

Bitten By The Blues

The Alligator Records Story

Bitten by the Blues, The Alligator Records Story, the new book co-authored by Alligator Records president and founder Bruce Iglauer and Patrick A. Roberts, was released in October, 2018.

It started with the searing sound of a slide careening up the neck of an electric guitar. In 1970, twenty-three-year-old Bruce Iglauer walked into Florence's Lounge, in the heart of Chicago's South Side, and was overwhelmed by the joyous, raw Chicago blues of Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers. A year later, Iglauer produced Hound Dog's debut album in eight hours and pressed a thousand copies, the most he could afford. From that one album grew Alligator Records, the largest independent blues record label in the world.

Bitten by the Blues is Iglauer's memoir of a life immersed in the blues—and the business of the

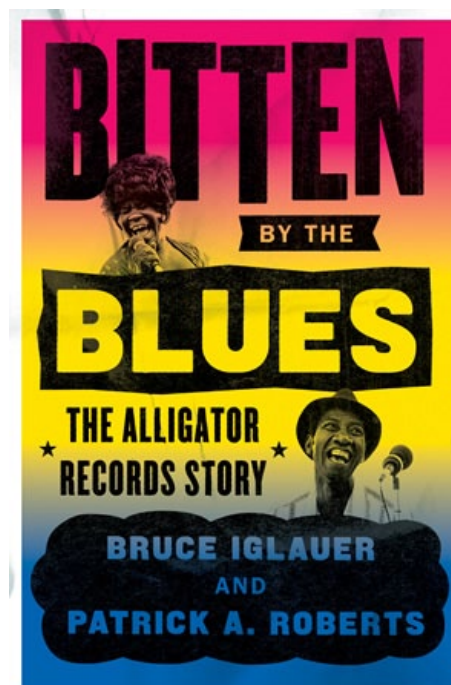


Bruce Iglauer by Chris Monaghan

blues. No one person was present at the creation of more great contemporary blues music than Iglauer: he produced albums by Koko Taylor, Albert Collins, Professor Longhair, Johnny Winter, Lonnie Mack, Son Seals, Roy Buchanan, Shemekia Copeland, and many other major figures.

In this book, Iglauer takes us behind the scenes, offering unforgettable stories of those charismatic musicians and classic sessions, delivering an intimate and unvarnished look at what it's like to work with the greats of the blues.

It's a vivid portrait of some of the extraordinary musicians and larger-than-life personalities who



brought America's music to life in the clubs of Chicago's South and West Sides. *Bitten by the Blues* is also an expansive history of half a century of blues in Chicago and around the world, tracing the blues recording business through massive transitions, as a genre of music originally created by and for black southerners adapted to an influx of white fans and musicians and found a worldwide audience.

Most of the smoky bars and packed clubs that fostered the Chicago blues scene have long since disappeared. But their soul lives on, and so does their sound. As real and audacious as the music that shaped it, *Bitten by the Blues* is a raucous journey through the world of Genuine Houserockin' Music.

According to Iglauer, "We wanted to paint vivid pictures of the charismatic blues immortals that I knew so well, like Hound Dog Taylor, Son Seals, Koko Taylor and Albert Collins, as well as to give insight into the creative process of planning and recording some of their classic albums. And we wanted to give the readers a close-up look at the exciting and visionary artists who are carrying the Alligator tradition into the future, like Marcia Ball, Shemekia Copeland, Selwyn Birchwood and Toronzo Cannon. It's also an insider's look at how the independent record business has changed over the last 50 years, and how those changes have impacted the artists who create the music."

Lauren Salas, Senior Promotions Manager with The University of Chicago Press, says, "*Bitten By The Blues* is the story of an iconic company and its relentless founder. ... It's the story of the blues business, of building a company based on a passion for the blues, and the highs and lows of running an indie label. It's the story of blues in Chicago and around the world."

"Bitten By The Blues, The Alligator Records Story", by Bruce Iglauer and Patrick A. Roberts, 336 pages, University of Chicago Press, 2018, \$30.

BRUCE IGLAUER is president and founder of Alligator Records, the largest contemporary blues label in the world. He is also a cofounder of *Living Blues* magazine and a founder of the Chicago Blues Festival.

PATRICK A. ROBERTS is associate professor in the College of Education at Northern Illinois University. He is the coauthor of *Give 'Em Soul, Richard! Race, Radio, and Rhythm and Blues in Chicago*.

What they said...

"This book is long overdue. Alligator Records has been a cornerstone of the blues world for over four decades. The stories about the artists and sessions that have paved the way for so many others are a pleasure to read. As an Alligator artist I am truly grateful for what Bruce and Alligator Records have done for me and this genre."

- Shemekia Copeland

"Bruce and his history with Alligator Records encompass so much of the richest and most exciting eras of urban blues. All the fascinating stories and behind-the-scenes intrigues are here, and the indelible legacy of his commitment to this music and the artists he cares so passionately about makes this a terrific, important read."

- Bonnie Raitt

"When I was about twenty years old, Hound Dog Taylor & The HouseRockers were my imaginary best friends. They were with me everywhere I went because I always had my portable CD player with me. I know for a fact I wouldn't be in this business if Bruce hadn't released those first two Hound Dog records. The fire Bruce captured on those records is the magic place I'm reaching for every time I'm in my studio."

- Dan Auerbach, The Black Keys

"Blues and gospel have always been first cousins, and Bruce was as supportive and gracious to me as you could imagine, always willing to offer his insight and expertise. He's been a true friend of the blues and independent music."

- Mavis Staples

"Bruce Iglauer stepped through the door of Florence's Lounge on Chicago's South Side and into a timeless love affair with the blues. Iglauer's story is about finding talent, nurturing it, and sharing it with others. It's also about staying independent in a world where conglomerates glom and Big Tech assumes more power. His Alligator Records is a soundtrack to modern blues, from Hound Dog Taylor in 1970 on through Son Seals and Albert Collins and to today's JJ Grey & Mofro. There are great stories here."

- Robert Gordon, author of Respect Yourself: Stax Records and the Soul Explosion

"In many ways the story of Alligator Records is the story of the blues over the last fifty years. Bitten by the Blues is the saga of Alligator Records through the eyes of the one person who knows it best—label founder and owner Bruce Iglauer. With his tough business mind, coupled with an often self-effacing sense of humor, Iglauer tells the tale of the Gator with candor and clarity. From the first Hound Dog Taylor record that launched the label, to the meteoric success of artists like Luther Allison and Shemekia Copeland, Alligator Records has, in many ways, defined success in the blues world. Bitten by the Blues is an eye-opening look at one of the most popular independent blues labels in history."

Brett J. Bonner, editor, Living Blues magazine