



Blue Chicago: The Search for Authenticity in Urban Blues Clubs

David Grazian

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Blue Chicago takes us inside the world of contemporary urban blues clubs to uncover how iconic—yet empty—images of the blues are manufactured and sold to music fans and audiences. Drawing on countless nights in dozens of blues clubs throughout Chicago, David Grazian shows how this quest for authenticity has transformed the very shape of the blues experience. He explores the ways in which professional and amateur musicians, club owners, and city boosters define authenticity and dish it out to tourists and bar regulars. He also tracks the changing relations between race and the blues over the past several decades, including the increasing frustrations of black musicians forced to slog through the same set of overplayed blues standards for mainly white audiences night after night. In the end, Grazian finds that authenticity lies in the eye of the beholder: a nocturnal fantasy to some, an essential way of life to others, and a frustrating burden to the rest.

"Chicago has given the world distinctive forms of urban blues and urban sociology. . . . In *Blue Chicago*, David Grazian's lucid and bracingly unpius study of the blues scene, the two homegrown traditions meet with satisfying results."—Carlo Rotella, *Chicago Tribune*

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