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Jazz Age Beauties: The Lost Collection Of Ziegfeld Photographer Alfred Cheney Johnston



Synopsis

Despite Prohibition, the '20s was the decade of jazz, flappers and hip flasks. While some took their vote and joined the Woman's Christian Temperance Movement, others, well, took liberties. Compiled here for the first time are more than 200 publicity stills and photos of some of America's first "It" girls—the silent film-era starlets who paved the way for the cacophony of Monroes and Madonnas to follow. Accompanying these iconic images are the stories behind them, including accounts from surviving Ziegfeld Girls, as well as ads featuring them that helped perpetuate the allure of It girl glamour. When rare and striking portraits of these women surfaced on the internet in 1995, author Robert Hudovernik began researching their source. What he discovered was the work of one of the first "star makers" identified most with the Ziegfeld Follies, Alfred Cheney Johnston. Johnston, a member of New York's famous Algonquin Round Table who photographed such celebrities as Mary Pickford, Fanny Brice, the Gish Sisters, and Louise Brooks, fell out of the spotlight with the demise of the revue. A sumptuous snapshot of an era, this book is also a look at the work of this "lost" photographer.

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Customer Reviews

“This sumptuous book features more than 200 publicity stills and photos of America's original “It” girls, as well as the “secret” nudes discovered on photographer Alfred Cheney Johnston's estate after his death.~The Globe and Mail

Robert Hudovernik is a freelance writer, photographer and scriptwriter. He wrote and produced a documentary funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities entitled Circus Echoes on the golden age of circus entertainment during the Art Deco era.

This is a spectacular book in every respect but one - it's size. The photos are fantastic, the layout is fantastic, the quality of its production is top drawer, everything about it is classy and well refined, but it's a downright unusual size for a book of this type, and that's why I only give it four stars. This needed to be in a large format to fully appreciate the photos and the beautiful layout work, but instead, it's sized about the same as most hardback novels, and when you place four photos on a page of that size, the images tend to be very small and you lose the overall impact of those photos. I highly recommend this one, get the hardback while you can before being forced into a reprint paperback, but I would've preferred the book be a sized more in keeping with most art and photography books.

This is a fantastic book of pictures, great to have it, as a lover of the Roarin' Twenties, etc. I guess everything old is new again - my generation thought we were so cool going braless in the 60's and 70's, but the flappers were doing it long before us!! These pictures have wonderful depth to them, and turned me onto a whole new genre of photography.

This book was amazing! I enjoyed looking at all the wonderful and beautiful pictures. Mr. Johnson had a real talent in bringing out true mystery and beauty in these women. At the time these were considered "racy" if only those critics could see what pictures are like today! I wish we had more photographers like this now, a little mystery is always better than the whole package in my opinion. The eyes are drawn to the lighting, the props and back drops, jewelry dangling, the scarfs seductively placed just right. A true work of art. Also interesting were the side stories about the women and their lives. Often tragic, some surprising but always interesting! I was thrilled to find how many pictures were included so many that I had not seen before. It is a great read for anyone facinated with the era.

As one who enjoys movies from the 30's, this book helped me to enter the world of early Ziegfeld and movie beauties and their way of life. Of the photographic books I have, this one has to rank at the top. The first 62 pages (and few at the end of the book) contain text with photographs. Photo

collections with text usually bore me, but this one was so interesting with details of the stories behind the women and that era, that I was disappointed when the text ended. I have one other photo book containing women of the 20's but the photography, poses, and beauty of the women in this book surpasses the other book by a long shot. The strict physical characteristics that Ziegfeld had for his women are evident in this collection. Included in this collection is Miss Universe from 1926. I wondered to myself if they stripped her of her crown for posing nude? This book also provides excellent examples of the use of lines when posing the female subject. The book refers to it as the "Line of Beauty". If one enjoys the history and images of that era, this is a must have book that won't disappoint. A superbly bound hardbook with mainly full page images of excellent quality. My one sad point of the book was to learn that there are boxes full of more of Johnston's images that someone is holding on to with plans to sell individually and deny the world to see them as a collection.

Browsing through this book of incredibly gorgeous jazz age beauties is like entering an art museum of timeless classics from the art deco era. The style and artistic quality of these photographs is nothing short of amazing. It kind of makes you wish that you lived during that incredible era when art, music, fashion, style, and beauty were all the rage. Bring the art gallery to your door, and buy this book of classic beauties from the jazz age ... it's a real treasure that will only get better with time.

As a longtime admirer of early celebrity portraiture, this book brings to light the works of a nearly forgotten master. Although I own over 40 books and numerous original images covering photography of 1890s-1930s, I have seen very few of the images in this book reproduced elsewhere. The text is accurate enough to give one a sense of the historical background in which Johnson worked, with one very minor error regarding Theda Bara and Bill Tilden. However, the text is brief and the book is just loaded with wonderfully reproduced images of stunningly beautiful women. Many are clothed as Ziegfeld Showgirls, the predecessors to today's Vegas Showgirls. Some images are of early film actresses. All are captured in Johnson's signature style which certainly influenced Clarence Sinclair Bull, George Hurrell, Harriet Ruth Louise, and other great movie studio photographers. If you appreciate early 20th Century photography, early film and American Theater of the period, you will love this book. And if you just like to admire beautiful natural beauty (not surgically enhanced), this is the book for you.

Much more than I thought it would be. The photography of Alfred Cheney Johnston is not just black and white photos: it is ART. And Mr. Robert Hudovernik's narration --and knowledge-- are a wonderful supplement to a delightful and beautiful picture book. A real treasure!

This may be one of the most important books of images I have ever seen. I know I will refer to it for years and am so glad these images have been uncovered to be appreciated after so long.

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