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New bio tells the definitive story of singer Matt Monro

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Good morning everyone. I hope your weekend is off to a great start. I've been focusing on a lot of music and movies lately. So today, I thought I'd get back to that occasional book review that I like to include every now and then. This morning, I've got a look at one of the most in depth biographies that I've read yet. It's one that if you're a fan of jazz and classic pop music, you'll truly appreciate after having read it. In today's edition of Reel Reviews, we take a look at the recent paperback re-release of the newest Matt Monro bio, *The Singer's Singer: The Life and Music of Matt Monro*.

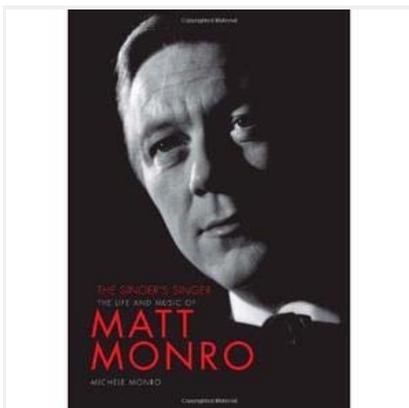
Up and coming singers today have so many avenues to have their voices heard. They've got American Idol, America's Got Talent, The Voice and so many other countless tv singing competitions. While some of the people on these shows go on to superstardom, just as many end up fading out and becoming forgotten. It proves that fame is a fickle mistress. And while fame has become so fleeting for pop singers today, the names of yesteryear's pop stars are still with us today. That is because they made their names the hard way. They worked to earn their fame. One of the greatest of those names of yesteryear is the one and only Matt Monro.

Matt Monro's daughter, Michele, released the most in depth bio on her father to date in 2010 with *The Singer's Singer: The Life and Music of Matt Monro*. And recently, the bio was re-released in paperback. While some paperback re-releases of books are known for being abridged, this is one re-release that doesn't lose any of the story written by his daughter. The paperback re-issue clocks in at a full 786 pages, not counting acknowledgements and other additional material. Monro and the publishers at Titan Books are to be commended for that. Throughout those 786 pages, Michele Monro tells readers of both the highs and lows of her father's life. Readers learn that Monro was destined to become a star from early on. No matter how many careers he went through, Monro's heart was always with music. Even if it meant the potential of causing trouble for himself during his military career, Monro fed his love of music and of performing. What's really funny about this story is that somehow he actually got away with almost going AWOL a number of times thanks to his higher ups.

Of course, his early military career was just one of the many interesting moments in what would be Monro's formative years as a singer. When he was finally given his first record deal with the now legendary Decca Records, the label actually wanted him to change his name as Terry Parsons wasn't exactly a very marketable name in their eyes. His daughter writes that the label took Parsons' new name from two other individuals. His daughter writes that the name Matt came from Australian writer Matt White. She explains that White had worked for a publication called the Daily Sketch and that he had written a large piece about the still then Parsons, who had been discovered while he was a bus driver. His last name came from the father of the person who had discovered him, Winifred Atwell. Her father's name was Monro Atwell. Thus, the name Matt Monro came to be Parsons' name for the rest of his life.

The real funny moment of this story comes in Monro's distaste for journalists who constantly misspelled his newly adopted last name. His daughter writes of her father's reaction to the misspellings, "It's easy to remember, it's an anagram of moron." Obviously he was aiming that barb at the journalists who couldn't agree with each other (or in some cases, with themselves) on how to spell his name. Anyone who has ever had their name misspelled and/or mispronounced will appreciate that comment. It's the same sort of sentiment that pop stars share even today.

Whether it was this funny moment or any other moment, Michele Monro leaves no stone unturned in her father's bio. From the troubles that led to the end of his first marriage to his career highlights meeting the likes of Frank Sinatra and others, this bio is a must for any true fan of classic pop music or of music history. It's no Summer read. If anything, it's a full on piece that will make readers appreciate the life of musicians not just in Monro's time but also today. Many of the stories included here are very similar to what audiences might see on VH1's "Behind The Music" today. That being noted, it may likely go down as one of the best music biographies written to date.



Credit: Titan Books

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