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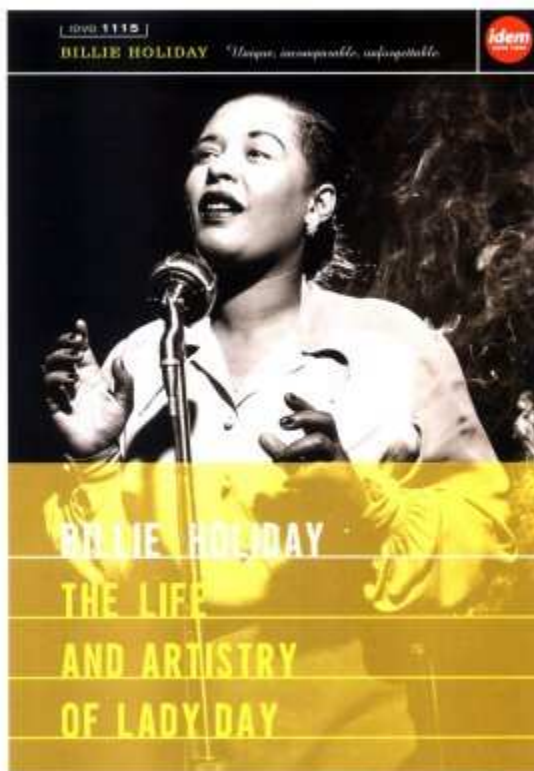
**[Billie Holiday - The Life And Artistry Of Lady Day](#)**

the best female vocalist in jazz history...

April 23rd 2009 05:55am | Posted by: [Michael Stevens, HNR Senior Editor](#)



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"...Arguably the best female vocalist in jazz history, a legendary performer of international reputation, Billie Holiday was known for the

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*emotional intensity she put into the lyrics of her songs. 'Lady Day' (as she was known by fans and musicians alike) lived the words she sang..."*

Nicknamed 'Lady Day' by musical partner, saxophonist Lester Young, Holiday was a seminal influence on jazz/pop singing, with a vocal style inspired by jazz instrumentalists, pioneering a new way of manipulating phrasing and tempo.



Admired for a deeply personal, intimate approach, Holiday changed the art of American pop vocals, co-writing several jazz standards including *God Bless the Child*, *Don't Explain* and *Lady Sings the Blues*.

According to Holiday's own account, she was recruited by a brothel, worked as a prostitute in 1930, and imprisoned for a short time for solicitation.



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It was in Harlem in the early 1930's that she started singing for tips in night clubs, landing at Harlem jazz clubs 'Pod's and Jerry's' and 'Monette's', where she was discovered by talent scout John Hammond. Hammond arranged for Holiday to make her recording debut, November 1933 with the Benny Goodman band, singing *Your Mother's Son-In-Law* and *Riffin' the Scotch*.

Goodman was also on hand in 1935, when she recorded with a group led by pianist Teddy Wilson, including the songs *What a Little Moonlight Can Do* and *Miss Brown To You*, finally establishing Holiday as a major vocalist. She then began recording under her own name a year later, producing a series of performances with the Swing Era's finest players.

Holiday's method of improvising the melody line to fit the emotion was revolutionary, writing songs *Billie's Blues*, *Tell Me More (And Then Some)*, *Everything Happens For The Best*, *Our Love Is Different* and *Long Gone Blues*.



In the late 1930s, Holiday also had brief stints as a big band vocalist with Count Basie (1937) and Artie Shaw (1938). The latter association placing her as the first black woman to work with a white orchestra, an arrangement that went against the tenor of the times.

This new digitally mastered DVD from [MVD Entertainment](#) includes a biography, discography, lyrics and bibliography...



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