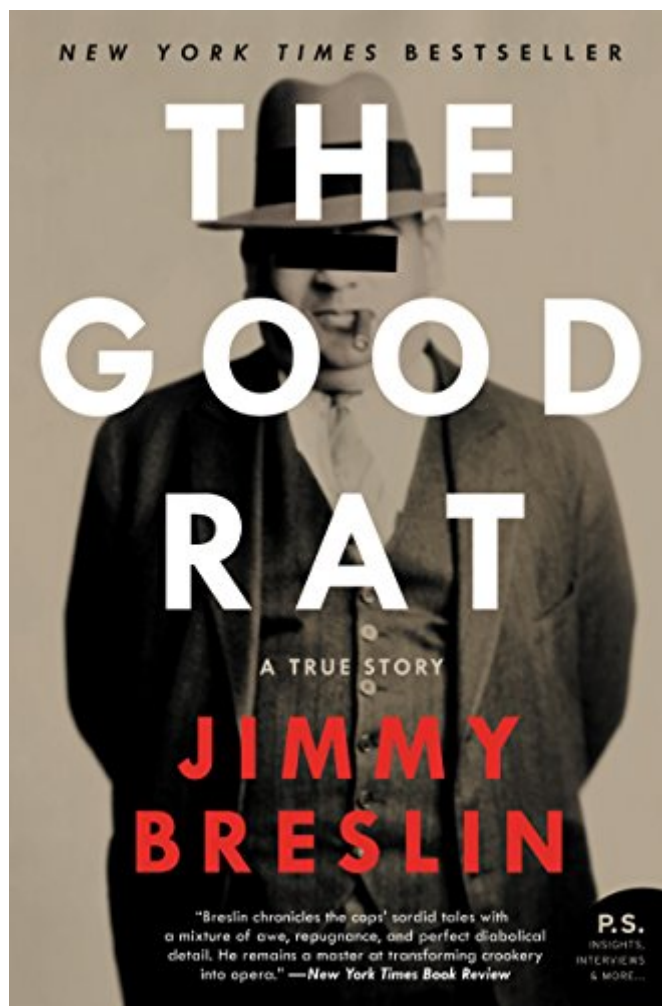


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The Good Rat: A True Story



Synopsis

In his inimitable New York voice, Pulitzer Prize winner Jimmy Breslin gives us a look through the keyhole at the people and places that define the Mafia—characters like John Gotti, Sammy "the Bull" Gravano, Anthony "Gaspipe" Casso (named for his weapon of choice), and Jimmy "the Clam" Eppolito—interwoven with the remarkable true-crime saga of the good rat himself, Burt Kaplan of Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, the star witness in the recent trial of two NYPD detectives indicted for carrying out eight gangland executions. Through these unforgettable real-life and long-forgotten Mafia stories, Jimmy Breslin captures the moments in which the mob was made and broken.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The Good Rat" is an entertaining and fast reading story of the New York Mafia. GR mainly revolves around one Burton Kaplan, a connected guy from Bensonhurst. That is an honorable Brooklyn neighborhood. Facing hard time, Kaplan rats out two of the most heinous bad guys we may ever read about. They would be Louis Eppolito and Steven Caracappa, two New York cops in the pocket of the Mafia. These quiffs took part in 8 gangland killings. How easy it must have been for these

cowards with badges to lure victims to their demises. Author Jimmy Breslin, who has spent his writing life among and about tough guys, has no use for these two losers. Eppolito, we are informed, "had the shoulders of a goat". That is one of the one liners at which this author excels. There are several of those gems. Breslin thoroughly skewers NYPD for issuing badges to Caracappa and Eppolito. (The former had a youthful burglary conviction, the latter's uncle was the Mafiosi "Jimmy the Clam"). Going further afield, Breslin informs us that when John Gotti plotted his takeover the Gambino clan, "he wanted to move the Boss, Paul Castellano, into a new home-a funeral parlor". He did exactly that on December 16, 1985 in a spectacular public rubout at the height of the evening rush hour. And Breslin describes Federal prosecutor Diane Giacalone as a "soft flower and a bundle of steel wiring". She hailed from Gotti's Ozone Park turf. That is in Queens. Ms. Giacalone lost her conviction of Gotti to a crooked juror who caused a hung decision. Incredibly, Ms. Giacalone's boss-one Andrew Maloney- knew of the jury rat and did nothing! JB also portrays the mob's stranglehold on snow removal at JFK airport. "The Good Rat" will be a good, hard cynical read. It will assuredly not increase one's respect for local law enforcement in New York City. How many bad apples are out there as prosecutors or cops? How thin is that line twixt law enforcement and law breaking? Cynics will have a field day here! The only possible weakness in GR is how it will be received the further one lives from NYC. As President Nixon would have asked: "How will it play in Peoria"? Solely on that issue, this reviewer deducted a star from the rating above. Other reviewers have criticized the length of transcripts from the Kaplan trial. This reader believes they are not mere filler, but very much a key part of a fascinating story. There is a long tradition of good, solid New York cop/Mafia tales but the "Good Rat" can stand with any-and at hardcover prices no less.

I've read several of Jimmy Breslin's books, starting with "The Gang that Couldn't Shoot Straight." Jimmy's columns were also must-reads, available once the Internet caught on. I was sorry to get to the end.

Very hard to read. Had no continuity for me. Felt like it was Jimmy Breslin puffing himself up about all the cops and robbers he knew in New York. Probably a famous newspaper columnist, not so good in the book department.... in my opinion.

Breslin will be missed. He had the inside track. His writing is tight, uncompromising, and, often, brutally frank. The world he specialized in portraying is one that lives in the shadows and behind the scenes that surround us all. Like a parallel universe, the majority of the civilian population will never

actually intersect with it, but that does not make it any less real. Breslin brings us as close as we ever really need to be.

Knows how to let his characters tell their story. His style is that of a newspaper man; punchy. Distracted some on the punctuation, hard to follow in some parts where his subject jumped back and forth in their timeline. That's his style, and his observations and characterization make his characters breathe and their pulse quicken. Worth the cost -- in print as well as digital.

Breslin's style of writing is refreshing and this is an enjoyable book.

Breslin writes with a sure hand in this one. His voices are true and mundane and colorful. You know these people.

no comment

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