



Memphis Going Down: A Century of Blues, Soul and Rock 'n' Roll

James L. Dickerson

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For over one hundred years, Memphis, Tennessee, has been the center of musical innovation for American popular music. From W. C. Handy to Alberta Hunter and Lil Hardin Armstrong, in the early years, to B. B. King in the late 1940s, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis in the 1950s, to Otis Redding, Booker T. and the MGs, and Al Green in the 1960s and early 1970s, Memphis music sizzled with a level of creativity unrivaled in the history of American music. For four decades of the city's marvelous music history, author James L. Dickerson was at ground zero, first as a student rhythm and blues musician at the University of Mississippi, where his band made history by becoming the first all-white musical group to perform at a black Memphis nightclub, and then as a Memphis journalist and magazine publisher who had unparalleled access to many of the music greats of the latter half of the century. *Memphis Going Down* is told in the words of the record producers, performers, and songwriters themselves as they reflect on their lives and music and its impact on popular culture. You'll hear legendary record producers such as Chips Moman, Willie Mitchell, Sam Phillips, and Jim Stewart talk about the ups and downs of the industry. And you'll hear the artists themselves: Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Al Green, Bobby Womack, B. B. King, Bobby "Blue" Bland, Stevie Ray Vaughn, Rufus Thomas, members of the Box Tops, and the Fabulous Thunderbirds go one-on-one with the author in an effort to understand the mysteries of Memphis music. PUBLISHERS WEEKLY "Memphis native Dickerson sifts through more than 100 years of musical, political, and cultural heritage in this work of history-as-memoir to provide a captivating profile of the one-time murder capital of the world. Beginning with the impact of bluesman W.C. Handy in the early 1900s, Dickerson combines sordid tales of brothels, racism, and political corruption with the role Beale Street played in the simultaneous evolution of both the city and American music. Chapters spanning a decade at a time cover the early influence of blues women Alberta Hunter and Memphis Minnie, backwater politician E.H. Crump, the rise of Elvis Presley and Johnny Cash, the founding of the Sun and Stax record labels, famous artists drawn to Memphis (including U2, ZZ Top, and Stevie Ray Vaughan); and even fellow Memphians Justin Timberlake and former Survivor vocalist Jimi Jamison. Dickerson (Ashley Judd: *Crying on the Inside*) references personal connections—Elvis's father worked in a store owned by one of the author's family members—and first-person accounts of his own role in the Memphis music scene as a journalist overtake the final third of the book. Nevertheless, all musical cities deserve a biography this thorough. (March 2013)

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