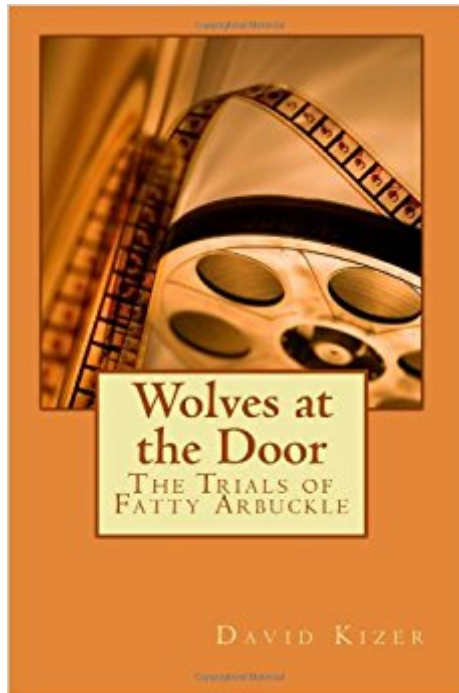




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Wolves At The Door: The Trials Of Fatty Arbuckle



Synopsis

Although there are various misperceptions of the Roscoe 'Fatty' Arbuckle scandal, what did happen led to one of the most incredible public spectacles of the 20th Century. Roscoe was a gentle soul caught in the middle of a political and media hurricane led by Matthew Brady, the district attorney who would stop at nothing to convict him with or without real evidence. The attorneys on both sides introduced techniques now routinely employed every day in the profession. The witnesses were a mixture of Agatha Christie characters and the courtroom confrontations were at times, hostile and humorous. In the background, beating the drums of morality for a prohibition era public, was Randolph Hearst, who never printed a paper he didn't intend to sell. Interwoven with the story are the remarkable movements and achievements occurring simultaneously in the world of exploration, sports and religion as America raced into the 'Roaring Twenties.' The verdict is unforgettable and the aftermath for everyone involved changed their lives - in ways none of them could have ever imagined.

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Customer Reviews

This is a self-published book about the murder charges leveled against silent film star Fatty Arbuckle in 1921, and I'd like to cut the author, David Kizer, some slack. I admire that he took on such an ambitious project and saw it through. Some have said here that the book is poorly written (and it is) but I think the bigger fault is that it's poorly edited. Some of the editing problems may seem trivial, although reading this book makes it apparent that commas in the wrong place, as well as the failure to place commas where required, can really detract from the reading experience. But

there are also too many sarcastic comments, awkwardly worded sentences, strange asides, as well as the occasional bizarre randomly inserted paragraph giving us updates on what Babe Ruth was doing on certain days. (One of the bigger "WTF" moments came when Kizer diverted from his storyline for a single paragraph to tell us that, back in New York, the Yankees beat the Indians 9 to 0 and Babe Ruth hit a single and made a nice running catch in the outfield. Huh?) There are two things that this book really desperately needs: A comprehensive review by an experienced and competent editor, and some kind of explanation of the author's sources. I realize that it may be difficult at this point to properly add numbered footnotes throughout the text, but two or three pages explaining the author's research process and a description of the source materials would add a great deal to the book's credibility. Meanwhile, as I type this, Babe Ruth is lying peacefully in his grave at the Gate of Heaven Cemetery in Hawthorne, New York, beneath a tombstone with his name on it.

This is without question the best book written on the Arbuckle affair. Mr. Kizer skillfully tells this tragic tale of early Hollywood, media abuse, abuse of the judicial system, and abuse of a fundamentally good guy, lucky enough to be rewarded handsomely for his comedic talent and unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time and paying for it with his career. Mr. Kizer is a very skilled writer, compellingly relating the story from what clearly is exhaustive research. He puts you in Roscoe's Pierce-Arrow as it makes it way North to San Francisco on that fateful Labor Day weekend. He puts you in that suite of rooms on the 12th floor of the St. Francis Hotel and describes in tremendous detail each step in the drama. He also puts you in Roscoe's prison cell where you feel the fear and confusion, defeat and despair that fell upon Roscoe when his life went from unimagined wealth and fame to universal derision in the blink of an eye. Ultimately he puts you in the courtroom where Roscoe's plight is played out. Mr. Kizer is a lawyer and his ability to relate, explain, and analyze the courtroom shenanigans displayed in the trials makes this work accessible to non lawyers, while keeping this 26 year trial lawyer captivated by the story. I have read most if not all of the generally available titles on this subject and am a long time silent film and early Hollywood fan. This book gives more detail than I have read anywhere else. Specifically, most other books gloss over Miss Rappe's activities just prior to the party. Mr. Kizer describes in great detail her movements and activities before, during, and after the party, up to the point of her unfortunate death. It is this attention to detail while maintaining a strong narrative style that sets this book apart.

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