

What's New

Filmmaker **Robert Mugge** has produced over three dozen documentaries over the past five decades, over 30 of which are music-related.

Many of those films have dealt with the blues, including *Deep Blues*, *Pride and Joy: The Story of Alligator Records*, *Hellhounds on My Trail: The Afterlife of Robert Johnson*, *Last of the Mississippi Jukes*, *Blues Breaks*, *Blues Divas*, *A Night at Club Ebony*, *Deep Sea Blues*, *All Jams On Deck*, *Big Shoes: Walking and Talking the Blues*, *Deep Roots: The Art and Music of Bill Steber and Friends*, and *Elvin Bishop's Raisin' Hell Revue*.

Mugge's documentaries have also covered jazz, Creole and zydeco music, New Orleans blues and R&B, gospel and soul, bluegrass, roots, and Hawaiian music.



I've seen many of these films, and it's impossible to go into one of these movies and not come out knowing more about their subject. They are loaded with compelling and fascinating information and wonderful musical performances from the artists featured.

Mugge previously authored a memoir, *Notes from the Road: A Filmmaker's Journey through American Music*, in 2023.

This year, he published a second music-related book, *Quotes from the Road: The Wit and Wisdom of American Musicians* (The Sager Group), which features excerpts from 150 of the interviews that he conducted with American musicians and many supporters. Many of the discussions within the book are not items that were discussed in the film, so music fans will be seeing much of this material for the first time.

Among the blues artists interviewed are Lonnie Brooks and his son Ronnie Baker Brooks, Lil' Ed Williams, Koko Taylor, Katie Webster, Marcia Ball, Robert Lockwood Jr., Roy Rogers, Willie Coffee (a friend of Robert Johnson), Vasti Jackson, Chris Thomas King, Bobby Rush, Little Milton, Willie King, Deborah Coleman, Denise LaSalle, Odetta, Ann Peebles, Irma Thomas, Mavis Staples, Otis Clay, Tommy Castro, Kim Wilson, Buckwheat Zydeco, Elvin Bishop, Ted Drozdowski, R.L. Hulsman, Larry McCray, Coco Montoya, Lee Oskar, Jimmy Thackery, Rev. Billy C. Wirtz, and others.

The book is divided into 25 different themes, which include the artists discussing how they got started in the music business, their influences, their early struggles, their playing styles and techniques, and their songwriting. Also discussed are family traditions, performances and venues, touring, and recording. There are other topics broached that include dealing with adversity and racism and politics.

One of the most interesting chapters deals with Hurricane Katrina and the aftermath for New Orleans musicians, which reveals a lot more about the prelude and aftermath of the storm that all of the New Orleans population had to deal with. The musicians were no exception, and there are harrowing reminiscences from Ball, Thomas, Dr. John, Theresa Andersson, Eddie Bo, Jon Cleary, Cyril Neville, Kermit Ruffins, and many others. If you haven't seen *New Orleans Music in Exile*, it's one of the best of Mugge's films.

Blues fans will also enjoy the excerpts from jazz artists like Sun Ra and Sonny Rollins, and from the Creole and zydeco artists like Boozoo Chavis, John Delafosse, Beau Jocque, Nathan Williams, Lawrence "Black" Ardoïn and Sean Ardoïn, Corey Ledet, Rosie Ledet, and Major Handy.

One of the things I've always enjoyed about Mugge's films is the way he generates a feeling of comfort around his subjects, with that feeling enabling them to open up about their careers. They are incredibly open about reflecting on their accomplishments, what they still want to achieve, their disappointments, and what they enjoy the most (and the least) about their chosen professions.

These interviews actually make the reader feel that the musicians and collaborators are talking directly to them. This is true with Mugge's films and it's also true with this book.

Simply put, if you are a fan of American music, you will absolutely love *Quotes from the Road: The Wit and Wisdom of American Musicians*.