

[PDF] Cocaine: An Unauthorized Biography

Dominic Streatfeild - pdf download free book

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Description:

Cocaine, writes filmmaker Dominic Streatfeild, "is not some evil spawn of Satan but simply a commodity." Like other commodities, cocaine has a history. When the Spanish conquistadors came to South America and observed that Indians who chewed the leaves of *Erythroxylon coca* could, it seemed, march over the tallest mountain or through the densest forest for days on end, they knew they were onto something. The newcomers took to growing coca themselves, and in time their product found an audience outside the continent, with users such as Sigmund Freud, Ernest Shackleton (who "took Forced March cocaine tablets to Antarctica in 1909 for the energy boost they gave"), Duke Ellington, and, eventually, half of Hollywood to testify to its powers. Streatfeild's appropriately rapid narrative takes in such key moments and players as "the year of cocaine" 1969, when the film *Easy Rider* reintroduced the drug to American popular culture, and George Jung, whose exploits are chronicled in Ted Demme's film *Blow*, to create a portrait of the drug that ranges over centuries. Though he supports legalization, Streatfeild acknowledges the evil and corruption

surrounding the trade. Drawing lessons from history, he also suggests the possibility that "cocaine will fizzle out in the year 2015 the way it did in the early twentieth century." At the close of this absorbing book, he adds, "It deserves to." --*Gregory McNamee* --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

From Publishers Weekly Boil off Streatfeild's informal tone a mix of self-deprecation and gonzo-journalist swagger and what's left is a fascinating and richly detailed story of the world's most notorious drug and an illicit \$92-billion-a-year industry. Streatfeild, a British documentary film producer, visits its every outpost, from Bronx crack houses and Amazonian coca plantations to Bolivian prisons and the compounds of South American drug lords. He launches the story with a history of the coca leaf and its prominent place in both ancient and contemporary consciousness, tackling race, poverty, class, violence, mythology and xenophobia as seen through the prism of cocaine. There are countless strands to the story, and Streatfeild follows every one: the rise of the Colombian cartels, government collusion with traffickers, the crack phenomenon, media hype, the U.S. war on drugs and the legalization debate. The author lights up the myriad figures who feature in cocaine's history: Columbus, Freud, Pablo Escobar, Manuel Noriega, George Jung, even Richard Pryor and the late basketball star Len Bias. He picks the brains of botanists and economists, lawmen and guerrillas, addicts and kingpins, and travels extensively throughout the Americas. The main drawback: Streatfeild's insistence that the reader be privy to superfluous research details such as fizzled leads, false starts, wrong turns and boring authors. In the end, though, Streatfeild delivers a straight tale about a world where nothing is as it seems.

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