



Underboss: Sammy the Bull Gravano's Story of Life in the Mafia

By Peter Maas

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Sammy the Bull Gravano is the highest-ranking member of the Mafia in America ever to defeat. In telling Gravano's story, Peter Maas brings us as never before into the innermost sanctums of the Cosa Nostra as if we were there ourselves--a secret underworld of power, lust, greed, betrayal, and deception, with the specter of violent death always waiting in the wings.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

America's fascination with organized crime is bottomless. From the books of Mario Puzo's Godfather series to films like *Good Fellas*, popular culture feeds an appetite for the dark side of the American dream--fortunes built on drugs, prostitution, and gambling instead of steel, railways, and software. But even in the most brutal films or books, a certain patina of glamour clings to fictional mobsters; their antihero status renders them strangely seductive. Now comes a real-life account of the mob by one of its former leading denizens: *Underboss*, the story of Sammy "the Bull" Gravano, as told by Peter Maas. Gravano spent his entire life in the mob, his loyalty unswerving until the moment he realized crime boss John Gotti was about to sell him down the river in order to save his own neck. At that point Sammy the Bull "switched governments" and turned state's evidence.

Gravano might not be well-educated and he's certainly not glamorous, but he's a vivid storyteller. What he has to say is horrifying in its matter-of-factness. Car thief, extortionist, intimidator, and murderer, Gravano was also a dedicated family man who preferred to spend evenings home with his wife and kids. Above all, he never lost sight of who and what he was: "I don't think I'm Robin Hood. I think I'm a gangster." John Gotti, on the other hand, thought he was a celebrity, an attitude Gravano obviously disapproved of. The relationship between Gotti and Gravano lies at the heart of this story, for loyalty is what Gravano lived by and what he ultimately betrayed. His reasons make for compelling, disturbing reading.

From Library Journal

Maas (The Valachi Papers, LJ 6/1/69) and Sammy "The Bull" Gravano team up to write a somewhat informative book on the Cosa Nostra of New York from the 1970s through the early 1990s. Maas narrates Gravano's life story while quoting directly from his subject. One early quote sets the book's premise when Sammy says, "I wouldn't have minded going to Vietnam. You got medals for killing people there." Through the many descriptions of Sammy's involvement in the Mafia as a hitman and leading up to his appointment as underboss to John Gotti of the Gambino crime family, the reader gets a real sense of a street thug. We learn that Gotti and Gravano masterminded and carried out the murder of Paul Castellano, then boss of the crime family, outside of Sparks Steak House in New York City. Eventually, after both were indicted on murder and racketeering charges, Sammy opted to "rat" on Gotti and served only five years. As a depiction of life in the Cosa Nostra from a man who brought down perhaps the most famous mob figure since Al Capone, this book is recommended for libraries looking to expand their organized crime collections. [This book, which was embargoed until publication, has provoked a lawsuit by relatives of Gravano's victims under the Son of Sam law, though HarperCollins has denied that Gravano was paid for his contributions.]?Ed.]?Brent Newmoyer, "Library Journal."

-?Brent Newmoyer, "Library Journal"

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From [Booklist](#)

Gravano--Sammy the Bull to his *Cosa Nostra* cohorts--is the highest ranking member of the Mob ever to defect. By turning state's witness against his friend and head of the Gambino family, John Gotti, Gravano was allowed to serve only five years in prison for 19 murders and won the dubious distinction of having to watch his back for the rest of his life. He also hooked up with Maas, author of *The Valachi Papers*, spent hours talking to him, and revealed a world that readers will be both fascinated and repelled by. As a child, Gravano lived across the street from a saloon, a Mafia hangout in Bensonhurst. Labeled a "slow learner," he

found the mobsters to be the one group that didn't put him down, and before long, he was in the gangster life. Gravano speaks matter-of-factly of his escalating Mafia career, which eventually involved becoming a hit man, but oddly, what emotion does come across is that of love, love for the *Cosa Nostra* and its traditions. Coming after all the murders and mayhem, Gravano's decision to rat on Gotti, mostly for his flamboyance of all things, is almost anticlimactic. Maas writes this page-turner in Gravano's voice, and it's a voice that readers will hear in their heads for a long while. *Ilene Cooper*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Matilda Greiner:

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each guide has different aim or even goal; it means that reserve has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time for you to read a book. These are reading whatever they take because their hobby will be reading a book. How about the person who don't like reading through a book? Sometime, person feel need book after they found difficult problem as well as exercise. Well, probably you'll have this Underboss: Sammy the Bull Gravano's Story of Life in the Mafia.

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