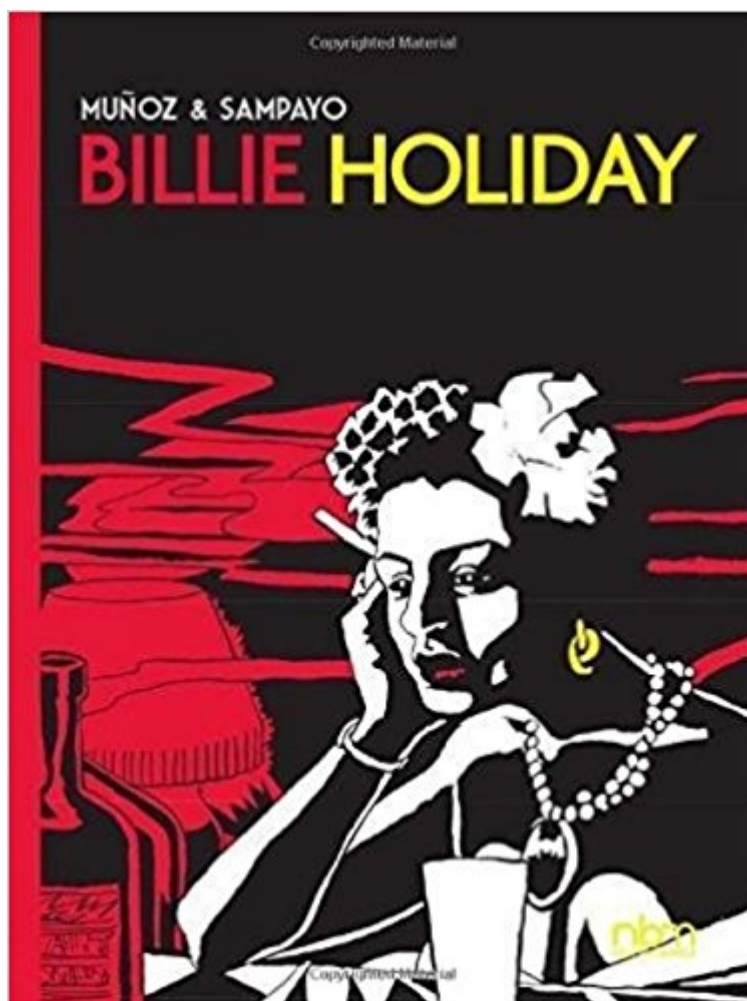


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# Billie Holiday



## Synopsis

Born in Philadelphia in 1915, and dead too early in New York in 1959, Billie Holiday became a legendary jazz singer, even mythical. With her voice even now managing to touch so many people, we follow a reporter on the trail of the artist on behalf of a New York daily. Beyond the public scandals that marred the life of the star (alcohol, drugs, violence...), he seeks to restore the truth, revisiting the memory of Billie. Through this investigation, Muñoz and Sampayo trace, through the undertones of racism, and in the wake of the blues, the slow drift of a singer who expressed the deepest emotions in jazz. By internationally renowned Argentine artists, featuring Muñoz's strikingly raw heavy blacks, this is not just a biography but a spell-binding art book tribute.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Jose Muñoz had a serious passion for comics from an early age. His first comics job was assisting Francisco Solano Lopez, illustrating stories by Argentine comics legend Hector Osterheld. His first leap into creating comics independently was the detective series Precinct 56. Muñoz moved to Europe in 1972, meeting fellow Argentine writer Carlos Sampayo. The duo collaborated often with various series, including Alack Sinner (IDW) and in Art Spiegelman's Raw. Gaining international recognition, the duo has won Angouleme and Yellow Kid awards and been nominated for an Eisner.

Great graphic novel. Well written and well drawn. In fact the black and white art is as bluesy as the

story itself.

