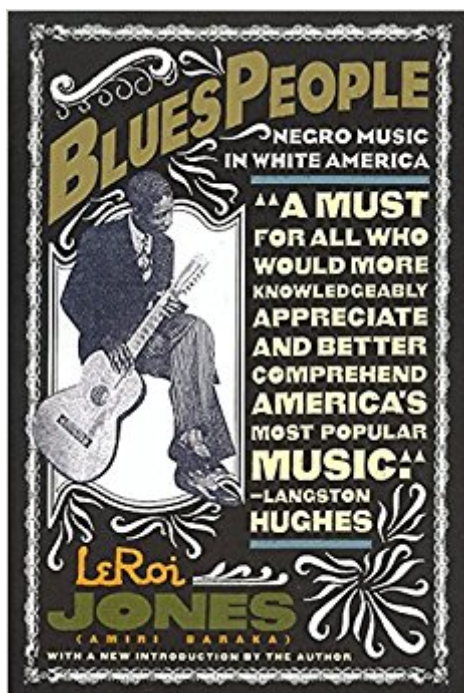


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# Blues People: Negro Music In White America



## Synopsis

"The path the slave took to 'citizenship' is what I want to look at. And I make my analogy through the slave citizen's music -- through the music that is most closely associated with him: blues and a later, but parallel development, jazz... [If] the Negro represents, or is symbolic of, something in and about the nature of American culture, this certainly should be revealed by his characteristic music." So says Amiri Baraka in the Introduction to *Blues People*, his classic work on the place of jazz and blues in American social, musical, economic, and cultural history. From the music of African slaves in the United States through the music scene of the 1960's, Baraka traces the influence of what he calls "negro music" on white America -- not only in the context of music and pop culture but also in terms of the values and perspectives passed on through the music. In tracing the music, he brilliantly illuminates the influence of African Americans on American culture and history.

## Book Information

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; 1 edition (January 20, 1999)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 068818474X

ISBN-13: 978-0688184742

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.6 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 44 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #19,047 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #1 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Blues](#)

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## Customer Reviews

"Blues People "is not only a fresh, incisively instructive reinterpretation of Negro music in America, but it is also curcially relevant to Negro-White relationships today."--Nat Hentoff"Blues People "is American musical history; it is also American cultural, economic, and even emotional history. It traces not only the development of the Negro music which affected white America, but also the Negro values which affected white America."--"Library Journal"

This extremely pertinent work will make a valuable addition to the musical and sociological

collections of public and academic libraries.

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the classic music history, *Blues People*, that propelled Jazz Studies into the college curriculum. 50 years ago, university scholars did not allow their students to study Blues and Jazz; but outside of school a young LeRoi Jones was introduced to the study of the Blues at the home library of Professor Sterling Brown, the renowned Blues School poet. In some ways *Blues People* is the product of a young writer searching for his own voice in the poetic insights of the music. Students may study the path from LeRoi Jones and *Blues People* to Amiri Baraka and *Digging: The Afro-American Soul of American Classical Music* by way of "*Black Music*" and "*The Music*" in the middle of that trajectory. This October the Schomburg Center will host the symposium: *Blues People: 50 Years Later* with Amiri Baraka, Ingrid Monson and John Szwed. check it out on the First Thursday series in Harlem.

If you already get the big picture about blues, jazz, or are a listener, this is a good book to read to gain an even more intricate knowledge about the history, development, and sentiment of blues and jazz in America. If you are a total blues or jazz noobie, this book is not very thorough and tends to focus on more detailed subjects, you might find yourself lost, or juggling with different genres, time periods, and people. Personally, after reading this book, I saw a side of blues that I never knew and thus am more careful about what I call blues, or jazz. Since the book was written around the 60's, the book ends about around bebop, or rock n' roll.

Amiri Baraka (aka Leroy Jones) wrote a book about the move from Africa to slavery and from slavery to citizenship, and from "African to Negro" in his words. As music was the most profound artistic expression of this move, Baraka analyses each stage of social change through the music it produced. As Baraka concentrates on the process, he does not put any emphasis on names and details of the musicians. The book is not in any way a list of "who's who in Blues or Jazz". The book is critical of American mainstream culture, describing it as shallow and un-creative. Baraka observes that Blacks who have tried to belong to the mainstream (white) society have not been able to produce any music of value. He believes that their rejection of their Blues (slavery) roots made them too shallow and un-creative as the society they wanted to join. Baraka is most knowledgeable of Bebop and its developments up to free Jazz, as they are the closest to his generation. He is admittedly less connected to country blues, which for him expresses the first stage in the post slavery black society. The book is magnificent in its originality and boldness. I think it is essential

reading for anyone interested in African American music and/or culture.

A very interesting read that very covers the origin and development of a number of genres of music in America and their place in culture. Something to note is that a significant portion of the book is framed around racial issues (as you would expect from the title), and Mr. Jones can take a pretty venomous tone when referring to American history and culture.

Good read and an unfamiliar (musical) view of "Negro" history

Received just as shown in the picture!

Great reference of Black American Music History!

good book.

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