



Memoirs of a Professional Cad

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Famed movie actor Sanders (1906-1972) originally published this witty autobiography in 1960 (Putnam). Broadcaster and film historian Tony Thomas has filled in the rest of the George Sanders story by supplying an introduction and a lengthy epilogue, in addition to a complete filmography. With 16 page

Memoirs of a Professional Cad Details

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From Reader Review *Memoirs of a Professional Cad* for online ebook

Lori says

I would give this book a 3.5. It was written in 1960. George Sanders is careful about what he writes about. Shares some of his life with readers but not too much. This would not be a tell all kind of book. Which is fine. Just wished he shared more about what it was like working with more actors etc. His niece writes and afterward years after the actor's death by suicide.

Doug says

Between the lines this is a fairly sad book about a very nice, generous, famous and talented man who was perhaps, except for his relationship with his second wife, lonely and full of crippling self doubt. His writing style is more Wildean than Wilde, it reads beautifully and sardonically but the key to understanding him is in the post script by his nephew, suddenly the blurred image becomes focused and you realise that he wanted to be somebody else but never managed it, so he accepted what he believed was the best his talents could achieve and regretted that decision for the rest of his life. In addition his nature made him a target for thieves, like so many of the talented.

The stories recounted are moderately interesting but there is so much that he glosses over that would probably have been much more interesting, if he had written that version.

Margaret H. says

If I were a lead in a romantic comedy, I'd mention this book and how badly I want a copy to the leading man in the first act and then, in the final act, it'd be the thing that makes him seek me out again after our third act misunderstanding.

Tosh says

You watched "All About Eve" and you love the George Sanders "character" in the film, and you need more of that. Well, this book should satisfy your hunger for Sanders and his slightly jaded way he looks at the world. I 'kind' of loved it, but began to think that in person he may have been a real drag to hang out with him. But on the other hand, this book really captures what one thinks is Sanders' character. He's very funny, has strong opinions about Russian revolutionaries and the Japanese (which made me a tad sour towards him, because I'm a Nihon-o-phile), but still, one can admire his stance in life as an often bored aristocrat with not that much money. His talent is seeing the world as an absurd landscape, and how he places himself in that world. The most surprising aspect of the book for me is that it is under 200 pages long, which I suspect there must have been more in the original manuscript. I don't think it was ghost-written, because his voice comes off very strong, but again, perhaps the ghost-writer is an excellent prose stylist and he or she knows how to capture Sanders voice. Written in 1960, came out twice in print, and now sadly out of print. The book is ripe for a re-print, because I think Sanders is an important actor and figure in the film world. And there are some

hysterical stories here.

Jeffrey Keeten says

"In the middle of April the Germans took a sombre decision...they turned upon Russia the most grisly of all weapons. They transported Lenin, in a sealed truck, like a plague bacillus from Switzerland into Russia."

Winston Churchill

Little did the Germans know they were also ruining the life of George Sanders. He was going to have to work for the rest of his life. He was born in St. Petersburg in 1906. His birth was not going well so his father took a carriage to find a midwife. *"He brought her back across the river in a rowboat, and in a state of exhaustion, pushed her into my mother's room, where she accomplished a successful delivery."*

In the light of the fact that I have been supporting my father for the past twenty years, his concern for my welfare at the time of my birth would appear to have been thoroughly justified."

When the revolution hit Russia in 1917 his family had to leave Russia abandoning their properties and moved back to England. Their friends and family that stayed were of course White Russians and many of them were executed or sent to prison camps. George Sanders's inheritance was lost. He went to school in England. He worked for several British companies abroad in South America and was fired from every job he ever attempted. There was this girl that worked in market research for one of these companies that kept his attention. *However, my interest in market research and information continued unabated, and I never lacked for excuses to wander into the office of that gorgeous redhead, where I would feast my eyes on her and enjoy her brilliant conversation. Her name was Greer Garson."*

Greer Garson, the girl always shooing the young George Sanders out of her office.

This is important because he got to hang out with Greer Garson before she was Greer Garson, but she also put him on a career path. She encouraged him to be an actor.

