



A Murder in Music City: Corruption, Scandal, and the Framing of an Innocent Man

Michael Bishop

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A Murder in Music City imparts a great sense of 1960s Nashville as it unfolds an old crime in the present day.

Eighteen-year-old college student Paula Herring was shot dead at her mother's Nashville home in 1964, with her young brother in the next room. For decades, the story haunted those who heard it.

With both Herring's mother and her convicted killer long dead, Michael Bishop spent years doggedly following clues and chasing information around the country. That winding investigation led to a plausible new theory of who might have really killed Paula Herring, and why.

In death, Herring became a topic for lurid true-crime magazines, but the court case to try her killer was suspiciously short: jurors were given only one work week to render a verdict. The case, which was plagued by sloppy detective work, put the whole city on edge.

Through interviews with key players in the case, Bishop poked holes in the official story and developed intriguing new ideas about the case. Bishop's search is presented with strong historical context.

Paula Herring comes through as flat—a newsprint photograph of a victim. Interviewees, though, are fleshed out; their voices drive interest in the second half of the book. Their testimonies are lively and heartbreaking, and they arouse suspicion, often revealing the next topic worth investigating.

The interviewees paint Paula as an athletic teen beloved by all her peers, a picture that stands in contrast to the boozy and seamy criminal activities of 1960s Nashville. Her mother is revealed through her liaisons in burger joints, beer halls, and secret party cabins with some of the city's most powerful figures.

Because the book's arc follows the author's own experiences, sometimes the story gets bogged down by dead ends or in details added more for completeness than for plot. Bishop just barely mentions an aunt of his own who disappeared, a hint to this amateur sleuth's drive to find Paula Herring's killer.

A Murder in Music City imparts a great sense of 1960s Nashville as it unfolds an old crime in the present day, and the conclusions are shocking. This is a compelling work of true crime.

MEREDITH GRAHL COUNTS (September/October 2017)

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