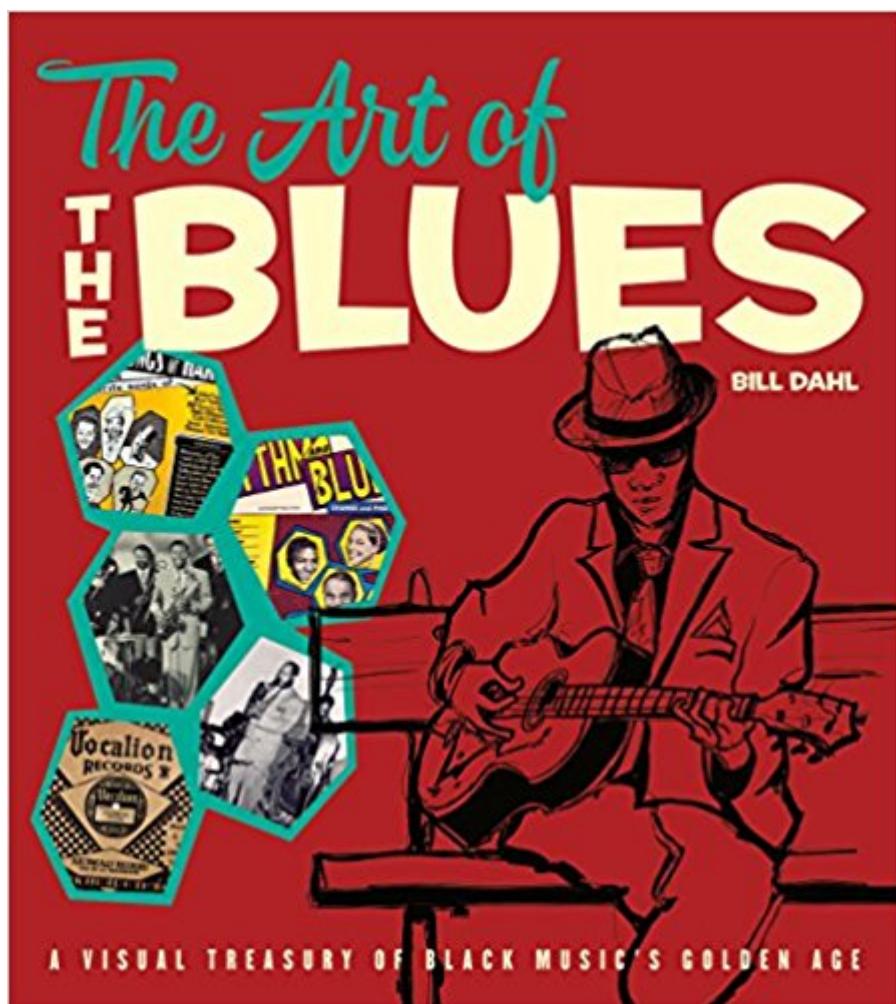


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# The Art Of The Blues: A Visual Treasury Of Black Music's Golden Age



## Synopsis

This stunning book charts the rich history of the blues, through the dazzling array of posters, album covers, and advertisements that have shaped its identity over the past hundred years. The blues have been one of the most ubiquitous but diverse elements of American popular music at large, and the visual art associated with this unique sound has been just as varied and dynamic. There is no better guide to this fascinating graphical world than Bill Dahl— a longtime music journalist and historian who has written liner notes for countless reissues of classic blues, soul, R&B, and rock albums. With his deep knowledge and incisive commentary— complementing more than three hundred and fifty lavishly reproduced images— the history of the blues comes musically and visually to life. What will astonish readers who thumb through these pages is the amazing range of ways that the blues have been represented— whether via album covers, posters, flyers, 78 rpm labels, advertising, or other promotional materials. We see the blues as it was first visually captured in the highly colorful sheet music covers of the early twentieth century. We see striking and hard-to-find label designs from labels big (Columbia) and small (Rhumboogie). We see William Alexander’s humorous artwork on postwar Miltone Records; the cherished ephemera of concert and movie posters; and Chess Records’ iconic early albums designed by Don Bronstein, which would set a new standard for modern album cover design. What these images collectively portray is the evolution of a distinctively American art form. And they do so in the richest way imaginable. The result is a sumptuous book, a visual treasury as alive in spirit as the music it so vibrantly captures.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Art of the Blues" celebrates the visual swagger of the blues simply for the sheer joy of those visuals. This exhaustive book, resplendent in a handsome crimson cover that's littered with a collage of artwork from the world of blues, is a rich tapestry of how art was used to push the blues as an undisputed king of music in its 20th century heyday. "The Art of the Blues" is a seemingly endless in its handsomeness and would be most welcome as not only a perfect accompaniment to your favourite blues LPs, but also as a sublime pictorial history of the blues itself." (PopMatters) "The great detail and high quality of hundreds of reproductions are a delight for blues fans and record collectors alike." (Jive Talk) "Art of the Blues provides a fascinating visual documentation of the music industry as well as insight into American culture. It's difficult to quickly flip through this beautiful book because there are so many compelling images that deserve a closer look, whether it's a publicity portrait of a young Etta James (taken by Hollywood photographer John E. Reed) or the 78 label of Adam Bit the Apple, recorded by Big Joe Turner for Houston's Freedom Recording Co., which used the Statue of Liberty as part of its graphics." (Bobby Reed DownBeat) "The Art of the Blues will be a jewel in any blues fans library. It not only enhances the ability to understand and enjoy the music, it acts as a lavish historical document that will enrich anyone's understanding of American history and the blues place in our ever changing society. One may be tempted to buy multiple copies so the lavish images can be mounted individually for display; they're that high quality, and there are so many of them! The depth and quality of the images is almost overwhelming, providing the opportunity for discovery whether it's the initial or hundredth time the book is enjoyed." (Mark Baier Chicago Blues Guide) "This is a real visual masterpiece, recommended if you have a suitable coffee table to place it on to impress your mates when they drop round of an evening." (Blues & Rhythm)

