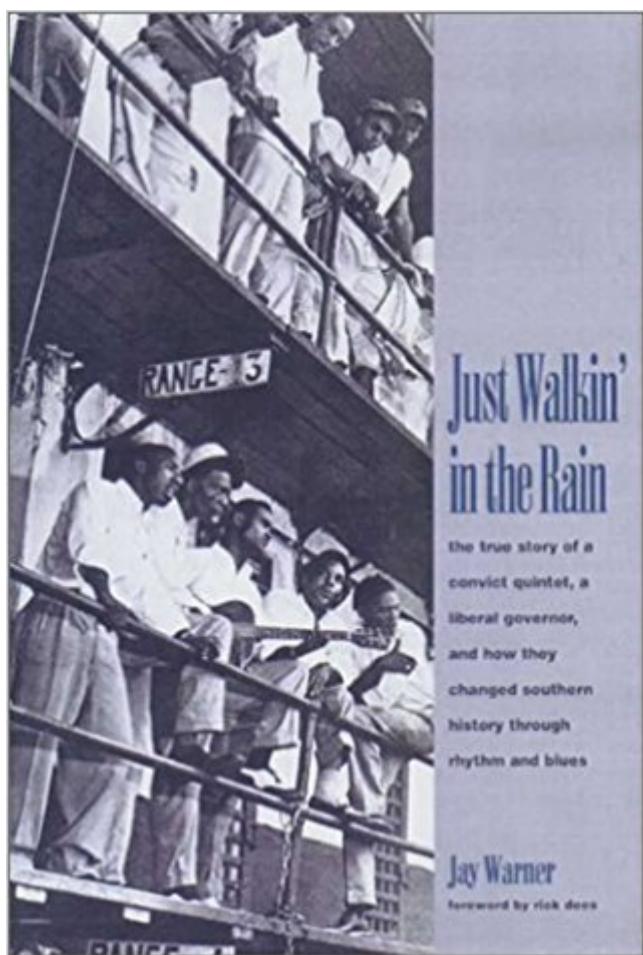


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# Just Walkin' In The Rain: The True Story Of The Prisonaires: The Convict Pioneers Of R & B And Rock & Roll



## Synopsis

The cold steel slam of a cell door. The soul-crushing fate of a life in prison with no possibility of parole for a crime you didn't commit. Such were the prospects facing Johnny Bragg, a humble musician from rural Tennessee who led a life that reads like a novel. Johnny and his fellow inmates in the 1950's-era R&B music group the Prisonaires had four strikes against them. They were poor, uneducated, imprisoned, and Black. They were also largely innocent of their crimes. Their gut-wrenching story is one of courage in the face of impossible odds, and salvation amidst the harsh realities of racial injustice and prison brutality. Championed by then Tennessee governor Frank Clement as an example of the possibility of prison reform, and asked to sing at the Governor's Mansion, the Prisonaires were more than just pioneers who built the foundation of modern R&B. Behind the soulful tenor of their leader, Johnny Bragg, the group was living proof that anyone can survive and overcome nightmarish adversity. Just Walkin' in the Rain is a book for all audiences who want to delve into one of the most inspiring chapters in musical history. You'll read how Elvis was influenced by the group's amazing sound. You may be stunned to discover that Johnny Bragg wrote the legendary song "Just Walkin' in the Rain" and the Hank Williams classic, "Your Cheatin' Heart."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

In 1943, 16-year-old Johnny Bragg was sentenced to six consecutive life terms in the Tennessee State Prison for raping his girlfriend. Rather than wither in anger, the teenager joined the prison's

gospel group, the Prisonaires, and wrote the hits "Just Walkin' in the Rain" and "Rolling Stone." (None other than Elvis Presley was a fan of the group's vocal style.) Warner, a Grammy Award-winning music publisher and author of *The Billboard Book of American Singing Groups, 1940-1990*, relates Bragg's tale with sensitivity. Most intriguing is his coverage of Bragg's relationship with progressive white prison warden James Edwards and former Governor of Tennessee Frank Clement, who pardoned Bragg in 1959. The two officials unabashedly believed that rehabilitation was in everyone's best interest, and Bragg's story demonstrates why. Recommended for music libraries, especially those in the South, as well as social science collections. DWilliam G. Kenz, Minnesota State Univ., Moorhead Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Jay Warner is a six-time Grammy Award winning music publisher and writer. A devoted musical historian, he is the author of *Billboard's Book of American Singing Groups* and *How to Have Your Hit Song Published*. He resides in Los Angeles.

Great book, an amazing story. The book is in like new condition, and at a great price. What can I say? I would recommend this Seller to anyone who is thinking of buying something from them.

