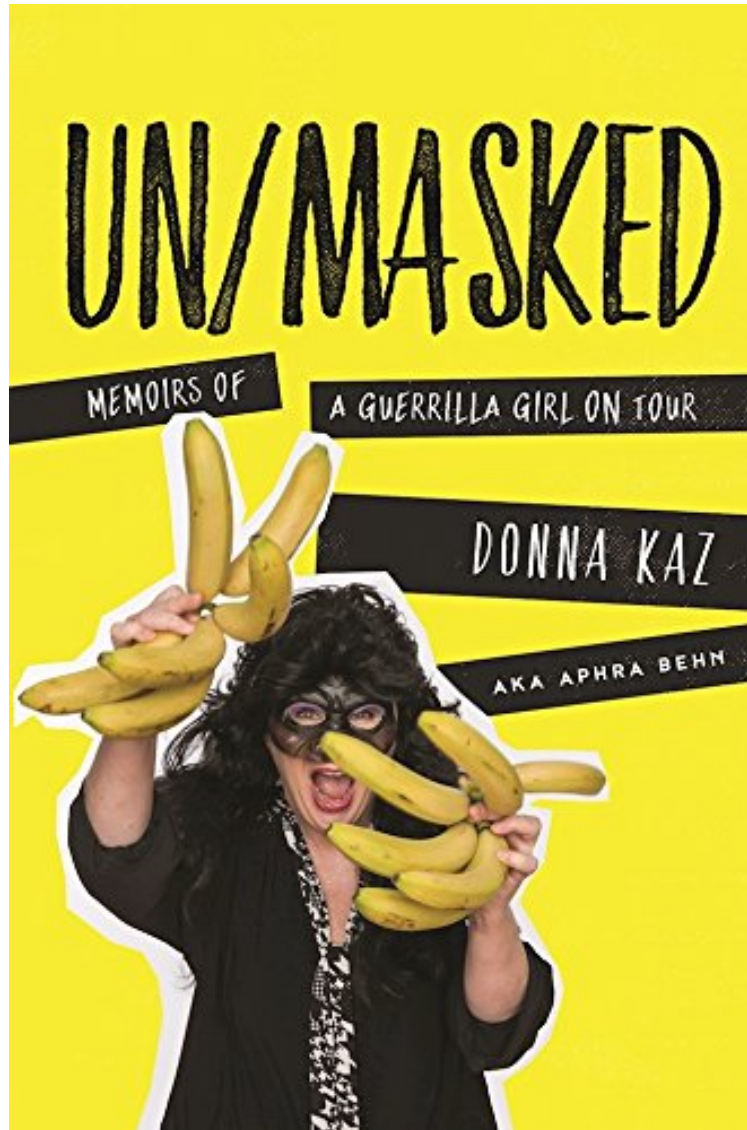


UN/MASKED: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour

Donna Kaz

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Donna Kaz : UN/MASKED: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised UN/MASKED: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Shocking Fascinating Counterpoint! A Real Page Turner! By Dan Mason I was surprised by the fascinating counterpoint of Donna Kaz/Aphra Behn; Abuse Victim/Guerrilla Girl! This shocking contrast made "Unmasked" a real page turner! Being a theatre artist myself I was surprised that I hadn't heard of the Guerrilla Girls and it was good to learn about this vital group of women... Obviously their efforts have helped women in the theatre ---- recently more women writers and directors than usual are being recognized by producers! The

memoir becomes increasingly gripping as the sad tale of her mismatched love match develops in contrast to the increased urgency of Guerilla Girls' endeavors. The writing is intelligent, honest and refreshing. Ms. Kaz is to be congratulated on her bravery...her achievement!... as is Ms. Aphra Behn!

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. we see how the artistic mind finds solace and empowerment while navigating the trenches of love and abuse

By Customer Donna Kazs *Un/Masked: Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl on Tour* (Skyhorse, 2016), chronicles the birth of a feminist who uses feminism to overcome a history of intimate partner violence that prevented her from seeing herself as a strong and vibrant artist and woman. Braiding the narrative of abuse with the urgent struggle of solidifying her place in theater, Kaz provides her readers with a dynamic storyline that keeps us turning the pages in search of the ingredient that all women seek towards their empowerment. Applying humor, candor, and in some places, the form that playwrights use when constructing scenes and dialogue, we see how the artistic mind finds solace and empowerment while navigating the trenches of love and abuse.

