



ART: Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman

Laurie Pepper

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Art Pepper told his sexy, sordid, and exciting true adventure stories to his lover, Laurie, who put them in a book. She quizzed him (and those who knew him) unrelentingly over seven years, editing and structuring a narrative to which she dedicated all her energy. *Straight Life* by Art and Laurie Pepper (Da Capo) was published in 1979. It was critical success and remains a classic of its kind, the subject of college literary and music studies. Laurie went on to marry Art and manage his resurgent career, touring the world with his band.

“Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman” was the headline some editor gave a newspaper interview Laurie did while the band was in Australia in 1981, and she’s now stolen that “that perfect title” for her memoir. *ART: Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman* (APMCorp), describes her marriage to the deeply troubled, drug-addicted, madly gifted artist. “That marriage was the making of me,” says Laurie. “Some people go to grad school or join the Marines. I married a genius who valued and inspired me and challenged me to use MY gifts. We had a difficult, powerful partnership. I had to tell that story.” She says she also needs to set the record straight and clarify her role: “People think I was some kind of little wifey-saint who rescued him. And Art encouraged them in that. But he knew how truly crazy I could be. We rescued each other.”

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR "ART"

Forged at the collision point of true art and real life, this brutally honest book is an engrossing journey across the hard countries of love and loss and redemption. It inspires the belief that love can overcome all obstacles and that creative talent knows no bounds. It was impossible for me to put it down.

—Michael Connelly, Author of the Harry Bosch series of novels

“I was no angel,” Laurie Pepper advises at the start of this stingly candid memoir, and in truth she is a wonderfully devilish writer, her pen a razor dipped in sulfur, her memory a lead-lined cave from which nothing escapes or goes unexamined. Everyone who knows the skillful craftsmanship she brought to *Straight Life*, the masterpiece she made of Art Pepper’s life, will find it here again, in service to her own story, which would be reason enough to celebrate this gripping book. But there is another: a wittingly different perspective on Art’s tale—this good wife was every inch his match.

—Gary Giddins, Author of *Bing Crosby: A Pocketful of Dreams and Celebrating Bird*

Music, love, gossip—along with mania and addiction, pain and calamity: Laurie Pepper writes with grace and candor about all of it. Joining *Straight Life* as one of the best jazz lives, and telling the story behind that great story, her new book deserves all the meanings of “Art” in its title.

—Robert Pinsky, Poet

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