Johnny Bragg was wrongly accused of rape. While in jail he was wrongly accused of 4 more rapes. The original charge was dropped, when girl admitted she lied. He was sentenced to 4 life sentences. Wound up in Tenn. State Prison. Thanks to the liberal policies of GOV. Frank Clement, Johnny & his group ( The Prisonaires ) were allowed to leave the prison to record at Sun Studios and perform at various shows. Johnny Bragg wrote and recorded " JUST WALKIN' IN THE RAIN. " Most people think that Johnny Ray was the first to record this song. Believe it or not, he was paroled twice.

Great story about a great group!

"Just Walkin' In the Rain" - the story of an amazing, graced life. Not often can a story about a rock and roll legend be called 'inspirational'. The tragedy of rock genius thrown into the propellers spans the decades from Johnny Act to Kurt Cobain. But the story of Johnny Bragg is, indeed, one that offers hope for all, no matter where life has taken you. And it's told wonderfully by rock historian Jay Warner in his new book, "Just Walkin' In The Rain", named after the Johnny Ray hit written by

Bragg. With a false accusation of rape made by a girlfriend which led to convictions on six 99 year sentences, surviving to near middle age might have been more than he could have expected. (Bragg was a poor Black man fighting the Tennessee Judicial System in the 50's.) Instead, his musical ability brought him together with an inmate singing group which he would rename "The Prisonaires". His talent brought a polish to the group's sound. Their work led Governor Frank Clement ( a Southern liberal Democrat, of all things) to become the group's greatest advocate (and Bragg's personal patron saint) in order to prove that all men, regardless of their past, were capable of redemption. And the Governor's effort to showcase the group at numerous state functions led to radio appearances and, ultimately, a career as hit recording artists...and encounters with everyone from Elvis to Margaret Truman...all while in prison. Bragg's story is a wild ride that Warner details with expertise and love. Everytime that it looks like Bragg has been dealt nothing but 3's and 8's, an ace or two always seems to wind up in his hand, so continually does a Divine hand appear to be intervening in his life. To be sure, the racial climate of the South at that time and Bragg's own worst tendencies keep this from having a Frank Capra ending. Still, if you're looking for a story that shows how misfortune can often be the first sign of a miracle (or if you want to check out an essential part of rock's beginnings), this is it! I

They were a short-lived '50s singing group made up of five jailbirds: a man in for larceny, a convicted rapist and three assorted killers. Although signed to a legendary label, Sun Records, they never scored once on the pop or R&B hit parades. And that despite the fact that they introduced "Just Walkin' In The Rain" -- a song that would later sell a million copies when recorded by Johnnie Ray, the over-the-top pop singer often billed as "The Prince Of Wails." On the surface, it would certainly appear that The Prisonaires never really amounted to much -- and were, at best, a mini-footnote in pop history. Enter master musicologist Jay Warner, one of the few in his field with the tenacity, drive and investigative skills needed to unravel the mystery of The Prisonaires' nearly 50-year old hidden story. Now, for the first time ever, the quintet's amazing, eye-opening saga has been revealed in painstaking detail in Warner's latest literary labor of love. To paraphrase Paul Harvey, just wait 'til you discover "the rest of the story." -- Gary Theroux, Music Editor, Reader's Digest

one of those stories you have to read to believe and still and still very real in this day and age even in the DNA era of the law, still this is something else. what a important musical figure and the stories that emerged through these songs and getting another chance. this is a must read indeed.

Warner has proven himself to be an enthusiast with a questionable grasp of solid information. Bragg was/is a talented songwriter and claimer of credit for all sorts of creative efforts ("Hank Williams bought my songs" - that sort of thing - more than Bragg have claimed authorship of some of Hank's songs so that's hardly a major revelation.). For instance, Bragg is portrayed as a coach and confidant of Elvis, for example. .... The story of Bragg is of bad and racially biased law enforcement of the 1940s and 1950s and of his inevitable imprisonment followed by constant visits of his group the Prisonaires to various concerts at the governor's home. The first few trips that Warner portrays are of interest, the final twenty or so start to drag...oh yeah, the group sang at the governor's mansion - so what else is new? And bringing Elvis on the scene with an attempt to portray suspense just falls flat - badly. The life of Bragg is an interesting magazine piece, but hardly a book.

I picked this book up as an assignment for my Popular American Music class, but have found a tremendous amount of admiration for a man who made lemonade out of lemons. I have learned a lot about a man who led a group of men to great achievements despite their lack of freedom and limited resources. I definitely recommend this to anyone who appreciates learning about a musician who truly sang for his freedom.

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