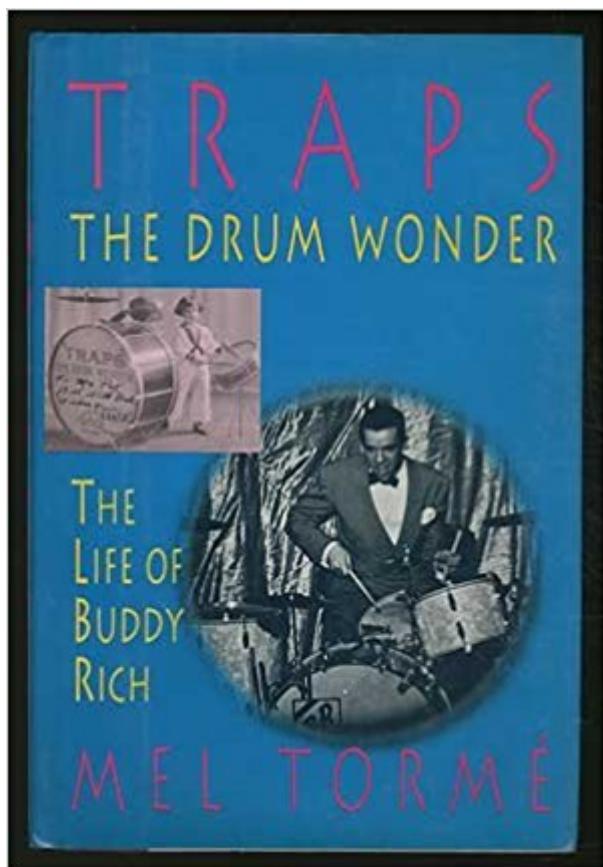


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Traps, The Drum Wonder: The Life Of Buddy Rich



Synopsis

Mel Tormé is world renowned as a leading jazz vocalist. He has performed in MGM musicals, co-wrote one of the enduring Christmas classics, "The Christmas Song (Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire)," and was recently profiled in *Life* magazine as one of the greatest living jazz singers. But Tormé has also written five books, including *The Other Side of the Rainbow*, Tormé's account of his year working on the Judy Garland television show--considered the best portrait of Garland ever written. In this book, Tormé writes a brilliant biography of his friend of forty years--the drummer Buddy Rich. Buddy Rich was one of the most famous drummers of the Swing Era, having starred in the Artie Shaw and Tommy Dorsey bands. After World War II he successfully led several of his own bands. Born into a vaudeville family, Buddy performed on the drums in his parents' act before he was two years old--where he was billed as "Traps, the Drum Wonder"--and became the highest paid child performer in the world by age four. This early fame--and Buddy's abusive father--left psychological scars on Rich, who developed an abrasive personality, and would beat his drums as an outlet for his frustrations. Although a close friend and admirer, Tormé pulls no punches when it comes to describing Rich's occasional outbursts and his sometimes childish pranks. But, as Tormé shows, Buddy could also be charming, affectionate, and funny, as he demonstrated during his frequent appearances as a guest on the *Tonight Show*. (When Rich died, Johnny Carson proclaimed, "The world lost a genius, and I lost a friend.") We also find tales of Buddy's stormy friendship with Frank Sinatra (his first roommate on tour with the Tommy Dorsey band), and his romance with Lana Turner (Buddy's first serious love affair). More than anything, of course, Rich was a brilliant musician, and he earned many tributes from jazz musicians ("What Buddy could do with a couple of pieces of wood was uncanny," remembers drummer Alvin Stoller). Tormé shows a deep understanding of the life of a jazzman, and the many challenges and vicissitudes that are involved with it. We learn of the problems of holding a swing band together during an era when bebop ruled, follow Buddy in his search for the perfect snare drum, and observe the many "drum-offs" when Rich proved his unmatchable talent in friendly competition with other talented drummers, such as Gene Krupa. The Buddy Rich story is a fascinating one, as much for what it says about the world of American music and entertainment as for the remarkable life it portrays. Drawing from magazines and many personal reminiscences, Tormé packs this biography with vivid, often funny, anecdotes. His personal touch and his in-depth knowledge of jazz make for a moving, insightful, and often hilarious biography.

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Customer Reviews

Singer/author Torme (The Other Side of the Rainbow) here tracks the career of his longtime friend, from the days when child prodigy Buddy Rich (called Traps, the Drum Wonder) amazed vaudeville audiences with his talent until his death from a brain tumor in 1987. One of the greatest drummers of all time, Rich had a complicated and abrasive personality, and even his 45-year friendship with the author had its ups and downs. Though Torme was often the butt of Rich's abuse and practical jokes, he apparently never wavered in his affection for him, and writes with sympathy and admiration. The book does not gloss over Rich's troubled relationships, however--battles with Frank Sinatra, Tommy Dorsey and other musicians, stormy marriage, disastrous financial affairs--and succeeds in capturing the drummer's complex personality as well as in characterizing his musical genius. Rich cooperated on the autobiography up until his death. in 1987. Photos not seen by PW.

