



Lola Bensky

Lily Brett

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Lola Bensky is a nineteen-year-old rock journalist who irons her hair straight and asks a lot of questions. A high-school dropout, she's not sure how she got this job - but she's been sent by her Australian newspaper right to the heart of the London music scene at the most exciting time in music history: 1967.

Drawing on her own experience as a young journalist, the bestselling author of 'Too Many Men' has created an unforgettable character in the unconventional and courageous Lola. Genuinely funny and deeply moving, 'Lola Bensky' shows why Lily Brett is one of Australia's most distinctive and internationally acclaimed authors.

Lola Bensky Details

Date : Published September 2012 by Hamish Hamilton (first published January 1st 2012)

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From Reader Review Lola Bensky for online ebook

Librariasaurus says

I only gave this book 2 stars because its written about an era and a community of musicians that I adore. The writing itself is fairly good but the character of Lola Bensky is dull, indecisive, annoying, self-loathing, green, unintelligent, unconfident, unconvincing, ignorant and woeful.

I feel that Lily Brett has tried to re-imagine something along the lines of Kerouac's *On The Road*, from a meek Australian female perspective, and failed miserably.

Throw in some graphic depictions of world war two atrocities, constant complaints and sympathy seeking from Lola about being fat, being a child of an Auschwitz survivor and not being good enough for anything and you have 267 pages of drivel.

Brett's ability to develop strong female characters is non-existent and to see a character like this making it into popular culture is both disturbing and counter-productive.

As a fan of this genre and era of music I was ecstatic that an Australian rock journalist character had been created who would venture into the murky depths of 60s and 70s rock, especially since, with the exception of Janis Joplin, Lillian Roxon and Linda Eastman; it really was a man's world. Reading Lola Bensky was like having the testosterone of every one of those arrogant rock men rammed down my throat and then suffering severe indigestion later on.

The depiction of some of rock's greatest ever talents like Jim Morrison, Brian Jones, Sonny Bono and Mama Cass was not only offensive to read, but is offensive to the memory of every single one of them. The only people given a favourable part in Lola's story were Mick Jagger, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix and eventually Cher.

Brett gave Lola an obsession with death and the book concludes with a reeling off of the list of dead rock stars along with quotes from their autopsy reports.

This book is about Jewishness, is a platform for obsessing over death, poor body image and cold parental relationships; it is chick lit, drama and every annoying thing you could possibly think of all bound together in a piece of very Warhol-ish cover art.

Don't let your daughters read this book, and don't read it if you're a fan of 60s and 70s rock, just don't read it. It's just too derogatory and ill-informed. Lily Brett should be ashamed of herself for having let the world see this paginated piece of literary garbage.

Clarabel says

D'un côté, j'ai adoré l'ambiance rock'n'roll du roman, la folie des années 60, la nouvelle scène, les excès, le glamour, la liberté. C'est carrément exaltant. Par contre, Lola Bensky n'est pas une rigolote : complexée et triste comme un bonnet de nuit, on la sent davantage simple spectatrice et engluée dans ses problèmes.

Au final, j'ai un peu mis de côté la part confidentielle de Lola Bensky pour me consacrer à son travail et aux légendes incarnées. Pour ça, rien que pour ça, j'ai beaucoup aimé ce roman. Sensation grisante d'avoir voyagé dans le temps et d'avoir touché les étoiles.

<http://blogclarabel.canalblog.com/arc...>

Ruth says

Ich bin Lily-Brett-Fangirl, das hat sich mit diesem Buch auch nicht geändert.

Die eigen-artige Lola Bensky habe ich dabei besonders ins Herz geschlossen. Ich mag ihre Macken, ihre Unsicherheit, ihre Art, einfach aus dem Bauch heraus über die Lager-Erlebnisse ihrer Eltern zu plaudern, ihre Sehnsucht danach, eine "echte" Jüdin zu sein, und die herrlich verschrobenen Geschichten, die sie als Autorin später einmal schreibt. Die Art und Weise wie Brett während des Erzählens Vergangenheit und Gegenwart mischt, natürlich durchzogen von ihrer eigenen Biographie, macht Spaß. Auch weil sie zeigt, wie sehr die – unverarbeiteten – Traumata der Eltern-Generation, die das Grauen des Krieges überlebt hat, auf die Kinder überspringen und diese sie mehr oder weniger unbewusst weiter(er)leben.