Kaz is in her early twenties when she meets Bill, a famous and charismatic actor who charms her into a three-year courtship full of sex, tenderness, bloody noses, and bruises. Much older than her, and much more experienced in the nuances of relationships, in Bill, we encounter a narcissist entrenched in his own self-worth. Unfortunately for the young Kaz who becomes enamored with him, he is too strong, too overpowering, and too manipulative for any twenty-year-old girl to see beyond his handsomeness and charisma. For the next three years, Kaz becomes the target of his unfettered rage when he feels insecure with his acting or his work.

Donna Kaz skillfully weaves in and out of the abuse so that her readers dont get bogged down by the heaviness of violence, which she does not have the power or the experience to flee. In contrast to the abuse she encounters in her relationship with Bill, were propelled forward twenty years circa the late 90s. It is during this time in her life that she becomes involved with the Guerrilla Girls, an activist group of feminists who wear gorilla masks and protest the male dominated arena of the arts. Along with the gorilla masks, the womens anonymity is further established when they each assume the moniker of a dead artist in a poetic attempt to represent and give voice to artists, poets, musicians, and writers the male industry of the arts renders invisible. Kaz assumes the name of Aphra Behn, the first English female known to have made her living as a writer during the 1600s. Concealed behind the gorilla mask and Aphra Behns name, Donna Kaz finds a voice that refutes the secondary and silenced inferiority meant for female artists in an industry that produces plays, music, art, and theater only created by men and only honoring men. The Guerrilla Girls spent their free time advocating for their rights to be artists, to produce their own work, to share with the world creative outlets that rest on female power and volition, and to open doors for the next generation of female artists entering this very patriarchal and male-run platform of the arts. Being a Guerrilla Girl and advocating for other women inevitably guarantees Kaz the courage she needed to also express the abuse she suffered at the hands of her intimate partner twenty years earlier. She not only named the abuse, but she also, finally, named her abuser, which cut him off entirely from her life, allowing her to move on, fall in love and marry, and pursue her artistic dreams:

I steep myself in feminism, which I believe will eradicate any traces of low self-esteem, rid me forever of longing to go backward in time, and show my batterer I would make it in this world without him. Yes, feminism will be the antidote to all my problems. More importantly, however, this articulation of abuse gives Donna Kaz permission to assert herself as a writer, a playwright, and an actor. These identities that position her in the face of power, independence, and confidence over her work, evaded her while she lived with the secret of her abuse, for he was the actor, the artist, not her. At the heart of this narrative, we find a woman who locates in her art and her feminism the authority to finally see herself as an artist. In her memoir, Kaz un.masks not only herself, coming out from behind the masks of both gorilla and Aphra Behn, but she also un.masks the way women are silenced in the arts and in intimate relationships that function to subordinate both women and their potential simultaneously. At a pivotal time when young women are finding their voice as writers/artists and as individuals we see how abuse can counter this budding promise. It isnt until Kaz is in her forties that she does find her voice as an artist and as a woman, refusing to be silenced by an abusive man who believed that his career as an actor was more important than hers that his creative contributions were more riveting, more significant to this world than hers. In the end, Donna Kazs memoir reinforces the need for more female artists to put their voices out there through their writing, singing, acting, creating, producing, and composing, for its our time to let the world know that our voices, our art, matters. No one has the right to silence us, and our art gives us the courage to take back our power. As Donna Kaz so aptly puts it, Only when womens narratives are equally heard can solutions rise to some of the injustices that plague us all. Without the voice and the vision of women and artists of color, the theatre is a play without a second act.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Hard to put down!

