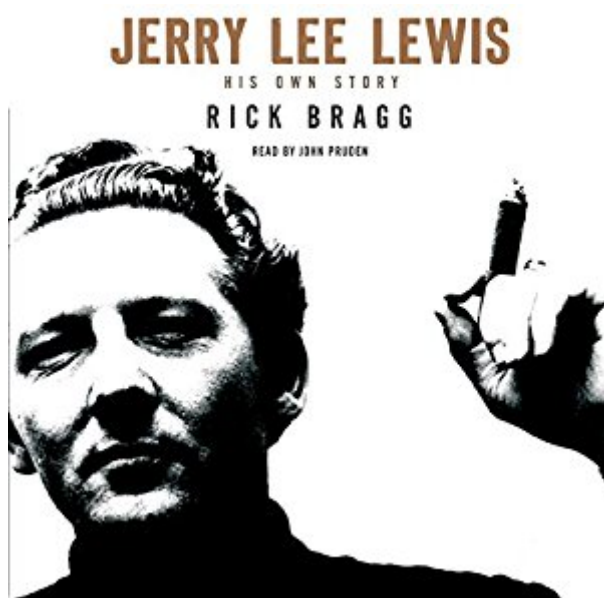


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Jerry Lee Lewis: His Own Story



Synopsis

The greatest Southern storyteller of our time, New York Times best-selling author Rick Bragg, tracks down the greatest rock and roller of all time, Jerry Lee Lewis - and gets his own story, from the source, for the very first time. A monumental figure on the American landscape, Jerry Lee Lewis spent his childhood raising hell in Ferriday, Louisiana, and Natchez, Mississippi; galvanized the world with hit records like "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" and "Great Balls of Fire", that gave rock and roll its devil's edge; caused riots and boycotts with his incendiary performances; nearly scuttled his career by marrying his 13-year-old second cousin - his third wife of seven; ran a decades-long marathon of drugs, drinking, and women; nearly met his maker, twice; suffered the deaths of two sons and two wives, and the indignity of an IRS raid that left him with nothing but the broken-down piano he started with; performed with everyone from Elvis Presley to Keith Richards to Bruce Springsteen to Kid Rock - and survived it all to be hailed as "one of the most creative and important figures in American popular culture and a paradigm of the Southern experience." Jerry Lee Lewis: His Own Story is the Killer's life as he lived it, and as he shared it over two years with our greatest bard of Southern life: Rick Bragg. Rich with Lewis' own words, framed by Bragg's richly atmospheric narrative, this is the last great untold rock-and-roll story, come to life on the page.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

Listening Length: 15 hours and 56 minutes

Program Type: Audiobook

Version: Unabridged

Publisher: HarperAudio

Audible.com Release Date: October 28, 2014

Whispersync for Voice: Ready

Language: English

ASIN: B00NBB1BS0

Best Sellers Rank: #192 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Arts & Entertainment > Music #388

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Artists, Writers & Musicians #478

in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Entertainers & Celebrities

Customer Reviews

Jerry Lee Lewis "His Own Story" By Rick Bragg I have just finished reading this 500 page book by Professor Rick Bragg. Thanks to Amazon's excellent service the book arrived yesterday morning

at 11am and it now 3pm on the following day and it has taken me almost every hour since to read it. You have heard of books you can't put down well this one stopped me going to sleep. As Jerry himself would say, there have been a flock of books about him but none are anything like as good as this one. I must confess here at the outset of this review to being an avid Jerry Lee fan and I have known him personally for over 52 years and been fortunate enough to fly with him in his private plane and to stay as a guest in Jerry's home. As such I can vouch for the veracity and truthfulness of the way Jerry and Rick describe many of the events I attended. Absolutely nothing has been glossed over. This is not a sugar-coated biography. It is an unusual book in as much as it is more than just a biography as the author recalls past events and jogs Jerry's memory into commenting on them. Frequently the actions described are quite shocking and this book is definitely unsuitable for maiden aunts and anyone of a nervous disposition. The book tells how Jerry was delivered into this world by his father as the doctor was lying drunk beside the bed. It was a breach birth and Jerry says, "I was born feet first and I have been jumping ever since." Jerry's father Elmo played an important part in Jerry's life and the wild streak that runs throughout the Lewis family meant that sometimes Elmo would be serving time in the dreaded Angola prison for bootlegging liquor. Jerry's mother Mamie did her best in very difficult circumstances and the book details their dirt poor existence in the south of Louisiana. It wasn't until Jerry was 21 and checked into a cheap hotel in Memphis that he was in a place that had a sink and running water. The book is excellent on Jerry's upbringing in the small town of Ferriday and how he was constantly competing with his cousins, Mickey Gilley and Jimmy Lee Swaggart. Jerry talks honestly about how he and Jimmy Lee stole goods from shops and he also tells of stealing a pistol. In fact one of the constant themes of the book is Jerry's many run-ins with the law, the Inland Revenue, and his multitude of court cases. Author Rick Bragg is already well known for his books and essays on the South and he writes eloquently on Jerry's religious upbringing and the torments he still suffers today in his eightieth year as he tries to atone for all his misdeeds in the hope that he will make it to Heaven. Surprisingly Jerry names some of his old girlfriends and recalls how he got naked by a riverbank with one 16 year old when he was just 13. However, in his mind he heard some Scripture and as he half expected a bolt of lightning at any second, they put their clothes back on. Jerry tells how he did not have sex until he was married at 16 and then he was disappointed and immediately decided he had married too young. Jerry eventually grew to like marriage as he eventually married seven different ladies "sometimes in a bit of a rush and without the precaution of divorcing the previous one. In the book Jerry details this unusual attitude to

