



## Woman with Guitar: Memphis Minnie's Blues

*Paul Garon, Beth Garon*

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Universally recognized as one of the greatest blues artists, Memphis Minnie (1897–1973) wrote and recorded hundreds of songs. Blues people as diverse as Muddy Waters, Johnny Shines, Big Mama Thornton, and Chuck Berry have acknowledged her as a major influence. At a time when most female vocalists sang Tin Pan Alley material, Minnie wrote her own lyrics and accompanied her singing with virtuoso guitar playing. Thanks to her merciless imagination and dark humor, her songs rank among the most vigorous and challenging popular poetry in any language.

*Woman with Guitar* is the first full-length study of the life and work of this extraordinary free spirit, focusing on the lively interplay between Minnie's evolving artistry and the African American community in which she lived and worked. Drawing on folklore, psychoanalysis, critical theory, women's studies, and surrealism, the authors' explorations of Minnie's songs illuminate the poetics of popular culture as well as the largely hidden history of working-class women's self-emancipation.

This revised and expanded edition includes a wealth of new biographical material, including photographs, record contracts, sheet music, and period advertisements, which further vivify this portrait of an African American musical legend. Complete, updated discography included.

"*Woman with Guitar* is a fascinating, thorough and extremely valuable biography of one of American musical history's most vibrant and pioneering artists. As the first woman singer/songwriter/ guitarist to ever reach stardom, the story of her life in music, on and off the stage, during one of the most important and formative periods of the origins of popular music, is an indelible, crucial window into that history."—Bonnie Raitt

"*Woman with Guitar* has been, since it was first published in 1992 and now with this new revised and extended edition, still the only real definitive biography of Memphis Minnie, the most important female singer, songwriter and guitarist in the history of Delta blues."—Lucinda Williams

"As a most ardent and devoted lifelong fan of Memphis Minnie and her music, I avidly devoured the original *Woman with Guitar* when it first came out in 1992. Now I am excited to be reading this new edition, and so grateful for its additional rare photos and carefully researched details, which shed even more light on this seminal, iconic, almost mythical musical pioneer, who was way ahead of her time, and whose soulful music and life so deeply inspired and influenced so many! A must read — whether you are already a Memphis Minnie fan, or just discovering her for the first time!" — Maria Muldaur

"An excellent book."—Bill Wyman

"*Woman with Guitar* is not simply a carefully researched biography of Memphis Minnie, compiled from the memories of her relatives, friends, and fellow performers; it is a vivid portrait of a talented singer and guitarist . . . The authors have added a new dimension to blues scholarship."—Paul Oliver, author of *Blues Off the Record*

"*Woman with Guitar* is a delight. The book is both thorough and brilliant, a rare combination these days. . . .

A fanatic interest in Minnie underpins and energizes this wonderful biography."—David Roediger, author of *The Wages of Whiteness*

**Paul Garon** is a co-founder of *Living Blues* magazine and author of *The Devil's Son-in-Law* and *Blues and the Poetic Spirit*. **Beth Garon** is a painter and collagist. The Garons operate a rare-book business in Chicago, Illinois, and have been associated with the US surrealist movement for many years.

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