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Pickers And Poets: The Ruthlessly Poetic Singer-Songwriters Of Texas (John And Robin Dickson Series In Texas Music, Sponsored By The Center For Texas Music History, Texas State University)



PICKERS & POETS

THE RUTHLESSLY POETIC
SINGER-SONGWRITERS
OF TEXAS

EDITED BY CRAIG CLIFFORD AND CRAIG D. HILLIS



Synopsis

Many books and essays have addressed the broad sweep of Texas music—its multicultural aspects, its wide array and blending of musical genres, its historical transformations, and its love/hate relationship with Nashville and other established music business centers. This book, however, focuses on an essential thread in this tapestry: the Texas singer-songwriters to whom the contributors refer as “ruthlessly poetic.” All songs require good lyrics, but for these songwriters, the poetic quality and substance of the lyrics are front and center. Obvious candidates for this category would include Townes Van Zandt, Michael Martin Murphey, Guy Clark, Steve Fromholz, Terry Allen, Kris Kristofferson, Vince Bell, and David Rodriguez. In a sense, what these songwriters were doing in small, intimate live-music venues like the Jester Lounge in Houston, the Chequered Flag in Austin, and the Rubaiyat in Dallas was similar to what Bob Dylan was doing in Greenwich Village. In the language of the times, these were “folksingers.” Unlike Dylan, however, these were folksingers writing songs about their own people and their own origins and singing in their own vernacular. This music, like most great poetry, is profoundly rooted. That rootedness, in fact, is reflected in the book’s emphasis on place and the powerful ways it shaped and continues to shape the poetry and music of Texas singer-songwriters. From the coffeehouses and folk clubs where many of the “founders” got their start to the Texas-flavored festivals and concerts that nurtured both their fame and the rise of a new generation, the indelible stamp of origins is inseparable from the work of these troubadour-poets. Please see the listing for the print edition to view the table of contents for this title.

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Customer Reviews

As a songwriter myself and a huge fan of the Texas songwriting tradition I can't recommend this book enough. There is a tremendous amount of insight into the work of each writer as well interesting historical bits that go beyond the usual coverage of these titans. A well done worthy undertaking of a topic that rarely gets it's just attention outside of a small circle of rabid fans.

This book was a gift that I thought I would leaf through, but it turned out to be a page turner and I bought it as a gift for other music loving friends. Awesome!

Gift for husband.

An academic and musicians perspective on American Folk Art. Truly enjoyable reading.

Interesting book for fans of Texas Music. Offers insightful chapters on some of the songwriters you don't hear much about, like Townes Van Zandt, Joe Ely, Steve Fromholz, and lots of others. Some of the artists I'd never heard of but enjoyed reading about them. Even the chapters on better known artists such as Kris Kristofferson offer fresh material and insights. The Willies and Waylons take a backseat to the more obscure songwriters of the era, and the book is all the better for it. Why rehash well-trod material when you can dig deeper and come up with something fresher? What's cool about the book is there isn't one author. It's a collection of essays and interviews by a dozen different writers. Some are better known like Jan Reid, who wrote the cult classic "The Improbable Rise of Redneck Rock" in the early 1970s; and Joe Nick Patoski, who has written excellent biographies on Willie Nelson, Selena, and Stevie Ray Vaughan. Other writers I never heard of, but it seemed like everyone involved in this book brought something interesting to the conversation.

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