Faszinierend, erschreckend, auf gewisse Weise tröstlich, zart und melancholisch. Für mich eine sehr gelungene Lektüre.

Melinda Elizabeth says

I can't say I enjoyed this very much. A made up journo having made up conversations with famous rock stars hold tick all the boxes, but all Lola does is obsess over false eyelashes, WWII atrocities and diets. The middle of the book inexplicably zoomed far into the future for no discernible reason, then again bafflingly back to the 60's for some of the conclusion. Reading this book in Lola's narrative is like a monotonous, muffled ongoing noise that you can't quite figure out.

Holly says

As a brunette, fringed 19-year-old music fanatic, I presumed this book would tick all of my boxes. Sadly, I was quite wrong. I hate to write negative reviews (esp of Australian authors) but I have to be honest and say that I really don't like Brett's writing. Not one bit. This novel is about a young woman interviewing some of the world's biggest and best musicians at the height/beginning of their fame. Sounds great, but her voice comes across as clunky, detached and basic and I struggled to connect to Lola Bensky at all. As a young interviewer, I found her quite boring. Apparently, Lily Brett was a rock journalist around the era she writes, but she fails to show any real knowledge of the music industry beyond how the public have been known to perceive a certain musician. And, as a guitarist myself, I cringed at her cliched and flat descriptions of Jimi Hendrix and especially Lola's far from realist interviews with Jagger and Townsend. Her language is a little basic and jarred and she writes about music with no passion, feeling or flair. I really wanted to love it, but I was left really disappointed with this book :(

Esther Rivers says

For someone who claims to have music journalism experience, they might have wanted to do a little more research into the life and times of 'swingin' London' in the 60s. The depictions of these characters feel like Brett researched them once or twice on Wikipedia-for anyone with the slightest bit of musical knowledge or love of rock 'n' roll, this story is insulting. Does the author really think this is believable? Is the target

audience young teenagers? Does every move that Lola (a most narcissistic, dull, self deprecating character) makes need to be explained? As if the reader is so unintelligent that nothing can be implied? Brett writes as if we know nothing about basic history, or for that matter basic writing. Is this the work of a clever storyteller? No depth, no intrigue, no empathy-I have to wonder what would implore a writer to not only brave depicting real life people-some of whom still live to read this-but to also depict them as half wits. A most annoying, uninteresting read.

Orsodimondo says

WILL THE MOON STILL HANG IN THE SKY WHEN I DIE?

Il gioco di rimandi è intenso fin dalla copertina: l'autrice ha nome e cognome brevi e con le stesse iniziali del personaggio che intitola il romanzo, tanto che si tende a confonderle.

Il percorso esistenziale di Lola è molto simile a quello di Lily che scrive: entrambe figlie di ebrei sopravvissuti ad Auschwitz, entrambe nate in Germania in un campo profughi subito dopo la fine della guerra, entrambe trasferite in Australia in tenerissima età, entrambe giornaliste musicali durante gli anni della swinging London e del festival di Monterey, entrambe trasferite dall'Australia a New York insieme a un marito pittore, entrambe giornaliste prima e scrittrici poi (anche Lola scrive romanzi a un certo punto della sua vita e la sua protagonista, soprannominata con l'acronimo Pimp, si sposa più volte e combatte per tutta la vita con il suo essere ebrea, proprio come Lola e Lily).

Con Jimi Hendrix Lola parla di permanente, bigodini, capelli stirati e lager nazisti.

Lola incontra Jimi Hendrix, sensuale e selvaggio ma molto educato, a detta di Brian Jones è il migliore chitarrista del mondo, e insieme parlano di permanente bigodini capelli stirati e lager nazisti.

