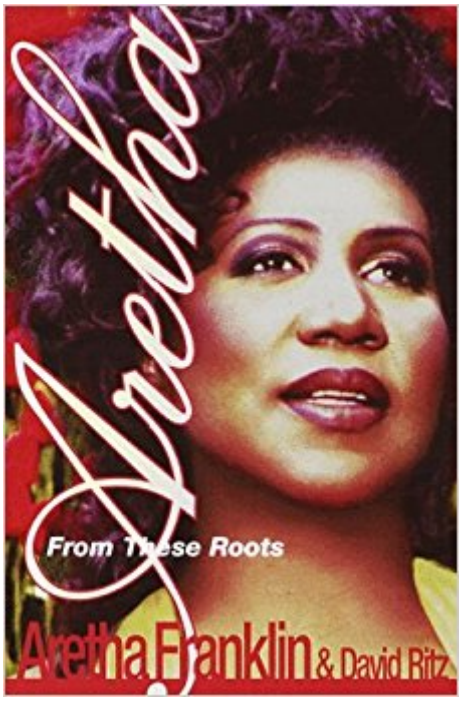
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Aretha: From These Roots



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Synopsis

Her soulful, soaring voice has earned her mythic status. Now, in her own moving words, the woman behind the myth is revealed. The result is a captivating self-portrait of one of this century’s most fascinating artists, an Aretha Franklin as real as the songs she sings.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â For the first time anywhere, Aretha tells her story--the glorious triumphs as well as the heartbreaking pain. With refreshing candor, Aretha tells it like it is, the way she sees it, the way she lived it.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â A child prodigy of the golden age of gospel, the daughter of a world-famous preacher, Aretha was the anointed successor to Mahalia Jackson and Clara Ward. But her father had a broader vision and helped Aretha enter the field of pop and jazz. By age eighteen, she was under contract to Columbia Records. Six years later, after only a few minor hits, she switched to Atlantic, where she shook the musical world to its roots. Her song "Respect" became the anthem of an epoch, a touchstone for African Americans, for women, for all people struggling to be free. Aretha became the Queen of Soul, the genre’s finest interpreter since Ray Charles.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â In Aretha: From These Roots, the singer gets up-close and personal. In rich detail, she paints a vivid picture of a Detroit long gone: the storefront churches, the basement parties, the explosive R&B shows. She documents her life as a single teenage mother, working to balance home life with career, coping with two challenging marriages and, later, romantic relationships that were the source of both tremendous joy and unforeseen heartache.Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Along the way, we meet the characters who lit up her life: her charismatic father, the Reverend C. L. Franklin, "the man with the million-dollar voice"; Sam Cooke, the man of her dreams; her singing sisters, Erma and Carolyn, and her manager-brother, Cecil; her famous colleagues--Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, the Temptations, Luther Vandross, and Luciano Pavarotti--as well as some famous rivals. Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Ã Â Aretha emerges as a triumphant woman of rare wit, willing to share with us her passion for great music, great food, and great love affairs. Her book does more than illuminate some of the most exciting songs ever sung; it lets you into the heart and mind of the mesmerizing woman who sang them.Ã Â Ã Â

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Customer Reviews

Unlike the soul-baring performances that have drawn listeners to her for four decades, Aretha Franklin is a bit cagey when it comes to discussing her personal life in her autobiography, From These Roots. The famously press-shy Aretha is a free-speaking anecdote spinner and a blunt sharer of opinions of coworkers and fellow artists. (Don’t get her started on Natalie Cole.) But some areas remain blurry; for instance, her troubled first marriage to a temperamental music-business figure named Ted White is covered in only a tiny handful of pages. Other happier memories of lovers and of her late father, the famed minister Rev. C.L. Franklin, find her in a more expansive mood. Most consistently indelible in this telling, though, is her musical story. Born in 1942, she grew up around some of the century’s greatest singers--Clara Ward, Dinah Washington, and Sam Cooke were all family friends. A voice that many consider the world’s finest, a strikingly individual touch on piano, and an eclectic ear for material combined to make her a notable artist who moved quickly from the gospel circuit to Columbia Records and moderate success in a variety of contexts, from show tunes to a gritty tribute to Washington. Her reminiscences of those days, and of the conquests that followed when she moved to the forefront of the soul revolution after signing to Atlantic, are obviously still fresh for her. A formidable presence even in her 20s, Aretha continues to be a daunting figure. While From These Roots isn’t as splashy a triumph as her 1967 Atlantic debut or her house-rocking at the 1998 Grammys with a rendition of Puccini’s "Nessun dorma," the book does make for an irresistible reflection on a singular woman and her art. --Rickey Wright

While the Queen of Soul’s autobiography is no crowning achievement, it offers a breezy tour through the singer’s life and trailblazing recording career. Raised in a musical household in Detroit (next door to Smokey Robinson, with frequent visits from Mahalia Jackson, Sam Cooke, Dinah Washington and Rev. James Cleveland), Franklin made her solo singing debut at the age of 10 in

her father’s church. At 16, she gave birth to her second son, dropped out of high school and recorded her first album. Several romances and two more sons followed, as did 17 Grammies (the most for a female performer) and more than 20 number-one hits. The strength of this memoir, whose coauthor has collaborated on books by Marvin Gaye, Etta James, Smokey Robinson and Atlantic Records owner Jerry Wexler, lies in Franklin’s candid discussion of her craft, song selection and various peers. She’s not shy about settling old scores with those she believes have dismissed her in printAincluding Gladys Knight, Mavis Staples and Cissy Houston. But she remains emotionally remote when talking about herself, reserving her real passion for her music. Few will finish this book, however, without an urge to add another Franklin disc to their collection. Photos not seen by PW. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Great reading worth the investment highly recommend

Very interesting and spicy account of Aretha’s life story. I enjoyed it immensely.

