



# **The Billionaire Shell Game: How Cable Baron John Malone and Assorted Corporate Titans Invented a Future Nobody Wanted**

*L.J. Davis*

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In 1992, John Malone, the brilliant, hard-nosed, and widely feared CEO of cable giant TCI, announced that the 500-channel information superhighway was imminent, and he was going to build it. The media went nuts. Companies by the hundreds, investors by the millions, politicians of all stripes, rushed to embrace this marvel of the age, this technology that would change our lives and make the savvy and the quick rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Trouble was, John Malone's interest in building the 500-channel information superhighway was largely rhetorical. He was much more interested in selling his debt-ridden company, with its notorious reputation for wretched customer service, to Ray Smith at Bell Atlantic--in what would be the largest merger in United States history. But sometimes bluffs--even \$33 billion bluffs--get out of hand. As entertainment, phone, computer, and electronics companies raced to spend vast sums on interactive digital television (the miracle technology at the heart of the information superhighway), nobody stopped to answer a crucial question: Was John Q. Public really going to fork over his hard-earned dough to have a conversation with his television set?

Witty, brilliantly reported, and wickedly revealing, *The Billionaire Shell Game* follows the best and the brightest of the information age--people like Time Warner CEO Gerald Levin, *Wired* guru Nicholas Negroponte, media mogul Barry Diller, the unpredictable genius Ted Turner, and the only man Malone truly feared, Rupert Murdoch--as they enthusiastically spend their stockholders' money in pursuit of a glittering future.

L.J. Davis has written a wildly entertaining tale of greed, stupidity, and the high-tech shell game.

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