Va a intervistare a casa Mick Jagger, anche lui molto gentile ed educato, molto ordinato e borghese, per niente ribelle, e Mick le prepara il tè e le presenta Paul McCartney.

A Monterey si siede in platea accanto a Janis Joplin e diventano amiche, mentre sul palco suonano i Canned Heat, Otis Redding, l'aeroplano Jefferson con le magiche voci di Grace Slick e Marty Balin, loro parlano di infanzie difficili e macchine da cucire Singer nere coi fregi in giallo oro.

Jim Morrison invece si prende molto sul serio, è pieno di cose che gli danno fastidio, mette a disagio, e i Doors lasciano Lola fredda.

Pete Townshend è sgradevole e maleducato.

Brian Jones è sempre fatto o strafatto.

Mick Jagger, molto gentile ed educato, ordinato e borghese, per niente ribelle, le offre il tè e le presenta Paul McCartney.

Lola ha problemi di peso, è ossessionata dalle diete, ne programma e progetta di nuove ogni giorno, ma non le porta mai a termine.

Però, è bella anche grassa, piace, gli uomini rimangono colpiti da lei, anche se lei non è per nulla colpita da se stessa.

La colpisce più sua madre e quando la donna muore la figlia non smette di pensarla.

Dopo i quarant'anni comincerà a calare di peso ma non per effetto delle diete, e a sessantatre anni qualcuno le chiederà se è sempre stata magra.

Al Festival di Monterey Lola e Janis si conoscono perché sono sedute fianco a fianco, parlano di infanzie difficili e macchine da cucire Singer nere coi fregi in giallo oro.

Fino a venticinque anni è impavida, capace di fare tutto e andare dappertutto. Poi, inizia a sdraiarsi su un lettino psicanalitico, ad avere terapeuti dell'anima in più città, e a cinquantadue non fa che porre limiti a se stessa, paralizzata dagli attacchi di panico, chimica sotto forma di pillole per superarli, niente più metropolitana, al cinema e teatro solo seduta accanto al corridoio o le uscite, è diventata agorafobica e ipocondriaca.

Lola pensa che Jim Morrison si prenda troppo seriamente, è pieno di idiosincrasie, mette a disagio l'intervistatrice. E comunque, i Doors la lasciano fredda.

Lola è ebrea e parla yiddish, è molto ebrea ma non praticante, i suoi genitori dopo Auschwitz non riescono a credere in nessun dio e irridono i credenti, crescono la figlia lontano da sinagoga e shabbat.

Ma Lola sa riconoscere al volo gli ebrei, pensa molto all'essere ebreo, ci riflette in modo che fa davvero sorridere, al punto che Woody Allen sembra sprovveduto sull'argomento.

Sente di non avere diritto di vivere la sua vita se non rimette in scena il mondo caotico e psicotico dei campi di concentramento, trasformando l'umiliazione, la vergogna e il senso di colpa del padre e della madre nella vittoria contro gli oppressori nazisti, analogamente a quello che avviene nei suoi sogni ricorrenti in cui salva una persona dopo un incidente d'auto.

Durante le interviste e gli incontri con le rock star non riesce a trattenersi dal raccontare la storia dei suoi genitori, inclusi dettagli tremendi macabri, riesce però a farlo senza seminare orrore e depressione intorno.

Lola trova Pete Townshend sgradevole e maleducato.

Lily Brett racconta facendo sorridere e divertire, e crea un personaggio unico dotato di profonda comprensione dell'animo umano.

Will the moon still hang in the sky when I die?

Certo che sì, Marty, la luna rimarrà in cielo anche dopo che tu non ci sarai più, ci resterà qualunque cosa accada.

Lily Brett intervista Cliff Richard a Londra nel 1967.