Bill Dahl is a freelance music journalist who writes regularly for the Chicago Tribune, Living Blues, and Goldmine. He has written or cowritten liner notes for countless albums—including the boxed set, Ray Charles—Genius & Soul: The 50th Anniversary, for which he received a Grammy nomination. He is the author of Motown: The Golden Years.

Bill Dahl, long respected authority on blues music and musicians (along with art consultant Chris

James) has put together a visual feast for blues fans. Just remember, this book focuses on (as part of the title states) the "Golden Age" of the blues. There's virtually nothing on country blues or big city electric blues beyond noting some album covers/artists from those eras. The 9 1/2" X 11" book is a nice size to better appreciate the hundreds of color plates and b&w photos. Plus, every plate has a fairly lengthy caption so you can better understand what you're looking at. The reproductions are clean, crisp and vibrant. There's also a single (usually) page that has information on each chapter along with a few essays on other pertinent subjects. The visuals run the gamut from movie/concert posters, to ticket stubs, to sheet music, to album covers, to early 78 RPM record labels, plus many b&w photos of important musicians from the time. The period covered begins in the early part of the Twentieth Century and ends in the early 1960's. Beginning with minstrel bands, and singers like Bessie Smith and on into small combos and singers from the (roughly) first half of the Twentieth Century, Dahl has put in chronological order how the blues morphed throughout the years. Chapter subjects include sheet music, prewar race records, record catalogs, prewar 78 labels, music/movie posters, postwar blues 78 labels, two sections of album covers, a photo gallery, and a list of period publications with great color plates Jazz Information, In The Groove, Ebony Song Parade, and others. There's also a list of sources and an index. Color plates include both well and little known songs and rarely seen reproductions of sheet music, 78 labels, and other ephemera. Just as a few included examples are things like "The Jazz-Me Blues", "Fare-Thee Honey Blues", "Chippin' The Blues", and "Cabin In The Cotton" which are shown on original sheet music. There's a great ad for "Black Patti Record-Making Records", fairly rare labels from the Okeh, Sunshine, Gennett and other early labels, posters advertising "Sunday Sinner", "Boarding House Blues" (especially well done and beautiful), along with album covers including Hadda Brooks, Snooks Eaglin, Jimmy Yancey, Little Walter, Clarence Henry, Pee Wee Crayton, Mance Lipscomb, Smokey Hogg, Bobby "Blue" Bland, and Scrapper Blackwell. Plus photos of a number of blues performers like Sara Martin, Eva Taylor, the Royal Creolians Band (most killed in a later fire), the Memphis Jug Band, Mabel Scott, Danny Overbea (a rockin' Chess artist who came before Chuck Berry) from photographers like the Hooks brothers, and Raeburn Flerlage. While other books dealing with the blues genre have incorporated some of the artifacts included here, this is the first book to focus squarely on the visual side of the blues genre. Every page has something well worth your time if you're into this period of blues music and performers. There's many names you'll recognize and some you may not know. The text is informative and interesting. It's written in an easy to understand style and with a straightforward explanation of the blues through the years. But as I've said, this is a visual feast for the eyes of blues lovers. The many rarely seen color plates along with some of the photos is the reason to add

this book to your blues music shelf. And when you add the text, this is one book that's worth purchasing. No matter if you read this book cover to cover, or open it randomly you'll soon find yourself sucked in (as I was even after all these years of reading and collecting books about the blues) with the great graphics and accompanying text. I have no stake in this book, but I think you'll be in the good graces of any fan of early blues who receives this book as a present. I envy anyone who opens this book for the first time who is unaware of the vast visual treasures included between its covers. A valuable addition to your library of blues books.

What a great assembly of photos and descriptions. It is as advertised, "A Visual Treasury." Makes a terrific gift for a blues fan, too.

A new book from music researcher and writer Bill Dahl who's "Motown - The Golden Years" remains the best book on that subject yet written. Many music fans will also know Bill thru his amazing liner notes and curation of so many classic Bear Family releases. His new book is a wonderful visual treasury of the Blues. Kind of a scrapbook/coffee table book covering; sheet music, race record ads, record catalogs, labels, posters, album covers and photographs. The large format book is beautifully designed and printed, looks fabulous and benefits greatly with Dahl's authoritative and illuminating text. Even with my extensive collection of music books and memorabilia I have not seen much of what shows up in these pages. No fans of black music, blues or R&B will be disappointed by this book, guaranteed to be a big hit with any music buff, in fact, I have already purchased 4 copies for fellow music fans this holiday season.

EXCELLANT

Wonderful photos

As described.

Great visual history!

Bought this for my son, he loved it

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