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Singer Torme here celebrates his friend, the late Rich, who was one of the most famous and explosive jazz drummers. Known for his abrasive personality and virtuosity, Rich achieved fame drumming for Artie Shaw and Tommy Dorsey while enjoying a feud with Frank Sinatra and courting actress Lana Turner. In this first full-length biography, Torme expands on chapter-length tributes by Whitney Balliett ("Super Drummer") and Burt Korall ("Drummin' Men"). Torme tries to be objective yet describes nearly every Rich performance as "especially good" and fails to mention that, although Rich was a virtuoso, other drummers have been at least as innovative and influential. Nevertheless,

this will appeal strongly to fans of Rich and big-band jazz.- Paul Baker, CUNA Inc., Madison, Wis.Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

My dad loved Gene Krupa and so did I. No one dare say to me that there was any drummer better than Gene .However, I left myself open to change that opinion once I began to observe and listen to Buddy play. Gene was great, an innovator and driving force behind the drums, but honestly couldn't hold a candle to Buddy, nobody could! I actually got a chance to meet Buddy Rich after his performance at a New York Westbury Music Fair concert circa 1980, courtesy of my date, his daughter Cathy's best friend at the time, Michelle. Her dad was a band leader in Vegas, and after Buddy's performance she took me backstage to meet him. He gave her a big hug and she introduced me to him, and I said hello and shook his hand. My biggest regret? I wish at that time I had the knowledge and appreciation of Buddy that I later came to have of this man's remarkable, if not God like ability as the master of his craft. Would that have helped me to tell him that night how much I loved this greatest drummer of all time, bar none? Perhaps not. Because knowing what I have seen and heard with my own eyes and ears when this man played the drums, well, quite frankly, I would have been speechless at the site of him to utter a single word of praise. What can you say to a man who's heard it all and you don't want to make the man uncomfortable gawking at him, as you goo goo and ga ga about how great he is? Now that he's gone and we are left with just a book, and a great one at that, I'll say this to you Buddy Rich: God bless you and your wonderful daughter, who keeps your blessed memory alive by speaking about you and promoting your band. You were loved, and your talent will never be replicated again, and like Frank, we still have the recordings and the videos to remind us all how truly great you were. Read the book, you can't put it down. Great work Mel. I hope you, Buddy, Frank and the rest of the swing band giants are having a blast entertaining the man upstairs.

A true musical giant. This is a fascinating biography filled with invaluable insights from a fellow musician who knew Buddy Rich well. Mel Torme was obviously a big fan of the drumming genius, and takes you from his beginnings as a novelty and prodigy, in a vaudeville act with his parents, where he was known as Traps-The Drum Wonder, to his rise to International renown, and finally to his end. He never took a lesson and never practiced. Buddy Rich probably felt alone in his genius, contributing to a personality that was moody, mercurial, restless, sought perfection in himself and his band members, who often received tongue lashings for failing to meet his expectations. Rich was a survivor, intent on not allowing big band music to not only survive but evolve and push

forward. Genius does not often breed nice guys. The book is filled with wonderful anecdotes about the era in which Rich left an indelible impression. His work continues to inspire the young drummers of today. A very entertaining and informative, and easy read.

In depth, well written biography of a drumming powerhouse. Gives an excellent education of went into creating a massively talented drummer. This book was referred to me after I had made a comment I saw Buddy Rich on Carson when a kid & thought him an arrogant, egotistical man I did not like. It was suggested I read this book. Admitting my opinion was formed by a 10 yr old girl I was willing to give it a shot. It did change my mind. He is a complex man who was the major breadwinner for his family from an early age. It explained how Buddy Rich's persona was shaped by too much responsibility, too much power, at too young an age, laying the groundwork for creating a seemingly arrogant, egotistical musician grounded in a childhood never lived. I highly recommend especially if you love learning the details of a great musical talent's life & a historical snapshot of his place in time.

I was and still am a big Buddy Rich fan. I was lucky enough to see him in my youth. [I am a drummer and percussionist too]. He was also quite a character. Reading a book by Mel Torme was a treat to begin with because I always liked Mel. I didn't realize he wrote along with all of his other talents. He was a friend and intimate of Buddy's so this biography comes from first hand knowledge and friendship but a lot of honesty. Mel, being an entertainer also worked with Buddy and so many others of that era so he knows of which he speaks. Great book. I couldn't put it down and it answered a lot about Buddy. I still feel Buddy was the best drummer ever and people still love him and his talent today. Enjoy this good book and the talent of both Buddy and Mel. RIP to both Buddy and Mel. You are both missed.

Mell Torme is uniquely qualified to author this terrific little book. Torme was an excellent drummer as well as a lifelong friend of Buddy Rich. He is also a good writer. The reader gets the Buddy Rich story, warts and all. A very complex man who is also a consummate artist. Highly recommended.

A biography of the greatest drummer of all time written by one of the greatest jazz vocalists of all time--who is also a great drummer. What could be better. Timely shipping also made it a great buy.

This book will be a very good read for any drummer or follower of big-band jazz. I couldn't put it

down, finished it in one day. I'm a drummer and have always been interested in Buddy's music. It was VERY interesting to learn of all the behind-the-scenes issues in Buddy's life, his start in music, relationships, financial woes, and health issues at the end. Torme does an excellent job of chronicling tons of little known facts about Buddy's life. He's an excellent writer and I was surprised to learn of just how close he was to Buddy throughout their careers. Great book!

Walk you through Buddy's life from a baby...

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