Amanda Apthorpe says

While it took me a little while to adapt to Lily Brett's writing style, ultimately I was fully engaged with the character of Lola Bensky. A little more than 'based' on her own experience as a rock journalist in the 1960s, Brett imbues Lola with wonderful warmth, humour and her self-effacing attitude is very endearing. Of course, the entree into the personal world of the 60s Rock Greats adds to the interest of this novel, but more than that, it is Lola's inner turmoil as she tries to come to grips with being the daughter of Holocaust survivors that is written with most effect. In an interview Brett was asked if she was ever in awe of the Legends she interviewed. She replied, "When your parents were in the Concentration camps of Auschwitz it's hard to be in awe of a Rock Star" (paraphrase). This book will have wide appeal, to those who just like a

good story, to those who remember or are fascinated by the hype of the Rock Gods of the 60s, to those who appreciate the psychological and physical displacement for survivors of atrocities and for their children, and for those who can appreciate the humour embedded in this novel. To my shame I have not read any of Brett's previous works, but I will definitely rectify that now.

Sharanya Sarathy says

I was apprehensive with the 3.3 average rating but I couldn't put this book down. I read it from cover to cover in one evening. I found the writing was simple, light, easy to get through but the content was surprisingly profound and at times almost disturbing. I found it to have a great balance of depth and simplicity. The non-linear timeline, the idiosyncratic main character, and the basis in Lily Brett's own life make this a great read, in my opinion. Sometimes Lola Bensky's weight obsession became dull to read about but it was self-aware and obviously purposeful.

Steve lovell says

Whatever became of Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich?

They had been long gone from my grey matter until Lily Brett's book bought back a memory of forty plus years ago. For a nano-second, despite their ridiculous appellation based on the member's nicknames, they were the hottest band on the planet with monster hits such as 'The Legend of Xanadu' and 'Bend It' – the latter being banned in the Bible Belt for its saucy lyrics. In my formative years of musical appreciation I'd purchased these two singles on 45rpm – that's how far back in the mists of time all this was – and for a while they had high rotation on whatever primitive music machine I was using at the time!

To quench my Brett induced curiosity I went to Wikipedia and found their moment in the sun was indeed brief. They reformed several times to work the nostalgia circuit, and I discovered that their lead man had recently passed away. Before he achieved fame Dave Dee was a policeman, and (trivia alert) had attended the car accident that took the life of 50's rocker Eddie Cochran, and almost that of his good mate Gene Vincent. Dee had found Eddie's guitar and looked after it till the family claimed it – so he was obviously well suited to his post fame career in law.

Needless to say, the 60s was a great time to enjoy one's teenagerhood living through a revolution in popular music, and it all came thundering back reading 'Lola Bensky'. Brett's heroine's adventures in popdom carries the 'novel', although it is about so much more. The titular protagonist's time in Swinging London, LA and Monterrey, as a rock journalist was, for this reader, the offering's highlight, bookending the middle chapters that outlined Lola's later life as novelist and wife. The author herself worked the same beat for iconic Aussie mag 'Go Set', my musical bible way back when. Lily presumably met the same pop legends as Lola (both LBs – get it), so one would think there's a fair amount of 'faction' here. It would be lovely to think these luminaries were much as they were painted in this work for, apart from Jim Morrison, they leave a largely favourable impression. Sadly most of them, after burning so brightly, were snuffed out by the usual suspects besetting the creative. What would Brian, Otis, Mama, Jimi, Janis, even the Lizard King himself, gone on to achieve – or not? Brett's roll call at the end, although a well trodden path, still remains powerfully poignant. Above it all loomed Sir Mick, and his ultimately knowing glance across the table to Lola in the final paragraphs says it all.

'Lola Bensky' is much more than a paen to those golden times. In this mix is Lola/Lily's Jewishness and the pall of the death camps. There is much on body issues – and here I discovered Mama Cass' terminal ham sandwich is myth – and we even have a novel within a novel. There is parental homage and a quandary

involving false eyelashes and Cher. Brett's writing of it all is as masterful, as we have come to expect, with the tone it creates. With music at the centre of my being though, I was disappointed when she moved away from this aspect after the opening chapters, and delighted when she returned to the 'summer of love' in ending.

