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# Annie Leibovitz: American Music



## Synopsis

The impulse to do AMERICAN MUSIC, writes famed photographer Annie Leibovitz, came from a desire to return to my original subject and look at it with a mature eye. Bring my experience to it to make it a real American tapestry. Her ambitious idea became AMERICAN MUSIC, a stunning collection of photographs of the musicians, places and people that enrich the landscape of American music. As Rolling Stone's chief photographer for over thirteen years, Leibovitz created a legendary body of work. Her portraits of some of the world's most talented musicians capture more than the performer, they convey the art of making music. For AMERICAN MUSIC, Leibovitz traveled across the country to juke joints in the Mississippi Delta, honkytonks in Texas, and jazz clubs in New Orleans to take pictures in places that mean something. In her signature style, she shares stunning portraits of American greats -- B.B. King, Willie Nelson, Bonnie Raitt, Bruce Springsteen, Beck, Bob Dylan, Mary J. Blige, Jon Bon Jovi, Steve Earle, Ryan Adams, Miles Davis, Etta James, Pete Seeger, Emmylou Harris, Tom Waits, The Dixie Chicks, Dr. Dre, The Roots and many more. AMERICAN MUSIC includes a commentary about the American Music project by Leibovitz, short essays by musicians Patti Smith, Rosanne Cash, Steve Earle, Mos Def, Ryan Adams, and Beck as well as biographical sketches of all the musicians.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The title of this volume can mislead people who don't remember that Annie Leibovitz started out as the lead photographer for Rolling Stone. The result of her life's photographic work with these

subjects is portrayed here along with some very fine notes at the end that explain who the subjects are for those you don't know. I liked the notes as much as the photographs. You will, too, unless you have an encyclopedic knowledge of American popular musicians. Those offerings are boosted in value by the essays authored by Patti Smith, Steve Earle, Rosanne Cash, Mos Def, Beck, Ryan Adams, and Annie Leibovitz. The work cries for a companion CD tucked into the back of the book so you could match the music to the images and words. Perhaps it was just too much work to put the permissions together for such a project . . . or the publishers just assumed that we know all the music (I certainly don't). The photography is often breathtaking in capturing musicians who have had a lasting effect on tens of millions of lives. In many cases, you are treated to large, two-page spreads where the center line doesn't interrupt your ability to focus on the image. The printing is very fine in the copy I read, and I hope it is also on yours. Here are a few of my many favorites: Pete Seeger, Clearwater Revival, Croton-on-Hudson, New York, 2001 (color) Fisk Jubilee Singers, New York City, 2003 Eddie Cotton, Jr. with Jan Hobson, Jackson, Mississippi, 2000 Po' Monkey's Lounge, Merigold, Mississippi, 2000 B.B.

Attempting to capture a moment that completely encompasses the event, the person, and her soul is really nothing new to a photographer. It becomes more difficult to depict all of this when what the photograph is cannot be seen, but only heard. If the right emotion isn't matched to the song being played, it will not only jeopardize the image, but also ruin emotion. An image can be just as loud and provoking as music. She pushes the bounds of how musicians are revealed in the photographs. Sometimes the moment is a place with music vibrating off the floorboards. Other times it is still and contemplative. Leibovitz clearly understands the bond of place and performance. From candid and portraits, soft or quiet moments to loud heart aching top of your lungs singing moments, Annie Leibovitz has found a way to communicate sound and imagery perfectly. Annie Leibovitz's book American Music succeeds in what can be rather difficult and illusive combination. Disregard your ideas of what you may think "American" music is. Annie not only reveals what American music is the soulful deep roots of the blues, the twangs of the banjo, the storytelling of the folk artists she also reveals introspective moments that the musician has with the music, the relationships that are intertwined with the band members, the soul vibrating and ear pleasing subtleness that comes with each song, each singer, each band, and each instrument. She finds each musician's personality and draws it to the surface. She is searching for that moment in which emotion and sound connect. Portraits are not her only avenues to explore and reach her desired connections. Leibovitz uses words from real musicians. Some are stories that are living on the lines of song and narrative.

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