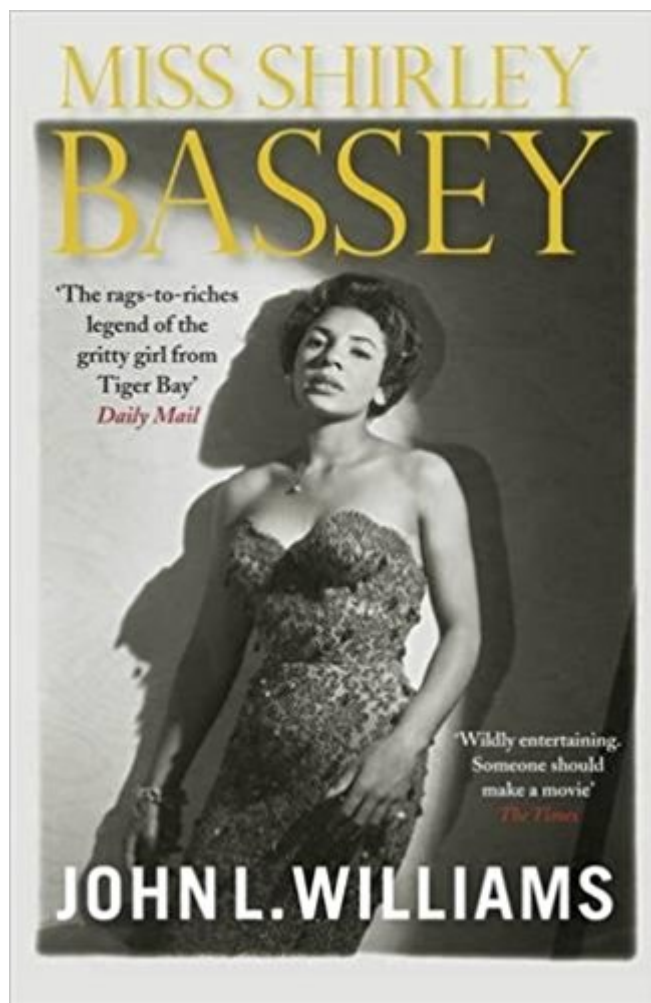




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Miss Shirley Bassey



Synopsis

In 1954, Shirley Bassey was seventeen years old. She had just returned from a cheesy revue tour called 'Hot from Harlem'. Depressed, disillusioned and four months' pregnant, she decided that her dream of being a professional singer was over. A mere ten years later, she was one of the biggest stars in the world. She had sold more records than any other British singer of the day, and was poised to conquer America. Her latest hit, 'Goldfinger', was the theme tune to the year's blockbuster film. No longer the two-bit jazz singer from Cardiff, she was by now an international sex siren, as glamorous and unreal as Bond himself. Miss Shirley Bassey explores this remarkable transformation, both of an individual and of the British society and British psyche that made it possible. From the vibrant, multicultural oasis of Tiger Bay in the Cardiff docklands through the club-lands of Soho and Las Vegas to New York's Carnegie Hall, it is a journey from mere mortal to international icon. Along the way she would encounter homosexual husbands, predatory managers, newspaper scandals, and a range of friends and acquaintances from Sammy Davis Jr to Reggie Kray. John L. Williams draws on original research and interviews to provide a portrait of a young woman on the cusp of stardom, whose rise to fame was in many ways symbolic of a changing world. Brilliantly written non-fiction in the style of David Peace's *The Damned Utd* or Nick Tosches' *Dino*, this is the story of a woman who set out to be extraordinary and - against all the odds - succeeded.

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Customer Reviews

"Fascinating." ["Effective and insightful . . . lovely details abound."](#) [Independent](#)

John L. Williams is the author of six books, most noticeably his Cardiff trilogy and Bloody Valentine (which the police force tried unsuccessfully to ban). He currently writes for the Mail on Sunday, having worked for the Independent, Sunday Times, NME and as contributing editor of GQ magazine. He was born and still lives in Cardiff.

