



The Pilgrim Jubilees (American Made Music Series)

Alan Young

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In 1960, four young men went into a Chicago recording studio and revolutionized the sound of African American gospel music. When they made that groundbreaking recording, the Pilgrim Jubilees had been singing together for more than ten years. Today they are still singing, and they are still at the forefront of gospel music.

The Pilgrim Jubilees is their story, told in their words. From their beginnings in rural Houston, Mississippi, through the good times and the hard times of more than half a century traveling the "gospel highway" they have played a pivotal role in shaping an entire musical genre. Today, based in Chicago, they stand as senior statesmen of gospel music.

The Pilgrim Jubilees know the pitfalls and hardships of their calling. They tell of arriving in a distant town so short of money they can't afford to refuel the car, then discovering their concert has been canceled. They recall singing their hearts out, then finding that the promoter has absconded with the money. They remember the days when racism meant that even a gospel singer could land in jail simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. And they recount the joys of the gospel life--the elation of having a record at the top of the charts, the companionship within the group and with the people to whom they sing, and above all, the drive to keep spreading the Christian message that has sustained them through the hundreds of thousands of miles they have traveled.

And all of these elements--the highs, the lows; the successes, the failures; the spiritual, the worldly--are the subjects the Pilgrim Jubilees talked candidly and at length about to New Zealand journalist and gospel researcher Alan Young when he spent several weeks at home and on the road with them. The result--*The Pilgrim Jubilees*--is the first full-length book on an African American gospel quartet. It's an illuminating look at the lives of the singers and musicians in the Pilgrim Jubilees. For fifty years they have shone in a unique world where showbiz meets religion and the "Jubes" are stars.

Alan Young is a journalist in Auckland, New Zealand. He wrote *Woke Me Up This Morning: Black Gospel Singers and the Gospel Life* (University Press of Mississippi).

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