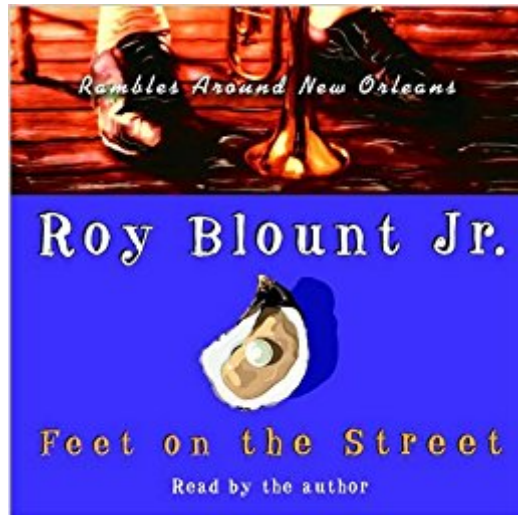


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Feet On The Street:: Rambles Around New Orleans



Synopsis

“Betcha I can tell ya / Where ya / Got them shoooes. / Betchadollar, / Betchadollar, / Where ya / Got them shoooes. / Got your shoes on your feet, / Got your feet on the street, / And the street—’s in Noo / Awlins, Loo- / Eez-ee-anna. Where I, for my part, first ate a live oyster and first saw a naked woman with the lights on. . . . Every time I go to New Orleans I am startled by something.” So writes Roy Blount Jr. in this exuberant, character-filled saunter through a place he has loved almost his entire life—a city “like no other place in America, and yet (or therefore) the cradle of American culture.” Here we experience it all through his eyes, ears, and taste buds: the architecture, music, romance (yes, sex too), historical characters, and all that glorious food. The book is divided into eight Rambles through different parts of the city. Each closes with lagniappe—a little bit extra, a special treat for the reader: here a brief riff on Gennifer Flowers, there a meditation on naked dancing. Roy Blount knows New Orleans like the inside of an oyster shell and is only too glad to take us to both the famous and the infamous sights. He captures all the wonderful and rich history—culinary, literary, and political—of a city that figured prominently in the lives of Jefferson Davis (who died there), Truman Capote (who was conceived there), Zora Neale Hurston (who studied voodoo there), and countless others, including Andrew Jackson, Lee Harvey Oswald, William Faulkner, Tennessee Williams, Jelly Roll Morton, Napoleon, Walt Whitman, O. Henry, Thomas Wolfe, Earl Long, Randy Newman, Edgar Degas, Lillian Hellman, the Boswell Sisters, and the Dixie Cups. Above all, though, *Feet on the Street* is a celebration of friendship and joie de vivre in one of America’s greatest and most colorful cities, written by one of America’s most beloved humorists.

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Customer Reviews

In this brief walking tour of New Orleans, Blount (Robert E. Lee; Be Sweet) spins an atmospheric, pleasantly meandering tale about a city he clearly knows and loves. Rather than offer up the standard guidebook-style list of things for tourists to do, Blount divides the book into eight "rambles," because "New Orleans is my favorite place in the world to ramble. Even on those deep-summer days that make a person feel swathed in slowly melting hamfat." Blount's yarns will make readers want to visit the city, soak up the mood and create their own memories. Even something as simple as a rain shower reads like a possible adventure: "It can rain so hard in New Orleans that you expect to see alligators bouncing off the pavement ... Also dramatic in their way are the soft showers of the early evening, sometimes arriving spookily in full sunshine from no clouds at all." Of course, even the most unconventional guide to the Big Easy would be incomplete without a mention of the city's food, and Blount devotes an entire ramble to raw oysters, which he says "give you a coolish inner lining collateral to the sheen that New Orleans humidity gives your skin." Blount's New Orleans isn't sugar-coated; it's at times wistful, melancholy and even dangerous. But all this combines to give the reader the impression that anything can happen in New Orleans, which is precisely the author's point. Those looking for a nontraditional portrait of this unconventional city will be delighted by Blount's colorful, almost tender account. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Blount, a well-known humorist, commentator, and biographer (Robert E. Lee 2003), contributes to the Crown Journeys series of travelogues an example of the best kind of travel-reading experience: when good writers perambulate through and around places they know and understand, and, in Blount's case, that place is the city of New Orleans. His observations and descriptions of interesting places within the city and his reflections on general and specific attitudes to be found there are both celebratory ("the best town for eating in America") and honest ("the city is hardly a model of racial harmony"). He makes several stops in his guided tour, taking time to ponder such topics as the frightening fact that New Orleans lies below sea level, the constant feel of wetness from the persistent rain and humidity, eating raw oysters as a "rite of passage," and, of course, the superabundance of characters--eccentric individuals who seem drawn to the Crescent City like

