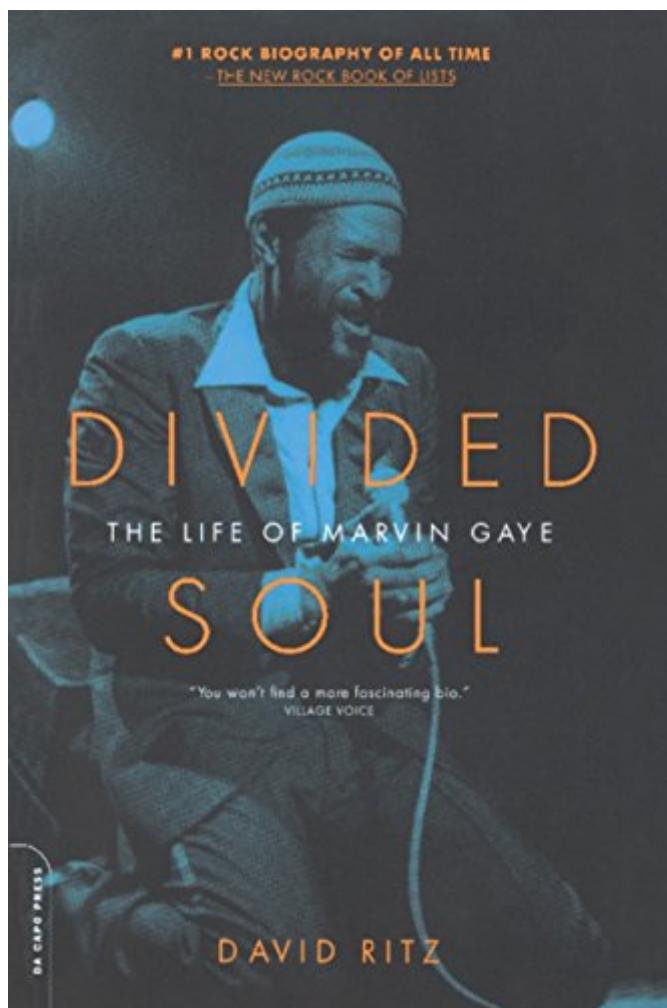


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Divided Soul: The Life Of Marvin Gaye (Da Capo Paperback)



Synopsis

Drawing from interviews conducted before Marvin Gaye's death, acclaimed music writer David Ritz has created a full-scale portrait of the brilliant but tormented artist. With a cast of characters that includes Diana Ross, Berry Gordy, Smokey Robinson, and Stevie Wonder, this intimate biography is a definitive and enduring look at the man who embodied the very essence of the word soul.

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Customer Reviews

I'm glad that I ignored some of the reviews that I read about this book. I feel that David Ritz did an excellent job of dissecting and analyzing Mr. Gaye. There were many instances where I found myself highlighting sections in the book. I have read several books about Mr. Gaye, some which were written by his relatives. None of them in my opinion reach the depth and breadth of what, why and how Mr. Gaye did what he did and why his life ended as it did. I highly recommend this book for anyone who wants to read the definitive biography of Marvin Gaye.

This was an often fascinating narrative. There is a lot of direct quoting of Marvin Gaye who I found incredibly honest, almost too honest, particularly about his sex life and insecurities and what he

thought about women (bit of a chauvinist). He did not seem to have a filter, which was great. Although...there's something to be said for retaining a little mystery. I loved hearing about Motown in the early days. It seems to me he had cocaine psychosis in the last years of his life. There's no use of that term, but he had all the signs with his crazy paranoia, etc. He had a sad end way too soon. But in the short time he was here, he gave us such beautiful music.

As a big Marvin Gaye fan, I kind of wish I had not read this. But like driving past a car accident I had to look. This man had very serious psychological issues that were not helped by serious drug abuse. Also for someone considered to be a "sex god" he was not a man that truly loved women. The title is very descriptive. Such an egotist, yet filled with self doubt.

