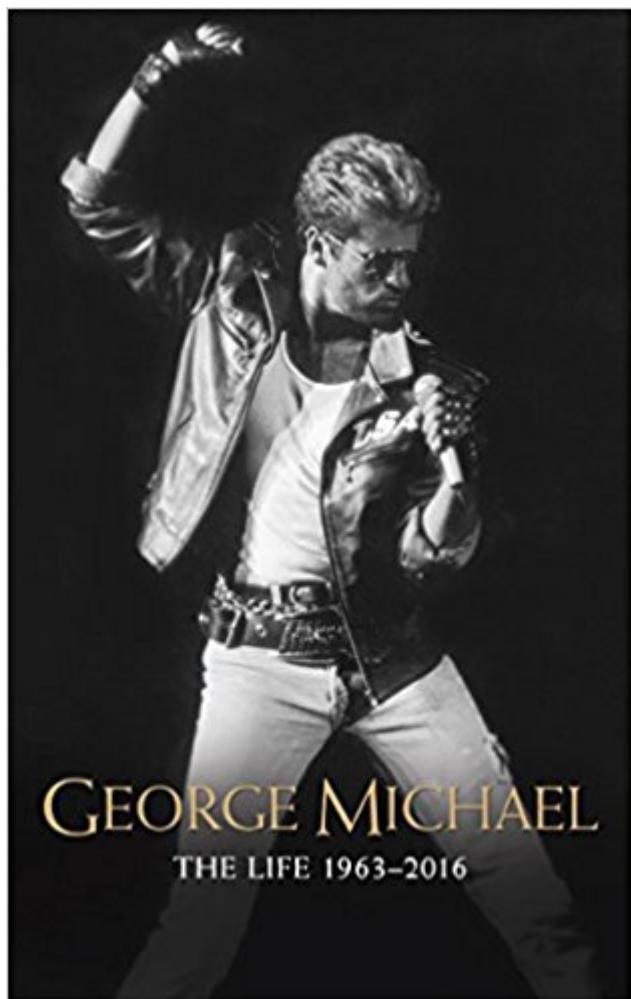


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George Michael: The Life: 1963-2016



Synopsis

George Michael's death on Christmas Day 2016 inspired a new appreciation of his talent and generosity. This new biography is a riveting examination of his extraordinary musical career and legacy that explores his complicated life on-and off-stage, including his sexual insecurity, the loss of his first lover to AIDS, his mother's untimely death, and his drug addiction. Filled with George Michael's own frank opinions, reflections, and observations, this book succeeds in reminding us of why he meant so much to so many. Emily Herbert is the author of Robin Williams: When the Laughter Stops 1951-2014 and Lady Gaga: Behind the Fame.

Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Lesser Gods (April 4, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1944713263

ISBN-13: 978-1944713263

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.7 x 7.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 10 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #428,340 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #206 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Pop #494 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Specific Groups > LGBT #600 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Popular

Customer Reviews

Emily Herbert is the author of Robin Williams: When the Laughter Stops 1951-2014 and Lady Gaga: Behind the Fame. She lives in London.

Chapter One: Death of An Icon Christmas Day, 2016, and the nation was settling down to digest its turkey, roast potatoes and Brussels sprouts when the news started to come through. One of the most famous stars of his generation had passed away. Aged just fifty-three, George Michael, golden boy of the 1980s and international superstar for the whole of his adult life, had been found dead in bed at his home in Goring-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, yet another high-profile death in what had been an extraordinary year. Ever since the singer David Bowie had died at the beginning of 2016, a roll call of the musical greats had seemed to pass away: Prince, Leonard Cohen, Earth, Wind & Fire founder Maurice White, Beatles producer George Martin, Keith Emerson, Merle Haggard; the

