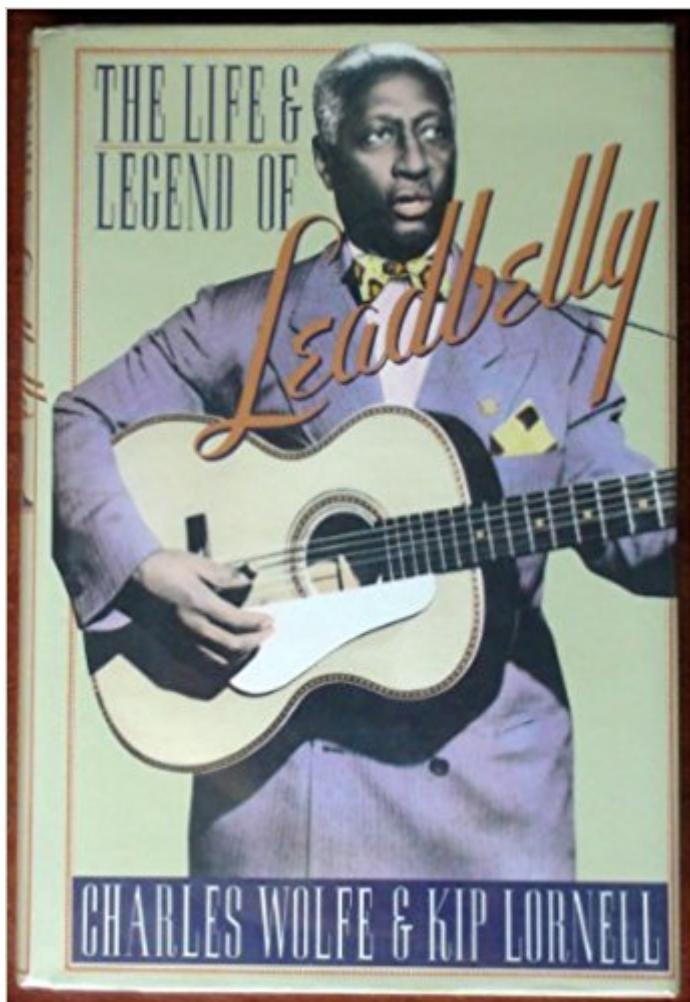


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# The Life And Legend Of Leadbelly



## **Synopsis**

A biography of the legendary folk and blues singer discusses his influences; his close relationships with folk greats Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger; his involvement in left-wing politics and the labor movement; and much more. National ad/promo.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Well researched and thoughtful, this biography depicts the career of Huddie "Leadbelly" Ledbetter (1888-1949), among the most influential of American folksingers. Folk music enthusiasts will be familiar with the highlights of Leadbelly's life--how his music earned him a pardon from prison, how folk-music experts John and Alan Lomax discovered and promoted him, how songs he either wrote or embellished ("Goodnight Irene" and "Midnight Special," for example) have become an integral part of American musical tradition--but it is the level of detail that Wolfe and Lornell bring forward that makes this book a standout. Leadbelly's early years in Louisiana and Texas, his introduction to music and his life in prison are portrayed in a fast-paced style that lends immediacy to the book. The introduction to the Lomaxes, Leadbelly's foray into New York society, his eventual estrangement from John Lomax and his recording and performance career are equally well chronicled in this notable effort. Wolfe is an English professor at Middle Tennessee University; Lornell is a consultant for the Leadbelly Archives at the Smithsonian. Photos not seen by PW. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Memo to Spike Lee: For your next film, consider the story of a black man born on the edge of the frontier in the waning days of the wild West. He was strong, handsome, and a talented musician, but mixing wine, women, and song led him to a Texas penitentiary to do time for murder. After a few years, this resourceful fellow won a pardon by performing a specially written song for the governor. His freedom proved short-lived, however; his attack on a "splendid white citizen" led to a stretch in Louisiana's notorious Angola State Penitentiary. Here, he was discovered by folklorist John Lomax, who recorded him for the Library of Congress and then won his release. Leadbelly spent the last 15 years of his life cementing his reputation as the foremost curator of America's musical heritage. If this incredible story of sex, violence, redemption, and the history of American folk music sounds interesting, add it to your music collections.- Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Curwensville, Pa. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Book condition exactly as described. Well written and informative biography.

