



Really the Blues (New York Review Books Classics)

By Mezz Mezzrow, Bernard Wolfe

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Mezz Mezzrow was a boy from Chicago who learned to play the sax in reform school and pursued a life in music and a life of crime. He moved from Chicago to New Orleans to New York, working in brothels and bars, bootlegging, dealing drugs, getting hooked, doing time, producing records, and playing with the greats, among them Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, and Fats Waller. *Really the Blues*, the jive-talking memoir that Mezzrow wrote at the insistence of, and with the help of, the novelist Bernard Wolfe, is the story of an unusual and unusually American life, and a portrait of a man who moved freely across racial boundaries when few could or did, “the odyssey of an individualist . . . the saga of a guy who wanted to make friends in a jungle where everyone was too busy making money.”

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Editorial Review

Review

“American counter-culture classic *Really the Blues* [is] a stylized oral history that anticipates the Beat novel...*Really the Blues* is part quixotic adventure novel, part inside-scoop...Mezzrow’s voice is funny, impulsive, full of itself and often spectacularly scatological....Listening to “Mezz” is tremendous fun...the book’s true literary inheritance is its style...one of the great, flawed, jubilant, jive-talking characters of American literature.” —Martin Riker, *The Wall Street Journal*

“The mighty Mezz was at once the greatest digger, the greatest chronicler, the greatest celebrator of [jazz] culture, as well as being a principal actor on its main stage and contributor of its most characteristic fragrance—the pungent aroma of burning bush.” —Albert Goldman, *High Times*

“Mezz Mezzrow’s rambunctious enthusiasm for jazz and the world it shaped and defined keeps the pages turning...The lost world of the Jazz Age comes alive in these pages, replete with all the Chi-town bounce and streetwise braggadocio that came with the risqué territory...Mezzrow’s love of the music and the ‘bandit’ lifestyle is palpable and infectious, giving his story a novelistic verve. In many ways, Mezz is the Augie March of jazz.” —Matt Hanson, *The Arts Fuse*

“As to the books of Bernard Wolfe, his extraordinary imagination, his range of styles and genres, should alone qualify him for a conspicuous role in 20th-century American literature.” —Thomas Berger

“*Really the Blues* returns us...to the roots of rock, to the roots certainly of beat and hence to the beginnings of the sixties counterculture through an extended look into the life of a Jewish boy...who turned his back on the middle class and all it had to offer to blow jazz in ‘more creep joints and speakeasies and dancehalls than the law allows.’ ”—Brooke Horvath, *Review of Contemporary Fiction*

“An intense, sincere and honest book. It makes all the novels with jazz backgrounds seem as phony as an Eddie Condon concert.”—Bucklin Moon, *The New Republic*

“An autobiography such as was never seen before beneath the moon.”—Ben Ray Redman, *The American Mercury*

About the Author

Mezz Mezzrow (1899–1972) was born Milton Mesirow in Chicago to a Jewish family “as respectable as Sunday morning.” As a teenager, however, he was sent to Pontiac Reformatory for stealing a car; there he learned to play the saxophone and decided to devote his life to the blues. Beginning in the 1920s, he had an intermittent career as a sideman in jazz groups, and struck up friendships with many of the greats of the day, including Louis Armstrong and Bix Beiderbecke. Enamored of African American culture, he helped channel it to whiter and wider audiences, backing and producing significant recordings by Frankie Newton, Teddy Wilson, Sidney Bechet, and Tommy Ladnier, among others, and helping to spark the New Orleans revival of the late 1930s. In the 1940s, Mezzrow started his own record label, King Jazz Records. He spent the last years of his life in Paris.

Bernard Wolfe (1915–1985) was born in New Haven and attended Yale University, where he studied psychology. An active member of the labor movement, he moved to Mexico for eight months in 1937 to

work as personal secretary and assistant to Leon Trotsky. In subsequent years, Wolfe held disparate jobs—from serving in the Merchant Marines to working as a pornographic novelist to editing *Mechanix Illustrated*—while writing fiction and science fiction. His best-known work is the 1959 novel *The Great Prince Died*, a fictional account of Trotsky's assassination. Among his other books are *The Late Risers*, *In Deep*, *Limbo*, and *Logan's Gone*.

Ben Ratliff has been a jazz and pop critic for *The New York Times* since 1996 and has written four books including *The Jazz Ear: Conversations over Music* and *Coltrane: The Story of a Sound*. His latest book is *Every Song Ever: Twenty Ways to Listen in an Age of Musical Plenty*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Debbie Davis:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As we know that book is very important normally. The book *Really the Blues* (New York Review Books Classics) had been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The guide *Really the Blues* (New York Review Books Classics) is not only giving you more new information but also to become your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your e-book. Try to make relationship using the book *Really the Blues* (New York Review Books Classics). You never experience lose out for everything should you read some books.

Denise Lee:

Precisely why? Because this *Really the Blues* (New York Review Books Classics) is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will surprise you with the secret that inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such wonderful way makes the content inside of easier to understand, entertaining method but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This book will give you a lot of positive aspects than the other book include such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking means. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I have been you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

Linda Caron:

The book untitled *Really the Blues* (New York Review Books Classics) contain a lot of information on this. The writer explains your girlfriend idea with easy means. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do certainly not worry, you can easy to read the idea. The book was published by famous author. The author brings you in the new time of literary works. You can read this book because you can read more your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice examine.

Jessica Hurst:

In this age globalization it is important to someone to receive information. The information will make you to definitely understand the condition of the world. The condition of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, newspapers, book, and soon. You can view that now, a lot of publisher that print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended to you is Really the Blues (New York Review Books Classics) this e-book consist a lot of the information of the condition of this world now. This book was represented so why is the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer require to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some analysis when he makes this book. Honestly, that is why this book appropriate all of you.

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