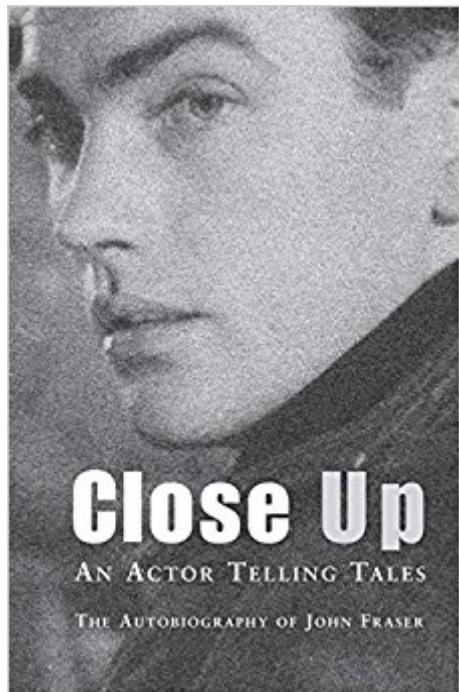


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Close Up: An Actor Telling Tales



Synopsis

Fraser's is a remarkably candid memoir, relating his affairs, friendships and working relationships with some of the biggest stars of the stage and screen, including Rudolf Nureyev, Dirk Bogarde and Bette Davis. John Fraser starred in over 30 films, including *El Cid* and *Tunes of Glory*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The best showbusiness autobiography I have ever read' Sunday Express 'A Supa-candid-gossip-expo-valid-dose-worth of Dirk, Sophia, Bette and Rudy in the sixties. Grab and gobble it!' Richard E Grant" --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

John Fraser starred in over 30 films, including *El Cid* and *Tunes of Glory*. He was nominated for a British Academy Award as Best Actor for his performance, opposite Peter Finch, as Bosie in *The Trials of Oscar Wilde*.

It has been a while since I devoured this book and no longer have it because it begs to be shared. *Close-Up* is the best autobiography I've laid my eyes upon. One needs to look no further than the first few pages, which recount his father who lay paralysed on a WW1 battlefield bleeding out for days while rats, their squeaks echoing his ears, feverishly gnawed into the open bullet-hole wound on his neck. His father survived, and we are immediately confronted with graphic intensity and a say-no-more portrait of his mentally tortured, alcoholic father, and the impoverished Scottish

projects where John Fraser was raised - only made cozier by the love of long-suffering stoic women: his mother and live-in aunt Gatty, the sniping, selfless, hardworking old maid whose endless sewing upstairs gave her nephew the wings to soar. Now if you are expecting celebrity gossip from that era, you'll find Fraser just as unflinching. He eviscerates big shots like Bette Davis, Hedy Lamarr, and lily-livered Dirk Bogarde and more, then hardly bothers to mention ice queen Catherine Deneuve (such a snub is clearly even more cutting) but his surgically precise observations are laced with compassion for stars like Rachel Roberts, even as he vividly detailing her brutal curtain call. If you are expecting to find what it was like to be a gay man of his era, there is a wealth of experiences, relationships (one that continues to this day), and a first affair of the heart on foreign ground that begins in the most gutwrenchingly touching way. Despite, and because of, homosexuality being a crime, mid-century gays bonded in a way that feels tribal and necessarily protective. None leaked to the gossip rags about the horsey sex contraption Bogarde had strung up in his barn (but what fun to read about it now) and within this tight-knit group, everyone seems to have known everyone else - from Coward to Maugham down to wannabes and bit players - and Fraser documents many of them. Most I had never heard of, but a quick google search would turn up a gallery of beautifully chiseled playboys, matinee idols and paramours. Benefit of hindsight allows now for a (perhaps unfair) reckoning on these players, the author included, who society forced to choose between courage/integrity and career/power. If you are expecting to learn something new, you're in for an updated vocabulary. Instead of regurgitating the most common word, Fraser will find a more exact one: the "newel" post; not a peg but a "dowel".

When I was a schoolboy in England, John Fraser, the author, was very visible and 'newsworthy'. I'd often see him in films or telly, or on stage. He was a very interesting fellow then, and he's proven to be a very interesting, talented author as well. In this excellently-written book, Fraser writes of his life with colourful, occasionally fascinating life and many of the fascinating and famous people he encountered: Dirk Bogarde, Sir Alec Guinness, Peter Sellers, Laurence Harvey, Hedy Lamarr, Richard Burton, Bette Davis, and many actors who are not household names but certainly were part of MY boyhood and are still well known in the UK: Rachel Roberts, Ronald Lewis, Gary Raymond, and Jill Bennett--not always in an entirely complimentary way, but clearly, and unsentimentally. It was a fine 'read' and a fine, well-lived life.

Fascinating look into an actors life. Well written, and an insight (some quite hilarious) into interactions with old movie stars and their foibles.

Good narrative of the actor's life.

John Fraser is not just another pretty face. He has known all the major actors of his era and was nominated for the British academy award. He also knew Nureyev intimately (yes, he is gay) and describes him as "scruffy." His description of his meeting with Bette Davis is side splittingly funny. But the beauty of this book is not only the content but the presentation. This gorgeous Scotsman is as eloquent and observant as any writer I have read. This is not your basic tell all, but the stories he tells are each fascinating and tell a lot about the humanity of the author.

Very good reading. Really enjoyed it.

I'm really getting tired of the review stuff - went you read as much as I do - this becomes more time consuming than necessary. Yes, I liked the book - it's very good.

Started off really good, interesting & in detail. Ending was bland, just list of productions with no mention of the important people in his life. What happened to his beloved auntie & sisters.

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