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Otis!: The Otis Redding Story



Synopsis

Rolling Stone's Jon Landau described Otis Redding's music as "the highest level of expression rock 'n' roll has yet attained." And now from the critically acclaimed author of *Midnight Riders: The Story of the Allman Brothers Band* comes an intimate look at soul brother number one and the undisputed king of soul, Otis Redding. Music was his sole occupation. Inspired by the works of Little Richard, a singer raised in a small town just miles from his own, Otis Redding knew he wanted to become a singer. This dream, his father said, would lead him nowhere, but when Otis Redding first burst onto the scene in 1962 with his R&B hit "These Arms of Mine" music enthusiasts knew they were listening to the voice of a star. With over fourteen songs gracing the top 20 chart, Otis Redding soon became a music phenomenon. Crooning tunes such as "Respect," "I Can't Stop Loving You," and "Try a Little Tenderness," Otis Redding defined a new generation of R&B music. He solidified his position as a superstar by stealing the spotlight at concerts like the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967. But at the height of his career, three days after completing his most popular song "(Sittin' On) The Dock of the Bay," Otis Redding died in a tragic plane crash over Madison, Wisconsin. Now, Otis! The Otis Redding Story tells the true life story of the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame legend who changed the face of R&B music. This revealing portrait is hailed as the most definitive text on the man who embodied the very essence of soul.

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Customer Reviews

Before his death in 1967 at the age of 26, the legendary soul singer Otis Redding was the premier

act of the Stax-Volt record company, whose recordings by Booker T. & the MG's and Sam & Dave, among others, offered a Southern-based brew of R&B, funk and blues that was Motown Records' main competitor in the mid- to late-1960s. Freeman, whose excellent *Midnight Riders* explored the Allman Brothers' revolutionary Southern rock, has produced another well-written, expertly researched and culturally sensitive chapter in the history of Southern popular music, as well as the first truly in-depth view of the man whose powerful stage presence and commanding vocals made him the first soul artist to cross over to a predominantly white, rock-oriented audience. Redding's music is given its proper context in the black community of Macon, Ga. which also produced Little Richard and James Brown and in the managing career of Phil Walden, a young white soul fan who managed and directed Redding's career and began a Macon-based musical empire that, unlike most Southern labels, achieved success based on a true unity of black and white musicians . But Freeman is no hagiographer: he makes it clear that both Redding and Walden were tough characters with their eyes on the money, too. This nuanced account of Redding's celebrated career, which ended only three days after he recorded the song "The Dock of the Bay," proves that he deserves his place in the pantheon of great American singers. Eight pages of photos not seen by PW. (Dec.) Forecast: With a national radio campaign and supported by the enduring popularity of Redding's music, this should be a success with audiences interested in classic American roots music. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

