest Lap . . . . .	227
Nousnous Violet . . . . .	230
Away with the Fairways . . . . .	235
Liar, Liar, Car's on Fire. . . . .	239
Sky Dive . . . . .	244
Careering Around . . . . .	257
Ulises the God of Love . . . . .	265
Batigol . . . . .	272
Electric Dreams. . . . .	277
Run For Your Lives! . . . . .	289
Never Lift, Never Give Up . . . . .	295
Frankenstein's Baby. . . . .	304
'We're Going to Need a Miracle' . . . . .	310
The Ace and the Joker . . . . .	317
Acknowledgements . . . . .	320

# Latin America, We Have a Problem!

*Abu Dhabi 2021, Race Day*

FIVE MINUTES and 18 seconds before we started broadcasting the last Grand Prix of the thrilling 2021 season to Spanish-speaking America, I knew a disaster was imminent.

The enthralling Formula One season had reached a thrilling climax. The eyes of tens of millions of fans were locked on two drivers: the up-and-coming pretender, supremely talented and intensely ambitious Dutchman Max Verstappen, in hot pursuit of his maiden Formula One World Championship; and the all-business, undisputed master of his craft, British superstar Sir Lewis Carl Davidson Hamilton, MBE and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering. Having won every other conceivable honour in the sport, Lewis Hamilton was striving to surpass racing legend Michael Schumacher by winning his eighth Formula One drivers' title.

Astonishingly, the fierce rivals were tied on 369.5 points after 21 closely fought races throughout a contentious season. Tens of millions of seasoned Formula One fans and newcomers alike were restlessly anticipating the finale of a sporting epic that would be talked about for decades.

Our onsite production crew, charged with bringing this mouth-watering action to Latin America, however, scarcely seemed to match the importance of the occasion. Covid-19 had reduced our numbers to just two. Our dynamic duo consisted of the youthful-looking, 57-year-old, blond-haired, ruggedly handsome Argentinian Juan Fossaroli, a superstar in his own right as presenter, principal

interviewer, commentator and pit reporter for millions of Latin American motorsport fans and, as a partner of the production company attached to Fox Sports, my boss. And then there was me. A less-eye-catching, somewhat balding 54-year-old from Jersey with, as we shall see, some serious challenges in presenting the same aura of suave sophistication. Oh, and that's Jersey, the tiny island just off the coast of France, by the way. Which is nothing like the place where Tony Soprano built his various dubious businesses.

The job title on my F1 season pass boasts 'producer' which certainly sounds good, suggesting an authoritative figure strutting around in mirror shades, dishing out orders to cowering subordinates. The reality is not always so impressive. My duties do include interviewing the racing drivers, team principals,<sup>1</sup> engineers, mechanics and other F1 team members (as well as passing celebrities); and I edit features for the motorsports programmes which air across Latin America. But I can also be seen performing more mundane tasks, such as clearing the way for our regular cameraman, the affable Ulises Panizza (Uli to his many friends), as he tracks backwards during a walking interview; sprinting up the paddock<sup>2</sup> searching frantically for a new battery; fetching Juan's jacket from the press room, or an umbrella from my locker to protect the camera when it rains; or begging another TV crew to lend us a forgotten cable; and then returning a few moments later to beg the same crew for the microphone that goes with the cable. In short, I get to do the jobs that Juan, the star of the show, is too busy to do.

It is also my pleasure to grovel to the FIA<sup>3</sup> for not filling in the appropriate paperwork for a parking pass and then to be haughtily reprimanded because they have nothing to do with such mundane

---

1 I optimistically hope this book will be of interest to relative newcomers to Formula One as well as seasoned fans, so I will explain F1 terminology in footnotes as we go. Team principals are the F1 team bosses.

2 The paddock is the area that the drivers walk through as they make their way from the teams' hospitality suites to their garages and is where the press do most of the driver interviews.

3 Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile, the governing body for world motorsport.

matters and say that I should instead apply to FOM.<sup>4</sup> And, by the way, I really should know the difference by now. Cue: more grovelling.

Indeed, whatever job needs doing, however much kowtowing is required, I do what has to be done to bring the action to our audience. And right now, what had to be done was to stand in for Uli, whose Chinese CanSino Covid-19 vaccine had been insufficient to satisfy officialdom that he was safe to travel to the Middle East. Which left us short-handed. So heroically, if somewhat diffidently, I accepted the mission to save the day.

