

The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll

Preston Lauterbach

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"[A] valentine to a lost world." —EDDIE DEAN, WALL STREET JOURNAL

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Preston Lauterbach : The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll:

10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Well written and Interesting chronicle of musical genre!By D_shrinkThis was a work that kept me interested and excited to learn more about individuals who in total were responsible for Rhythm and Blues, which was later morphed into Rock-n-Roll.The Chitlin Circuit referred to the grand tour of ever changing southern bars, taverns, holes in the wall, barbeque joints, and makeshift venues for dancing or simply those to showcase new black artists, while turning a substantial buck on the booze sold. The era described

extended from about 1930 to the mid 1980s. At the beginning of that era, the featured performers had larger orchestras and preferred to play SWING, while the crowds would rather hear smaller bands that played RB. The promoters agreed with the crowds as the guarantees were much smaller for bands than orchestras. One of the added bonuses of this book were the numerous B/W photos of the many people who made this musical form popular. The author's telling of this story is done in a rapid fire staccato pacing. An example being "He modified what Mother Nature gave him to compensate for what Father Time took away." How can you not love a line like that. It was just so easy to see the scenes depicted through the author's voice. Even the chapter titles as "The Loser Goes to the Hospital, the Winner Goes to Jail!" has a certain panache and verve that sets the tone of the place and period. There were numerous vignettes of the many important personalities of the era that enabled you to get to know them on a more personal level. We get to know the history of how Riley King morphed into B. B. King, Richard Pennington into "Little Richard", John Alexander Jr. into Johnny Ace, Willa Mae Thornton into Big Mama Thornton and all the intrigue and events of the daily life on the circuit. This is a must read for anyone interested in that period of our history and its background and certainly for all interested in the roots of RB. A great read!

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A significant piece of research

By Ron Hawkins

In this book Preston Lauterbach has dug deep into the origins and the workings of the chitlin' circuit, a place of mystery that I knew by name as a signifier for down-home music and what I imagined to be wild and behaviour you wouldn't take down-home. I know a great deal more now because Lauterbach's scope of research and ability as an historian is astounding. For a writer in 2011 to have found the information and pieced together the puzzle that is contained in this book is a remarkable achievement. For work of this kind I am always on the lookout for errors that will tell me the real depth of a writer's research and commitment. I'm not an expert but I can pick a faker, all I found were a couple of very minor factual errors; Mr Lauterbach is the real deal in music history and I hope that he continues his commitment. Aspects of the book that I really liked were finally Roy Brown getting due credit for his achievements. I also liked that we weren't spoon-fed the RB + CW = Rock and Roll myth again. Elvis Presley while a significant artist and cultural influence had nothing to do with 'creating' Rock and Roll, that work was done. Presley's significant achievement was the brief popularising of rockabilly; music which he quickly abandoned (as the public did) in favour of the already existent Rock and Roll. I love Elvis, but I also love those who came before and who Mr Lauterbach pays tribute to in this book. After all this praise of the book I have to say that the Lauterbach's writing style needs some work. At times I found the book a little difficult to get through and I am ready to admit that it may just be me, or maybe that there is so much new that you need to take it a little slowly. I found the writing overall a little too earnest, and the attempts at humour often a bit forced. The writing style overall made me work a little bit too hard when it should have carried me along for the ride. It is Preston Lauterbach's first book and a great achievement. His writing will improve, his research and historical analysis skills are there already. I recommend this book to people who really care about the multi-layers that went into the creation of rock and roll and want to look past the standard simplistic history.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. As a music journalist, I first heard this term ...

By Customer

As a music journalist, I first heard this term "Chitlin Circuit" from Terri Lewis of Flyte Time, later called "The Time." I have never viewed modern or earlier music the same way ever since (a couple of decades). May the Powers That Be Bless these folks for writing this book. Our present-day music would sound very different if it weren't for these earlier music pioneers who suffered a lot of indignities to be heard. The book also traces a lot of the important influences each artist passed down to successive generations. A "Must Read" for anyone who claims to understand modern music." Such a gift--Invaluable insights.

Lauterbach's tribute . . . is welcome and overdue. Jonathan Yardley, Washington Post For generations, "chitlin' circuit" has meant second tier brash performers in raucous nightspots far from the big-city limelight. Now, music journalist Preston Lauterbach combines terrific firsthand reportage with deep historical research to offer a groundbreaking account of the birth of rock 'n' roll in black America. 34 illustrations

Lauterbach's first book is a rocking read and a deserving tribute to the people and places who were the foundations of rock and roll. A great read, well-written, and insightful. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the seedy history of American popular music. In this terrific popular history, music journalist and first time author Lauterbach uncovers a secret world that involves not only music but also racketeering and bribery, bootlegging, and various scandals. Lauterbach focuses on how the chitlin' circuit developed from the late 1930s to the early 1940s, with a particular emphasis on how it nurtured early rock 'n' roll. A major achievement and an important contribution to American music history. Highly recommended....relishes the criminal origins of the mostly southern black club scene from the early '30s to the late '60s....a coherent, musically savvy history of a performance culture that until now was known only piecemeal.--Robert Christgau

Mr. Lauterbach uncovers a story as sensational as any day-glo circuit-show poster...The era's hepcat lingo ("ork" for orchestra, "ofay" for "white") and hard-boiled, noir ambience give Mr. Lauterbach a tune he can carry....the book is at heart a well-researched valentine to a lost world of seedy con men, promoters and club owners, the power brokers and hustlers who made the "circuitry spark.--Eddie Dean

Lauterbach has written the definitive history of the musical back roads and back rooms of the southern United States.... a great read, well written

and insightful. Highly recommended to anyone interested in the seedy history of American popular music. Lauterbach's writing is as energetic as a Little Richard song (a performer who started on the chitlin' circuit and crossed over to national fame)... a rocking read and a deserving tribute to the people and places who were the foundations of rock and roll. [T]he genius prequel to an oft-told epic. Lauterbach spins the tale with enormous vitality and it's terribly fun to read. He masterfully explains the complex logistics of the entertainment industry, and studs the book with fascinating, little-known characters. . . . The reader will finish with an overwhelming urge to turn up the volume. --Kate Tuttle "A well-researched valentine to a lost world of seedy con men, promoters and club owners, the power brokers and hustlers who made the circuitry spark. --Eddie Dean" ...crucial to our understanding of late-20th-century pop music and all the more impressive for its exhaustive research. Preston Lauterbach's book spirited, studious, surprising, occasionally hilarious is absolutely persuasive on its subject. --Stephen M. Deusner "Opens new doors in pop-music scholarship as well as American (and African-American) cultural history. --Michaelangelo Matos "This sprawling, fascinating history drops readers into a chaotic, dangerous, utterly vanished world. --John Repp "[T]he genius prequel to an oft-told epic. "About the Author Preston Lauterbach's first book, *The Chitlin' Circuit: And the Road to Rock 'n' Roll* was named a best book of the year by the Wall Street Journal, Boston Globe, and NPR. A Curb Visiting Scholar in the Arts at Rhodes College, Lauterbach lives near Charlottesville in Nelson County, Virginia.