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# Donny Hathaway's Donny Hathaway Live (33 1/3)



## Synopsis

In January of 1979, the great soul artist Donny Hathaway fell fifteen stories from a window of Manhattan's Essex House Hotel in an alleged suicide. He was 33 years old and everyone he worked with called him a genius. Best known for "A Song for You," "This Christmas," and classic duets with Roberta Flack, Hathaway was a composer, pianist, and singer committed to exploring "music in its totality." His velvet melisma and vibrant sincerity set him apart from other soul men of his era while influencing generations of singers and fans whose love affair with him continues to this day. The first nonfiction book about Hathaway, *Donny Hathaway Live* uses original interviews, archival material, musical analysis, cultural history, and poetry to tell the story of Hathaway's life, from his beginnings as a gospel wonder child to his final years. But its focus is the brutally honest, daringly gorgeous music he created as he raced the clock of mental illness—especially in the performances captured on his 1972 album *Donny Hathaway Live*. That album testifies to Hathaway's uncanny ability to amplify the power and beauty of his songs in the moment of live performance. By exploring that album, we see how he generated a spiritual experience for those present at his shows, and for those with the privilege to listen in now.

## Book Information

Series: 33 1/3

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic (October 20, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1628929804

ISBN-13: 978-1628929805

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.5 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #190,574 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Rhythm & Blues](#) #42 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Soul](#) #399 in [Books > Humor & Entertainment > Sheet Music & Scores > Forms & Genres > Popular](#)

## Customer Reviews

A more than welcome addition to the Hathaway legend. *Echoes Magazine* A brilliant and revealing new book on one of my faves of all time: the inimitable Donny Hathaway. -- Michael Eric Dyson,

academic, author, and radio host

Emily J. Lordi is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and the author of *Black Resonance: Iconic Women Singers and African American Literature*. Her music and book reviews appear on such sites as Pitchfork, The Root, and the Los Angeles Review of Books.

I absolutely loved this book. Lordi's passion for the music paint a complex and beautiful narrative about Hathaway, and I learned so much more about him from reading this book. Lordi is one of those rare scholars whose writing draws from cultural, musicological and philosophical theoretical frameworks which she makes approachable and weaves into a beautifully written narrative.

Professor Lordi's take on Donny Hathaway, the man, the myth and the artist is a rare treat. She describes the music and the circumstances that led to the creation of the music equally well. It was a pleasure to immerse myself in Professor Lordi's prose about one of soul music's greatest titans.

Excellent book!

I was excited when I learned that this book, the first-ever non-fiction volume about Hathaway and his music, was being published, and Lordi admittedly does a strong job delineating Hathaway's influences, idiosyncratic approach to musical emotion and expression, and how his music intersected, both stylistically and ideologically, with black sociocultural concerns of the period. I also appreciated that the author didn't make it a book just about the tragic later circumstances of Hathaway's far-too-short life. But I'm only giving this three stars for one simple reason: The burden of being the first Hathaway book means Lordi has a lot on her plate, and as a result, "Donny Hathaway Live" the book ends up short-changing "Donny Hathaway Live" the album. It doesn't feel like enough of the volume is actually about the album it purports to chronicle; there's basically one chapter that's about the album itself and each song gets seemingly just a handful of paragraphs. Still, it's nice that someone has taken on Hathaway in the scholarly / critical realm in an in-depth way. Now here's hoping for a full-scope biography that also puts this album in fuller perspective.

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