Under my sole supervision was the hi-tech Sony PMW-300 XDCAM camera that would provide millions of Latin American F1 fans with an intimate, insider's perspective, up close and personal with the superstars of this elite sport. Our viewers would experience the febrile atmosphere in the paddock, hear the roar of the engines on the chaotically coordinated grid, snatch glimpses of, and maybe even a sound bite from, their heroes as they strode purposefully to their cars. And they would hear the latest fevered speculation and sensational developments from Juan, their beloved correspondent.

The ever-so-tiny flaw in this plan was that handling a production grade camera is skilled work and I was, more or less, a novice. There are many features on a modern video camera, but the only ones I had really mastered were the on/off switch, the focus, the zoom, the iris (sort of) and the record button. Which is not necessarily to say I always pressed it at the right time.

So, just two guys with a big responsibility, working on a shoestring. There were no back-ups, no additional support staff and no spares. The all-important camera was perched on top of its tripod to take a final shot of FOM's promotional poster 'Lewis vs Max – Winner Takes All', which was affixed to the wall between the back entrances of the Mercedes and Red Bull garages. The drivers appeared to be staring one another down like prize fighters and I thought I could use the image in the following week's highlights

---

4 Formula One Management, the operating company that controls the broadcasting, organisation and promotional rights of Formula One.



magazine, dramatically zooming out to reveal the protagonists in a montage of victorious, celebratory, reflective and pensive poses. And to be honest, I was feeling quite smug about how good my seventh attempt at the Tarantino-inspired reverse crash-zoom shot looked.

The feed was already streaming from the LiveU video transmission pack on my back to our studios in Buenos Aires and Mexico City for recording and broadcast. I would not touch the record button again until the race was over. The studio-based producers were no doubt wondering why they were seeing repeated crash-zooms of a poster instead of our presenter, Juan. It was past time to get going.

My job for the half-hour pre-show, the race itself and the hour-long post-show was simple. I just had to point and focus the camera either on Juan, or on the drivers, as they rushed through the paddock to their garages, climbed over their halos,<sup>5</sup> pulled in their elbows and slithered into their specially moulded carbon fibre seats in their cockpits, before turning right out of their garages and roaring off down the pit lane on to the anti-clockwise circuit.

Or perhaps I would shoot nervous-looking team principals, suavely unruffled former world champions, excited celebrities, or one of the many other voracious attention-seekers, of which there is a plentiful supply at this sort of sporting spectacular. Some interviews I had arranged weeks before. Others would be done as the opportunity presented.

I might pan from Juan to the #44 Mercedes in the pits and then zoom in slowly on to Lewis's helmet as Juan pointed out an intriguing design detail. Or maybe I would follow Max with a dramatic whip pan (if perhaps not perfectly in frame) as he emerged from the garage in his #33 Red Bull and cruised on to the circuit to perform final checks before taking pole position,<sup>6</sup> the rest of the field slotting neatly into place behind.

---

5 The horseshoe-shaped titanium tube above the driver's head that provides crash protection.

6 The front of the starting grid.

Or after crossing over from the pits to the grid, I might capture the moment they pushed Lando Norris in his McLaren-Mercedes into third place and film him climbing out of his car; and then walk inelegantly backwards ('moonwalking' as Uli likes to call it) to keep Lando in frame as he made his way to the front of the grid for the national anthem. Doubtless I would stumble over a wheel gun or tyre cover in the absence of anyone to clear my way, but I might create a compelling, if shaky, travelling shot of the British driver. My job was just to follow whatever action Juan chose to highlight while he confided the latest buzz to our viewers or bantered with the hosts in our studios in Buenos Aires and Mexico City.

I checked the time on my wristwatch again. 16:24:40. The second hand was racing around the clock face and I was running out of time. The heavy, cumbersome tripod would not be required again until the post-race interviews, so I planned to switch the camera to a lightweight monopod that I could fasten to my belt clip.

So, all I had to do was lift the camera and tripod and carry the vital but fragile equipment ten metres up the paddock to the meeting point with Juan and make the swap. Five minutes and 18 seconds before we went on air, I began to lift.

Perhaps it was a subtle shift in the weight above me, or the slight sound of metal sliding against metal. But whatever it was, I knew for sure that there was nothing I could do to prevent a catastrophe.