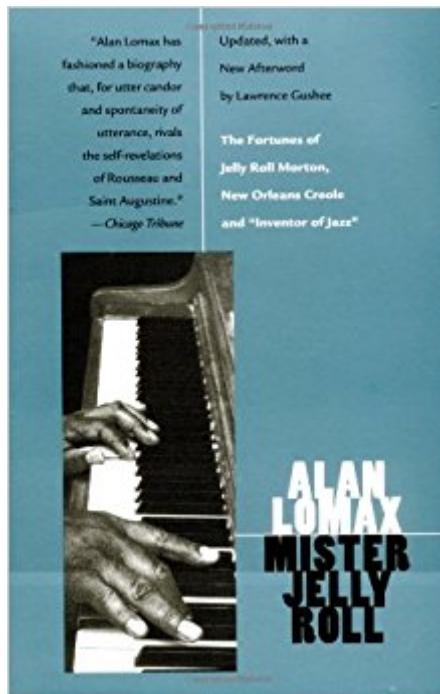


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Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes Of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole And "Inventor Of Jazz"



Synopsis

When it appeared in 1950, this biography of Ferdinand "Jelly Roll" Morton became an instant classic of jazz literature. Now back in print and updated with a new afterword by Lawrence Gushee, Mister Jelly Roll will enchant a new generation of readers with the fascinating story of one of the world's most influential composers of jazz. Jelly Roll's voice spins out his life in something close to song, each sentence rich with the sound and atmosphere of the period in which Morton, and jazz, exploded on the American and international scene. This edition includes scores of Jelly Roll's own arrangements, a discography and an updated bibliography, a chronology of his compositions, a new genealogical tree of Jelly Roll's forebears, and Alan Lomax's preface from the hard-to-find 1993 edition of this classic work. Lawrence Gushee's afterword provides new factual information and reasserts the importance of this work of African American biography to the study of jazz and American culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Unlike many works that Alan Lomax had has hand in, this book is great reading, if nothing more. I am not known to be a fan of Alan Lomax and his father as my review of _The Land Where the Blues Began_ attests, but at least Lomax realized what a treasure Jelly Roll Morton was and interviewed him and also had Morton create hours and hours of singing and piano music. This book offers a digest of hours and hours of interviews with Morton in the late 1930s when Morton was living in Washington. It is supplemented by some very useful interviews Lomax did with New Orleans

musicians and their families in the late 1940s. The New Orleans interviews provide very useful direct source material about the social and culture and professional milieu that both Creole and Black musicians in New Orleans Sprang from. A recently written critical review by a real scholar at the close of the book explains the great limitations of Lomax's selections and writings here. Lomax apparently knew little about the real history and processes of New Orleans jazz and life, so that a lot of questions that someone's interest in Morton's impact on music are not asked, not just in what Lomax selected to put in this book, but in the larger transcripts of Lomax's interviews and in the monologues Morton dictated to a stenographer as part of this project. Lomax's tendency is to seek out non-musical issues his stereotypical images of Blues and Jazz musicians call forth. This is quite unfortunate because to the end of his life, Morton had a very sophisticated and articulate understanding of music and was capable of serious discussion of jazz and blues in formal musical terminology. He was a person who seriously thought about music most of the time when he was not playing it.

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