

**Bummy Davis vs. Murder Inc.:
The Rise and Fall of the Jewish Mafia and
an Ill-Fated Prizefighter**

Ron Ross *St. Martin's* \$26.95 (400p)
ISBN 0-312-30638-5

Humming with wisecracks and crowded with oddball characters and lovable cranks, this mesmerizing anecdotal history rewrites the maligned legend of Jewish prizefighter Al "Bummy" Davis. Born Albert Abraham Davidoff in 1920, Davis was a plucky young street scrapper who rapidly became one of the most brash and charismatic boxers of his generation. With a devastating left hook and irrepressiblechutzpah, Davis won many of his professional fights and nearly all of the hearts in Brownsville, the once infamous Jewish neighborhood in Brooklyn, N.Y. Home to Abe "Kid Twist" Reles and "Pittsburgh Phil" Strauss, two of the Jewish mob's most feared henchmen, Brownsville was where lighthearted kvetching and the shouts of pushcart vendors faded into the muffled screams of the mafia hit. In the hands of Louis "Lepke" Buchalter and "Big Al" Anastasia, Murder Inc. turned the business of crime into a vast, well-oiled enterprise. As the younger brother of Willie Davidoff, one of the Buchalter's trusted bagmen, Davis never escaped his brother's shadow and the tabloids had a field day painting him as a dirty, low-life thug. To Ross, a former professional boxer and fight promoter, the story of Bummy Davis is inseparable from that of Depression-era Brooklyn, where the mob was still in its infancy and people were in desperate need of a champion. Having scoured the memories of Brownsville natives and boxing associates for scraps of stories, Ross stitches them together with wonderfully imagined scenes and crackling dialogue. Although the book is wreathed in the golden halo of nostalgia, Ross writes with the flair and spellbinding magnetism of a natural storyteller.

Forecast: *The book spans a variety of genres – true crime, Jewish/New York history, sports biography – and is likely to draw a diverse readership.*