

Country Music Annual, 2001

Charles K. Wolfe

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Although this compilation is designed for scholars of country music, the ten articles that comprise it contain enough anecdotes and odd facts to make the book appealing to all serious fans of the genre. It is uniformly thought-provoking, too. Each essay puts the music and/or its practitioners into a cultural context that is larger than that of pure entertainment alone.

Artists whose works and careers are examined here include the Carter Family, Ernest Tubb, Jerry and Tammy Sullivan, the alternative country group Uncle Tupelo, Sally Ann Forrester, and fiddler Henry C. Gilliland. There are essays on the close connection between NASCAR racing and country music, the rise and transformation of The Nashville Network (now called The National Network), the impact of radio on musicians in the Blue Ridge Mountains, and the colorful history of “The Great Judgment Morning,” a song made famous by the great Roy Acuff.

Ronnie Pugh, the foremost authority on the life and work of Ernest Tubb, explains in his essay how Tubb was influenced by fellow Texas musicians, a fact that generally goes unnoticed since Tubb was such an ardent and outspoken disciple of Mississippian Jimmie Rodgers. (Pugh also relates a fascinating story about young Tubb being royally snubbed by rising movie star Gene Autry.) Bluegrass player and scholar Murphy H. Henry examines the neglected but significant musical legacy of Sally Ann Forrester, who performed and recorded with Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys from 1943 to 1946. Jack Bernhardt, who traveled at length with the father-daughter duo, details how Jerry and Tammy Sullivan’s music defines and furthers their religious mission.

The editors of this collection are familiar presences to long-time followers of country music. Akenson is the founder of the International Country Music Conference. Wolfe, whose *Classic Country: Legends of Country Music* was reviewed in this magazine recently, teaches and writes on all aspects of country music. His latest full-length study on the subject is *A Good-Natured Riot: The Birth of the Grand Ole Opry*.

EDWARD MORRIS (July / August 2001)

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