list seemed to go on and on. Many more famous figures from other walks of life, including the writer Harper Lee, the actor Alan Rickman, the Egyptian politician Boutros Boutros-Ghali and numerous others had gone, too, which, allied to a series of earth-shattering world events in the political sphere – Brexit, the election of Donald Trump, ructions in the Eurozone and the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East – had seemed to be changing the very nature of the planet. And now, adding to the roll call of the Grim Reaper’s subjects in this extraordinary year, there was George Michael, too. There seemed to be something particularly tragic about George’s death, however, a man who, like Prince, had gone decades before his time. A generation had grown up with music from his Wham! days as a backdrop to their lives and had watched, with a good deal of sympathy albeit laced with bewilderment, as he battled his demons in later years, with addictions to drink and drugs leading to all manner of public escapades in which a worse-for-wear George would find himself in the headlines yet again. All this was actually explained by the battle that the public was not privy to in the early days: the struggle George had with his homosexuality, his reluctance to go public about it for fear of upsetting his Greek Cypriot parents and, when he first hit the limelight, his fans. George had found fame as a teen idol appealing to young girls and the record industry was none too keen on the idea of its latest heart-throb making it clear to his female fans that his interests lay very much elsewhere and so it took the singer-songwriter years before he was eventually able to come out of the closet, which he did only when in reality he had no other choice after his arrest in 1998 for engaging in a lewd act – a – although in fairness, in later years he claimed this was a –subconsciously deliberate act. It certainly put an end to years of speculation about the true nature of his sexuality. But as with so many of his travails, this too was greeted very sympathetically by a public who had come to understand that George Michael was a deeply troubled man. Although prone to complain about the excessive media coverage that resulted in such scrutiny of his life, he was at the same time a much-loved figure and there was a palpable desire for George to defeat his demons once and for all. Alas, it was never going to happen and soon the sad news of his demise had been verified. –It is with great sadness that we can confirm our beloved son, brother and friend George passed away peacefully at home over the Christmas period,â€ his publicist Connie Filippello said in a statement. –The family would ask that their privacy be respected at this difficult and emotional time. There will be no further comment at this stage.â€ Of course, there was a great deal of speculation as to what actually happened: George’s heavy drug use was no secret and it was also widely known that he had spent periods in rehab, none of which had ever managed to make much of a difference to his life. Many feared the worst, but it eventually emerged that the cause of death had been heart failure:

he died in bed, lying peacefully,â€ his manager Michael Lippman said. “I’m devastated,â€ he added, but there was no foul play whatsoever.â€ Even so, Georgeâ€s lifestyle, specifically his drug intake, must have taken its toll and it is the case that cardiac arrest is frequently suffered by heroin users. There were persistent rumours that this had become Georgeâ€s drug of choice although members of his family strongly denied it. There was no doubt, however, that he had spent long periods in rehab and had indulged mightily in narcotics over the years. The police had been called to the property as is standard in these matters and released a statement just before midnight on the 25th:

“Thames Valley Police were called to a property in Goring-on-Thames shortly before 2 p.m. Christmas Day. Sadly, a 53-year-old man was confirmed deceased at the scene. At this stage the death is being treated as unexplained but not suspicious.â€ An ambulance also arrived at around 1.40pm and the reality began to sink in for those on the scene: George Michael really had gone. Of course George had had health problems for years, one of the most serious being a bout of pneumonia in 2011, during which heâ€d needed a tracheotomy and which had left him with permanent lung damage, serious for a man who had previously confessed to smoking twenty-five cannabis joints a day. There was some speculation that there might have been some form of recurrence, this time a fatal one. “His lungs never fully recovered,â€ one source explained. “That can happen after a serious bout of pneumonia like George had. Sometimes, it leaves the lung scarred or damaged, which can lead to a loss of function. It can leave you feeling breathless, as the lungs have a smaller capacity than before. George made no secret about how much he smoked. Smoking can seriously affect the lungs and dramatically increases the risk of infection. After having pneumonia, itâ€s incredibly dangerous to smoke at all.â€ George had in fact previously given up smoking but some reports were suggesting that he had taken up the habit again. As more details began to filter through about what had really happened, it emerged that it was Georgeâ€s boyfriend, the celebrity hairstylist Fadi Fawaz, who had found the singer. Fadi was clearly in a state of shock. “ITs a xmas i will never forget finding your partner dead peacefully in bed first thing in the morning. I will never stop missing you xx,â€ he tweeted. Georgeâ€s ex-partner, with whom he had been for many years (and many thought a reunion was on the cards), Kenny Goss, also issued a statement: “He was a major part of my life and I loved him very, very much. The beautiful memories and music he brought to the world will always be an important part of my life and those who also loved and admired him.â€ Others were quick to follow suit to pay tribute and their respects. Sir Elton John, with whom George had fallen out on and off over the course of several years, but with whom

