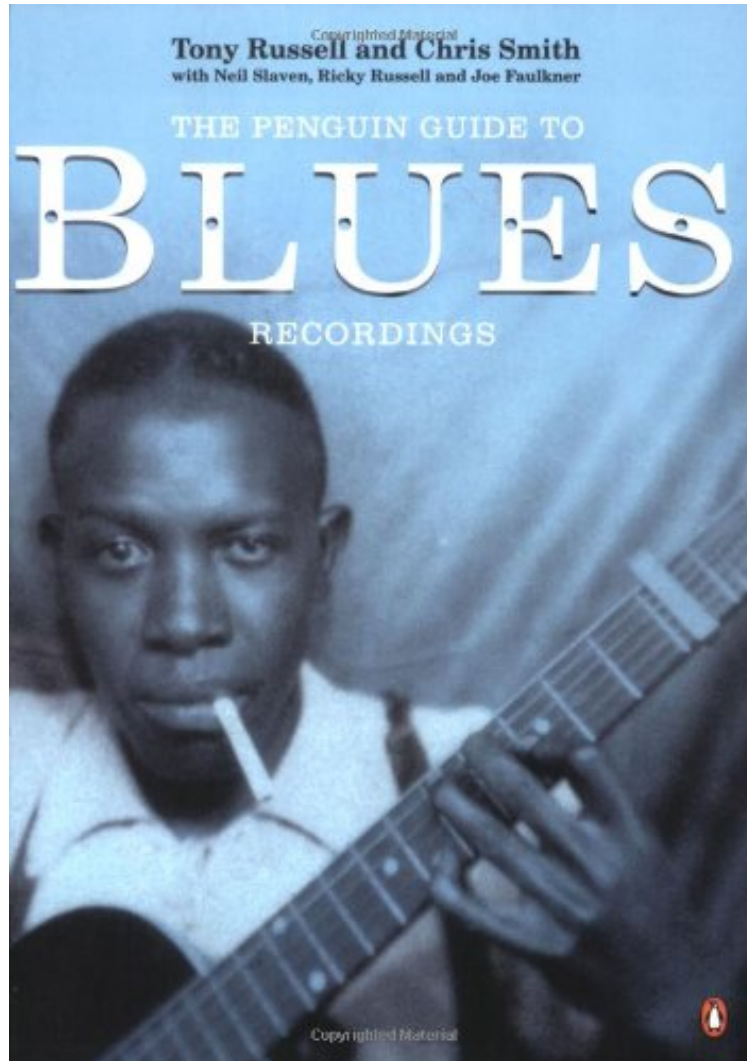


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The Penguin Guide to Blues Recordings

Tony Russell, Chris Smith

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Tony Russell, Chris Smith : The Penguin Guide to Blues Recordings before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Penguin Guide to Blues Recordings:

12 of 16 people found the following review helpful. Sometimes a very tough read By zphage The British version of this is a beautiful huge oversized book, US version is a standard fat trade paperback. The tone is dry, almost academic, and maybe a little British humor. The listings and research are very good. They cover rural and electric blues, pre war and post war BUT, they don't like most of what they review. Some of the writing is so unclear and dense, it comes across as Alan Greenspan writing/speaking about economics. If you want to know what artist to check out and if a CD/album is good don't come here. This book is not a good first choice, but a great second choice for serious blues fans looking for some challenging reading. This book will supplement the much more reader friendly ALLMUSIC GUIDE TO

