



## Traps - The Drum Wonder: The Life of Buddy Rich Hardcover

*By Mel Tormé*

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**Traps - The Drum Wonder: The Life of Buddy Rich Hardcover** By Mel Tormé

(Book). Now back in print, this bestseller by Mel Tormé is a brilliant biography of his friend of forty years, Buddy Rich, who was one of the most famous drummers of the Swing Era, having starred in the Artie Shaw and Tommy Dorsey bands. His career started when he was two years old in his parents' Vaudeville act, and by the time he was four he was the highest paid child performer in the world. The Buddy Rich story is a fascinating one, as much for what it says about the world of American music and entertainment as for the remarkable life it portrays. Drawing from interviews and many personal reminiscences, Tormé packs this biography with vivid, often funny, anecdotes. His personal touch and his in-depth knowledge of jazz make for a moving, insightful, and often hilarious biography. 233 pages, 6-1/2 x 9-1/2 Softcover

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Singer/author Torme ( *The Other Side of the Rainbow* ) here tracks the career of his longtime friend, from the days when child prodigy Buddy Rich (called Traps, the Drum Wonder) amazed vaudeville audiences with his talent until his death from a brain tumor in 1987. One of the greatest drummers of all time, Rich had a complicated and abrasive personality, and even his 45-year friendship with the author had its ups and downs. Though Torme was often the butt of Rich's abuse and practical jokes, he apparently never wavered in his affection for him, and writes with sympathy and admiration. The book does not gloss over Rich's troubled relationships, however--battles with Frank Sinatra, Tommy Dorsey and other musicians, stormy marriage, disastrous financial affairs--and succeeds in capturing the drummer's complex personality as well as in characterizing his musical genius. Rich cooperated on the autobiography up until his death. in 1987. Photos not seen by PW.

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From Library Journal

Singer Torme here celebrates his friend, the late Rich, who was one of the most famous and explosive jazz drummers. Known for his abrasive personality and virtuosity, Rich achieved fame drumming for Artie Shaw and Tommy Dorsey while enjoying a feud with Frank Sinatra and courting actress Lana Turner. In this first full-length biography, Torme expands on chapter-length tributes by Whitney Balliett ("Super Drummer") and Burt Korall ("Drummin' Men"). Torme tries to be objective yet describes nearly every Rich performance as "especially good" and fails to mention that, although Rich was a virtuoso, other drummers have been at least as innovative and influential. Nevertheless, this will appeal strongly to fans of Rich and big-band jazz.

- *Paul Baker, CUNA Inc., Madison, Wis.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

From jazz singer Torme, (*It Wasn't All Velvet*, 1988, etc.)--an engaging warts-and-all life of the world's greatest drummer, Buddy Rich. A life of Rich has its problems, particularly his terrible mouth, which stripped flesh from bone without a second's notice and for next to no reason. At 18 months, Rich joined his parents on the vaudeville stage as a wonderchild of the drums. Soon "Traps" was a featured act, at last getting top billing wherever he played. Completely lacking a formal education, Rich spent his whole life on the road. An adulated jazz drummer who drew shouting audiences to their feet daily and became the featured soloist of famed swing bands led by Harry James, Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, etc., the performer lived an emotionally surreal life. On top of this, though he didn't drink (it would have ruined his timing), he smoked pot daily from age 18 onward. As with heavy dope-smoker Bob Marley, Torme wonders whether pot contributed to the brain tumors that finally killed Rich. In some ways, the drummer's greatest successes were with others' big bands. His own big band (first underwritten by fellow Dorseyite Frank Sinatra) folded time and time again. Rich made many movies and became a regular on *The Tonight Show*, his acerbic barbs delighting drum-lover Johnny Carson. But he lost friend after friend, his vitriol scarring all without reservation, though he mellowed late in life when the birth of a grandchild somehow freed him to love himself through the baby. Otherwise, he seemed entirely without feeling, until one day he dragged Torme, to see his favorite film, *Norma Shearer's Smilin' Through*. Torme, got MGM to put the movie on videocassette as a present for Rich, but Rich alienated Torme, by vilely insulting him at the very moment the present was given. Exceptional on music biz and drum techniques while humanizing an emotional monster. A labor of love. -- *Copyright ©1991, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

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