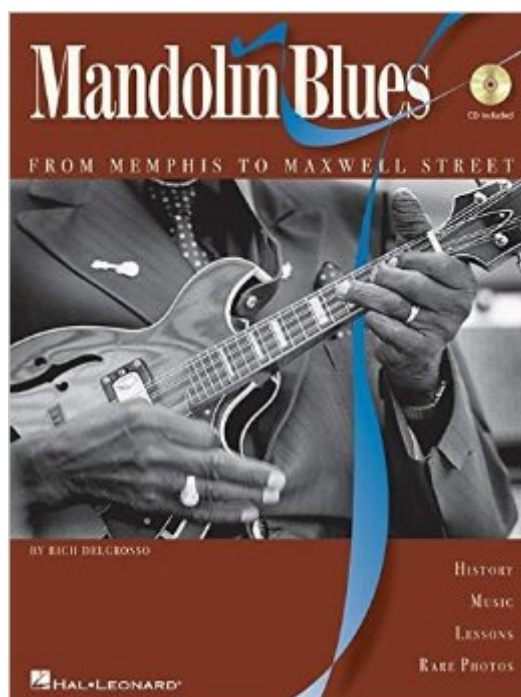


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MANDOLIN BLUES BK/CD FROM MEMPHIS TO MAXWELL STREET



Synopsis

(Mandolin). Travel back in time as acclaimed mandolinist Rich DelGrosso, author of the best-selling Hal Leonard Mandolin Method (00695102), traces the history and music of America's rich blues tradition through the eyes of the mandolinist. Follow the lives of players like Yank Rachell, Howard Armstrong and Charlie McCoy, and then learn their timeless music with standard notation, tablature, and an accompanying full-band CD of all the tunes in the book.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mandolinist Rich DelGrosso is a self-professed "blues freak." After first hearing the strong, expressive blues mandolin of Johnny Young, he began a journey to research and revive that type of music. Nominated by The Blues Foundation for a 2006 Best Instrumentalist Award, DelGrosso has put together a charming overview of music, history, lessons and photos. "From Memphis to Maxwell Street" is the story of America's black mandolinists who nurtured the growth of blues music, complemented and energized jug and string bands of the South, and inspired such composers Scott Joplin and W.C. Handy. In the early 20th-Century, Memphis was where touring mandolin players like Vol Stevens, Will Weldon, Eddie Dimmitt and Charlie McCoy played. In nearby rural areas, W. Howard Armstrong and Carl Martin and their Tennessee Chocolate Drops played medicine shows, parties, picnics and fish fries. In the 1960s, they revived their string band sound in Martin, Bogan & Armstrongs. From rural Tennessee, Yank Rachell travelled with guitarist Sleepy John Estes and Hammie Nixon. In this book, "Yank Rachell's Blues" and "Early This Morning" show how his music

was more modal than melodic. After introductory info about the style itself, DelGrosso's clear perspective focuses on blue notes, harmonies based primarily on seventh chords, predictable 8- or 12-bar progressions, and rhythms driven by back beats. Three kinds of rhythmic dance music (rags, drags, stomps) are demonstrated. Using standard notation and tab, the author gives us some great melodic examples of these forms (Dallas Rag, Jackson Stomp, Knox County Stomp, State Street Rag, Vine Street Drag). Many of these tunes are derived from the music of Howard Armstrong, a man who befriended, inspired and mentored DelGrosso until Howard's passing in 2003.

Rich DelGrosso has written a valuable introduction to playing blues and jug band music on the mandolin. African-American musicians developed distinctive techniques for making funky and expressive music on the mandolin, techniques which were essential to Bill Monroe in developing his brilliant bluegrass style. This wonderful music is terribly underappreciated, so it a great surprise to see a whole book from a major publisher devoted to such an obscure topic. The cover of the book promises "History, Music, Lessons, and Rare Photos," in that order. The history is, in fact, one of the strongest aspects of this book. DelGrosso has an unusually deep understanding of the cultural context of African-American mandolin music because of his friendship with several of the great players (all now deceased) in the tradition. Very little of this music has previously been available in widely-available print editions. This book has a good balance between the best-known classic mandolin tunes like "Dallas Rag," and even more obscure material. The sequence of tunes makes good sense in telling the history, and works pretty well in terms of technical challenges to the student. The accompanying CD is beautifully played and produced, although repeats on some of the shorter tunes would have been helpful to students. DelGrosso is weakest in the "Lessons" department. He takes the time and space to discuss the trickiest passages in only a few tunes. Students are given tablature, notation, and recordings, but they're largely left to figure out the details on their own. There's only one page in the entire book that gives left hand fingerings.

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