"He knew this was the record that was going to open a door long nailed shut; he just never got to step inside." That is how Freeman describes "(Sittin' on) the Dock of the Bay," Redding's first No. 1 hit on both the R&B and pop charts in 1968. The song was another confirmation of Redding's skill as well as his break into the white artist-dominated mainstream. Sadly, he died in a plane crash days after recording it in 1967. As editor of *Atlanta* magazine and author of the critically acclaimed *Midnight Riders: The Story of the Allman Brothers Band* (Scott Freeman, 1995) Freeman, as only a Georgia native can, forthrightly portrays his subject's life from his meager, sometimes criminal, beginnings as a Little Richard wannabe in Macon, GA, to his rise to King of Soul with his fiery sessions for Stax Records and legendary performance at the Monterey International Pop Festival. With industrious research and countless interviews with Georgia musicians and locals, *Otis!* not only chronicles Redding's story but also explains how Motown rival Stax crafted its country-soul sound with a roster that included Booker T. and the MG's and James Brown. Jane Schiesel's *The Otis Redding Story* (1973) has long been out of print, so this update is welcome. For all public libraries. Eric Hahn, Fargo, ND Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I'm giving this a five because there don't seem to be too many other books about Otis out there and this is a pretty good read. The writer gives his take on Otis' life coming from Macon Georgia, the same town where Little Richard and James Brown were born. Like Carla Thomas says in 'Tramp!', 'You from the Georgia woods!' Otis grew up on the streets. His father was preacher, had been a sharecropper. They lived in tough neighbourhoods until Otis got money. According to Freeman Otis was pretty much a saint except about money, where he could be mean. Most, or a lot of Freeman's information seems to come from the people Otis grew up with and played with, all of whom had a very high regard for him as a person as well as a musician, although a number of them flagged up his ability to be tough on the street, and hardnosed attitude to business. However it seems like he always loved to be around his family and friends from home, although towards the end his life got very hectic. There's a lot of speculation about where Otis' life was going around the time he was killed. There's a lot of stuff about the high regard he was held in by many other musicians including the Beatles, Dylan and most of all Janis. Well, why wouldn't they? Highlights for me include Freeman's willingness to take a sidetrack here and there to explore the lives of players in Otis' life, especially Johnny Jenkins. Another key character would be Steve Cropper, seemingly the guy that held Stax together for many years at least in terms of personalities and the music. No surprise there. There are a number of terrific stories in here, and I won't spoil the book, but the best one would be when James Brown invaded a gig where Joe Tex was playing with the Pinetoppers because he didn't like the way Tex took him off. Like I said, a good read, and it leaves some unanswered questions, but when you're talking about a man who recorded one of the best albums ever made, by anybody, in any genre, I don't mind a little mystery.

Short, but great information and stories. Tear inducing due to the tragic and conspiratorial circumstances of his death. Hard to read this and not believe someone had a hand in his death much like Sam Cooke and countless others. Would definitely recommend to Otis fans. You can easily read this book in an afternoon or two.

It was nice to hear the other side of Otis Redding's upcoming family and friends (something different) in this book. However, it would have been really good to hear what Otis Redding's Stax family (1963 - 1967) really had to say about him in this book when they were working closely behind him in the studio and also to mention what do they think about him after 35yrs since his death... That part should have been added on to this book.. Otis has a Stax's family too... I don't think it's fair to

have that old little bits and bits statements that was pick up from another story from a book or magazine so long ago...that I what notice in this book called Otis!..This book was clearly written on one side of the story. I am sure that there are many untold stories told about Otis Redding, in the studio that the stax family can really tell us today.For example, of many...I would like to know from Issac Hayes side of the story, his memory of singing in the background song in Otis Redding's song and why it happened.. The song was called "Fa-Fa-Fa Sad Song"...stories like that should have been brought more.No matter what is said, Otis Redding will live on forever.....

Greatest Soul singer, ever. Fantastic book! Well organized, with an abundance of "new" informantion about his life. Really enjoyed the book.

I really thought I knew Otis Redding until I read this book. WOW! I learned so much... good and bad. I recommend this to any soul music fan! Great, easy read!

this book is trying to show otis redding to be as a person that has a split personality.on the one hand he is gentle and kind and wise...on the other hand he is (supposingly) selfish, rude and curses God, o yes, and violent.This writer doesnt even have the dates right, at one point he actually says that otis voice was weak and thin....but looking at his picture that is actually a pretty good discription of himself.in any case, this book slanders otis redding, if i was his widow i would sue.

I thought this was a great read, and I don't think there is much else to know about Otis Redding and I learned a lot about him and the legacy of his music. I never quite realized just what an impact and how popular he was until reading this book. He certainly left us too soon. No telling how far his career may have gone.I was curious to have more funeral details however. But usually most biographies go right over the death and funerals of the ones being written about for some reason. Certainly not for lack of information because most celebrity funerals are well covered in the press. Maybe they think the readers wouldn't care to know. But I think we do. I was curious to know the cause of Otis's death. I know it was in a plane crash, but if you've ever seen photos, when he was taken from the water he looks perfect, even had an open casket, so it makes me curious. Drowning perhaps?I've read and have the author's book on the Allman Bros. and liked that very much too, so figured this would likewise be a good one. It was.

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