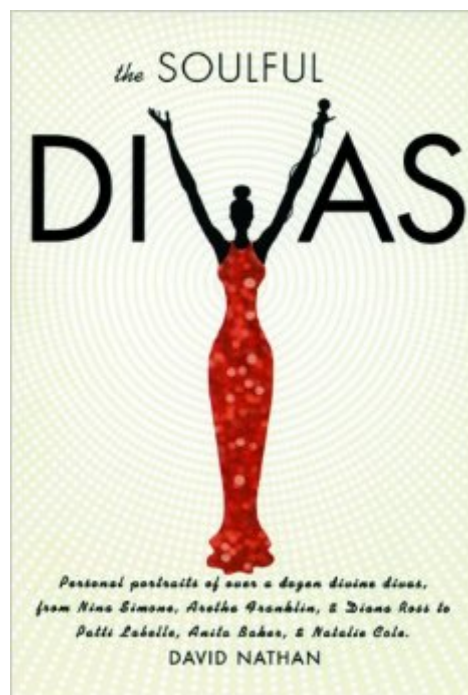


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The Soulful Divas: Personal Portraits Of Over A Dozen Divine Divas From Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, & Diana Ross, To Patti LaBelle, Whitney Houston, & Janet Jackson



Synopsis

Personal portraits of over a dozen divine divas, from Nina Simone, Aretha Franklin, and Diana Ross to Patti LaBelle, Anita Baker, and Natalie Cole. 40 illustrations.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I wanted to love this book...after all, the music world is filled with legendary anecdotes of some of the women profiled by Mr. Nathans (Diana's attitudes, Chaka's seductive powers, Natalie's substance abuse history), and together these women could make a CD that you'd drop in the player on Sunday, and still be singing along with come payday. Unfortunately, the profiles are more cotton candy than ham hocks. Most of these ladies would deserve (and have already written, or have had written about them) entire tomes which still leave out juicy details. The section on Phyliss Hyman, a masterful, yet tragic soulstress, leaves the reader starved for more of a history. The Patti LaBelle pages ignore key sections of her (and her bandmates) historic segue from a "girl group" to the infamous glitter sisters known as LaBelle. There are some excellent photos in this book, and some interesting stories about the profiled women, but most of the details have been previously discussed by the singers themselves.

It is obvious that David Nathan truly idolizes his subjects which probably accounts for the calculated design at the end of each chapter to make sure in no uncertain terms that he has shown that subject in her best light. I can certainly empathize because many of the divas profiled are true

favorites of mine. That said, soul diva aficionados will readily recognize this as a collection of all-too-familiar press clippings even the most casual follower has at least heard of. To his credit, it is indeed refreshing to hear about lesser publicized divas like Esther Phillips, Millie Jackson, Nina Simone, Doris Troy or Phyllis Hyman. And ultimately, the final chapter sketching younger divas appeared entirely too hastily thrown together with the end result being little more than an unsatisfying epilogue. Quite honestly, if you are in to black female vocalists, this, of course, was an easy, flattering read. However, the finished product is little more than an indulgent scrapbook by a journalist who, apparently, could have shed infinitely more light on the personalities he featured, but declined or refused out of either fierce loyalty or abject fear. Not only do the subjects deserve more than this, but so does the author.

With *Soulful Divas*, David Nathan - a true lover of r&B music - has compiled interviews with many of his favorite singers of the past 40 years. Some of the subjects, like that of the humorously raunchy Millie Jackson and the troubled Nina Simone, make for compelling reading. Most suffer from his endless fawning however. Take, for instance, Diana Ross. By all other accounts, Miss Ross is a difficult person, yet Nathan makes her out to be practically a saint. Nathan's frequent access to all of the top divas exposes the modern journalist's dilemma: if he fully captures his subjects in print, warts and all, he risks alienating them and being denied interview access to them in the future. Instead, Nathan fawns all over his subjects and gets repeat interviews with high-profile women who are often leery of the press (Aretha Franklin for one). Because of his "tactics", we are able to enjoy his many interviews in one setting (this book). Too bad most of his portraits don't penetrate the surface.

Mr. Nathan remains one of my favorite entertainment scholars with a special love for "the working girls", "the entertainers", "the dark divas". Growing up in 60s England, Mr. Nathan's passion for black music made him stand out. Formulating one of the first fan clubs for Doris Troy and then Nina Simone. His love then extended to arguably the reigning divas of the 60s/70s, Dionne Warwick, Aretha Franklin and Diana Ross. This book attempts to give a snapshot view of the careers of nearly 20 of the great dark ladies of songs. A comprehensive look at these great women would require volumes. So it is rather unfair to challenge Mr. Nathan on the book's depth. Being a lover of most, if not all of these ladies, my perspective of this book is in line with my expectations. His understanding and knowledge of these ladies goes much further than the book indicates. This I know firsthand. Maybe Mr. Nathan will consider updating and expanding this book for a new generation.

I love this book and the Divas that are featured in it. Its a must have for the cover alone! I love displaying it on my coffee table, as a conversational piece. The cover is a work of art in a Diva's World...lol. Diva G.

This book is a must for music lovers. I have followed the careers of every Diva in this book, my only dissapointment is that wasnt longer and included more Diva's. I especially enjoyed the one on one with Aretha, Patti, Diana, Dionne, and Gladys's. I have a new R-E-S-P-E-C-T for all the Diva's. Mr. Nathan gives great insight on what sacrifices that each performer has made to become a star. He shows that its not all its crack up to be. I hope that this books shoots straight to the top. I can guarantee that you will not be dissapointed with this book. Pick up a copy and give it to friends. These Divas story need to be told to the world.

David Nathan continues his sojourn into African-American folklore in a most sincere manner. The only objection I have is his inclusion of Doris Troy. She was bigger in Great Britain than in America, but as 'blue-eyed soul' royalty he is allowed this bit of self-indulgence (smiles). He makes the reader feel each chapter and get a real sense of what each diva is really like. Perhaps Aretha Franklin should've hired Nathan to collaborate with her on her autobiography, for he knows things about her that she has either forgotten or doesn't want to recall. When I think of David, I think of his aways on point observations about 'divas', and after all it takes a true one, to know one. From one 'diva' to another, you go boy. Exceptional coverage on Nina Simone and Chaka Khan. This should be required reading for all aspiring vocalist and entertainers. There have been many books and essays written about several of the luminaries that Mr. Nathan writes about, the most unfortunate things is that none of them have given him adequate credit for providing their facts. From Aretha to Patti to Gladys to Dionne to Whitney and all others in between (and beyond), this guy knows the real deal. Millie Jackson should get you to collaborate with her on her autobiography real soon while you're hot, 'cause that lady is smoking and don't we love her frankness). Keep up the good work David.

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