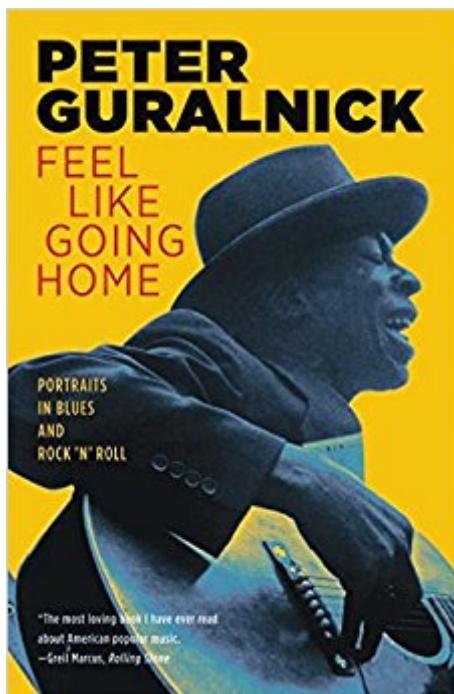


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Feel Like Going Home: Portraits In Blues And Rock 'n' Roll



Synopsis

This vivid celebration of blues and early rock 'n' roll includes some of the first and most illuminating profiles of such blues masters as Muddy Waters, Skip James, and Howlin' Wolf; excursions into the blues-based Memphis rock 'n' roll of Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie Rich, and the Sun record label; and a brilliant depiction of the bustling Chicago blues scene and the legendary Chess record label in its final days. With unique insight and unparalleled access, Peter Guralnick brings to life the people, the songs, and the performance that forever changed not only the American music scene but America itself.

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Customer Reviews

Peter Guralnick pledges in the epilogue to *Feel Like Going Home* that his writing will henceforth be "younger, less self-conscious and critical." Don't dwell too much on the author's oath, however: the prose here is hardly jaded and awkward. Initially published in 1971, *Feel Like Going Home* consists of 11 chapters, most of which are single-subject studies of American roots-music artists. Guralnick openly reveres his interview subjects, which isn't to imply that he fawns over them. The likes of bluesmen Howlin' Wolf and Johnny Shines, incorrigible rock & roller Jerry Lee Lewis, and, in particular, moody man-without-a-genre talent Charlie Rich (who was inspired to write a song called "Feel Like Going Home" based on this book--it's the final song on his final album) come across as knotty, vivid, complex characters. Published in tandem with Guralnick's similarly organized *Lost Highway* and his superb history of southern soul, *Sweet Soul Music*, *Feel Like Going Home*

provides an early-stage perspective on a music historian who's truly arrived. --Steven Stolder

Published in 1971 and 1979, respectively, these titles continue Guralnick's analysis of American music. *Feel Like Going Home* concentrates primarily on blues artists, with some borderline rockers thrown in, while *Lost Highway* covers a wide array of artists from several genres, including everyone from Hank Snow to Elvis to Merle Haggard. Both volumes were hits with critics and have a place in popular music collections. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

As someone who doesn't know a lot about blues music except to run and hide when someone begins to comment on "the cadential modalities of Muddy Waters's early Chess period" over cocktails, I approached this book with trepidation, unnecessarily. It's a very enveloping and informative look at some of the compelling personalities who helped shape two key forms of American popular music, the blues and rock 'n' roll. It's not a comprehensive history; Guralnick instead offers some individual, detailed portraits. You can understand him choosing Waters, Howlin' Wolf, and Jerry Lee Lewis, because they were all giant figures in the creation of these genres. But other choices are more idiosyncratic, like Johnny Shines, described as "a run-of-the-mill blues singer" by the co-founder of landmark label Chess Records; and Robert Pete Williams, who seems to merge blues with free associative verse and would never be more than a footnote character in most histories. And what's with including Charlie Rich, who had a brief association with rock's founding via Sun Records but never really established himself as either a blues or rock performer? Guralnick never does tie any of this in; his pieces, however intended to cohere, feel like collected articles written for music magazines. I don't know that they have to be read in order and one after the other, like chapters of a book. But individually they are good, in most cases very good. Guralnick is an unusual departure from rock writers. He writes with singular care; with craft, honesty, and an engaging sense of humility that draws the reader in. He doesn't make broad claims for anyone's greatness, or dismiss others out of hand. He takes himself out of the picture, and makes it feel like you are the one in the room listening to Shines talking about traveling moonlit country roads with Robert Johnson, looking for a barrelhouse or gin joint to make a few bucks in. Or Williams, sitting in his country home alongside a dirt road, portraits of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King over his head, drinking away the afternoon and wondering if his inability to pick out a tune at times is because maybe "blues is evil." "God is warning me, I've got to get myself straight," Williams tells Guralnick. "And yet still and all I don't know, something hits me and I feel peculiar, I might be riding along, say now you get in your car and ride, well the ideas just come to me out of the air. Why is

that? What made me think of that?"Traditional blues music was in trouble by the time of this book's publication, in 1971. Guralnick visits Chess Records and finds a record company about to collapse. It's perhaps symbolic that when Guralnick introduces us to Muddy Waters and Howlin' Wolf, both men are laid up sick in bed. Perhaps an earlier look would have offered a more vibrant take. But Guralnick gets the most out of what he finds. The best essays are on Wolf, who relishes comments about his "gargantuan" onstage theatricality but exposes a thin skin on other fronts; and Rich, who seems so out-of-water here except for the engaging candor from him and his wife. Rich's drinking problems and lonely sadness are the main focus of his essay, yet Rich not only cooperated with the author, he ended up inspired enough by it to write a song using the book's title. It's the best essay in that you feel for the guy; then again, they're all like that. I don't know that much more about Skip James or Muddy Waters from reading this book, but I know enough now not to duck off in the other direction when I hear their names spoken of. Good music, like all things in life, knows no boundaries.

if you love the music- when-it was -music era(s) of this country, ANYTHING authored by Guralnick are gotta-reads.

Like all Guralnick's books, this is a fascinating, well-written history - this time of the blues. Unfortunately with my Kindle version, I could never get past chapter 5, no matter what I tried. I like the book so much (at least what I could read), I bought the paperback version.

Excellent reading for the true blues fan. Lots of interesting information about some musicians few have heard about. Yet another sad perspective of how tough the music business is for the early players. You will understand about suffering once you read about Robert Pete Williams.

This book is fine, but not what I was hoping for. Good basic biographies about blues artists, but nothing beyond the basics.

Everything I've ever read that was written by Peter Guralnick is great! The enhanced edition is no exception.

excellent

GREAT STORY It reads as if you are right in the room with Muddy and Wolf. If you are a blues fan this is a must read

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