By AJB After grabbing dinner one night last week, I walked down to Lincoln Center with my book in hand. I was going to go to a coffee shop to read but it was so nice out I realized that I could read by the light of the fountain in the Josie Robertson Plaza. How cool was it that I was reading about the author walking down Columbus Ave after meeting up with the guerrilla girls (I had just walked those streets) and then she was heading over to Barnes and Noble, which was right by where I was reading!! What are the chances??? I thought it was such a great moment as I was beginning to read this book! (but maybe being from Jersey makes it seem more incredible than if I were a cosmopolitan NYC gal!) Becoming acquainted with Donna through her writing was very exciting! Of course the pain of her experiences also touched me in a very special way. She such a strong woman to

have lived through so much hurt. I cried to know much she suffered at the hands of an abusive partner. I can't describe how I wanted to jump through the pages to protect her from harm. The book was a page-turner and it was hard to put it down. I ended up finishing it after 2 am the other night reading by the light of one of those book lights so I wouldn't wake my husband up. It was actually nice to hold a book and turn pages, as I read only on my Kindle. In today's world of women in the news addressing abuse, this book is important to read as it really brings you personally into the world of a strong woman, and shows how incredibly difficult it is to walk away from someone she loves despite the abuse she has suffered.

Donna Kaz was 24 years old when she moved to New York City in the fall of 1977 to pursue a career in theatre. She rented a spacious loft apartment on gritty Fifth Avenue in Chelsea and landed a job serving beers and burgers at the classic bar, Jimmy Day's, in Greenwich Village. She was on her way until a tall, blonde, handsome actor sat in her station during a lunch shift. That actor was William Hurt who swept Kaz off her feet and carried her to Hollywood and back for a three-plus year love affair that was both fantastical and physically dangerous. It took Kaz fourteen years to begin to admit she had survived domestic violence. Once she realized the extent of the abuse she had been subjected to she pulled a gorilla mask over her head and became "Aphra Behn," a bad-ass feminist, activist and member of THE GUERRILLA GIRLS. UN/MASKED, *Memoirs of a Guerrilla Girl On Tour*, follows the unmasked DONNA KAZ, and the masked APHRA BEHN through their often surprising 25 year journey. In a braided narrative that flips between 1977 and 1997, Donna Kaz describes, with an ironic and humorous voice, what it was like go from being on the arm of William Hurt and an insider on the sets of movies like *Altered States* and *Bodyheat*, to an anonymous outsider donning a scary gorilla mask to protest sexism at Broadway's Tony Awards. Donna Kaz hobnobs with actress Kathleen Turner and director Lawrence Kasden, while Aphra Behn organizes sticker campaigns focused at the big New York City theatres which produce season after season of only plays by white male playwrights. When the Roundabout Theatre's toilet stalls (in both women's and men's rooms) are plastered with Guerrilla Girls' stickers stating: In this theatre, the taking of photographs, the use of a recording device and the production of plays by women is strictly prohibited - the Roundabout announces their next season will include two plays by women. Aphra and the Guerrilla Girls take all the credit and go on to create comedic art and theater that blasts the blatant sexism of the theater world while proving feminists are funny at the same time. That these two narratives--that of a young victim of domestic violence at the hands of the successful actor, William Hurt, and that of an artist so fed up with sexism in the theater world that she puts on a gorilla mask and takes the name of a dead woman artist to provoke change--have been lived by one woman is remarkable. Donna Kaz offers a very compelling firsthand account--illuminated by more than thirty behind-the-scenes photographs, stickers and posters --of her transition from a silent survivor to an unapologetic activist. After reading UN/MASKED you will be able to adopt the Guerrilla Girls' tactics, from making smart, funny art to wearing fake fur masks, to organizing campaigns that influence change in the art and theatre worlds. You will glean insights into what it is like to be in love with a man who is also your assailant, and how the cycle of violence is an extremely difficult vortex to escape from. You will find inspiration in the story of how Donna Kaz became Aphra Behn and eventually decided to reveal how her early life dictated a path towards feminism and her ultimate decision to go underground and become the feminist masked avenger Guerrilla Girl, Aphra Behn. This debut memoir from Donna Kaz aka Aphra Behn, is a new addition to investigations into abusive relationships and the tradition of feminist narrative nonfiction. It is a memoir of a woman-turned-survivor-turned-radical-feminist who takes off her mask and, by merging her identities, reveals all.

"Donna Kaz's book is more than a wildly entertaining snapshot of 80s art culture. More than an answer to the question of, "Who were those crazy feminist activists behind the gorilla masks?" It is a generous, fearless, often hilarious coming of age tale that takes Kaz from being a victim of domestic abuse in Hollywood to becoming an artist and part of one of the most unforgettable art protest groups of our time." - Elissa Schappell, author of "Use Me" and "Blueprints for Building Better Girls"