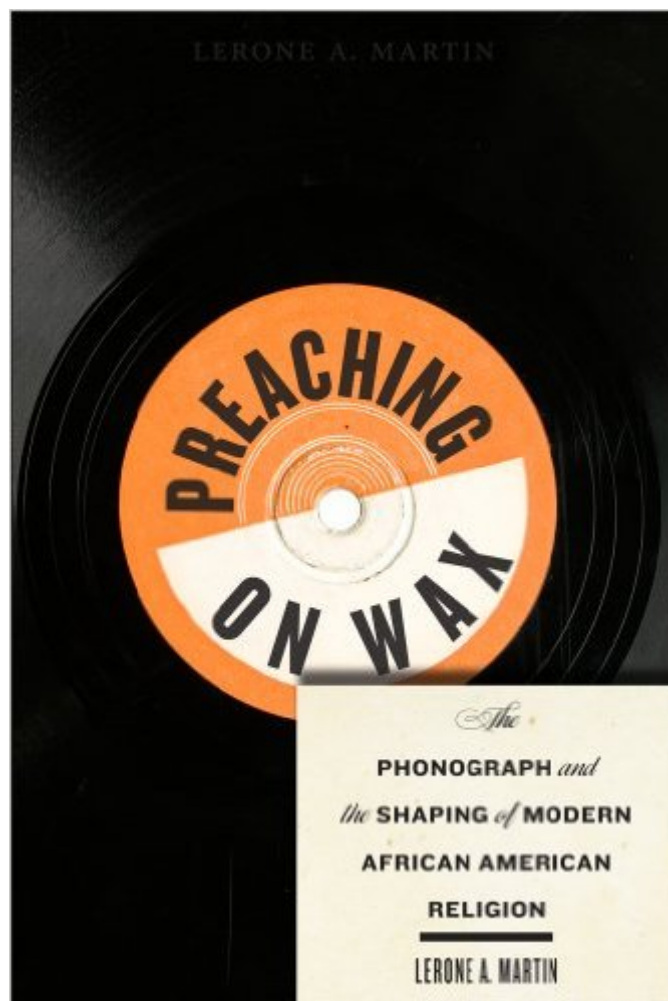


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# Preaching On Wax: The Phonograph And The Shaping Of Modern African American Religion (Religion, Race, And Ethnicity)



## Synopsis

Certificate of Merit, 2015 Award for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research presented by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections From 1925 to 1941, approximately one hundred African American clergymen teamed up with leading record labels such as Columbia, Paramount, Victor-RCA to record and sell their sermons on wax. While white clerics of the era, such as Aimee Semple McPherson and Charles Fuller, became religious entrepreneurs and celebrities through their pioneering use of radio, black clergy were largely marginalized from radio. Instead, they relied on other means to get their message out, teaming up with corporate titans of the phonograph industry to package and distribute their old-time gospel messages across the country. Their nationally marketed folk sermons received an enthusiastic welcome by consumers, at times even outselling top billing jazz and blues artists such as Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey. These phonograph preachers significantly shaped the development of black religion during the interwar period, playing a crucial role in establishing the contemporary religious practices of commodification, broadcasting, and celebrity. Yet, the fame and reach of these nationwide media ministries came at a price, as phonograph preachers became subject to the principles of corporate America. In *Preaching on Wax*, Lerone A. Martin offers the first full-length account of the oft-overlooked religious history of the phonograph industry. He explains why a critical mass of African American ministers teamed up with the major phonograph labels of the day, how and why black consumers eagerly purchased their religious records, and how this phonograph religion significantly contributed to the shaping of modern African American Christianity.

## Book Information

Series: Religion, Race, and Ethnicity

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: NYU Press (November 14, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1479890952

ISBN-13: 978-1479890958

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.7 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (1 customer review)

Best Sellers Rank: #858,017 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #91 in Books > Humor &

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## Customer Reviews

Thoroughly researched and eloquently written, this is a captivating account of the old-time-gospel "revival on wax" that was preached by black ministers, produced and distributed by America's leading record labels, and enthusiastically consumed by blacks (and whites) across the nation in the interwar years. Martin does a masterful job of contextualizing the voices of ministers like James Gates, Leora Ross, and Black Billy Sunday, placing them within the currents of cultural, commercial, and religious change in interwar America. I cannot recommend this book highly enough. Kudos also go to New York University Press for making this book affordable in paperback and e-book editions. It is a book that deserves to have a wide audience.

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