Marvin fans will definitely appreciate the thoroughness of this book, which is compiled with a myriad of testimonies from friends, family, label mates, and even Marvin himself. This book is very detailed and EXTREMELY honest, unlike some other music biographies (*cough* Temptations *cough*) BUT...it may shatter your sweet, pristine image of the "Prince of Soul." I had fallen in love with Marvin the singer, the swooner, the seeming romantic, so I wanted to know more about him. And I must admit...that though I appreciated the candidacy of this book, I wasn't quite ready to be introduced to the "other" side of Marvin. Beyond the smooth voice, the sensual lyrics, and the gorgeous face...there was the highly disturbed, contradicting, paranoid, coke addicted, sexist, abusive, mentally unstable, emotionally tortured, self-destructive, incredibly insecure...Marvin Paige Gaye. Oh, and other aspects to this very disconsolate character that I won't touch on. I cry for Marvin because he never conquered his inner demons. He never sought the professional help that he so desperately needed. He continued on his reign of self-sabotaging terror until, I'm sad to say it, his very predictable demise. It hurt to read about such a tragic life. And it hurt me even more to read about his death in, finally in raw detail, by the man who never showed him any affection or support in all of his life: his father. But it was all foreshadowed, it really was. Such a perilous life was not meant to have a happy ending. As I was reading, I felt myself wanting to jump in the book as if it could take me back to his time to where I could intervene in his life and his self-crippling behaviors. "No Marvin, stop..." I found myself pleading with him. I shook my head throughout most of the book. This man needed to be saved. But it truly felt like...such a person could not be. He didn't even want to save himself. I don't quite listen to his music the same anymore. Don't get me wrong; I still appreciate all of his music and I greatly respect and adore his talent. Marvin (along with The Temptations) are my favorite male singers. But now that I know the story behind the music...I'm not

so much swooned by Marvin the "heart throb." I just feel sorry for Marvin the tortured artist. In every song, through every word, gliding on every melody... I feel the tragedy he was living while creating it decades ago. By the end of the book, I found myself most upset at his family. I feel like his mother could have done more to save her son years before the final showdown between Marvin Senior and Junior. Like...not waiting to divorce him AFTER her twisted husband killed him. Again, I really feel like all of this was foreshadowed. Why didn't anyone intervene? I wonder why no one sought professional help for Marvin during the final years of his life at home when he was alone with his drugs and extreme paranoia. It was suggested that Marvin could've perhaps had schizophrenia. Whatever he had, his decaying and finally his destroyed mental state was evident, but it was IGNORED. His mother tried to pray it away. Ummm...no. I'm a praying woman myself, but there are some things you DO need additional help and resources for. If Marvin was my family member, I would've had him FORCED into a hospital kicking and screaming to receive the treatment and services that he obviously needed. How anyone could keep a drug addict, obviously mentally incapacitated man just chillin' in their home is BEYOND me... I see that 2 of Marvin's siblings have wrote their own memoirs revolving around Marvin. That is something that I definitely have to check out for further answers and clarification... This book is literally an experience that you have to undergo for yourself to really understand this complicated man and his complicated, and disturbing, life. I can only pray that Marvin has finally found the peace he could never find on earth. Rest easy, prince. I still love you. XOXOXOXO

While the Publishers Weekly review recommended that fans simply listen to the man's records, David Ritz does a credible job of telling us what was going on in Marvin's life, and his tortured soul, that led to his death at his father's hands. While another writer might offer a more objective perspective on the singer's life, as Ritz seemed to get very close to Marvin Gaye, at least in his own mind, the author not only leads us through the Motown legend's drug-addled, but professionally accomplished life, but he tells us a bit about the society in which he was raised, the musical world he aspired to conquer and the extreme dysfunction that a family can exert on its own. This is not easy reading, nor very comfortable, because the man trafficed in heavy sexual content in his songs and performances, and descended into a hellish drug addiction that inhibited his artistic ability and created a pervasive paranoia that led to a self-fulfilling prophecy: that he would die at the hands of killer wielding a hand-gun. Ritz does a fine job of revealing just how self-loathing the singer was, how conflicted over his sexuality he was - not that wasn't strongly heterosexual, but that he had a perverse madonna/whore complex towards women that built his lovers up on a pedestal and then

smashed them down, often literally - and how little he really enjoyed his celebrity as a sexy soul singer. The corps of enablers all suckling from the trough didn't help the singer make any effort to conquer his demons but the many instances of physical abuse to his second wife, to female fans who came to his home seeking intimacy, and others makes one wonder why no one ever called the police, who could have had him tried on assault and battery, which might have led him to the kind of addiction therapy for his sexual healing that he so desperately needed but scrupulously avoided. In 1971 he asked for "mercy, mercy, me," but he never did find the salve for his divided soul. It's a terrible shame that his life was the epitome of the tortured artist, whose ravaged mind and life yielded such pearls of musical beauty. It's a price no one should have to pay.

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