

OXFORD AMERICAN

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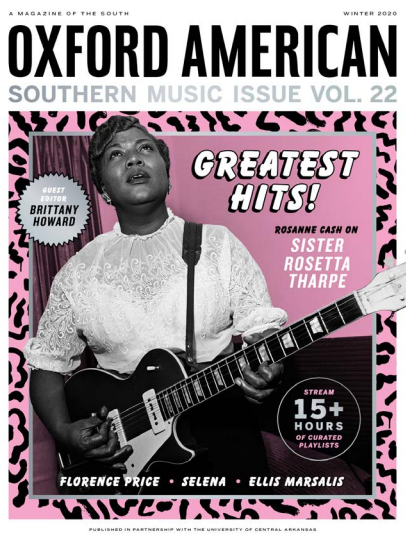
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Introducing the *Oxford American's* Greatest Hits Southern Music Issue

Guest edited by Brittany Howard, the 160-page magazine, featuring more than 30 contributors and 15+ hours of curated music, will be on newsstands Dec. 1

October 27, 2020—LITTLE ROCK, AR—The *Oxford American's* 22nd annual Southern Music Issue is a “Greatest Hits” edition. **Brittany Howard**, the Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter and lead vocalist of Alabama Shakes, served as guest editor. She selected ten of her favorite *OA* music stories to republish alongside a section of new writing on musical icons.

Howard’s picks extend back to the magazine’s third issue, published in 1993, when the late **Elizabeth Wurtzel** wrote “R.E.M. for the People,” and 1997, when **Peter Guralnick** published “Whose Skip James is This?” in the debut music issue. She also chose more contemporary essays like **Tiana Clark’s** “Nina Is Everywhere I Go” and **Lauren Du Graf’s** “The Gospel of Jodeci,” both published in 2018. “I found some connection to all of the stories inside this issue,” Howard writes in her introduction. The pieces, she says, help her to “remember that it is impossible to talk about the South without poetry.”



Howard’s introductory essay is accompanied by a Spotify playlist curated by the artist herself and includes songs performed by Irma Thomas, George Clinton, Al Green, and Ella Fitzgerald. In lieu of a single CD compilation, and with a nod toward the issue’s “greatest hits” theme, more than a dozen writers and musicians created streamable playlists and micro-essays that mine topics, eras, and distinct genres and musical corners of the South. Gothic blues vocalist and musician **Adia Victoria’s** “Not in This Life—Death, Secession, and Belonging in Southern Sacred Music” covers the music of the Dixie Hummingbirds, Son House, and Blind Willie Johnson; she calls the region a “land of separations and divine transitions.” According to Oh Boy recording artist **Kelsey Waldon**, “the mountain blues is really no different than the Delta blues”—she offers the music of Jessie Mae Hemphill and Hazel Dickens as proof. **Kiese Laymon** gives a peek into the music that helped him while writing and editing his essay on Outkast, “Da Art of Storytelling’ (A

Prequel),” originally published in the *OA’s* Georgia Music Issue. The musician and longtime *OA* contributor **Rosanne Cash** selects songs by Big Maybelle, Bobby “Blue” Bland, and Ruth Brown, “mysteries with backbeats” that are beloved and born out of “longing memory, craving, suffering, injustice, and lust.”

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In the section of the issue dedicated to new writing, *OA* contributors focus on iconic artists who have deepened and extended the reach of the region's musical heritage. Cash's essay, "The Godmother of Soul," follows the career of Sister Rosetta Tharpe, the edition's cover star, who was born a bit more than a hundred miles from the birthplace of her father, Johnny Cash, and was his favorite singer. **Gwen Thompkins**, the host and executive producer of "Music Inside Out" in New Orleans, reflects on a series of decisions the late musician and teacher Ellis Marsalis made that changed jazz history. And the poet and essayist **Harmony Holiday** listens to *Mississippi River Suite*, the twenty-eight-minute song cycle written by Florence Price, the first Black woman composer to have a symphony performed by a major American orchestra. In 2009, a trove of Price's symphonies was found in the attic of her former home outside of Chicago. "It is not shocking that [Price] is this great at Western classical composition, but it is tradition to act as if it is," Holiday writes.

Other new features include **Elizabeth Nelson's** meditation on Charlie Daniels; **David Ramsey's** reflection on the spirited recordings of Brother Claude Ely; **Patterson Hood's** remembrance of "Growing up Muscle Shoals" with a session musician as his father; and new poetry on Selena, the Chicks, and more.

Published since 1997, the music issue is the *Oxford American's* most acclaimed and popular production. In 2012, *New York Times* critic Dwight Garner wrote that the *OA's* compilations "practically belong in the Smithsonian." Since 2009, the music issue has centered on a different theme, including Southern states and Visions of the Blues.

The 2020 Southern Music Issue is available now for pre-order at OxfordAmericanGoods.org. It will be on select newsstands on November 25, 2020. Or, subscribe to the *Oxford American* by visiting OxfordAmerican.org/subscribe. For bulk orders, contact info@oxfordamerican.org or 501-374-0000.

ABOUT THE OXFORD AMERICAN

The *Oxford American (OA)* is a nonprofit arts organization whose mission is to explore the complexity and vitality of the American South through exceptional writing, music, and visual art. The primary medium through which the *OA* accomplishes this mission is the quarterly publication of the *Oxford American* literary magazine. The *OA* values diverse perspectives and encourages artists across disciplines to present work that creates a deeper understanding of the South. It has won four National Magazine Awards—including the 2016 Award for General Excellence in the category of Literature, Science and Politics—and other high honors since it began publication in 1992. The magazine has featured the original work of such literary powerhouses as Charles Portis, Roy Blount, Jr., ZZ Packer, Donald Harington, Donna Tartt, Ernest J. Gaines, and many other distinguished authors, while also discovering and launching the most promising writers in the region. The *OA* has also published previously unseen work by such Southern masters as William Faulkner, Eudora Welty, Walker Percy, James Agee, Zora Neale Hurston, James Dickey, and Carson McCullers, to name just a handful. The *Oxford American* is published in partnership with the University of Central Arkansas. For more information, visit OxfordAmerican.org.