



ART: Why I Stuck With a Junkie Jazzman: Inventing a Marriage

Laurie Pepper

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He really believed his life was over, so Art Pepper told his sexy, sordid, and exciting true adventure stories to me and I put them in a book. I quizzed him (and those who knew him) unrelentingly over seven years, editing and structuring a narrative to which I dedicated all my energy. “Straight Life” by Art and Laurie Pepper was published in 1979. It was critical success and remains a classic of its kind, the subject of college literary and music studies. It also brought Art to the world’s attention. I went on to marry him and manage his triumphant return to recording and performing, and we toured the globe with his band. “Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman” was the headline some editor gave a newspaper interview I did while the band was in Australia in 1981. I’ve now stolen that that perfect title for my memoir.

“ART: Why I Stuck with a Junkie Jazzman” (APM Corp), describes my marriage to the deeply troubled, drug-addicted, madly gifted artist. That marriage was the making of me. Some people go to grad school or join the Marines. I married a genius who valued and inspired me and challenged me to use MY gifts. We had a difficult, powerful partnership. I had to tell that story. I also needed to set the record straight and clarify my role: People think I was some kind of little wifey-saint who rescued him. And Art encouraged them in that. But he knew how truly crazy I could be. We rescued each other.

“ART” has been described by reviewers as a page-turner, a powerful and redemptive love-story, brutally honest, plumbing the depths and reaching the heights, tragical, comical, and sometimes sublime. It shows how two far-from-perfect people helped each other to live life on its own terms, managing not just to endure but to prevail.

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