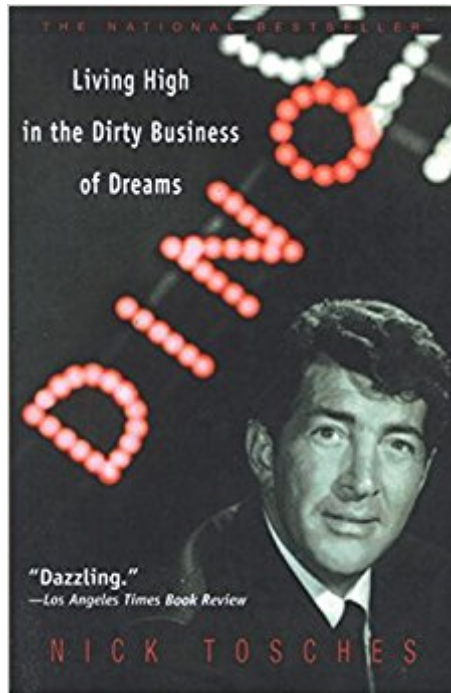




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Dino: Living High In The Dirty Business Of Dreams



Synopsis

From dealing blackjack in the small-time gangster town of Steubenville, Ohio, to carousing with the famous "Rat Pack" in a Hollywood he called home, Dean Martin lived in a grandstand, guttering life of booze, broads, and big money. He rubbed shoulders with the mob, the Kennedys, and Hollywood's biggest stars. He was one of America's favorite entertainers. But no one really knew him. Now Nick Tosches reveals the man behind the image--the dark side of the American dream. It's a wild, illuminating, sometimes shocking tale of sex, ambition, heartaches--and a life lived hard, fast, and without apologies.

Book Information

Paperback: 656 pages

Publisher: Delta; 1st edition (April 13, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 038533429X

ISBN-13: 978-0385334297

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1.4 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 74 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #437,742 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #120 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Reference #600 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Popular #1282 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Leaders & Notable People > Rich & Famous

Customer Reviews

Nick Tosches has written several biographies including *Dino: Living High in the Dirty Business of Dreams*; *Hellfire: The Jerry Lee Lewis Story*; and *Unsung Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll: The Birth of Rock in the Wild Years Before Elvis*. He was born and raised in New Jersey and lives in New York.

I'm a little young to remember Dino, but I heard the book's author, Nick Tosches, interviewed on the WTF Podcast and thought it would make an interesting read. I wasn't disappointed.

A little robust on detail but otherwise a full look at Dean Martin's life and interactions.

Excellent

Very well documented and Nick Tosches's prose does not get in the way of telling a story which is in the end, a dark reflexion on human condition that leaves us feeling that Dino was not capable or was too bored to enjoy his life and success.

Many years ago, I saw Dean Martin's show in Las Vegas -- an odd hodge-podge of crooning, jokes, and audience banter. I found it fascinating that a man could make a living doing this (remember, this was back in the Rat Pack years), and always wanted to know more about what made Dean Martin tick. This book is not a good way to find that out. Nick Tosches' style is so overblown, so full of faux hipster lingo and overheated flights of fancy, that it is virtually worthless as a biography. Tosches early on develops a thesis that Dean was a sociopath without feelings or scruples. This may or may not be the case, but it is presented here as the gospel, without a shred of supporting evidence. Tosches basically invents a persona for Dean Martin out of whole cloth. That alone would not be reason enough to put this book down after 80 or so pages, which I did. Nick Tosches' dreadful writing style is the actual coup de grace. The book is so much about what a wildly inventive writer Tosches is, and so little about its actual subject, that it is impossible to read, at least for me. When you set out to write a tour de force, as Tosches obviously has done here, you wind up with a colossal windbag of a book, inflated by a colossal windbag of a writer. Do yourself a favor and watch a couple of YouTube videos of Dean Martin instead. You will learn more than this horrid excuse of a book will ever tell you.

Personally I was hoping for at least a glimpse of Mr. Martin even with blemishes. Instead I got a far better insight into Mr. Tosches. Often he seems to dislike his subject yet none of the actual quotes and facts demonstrate any reason for said dislike. Mr. Martin is shown to be emotionally repressed, not too eager to expend much effort, not particularly good with finances and more than willing to please the ladies who throw themselves at him. The actual quotes from those who knew and worked with Martin are mostly complimentary. He projects attitudes and animosities representing those of Mr. Martin but offers no quotes or sources to back up their validity. The author DOES spend a great deal of time talking about the Mafia. One anticipates that it would lead to some reveal of some involvement of Mr. Martin with gangsters. Instead after lots of stories about the mob you get the detail that Mr. Martin didn't bow to them or that he ignored "orders" from Giancana or that he

had the good sense to remove himself as part owner of the Cal-Neva casino when he realized Sinatra was fronting for Giancana. If the author wanted to write about the Mafia he should have done so. The author also makes his own attitude (I am assuming it is his as there is never a connection made to anything said by or about Mr. Martin on the subjects) toward the Kennedy brothers, Frank Sinatra, Peter Lawford, Sammy Davis, Jr. quite obvious....he appears to dislike them all to varying levels. As for Jerry Lewis, at least he doles back up some of the commentary with quotes from Martin, Lewis or others often enough to allow them to be attributed to Martin in some form. The author even alludes strongly to being aware of what REALLY happened in the death of Marilyn Monroe (and you just bet those bratty Kennedy boys were behind it just as he implies Giancana is clearly the one responsible for the hit on Jack Kennedy. Again, the author would be better served to simply write on those topics given his clear interest. In short; if you wish to get a glimpse into the life and personality of Dean Martin you won't find much here. I understand that Mr. Martin was supposedly very closed about his inner self and thus a difficult subject but even a bald retelling of facts would be better than conjectures and projections that fill these pages. Want to better know Mr. Martin.....save your money on this book and look elsewhere.

Nick Tosches tried to do the impossible here, and your guess is as good as mine as to whether he accomplished it: namely, to give us insight into what made Dean Martin tick; what motivated him, what turned him on, what turned him off, etc. The book has excessive detail, which I thought was a kind of filler or stalling technique when you realize that in spite of all the misc data out there on Dino; amply supplied in this book; none of it amounts to a hill of beans. In the end, you have to take a leap of faith that somehow, through tireless research and interviews, Mr Tosches developed an intuitive sense of what made Dino tick. The book was strong on the Jerry Lewis years, due to his interviews with Lewis. Also, Jeannie Martin gave some unique perspectives as well (ex: Dean said his prayers faithfully every night). Let's face it, there's no way to be analytical about such a complex and private individual. No doubt Mr Tosches hit the mark at times, and missed by a country mile at others. I found myself asking "does Dino really not give a crap about anything, as Nick Tosches suggests?" If so, why pray to the Lord each night? Without Dean's actual thoughts, I don't know how anyone could come closer to figuring this guy out than Nick Tosches did. I mean, even his wife didn't have a clue! If excess (and unnecessary) profanity doesn't turn you off, give it a try. I especially enjoyed the occasional thoughts in Italian! Nice job, Mr Tosches!

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