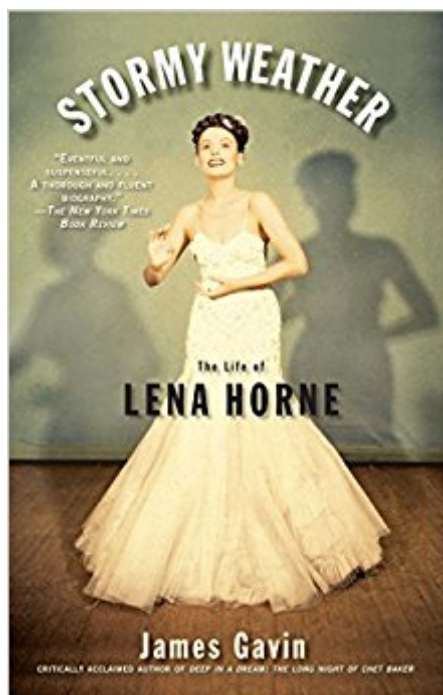


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Stormy Weather: The Life Of Lena Horne



Synopsis

THE "DEFINITIVE" (VANITY FAIR) BIOGRAPHY OF LEGEND LENA HORNE "THE CELEBRATED STAR OF STAGE, MUSIC, AND FILM WHO BLAZED A TRAIL FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS IN HOLLYWOOD AND BEYOND" Drawing on a wealth of unmined material and hundreds of interviews "one of them with Lena Horne herself" critically acclaimed author James Gavin gives us a "deftly researched" (The Boston Globe) and authoritative portrait of the American icon. Horne broke down racial barriers in the entertainment industry in the 1940s and '50s even as she was limited mostly to guest singing appearances in splashy Hollywood musicals. Incorporating insights from the likes of Ruby Dee, Tony Bennett, Diahann Carroll, and Bobby Short, Stormy Weather reveals the many faces of this luminous, complex, strong-willed, passionate, even tragic woman "a stunning talent who inspired such giants as Barbra Streisand, Eartha Kitt, and Aretha Franklin.

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Customer Reviews

I have the cherished memory of seeing Lena Horne in her one-woman Broadway show back in 1981, The Lady And Her Music. At 64, she was a phenomenal force of nature perfectly in command onstage, and yet the source of her conviction, according to biographer James Gavin, appears borne out of anger as much as pure talent. In his meticulous account of her long life, full of well-documented archival material, Horne had good reason to be angry as she was deeply conflicted about her racial identity. The lightness of her skin was the source of constant taunting,

and so traumatized was she that she separated herself from her darker-skinned relatives. Horne's middle-class childhood in Brooklyn is described in sharp contrast to her unstable, self-conscious adolescence. However, it was her unearthly beauty that forged her escape route, first as a chorus girl in the Cotton Club, then a meteoric rise to full-fledged Hollywood star, and finally as an unparalleled nightclub entertainer. Her WWII-era MGM years prove to be a painful case study in racial discrimination at a time when African-American women were portrayed either as "yes'em" maids or mammy-type servants. Horne was the sole exception until Dorothy Dandridge in the 1950's, a beautiful token figure usually posed against a column wedged into big MGM musicals like Panama Hattie and Ziegfeld Follies.

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