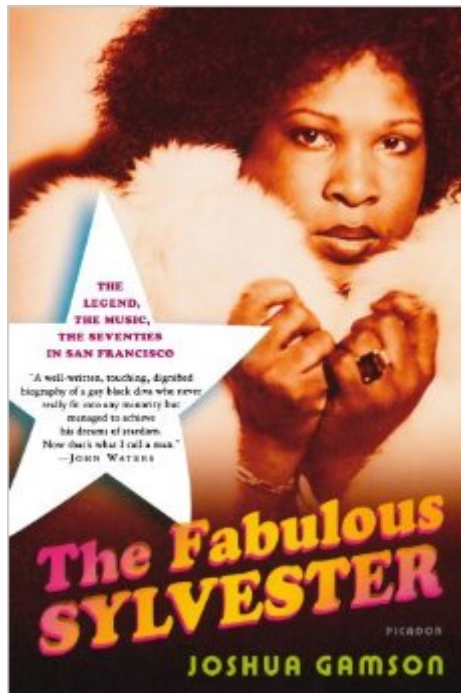


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The Fabulous Sylvester: The Legend, The Music, The Seventies In San Francisco



Synopsis

Imagine a piper singing in falsetto, wearing sequins, and leading the young people of the nation to San Francisco and on to a liberation where nothing was straight-laced or old-fashioned. And everyone, finally, was welcome--to come as themselves. This is not a fairy tale. This was real, mighty real, and disco-sensation Sylvester was the piper. Yale-trained sociologist Joshua Gamson uses Sylvester's life to lead us through the story of the 1970s, when a generation took off its shame. Celebrity, sociology, and music history mingle in this endlessly entertaining story of a singer who embodied the freedom, spirit, and flamboyance of a golden moment in American culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Sylvester was a beloved figure inside his circle of admirers; he received cautious regard at best from outside that circle. Now, along comes a long overdue biography, and what a volume. The timing couldn't be more right, as the US has finally put to rest most of the putrid disco backlash. In the stores are not only decent compilations of the disco music but also books like this one that reflect the reality of the subculture. Not the bandwagon that pop radio jumped on, not the Arthur-Murray style competitions, not the faux-glamour suburban nightclubs, but the real deal. Sylvester was both artist and participant in the disco culture-- singer, performance artist, club dancer. The author of this book captures Sylvester in all his complexity and drives home the important part he played in the subculture that was disco. Gamson is an academic, which means that he has been thorough in locating good sources of information. He seemed to have access to so

many of the important persons and institutions that played a part in Sylvester's life. He is able to provide a well-rounded depiction of the man's personality, warts and all. He does a good job laying out the formative experiences in this colorful life, be it a mother who role-modeled an imperious love of fashion but later derided a child who followed her example, or a church community that would exploit Sylvester's temperament but denounce him for acts its other members could get away with if they kept hypocritically silent. Sylvester's complicated relationship to the gay community of 70s San Francisco is fascinating. The author does a great job bringing all the early elements around in the end of the book, showing how lasting the formative events are and how much a person can fill in the voids during adulthood.

I enjoyed this book so much that I read it twice, then a year later, read it again!--FANTASTIC!! It captures the times, the people, places and things that made Sylvester, San Francisco, that music and that era such a golden & magical time! I love the stories of the young Sylvester growing up in South Central L.A. in the 50's and 60's, FLAMING THE CHILDREN!! Giving them fabulousness and outrageousness at every turn, from his soul-stirring falsetto rendition of the black gospel classic "Never Grow Old", to the rawkus "DISQUOTAYS", a rag-tag gang of young black drag queens that he hung out with, to the off-the-charts outfits that must've stopped traffic in the hood big time! (LOL!!) It was evident to all who knew him even then, that this pretty black child with the high voice was way different and way way special!! (-: Some didn't know how to take Sylvester or even know what to do with him, yet he pressed on!--Carving out his own space within the harsh realities of ghetto life as best he could. Sylvester was a true pioneer in every way! He didn't see race, gender, the expectations of others, the taunts of hateful & ignorant people, etc., as obstacles or boundaries he needed to respect. He was a true original!--Uncut, undiluted, young, black, gay, gifted, stylish, full of charm and ambition, with the soul of a torch singer or a blues shouter infused by a rock-n-roll rebel spirit and soul singer's chops! What a combination! I myself can attest to Sylvester's impact, as both a fan and as young gay black kid who was coming of age and into self-awareness at the very time that his star was reaching its zenith!

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