This book is hands down the most comprehensive account of Lead Belly's life. The book is an easy enjoyable read. I For one picked it up on a Saturday morning and completed it the same day. No stone goes unturned.

Great book. Author really captured all of Leadbelly's dimensions with balance and reverence. Great detail on music history context and great research done to reveal the man (with his greatness and imperfections) behind the myth.

My family had a copy of this book which was misplaced almost twenty years ago. I was glad to find it here on . My grandmother is mentioned in this book as one of Ledbetter's former girlfriends. I purchased for personal reasons and was amazed to read of some of things he survived. It also gives insight in the reason we have the blues music. A true legend and this should be considered mandatory for all music students.

love it

This item was just as it was described in the posting and I was very happy with the quality. Thanks!

Kurt Cobain introduced me and my generation to Lead Belly. I used to feel self conscious about it

because after Cobain's suicide there rose such an industry about him that listening to his recommendations felt like a pose. When you're young, you fear being put in a position of having to defend your own authenticity or the cultural spoils you nourish yourself on. There are few better ways to feel small than when you have a friend admiring your collections and hear, "You have THAT record in your collection?? I still love Nirvana. One of its greatest gifts was introducing me to The Vaselines and especially Lead Belly -- I still feel a little like a poser because generally I only have Lead Belly records. How many other ways would a white suburbanite (more or less) like me have of being exposed to this work? I don't have much interest in delving further into the Lomax discoveries or the records people populating Cafe Wha might have listened. But that's fine because it's about the songs. That's what drew me to Lead Belly. The power. The passion. The discipline. The perseverance audible in his work. That perseverance particularly is what keeps me coming back to his records. This biography means almost as much to me as the music itself although not quite, ha. Again it's all about the song and the man. There simply isn't a better source of information if any that matches the research and reliability. Obviously I have no idea about the sources. It could all be lies for all I know. But I don't think so. I love Cobain's music. I love Bob Dylan. I've read books on them, too, and I've regretted it. I don't see those guys in the music. It's a betrayal in some weird way being confronted with accounts of who these guys are compared to the figures cut by the music. It's different with Lead Belly. he is the music, not to be cheap or sappy. I know he didn't create most of the songs I love to listen to him sing, but whatever he sings immediately does become HIS. I don't know what to say about the book honestly., I keep talking and nothing seems relevant to the book, I realize that. But it all is relevant, too. You should just get it and read it. I read a few others and they're not better than this one. This book gives you the legends and lets the hot air from them to a more real picture. At the same time there is a sense of the legend becoming bigger with the truth. Other books print the legend and you sort of feel patronized and like wasted your time. Read this if you want to know as much of the real guy as there is to know at this point.

I found this a fascinating and educational account of an important musical artist, but more than that - the story of crucial developments in American roots music reflecting its diverse origins early in the nation's history and reverberating in popular rock, R&B, and other music today. We learn quite a bit about Leadbelly the man and perhaps even more about the hundreds of songs he channeled and made his own (e.g., "Midnight Special," "C.C. Rider," "Irene," etc.). Music comes from a place and

time, and this thoroughly researched book conveys that too - it was fun reading with an atlas or Google Maps nearby to follow the book's vivid descriptions of events and cultures of deep rural areas to the heart of NYC from the 1880s to the 1940s. YouTube too was a helpful companion for dipping into the music by Leadbelly and other performers across the years (e.g. compare the videos of "Black Betty" by Leadbelly and by Ram Jam, or the many versions of "Goodnight Irene").

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