



I'd Rather Be the Devil: Skip James and the Blues

Stephen Calt

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Providing a clear look into the life of one of the greatest Mississippi bluesmen, this is the first biography of the late Skip James, perhaps the most creative and idiosyncratic of all blues musicians. His 1931 performances of "Devil Got My Woman," "I'm So Glad," and "22-20 Blues" are masterpieces that transcend the genre. Drawing largely on hundreds of hours of conversations with James himself, it paints a dark and unforgettable portrait of a man untroubled by his own murderous inclinations, a man who achieved one moment of transcendent greatness in a life haunted by failure. In doing so, it offers new insights into the nature of the blues, the world in which it thrived, and its fate when that world vanished.

Skip James (1902–1969) was perhaps the most creative and idiosyncratic of all blues musicians. Drawing on hundreds of hours of conversations with James himself, Stephen Calt here paints a dark and unforgettable portrait of a man untroubled by his own murderous inclinations, a man who achieved one moment of transcendent greatness in a life haunted by failure. And in doing so, Calt offers new insights into the nature of the blues, the world in which it thrived, and its fate when that world vanished.



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