

[PDF] The Unruly Life Of Woody Allen: A Biography

Mary Woods, Marion Meade - pdf download free book

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Description:

Woody Allen once controlled the press like his actors--and as critic Andrew Sarris observed, Woody "is almost a ventriloquist and all his actors are marionettes. It's his nature. He has to be on top." The Soon-Yi scandal cost him \$7 million and his protected reputation, and now we've got Marion Meade's unblinking look at his blighted life (superior to John Baxter's , not quite as good as Meade's). The son of a loveless dad and mom who respectively ignored and beat him daily, Woody grew up mean, scarred, and scared: he slept with a night-light until his early 40s and considered suicide daily until at least age 51. His uncanny gift for comedy gave him no comfort, but movies did. His most autobiographical character is Cecilia in *The Purple Rose of Cairo*, who took refuge in theaters from "the ugly light" of real life.

Boy, does Meade cast ugly light on Woody and his work. His best role for a woman, Annie Hall, is "basically stupid," as Diane Keaton said. In life and art, Woody sought leading ladies he could dominate. He stalled Mia forever before granting her the right to keep her shampoo at his apartment "alongside toiletries belonging to Diane Keaton, preserved there like so many fossilized relics in King Tut's tomb for more than a decade." Mia was horrified that he spilled her family's nasty secrets in *Hannah and Her Sisters*, and fretted over his obsession with Keaton and her sisters, Mariel Hemingway's sister, and Mia's own sister Steffi--whose photos she discovered (shades of Soon-Yi!) in his apartment. Woody's lovable persona was as fake as his transplanted, dyed hair. And Mia's no sweetheart herself: having caught her scuzzy dad with Ava Gardner one night as a child, she married Ava's squeeze Frank Sinatra at 19, and then stole her friend Dory Previn's husband, André, saying, "You don't fight what feels good."

If Meade's sour, thorough tome is true, nobody in Hollywood fights what feels good, and they all come out looking pretty bad. --*Tim Appelo* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly In the second Allen bio in as many months, novelist and biographer Meade (*Dorothy Parker: What Fresh Hell Is This?*) provides a psychologically nuanced, tough-minded portrait of the filmmaker that's a good counterpoint to John Baxter's exhaustive coverage of Allen's oeuvre in *Woody Allen: A Biography* (Forecasts, Nov. 15). While Meade certainly doesn't slight Allen's work, she has a better feel than the Paris-based Baxter for Allen's milieu, including the role of New York film critics, and uses a broader mix of sources to reconstruct it. (Allen refused to cooperate.) Accenting her agile narrative with pertinent shtick from his films, she presents Rashomon-like observations from friends and enemies about Allen's loyalty and ethics. Once Allen's affair with Soon-Yi Previn was made public, even sympathetic interviewers--like 60 Minutes's Steve Kroft--related to the author that Allen was oblivious to the impropriety of a relationship with his wife's adopted daughter. Meade's lengthy account of the child custody battle between Allen and Farrow will remind readers that the judge considered him a terrible father, perhaps even an abuser. When it comes to Allen's work, Meade admires films like *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and lets caustic critics of works like *Stardust Memories* have their say. Though she recognizes that "the ubiquitous Greek chorus" of film critics still debate Allen's legacy, and that the filmmaker has indeed endured his scandals, Meade's pointed citation of Allen's ongoing rancor toward both his first wife and Farrow is what lingers in the reader's mind. Photos not seen by PW.
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