

Blues Faces: A Portrait of the Blues (An Imago Mundi Book)



For more than fifty years the blues and the singers who sang them were nearly forgotten. Not until Sam Charters published his seminal *The Country Blues* in 1959 (still in print more than forty years later) did a new wave of interest in this great American music form take root. In the blues boom of the 1960s and 70s, his articles, books, research, field recordings, and studio productions featuring dozens of familiar as well as unsung musicians, brought the blues to thousands of listeners. He traveled to Africa to document blues roots there, and in the 1980s he hung his recording hat in Louisiana, where he produced blues in the Cajun and Zydeco style, winning a Grammy for a 1983 album with Clifton Weaver. If this musical form has a patron saint, then Sam Charters is his name. As new audiences were learning about the blues through his books and records they were also seeing the blues through the photos of his wife Ann Charters. Although better known today as a Beat scholar, biographer of Jack Kerouac, and anthologist of short fiction, she was for years on the other side of the microphones with her camera. This book is a collection of her blues portraits, along with some by her husband of singers she didn't have a chance to meet. The photographs were used on record covers, on book jackets, and to illustrate books and articles. Some have never before been published. *Blues Faces* gathers this rich harvest for the first time. Samuel Charters has added a warmly personal commentary that complements the visual images and completes this fascinating portrait of a vital musical style.

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