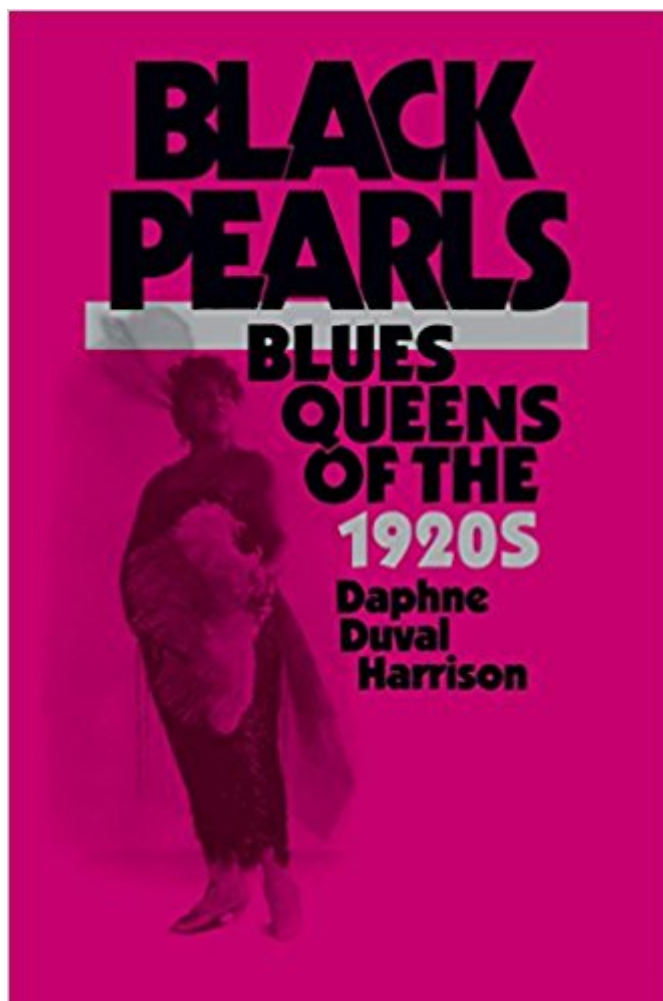


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# Black Pearls: Blues Queens Of The 1920s



## Synopsis

Throughout the 1920s, in tents, theaters, dance halls and cabarets, and on "race" records, black American women captivated large audiences with their singing of the blues. University of Maryland professor Harrison examines the subjects and texts of their songs, the toll these performers paid for their right to be heard, and what they did to transform a folk tradition into a popular art. She describes the singing and lifestyles of Sippie Wallace, Victoria Spivey, Edith Wilson and Alberta Hunter to illustrate how they introduced a new model of the black woman: assertive and sexy, gutsy yet tender, bereft but not downtrodden, exploited but not resentful, independent yet vulnerable. The author shows that their choice of performing style, inflection, emphasis and improvisation provided a perspective and expressiveness that profoundly affected later American popular music.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Rutgers University Press; Reprint edition (March 1, 1988)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0813512808

ISBN-13: 978-0813512808

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #384,660 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #88 in [Books > Arts &](#)

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## Customer Reviews

Throughout the 1920s, in tents, theaters, dance halls and cabarets, and on "race" records, black American women captivated large audiences with their singing of the blues. "Harrison examines the subjects and texts of their songs, the toll these performers paid for their right to be heard, and what they did to transform a folk tradition into a popular art," said PW. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Blues music spawned legendary performers whose influence has been felt in many musical forms here and around the world. Until now the important role of the great women blues singers has

largely gone unexplored. This book tells of the cultural and social impact of the blues during the 1920s when the genre was dominated by women, both on stage and on record. Harrison (Afro-American Studies Department, University of Maryland) writes with authority, focusing particularly on Sippie Wallace, Edith Wilson, Victoria Spivey, and Alberta Hunter as she analyzes the music and the collective black experience out of which it grew. A significant book, particularly for collections of music history, black studies, and women's studies. Daniel J. Lombardo, Jones Lib., Amherst, Mass. Copyright 1988 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

This was a great, look at the early history of Blues music. A must for folks interested in important figures in music in general (without the Blues, there'd be no Rock) and wondering where all the ladies are.

Great!

Did you know that women were the first popular blues singers? Black Pearls explores the pioneering women who in the 20's changed the record industry and music as we know it. Having read a few blues books by now, I found that portions in the introductory sections lacked the sort of awe-inspiring insight that makes for an excellent blues book. And my attention span had me skipping half-way through the chapter on lyrical analysis. However, once I got to the sections that focus on the individual performers, this book excelled. There are many who seem hellbent on denying these particular women a hallowed place in the history of popular music (read Alan Lomax's brief dismissal of the classic blues era in his "The Land Where the Blues Began"), but Harrison's prodigious biographical and musical insights really open the door to a greater appreciation of the women she features. As a companion, I might suggest the cd "Classic Blues Women" by Rhino Records.

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