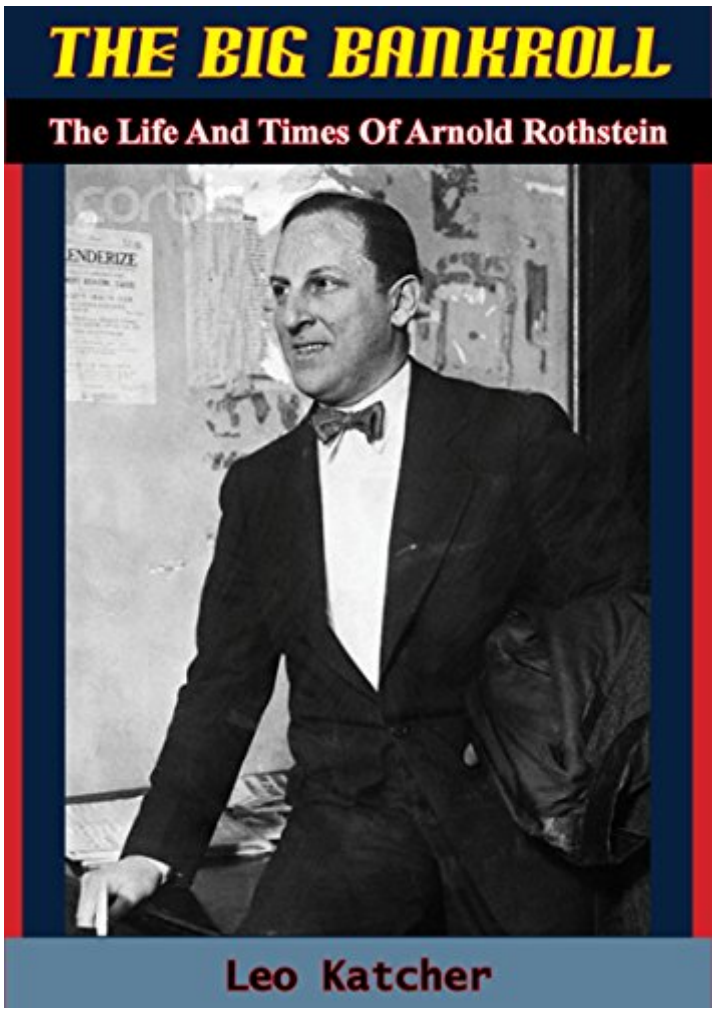
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The Big Bankroll: The Life And Times Of Arnold Rothstein



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Synopsis

Arnold Rothstein (1882-1928) was described in the newspapers of the 1920s as Ã¢â ¬Å“a sportsman.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“a gambler.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬Å“the man who fixed the 1919 World Series.Ã¢â ¬Â• But he was much more than that. A bootlegger and labor racketeer, he corrupted politicians, promoted crooked stock sales, and imported narcotics. And, perhaps most importantly, he transformed organized crime from a thuggish activity practiced by hoodlums into a big business. run like a corporation, with himself at the top.For twenty years, the name of Arnold Rothstein symbolized moneyÃ¢â ¬â •big-time money, gambling money, racket money, illegal money, millions upon millions of dollars. His share was ninety percent of any deal; he was never indicted for a single crime: he always won at cards and horses. And, despite his involvement in dozens of murders and hundreds of other crimes, his luck never ran out. At least not until 1928, the year in which he was fatally shot. The perpetratorsÃ¢â ¬â •and Rothstein's millionsÃ¢â ¬â •were never found.The Big Bankroll is the definitive biography of the man known simply as Mr. Big. In it, Leo Katcher reveals not only the sordid details of the life of America's most powerful gambler, but illuminates the whole era in which crime became king.Leo Katcher was a reporter for the New York Post during RothsteinÃ¢â ¬â„¢s reign, and spent ten years researching this book, interviewing Lucky Luciano. Carolyn Behar (Rothstein's widow), and dozens of others.-Print ed.Ã¢â ¬Å“This well-written bookÃ¢â ¬â •part biography, part social historyÃ¢â ¬â •is as fascinating as a dozen works of fiction, and a good deal more frightening.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •SpectatorÃ¢â ¬Å“Leo Katcher, who was a newspaperman in the days when Rothstein ruled, has brought not only the man but his times back to life. This is a vivid, fascinating book....Katcher does not glamorize Rothstein: he dissects him skillfully and explains him and his corrupt associates and the conditions which made it possible for such men to become wealthy and powerful....Katcher has done a superb job.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Quentin Reynolds. Saturday Review

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Customer Reviews

This is one of the most important American gangsters I'd never heard of. A shrewd, risk taker Arnold Rothstein did more to shape the blueprint of the American Gangster myth than many more who were well known. Leo Katcher tells his life story in a compelling manner while sharing interesting side stories of the era. This bio spans Rothsteins entire life through expiration and is very detailed. A worthy read for lovers of this sort of thing.

