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One Giant Leap for Fankind

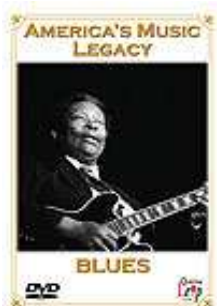
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Feb
22

[America's Music Legacy: Blues \(DVD\)](#)

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By **Danny R. Phillips**



The series *America's Music Legacy*, with installments on Dixieland Jazz, Folk, Country, Soul, and others has the goal of documenting the foundations of America music. And with this chapter, "Blues," they do a fine job.

Though it can seem slightly hokey and the performances painfully staged (the performances are set in "clubs" with "customers" in the audience; when the audience does get movin', it still seems like they're just playing a role), the real saving grace is the fact that this DVD focuses on the music. Despite the lack of energy and wildness that the blues should inspire and a spontaneous feeling of excitement that the genre can sometimes generate, there are some great performances by great players to be found.

Host Brock Peters sections the show into two parts, each opening with the obligatory black and white photo of a "classic" blues player to be followed by a modern bluesman or woman that they undoubtedly influenced. Unfortunately short clips from the great Billie Holliday, Count Basie and others give only a hint of their proven greatness. I mean, who hasn't heard Lady Day singing "Strange Fruit" or "God Bless the Child" and cried a little, at least inside? Give us more of that and less of the poor 1980s-era, morphing special effects. Linda Hopkins is

good but she isn't Bessie Smith.

The DVD does have its uplifting points like "Everyday I Have The Blues," a duet between Linda Hopkins and the great B.B. King or the sexy Esther Phillips/Joe Williams romp "Cherry Red." The sound quality is quite nice considering it was recorded in 1985.

Yet, more blues innovators could have been covered here like, Robert Johnson, Sonny Boy Williamson, Skip James, Mississippi Fred McDowell, or Son House. That would have been great but then it would've been a documentary like the thousands of other documentaries on the subject of "The Devil's Music," and that is not what *America's Music Legacy* strives to be.

America's Music Legacy succeeds as a quality program filled with live performances that at times, stir the emotions and sink the spirit low down only to raise it up and leave the viewer wanting to know more about the music that birthed rock and roll. And for that, it's worth checking out.

A side note: For further blues viewing, check out *The Howlin' Wolf Story*, *The Search for Robert Johnson*, *Martin Scorsese presents The Blues*, or give a listen to *Newport Folk Festival: Best of the Blues 1959-1968* (featuring classic performances by Skip James, Bukka White, Son House, Mississippi John Hurt, and others).

America's Music Legacy: Blues was released December 7, 2010 from *Quantum Leap and MVD Visual* and is available through [See Of Sound](#).

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1. [Popshifter » America's Music Legacy: Dixieland Jazz \(DVD\)](#) Says:
[March 15th, 2011 at 11:02 am](#)

[...] that is explored here by host Al Hirt, the Jazz trumpeter and Dixieland luminary. Much like the Blues installment of the this series, it includes live performances and is packed with clips of giants [...]

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- [Issue 006: Sep/Oct 2008](#)
- [Issue 007: Nov/Dec 2008](#)
- [Issue 008: Jan/Feb 2009](#)
- [Issue 009: Mar/Apr 2009](#)
- [Issue 010: May/Jun 2009](#)
- [Issue 011: Jul/Aug 2009](#)
- [Issue 012: Sep/Oct 2009](#)
- [Issue 013: Nov/Dec 2009](#)
- [Issue 014: Jan/Feb 2010](#)
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