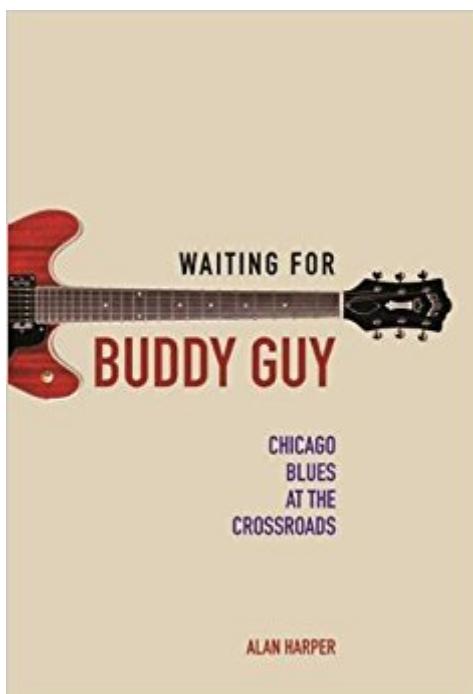


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Waiting For Buddy Guy: Chicago Blues At The Crossroads (Music In American Life)



Synopsis

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, British blues fan Alan Harper became a transatlantic pilgrim to Chicago. "I've come here to listen to the blues," he told an American customs agent at the airport, and listen he did, to the music in its many styles, and to the men and women who lived it in the city's changing blues scene. Harper's eloquent memoir conjures the smoky redoubts of men like harmonica virtuoso Big Walter Horton and pianist Sunnyland Slim. Venturing from stageside to kitchen tables to the shotgun seat of a 1973 Eldorado, Harper listens to performers and others recollect memories of triumphs earned and chances forever lost, of deep wells of pain and soaring flights of inspiration. Harper also chronicles a time of change, as an up-tempo, whites-friendly blues eclipsed what had come before, and old Southern-born black players held court one last time before an all-conquering generation of young guitar aces took center stage.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Like a great concert that makes you want the owner to leave the bar open for one more round, one more encore. A tip of the pork pie hat to Alan Harper."--American Blues Scene "Harper's book, packed with interviews with club owners, musicians and magazine editors, and illuminated throughout by his own thoughtful and sensitive reactions to the many gigs he attends all over the city, is as enlightening as it is racy, as much an unblinking (and often engagingly self-deprecating) eyewitness account, full of telling detail, as an intriguing social history, dealing with such burning

issues as authenticity, racial politics, music-industry practices, the difficulties of making a living as a blues player in an increasingly rock-dominated world."-- London Jazz News"Harper absorbed Chicago blues utterly and wholly, and in this gem of a book, he imparts his passion and knowledge in a witty, intelligent, revealing and honest manner. It's a real page-turner."--Record Collector "Part memoir, part history and part. . . bluesological lament for a time and place that we will never see again."--Goldmine"Harper's memoir is beautifully wrought, and populated with an array of vivid and memorable charactersâ | Flecked with insight, wit and warmth, it proves to be an evocative portrait of a bygone era."--MOJO "Harper shares his stories of searching for the blues in Chicago in his crisply told, energetic, and vibrant memoir."--No Depression Â

Encounters with blues royalty

I have been waiting for this book for decades: An actual book offering a snapshot of the Chicago Blues Scene from 1979 to 1982 approximately with some background of the years before in straight English not academia! This is non-stop reading. It offers a great candid portrait of the musicians, record labels, blues bars of Chicago as experienced and written by an English fan during that period of time. Why he chose to sit on this book for 35 years of so, who knows. This is non-stop reading for any fan of classic Chicago Blues.

I have been a drummer in Chicago blues bands since 1976. So it was good to relive those days. It brought back lots of memories. People here in Chicago take this music for granted, but visitors from other countries seem to appreciate it more. Alan's book is very informative on the many blues bands of the time and many who are sadly no longer with us.

A charming tale of a youth spent chasing music.

Fun read. Good education on blues greats, from a forgotten time.

Very interesting read about Chicago Blues in the 70's and 80's.

