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The Big Bankroll: The Life And Times Of Arnold Rothstein



Synopsis

Arnold Rothstein (1882-1928) was described in the newspapers of the 1920s as "the sportsman," "the gambler," "the man who fixed the 1919 World Series." But he was much more than that. A bootlegger and labor racketeer, he corrupted politicians, promoted crooked stock sales, and imported narcotics. And, perhaps most importantly, he transformed organized crime from a thuggish activity practiced by hoodlums into a big business, run like a corporation, with himself at the top. For twenty years, the name of Arnold Rothstein symbolized money—big-time money, gambling money, racket money, illegal money, millions upon millions of dollars. His share was ninety percent of any deal; he was never indicted for a single crime: he always won at cards and horses. And, despite his involvement in dozens of murders and hundreds of other crimes, his luck never ran out. At least not until 1928, the year in which he was fatally shot. The perpetrators—and Rothstein's millions—were never found. *The Big Bankroll* is the definitive biography of the man known simply as Mr. Big. In it, Leo Katcher reveals not only the sordid details of the life of America's most powerful gambler, but illuminates the whole era in which crime became king. Leo Katcher was a reporter for the New York Post during Rothstein's reign, and spent ten years researching this book, interviewing Lucky Luciano, Carolyn Behar (Rothstein's widow), and dozens of others. -Print ed. "This well-written book—part biography, part social history—is as fascinating as a dozen works of fiction, and a good deal more frightening." "Spectator" Leo Katcher, who was a newspaperman in the days when Rothstein ruled, has brought not only the man but his times back to life. This is a vivid, fascinating book....Katcher does not glamorize Rothstein: he dissects him skillfully and explains him and his corrupt associates and the conditions which made it possible for such men to become wealthy and powerful....Katcher has done a superb job." Quentin Reynolds. *Saturday Review*

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Customer Reviews

Like many, I was thrilled with so very much of HBO's BOARDWALK EMPIRE series. Sure, the problem took some creative liberties in the detailing of specific events, but it often did that when trying to concoct a more cohesive narrative for the audience's interest. To be fair, there were so many colorful characters of those bygone days, and I imagine it may've been difficult in the writers' room figuring out which major figure was going to get the lion's share of available screen time; but "before it ended" I suspect many were thrilled with that rare opportunity of re-examining history via some modest fictional contrivances. One of the most interesting portrayals I thought EMPIRE did was that of Arnold Rothstein, played in the series by Michael Stuhlbarg. As a long-time fan of most things involving Prohibition, I was thrilled to finally see "the Big Bankroll" as he was known brought to life; so much of Roaring Twenties crime dramas have put the focus on Al "Scarface" Capone, but those of us familiar with the subject matter known that there were many equally captivating individuals. Finally, some light was shed on Arnold, and this encouraged me to finally pick up THE BIG BANKROLL: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF ARNOLD ROTHSTEIN. Written by Leo Katcher, BANKROLL isn't anything necessarily fresh or new. In fact, the book was first published in 1958, putting it thirty years after Rothstein himself was cut down in the prime of his life (physically, but perhaps not so much fiscally). Katcher opens with a marvelous framing device "he essentially puts the reader in-the-moment of Rothstein's "assassination" and then segues back in time (as it were) to deliver the more biographical highlights of the man's life.

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