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Synopsis

(Limelight). "...in the tradition of the best jazz autobiographies...a fascinating travelogue through the jazz world, filled with vivid images of Gene Krupa, Stan Kenton, Roy Eldridge and Billie Holiday...Her prose is as hip as her music." The New York Times Book Review

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Customer Reviews

"The record of [the] early years is like the story of the music itself: rich, exciting, innovative; featuring the primitive beauty of the twenties when one foot was still in showbiz; the thirties with hip sophistication and hard swinging for hard times; the explosive forties of pre-war big-band bashes and post-war bop; and then the fifties, going off in a hundred directions with a needle in the arm.... it is the best jazz autobiography I've ever read". --Jim Christy, (Toronto) Globe and Mail"...in the tradition of the best jazz autobiographies...a fascinating travelogue through the jazz world, filled with vivid images of Gene Krupa, Stan Kenton, Roy Eldridge and Billie Holiday...Her prose is as hip as her music." - The New York Times Book Review --The New York Times Book Review

I gobbled this one up. Fascinating, intimate , deeply honest.I agree that parts of Anita's story do sound like a gritty hardboiled paperback pulp novel- but that's the way it was.Interesting to see the effects of the first foray in the "war against drugs"- Anita was set up several times by government officials and she served hard prison time for a couple of pot seeds, insane! Anita seems part Bille Holiday- part Frances Farmer- because she definitely lived on her own terms and paid the price. An interesting part of the book is the background,where the authors painted a realistic portrait of a

single parent household in the depression ;Anita's mother was one of the coldest I can recall- although not outright abusive, she was just not capable of warmth period. Readers will find a rare look at the show business of the Depression 30's where Anita cut her teeth in the walkathon circuit. This arena has not been covered to death in memoirs- a large swatch of the public, looking for cheap live entertainment, went to traveling shows of a sort - a cross between vaudeville and the circus I suppose, where a living could be made by show biz aspirants , by marathon dancing. This was tough stuff. I find that Anita's passion for jazz- song styling- is immense, it is essentially the only beacon in her long rough and tumble life. She is able to articulate just what it is that she is learning all along the way. Never commercial, she was a true non-diva bohemian. The 14 year heroin addiction is a sad story- but it goes right along with the program. After two jail stints and upon discovering a tea-totalling religious fanatic that has one small caveat (he only likes things he can inject with a hypo), Anita figures- I got the name, why not play the game? She figured it would keep the cirrosis at bay. No kidding... This book is about her life- the multi dimensions, unlike other showbiz memoirs, it 's not about name dropping, it's just about how it was for her, and much time is spent on the "craft" and what it means.

I have not finished the book yet. I have been savouring it over lunch for a few weeks. Not wanting to end the experience too soon. If it is not mostly the words of Miss O'day herself, the ghost writer should have received several awards for his work. So true does the voice of the teller read. The writing style is so open and conversational, if not outright confessional, that at times, it feels as if, I am sitting at a bar stool, in one of the great old jazz clubs, on a rainy afternoon, Anita herself telling me her stories directly. So genuine is the voice that jumps off of the pages. Pulling no punches on those she comments on, herself included. Told with a great sense of humor, even in the dark moments. When self pity creeps in, she calls it for what it is. Touching and sympathetic at times, as well, the Judy Garland episode particularly comes to mind. I am amazed at how many names of my long favorites that I had not connected with her before, she herself cites as sources of inspiration. Zoot Sims being a strong case in point. If you are already a fan, it is a must read. If you are not, but are interested in Jazz at all, read the book, then seek out and devour the Anita O'Day catalogue. Track down the Mosaic box set if you can. While Ella and Sarah, "may" have had better voices according to some. Few would argue for the consistency of their catalogues when compared to Anita O'Day's. Her book mirrors the consistency of her catalogue, while giving her reader, the clearest and most open view "behind the looking glass", likely to found, of the Jazz era, and it's players, great and small. Thanks Anita

Anita O'Day was one of the original band jazz singers. A documentary came out while she was still alive. Got great reviews in "Time." I liked June Christie and Chris Connor better as Anita had an edge to her singing. A big heroin addiction did not help matters. But she eventually she got herself under control and was still singing and going to the race track in her 70s. Fascinating story of a real survivor. See the documentary if possible. I have become a huge fan of hers on many levels. She did not just sing, she used her voice like a horn. I am constantly amazed how she could work and do heroin at the same time and it did not show.

What a wild ride. I've been a huge fan of Anita O'Day for 20 years. Really enjoyed this book. It's a classic for jazz fans.

Although I love jazz vocalists--Carmen McRae, Ella Fitzgerald, and Sarah Vaughn in particular--I had never heard of Anita O'Day until I listened to a replay of an interview she did with Terri Gross for Fresh Air. I actually bought and read her autobiography before (or at least while) I was getting to know her music. What I enjoy about this book and O'Day's music is that she keeps it simple and honest. It is true that her career suffered because of heroin addiction. But it's her style to simply say: "And that's how that went down." Period. No regrets. Meanwhile, she made an important contribution to jazz, and she was there for much of its high season--swing, bebop, cool. There is so much joy in her singing--and that's what she said she wanted in life: to make people happy through music. Every time I hear Honeysuckle Rose, she lifts me up!

This was a good book. Anita O'Day was one crazy lady but what a singer. I have some of her albums and they are great. Her book sheds some light on her life and how she won some battles and lost some too. I found it interesting that she never blames anyone for the path she chose through life. I have now come to appreciate jazz from the 40's 50's and 60's. I am a die hard heavy metal fan but truly enjoy Anita O'Day. I would recommend this book to all.

Great copy--good read!!

Miss O'Day is witty and detailed in describing her incredible life as a singer with the jazz greats from the 1940's until the new century! Her battles the addiction are heroic and she eventually triumphs and keeps on singing and getting better! She's not tragic but irrepressible! A grand autobiography

for all jazz lovers!

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