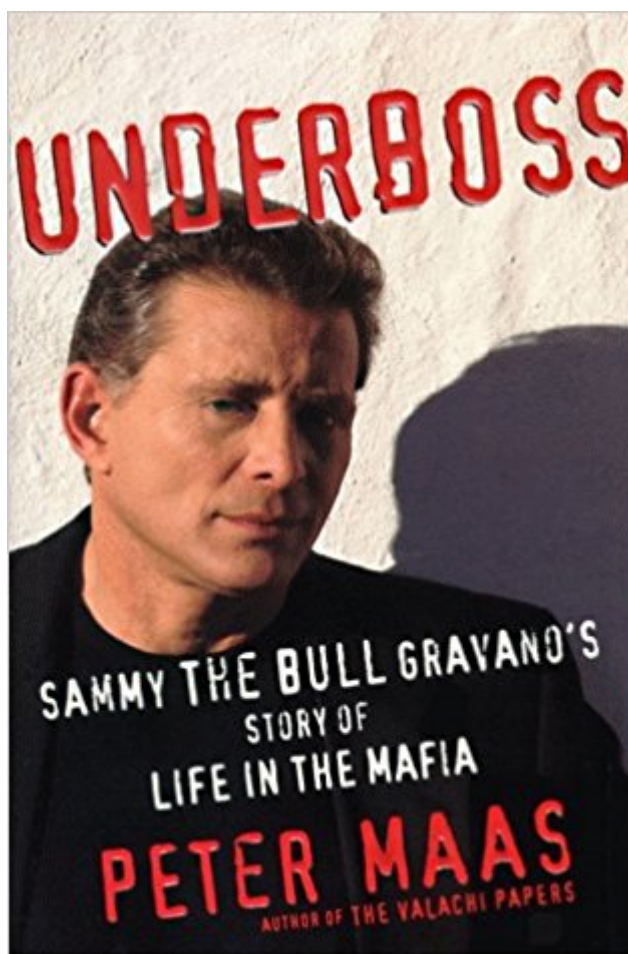


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Underboss: Sammy The Bull Gravano's Story Of Life In The Mafia



Synopsis

In March of 1992, the highest-ranking member of the Mafia in America ever to defect broke his oath of silence and testified against his boss, John Gotti. He is Salvatore ("Sammy the Bull") Gravano, second-in-command of the Gambino organized-crime family, the most powerful in the nation. Because of Gotti's uncanny ability to escape conviction in state and federal trials despite charges that he was the Mafia's top chieftain, the media had dubbed him the "Teflon Don." With Sammy the Bull, this would all change. Today Gotti is serving life in prison without parole. And as a direct consequence of Gravano's testimony, Cosa Nostra the Mafia's true name is in shambles. Peter Maas is the author of the international bestseller *The Valachi Papers*, which Rudolph Giuliani, then a federal prosecutor and now the mayor of New York City, hailed as "the most important book ever written about the Mafia in America." In *Underboss*, based on dozens of hours of interviews with Gravano, much of it is written in Sammy the Bull's own voice, we are ushered as never before into the most secret inner sanctums of Cosa Nostra and an underworld of power, lust, greed, betrayal, deception and sometimes even honor, with the specter of violent death always poised in the wings. It is a real world we have often read and heard about from the outside; now we are able to experience it in rich, no-holds-barred detail as if we were there ourselves. Unlike his glamorous boss John Gotti, Sammy the Bull honored Cosa Nostra's ancient traditions, hugging the shadows, avoiding the limelight and staying far from the flashbulbs and reporters. But he was present at such key events of the modern Cosa Nostra as the sensational slaying of mob boss Paul Castellano, Gotti's predecessor, in front of a Manhattan steakhouse. Compulsively readable, Gravano's revelations are of enormous historical significance. "There has never been a defendant of his stature in organized crime," the federal judge in the Gotti trial declared, "who has made the leap he has made from one social planet to another." Gravano's is a story about starting out on the street, about killing and being killed, revealing the truth behind a quarter century of shocking headlines. It is also a tragic story of a wasted life, unalterable choices and the web of lies, weakness and treachery that underlie the so-called "Honored Society."

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Customer Reviews

America's fascination with organized crime is bottomless. From the books of Mario Puzo's Godfather series to films like Good Fellas, popular culture feeds an appetite for the dark side of the American dream--fortunes built on drugs, prostitution, and gambling instead of steel, railways, and software. But even in the most brutal films or books, a certain patina of glamour clings to fictional mobsters; their antihero status renders them strangely seductive. Now comes a real-life account of the mob by one of its former leading denizens: Underboss, the story of Sammy "the Bull" Gravano, as told by Peter Maas. Gravano spent his entire life in the mob, his loyalty unswerving until the moment he realized crime boss John Gotti was about to sell him down the river in order to save his own neck. At that point Sammy the Bull "switched governments" and turned state's evidence. Gravano might not be well-educated and he's certainly not glamorous, but he's a vivid storyteller. What he has to say is horrifying in its matter-of-factness. Car thief, extortionist, intimidator, and murderer, Gravano was also a dedicated family man who preferred to spend evenings home with his wife and kids. Above all, he never lost sight of who and what he was: "I don't think I'm Robin Hood. I think I'm a gangster." John Gotti, on the other hand, thought he was a celebrity, an attitude Gravano obviously disapproved of. The relationship between Gotti and Gravano lies at the heart of this story, for loyalty is what Gravano lived by and what he ultimately betrayed. His reasons make for compelling, disturbing reading.

