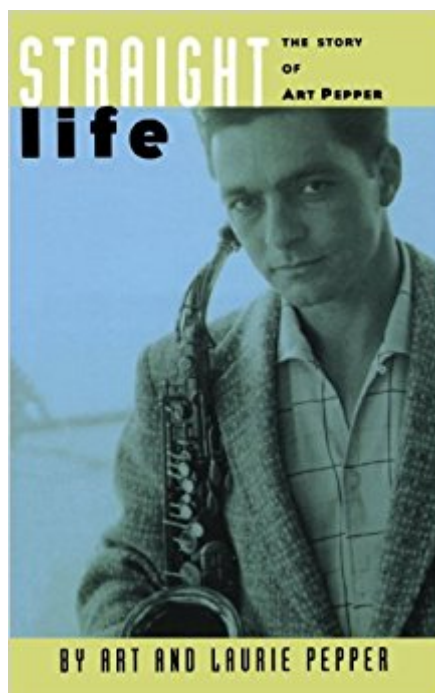


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# Straight Life: The Story Of Art Pepper



## Synopsis

Art Pepper (1925–1982) was called the greatest alto saxophonist of the post-Charlie Parker generation. But his autobiography, *Straight Life*, is much more than a jazz book; it is one of the most explosive, yet one of the most lyrical, of all autobiographies. This edition is updated with an extensive afterword by Laurie Pepper covering Art Pepper's last years, and a complete and up-to-date discography by Todd Selbert.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

needs more stars for items that are truly extraordinary. *Straight Life* is just that. It's impossible to put down. Though the book is the autobiography of a brilliant though totally destructive jazz musician, it's much more than that. It also provides incredible insights on how talented members of society can destroy their lives by getting caught up in a never ending quest for ethereal satisfaction. Pepper never wanted to come down. He sought the "high" no matter how many times he went to prison, counseling, or acknowledged he had a major problem. After what appeared to finally put him on the right path, his years at Synanon, he went right back to the "fix." Art Pepper still managed to leave a substantial legacy of brilliant music. But, again, this book makes you wonder what so many others likewise addicted to drugs and/or alcohol might have made of their lives and contributed to society. Savor this immensely compelling and instructive book. Please.

As f#%&ed up as Art was, you want to be him, jamming, scoring, balling and doing hard time and

suffering on the west coast jazz scene. If you're not already a fan go and grab some of his albums and put em on and read this when you call in sick to work. You won't be able to put it down.

This is compelling reading about one of my favorite alto horn players. There was far less about music and far more soul-baring than I had expected in this harrowing autobiography. Pepper is an endlessly fascinating personality riddled with paradoxes and contradictions and we must thank his wife Laurie Pepper for driving him to tell his story. I'm now reading her book, *Art: Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman* which covers some of the same ground, but with an entirely different perspective. Both Peppers are marvelous raconteurs and I wholeheartedly recommend both books.

This is an excellent read. If you have any inclination of what Art Pepper was like, this will blow the doors off your perception of the man. The gritty cold truth brought to mind Kerouac and Salinger. From the depths of heroin withdraw, prison life and sexual perversion to the soaring saxophone solos...nothing is left to the imagination.

My little brother loved this book and the compositions in it very much.

I read this long ago, but wanted to re-read it because of a long essay in Terry Castle's book about it in her *The Professor: A Sentimental Education*. It is a straightforward account of the non-straight life of a brilliant jazz musician, with copious references to his heroin habit.

The oral history was a perfect venue for covering Pepper's life and it was lovingly accomplished by Pepper's last wife Laurie. Pepper's personal account is brutally honest and at times profoundly disturbing. After reading this I'm left thinking how terribly destructive addiction is and how the "war on drugs" makes it even more destructive.

This was a painful book to read,,,refreshing in its narrative style, but brutally honest in its unvarnished look at Art's weaknesses. Those of us with much less talent than him will beat our heads against a wall at his continuing falls from grace and lapses into drug abuse. He's not the first, nor is he the last jazz giant to fall into this pit, but it just seems particularly poignant that he was too weak to stand stronger against the drugs. He absolutely was one of the titans of jazz, and this book provided an honest look at his life and his career..a career that ended sadly and all too soon.(The listing of all his recorded credits was a terrific addition. Thanks.)

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