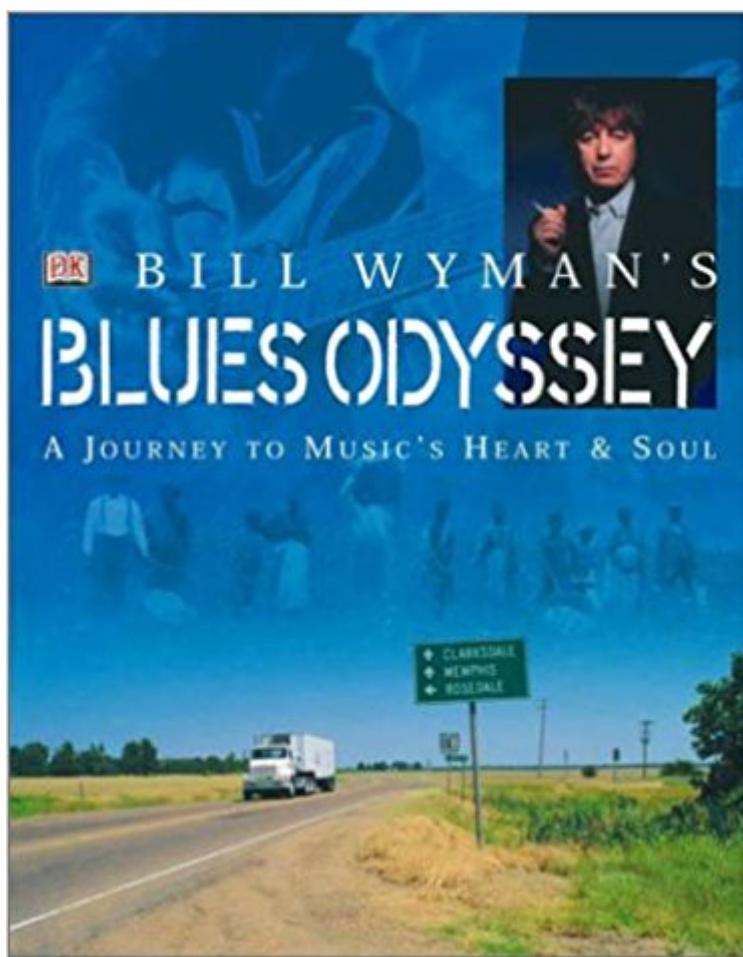


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# Bill Wyman's Blues Odyssey: A Journey To Music's Heart & Soul



## 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 Feature spreads with previously unpublished photographs from Bill Wyman's personal archive showcase 40 Blues legends from Robert Johnson to John Lee Hooker, telling the story of their fascinating and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

As much a history of the African-American experience as it is a music resource, Wyman's latest book (after *Stone Alone*) chronicles the rise of that heartbreakingly unique American music: the blues. With beautiful photographs, maps, drawings, portraits, time lines and record cover reproductions, the book spans nearly 400 years, from 1619 and the origins of slavery to the

modern-day sounds of Bonnie Raitt and Eric Clapton. Although Wyman (of the Rolling Stones and the recently formed Bill Wyman's Rhythm Kings) is credited as the author, the work includes many boxed quotations from the musician himself, thus leaving the reader wondering how much of the writing actually fell on Havers, who receives only minor recognition. This stands as a truly comprehensive look at the blues. Readers learn about Papa Charlie Jackson, one of the first bluesmen to record (in Chicago, 1924); Ma Rainey, credited with bridging the gap between "urban" and "country" blues; and John Lee Hooker, who before his recent death was the "last living link to the prewar Delta blues tradition." The authors also discuss particular songs, including "Beale Street Blues" and "Nobody Knows You When You're Down and Out," telling who has covered them and when. Instruments, geographical locations and record labels are discussed, as are society's racial reactions to the music (for example, although physical segregation was rampant in the 1950s, radio helped in eroding the differences between black and white). Throughout, interesting if sometimes irrelevant details abound: from tidbits about Fats Waller's childhood to the finer points of cotton growing and a list of battles won by the Confederacy. Overwhelming and extensive, this is a fine addition to any African-American history, jazz or blues collection. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