I've encountered George Sanders a lot over the past year most recently in *Samson and Delilah* where he was barely recognizable until he spoke. He starred with Hedy Lamarr, Angela Lansbury (it was odd to see Jessica Fletcher in a cheesecake role), and Victor Mature. Hedy Lamarr as she seemed to with everyone she met made an impression on him.

"When I first met Hedy Lamarr, about twenty years ago, she was so beautiful that everybody would stop talking when she came into the room. Wherever she went she was the cynosure of all eyes. I don't think anyone concerned himself very much about whether or not there was anything behind her beauty, he was too busy gaping at her. Of her conversation I can remember nothing: when she spoke one did not listen, one just watched her mouth moving and marveled at the exquisite shapes made by her lips."

Over lunch sometimes I just have TMC playing in the background and the other day I heard his suave, sophisticated English voice. It took me more than a moment to recognize him as one of the pirates in *The Black Swan*. He played Simon Templar in a series of Saint movies. He also played, what is considered a knockoff Saint series by some, the character Gay Laurence in a series of Falcon movies before handing the project off to his brother Tom Conway. The films are not necessarily very good, but listening to him pronounce lines of dialogue with his debonair flourish is certainly worth your time. I also recently saw him in *Rebecca* playing the skin crawling friend Jack Favell. He was in another Hitchcock that I had the pleasure to rewatch this month, *Foreign Correspondent*. Due to the fact that he has been appearing regularly in the movies I've been watching I decided I would pick up his autobiography of which I've heard he was, as expected, quite witty.

The Debonair George Sanders with Joel McCrea and cute as a button Laraine Day in *Foreign Correspondent*.

He was married to Zsa Zsa Gabor. I can only imagine that he must have felt that he really was a cad and needed to be punished day and night and night and day. *"To begin with, it is impossible to be in love with a woman without experiencing on occasions an irresistible desire to strangle her. This can lead to a good deal of ill-feeling. Women are touchy about being strangled."* He does defend Zsa Zsa despite the fact that his relationship with her was a devastating experience.

"Zsa Zsa is perhaps the most misunderstood woman of our times. She is misunderstood because she is guileless. She allows her vitality and instincts to spring from her without distortion. She doesn't disguise her love amorous entanglements or jewels or whatever else catches her fancy, because her character is pure. She is whole-cloth. an isotope of femininity. In a sense also radioactive and fissionable."

Zsa Zsa Gabor, a lot of woman for just one man.

He doesn't learn. His last marriage which only endured six weeks was to Zsa Zsa's older sister Magda. It must have seemed like a good idea for about five minutes or about as long as it took a preacher to perform the nuptials. What no Eva? Maybe he didn't stay in queue long enough to become one of the legion of ex-husbands that Eva left in the wake of her whirlwind lifestyle. All three sisters were actresses, but were much more famous for being socialites.

The book was written in 1960. He is witty and charming and tries his best to convince me he was a cad, but he fails miserably. He is just a guy who loves the wrong women, who is a bit lazy, and who suffers from compulsive behaviors.

He sounds like just about everybody I know.

The book does bog down at times. His description of his experience searching for a psychiatrist was verging on boring. Although he did slip in a good line. *"I want to state quite unequivocally that I am one of the sanest people I know. If I weren't, I would never have risked going to a psychiatrist."* The moments when he talked about what is wrong with American culture and with putting contraceptives in the water supply so that women could finally be free to make love as much as they wanted also felt dated and sort of tedious.

In 1967 he had a year that would stagger the most even keeled of people. His mother died. His brother Tom Conway died from a failed liver. His beloved wife Benita Hume died of bone cancer. I guess it makes sense

that he tried to reset the clock in 1970 by marrying Magda Gabor, but as we all know, or soon discover, it is impossible to go back. We can only go forward. He began drinking heavily. He had issues with balance and suffered a small stroke. In 1972 he checked himself into a hotel in Castelldefels near Barcelona and took five bottles of Nembutal and died. He left a suicide note that might have been left by any number of the characters he played on film.

