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Blues And Gospel Records: 1890-1943



Synopsis

Since its first edition in 1964, Dixon and Godrich's Blues and Gospel Records has been dubbed "the bible" for collectors of pre-war African American music. It provides an exhaustive listing of all recordings made up to the end of 1943 in a distinctively African American style, excluding those customarily classed as jazz (which are the subject of separate discographies). The book covers recordings made for the commercial market (whether issued at the time or not) and also recordings made for the Library of Congress Archive of Folk Song and similar bodies--about 20,000 titles in all, by more than 3,000 artists. For each recording session, full details are given of: Â artist credit Â accompaniment Â place and date of recording Â titles Â issuing company and catalogue numbers Â matrix numbers Â alternative takes There are also short accounts of the major "race labels" that recorded blues and gospel material, and a complete list of field trips to the south by travelling recording units. Howard Rye has joined the original compilers for this thoroughly revised, enlarged, and reset fourth edition. The scope has been widened by the addition of about 150 new artists in addition to newly discovered recordings by other artists. The compilation now includes recordings by groups such as the Fisk Jubilee Singers, the Pace Jubilee Singers, and the Tuskegee Institute Singers, who, although they employed African American materials and musical devices, were designed to appeal to a predominantly white audience. Early cylinder recordings of gospel music from the 1890s are included for the first time. Previous editions of this work are applauded for their completeness, accuracy, and reliability. This has now been enhanced by the addition of new information from record labels and from record company files, and by listening to a wide selection of titles, and detailed cross checking.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Praise for the third edition: "Indispensable: every music library should have it, and it will be a high priority item on any blues collector's list."--Ethnomusicology"The definitive discography of the genre; it is comprehensive and accurate to the extreme, and is essential for all those who are interested in pre-war blues and gospel recordings."--Goldmine"Absolutely indispensable to anyone with an interest in pre-war Blues and Gospel music."--Blues Unlimited

The compilers of this volume come from a mixture of backgrounds. Robert M. W. Dixon is Director of the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology at the Australian National University. He has done original field research on the indigenous languages of Australia, Fiji, and ia, besides writing A New Approach to English Grammar: On Semantic Principles (Clarendon Press, 1991). The late John Godrich was in the Merchant Navy and then worked as a clerk at Swansea Docks. Howard Rye, who like Dixon is an Oxford graduate, is an independent scholar of jazz and blues. He is principal researcher for the New Grove Dictionary of Jazz and is a regular contributor to jazz and blues publications. From 1980 to 1995, he was editor of Collectors Items.

Everyone else has already said what there is to say. If you are involved in any kind of research on blues, gospel, or American folk music then this has to be in your library.

If you work with recordings, this is an invaluable resource. I'm so glad, after years of making due with scans from libraries, that I finally purchased this book.

This is the 4th edition of a compilation of recording sessions of blues and gospel performers between 1890 and 1943, listed by matrix number and by records issued from that master, listed alphabetically by artist name and in order of recording dates under each artist and who accompanied on what instruments if known. It is mostly of interest to collectors and ethnomusicologists, and is an invaluable resource to us. this edition contains more information than the original edition from 1962, having been revised in 1997.

This encyclopedia is indispensable to anyone seriously interested in blues and gospel recordings of the pre-WW2 era. Awe-inspiring labor has brought forth a volume of nearly 1500 pages listing, alphabetically by artist, recording data for every known African-American blues and gospel performer whose work was put on disk through 1943. It is not a jazz discography, though a few essentially jazz acts are included. As well as commercial recordings, it also attempts to catalog all known folklore field recordings of the same period, particularly those of the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress. Included are an index of artists, to help locate sideman appearances, and an index of song titles. The work involved here, which has occupied several writers for many years, is awe-inspiring, particularly since the book is specialized enough (and priced highly enough) that it will never break any sales records. A love for this wonderful music is evident on every page. I bought a copy about 2 years ago and use it frequently, especially with my disk and tape collection. The kind of session data given so generously here was notoriously absent on LP reissues of early blues music. As an inveterate compiler and collator and list-maker, I can't imagine not having this info! The Oxford edition is a sturdy and well-made volume, and I consider the book worth every dime I paid for it, and then some. One "improvement" I would like to see in a future edition is the addition of some symbol to designate records of which no copy is known to exist. Here and there the editors note that a particular recording has "never been found," but this should be done more consistently. Even with such a notoriously lost 78 as Pm 13096, only the absence of a master number indicates its status. Since 7 types of saxophone are differentiated in the instrumentation chart, I would also suggest that the Queen of Musical Instruments -- I mean, of course, the 12-string -- might be distinguished from the plain old 6-string guitar (perhaps as "12g"). The quibbles are quite minor. There is really nothing about this book that I don't like. Casual blues and gospel fans certainly don't need it, but it will be indispensable to those with a more serious interest.

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