moths to the flame. Brad HooperCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved
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Don't visit the Crescent City without first reading this offering from the great Roy Blount, Jr.! He guides you clear of the tourist "traps" and steers you straight toward what makes this old city so magical . . . the people! Oh, the section on "I can tell you where you got your shoes"? That saved me money and trouble not :45 minutes into my first walkabout!

I ran into Roy Blount Jr. in a small used bookstore on Dauphine Street in the French Quarter. Immediately afterwards I downloaded this book. Each page was narrated by his drawly voice providing insight in the place and people of The Crescent City. The book was as genuine and interesting as the author.

Having traveled to New Orleans twice (in different company), it was great to revisit familiar places through the mind's eye, and to benefit from Roy Blount, Jr.'s perspective of his "adopted" favorite town. A more personalized version of the Crown Journeys books than most, but very enjoyable.

Roy Blount jr's conversational and personal vignettes make a compelling read for first time visitors and frequent Traveller's to the crescent city. Highly recommended.

I own the book and the CD. This book takes you right down the streets. Roy Blount Jr. makes you feel like you are right there with him. This really makes you smile. I love driving and listening to his book.

Roy Blount is appropriately known for his humor, which suffuses this short book of walking tours of New Orleans. This is no typical book of walking tours however - it's more about the personalities (both human and establishment-wise, since each restaurant he visits certainly has its own personality as well) to be found along the way. Blount revels in the uniqueness of New Orleans' culture and introduces the reader to some local traditions. The walking tours, called "rambles" are not centered around certain areas of town or types of architecture, but rather themes such as "oysters" or "desire." Within each short chapter on these themes, Blount rambles through local restaurants that tie to the theme in some way, recounts stories from movies or literature that are relevant as well, and shares unusual conversations he's had with local characters that underscore

how this city is both maddening and inescapable for those who love her.

I had picked up this book expecting it to be something along the lines of an updated WPA City Guide, only much, much shorter. Turns out to be more a guide for tourists written by a tourist. There is nothing terribly internal or revealing about the book. I gave up about half-way through. I found nothing new or revealing, or a discussion of any venue not listed in a Lonely Planet type of guide. Blount seems to obsess on alleged New Orleans features that are foisted on tourists but reasonably unknown to the locals. For examples, his insistence on referring to sidewalks as banquettes, perhaps is a nice way of hearkening back to the image created by the likes of Lyle Saxon and others, but having lived in New Orleans for quite a while now, I cannot recall hearing the word ever come up in casual conversation. In sum, I doubt Blount's book sounds terribly authentic to most New Orleans residents of the neighborhoods of which he writes. I suspect a reader who visited New Orleans tourist spots alone, read guides from those venues, or has a romanticized notion of the city might find the book as a pleasant memento or a gift to introduce someone to a rather idealized/stereotypical view of the city. Other than that, I am not certain who the intended audience might be.

Bottom Line. Were I not originally from New Orleans and a fan of the place I might have given Feet on the Street 4 stars. But hearing Roy Blount read his *À l'ambule* is worth that extra star. The CD is as much a series of biographical sketches as they are a travel guide to New Orleans. For me they engendered many feeling of nostalgia plus smiles at his adventures. The material favors adults. The references to nudity, sex and drinking are gentle enough but too frequent to make this an every family member listen. What exactly is a parent supposed to tell a child about a woman seen and heard on Bourbon Street, lurching merrily between two men and declaiming *À l'ambule* "My hole hurts!" *À l'ambule* • So not exactly for the youngest. Then again I think that New Orleans should be preserved as an adult vacation spot. My fear is that the New Orleans of Post Katrina has speeded the processes of becoming too much like everywhere else and without keeping enough of the quirky personality that made it such a fun place to visit. Feet on the Street is highly recommended. First time visitors are cautioned to check ahead to see which of the restaurants and bars highlighted here still exist. There are also a few factual errors. Mostly they are the kinds of mistakes that out of towners can never get right. Besides in New Orleans you can believe the Historians or you can believe the stories you Momma tells ya.

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