

Dream Lovers: The Magnificent Shattered Lives of Bobby Darin and Sandra Dee - by Their Son Dodd Darin

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The son of Sandra Dee and Bobby Darin, using his own memories, interviews, letters, and rare photographs, chronicles his parents' lives, which were full of illness, family secrets, and the horror of childhood abuse.

Every night, I hope and pray A dream lover will come my way... For a generation those words evoke memories of a happier, more innocent time, when Bobby Darin electrified America and Sandra Dee was everybody's sweetheart. When they became husband and wife, the marriage looked like the picture-perfect culmination of an American dream. But was it? In this intensely personal biography the son of Bobby Darin and Sandra Dee goes far beyond the ordinary celebrity bio, revealing the real story behind his parents' shining image - their troubled childhoods, up-and-down careers, brief marriage, and tumultuous lives together and apart. Bobby Cassotto was a manic, fast-talking street kid from New York who scratched and clawed his way into the music business. But his charm was fueled by an illness that he knew would shorten his life and the secret scandal of his true mother's identity. Sandra Douvan was the sweet, wispy-thin teenage model from New Jersey who seemed to rise to fame without effort. But Sandra had her own dark secrets: a lifelong obsession with food and dieting, and sexual abuse at the hands of her stepfather. At sixteen she had never been kissed, and found herself in love with twenty-four-year-old Bobby Darin. Bobby's career was still rising as he restlessly reinvented himself from a pop crooner to an acclaimed actor, music producer, and blockbuster nightclub performer. Twelve years later Bobby was dead, Sandy was beginning a life as a Hollywood shut-in, and America was changed forever. Darin was an extraordinarily talented singer who became a pretty good actor; Dee was an extraordinarily beautiful child model who became a pretty good actress. Both were major stars when they married-she at age 16 and he at 24-and this is the fairly depressing story of their lives and of their brief marriage as told by their son. Dodd Darin relies on his own memory and on extensive recollections from the family's friends and associates. His father suffered from a heart condition that he knew would kill him at a relatively young age and that led him to concentrate on his career to a fanatical degree. His mother was a teenaged alcoholic, hobbled by an abusive childhood and an intrusive, overprotective mother who never permitted her to grow up. Their marriage was doomed from the start, and this book is their son's way of trying to deal with his conflicting feelings about their lives and his father's death. The book's tone varies from chatty to despairing but is always intensely personal, giving the reader the unsettling impression of eavesdropping on someone else's psychotherapy. Recommended only for large general collections.

--Rick Anderson, Contoocook, N.H.

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