



Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl

By Steven Bach

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Leni Riefenstahl, the woman known as “Hitler’s filmmaker,” made some of the greatest and most innovative documentaries ever made. They are also insidious glorifications of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. Now, Steven Bach reveals the truths and lies behind Riefenstahl’s lifelong self-vindication as an apolitical artist who claimed to know nothing of the Holocaust and denied her complicity with the criminal regime she both used and sanctified.

A riveting and illuminating biography of one of the most fascinating and controversial personalities of the twentieth century.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Hitler's favorite filmmaker prettified her own story almost as much as she glorified the ugly reality of the Third Reich, which makes her a natural for biographers with a taste for dish and debunkery. Bach (*Marlene Dietrich: Life and Legend*) excavates, somewhat more fluently, many of the low points covered in Jürgen Trimborn's recent *Leni Riefenstahl: A Life*: her courting of Nazi sponsorship and admiration for Hitler, her witnessing—later denied—of a massacre of Polish Jews, her deployment of Gypsy slave laborers as extras (many of them died at Auschwitz) and her postwar efforts, through lawsuits and misleading memoirs, to downplay or suppress these facts. Bach also fleshes out more of Riefenstahl's private life, with details about a parade of lovers (one of them, an American decathlete, apparently tore off Riefenstahl's blouse and kissed her breasts in front of 100,000 spectators at the 1936 Berlin Olympics) and her attempts to get her hands on the inheritance of her niece and nephew. He intersperses perceptive commentary on her masterful propaganda films, while noting that her art "lulls and deceives" instead of awakening and illuminating. The result is a lively, incisive look at a compelling and somewhat appalling figure who demonstrated that beauty isn't always truth. Photos. (Mar. 19)

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Riefenstahl revered "what was beautiful, strong, and healthy," but her greatest achievements, the paradigmatic films *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia* were made to glorify Hitler and the Third Reich. In his penetrating and superbly well-written biography, Bach ponders the difficult questions raised by Riefenstahl's many-chaptered life (she was 101 when she died in 2003). Is there a moral dimension to art? Is devotion to making art an excuse for moral failings? As Bach expertly elucidates the opportunistic Riefenstahl's exploits as a dancer, actress, filmmaker, Nazi insider, African adventurer, photographer, and deep-sea diver, he takes measure, as no one else has, of her ruthless ambition, idealized aesthetics, and extreme egocentricity. Dexterously fitting together newly recovered puzzle pieces, Bach presents evidence suggesting that Riefenstahl was part Jewish; explicates her close relationships with Hitler, Goebbels, and Albert Speer; documents her use of "film slaves" borrowed from "holding pens for the Holocaust"; and analyzes her "self-righteous entitlement" and personal revisionist history. Possessed of phenomenal vitality and physical courage, if lacking in compassion and integrity, Riefenstahl loved fairy tales, and, as Bach so perceptively and artistically reveals, she succeeded in living one, however insidious. *Donna Seaman*
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Review

"Brilliant. . . . It's difficult to overpraise Bach's efforts. . . . A compulsively readable and scrupulously crafted work [Bach created] an almost novelistically compelling narrative of a life endlessly obfuscated by lies."

—*The Los Angeles Times Book Review*

"Energetic Serves as [a] much needed corrective to all the spin, evasions and distortions of the record purveyed by Riefenstahl."

—*The New York Times*

"Fascinating. . . . The definitive new biography from Steven Bach should silence any lingering Riefenstahl apologists. . . . [He] bravely sorts through the mountain of falsehoods." —*Film Comment*

“Fascinating. . . *Leni* is a cautionary tale about an artist whose prodigious determination and ambition seem to have been unmediated by the slightest influence of conscience, soul, or heart.”

—O, *The Oprah Magazine*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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The book *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl* can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. Why then must we leave the great thing like a book *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl*? A number of you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim in which book can give many info for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer with the book. Knowledge or information that you take for that, you could give for each other; you can share all of these. Book *Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl* has simple shape but the truth is know: it has great and big function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by wide open and read a publication. So it is very wonderful.

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Henry Perry:

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their particular friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, likely to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book is usually option to fill your cost-free time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to consider look for book, may be the reserve untitled Leni: The Life and Work of Leni Riefenstahl can be good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

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