he was now thought to be on much warmer terms, wrote: "I am in deep shock. I have lost a beloved friend"; the kindest, most generous soul and a brilliant artist. My heart goes out to his family and all of his fans. @GeorgeMichael #RIP. Equally poignant was a posting from George Wham! bandmate Andrew Ridgeley, with whom he found fame all those many years ago. "Heartbroken at the loss of my beloved friend Yogi [George's nickname]. Me, his loved ones, his friends, the world of music, the world at large. 4ever loved. A xx." Indeed, the two of them had shared a particularly special bond; no one else could have known quite what it was like for those two young boys still barely out of their teens to be catapulted into the spotlight and onto the stage of international stardom. Ridgeley had long since bowed out from the mayhem and lived a quiet life in semi-retirement but on the few occasions he did venture out, it was frequently connected to George, as when he took part in George Michael: A Different Story, a 2005 TV documentary about the life of his old friend. There was clearly still a huge amount of affection there. It wasn't just people who knew George who were affected by the news, however, and as sometimes happens after a very public death, private stories were emerging that testified to what a very decent man he had been. A public tide of grief was swelling and along with it numerous reports of George's kindness and generosity. "A woman on Deal Or No Deal told us she needed £15k for IVF treatment. George Michael secretly phoned the next day and gave her the £15k," said the television presenter Richard Osman. It emerged that George had also given a barmaid a \$8,500 tip on learning she was a student nurse with debts, while charities including Terrence Higgins Trust and Macmillan Cancer Support revealed that the singer had secretly donated millions of pounds to them. NHS nurses who attended a free concert that Michael held for them in 2006 were keen that the world should know of his generosity.

"No one had ever done anything like that before, and no one has done it since," Caroline Smith, thirty-seven, a senior nurse at Royal Surrey County Hospital, told The Times. "It was such a powerful evening. For somebody as famous as that, to thank us in such a way, was really quite inspirational. I should hope at the very least he's in everybody's thoughts." Fellow nurse Simon Pawlin added: "It set him apart. We left that concert buzzing. The fact that it wasn't for the cameras, it wasn't about him being a celebrity, it was about him giving something back, that tells you something about the person he was. It was a very special evening we'll never forget." It further emerged that George donated the royalties from "Jesus To A Child" to children's charity Childline, a gift that amounted to £2 million, on condition that it be kept secret. "George helped us to reach out to hundreds of thousands of children through his generosity," said Childline

founder Esther Rantzen, who was among those calling for a tribute concert in his honour and who believed his personal issues might have contributed to a special sympathy for the children that needed Childline. He approached us, rather than us going cap in hand to him, but it was an intensely personal gift. He didn't want it to be known or to be part of his image. I think it would be wonderful to celebrate him with a tribute concert next year. We were able to counsel 300,000 children who needed help last year, through emails, online and phone calls, and George made a palpable difference. There was a sense of personal interest. He kept his sexuality quiet and it may have been tough for him when he was younger. By this time, George's death was making headlines worldwide. Fans and admirers began leaving floral tributes outside his home overlooking the River Thames, which still had a berry- and apple-covered wreath on one side door and two reindeer statues in the garden covered with fairy lights, while an outpouring of affection and sorrow was engulfing everyone involved with his private life. The family and close friends of George have been touched beyond words by the incredible outpouring of love for him in the hours and days since his death. His publicist said in a further statement, which was also keen to emphasise that the death was not drugs-related. For someone whose life was ultimately about his music and the love he had for his family and friends, his fans and the world at large, there could be no more fitting tribute than the many, many, kind words that have been said...

Really enjoyed this book. It was written with a sympathetic view toward GM, but did not just gloss over his unfortunate drug problems. Those of us who love GM know that he had these problems, they were a part of him and probably eventually played a large part in his death, so they can't just be ignored, but the Ms. Herbert dwelt much more on George's music. I especially liked the author's viewpoint on how much Andrew Ridgeley contributed to George's success, and how Andrew deserves more credit than he usually gets by always being such a great friend and sounding board for George. (I love Andrew as well!) I miss George terribly and always will. Because I live in the USA, I never got to see him in concert and will always feel bad about that, but this book assuaged my sadness just a bit. Recommend.

Loved reading about parts of his life. Would love to have his book *Bare*, but the prices are awful, some at thousands and hundreds of dollars. It's just very wrong. Profits could be made up in volume instead of price greediness.

I found it good, but didn't really learn anything more than I already knew. Still, if you wanted to find

out something about George Michael and knew little to begin with, this would be a fine way to start.

A wonderfully written book. A terrific tribute to a true musical genius with a heart of gold. An excellent book.

Great book with lots of interesting information.

LOVED this book. So insightful into GM

Fast shipping... Just as promised

Nice book.....I've only read part of it so far, and it's an interesting book. Nice photos included.

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