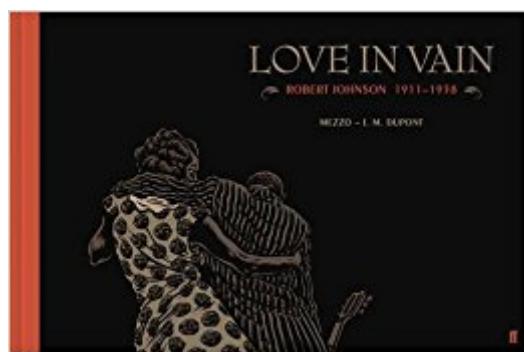


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# Love In Vain: Robert Johnson 1911-1938, The Graphic Novel



## Synopsis

From 'Crossroads Blues' to 'Sweet Home Chicago', 'Hellhound on My Trail' to 'Come On In My Kitchen', Robert Johnson wrote some of the most enduring and formative songs of the original blues era, songs that would go on to help shape the birth of rock 'n' roll in the 1960s. Beloved of Clapton, Dylan and the Stones, Robert Johnson remains one of the most iconic and mythologized figures in popular music (and the first of many to die at the age of 27). Born in the in the South in Mississippi, Johnson made his way to the urban North as a traveling musician, but it was only when he returned to the South that he recorded the twenty-nine songs, in two sessions, which would create his legacy. Exploring the stories and legends that surround his life and death – his childhood, his womanizing, his pact with the devil at the crossroads – Mezzo and DuPont have produced a fittingly creative and beautiful depiction of this most extraordinary life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"All the time that the tension builds, so too does the detail in Johnstone's picture of a once-happy family ground down by sorrow...I would have been happy to read chapters and chapters more of this book." – Independent on Sunday

An avid admirer of Robert Crumb, Mezzo is one of the most respected artists in the French graphic novel world. His cult classic King of the Flies (with Michel Pirus) was published in the United States by Fantagraphics. A former music journalist, Jean-Michel Dupont also worked as a copywriter for

advertising.

This book tells the now familiar story of Robert Johnson's life, from his up-bringing, his "meeting" the Devil, to his lifestyle of drinking and womanizing, to his music, and his early death. The story was written by J.M. Dupont and the illustrations are by Mezzo. And while the story is well told it's the strikingly beautiful illustrations that elevate this book to something special. The warm-toned black and white illustrations are both evocative and straightforward in detail. Pausing to really look at virtually every panel will increase the enjoyment factor greatly. From Johnson's tough upbringing, his early attempts at playing the guitar, his "sudden" mastery of the instrument, his ramblings with fellow bluesman Johnny Shines, his philandering with married women, his drinking ("never drink from an open bottle"), to his early death, not from a poisoned bottle of alcohol given to him by a jealous husband, but from pneumonia. The illustrations are well matched with Dupont's telling of the story. Also included is a section titled "Song Book" that has the lyrics to some of Johnson's most famous songs along with some full page impressionistic drawings across from each lyric page. There's also a panel that features Eric Clapton singing Johnson's "Crossroads", and several panels of the Rolling Stones at Altamont singing another Johnson tune "Love In Vain", the last panel which alludes to (possibly) the Devil. A small Bibliography is also included. This is a beautifully done book--from the thick hardboard covers, the period style graphic pattern used on the end papers, to the thick paper stock, and of course, the wonderful illustrations that are visually so arresting. At times Mezzo's work is vaguely reminiscent of R. Crumb's work, especially in the many faces throughout the book. The book is 72 pages in length and is 7 3/4" X 12". But don't let the slim number of pages deter you from checking this book out. This is a case where quality most definitely outstrips quantity. A few of the panels contain illustrations dealing with sex, and while not totally overt, it's obvious what's going on. And one panel has Johnson uttering the "f" word, and there's some risque lyrics in other panels of Johnson's songs. I don't think this will matter much to most people familiar with Johnson's lifestyle, and it is a depiction of that period and his life. But I thought I'd warn anyone who may be offended. In defense I have to say that without the sex scenes and lyrics this wouldn't be true to the tale of Johnson's life. This is a book to add to your shelf of blues books if you're a fan of Johnson's music. This is quite a good month for blues fans looking for books on the blues. Also well worth checking out is a book by Bill Dahl, "The Art of the Blues--A Visual Treasury of Black Music's Golden Era". This too is a well produced book that's a visual feast for fans of the blues in (roughly) the first half of the Twentieth Century. I've posted a review of that book too if it sounds interesting.

Beautiful book

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