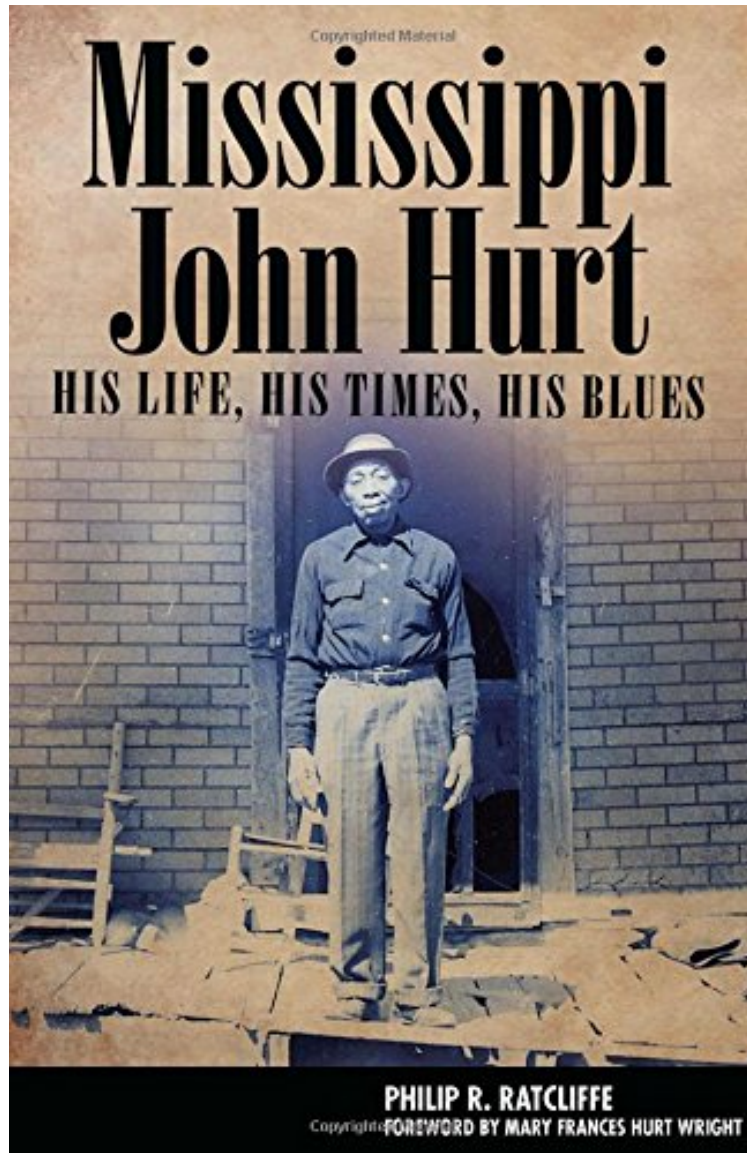


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Mississippi John Hurt: His Life, His Times, His Blues (American Made Music Series)

Philip R. Ratcliffe

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Philip R. Ratcliffe : Mississippi John Hurt: His Life, His Times, His Blues (American Made Music Series)

before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mississippi John Hurt: His Life, His Times, His Blues (American Made Music Series):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. The Roots of the Delta Blues!By Thomas E. BaldwinPublished as

