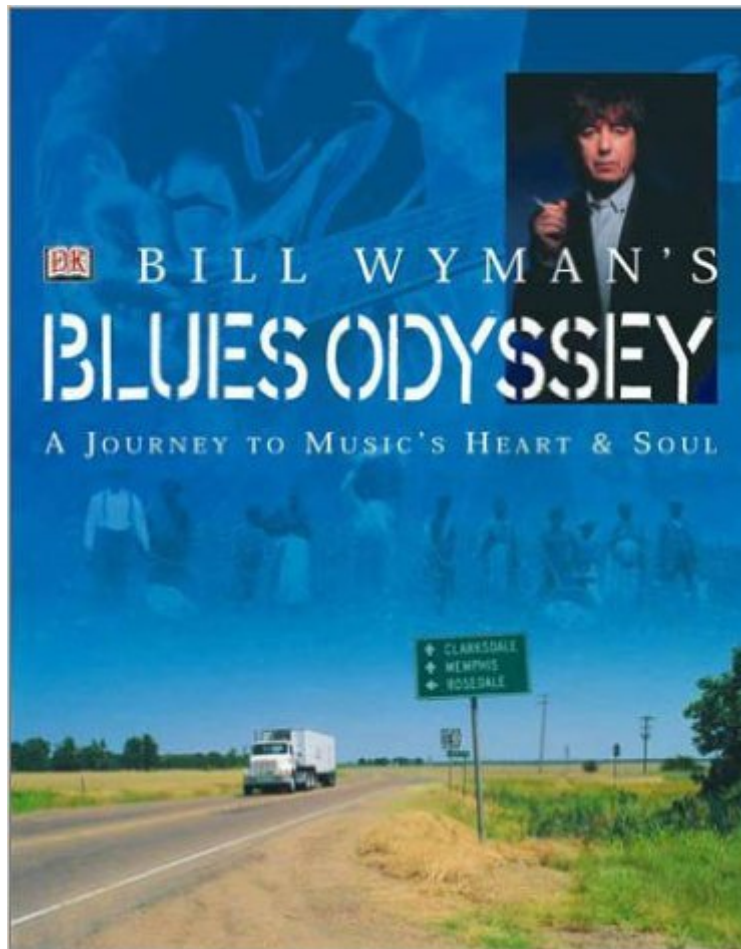


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Bill Wyman's Blues Odyssey: A Journey To Music's Heart & Soul



Synopsis

In this evocative and intensely personal history of the blues, Bill Wyman pays tribute to the musicians who inspired him and whose music he took around the world as a member of the Rolling Stones. The starting point of Bill's Odyssey is the journey of African slaves to the plantations of America's Deep South. We follow their descendants as they walk, travel the highways, and ride the railroads out of the Delta and the troubled South via Memphis to the northern cities of Chicago and St. Louis. But this is no superficial history: Bill Wyman's in-depth odyssey reveals a society where poverty and injustice as well as love and faith, found their expression in a musical style that gave birth to rock 'n' roll. Location shots of smoky juke joints, railroad stations, and endless highways combine with richly detailed maps to bring the Blues alive. Feature spreads with previously unpublished photographs from Bill Wyman's personal archive showcase 40 Blues legends from Robert Johnson to John Lee Hooker, telling the story of their fascinating and often troubled lives. Bill Wyman is a legend in his own right. He has known and played with many of the Blues legends, and his personal knowledge and unprecedented access give this book an authenticity that is almost impossible to match.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This book falls somewhere between the in depth tomes of Paul Oliver and the "Blues for Dummies" book. It has greater depth than the "Dummies" book, covering such history as the slave trade and American Abolition movement to a greater extent than found in a casual survey. Wyman & Havers also provide a decent intro for ragtime, spirituals and jazz before they get into the meat of the

subject. The book covers the usual subject matter with a little greater depth than usual. Excellent features include profiles of essential artists (including suggestions on what to purchase for great listening), recording histories of the great songs (Stack O'Lee, Rollin' and Tumblin', etc.) and a recurring map featuring blues highlights. As a blues fan and collector, I found it fascinating reading which I plan to pass on to other fans and nonfans alike.