Dear World, I am leaving because I am bored. I feel I have lived long enough. I am leaving you with your worries in this sweet cesspool. Good luck. (His signature appeared under the message.)

Marcus says

Easy to read, lightweight, wry but also sadly marred by misogyny and racism.

Alvin says

A smorgasbord of cocktail party witticisms mixed with showbiz anecdote and personal history. If you're willing to overlook the 1950s-style casual sexism and xenophobia, Sanders' caricature of himself as an impossibly bored, lazy, self-centered, and misanthropic aristocrat is pretty hilarious. His marriage to Hungarian blonde bombshell Zsa Zsa Gabor is described far too briefly, and one could wish for a lot more Hollywood scandal, but one has to settle for what one can get.

Jenny says

Slight, frothy, laugh out loud funny. Don't expect great depth here. I'm not sure if Sanders really had great depth. Maybe he did, but he hides it well. He is no less of an enigma after reading this entertaining autobio. The book can be hard to find. I checked the copy I read out of the University library and kept it so long that I expect they have given up on me ever giving it back.

Stephenie C Lawson says

Ok but could have been better

I was anxious to read this book about George Saunders which started out interesting then just seemed to ramble. The interesting things such as his marriage to Za Za Gabor and George's synopsis of several Hollywood big names of the day were not really expounded on enough. Meanwhile his dole descriptions of motion picture making and his acting and singing talent don't ever seem interesting enough by him to relay

anything better.

Jacob Yang says

George Sanders is a bit of a jerk, if not a cad, despite his assertion "I am a dear, dear, boy." The memoirs of the man who has distinction of marrying to Gabor sisters (Zsa Zsa and Magda) only briefly comments on Zsa Zsa throughout, but it is incisive and witty. Less about his acting career and more about his outlook on life, this book is a good, quick read. Sanders on vacations: "It seems to me that the mistake so many of us make is that of looking for fun during a holiday when the real trick is to use a vacation to make the rest of the year interesting." Long forgotten actors like Laird Cregar are mentioned and interesting to Google. The account of a brief visit to Japan smacks of period racism and xenophobia, a bracing reminder of how--not so long ago--Asians were (and really, still are) viewed by Westerners.

Karen says

Amusing. Sardonicallly amusing.

Liz says

A fun and amusing read. George Sanders says that mostly in his acting career he was basically playing himself. This is not a book about Hollywood and celebrities per se, but rather his thoughts on a variety of things. His sardonic wit had me laughing out loud at times. I especially liked his description of staying at American hotels.

Sarah Andreotti says

When I chose to read this book, I expected one of those funny stories of how an actor grew up, ended up in the craft of acting, anecdotes of their famous friends, and the real story behind the person. You definitely get Sanders' backstory here which was interesting- war, boarding schools, fired from two jobs, decided to act, married Zsa Zsa, etc. After this initial background bit, it kind of seemed to turn from history lesson to random thoughts.

About a quarter of the way through, I lost interest and read a different book, but being someone who has guilt over unfinished books, I returned to it and finished it on a road trip. Toward the last quarter, I felt kind of bad for the guy. He was working closely with Tyrone Power at the time of his death, which seemed to deeply affect him. He shared a lot of philosophical thoughts about life and death, which didn't seem to surprise me since I had just recently learned of his own suicide (ironically in the Debbie Reynolds book I read while taking a break from this one). Some of those most interesting were about people and modern technology- almost prophetic. Several quotable and highlight-worthy lines for sure.

Over all, I found that the aloof, witty character he plays in a lot of films is just him playing himself. Not necessarily an upbeat autobiography about the good ol' days in Hollywood, but definitely an interesting read if you're a Sanders fan.

Peter Oliver says

This book was a wonderful surprise! I had no expectations whatsoever. Having said that, however, I was knocked out by it! The book is well written and very, very funny!

This book is a wonderful read!

Alison Sendecki says

I really wanted to like this book, but had trouble getting into it. I found it sad that a man I enjoyed watching on screen could be so cavalier about his performances and put such little effort into what he did. Unfortunately the occasional wry humor could overcome his lack of personal depth of character.