Billie Holiday (born Eleanora Fagan, on 7 April 1915) had teenage parents and experienced a childhood of poverty and abuse. *Billie Holiday*™ by writer Carlos Sampayo and artist Jose Muñoz starts with an introduction charting her life by French journalist Francis Marmande. Even allowing for very poor translation his is one of the worst pieces of writing I've both prolix and pretentious that I've encountered. The opening sentence gives you a taste: "Let's forget for a moment, please, since it's unforgettable in of itself, in fact, impossible to, indelible, but try to forget her mother giving birth at the age of thirteen, her great-grandmother housed in a shack in the back of the plantation, whom the master, a handsome Irishman, would come bang at set times, and by whom, she would have seventeen children all dead except for one, Billie's grandfather." The French have a habit of elevating the heroes of popular culture to the pantheon of the greats, even regarding Jerry Lewis as a genius. It should therefore come as no surprise that Marmande rates *Lady Day*™ on a par with Virginia Woolf, Carson McCullers, Marguerite Duras, Stravinsky and Mozart. It therefore comes as a considerable relief to leave the introduction behind and to move on to the book proper. Carlos Sampayo copies the central storytelling device from *Citizen Kane*™ so that instead of newsreel reporter Jerry Thompson trying to reconstruct the life of the recently deceased Charles Foster Kane, we follow a New York newspaper reporter who is researching Holiday's life for a piece to mark the 30th anniversary of her death. Sampayo's text covers all the key aspects of Holiday's harrowing life, including the prostitution, alcoholism, drug addiction, destructive relationships, and casual and overt racism, and is admirably complemented by the stark but arresting black-and-white drawings of Muñoz. Holiday's relationship with Lester Young, her personal courage (most obvious in her championing of the song *Strange Fruit*™) and the reminders of her vocal artistry do a little to make Holiday's life and the book less dark and downbeat.

'Billie Holiday' by Carlos Sampayo and José Muñoz is a graphic novel about the famous jazz singer. She didn't have a picturesque life, and this book doesn't flinch from that. The book begins with an essay by Francis Marmande, a writer and journalist for *Le Monde*. The graphic novel has a framing story of a journalist doing a story on the 30th anniversary of Billie's death. What follows is not a complete story of her life, and it's certainly not a happy one. Billie had her own problems with drugs and men, and those are presented in an unflinching way. She was also discriminated against

and faced racism in spite of her tremendous fame. The book is drawn in stark black and white. The figures come across as caricatures with garishly drawn features. The incidents here are ugly and don't serve to put Billie Holiday in the best light. She had a hard life, and this book doesn't make any excuses for that. I appreciated the approach this graphic novel took. I received a review copy of this graphic novel from Papercutz, NBM Publishing, and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you for allowing me to review this graphic novel.

This is a gritty, noirish look at the life of Billie Holiday. As the story begins a newspaper writer is given the task of putting together a special piece to honor the 30th anniversary of Billie Holiday's death. The reporter doesn't even know the name - Billie Holiday. The rest of the book unfolds as the cold hard facts of the research get interspersed with flashbacks to the "real life", the story behind the story. The reality that is more nuanced, less black and white than the impersonal facts presented 30 years later. *Billie Holiday* by Carlos Sampayo is a commentary on the realities that Billie Holiday suffered through and on the injustices of the times she lived in. The artwork, fittingly enough, is full of heavily lined figures in plays of shadow and light as they help to illustrate the grey areas that made up the truth behind much of the legend. \*\*\*Thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for allowing me the opportunity to read and review this title

The introduction is interesting but the sarcasm does not really work. The artwork and the story showcase Billie's ups and downs. The artwork is very stark black and white, her story is not so simple. Told from the point of view of a reporter researching her life the story recounts her lows, arrests, drug addiction and highs, writing *Strange Fruit*

*Billie Holiday* by Carlos Sampayo is a free NetGalley e-comicbook that I read in late May. A very quick, but striking comic that jumps between a reporter writing about Billie Holiday and Lady Day's life told in discriminating, vice-filled, yet strangely emotive black ink woodcut.

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