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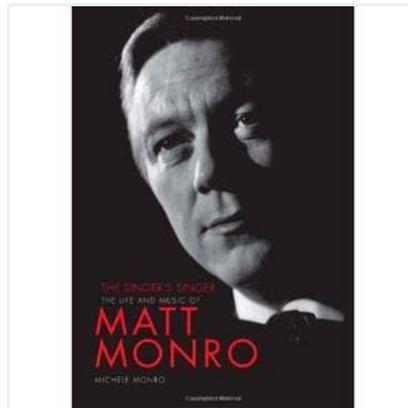
Hitting The Note: Michele Monro speaks on The Singer's Singer

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Published: May 28, 2012 | [0 Comments](#) | [Post a Comment](#)

Happy Memorial Day and happy Monday, everybody. I hope everybody had a safe and happy weekend. Mine was pretty relaxed. I went through some more music that I'll be reviewing later this week, and another season from another classic Nicktoon. And also, I finally managed to sit down and watch *We Bought a Zoo*. I'll have a review of that movie alter this morning. But while you wait for that, I've got another treat for you this morning. As you'll recall, I recently reviewed the new paperback edition of the bio on singer Matt Monro, "The Singer's Singer." Well, I am happy this morning to share an interview I was lucky enough to have with the legendary singer's daughter, Michele, who wrote her father's bio. Michele shared her thoughts with me on taking on the duties of writing her father's bio herself, life with her dad and more. That's in this special bonus edition of Reel Reviews. Read on!



Credit: Titan Books

RR -- This bio is one of the most extensive that I've read to date. I'm curious how long did it take just to gather all of the information for the bio? How long did it end up taking to actually write your father's story?

MM -- This book was really a labour of love and was written for my son Max. I suffered a near-fatal car crash a few years ago and it struck me that if anything happened to me, my son wouldn't know anything more about his grandfather other than he was a great singer. It upset me that he wouldn't know his origin or roots or what Matt Monro had contributed to the music business so as soon as I was able I started the process. It took three years to do the research and interview more than 200 people. A further year was spent actually writing the book and a further year with publisher's re-writes and edits.

RR -- What led you to choose Titan Books to publish your dad's bio? Were there other publishing companies to which you had sent your manuscript?

MM -- The fans had been begging for years for a book of some sort as there had never been one written. I sent a synopsis by email to 10 publishing houses and I had replies from all of them within a week. In fact one company actually sent me a contract without talking to me first. The contract specified that the manuscript be delivered by a certain date and be no more than 80,000 words. I rang them up, thanked them for their interest and explained that 80,000 words was the size of my index! I had no interest when I first started writing the book of having it published so hadn't bothered to find out any guidelines or pointers. It turned out that all publishers aim for books between 80,000 - 10,000 words so to keep costs down. That was one of the main reasons for going to Titan. They really loved Matt Monro's music and were passionate about doing the project correctly rather than worry about every penny. My conditions were simple.

The title had to stay intact. My father was the singer's singer and

there could be no other title for the book as far as I was concerned.
Secondly it had to come out in time for dad's 25th anniversary (7 February 2010)
Lastly the manuscript couldn't be butchered or hacked to death.

Titan were happy to meet my terms and have been true to their word the whole way through. It was definitely the right choice.

RR -- Your father's work has been released many times over the years. Now, with the release of his bio both in hardback and paperback, are you seeing any type of resurgence in popularity of his music? If so, are you seeing it in a particular audience or is it more spread out?

MM -- My father's popularity has been amazingly steadfast over the years since he passed. The website I created - www.mattmonro.com- gains about 5,000 hits a month and it has been excellent means of letting the fans know what is imminent. It has also allowed them a voice as to what they would like to see released. I have been doing radio interviews over the years and have programmes running on hospital radio so this has been brilliant at promoting whatever needed highlighting. The book of course has made the public even more curious as to who the man was behind the music and it has allowed Matt Monro to gain a newer and younger fan base than before. The book has also garnered interest from television programmes and that gets my message across to even more people than before. I am passionate about keeping my father's legacy going as long as I can.

RR -- In gathering the information for the book, it all had to have brought back a flood of memories. Were there any moments included in the book that were especially funny or emotional for you, in writing your father's story?

