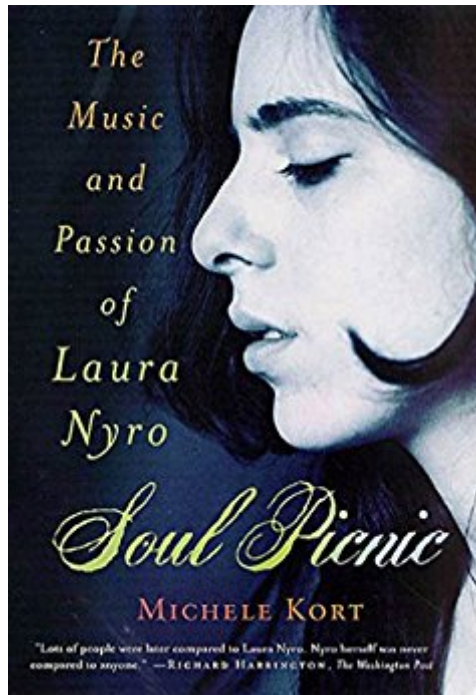


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Soul Picnic: The Music And Passion Of Laura Nyro



Synopsis

Laura Nyro was a beloved and pioneering singer-songwriter of the 1960s and 1970s, whose songs were covered with great success by the Fifth Dimension; Blood, Sweat & Tears; Three Dog Night; and Barbra Streisand. This first biography from Michele Kort, Soul Picnic, uncovers previously never revealed details, including a love affair with Jackson Browne, and her relationship with painter Maria Desiderio. Unappreciated in her time, Nyro's legacy is currently experiencing a revival. With her groundbreakingly honest and passionate lyrics, her unusual and innovative rhythms and melody, Nyro's influence is still felt by singers and songwriters today.

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Customer Reviews

Reading this book finally gave me that special "secret key" into a world no one was privy to until now. Laura Nyro's mysterious persona was always very compelling. She was someone you never could get too much of, because there never was much we were allowed to know. So, those of us who fell in love with her amazing music always were forced to read into the lyrics, to wonder, to get lost in a trance while listening as we saw visions of New York streets and imagined the people and scenes in her songs. I was 16 years old the first time I escaped into Laura's music, and that was

decades ago. My reaction as I listened to each song, was that I was stunned. The songs were stunning. Her voice: stunning. It was that melding of jazz, gospel, Broadway and how every note she played on the piano was intentionally placed and significant. And how her voice captured all the raw emotion of real New York life. She made me yearn to go there, to feel what she felt, to see what she saw. She was the pioneer, a woman whose creative abilities were, in my opinion, up until that time, unsurpassed by anyone, male or female. That's why the book is such a treasure. It unlocks so many of the mysteries that many of us had resigned ourselves to never know. Unlike the other reviewer, I relished the details of the recording sessions and everything else, every other detail about Laura's life, personality, art. At the risk of sounding snobbish, I suppose you have to be the following to truly appreciate what is offered here: 1) an absolute die-hard Laura Nyro follower and fan from the 70s, and 2) probably a songwriter and musician yourself in order to understand what it takes to create the kind of work she created. (I am both).

From the first time I heard her on the radio singing "Save The Country", I have been enamored with Laura Nyro. I loved her voice, piano and songs, and thought her work on New York Tendaberry was some of the best and most unique work I had ever heard. I also liked her looks and her demeanor. I liked her so much, I wrote her an affectionate letter via Columbia Records in 1969, but, to my regret, she never answered. Michele Kort, in her outstanding biography of Laura, has made me feel like I did get a chance to meet her, after all. Her writing pulled me in from the first page, and I felt like I was right along side of Laura as I relived her ascendancy to musical greatness. Ms. Kort informs the reader of many interesting facts, such as Ms. Nyro having been named by her musician father after the song from the classic movie, *Laura*, and that she had lots of training in voice but had fairly limited piano training. Ms. Kort takes us through all Laura's albums, what was going on in her life when they were being conceived, developed and recorded, who produced and engineered them, who the other musicians and vocalists were, and the various negotiations Laura engaged in with the record companies to get the result she wanted. I found this information of great interest and I would not have minded at all if the book had been another three hundred pages. Most gratifying was that Michele Kort has written a quite detailed book which gives the reader a very good sense of Laura and some of her idiosyncrasies, but she always treats her with the greatest respect.

I confess. I belong to the tribe of souls who have long worshiped at the altar of Laura Nyro. Most of us were there back in 1967 at the beginning of her career, when her voice and piano first tore through our consciousness, awakening us, and it forever altered our relationship to music and

melody. Her music has been the central soundtrack to our lives, but not just as background sound, we cared about her music as art, it reached us at the deepest levels of our hearts and souls and it transfigured and healed many of us. Indeed, we experienced it as religion, and it has never left us. We are a unique breed of fans in that Laura Nyro is more than our favorite singer/songwriter. We believe we were "saved" by her music. Michelle Kort understands this essential nature of those us in the tribe, and we have waited a long long time for someone as capable as she to write Laura's story. She has done an absolutely fantastic job with this biography, especially given the difficulty of the task. Difficult because no other figure in popular music remained as mysterious and elusive and unpenetrable as Laura did throughout her life. She firecely protected her privacy at the expense of her career, and she so singularly, uncompromisingly pursued her craft without a thought to self-promotion, that consequently very little about either her personal or professional life was ever revealed to the public. We who have loved and listened to Laura for over 30 years had to settle for the occasional rare interview, or little scraps of news and gossip, often inaccurate, passed down through the tribe and endlessy debated among ourselves. Michelle Kort's miracle of a book corrects this long silence and finally tells the story we have breathlessly waited for most of our lives.

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