I was saddened to miss Lily's book launch in Hobart, but gratified that she graciously signed my copy of 'Lola' in my absence. It was reported to me as a magic event, with Lily's warmth and care for her readers palpable throughout. In the same way we feel her love for the characters peopling her novel, real and imagined. For a few short months over one northern summer it did feel we were onto something special. Then came Altamont, the moment was lost and it all faded away. The spirit of those times has never been recaptured. Pity that.

Jillwilson says

When Lilly Brett was quite young, she got a job with Go-Set, which was the first Australian rock/pop newspaper. Go-Set came out of a group who worked at Monash Uni on Lot's Wife. While Lily had no formal training as a journalist she was given quite a lot of opportunities, including going to Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, just as her fictional character, Lola Bensky does. At the time, she says that an experienced journo gave her some advice: "Always start with a good line."

This novel opens with "Lola Bensky was sitting on an uncomfortably high stool. She could feel the nylon threads of her fishnet stockings digging into her thighs." I loved this opening scene – anyone who has worn uncomfortable stockings, will identify with Lola, squirming on her stool as she tries to ascertain where the tissue that acted as a buffer between her legs and the stockings has gone, and as she tries to look cool while talking with Jimi Hendrix. The passages about music are great – so interesting – she had uninterrupted access to Mick Jagger, Hendrix, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and Mama Cass amongst others.

Brett intertwines this story with that of her upbringing. Her parents are survivors of the Holocaust. Edek, the redoubtable father re-occurs in this narrative but it's the figure of her mother that is more pervasive. Her mother, understandably, is presented as being hugely damaged and this has a significant impact on Bensky's life. You will notice that I write Bensky – whilst the novel follows some of the key events of Brett's life, it is a novel – it's easy to conflate the two.

Of this period of her life, Brett says "having two parents imprisoned in Nazi ghettos and then Nazi death camps really makes idolizing rock stars seem almost absurd. So Lola came from a very, very different place than if you'd grown up with sunshine and Sao biscuits and a feeling that the world was just perfect. She really, really wanted to know who these people were." (<http://wheelercentre.com/dailies/post...>)

I really liked reading the depictions of her encounters with these rock stars – encounters that are pretty amazing given that Brett/Bensky is only 19 or 20 years old. What is described is fresh and interesting. I kept wanting to know "Did this really happen? Did they really say that?" It reads like it is real, like Brett drew on her old Go-Set columns and diaries to write these scenes. I wanted it to be real – I would have preferred a memoir rather than the ambiguous half-land that I think this narrative is. In a memoir, I would have been less impatient with Bensky's constant refrain about being fat. The repetition of this drove me mad; a novel demands slightly more finesse in terms of getting a point across.

Easily the most poignant scene of the novel was the description of the family eating; Edek and Lola eating with each other, the mother eating scraps with her back turned to the rest of the family. The long reach of the Holocaust stretching out to suburban Australia with its impact on generations after. Brett said in an

interview: "I once said to my mother, 'When I close my eyes I can hear crying', and she said, 'That's because when you were born everyone was crying, either out of joy at your birth or terrible anguish at loved ones who had died'." Max and Rose were happy to be alive and in Australia - "Dad would come home in-between shifts at the factory he worked at, and say, 'This country is paradise'" - but their experiences infused them with a suspicion of happiness that Brett inherited.

"Excess happiness expressed loudly is the most bothering aspect to me," she says. "You don't want to push your luck. I always feel bothered by people who, when asked how they are, say 'Excellent!' The man I live with, David, has a terrible tendency to say how wonderful everything is. I just grit my teeth. And if we are alone I say, 'Don't, just don't'."

When she was young, in Melbourne, Brett used to envy the "carefreeness" of the English-speaking children she met at school. Now she is not so sure. "The idea that a person's skin colour or sexuality or even the music they listen to makes them somehow less human than you, that's a dangerous idea that I've always tried to warn people about in my work," she says. "So, in that way, my parents' history has compelled me to write. "In an important way, it liberated me." (www.smh.com.au/entertainment/books/th...)

