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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

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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 Billie 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.

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