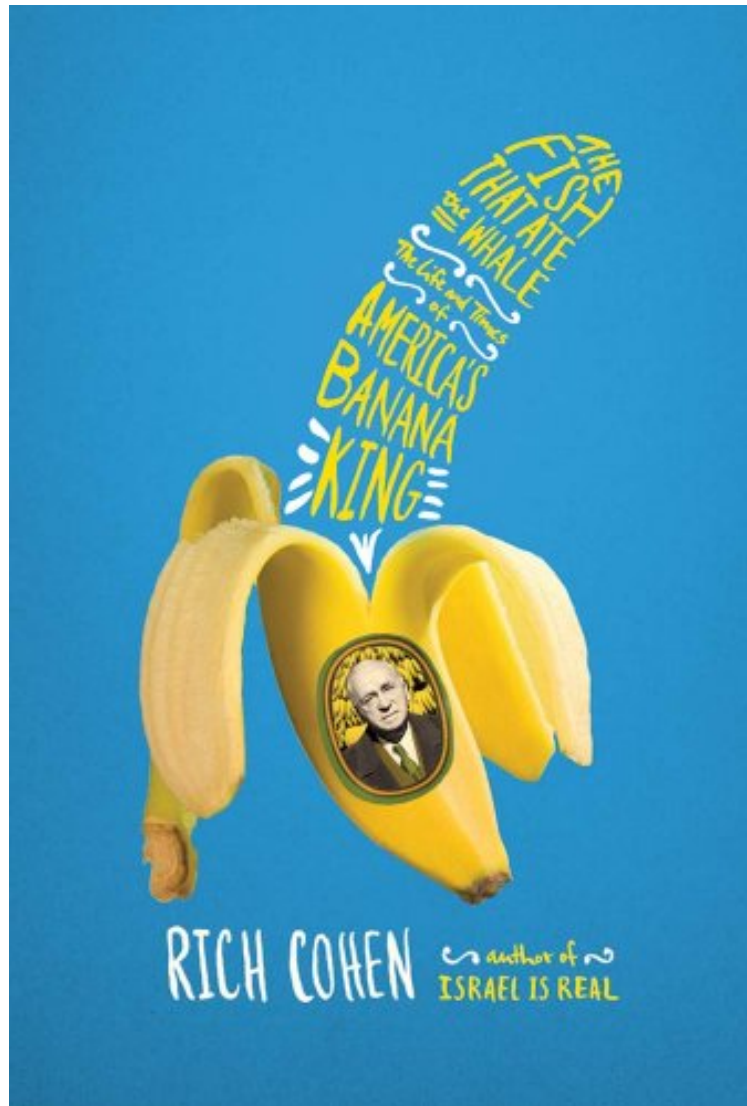


The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King

Rich Cohen

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Rich Cohen : The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. AN IMMIGRANT THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE By Robert Ongley To be fair, this is not my kind of book. I'm more of a fiction guy and if I read non-fiction, I prefer spiritual self-help fare. So, I wasn't fascinated by a biography of America's Banana King. It's a rags to riches story, which does appeal to my root-for-the-underdog inclination. Still, Samuel Zemurray created a pretty big corporation and eventually

managed to take control of a mammoth one. That's not a spoiler. It's all right there in the title. This is definitely an interesting book about an interesting man. His drive, his ingenuity and his guts took him to amazing heights. His accomplishments on the world stage are difficult to imagine when you take into consideration his humble beginnings and relative lack of fame even today. Insights that came through extensive research provide an inside look at how big business and big government do their dirty work under the guise of progress or national security. Well-written and very readable, *The Fish That Ate the Whale* is a piece of American history worth your time. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. 5-Star Book, 3-Star Writing . . . By Bradley Bevers As far as business biographies goes, this is one of the most fascinating and storied lives I have ever read about. Samuel Zemurray led a fascinating life, and the author covers much of the material well and presents it a very engaging way. Unfortunately, there are also some choices the author makes that detract from the book and the story of Zemurray's life, but not enough to warrant skipping it. Sam Zemurray is accurately described by the author as a sort of quintessential American story. He was born in Russia, but moved to the United States when he was just fifteen years old. He knew that he wanted to be a businessman, and set off in search of a product. He fell in love with bananas, a brand new fruit to the United States, and started his business by buying the discards that no one else wanted. From there he built his small company into the second largest, best run banana company in the world. Bananas might not seem like much now, they certainly didn't to me, but the banana industry was one of the largest industries in his time, controlling governments, shipping channels, and entire continents. Sam himself had a hand in overthrowing governments, defying U.S. presidents, and using guerrilla warfare to grow his business. He eventually sold his business, retired, took over another business, resurrected the banana trade and saved it for years, helped Israel become a country once again, and much more. His life and his influence were unmatched in the South American world at the time, and he had a hand in almost everything. Fascinating story of someone who has been largely forgotten. By itself, the book is a great read and highly recommended. But there are several times the author takes his style of writing and pushes the envelope too far. He hypothesizes too often about Sam's thoughts, references his other books, and inserts himself into the story in an annoying way. He's a gifted writer who has really condensed Zemurray's life down and made it a great read . . . but it what it is a great, highly recommendable book could have been even better. Buy this book and read it, highly recommended. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Through and Unique By Brett B. Great read. Stale at times, but necessary to set the stage and picture of the times. Parts about his children and family were sometimes verbose- but I understand the author wanted to paint the entire portrait of a man, and what is a man without family?

A legendary tale, both true and astonishing, from the author of *Israel is Real and Sweet and Low* When Samuel Zemurray arrived in America in 1891, he was tall, gangly, and penniless. When he died in the grandest house in New Orleans sixty-nine years later, he was among the richest, most powerful men in the world. In between, he worked as a fruit peddler, a banana hauler, a dockside hustler, and a plantation owner. He battled and conquered the United Fruit Company, becoming a symbol of the best and worst of the United States: proof that America is the land of opportunity, but also a classic example of the corporate pirate who treats foreign nations as the backdrop for his adventures. In Latin America, when people shouted "Yankee, go home!" it was men like Zemurray they had in mind. Rich Cohen's brilliant historical profile *The Fish That Ate the Whale* unveils Zemurray as a hidden kingmaker and capitalist revolutionary, driven by an indomitable will to succeed. Known as El Amigo, the Gringo, or simply Z, the Banana Man lived one of the great untold stories of the last hundred years. Starting with nothing but a cart of freckled bananas, he built a sprawling empire of banana cowboys, mercenary soldiers, Honduran peasants, CIA agents, and American statesmen. From hustling on the docks of New Orleans to overthrowing Central American governments, from feuding with Huey Long to working with the Dulles brothers, Zemurray emerges as an unforgettable figure, connected to the birth of modern American diplomacy, public relations, business, and war; a monumental life that reads like a parable of the American dream.