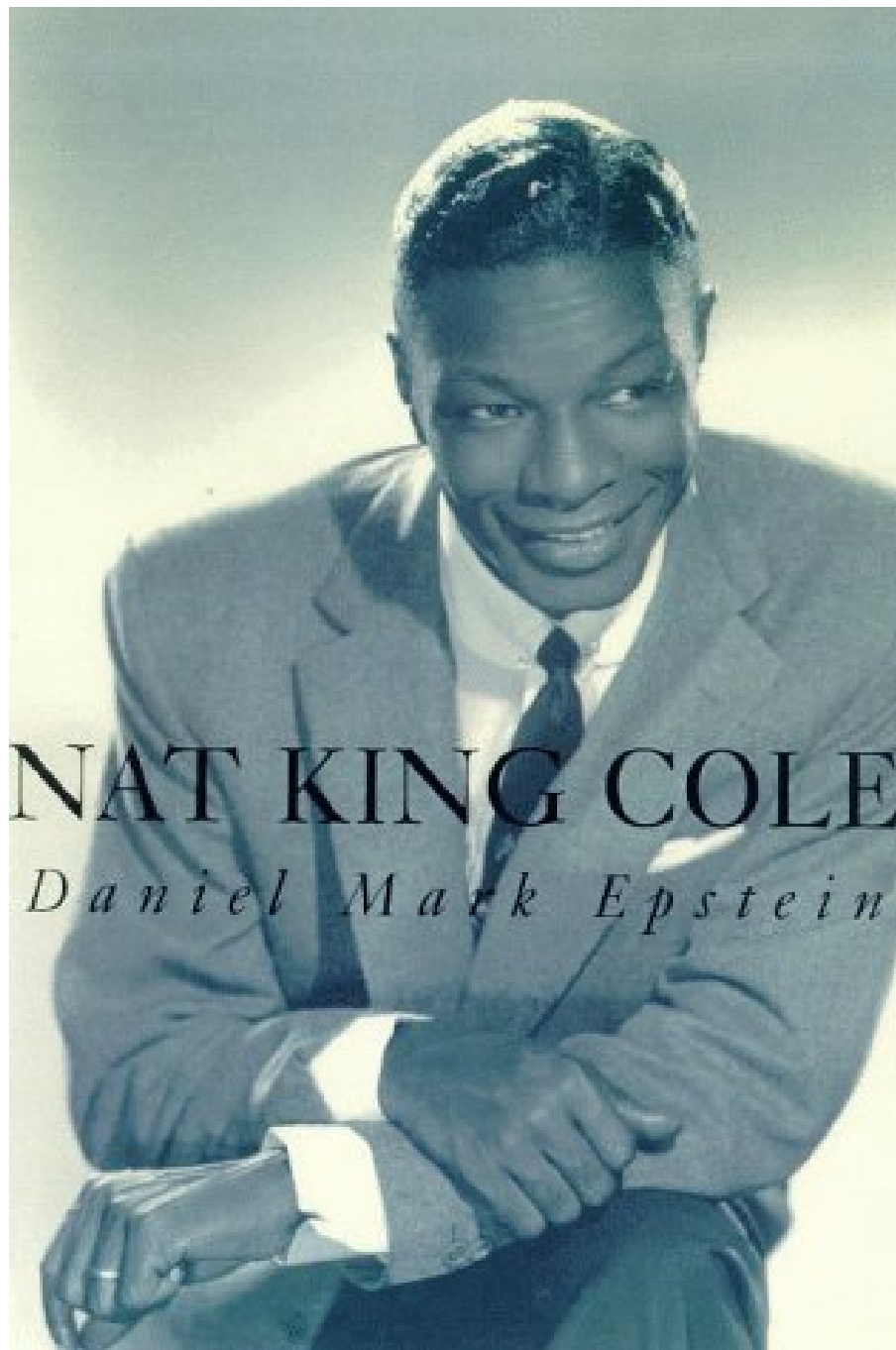


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NAT KING COLE BY DANIEL MARK EPSTEIN PDF

The first major biography of the great jazz pianist and singer, written with the full cooperation of his family.

When he died in 1965, at age forty-five, Nat King Cole was already a musical legend. As famous as Frank Sinatra, he had sold more records than anyone but Bing Crosby.

Written with the narrative pacing of a novel, this absorbing biography traces Cole's rise to fame, from boy-wonder jazz genius to megastar in a racist society. Daniel Mark Epstein brings Cole and his times to vivid life: his precocious entrance onto the vibrant jazz scene of his hometown, Chicago; the creation of his trio and their rise to fame; the crossover success of such songs as "Straighten Up and Fly Right"; and his years as a pop singer and television star, the first African American to have his own show.

Epstein examines Cole's insistence on changing society through his art rather than political activism, the romantic love story of Cole and Maria Ellington, and Cole's famous and influential image of calm, poise, and elegance, which concealed the personal turmoil and anxiety that undermined his health.

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Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Very informative book about Nat...I was satisfied

By The Fancy One

I enjoyed this book very much. I got into Nat King Cole's music when I was in my mid-teens (late '70s-early '80s) because I am a fan of Natalie's as well...There was a lot of info in the book that I did not know, so it was very enlightening to read something so detailed about Nat's life. He was not portrayed as a saint or a martyr, but merely as a man who had his faults, just like any other man. And you still end up liking him. I gave it four stars because I had problems with how Epstein interpreted several of Nat's songs, which I think had more to do with his personal opinion of them than what they actually meant (re: the "Nature Boy" and "Straighten Up and Fly Right" stories), and little errors that should have been caught during the final edit (like the one about "Capitol Records, the home of Elvis Presley" - hello, ELVIS NEVER RECORDED FOR CAPITOL). But for the most part, this book lets you get to know Nat Cole as he really was...Highly

recommended.

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful.

The best book about Nat that's out there

By A Customer

I found this book to be revealing and enlightening about one of my favorite singers. Nat King Cole had a voice like no other before or since. With his calm demeanor you'd never think that he endured so much hell in his life. No wonder he smoked as much as he did. This book is one of the best I've ever read about the life of Nat Cole, but like some of the previous reviewers, I found little errors, too. I also felt that it had a strong sympathetic bent towards Nat's widow Maria, as if she were the heroine of the story. That isn't any wonder; this book was written in full cooperation with the Cole family, so I'm sure Mrs. Cole would have had to come out of it looking good, or she wouldn't have cooperated. Also Epstein says that shortly before Cole died, that he and his wife reconciled after Nat's torrid love affair with a twenty year old chorus girl. According to many other sources, though, they never did reconcile their differences. But this is what Maria Cole wanted people to believe. But still this book is very interesting. It reads like a juicy novel, but it's better, because it's a true story. It's engaging and will definitely hold your attention. You will feel like you knew the man personally. For anyone who loves Nat and his music, this book is a must.

5 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Very Good but Should Have Been Great

By A Customer

Nat deserved a serious look at his life and this book is a noble attempt. On the whole, it's a nice balance of his life and his art. But there are too many stupid little mistakes that I caught, it makes me wonder how much more I missed. I'd be happy to help fix future editions of this book! Examples: Elvis Presley never recorded for Capitol (he recorded for RCA) Oscar Moore went left the trio top play with his brother's band. Epstein makes this sound like a step down into obscurity. He doesn't even mention the while white-hot member, Charles Brown.

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