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# Lady Sings The Blues The 50th Anniversary Edition (Harlem Moon Classics)



## Synopsis

Lady Sings the Blues is the fiercely honest, no-holds-barred autobiography of Billie Holiday, the legendary jazz, swing, and standards singing sensation. Taking the reader on a fast-moving journey from Holiday's rough-and-tumble Baltimore childhood (where she ran errands at a whorehouse in exchange for the chance to listen to Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith albums), to her emergence on Harlem's club scene, to sold-out performances with the Count Basie Orchestra and with Artie Shaw and his band, this revelatory memoir is notable for its trenchant observations on the racism that darkened Billie's life and the heroin addiction that ended it too soon. We are with her during the mesmerizing debut of "Strange Fruit"; with her as she rubs shoulders with the biggest movie stars and musicians of the day (Bob Hope, Lana Turner, Clark Gable, Benny Goodman, Lester Young, Coleman Hawkins, and more); and with her through the scrapes with Jim Crow, spats with Sarah Vaughan, ignominious jailings, and tragic decline. All of this is told in Holiday's tart, streetwise style and hip patois that makes it read as if it were written yesterday.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have a deep love and respect for some of the most influential female jazz and soul singers of our time, like Ella Fitzgerald, Sarah Vaughn, Dinah Washington, Carmen McRae, Lena Horne, and last but not least, Billie Holiday. In LADY SINGS THE BLUES, Holiday recalls some of the most resonant memories of her turbulent past--the good, the [mostly] bad and the [frequently] ugly. From the very start, Billie Holiday (birth name Eleanora Fagan) born to thirteen year old Sadie Fagan and

sixteen year old Clarence Holiday, had a very difficult life. The young girl saw much in the rough streets of Baltimore, Maryland, as a call girl, a jailbird and a spitfire with a vey hot temper. Billie didn't even consider a career in singing, and her introduction as a vocalist was (perhaps) accidental, but definitely fate. Her descent into drug addiction, jailtime, turbulent relationships (with both men and women) and the great antipathy she faced in the storm of racism, jealousy and gossip made for a very adverse life, on and off of the stage. Some of the greatest moments of her career are documented here, as told to writer William Dufty. We learn the stories behind songs like "Strange Fruit," that are songs she created and truly lived and experienced, before setting them to lyric and melody. Though, I never heard Billie Holiday's speaking voice, I heard it throughout this piece, and I can see why it was brought to the screen, as a film. I haven't seen it, so I honestly have no idea how well it translated as a movie, with Diana Ross. Though, I have heard it was fantastic. There is also a companion CD, that goes with the memoir, to mark the 50th anniversary of its original release (1956-2006). Perhaps that's why I had to take one star away from the package, as a whole.

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