



Soul Picnic: The Music and Passion of Laura Nyro

By Michele Kort

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Unappreciated in her time, Nyro's legacy is currently experiencing a revival. With her groundbreakingly honest and passionate lyrics, her unusual and innovative rhythms and melody, Nyro's influence is still felt by singers and songwriters today.

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Soul Picnic: The Music and Passion of Laura Nyro By Michele Kort Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Young women growing up in the tumultuous 1960s found that the music of Bronx-born singer/songwriter Nyro was something they could cling to. Journalist Kort, who obviously felt the same way, here portrays the enigmatic performer in this first account of her life (1947-97), cut tragically short by ovarian cancer. Nyro was just a teen when she began what would become a long recording career, though renditions of her works by others (e.g., the Fifth Dimension, Barbra Streisand) would generally be more successful commercially than any of her own. Kort gathers every date, description, and dialog to draw a complete picture of her subject. For the legion of now middle-aged fans, there is perhaps too much minutiae regarding studio sessions, musical arrangements, chord variations, personnel changes, and industry infighting. Nyro's relationship with eventual power-broker David Geffen (her agent, representative, and friend) is more interesting, though the ending of that tale remains somewhat ambiguous. There is nothing here from Nyro herself, except what is culled from numerous interviews and the shared memories of family, friends, and fellow musicians. Musicologists and students of the history of popular music will wallow in the preponderance of information, especially as it pertains to Nyro's unquestionable influence on the music industry and the growth of women as both performers and composers. Those of us who knew every lyric of every song (and still do) would prefer a more accessible portrait of our goddess. Still, this biography is recommended for academic and public libraries. (Photos not seen.) Bette-Lee Fox, "Library Journal" Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

From [Booklist](#)

"Some will feel *saved* by her music," Kort says, and that accurately indicates her stance on the influential '60s singer-songwriter whose "And When I Die," "Eli's Coming," "Wedding Bell Blues," and "Stoned Soul Picnic," became signature songs for Blood, Sweat and Tears, Three Dog Night, and the Fifth Dimension--acts that appealed to a different, more mainstream audience than Nyro herself did. While providing hits to sparkly rock featherweights (i.e., some of the era's consistent hit makers), Nyro endured management by chameleon supreme David Geffen, which was unsettling for her but makes for good reading. Always enigmatic, she was somewhat secretive near the end of her life, after she received "the worst possible diagnosis: stage 4 ovarian cancer," which she "definitely felt she was going to get," says her brother. Nyro was one of the songwriters whose output gives "Age of Aquarius" rock its lingering cachet, and it is unfortunate that too many middle-of-the-road musicians have made elevator music out of it. Kort's admiring biography begins to give Nyro and her impressive music their due. *Mike Tribby*
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Review

"It was always my road to have high drama onstage-Laura Nyro gave me a map." ?*Rickie Lee Jones*

"She wrote about the world I lived in but infused it with so much passion that ordinary things-the weather, the river, the streets, the kids-glowed with a spiritual energy. Though we were plain, ordinary, nasty kids, when she sang she made us beautiful." ?*Suzanne Vega*

"Laura Nyro you can lump me in with, because Laura exerted an influence on me. I looked to her and took some direction from her." ?*Joni Mitchell*

Users Review

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