Like many, I was thrilled with so very much of HBOÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s BOARDWALK EMPIRE series. Sure, the problem took some creative liberties in the detailing of specific events, but it often did that when trying to concoct a more cohesive narrative for the audienceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s interest. To be fair, there were so many colorful characters of those bygone days, and I imagine it mayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve been difficult in the writersÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ room figuring out which major figure was going to get the lionÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s share of available screen time; but ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ before it ended ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ I suspect many were thrilled with that rare opportunity of re-examining history via some modest fictional contrivances.One of the most interesting portrayals I thought EMPIRE did was that of Arnold Rothstein, played in the series by Michael Stuhlbarg. As a long-time fan of most things involving Prohibition, I was thrilled to finally see ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœthe Big BankrollÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ as he was known brought to life; so much of Roaring Twenties crime dramas have put the focus on Al ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã ËœScarfaceÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ Capone, but those of us familiar with the subject matter known that there were many equally captivating individuals. Finally, some light was shed on Arnold, and this encouraged me to finally pick up THE BIG BANKROLL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN.Written by Leo Katcher, BANKROLL isnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t anything

necessarily fresh or new. In fact, the book was first published in 1958, putting it thirty years after Rothstein himself was cut down in the prime of his life (physically, but perhaps not so much fiscally). Katcher opens with a marvelous framing device ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ he essentially puts the reader in-the-moment of RothsteinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœassassination ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ and then segues back in time (as it were) to deliver the more biographical highlights of the manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life. By doing so, the writer underscores that things certainly wonÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t end well for the mobÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s chief financier, and he credits his audience with being able to now follow on the journey through the life that was.Once establishing the particulars of RothsteinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s family life ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ that being his familyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s strict adherence to Jewish faith ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ Katcher then masterly spools through so many events which portray just how far from those humble, structured beginnings Arnold travels. It doesnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t take long for the young manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s interests in amassing a particular fortune sets those cerebral wheels in motion, forcing Rothstein to constantly up-the-ante on his expectations. Did this psychological tendency turn him into one of the Roaring TwentiesÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ most prolific gamblers? I didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t feel Katcher ever concluded that definitely, though itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s clear how one might reach that conclusion. As for Arnold? He kept pursuing what he thought was what life had intended for him, and he rarely if ever took his eyes off that prize, even though it mayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve clouded his reasoning to a degree in the last few years of his life.ItÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s a terrific read, due in large part to KatcherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s almost journalistic insistence on defining everything. In order to do so, the writer had to use many pages to explore tangentially some of the other people as well as the mechanics of early 20th century gambling and pool halls. As a consequence, there are several long passages within BANKROLL that feels as if itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s part of someone elseÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s biography; Katcher tried very hard to always put context into RothsteinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s life, even when doing so meant a healthy sidetrack expanding on key players in the manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s burgeoning regime. Also, Katcher used an awful lot of ink explaining ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœbucket houses,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ so much so that I found some of it mildly ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ well ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ boring. A helpful edit probably wouldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve turned in a thinner manuscript, but when the devil resides in details and youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re talking about the devil I can understand one writerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s insistence on keeping it whole.Still, there are parts of RothsteinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s legacy that remain lost to history. We know that the mob rifled through all of the manÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s paperwork upon his demise, and weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll never know with any certainty what was

taken away and sheltered from inquiring eyes. I think itÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s safe to conclude that weÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ll never understand just how large the Big BankrollÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s own empire mayÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ve stretched. But if youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re looking for an excellent summation of events and youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re willing to sift through some of the fine points then youÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢re in for as compelling a portrait of one of gangdomÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s most interesting geniuses.HIGHLY RECOMMENDED. THE BIG BANKROLL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN benefits from being originally written much closer to the days wherein ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Ëœthe Big BankrollÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ himself did business on the streets of old New York (KatcherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s book was published three decades after RothsteinÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s death in 1928), allowing the author an opportunity to interview surviving gangsters and (ahem) businessmen who knew him well. Still, I thought the piece dragged a bit in the middle wherein the author dedicates a fair amount of space to the minutiae of operating some of the Roaring Twenties most prolific scams. It comes back to life in the end, drawing to a close the portrait of ganglandÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s original super-intellect.

Arnold Rothstein embodied the dymamism of the 1920's. A brilliant mind who felt as comfortable in the pool halls of the Bowery as in a Wall Street bank, he single handedly built a multi-million dollar empire while gaining the fear and respects of gangsters and politicians.In this seminal look at this important historical figure, Leo Katcher explores the myth and the legend of a man who was an influence on future Underworld leaders like Meyer Lansky and Al Capone, and also future American business leaders. History is created by historians. Did Rothstein buy and corrupt the 1919 world Series? Katcher thinks not. We may never really know.Yet there is no denying that Rothstein was a fascinating figure. He could win staggering sums of money at the poker table, and was one of the pioneers of the American casino. Yet, he also reached into legimate businesses, like insurance, and finance. His mind worked like a computer, constantly calibrating and recalibrating odds and probabilities.The fascinating biography "Titanic Thompson" talks of a double cross at the poker game which caused Rothstein to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars. Rothstein never paid his marker, which, theory goes, resulted in his early demise. Yet, legend has it that Rothstein had bet heavily on Herbert Hoover to win the Presidential election, and was waiting for that bet to pay off to square his debt.Questions swirl around this man, still, 85 years after his murder. He is a real life character out of a Fitzgerald novel. Nobody could make this stuff up.

I highly recommend this book to those who want an in depth knowledge of the times in NYC near

the turn of the century. Politics, social and economic landscape of the era are described. How Rothstein came to be. worked and thrived in that environment. Enjoy!

Super book . Very well written story.

None.

Very good book, but a little long

Quality stuff in the style of a century past when newsmen were newsmen, and their approach to a good story was to give it the best they had, and they always seemed to have it! Rothstein was an enigma inside a mystery wrapped in unbelievable truth and Leo Katcher has captured all of it in a wonderful account of the man’s life and activities

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