marriage in a very factual manner that will surprise many. Jerry talks very frankly about his early years as a musician and how he was inspired by hearing Elvis's early records on the radio. He had read in magazines how Sam Phillips, the owner of Sun records had made star out of Elvis and the book gives Jerry's first hand account of how he got started at Sun and his elation at hearing Memphis DJ Dewey Phillips play his first record on the radio. There is a good description of the Million Dollar Quartet session where Jerry, Elvis, Carl Perkins and Johnny Cash were all photographed together in the Sun studio in December 1956. That jam session became history and Jerry is now the sole survivor as his three colleagues are now no longer with us. Jerry is also extremely truthful about his lifetime dependence on a mixture of alcohol and drugs. And by drugs Jerry does not just mean a few uppers, he lists a complete range of pharmaceuticals that he either swallowed or injected. He certainly doesn't recommend that way of life and the book will serve as a wake up call to many musicians who think it is fun to dabble in drugs "only Jerry didn't dabble. Above all the sensational stories the book chronicles his great success as a musician. No other singer pianist has enjoyed such a long career. He has cut records across all the fields of popular music and has sold millions and millions of records from gold discs like Great Balls of Fire and Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On in the fifties to being a star with millions of downloads on YouTube and I-Tunes. Despite being a consistent seller for over 58 years, from rock'n'roll to country to gospel, Jerry maintains in the book that he has never been paid properly for most of them. Yet he has never sued anyone for what is rightfully his. They have tried making films of his life and various articles and books have also attempted to capture the essence of Jerry Lee Lewis but until now all have failed. In the words of my late friend Glenn Sutton, who wrote 5 songs for him, "Jerry Lee Lewis can take any song and make it his own, he is the greatest entertainer in the World, always has been and always will be." I thoroughly recommend this book and every aspiring musician should read it all and learn from it. Graham Knight from Aberdeen, Scotland Graham@knightsaberdeen.com

When you reach a certain comfort level with someone you are willing to tell them things you wouldn't share with just anyone. That's because you wouldn't let your guard down to someone you weren't sure had your best interest at heart. In JERRY LEE LEWIS: His Own Story Pulitzer Prize winning author Rick Bragg definitely had the trust of Mr. Lewis because he allowed him to see and the very essence of who he is not just as an entertainer but a man---and we as readers are all better off because of it. Lewis once told Bragg that he "had been lucky at everything, except life", but I think once you begin this book you will see that blessed more aptly describes the life that Lewis has

lived, and it began at an early on. You see, Lewis knew that he had been given something special when it came to music. In the book we learn that while the world was experiencing war, Lewis realized that "his own world was just too small". He had to make a move, and by 1943 music was really his everything. He started to actually visual success, though he didn't call it that or even know it to be that, and he shared those thoughts with one of the women that would later become his girl. There was so much I learned about Lewis in this book that I had never known. I never knew how his beginnings impacted the man he would grow to be. I never thought about the responsibility of being called the King by Elvis himself, and then living up to that. And then there was his private life that would become public, long before the 24-hour news cycle and the internet---and how he railed against it. Bragg writes this: "He really believed there were things in life that were the world's business and things that were his business, like the things that happened between a man and his wife. He believed it." Experiences would teach him, however, that that was not the case. That no matter how much he achieved there would always be things that would create barriers that he would have to overcome---and he did overcome them, becoming wise and more seasoned along the way. A true testament to what is possible captured by a writer that knows the possibilities of the human spirit, this book is sure to inspire you to keep on keeping on as long as you can.

I just finished reading this book. I am a fan of not only the subject of the book, but also the author, Rick Bragg. Rick Bragg speaks my language. I have loved the Killer's music for boo coo years, and like him, I am now old... but I still love the music. During the decade of the 70's, I lived in Fla. and collected many of Jerry Lee's albums. My house was filled with Jerry Lee's music nearly ALL the time. I was fortunate to see him in concert in Tampa during this time as well. There is only ONE Killer, only ONE Jerry Lee Lewis as this book will, no doubt, convince you. It tells not only about the good things that have happened in Jerry Lee's life, but it also tells you about the bad things....the things that most people would not want put in a book. I learned so much about this man by reading this book. I thought I already knew a great deal about Jerry Lee, but I didn't know squat until this book. I think Rick Bragg is the only person who could have written this book and made it simply magnificent.

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