MM -- I was rather worried about writing the ending of the book thinking that all the way through the process I would have it at the back of my head that the end was nigh so to speak so I decided to write about his passing first, thinking that would get me over the hardest moment but it didn't work out that way. Like any child there are a thousand moments that you will always remember, some sweet, some bitter and some that you don't want to remember. The foreword was very hard to write, those were the last few days of his life and as anyone who has lost a loved one will tell you, it is impossible to put that grief into words for there are no sentences that will adequately express the pain you go through.

There are a multitude of moments that made me smile or made me laugh out loud as certain memories flooded back but overall the journey was an emotional one. I didn't write a fairy tale and there could be no happy ever after, you know the ending before you start and that makes it hard. I also lost my mother shortly after the book was published. It meant so much to her that a story was finally in print and would sit in the British Library forever, she felt he deserved that, but in the five years it took it never occurred to me that my mum wouldn't be here to share in the accolades that have followed. That was a bitter pill to swallow.

RR -- So many of the bios that I've read over the years have been written by either friends of the subjects or someone that had no connection to said individuals. So what was it that made you personally want to write your father's story, rather than have someone else do it?

MM -- Several authors had approached my mum and I since my father passed away but it never felt right. They were some that were only really interested in dad's alcoholism and the salacious moments that they thought they could write about. Yes my father was an alcoholic but it was a segment of his life, it didn't define him as a person. There is a huge difference between a drunk and an alcoholic and I didn't want them getting the two confused. About eight years ago, I was approached again by an individual who wanted to write the book. I talked it over with Steve Woof, the head of EMI, who I work closely with in bringing out the albums and he told me "the only one who should consider writing a book is you". It made me stop and think but before I had come to any conclusion I had the car crash. That crisis made my decision easy.

RR -- Reading through your dad's bio, he worked with a who's who of jazz and pop of the time. Were there any that really stood out as favorites with whom he liked to work?

MM -- He adored working with his mentor Winnie Atwell. She had a certain funk going on that he loved and of course Tony Bennett and Sammy Davis rank highly on his list. He loved them as people and to him that was important because they gave their music heart and soul. He would have given his right arm to work with Sinatra but something always conspired to get in the way. He actually had the opportunity of signing with Reprise and he would have jumped at the chance had it not been for his advisors. They read more into it that just an innocent offer - had my father signed with the company they could in fact have prevented him from recording at all. Some thought they wanted this so Sinatra had no competition - but like so many rumours - they were without substance.

RR -- Is there any one song that your father sang that you would say is your favorite to this day?

MM -- There are so many that my dad sing that I love but it really depends on my mood. Sometimes when I'm down I want songs that reflect that feeling but at other times I want to feel elated by the performance. I particularly love the album 'The Rare Monro' purely because it is songs that had never been released before and there are some stellar moments in those 50 tracks. It actually took me five years to convince the record company that it would sell even if 'Born Free' and 'From Russia With Love' weren't on it. Thankfully I was right and that has spurred the follow-up "Matt Uncovered - The Rarer Monro" which is due out at the beginning of July. The one song that holds a special place in my heart is 'Michelle'. Dad had arranged for me to go to the studios with him. It was my first time and I was hugely excited. I had no idea what he was recording but at the given time George Martin tapped his baton to gain silence from the orchestra, my dad held my hand and started singing to me. It was actually that rendition that was cut and pressed. Moments like that stay with you throughout your life.

RR -- This bio is a great recollection of your dad's life. For those who have either never heard your dad's music or don't know about your dad, what would you want audiences to know more than anything about your dad?

MM -- The one word used more than any other to describe Matt Monro's show business image is professionalism. He gave his audience his best, he gave his musicians respect, he possessed unmistakable tone, flawless diction, was subtly sparing in the use of grace notes and sang in the accent of his speaking voice. He made a huge impact on the business when talent and style still had a part to play. That he was surely one of Britain's greatest exports is not in question. His record career alone must be a significant milestone in the annals of the music business. But go beyond the tabloid image and you find a staunch and supportive friend, a man who cared deeply about other people, a humble man with no ego who didn't believe his own hype. But this is a man of so many different parts, a meditative soul who was overwhelmed by his own press and seemed genuinely surprised that people would want to listen to him. He was the most wonderful husband and father who cherished his family deeply. That he was sparing of the time he could give them was unfortunate, but he was not sparing of the love he gave. He was caught in the headlights of an industry that exuded magic, at times torn between the two, but he made the right choices - his family wouldn't have wanted it any other way.

To really understand Matt Monro all you have to do is one simple thing - listen - his voice is the clue to his humanity. Through his music Matt lives on.
He is irreplaceable.

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