This rich personal history of the world of blues music blends a history of the movements of blues from Africa to the US with a personal exploration of the society and places which fostered the rise of blues music. From location shots of juke joints to biographical sketches of big names in blues music, this is packed with color images which bring a far more personal touch to the subject than most.

A coffee table book, pure and simple, with thick, glossy pages full of photos, timelines, and charts. But the prose is the equivalent of a high school term paper--no flow to the paragraphs, themes jumbled and disorganized, little explication or analysis. Sure, it is an encyclopedia of facts, some of them quite interesting, but who wants to read an encyclopedia cover to cover? Apart from the inelegant ghost writing, Wyman's own asides are entirely superfluous. Compare this to Alan Lomax's "The Land Where the Blues Began".

Abundant with pics and maps, data, short bios, some discography. I'd recommend this to anyone who wanted an overview of recorded Blues history, mostly Delta Blues history, and up into Chicago Blues history. Though Bill Wyman admittedly was kind of a late comer to the blues compared to his Rolling Stones bandmates, he makes up for it with this chronicle. The history of how the blues made its way into the London scene is a little goofy really; it was a matter of fadism and record collecting, adopting downtrodden personas and copying vocal and guitar licks note for note. But most of us who grew up on the Stones were glad they did. Wyman tracks this British Blues development as well and includes chapters on a few other well known mostly white US practitioners. All in all, it's a visually solid and very readable piece, I'm very glad to have it for its chronological look at blues evolution. Rabid fans might miss the fact that some areas other than the Delta are overlooked but, again, this is a very worthy introduction.

No book is without faults but warts and all this is a damn fine book for anyone remotely interested in the Blues, Music or plain Bill Wyman. The most annoying thing about this book is where it is repetitive on certain passages, but then this is the way it is written. Those are the warts, the best part

of the book is its contents of anecdotes and is crammed full of splendid photographs. I found the best/worst part of the book was its essential recordings showing classic songs/albums about individual artists. (the worst part is that I am currently seeking an endless list of albums I do not have) For an ageing Rolling Stone, still on the road doing what he does best Bill Wyman and Richard Havers have written an Historical Masterpiece! After all it is not an easy task writing about the origins of modern pop music with all your own prejudices and favourites and at the same time wondering whether or not you have left someone of note out in the cold! My advice to you all is to go out and buy yourself an Historical Music Book Today! (While it is in its 1st Print!)

Overall, a great book that educates the reader in an entertaining, clear and down-to-earth manner. I especially appreciated the background information (for example, on slavery, segregation and the cotton trade) which puts the blues into its social and spiritual context. This book is clearly a labour of love, especially for Bill Wyman, but that love unfortunately extends to an excessive number of Bill Wyman photographs. Bear in mind that as a coffee table book, this book lacks some of the depth and flow of a good blues read, evident in books such as Robert Palmer's "Deep Blues" or Alan Lomax's "The land where the blues began".

Sure this book is like an encyclopedia, but you won't find a better guide for finding obscure blues artists that otherwise would be forgotten. Most books go into familiar territory and rehash the same old information, but Bill Wyman is a serious collector who wants to share his love of the blues. This book is loaded with enough information to get you started on your own eclectic blues collection.

Nice book to introduce blues to the average folks. The organization is well done with plenty of interesting tidbits scattered throughout. Bill does a pretty good job of linking the past with present-day performers (eg. who originally recorded a song and who has done it since.) Some of the best parts are the photographs of folks like Memphis Minnie, Barbeque Bob, and Charlie Patton. Is it the most comprehensive blues book I've ever read? No, but it nicely covers the main players and is much more than a book for the coffee table. Enjoy!

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