



Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life (American Made Music (Paperback))

Alan Young

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Many studies of African-American gospel music spotlight history and style. This one, however, is focused mainly on grassroots makers and singers. Most of those included here are not stars. A few have received national recognition, but most are known only in their own home areas. Yet their collective stories presented in this book indicate that black gospel music is one of the most prevalent forms of contemporary American song.

Its author Alan Young is a New Zealander who came to the South seeking authentic blues music. Instead, he found gospel to be the most pervasive, fundamental music in the contemporary African-American South. Blues, he concludes, has largely lost touch with its roots, while gospel continues to express authentic resources.

Conducting interviews with singers and others in the gospel world of Tennessee and Mississippi, Young ascertains that gospel is firmly rooted in community life. *Woke Me Up This Morning* includes his candid, widely varied conversations with a capella groups, with radio personalities, with preachers, and with soloists whose performances reveal the diversity of gospel styles. Major figures interviewed include the Spirit of Memphis Quartet and the Reverend Willie Morganfield, author and singer of the million-selling "What Is This?" who turned his back on fame in order to pastor a church in the heart of the Mississippi Delta. All speak freely in oral-history style here, telling how they became involved in gospel music and religion, how it enriches their lives, how it is connected to secular music (especially blues), and how the spiritual and the practical are united in their performances. Their accounts reveal the essential grassroots force and spirit of gospel music and demonstrate that if blues springs from America's soul, then gospel arises from its heart.

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