part of the American Made Music series by the University Press of Mississippi, Mississippi John Hurt is a well written biography of legendary blues musician John Hurt by Philip R. Ratcliffe. Tracing Hurt's family back to slavery days, Ratcliffe gives us the background which must be a part of any study of blues music. It also gives us a view of music in the middle of the last century. The music industry today is based on music copyrights establishing authorship so that royalties can be paid. But, Hurt and the other musicians first recorded in the 1920's bent familiar melodies and changed words to fit their own styles and moods. For example, Hurt's recording of the familiar song "Frankie and Johnny," is about Frankie and Albert. John Hurt was a small, quiet, unassuming man from Avalon, Mississippi, which is just at the edge of the Mississippi delta. He was discovered in 1926 and made several records in Memphis and New York before the depression claimed all the recording companies. He went back to farming and was re-discovered in 1963 during the folk music revival. He went on tour at age 70 and died in 1966. John Hurt played the guitar by running a constant bass beat on the top three strings with his thumb, index, and middle fingers while playing a melody on the bottom three strings with his ring and little finger, sometimes plucking the frets above with his left hand. It's light and airy with none of the harsh, string stretching improvisation that came with electric guitars in the 1950's. His music would be categorized as Old Blues, i.e., part folk music, part blues, part African rhythm and style. He sounds more like Jimmie Rogers, the father of Country Music also recorded in 1926, than Muddy Waters or John Lee Hooker. Ratcliffe has given us a window into the society of Mississippi during the Jim Crow years, and it's nuanced. The Ku Klux Klan was an ever present threat to blacks who violated the strict segregation rules of the time, yet Hurt's family and friends describe a friendly rural area where the races lived together and cooperated in farming and logging. Their social lives revolved around their churches, segregated by race, and the local store, where the races mixed. Black and white people enjoyed John Hurt's singing and playing. I bought this book as research for my next book, Sliding Delta. A quest to find Mississippi John Hurt and learn to pick the Delta Blues takes a Chicago college boy south of Memphis in the summer of 1965. It's a coming of age historical novel about the delta, the blues, and The South. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Mississippi John Hurt and Johnny Carson By herbgart What devoted research. Ratcliffe spent a lot of time with John Hurt's family and friends. He learned a lot about John that helps make this book so valuable. His personal love and passion for Mississippi John Hurt's music was his motivation to write John Hurt's story. The only thing he missed was getting more of the flavor of John's career after being rediscovered by Tom Hoskins. Almost every word in this book is accurate and heartfelt. But there is one event that needs to be updated. When Mississippi John Hurt appeared on The Tonight Show in 1964, it was a historical moment in the history of Johnny Carson's career! John sat on a stool in front of the curtain and sang Nobody's Dirty Business and then in his warm and personal way, he said "I know you know this song. Please sing it with me," and he sang "You Are My Sunshine". By the end of the song the audience were in tears of joy, as was Johnny Carson. The audience gave him a standing ovation! Something that never happens on The Tonight Show! But because of a kind of mass hypnosis Mississippi John Hurt was not invited back to perform again! As hard as it is to believe, instead of seeing John Hurt sitting on a stool in front of the curtain, thousands of people saw him sitting on a bale of cotton! Thousands of letters, Telegrams and phone calls came in complaining about exploiting the old man and having him sit on a bale of cotton!!!! True story and one of the most incredible experiences Johnny Carson ever had on The Tonight Show!! You should buy this book and learn about the man and his music. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Labor of Love By Ron Dragano Unfortunately there's not a lot of information available for any in depth biography but leaving no stone unturned, the author presents all he could dig up and unearths some new tidbits of info that shed light on John. He provides background to place John in the context of his times, relations and environment and I now know more about railroad routes in rural Mississippi than I care to. But his point is well taken as he explains John's access to musical influences of the day that literally rode the rails into his world. The book is obviously a labor of love and those who love John will realize the limitations the author faced and the wonderful job he did within them.

Winner, Best History, 2012 Association for Recorded Sound Collections Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research When Mississippi John Hurt (1892-1966) was "rediscovered" by blues revivalists in 1963, his musicianship and recordings transformed popular notions of prewar country blues. At seventy-one he moved to Washington, D.C., from Avalon, Mississippi, and became a live-wire connection to a powerful, authentic past. His intricate and lively style made him the most sought after musician among the many talents the revival brought to light. Mississippi John Hurt provides this legendary creator's life story for the first time. Biographer Philip Ratcliffe traces Hurt's roots to the moment his mother Mary Jane McCain and his father Isom Hurt were freed from slavery. Anecdotes from Hurt's childhood and teenage years include the destiny-making moment when his mother purchased his first guitar for \$1.50 when he was only nine years old. Stories from his neighbors and friends, from both of his wives, and from his extended family round out the community picture of Avalon. US census records, Hurt's first marriage record in 1916, images of his first autographed LP record, and excerpts from personal letters written in his own hand provide treasures for fans. Ratcliffe details Hurt's musical influences and the origins of his style and repertoire. The author also relates numerous stories from the time of his success, drawing on published sources and many hours of interviews with people who knew Hurt well, including the late Jerry Ricks, Pat Sky, Stefan Grossman

and Max Ochs, Dick Spottswood, and the late Mike Stewart. In addition, some of the last photographs taken of the legendary musician are featured for the first time in Mississippi John Hurt.

About the Author Philip R. Ratcliffe is an independent ecological land-use consultant, a musician, and an ardent blues fan.