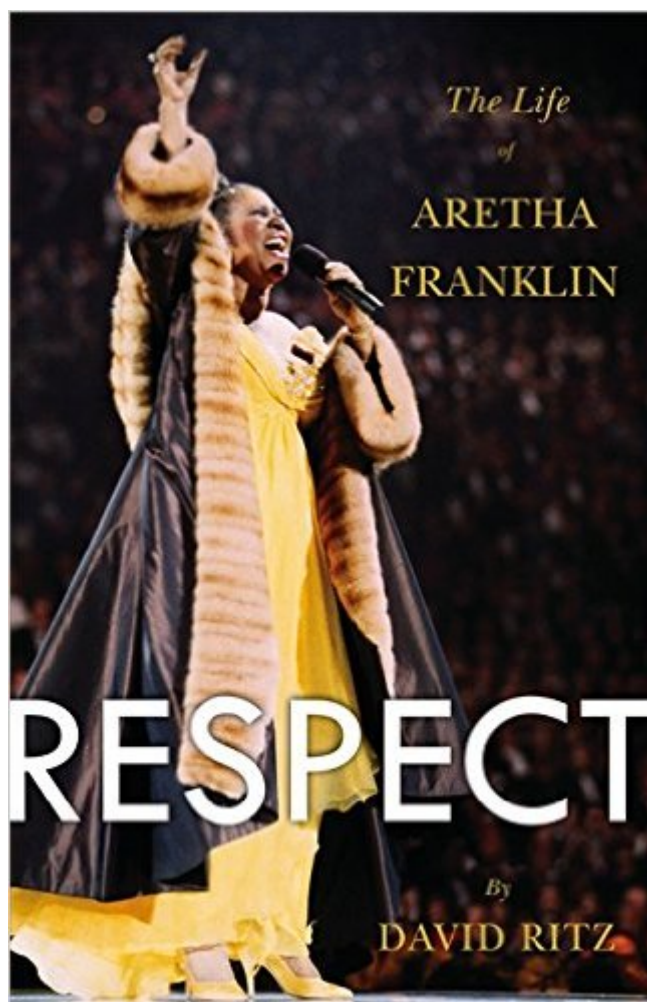


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Respect: The Life Of Aretha Franklin



Synopsis

The definitive biography of the Queen of Soul from acclaimed music writer David Ritz. Aretha Franklin began life as the golden daughter of a progressive and promiscuous Baptist preacher. Raised without her mother, she was a gospel prodigy who gave birth to two sons in her teens and left them and her native Detroit for New York, where she struggled to find her true voice. It was not until 1967, when a white Jewish producer insisted she return to her gospel-soul roots, that fame and fortune finally came via "Respect" and a rapidfire string of hits. She has evolved ever since, amidst personal tragedy, surprise Grammy performances, and career reinventions. Again and again, Aretha stubbornly finds a way to triumph over troubles, even as they continue to build. Her hold on the crown is tenacious, and in RESPECT, David Ritz gives us the definitive life of one of the greatest talents in all American culture.

Book Information

Hardcover: 528 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown and Company (October 28, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0316196835

ISBN-13: 978-0316196833

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.8 x 9.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.8 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (116 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #509,063 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #126 in Â Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rhythm & Blues #1473 in Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Rich & Famous #3369 in Â Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Ethnic & National

Customer Reviews

I've heard the stories for years about how difficult Aretha Franklin is known to be -- to fellow performers, making audiences swelter at her shows due to her disdain for air conditioning -- and while I've enjoyed her Atlantic years recordings, her purported attitude always kept me from actually liking HER as a person. Not to mention that about 7 years ago I had the displeasure of encountering The Queen and these old men acting as her footsoldiers at Colony Records in NY when one of her peons tried to tell me where to stand. I had no idea why this old man was in my face and was about to curse him out until I realized that I was getting dangerously close to The Queen as I tried to make

my way to the cash register. Who knew? And I was annoyed; if she didn't want to be noticed, then she shouldn't have had on that ridiculous black mink coat in April in NYC. But I digress...David Ritz has done her a major solid by finally making SENSE of who she is and why she is the way she clearly is. That is the function of a great biographer; to make a reader empathize with the subject, even one we may have had previous unfavorable impressions of. That was brilliantly done here. Now my heart in fact goes out to Aretha Franklin, and understanding the nature of her idiosyncrasies really helps one be able to see past them to take in the full breadth of who she is and what she represents. As an added plus, this was the first book I've read entirely on a Kindle fire, and having Aretha's "Queen of Soul" box set playing on my headphones while reading it was a beautifully immersive experience. I can't wait to experience more music biographies this way. I understand that Miss Franklin has released statements to the press calling this book a pack of defamatory lies, threatening legal action, etc.

Just as thwarted Aretha ghostwriter David Ritz's unauthorized bio was hitting bookstores, the Queen of Soul gave it some extra publicity by denouncing it as trash and threatening to get her lawyers involved. But as you read this remarkable tome, you learn that Aretha habitually ponders legal action for various imagined slights. She was furious when a Time magazine cover story included a few unflattering remarks, and when Steely Dan namechecked her in "Hey Nineteen." Call the lawyers! she screamed, before wiser souls in her circle risked their livelihoods by telling her to calm down. In reality, Aretha was frequently on the wrong end of lawsuits, sued for backing out of engagements, or pursued by the IRS and creditors for not paying her bills. "Respect" has a lot of juicy details, but the title is more than just a nod to her best known song. David Ritz writes in his usual elegant way with the utmost respect for this, ahem, larger-than-life legend. Inevitably, you will put the book down in a few places and head to your stereo or to Youtube to play some Aretha, as he shines new light on her musical craft. In my case, I took a Youtube break to watch her 1971 concert at the Fillmore West and the trailer for the unreleased film shot for her "Amazing Grace" gospel album. David Ritz describes both in vivid detail. I wouldn't call him a fanboy, but there are few writers who are so enamored of and knowledgeable about Aretha as David Ritz who, I guess, won't be on Aretha's Christmas card list this year, or ever again. He collaborated with her on her memoir "From These Roots," which he basically admits was her idealized fantasy. It wasn't his fault. She made stuff up, and kicked him out of the editing process.

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