From the cover image of a Guild Starfire IV guitar and throughout this 110-page book, this is a good read about interesting times in the history of Chicago blues. A book of this kind does not come out very often, since the number of fans in the blues audience does not always justify all that's involved

in getting a book in print, from a publisher's standpoint. This book has the unique perspective of someone from another country who came to Chicago in the late 1970s and early 1980s to hear the music and the stories from a great variety of blues artists and others involved with the music, such as bar owners and record company owners. I am very familiar with the music of this period, since I also was seeing the artists play live and listening to their records during the times mentioned. In fact, I still listen to those records, and also the CDs which came later, that contain some of the greatest recorded blues, to my ears. Sadly, many of the artists have passed on, but their recorded works are close at hand, and some are still with us and recording. One of my major reasons for buying this book was for any glimpse into the life and music of Jimmy Dawkins whose music had great effect on me. Others that impressed me included: Son Seals; Eddy Clearwater; Luther Allison; Otis Rush; Jimmy Johnson; Maurice John Vaughn; Lonnie Brooks; and Buddy Guy, for examples. While I recommend this book for any blues fan, I did not give it five stars due to the author's critiques of a few of my personal favorite blues artists where I have different points-of-view. The blues is still very much with us and is not going away. There are many day-to-day subjects in this old world that lend themselves to this musical form. As we live, experiencing life's ups and downs, thankfully there is a soulful outlet that will help us get through. Do you feel it?

The author is a serious fan. I'm married to a long-term record collector and know many others (including one who taught himself Swedish, the better to appreciate early Abba), but none like this. Alan Harper has never thrown a ticket away. He knows the dates, venues and who was performing at every gig he attended in Chicago. He helpfully provides these in an appendix to this excellent book, so if you were there, or think you might have been but have forgotten the details, this is the book for you. It is emphatically not a book of lists for blues nerds, however. I bought the book on spec, wondering if it would be suitable for my husband's birthday. After the debacle with the Alex Harvey very rare, vgc, album I bought last year for too much money (he already had it), I was hoping to find something music-related that would extend his collecting instincts in a new direction. Blues, as the basis of rock, seemed an appropriate choice. The hardback edition looked giftable, but I wasn't prepared to shell out the money without a preview, hence the paperback. I only intended to flick through it, but from the first page, I was hooked: I made my way to the Holland Tunnel at the start of Interstate 78 and stuck out my thumb. It was a beautiful morning. I was twenty years old. Thus begins a fabulously evocative journey that would horrify the parents of today's gap-year youngsters. We learn a lot about the blues in this book. More knowledgeable music reviewers than I have commented favourably on Harper's

expertise, but I found myself transported more by his descriptions of people and places, not forgetting the wonderful selection of the author's photographs. The English author and American publisher juggle the transatlantic cultural references with ease. The publisher rightly won the toss regarding the spelling, but there are numerous equal-opportunity footnotes, so those of us already familiar with the Hammersmith Odeon learn of the now-demolished Regal Theatre, for example. Nobody is told what 'taking the piss' or trainspotting are, which I rather liked. The footnotes also, as you would expect, list the music references in full, and I was inspired to start my own blues collection by Harper's enthusiasm for B.B. King's 'Live at the Regal'. So who should buy this book? A 'yes' response to any of these questions and it's for you: Are you in your 50s or older? Have you ever been to a live gig? Do you think you know Chicago? Would you like to know Chicago better? Did you do a gap year? Do you remember opening a pub door and not being able to see through the smoke to the bar? Do you remember when the bottles the roadies put on the stage were anything but mineral water? Did you hitchhike? Do you wish you'd been brave enough to hitchhike? Are you a radio or TV producer in search of a ready-made series? All it needs is the soundtrack. There are even recordings of the interviews on the accompanying website [...] In his epilogue, Alan Harper identifies three types of music writer: the fan with a typewriter, the fan who is an academic and the fan who is a journalist. He may have begun his journey as the fan with a typewriter and aspirations to write a scholarly work, but had he not shelved the project while acquiring his undoubted skills as a communicator of specialist knowledge to the general reader, this would have become a very different and far less interesting book.

An incredible eyewitness insight to the crossroads of old-new Chicago blues. The photos are extraordinary and take us along on a really good ride. Alan is a master craftsman, and his passion for the music and its musicians is obvious.

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