THE BLUES very nicely. 0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Good but not better than All Music Guide. By KASHIWAGood, newer book of Blues rated recordings. With that said, it lacks the more variety of artists and listed CDs as found in All Music Guide. 2 of 3 people found the following review helpful. arguing with myself over the Penguin Guide. By Tiny tunes I'm arguing with the "Penguin Guide to Blues" which is incredibly frustrating. Nary a mention of Bo Diddley other than mentioning a few albums and lines like this, "Bo Diddley's songs are essentially chants over rhythm tracks". How about that to sum up one of the great influences in popular music, not many artists created a lick that (I realize the lick predates Bo...) that artists continue to cover for 50+ years. Here, they write more about George Thorogood than Diddley. (They mention George The Fabulous Thunderbirds, but no ZZ Top? Come on, they are soaked in blues and surpass both George the Fab's entire repertoire in the lines "Jesus just left Chicago, and he's headed for New Orleans"--let alone the guitar work on "My Head's in Mississippi") They also review about 5 of Clapton's albums (all of his crappy later albums and not even mentioning his best blues work, Derek and the Dominoes) saying he "reinvented the vocabulary of guitar playing to a degree that echoed...T-Bone Walker." Really? More than Hendrix? Hendrix as well, is also missing from their coverage. And not a mention of the Rolling Stones (though Richards/Jagger were entirely indebted to the blues, especially in the early days--and are the reason so many heard about Robert Wilkins and Slim Harpo. Though they do mention most of the greats, like the endless albums of John Lee Hooker (They prefer the Modern Recordings, as it gets the King's crown symbol, similar to the Penguin Jazz guide symbols), and Lightnin' Hopkins (though no mention of "Lightnin' Strikes Back" the fantastic lp I have that includes a classic cut, "Got Me a Louisiana Woman"). There is so much here, in fact too much that you'd ever could conceivably listen to, which is the problem. So there are tabs on Jimmy Vivino, Sam Theard, The Nighthawks, etc. and other forgettable names and sides. Why bother? And in the process a lot is missed like Willie Brown who has only a few but historic recordings, "M O Blues" and "Future Blues" that are essential and deserve crowns; Robert Pete Williams' great "I'm Blue as a Man Can Be, Vol. 1" which has stellar liner notes by guitarist Henry Kaiser; they miss the boat on Muddy Water's "Folk Singer" album and gloss over the great, great version of "Mannish Boy" on the album "Hard Again" which should be the definitive version for both Johnny Winter's control, Willie "Big Eyes" Smith's drums, and of course, Muddy's singing (it's hard to believe he was 66 years old); they also almost get the definitive blues collection, Rhino's "Blues Masters Series: Vol. 8: Mississippi Delta Blues" which also has great liner notes by Robert Palmer (The entire Rhino's "Blues Masters Series" Cd's could be a desert island collection or a great introduction to the blues). They get some things correct. including "Mississippi" Fred McDowell's "First Recordings." Also, Sonny Boy Williams II is filed under "S," but Sonny Boy I is filed under "W." Go figure. Some of the cataloging is confusing. I still haven't been able to find the Blues at Newport albums which have great versions of Wilkins, "Prodigal Son," Hooker's "Tupelo" and "Bus Station Blues," Skip James' "Hard Time Killin' Floor Blues," and McDowell's "If The River Was Whiskey." Still, there is so much to sift through, pages to mark, and crates to digg--similar to the Penguin Jazz Guide--your glad someone has gone through and sifted through all of this work. Though, at over 900 pages, they could strip this down to the blues artists who matter and create a pocket guide. Furthermore, arguably the greatest blues singer ever, Elmore James' singing is described as "plangent," so condensing could also include less academic distancing.

A one-of-a-kind new guide to recorded blues This informative, insightful, and easy-to-use A-Z guide surveys the recorded work of more than a thousand blues artists. From towering figures of the past like Charley Patton, Bessie Smith, and Robert Johnson to stars of the modern era such as B. B. King, Buddy Guy, and Stevie Ray Vaughan, this valuable resource provides crisp, expert, and witty reviews of almost six thousand recordings and is required reading for blues aficionados as well as anyone just starting a collection.

About the Author Tony Russell is a music historian who has written on country music, blues, jazz, and other forms of popular music in a wide variety of publications. He has researched, written, and presented many musical programs for BBC Radio and has acted as consultant on numerous radio and television documentaries.