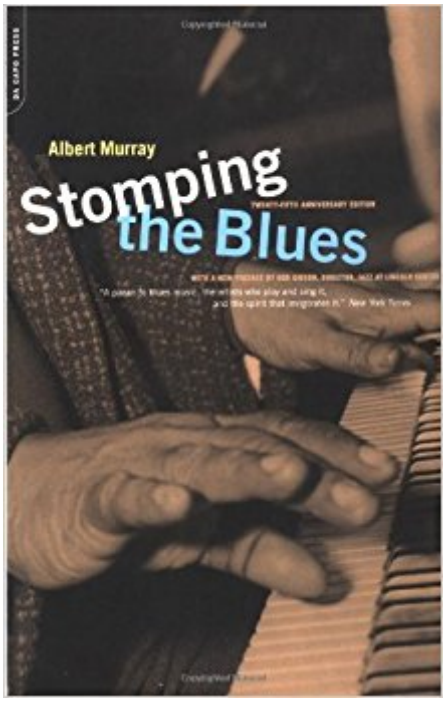
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Stomping The Blues (Da Capo Paperback)



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Synopsis

This study of the blues by one of America's premier essayists and novelists will change old attitudes about a tradition that continues to feed the very heart of popular music—a blues that dances, shakes, shimmies, and exchanges bad news for stomping, rollicking, pulse-quickening good times.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A Flamboyant, insightful examination and evocation of the sources, styles, and mythologies of blues music." -- Newsweek"An entire chapter is devoted to correcting misconceptions about the blues and to redefining the music and its connotations for American culture." -- Jason Berry, The Nation"As striking a book about music as I have ever seen." -- Greil Marcus, Rolling Stone"By far the most stimulating interpretation of the meaning of jazz in African-American life." -- Martin Williams, author, The Jazz Tradition"It is a discussion of the basic aesthetic values of blues music, how those values embody ritual responses to life, and the manner in which they originated in American black communities and were stylized by individual geniuses into an art of universal import." -- Gary Giddins, New York Magazine"Murray writes of the blues from the inside. His observations and conclusions show his authoritative comprehension of a blues musician’s roots, the choices and adaptations he makes of existing material to form his own style, and the off-stage personal style he creates to go with it...Murray’s preaching is sound." -- Amy Lee, Christian Science

Monitor

Albert Murray was born in Alabama in 1916. A cultural critic, biographer, essayist, and novelist, he has taught at several colleges, including Colgate and Barnard, and his works include The Omni-Americans, South to a Very Old Place(nominated for a National Book Award), The Hero and the Blues, and Trading Twelve: The Selected Letters of Ralph Ellison and Albert Murray. He has also won the ASCAP–Deems Taylor Award for Stomping the Blues.

What is "Blues" ? Albert Murray says the Blues are those evil entities that attack our spirit, threatening to depress it. Blues music is the reaction - the means of which the blues is driven away. Actually it is the means African Americans have used to drive away the blues. There is no essential difference between Robert Johnson, Charly Patton, Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Count Basie or Charlie Parker - the all play the blues. Only their stylistic approach differs.This book talks about the different ways the blues were being stomped - driven away. Murray objects to the "purists" who limit their definition of blues to those played by rural - unsophisticated musicians (such as Blind lemon Jefferson or Leadbelly). While Murray acknowledges their value, his personal taste leans much more to the Louis Armstrong - Charlie Parker lineage. He concentrates on Armstrong, Bessie Smith, Morton, Young, Ellington, Basie and Parker.Murray seldom uses the word "Jazz" when relating to the music or the musicians. For him they are all "blues drivers", who provide their public with a stomping ritual that is totally functional. Their innovations are a result of the attempt to fulfill their role, to swing harder, and not necessarily a result of a personal desire, detached from their public role.Murray differs from most writers who have written on the subject. He comments on the mainstream critics - criticizing their glorification and condescending tendencies. He does not emphasize the inner divisions among the African Americans, as does Amiri Baraka in "Blues People".This is a remarkable book, recommended to all "Blues and Jazz" lovers.

Murray provides, in a single volume, not only an excellent historical review of the blues idiom, but a perspective that probably no stupid white boy like myself could ever attain, regardless whether I lived in the geographic area or in the period discussed. It also contains an excellent collection of photos and provides a fine musical reference. In these areas Murray informs and teaches appreciation wonderfully. Clearly a man of superior mental capability and broad background, he relates this story in an authentic colloquial style.Murray, however, reveals an elitist vein. After going to great length to provide perspective on the Blues: As Such, As Dance Music, and seemingly

everything in between; He, in one chapter, devolves into a discussion about folk music that in my opinion fails to recognize the difference between pinnacle professional musicians and common folk that like to play for themselves, whether they earn a living at it or not. He seems to fail to see that while nearly everyone that enjoys a genre can appreciate the best artists, they might also appreciate the fellow who performs at a skill level that would likely look and sound as their's might, regardless that virtuosity isn't achieved . He seems to say; If you cannot excel - listen to a recording.

One of the first books I ever read about jazz and blues, this classic goes right to the heart of things--namely, swing. I first heard about Stomping The Blues in an interview with Wynton Marsalis, and later at a live gig he recommended it once again. That was probably around 1987, probably in St. Louis. My own recommendation is get this book if you're interested in the African-American roots of jazz and blues and how the element of swing is the essential ingredient in these original American art forms. Highly recommended!

Great book! They should make this book a mandatory read for public schools!

Murray has lots of text musing about the blues, as other reviewers say, but not that much analysis of the music. And lots of repetition. There's one chapter devoted to criticizing dictionary definitions of the blues, repeatedly emphasizing that, contrary to dictionary definitions, the blues are not necessarily sad (and, as Murray says, most aren't) or slow or sung. The one interesting chapter devoted to the music is about the Kansas City scene. There are quite a few references to recorded performances in the last half of the book, all to LPs (not surprising, given the copyright date of 1976), some of which are to well-known recordings (such as Armstrong's Potato Head Blues), some are not. About half the pages are photos of musicians, dancers, or images of 78 rpm recordings. Some of the photos are well-known, others aren't. I skimmed much of the text but enjoyed the photos.

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