I read the book in the fall and for Christmas I decided to purchase the audio book for my mother who doesn’t read but is a huge Aretha Franklin fan. Although, I wish it was Aretha’s voice on the audio CD I couldn’t beat the price and this was a thoughtful gift to give to an Aretha fan.

While the Queen of Soul’s autobiography is no crowning achievement, it offers a breezy tour through the singer’s life and trailblazing recording career. Raised in a musical household in Detroit (next door to Smokey Robinson, with frequent visits from Mahalia Jackson, Sam Cooke, Dinah Washington and Rev. James Cleveland), Franklin made her solo singing debut at the age of 10 in her father’s church. At 16, she gave birth to her second son, dropped out of high school and recorded her first album. Several romances and two more sons followed, as did 17 Grammies (the most for a female performer) and more than 20 number-one hits. The strength of this memoir, whose coauthor has collaborated on books by Marvin Gaye, Etta James, Smokey Robinson and Atlantic Records owner Jerry Wexler, lies in Franklin’s candid discussion of her craft, song selection and various peers. She’s not shy about settling old scores with those she believes have dismissed her in print--including Gladys Knight, Mavis Staples and Cissy Houston. But she remains emotionally remote when talking about herself, reserving her real passion for her music. Few will finish this book, however, without an urge to add another Franklin disc to their collection.

I checked this book out from my local library. After having read it, I am glad I did. This book is hardly worth the paper it is printed on. Personally, Biography/Autobiography is my favorite genre. I like to find out what happens behind the cameras, what creative processes an artist goes through, how their personal struggles correlate with the ups and downs of their careers. "From These Roots" hardly goes into much depth on any of the aforementioned subject matter and instead, we find Aretha giving what is probably the most mediocre, yet honest performance of her career.I am a lifelong fan of Aretha. I remember my parents playing her music often, and I have amassed my own collection of her music over the years. Her voice has always touched me, just like it has so many others around the world. There is definitely the demand for an Aretha Autobiography, after all, many others just like me are curious to know just what makes this woman so great. The book itself, however, give the reader no greater insight into what makes Aretha great, but rather, more of what makes her human.Long chapters devoted to throwing dirt on other celebrities, reminiscing about what has been on the menu for her since the ’50’s and generally skirting around the big stuff. I guess I could forgive her not talking in depth about her personal affairs. I can’t imagine what its like for the world to know your deepest of secrets, much less be prying for your secrets. What makes the book hard to enjoy though, is Aretha’s over-inflated sense of self while she skirts over the all the major stuff. In regards to her two teenage pregnancies all she really had to say was "A baby is a gift from god." That may ring very true, but I’m sure she went through some form of humiliation and embarrassment over that type of a situation. And as she blows off life event after life event in her writing (Divorces, Weight issues, career downturns, even just something as simple as life in Detroit in general), We don’t find a woman who has learned much, or who is even remorseful or grateful for her mistakes. We find a woman who holds petty grudges and apparently steams over them for decades before publishing them.I think she hit a real low in the book when she basically said that the only reason that Barbara Streisand and Diana Ross have gotten to where they are because they "worked hard." This is true, but the way she comes across is as if she means to imply that it was only hard work and not talent that helped them. She seems to have a big problem with other women in general from what I can tell from this book.I still love Aretha and her music. I will always have love for the woman who has given us so many musical gifts. But just like Diana Ross, Aretha reinforces the ideas behind why unauthorized biographies actually exist.

I baught this book sight unseen when I saw she’d collaborated with author David Ritz who wrote Marvin Gaye’s posthumous memoirÃ Â Divided Soul: The Life of Marvin Gaye. After reading it over a number of times the first thing I can say is....it could’nt be anymore different. This is basically an

autobiography and although this didn't diminish my appreciation for the musical triumphs of The Queen Of Soul there were a lot of things about this book that didn't sit too well with me. For one,there's the obscene amount of kissing and telling Aretha indulges in in this book,even regarding her relationship with Temptation Dennis Edwards. In all these situations it repeats a general theme she seems to have throughout this book:that everyone who disrespected her did so because they were somewhat green with envy and she was actually rather blameless. No point does this become more apparent then when she discusses her falling out with Luther Vandross,acting as if he was plain bossing her around without illustrating both sides of the story. She comes off as something of a musical perfectionist,which can be a good quality. But also someone who takes her possition as "the queen" very seriously as she constantly illustrates how,in every area of life she makes blanket pronouncments on....pretty much everything. Even in print,her opinionated arrogance is sometimes a little much to take. As a black woman in her era I can certainly understand her need to maintain dignity but even in that case there are times where she definately takes it a bit too far. This is also full of an enormous amount of celebrity gossip,ranging from her own father to polititions. To some this might be a point of appeal. To me it's trite and very typical. Her writing style is intelligent for sure but also extremely self important and overly wordly. She doesn't write the way she talks for the most part and one can see that,at least at this point "keeping it real" isn't strong in her book. This is not the image one gets from her through her music,especially from the same person who blasted out onto the scene demanding R-E-S-P-E-C-T. It's worth renting from a library if you can find it there just to satisfy curiousity and you may get something different from it. But I have to admit I found this presentation disappointing to all too big a degree.

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