Maas (The Valachi Papers, LJ 6/1/69) and Sammy "The Bull" Gravano team up to write a somewhat informative book on the Cosa Nostra of New York from the 1970s through the early 1990s. Maas narrates Gravano's life story while quoting directly from his subject. One early quote sets the book's premise when Sammy says, "I wouldn't have minded going to Vietnam. You got medals for killing people there." Through the many descriptions of Sammy's involvement in the Mafia as a hitman and leading up to his appointment as underboss to John Gotti of the Gambino crime family, the reader gets a real sense of a street thug. We learn that Gotti and Gravano masterminded and carried out

the murder of Paul Castellano, then boss of the crime family, outside of Sparks Steak House in New York City. Eventually, after both were indicted on murder and racketeering charges, Sammy opted to "rat" on Gotti and served only five years. As a depiction of life in the Cosa Nostra from a man who brought down perhaps the most famous mob figure since Al Capone, this book is recommended for libraries looking to expand their organized crime collections. [This book, which was embargoed until publication, has provoked a lawsuit by relatives of Gravano's victims under the Son of Sam law, though HarperCollins has denied that Gravano was paid for his contributions.]?Ed.]?Brent Newmoyer, "Library Journal.-?Brent Newmoyer, "Library Journal"Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This is a good book not only telling the story of Sammy the Bull Gravano, but it also goes into detail of the different ways the mafia made money. I found that fascinating. Going into detail what points meant (a vig), different schemes like trunking and what he called lumping in the construction business. Or how they would rob drug dealers \$200,000 and pay tipsters off \$10,000 send some money up the ladder and pocket the rest. Or stories of shylocking and how made members would borrow money at 1-1.5 points then turn around and lend at 2-3 points. I found those details very fascinating. It was also interesting to hear stories of the inner structure of the mob and how the hierarchy worked. This is definitely a a good read if you like the history of the mob. It may bother you if you think that this book is glorifying criminal activity. Objectively speaking I am ok with it because it is the story of Americana history told from first hand point of view that we would never have access to. Its an very interesting read.

I was close to not even buying this book when I was reading these reviews saying it was slow and boring and exactly the same as John Gotti's book except harder to stay interested in, but I ended up buying it anyway. I'm glad I did. I really enjoyed it. I'm currently now reading The Valachi Papers by the same author and I'm finding this book harder to stay on track and understand. I wish it was more like Underboss. But they are two different stories, and maybe the time era has some effect. Anyways, I liked Underboss a lot. It made me really like Sammy Gravano and really dislike John Gotti actually. I wondered if I would have read John Gotti's book if I would have felt the opposite.

Very interesting account of life in the Mafia of the 70's and 80's. Peter Maas has done the seemingly impossible and pieced together all the information gathered over years and years of investigation, wire-taps, testimonials, statements etc etc and carved out a timeline showing Gravano's evolution

into, and then out of, the Mafia. Maas' writing style is easy to follow as he relates chronologically a fascinating story about a world that resides only in the shadows. The main voice in the book is that of Sammy Gravano who, by force of character alone, rose to the dizzy heights of John Gotti's underboss. The title Underboss seems to mean that Sammy gets to do everything concerned with running a multi-million dollar operation and Gotti gets to reap all the rewards. If anything the reader might get lost in all the names banded about in the book along with the ever switching allegiances. Nevertheless, it's a fascinating story that will hold your interest.

Wish had read this before some of the others answer a lot of questions left by others shows and book

Very good read from start to finish always like reading about the Gambinos

love the mafia books. great read

Soon after reading this book, which says in the epilogue that Sammy and his wife Debra divorced and that she took the kids and stayed in New York while he moved to Arizona to start a new life as an upstanding citizen, I read that Sammy, Debra and their children (several years later) were all accused of operating an Ecstasy drug ring in Arizona. It's possible that the book was telling the truth and that Sammy and his wife remarried and she later joined him in Arizona. It's also possible that they were never divorced, and that this was a lie put in the book to protect Debra and the kids. My point in mentioning this is that, although the book makes for compelling reading, it's good to remember that the primary source of the information is a multiple murderer, a crook and a stool-pigeon. I wonder how much of it is true and how much Sammy made up to make himself look noble or to protect his friends. If my suspicions are correct, I don't have a very high opinion of Peter Maas as a journalist. My advice is to take this book with a very big grain of salt. On another note, I'm glad I bought this book used. Although Sammy doesn't appear to be getting royalties (at least not above the table!), I wouldn't want to put my money in this man's pocket, or encourage other people of his character to make money in this way.

Best one i have read so far

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