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Ella Fitzgerald: The Complete Biography Of First Lady Of Jazz, Updated Edition



Synopsis

Stuart Nicholson's biography of Ella Fitzgerald is considered a classic in jazz literature. Drawing on original documents, interviews, and new information, Nicholson draws a complete picture of Fitzgerald's professional and personal life. Fitzgerald rose from being a pop singer with chart-novelty hits in the late '30s to become a bandleader and then one of the greatest interpreters of American popular song. Along with Billie Holiday, she virtually defined the female voice in jazz, and countless others followed in her wake and acknowledged her enormous influence. Also includes two 8-page inserts.

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Customer Reviews

The book is loaded with facts about Ms. Fitzgerald's concert and recording careers, but gives almost nothing about her personal life.

I'd have given this book 4 1/2 stars given the option. The only reason I didn't give it 5 is that it gets somewhat dry towards the end, but I blame my attention span for some of that. It's full of fascinating stories, tidbits and opinions from musicians, producers, friends and agents who worked with Ella. You'll come away from the book with a new understanding of Ella the person and Ella the musician. You'll learn much about the times and the musicians who created the story of popular music and jazz in America. You'll also have a fascinating guide to her recorded music, the whys and the hows of it, the circumstances that made it wonderful or less than great. I recommend this book!

This is the best of the Ella bios. Authoritative, well-written, and insightful with a helpful discography. Avoid the much inferior "First Lady of Song" by Fidelman. THIS is the bio to buy.

I have long been an Ella Fitzgerald fan, so overall I found this book to be an enjoyable and interesting read -- but in my opinion it was a bit unbalanced and tedious at times. There was quite a bit of "the music critics' " analyses of jazz, Ella's performances, and her recordings, which was much less interesting to me than her LIFE. But I now know that she was a very private person, so maybe there just isn't a lot of information to be had. But for example, I would have liked to know more about her marriage and her adopted son.

I'll start off by saying that I'm a huge Ella fan. I bought this hoping to learn more about her real life and what made her who she was. I was really disappointed in that the author gives a rundown of all her gigs and connections and a history of how she got to be from place to place. The writing is almost void of Ella.....her thoughts or personal experiences from her own perspective are missing. I gathered just as much information about her life from internet searching. I was really hoping for something along the lines of Art Pepper's "Straight Life" and this falls, sadly, very short. It's okay for the reader that wants to know where she lived, performed, and recorded but not for much else.

I read this book in for the first time in 1996. and now, second time around, still have the same feeling - Stuart Nicholson had obviously find easier to trace every step Ella Fitzgerald ever made in recording studio,than what she thought,felt and reasons behind her behaviour."A model in research and musical insight?" There is a year-by-year recording dates discography but not one single interview or even quote!!Yes,Ella was a wonderful,gifted singer,but what eventually came out of this book (between the lines,if you bother to read) is that she was easily and ruthlessly pushed around by Norman Granz (manager) and made him a millionaire,toured 365 days in the year so Granz could collect Picasso paintings & move to Switzerland and that same Granz didnt have understanding for her,making a scene when she couldnt perform as her sister had just died (Duke Ellington stepped to protect her and got a slap on HIS nose instead).If Stuart Nicholson didnt have acces to do interview with Fitzgerald herself or at least some of her close friends,I wonder why did he bother to writte a book at all (just to dig some dirt & discover that she was - maybe?- a victim a child abuse,something that she kept behind her and didnt want to discuss,which we should understand and respect).No matter how appealing singer Ella was,I find repulsive idea of this big

woman being lead around by her manager as beast of burden. And they said Billie Holiday was a tragic figure - hey, Billie at least had a good time! At the end of 245 pages, I find this book simply overrated - you can easily find Fitzgerald's discography in every jazz dictionary and perhaps as a subject of his book Nicholson should have consider Norman Granz instead.

The revised edition of this survey of jazz lady Ella Fitzgerald will appeal to any who haven't already gotten too many jazz biographies of Ella under their belts. Ella Fitzgerald defined the female voice in jazz, and Stuart Nicholson's biography was considered a classic in the genre. This updated edition includes further research of original documents, photos, and interviews to expand upon Ella's life.

It's more like a history book of the swing times. Since Ella never talked about herself it doesn't really let you get to know who she is but you learn what she was doing and you get tiny glimpses of her personality etc. But it's very interesting to learn about what was happening back then.

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