As a stateside Dame Bassey fan, I'll take what I can get. I'd already read Shirley Bassey: Diamond Diva by Peter Hogan, and when I saw that there was another book about "the girl from Tiger Bay," I wanted very much to inhale that one too. This book covers her early life and career. That's it. It's incomplete, and unfortunately, feels very much so. I'm not even sure that I can, in good conscience, recommend this book. Diamond Diva is the far superior of the two in that it's much more informative, and definitely feels to be the more thoroughly researched.

Miss Shirley Bassey is a well written book about a true star ! Amazing to me the author has put together great interviews, of Shirley and others and made a compelling read. Perhaps Shirley Bassey is the only one who knows the real stories of her life. I am anxious to know what happens after 1967 the cut off point. Recommended highly.

The fact that this was unauthorized clearly the writer did his research. Shirley's story is nothing like i expected. I think she is the best female performer of her time....worth the read if you're a Bassey devotee. I know I AM.

Not much that I did not know. Nothing new and exciting. Would have liked more on the personal side of her life

Loved it!

I have been a Dame Shirley Bassey Fan for over 50 years. We all know that she had a hard upbringing, and all credit to her for rising above this by her sheer talent. I was truly horrified to read some of the unsavoury pieces of this book, written by a man who admits only having heard slightly about her a few years ago. Did we really need to know that before she was born, her Coloured father was running "dances/brothels"? The first half of this book nearly put me to sleep, none of it being

about the Dame, most of it sheer muck raking. Many of the later stories might also have been copied/reworded from Muriel Baileys earlier effort. If you are a Dame Shirley Bassey Fan. Save your money, don't buy this trash. Think of the Classy lady she is now, and save yourself angst by not reading this book.

This is one of the most fascinating celebrity biographies I've read. I had trouble putting it down. The book takes in the life of the great singer/entertainer Shirley Bassey before she was famous. I knew a few things, but had no idea of many others. This biography really takes you into the history of Cardiff, Wales and the lives of the lower class people Shirley was born. It's not a pretty or dreamy biography; It has grit! While it might not be a book Dame Bassey would like, it truly tells her story - the story of a very real girl with a talent for singing, who survived her tough beginnings and landed on top. Many early interviews are quoted, so fans will have an opportunity to know and understand her on a much deeper, elemental level. Just a note for those from the US, this book was written for a British audience and about mid-book, you may have to get online and look up the meaning of a few words!

John L. Williams is a crime writer from Cardiff. This is very important to note, as we are not talking about another star struck fan who is writing about his favorite subject but about professional writer intrigued about celebrity with roots in his own neighborhood - this also means that he takes time to describe and paint the picture of what it was like to be mixed-race singer in 1950s, going so far to even add in appendix chapters about crimes and night life in Cardiff, minstrel shows (Bassey had her start in one) and touring revues with striptease (these were kind of shows she was singing in the beginning). Williams had certainly did some good research and if he got some negative reviews in UK media for unearthing old skeletons from the closet, well it depends on perspective of the reader - people who focused on scandals, secrets and dirty laundry lost the point author wanted to make - he was describing struggle to the top and what sacrifices young girl had to make along the way. This also brings up another question: what do we expect from biographies? Celebrating someone's life without a hint of darkness would be described as "fawning" but if the author did research and found old police records & secrets it brings uproar for being indiscreet. Myself, I found the book fascinating in many ways, specially because of the writing style - it is hinted between the lines that Williams could have been far more indiscreet if he was inclined so while telling the story about young unknown girl trying to escape poverty and start in show business. Interestingly, Williams ends his story in 1967. when struggle was basically finished and his subject was definitely established - while

many could wonder whatever happened in the next 40+ years I perfectly understand author's reasoning that it's only hungry years that count. While focusing on star with surprisingly long career (she started long before Beatles and is still around) Williams also brings in focus long forgotten names and atmosphere of the times. If you think 1950s were innocent years, think again.

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