Looking Up At Down: The Emergence Of Blues Culture

William Barlow

An emergence is when something comes into view like the emergence of a seedling in a garden or the famous emergence of Punxsutawney Phil on Groundhog Day which is supposed to show how soon spring will "emerge." Emergence is a noun that goes back to the Latin root emergere, meaning "bring to light," and it came into English in the 17th century. Just as something comes to light or shows up where there was darkness or nothing before, an emergence happens like new technologies such as the emergence of e-readers. Pronouncing emergence is the same as pronouncing emergency. The blues is also about overcoming hard luck, saying what you feel, ridding yourself of frustration, letting your hair down, and simply having fun. The best blues is visceral, cathartic, and starkly emotional. From unbridled joy to deep sadness, no form of music communicates more genuine emotion. Once the Delta blues made their way up the Mississippi to urban areas, the music evolved into electrified Chicago blues, other regional blues styles, and various jazz-blues hybrids. A decade or so later the blues gave birth to rhythm 'n blues and rock 'n roll. No single person invented the blues, but many people claimed to have discovered the genre.
More than just a history of a musical genre, *Looking Up at Down* traces the evolution of the various strands of blues music within the broader context of the culture on which it commented. “Bill Barlow’s fine study is a major contribution to our understanding of blues. He carefully traces the music from its roots in the rural South to urban traditions in Memphis, St. Louis, and Chicago. Barlow’s broad portrait of the blues and his perceptive analysis make this study a classic.” —Bill Ferris, Director, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, The University of Mississippi. Read more. Book Description. The evolution of the various strands of blues music. Read more. See all Editorial Reviews.