Wyman, former bass guitarist for the Rolling Stones and the author of two previous books, has assembled a visually stunning coffee-table tribute to the blues that serves as the companion volume to the Bravo special of the same name, airing on November 1. Although detail is somewhat thin in this type of book, given the breadth of the subject, Wyman brings out the connections among blues and jazz, vaudeville, rock'n'roll, minstrel song, and white country music as well as anyone could in anything short of a scholarly treatise. Included are the author's interesting vignettes from his tour notes with the Rolling Stones, interviews with blues performers, brief biographies, fact files, and influences. Wyman's love of the blues and his attachment to its practitioners are obvious at every turn. Although Wyman does not include a bibliography or even a short suggested reading list, he does offer a discography of favorite recordings that captures a large range of blues-based styles from Bessie Smith to Eric Clapton and shows the debt rock owes to blues music. Blues fans and especially followers of blues-influenced rock bands will pore over this; recommended for public libraries with large popular music collections. James E. Perone, Mount Union Coll., Alliance, OH  
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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.

This book is more than just a book about the Blues. It's also a very comprehensive, well documented, well illustrated "history", of Slavery (Not only in the U.S.A., but also in Africa itself, in England, the West Indies, & in Brazil). It also covers some general American history, history of the Southern U.S.A., The Confederacy, the American Civil War, and how all of this ties into the creation of the genre of American Music known as the "Blues". Bill Wyman has certainly done a great job in creating this book. To me, it is the "Ultimate" reference guide to the Blues. I can relate to a lot of this, because, I was born & raised in the Mississippi Delta, on the Louisiana side, on an 80 acre farm. The picture on the cover says a lot. It's a picture of a truck traveling down highway 49, through the Mississippi Delta. Highway 49 intersects with highway 61 in Clarksdale, Mississippi, (Which is the Famous Crossroads in Blues Folklore). The Mississippi Delta became the birthplace for the "Delta Blues". In Clarksdale, there is a museum of Delta Blues. The history in this book starts off around sometime during the later 1600's. According to this book the history of slavery, began in West Africa itself. In Western Africa, Africans would capture and enslave other Africans. When England began trading with these Western African Nations. The Western African Nations offered slaves in return for clothes, and other goods from England & America. So, the international slave trade began. Primarily, England would send a slave ship to western Africa, exchange goods for slaves, then ship the slaves to the Southern U.S.A., or to Brazil, or the West Indies and sell them, then buy cotton, sugar, and etc., and return to England. That was the basic cycle of the Slave Trade. Anyway, the book progresses on through the American Civil War, reconstruction, and the sharecropper system of the plantation system. It's a system where the descendants of former slaves and poor whites, worked the plantations in return for a share of the profit from the crops they raised. They usually lived in small "shack" type houses on the plantation. Anyway, this is the

environment where the Delta Blues was created. This was sometimes around the 1920's or so. Charlie Patton became the 1st King of the Delta Blues, around this time. Then, this book progresses on and covers the other great Delta Blues artists, such as Son House, Robert Johnson, and many, many others. Around the 1940's these southern plantations became so mechanized, that they no longer needed all the labor that the share-croppers provided. So, without jobs a lot of the share-croppers migrated North to cities like Memphis, St.Louis, and especially Chicago. This book covers the history, up through publication time, of the Famous Stovall Plantation. This is the plantation where Muddy Waters grew up in, and worked at, before migrating to Chicago. The book goes on to cover the Blues, throughout the Southern U.S.A. It covers 100's of blues musicians. It even covers how the blues influenced more modern Southern Rock Bands such as Lynyrd Skynyrd, The Allman Brothers Band, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, and other artists, such as Bonnie Raitt. And, it covers how the blues influenced the Rolling Stones & other British bands. Bill Wyman even has a "soundtrack" listing for his "Blues Odessey". It includes a list and pictures of albums that he singled out in his blues journey. It starts with some of the early 1920's blues artists and ends with Stevie Ray Vaughan's album "Texas Flood". To me, this is my favorite blues book, but that's my opinion. I do think that anyone who is interested in the blues, and its history, would enjoy this book very much, so in that context, I do highly recommend it. Thanks!!!!

I don't know if this book is still in print, but I think you can't read a better book on the history of the blues. Great graphics and contents, pictures and social events, I know my stuff but I'm learning a lot more. I watched the movie in probably in 2002 or so on Pbs. I'm glad I got to shake Bill Wyman hand at a Rhythm Kings show in Chicago. And I'm glad I got to see some of these greats in person while they were alive!

A great wealth of information. Breaks down different regions and different influences. Also includes a lot of rare photo's.

Well researched with interesting stories about the history of the roots and progression of the blues. A great addition to any collection.

Really cool book by one of the coolest guys in music

One of the best books on the Blues music history. Great photos and narrative.

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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