



Sacred Steel: Inside an African American Steel Guitar Tradition (Music in American Life)

Robert L. Stone

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In this book, Robert L. Stone follows the sound of steel guitar into the music-driven Pentecostal worship of two related churches: the House of God and the Church of the Living God. A rare outsider who has gained the trust of members and musicians inside the church, Stone uses nearly two decades of research, interviews, and fieldwork to tell the story of a vibrant musical tradition that straddles sacred and secular contexts. Most often identified with country and western bands, steel guitar is almost unheard of in African American churches--except for the House of God and the Church of the Living God, where it has been part of worship since the 1930s. Sacred Steel traces the tradition through four generations of musicians and in some two hundred churches extending across the country from Florida to California, Michigan to Alabama. Presenting detailed portraits of musical pioneers such as brothers Troman and Willie Eason and contemporary masters such as Chuck Campbell, Glenn Lee, and Robert Randolph, Stone expertly outlines the fundamental tensions between sacred steel musicians and church hierarchy.

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