



Early Years of Rhythm & Blues

Alan B. Govenar

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Benny Joseph made his living as a professional photographer in Houston's black community during the crucial decades from the 1950s through the early 1980s, when the amplified pulse of rhythm and blues underscored the social changes sweeping the nation. Joseph photographed everything from parades and teen hops to impassioned speeches by civil rights leaders Martin Luther King, Jr., and Thurgood Marshall. Under contract to the pioneering black entrepreneur Don Robey, owner of the Duke and Peacock recording labels, Joseph photographed many of the popular recording artists of the day, including B.B. King, Mahalia Jackson, Buddy Ace, Clarence Gatemouth Brown, and Della Reese. With over 120 unique black and white photographs, this is a must have for all rhythm and blues enthusiasts, and a valuable historical resource for photography collectors. Writer, photographer, and filmmaker Alan Govenar met Joseph in 1984 when he was closing his studio in Houston's Third Ward and worked with him over the next five years, sifting through thousands of negatives to identify and contextualize his most compelling images of this remarkable era.

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