In commenting on the book, Brett compared the access she had to famous people to what is available now. "Today nobody gets a personal picture out of anyone who's a celebrity in any way, you have to be a celebrity for ten minutes and you've got your own management company, public relations company, bodyguards. As an interviewer, you get 15 minutes with 20 other journalists and a very small window of what you can say and what they can't say."

And my favourite line from the book comes apropos of a discussion about Jewish humour: "If they had to put his brain in a chicken, it would run straight to the butcher."

Nicki says

This started off well. Initially I quite enjoyed it. The interviews with the celebrities were interesting and I figured since Lily was herself a journalist, maybe they were based on real ones. Having read some of the other reviews for this, it seems that this is not the case and they are fictional. I am a little too young to know most of them, but had of course heard of the majority. I enjoyed what I thought was an insight into them. The main problem I had was that we don't really get to know Lola very well. She seems to have no personality, interests or thoughts, apart from worrying about her weight. It's never explained how or why she becomes a music journalist. She does not seem to be a music fan or have any interest in it (or anything else). I can't imagine who would have employed her for that job. Much is made about how few jobs there were for women in music. Lola has nothing that makes her stand out, except her weight, and I can't imagine that being a plus in such sexist times.

The book steers off halfway through to where Lola is married to an ex rock star and has children. The husband is not faithful to Lola, dating back before the wedding. I could not understand why she would want to marry him. We never learn the husband or the kids names, or the name of her next partner. They seem irrelevant and so does Lola. She has no backbone and life just seems to happen to her. I can't figure out if she's poorly written, or just the most boring character ever written.

Lola is the daughter of parents who survived a concentration camp. It is horrible, and I understand (or at least can empathise) the horror of that in your background, all other family members dead and your mother highly critical of you. There is a lot in here about that, and how it has shaped Lola. I pitied her, and her parents, but it felt to me like a totally different story than the one about a 60's rock journalist. Not necessarily one that

was overly hinted at on the sleeve of the book, or that I would like to read. I have gathered from reading reviews here that most of Lily Brett's books cover this, as this is in her own past.

It's a very sad and horrible thing that happened, but I have to say this will be my first and last Lily Brett. It's not a subject I want to keep revisiting. I'm glad it's represented in books and hope it never happens again, but I sure don't wish to read the same character and situation over and over.

I probably would have liked this more if Lola wasn't so blah.

Megan says

Lola Bensky is probably one of the more surprising novels I've read in a long time. Lily Brett, who is quite famous in her native Australia, has certainly won a new fan in this here blogger. What at first glance would seem to be simple little tale about a girl interviewing all the famous rockstars of the 1960s and 1970s, turned out to be an unexpectedly poignant exploration of a generation from a completely unique point of view.

See my full review here: <http://www.thewhynottblog.com/book-re...>

Kimbofo says

On initial glance, Lily Brett's *Lola Bensky* appears to be a light-hearted novel about a young Australian rock journalist who makes a name for herself at one of the most exciting times in music history: the late 1960s.

But there's a darker edge, for *Lola Bensky*, the bright and bubbly 19-year-old at the heart of the story, is the child of Holocaust survivors and her life is governed by a particular kind of psychological trauma.

To read the rest of my review, please visit my blog.

Komala says

I'm disappointed to say that I have nothing good to say about this book. Why would anyone want to read a book about a woman who, rather than talk about her incredibly interesting career; or her travels; or the amazing people that she has interviewed and hung out with, chooses instead to write about how fat her thighs are? Lola doesn't seem to have any passion for music, or anything really. It's almost as if she just stumbled into the music industry. Her mother is so hateful that I didn't even have any sympathy for her being an Auschwitz survivor (now that takes some talent!). The writing style is stilted, the main character is a twit, the plot is...missing.
