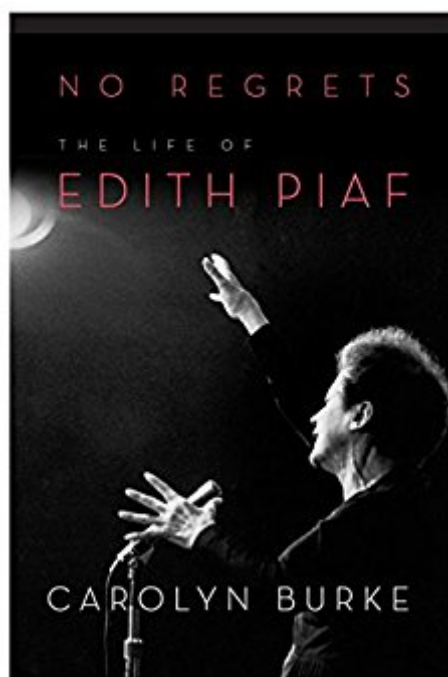


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No Regrets



Synopsis

The iconic French singer comes to life in this enthralling, definitive biography, which captures Edith Piaf's immense charisma along with the time and place that gave rise to her unprecedented international career. Raised by turns in a brothel, a circus caravan, and a working-class Paris neighborhood, Piaf began singing on the city's streets, where she was discovered by a Champs-Élysées cabaret owner. She became a star almost overnight, seducing Paris's elite and the people of its slums in equal measure with her powerful, passionate voice. *No Regrets* explores her rise to fame and notoriety, her tumultuous love affairs, and her struggles with drugs, alcohol, and illness, while also drawing on new sources to enhance our knowledge of little-known aspects of her life. Piaf was an unlikely student of poetry and philosophy, who aided Resistance efforts in World War II, wrote the lyrics for nearly one hundred songs (including "La Vie en rose") and was a crucial mentor to younger singers (including Yves Montand and Charles Aznavour) who absorbed her love of chanson and her exacting approach to their métier. Here is Piaf in her own world "Paris in the first half of the twentieth century" and in ours. Burke demonstrates how, with her courage, her incomparable art, and her universal appeal, the little sparrow endures as a symbol of France and a source of inspiration to entertainers worldwide. From the Hardcover edition.

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Customer Reviews

I buy too much stuff at to review most of it, but I had to make an exception for this book. For the subject matter, it is just about a perfect biography. There are lots of stories around about Piaf, many of them apocryphal. Burke addresses them all, evaluates them, and gives cogent arguments to evaluate how likely each is. In addition, she digs up incredibly complete information on Piaf's life from her childhood years through her discovery, her development as a great singer and icon of France, her almost innumerable lovers (though Burke does enumerate and explain each in detail!), to her death and beyond. In addition, Burke provides insightful explanations of the culture in France during each part of Piaf's life, giving context to her life and achievements. If you love Piaf as I do (the only singer who can compare with her, in my opinion, is Ray Charles), then this book is a must read, giving context to all of her recorded songs (and a number that, sadly, were never recorded). My only criticism, and it is minor, is that her documentation, while exemplary, is done by means of end notes that are not referenced in the text, so you don't know when to go look at them (and there are hundreds, literally). If they were purely citations of sources, this would be fine, but like most authors, Burke slips in a few anecdotes into the notes that any reader would not want to miss. If she ever puts out another edition of the book, she should either put the notes at the end of each chapter and add raised numbers in the text to refer to them; or, if as I suspect, she didn't want to 'clutter' the text with raised numbers, then she should put all the anecdotes into the main text, removing them from the notes. In any case, I highly recommend this book. Biographies for persons of different careers and time periods will vary in the characteristics that make them good or bad biographies--a biography of an ancient Greek general, like Alexander the Great, will have very different criteria than a biography of a 20th century singer and cultural icon. For a person like Edith Piaf, this is as close to a perfect biography as one can get.

I grew up listening to and admiring French pop music, always trying to sing along with the proper words, hoping to become immersed in the French language while studying it in high school. The songs of Edith Piaf were tops, oh so French, iconic. Her life as a free, though tormented, spirit, haunted me in the bohemian 1950s, and although I knew almost nothing of her real life, intimations of her living a louche and druggy existence abided and acquired a patina that seemed to be a

widely held notion. Carolyn Burke's biography of Piaf rubbed away decades of this fuzzy thinking. Reading it was like watching a burst of magnificent fireworks rear up into the night sky and release streamers of words and music that mesmerize. Burke's book gives us easy access to the world of this great talent with new depth and heart. She details the real events of the Little Sparrow's life, dispelling myths, focusing on Piaf's gifts of talent, generosity of spirit, enormous energy for love, life and expression with specific references to the words of her songs and their origins. Here is Piaf's life drawn without sensational headlines--how she functioned as a force of nature, a sensual woman who was a tireless lover of men, a woman who pushed herself constantly to the edge of her energy store, a woman whose consequent ill-health caused her to make bad choices and become addicted to various medications. Burke's book delves into the complexity of Piaf's relationships with family, friends, songwriters, and lovers. The result is wholly memorable--a serious, yet entertaining and inviting book--the tiny woman behind the voice and songs still touching our hearts. _____

the story of an amazing woman in extraordinary circumstances. I had seen her on TV on the Ed Sullivan Show on a few occasions and now I wish that I had known her story then. I would have appreciated her even more.

I had hoped. Edith Piaf's voice and interpretive abilities were so extraordinary. I always find I want to read everything I can about her in order to better understand the foundation of her interpretation of a lyric. My French is grade school at best, yet I always feel as though I understand what she is trying to tell me when she sings.

This is the best biography of Edith Piaf that I have ever read, excepting, of course those written by Piaf herself. Even those books did not tell the entire truth of her life, she had to use a modicum of decorum for her own sake, that of her "publique"s. Ms. Burke's relating of her tale really puts you in Piaf's place in a whirlpool of activity and change in France that she helped guide with her song. She was known as "La Voix de Paris" and Ms. Burke helps show you the forks in the road that lead her to become the most celebrated female singer in France. She shares Edith's dark times, too, but in a very respectful way and cautions the reader to not think that was all there was to this incredible woman. In all things Edith sought love that one magical *le grand amour* above all things. When she found and lost it in Marcel Cerdan, she just kept on seeking it in other men, but never was hopeful that she would find it again. Her life was led just like her sad, tragic heroines of her songs, seeking

love and finding death, or sadness. There has never been anyone like her and will never be anyone like her again. My only wish is that the French singer, Jill Aigrot will give up her lame attempt to emulate Edith Piaf, which is impossible, she doesn't have the voice, the fire, nor the spirit. Thank you again for your delightful book, Ms. Burke.

Beneath the surface examination of the life of Edith Piaf... An uncompromising mix of talent, determination, and passion.

Purchased as gift in conjunction with Je Ne Regrette Rien CD then bought for myself. Fascinating story of an amazing artist.

I gave this book to my husband for his Birthday and he loves it! It is very well written and the print is just right! thank you RB

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