



For the Record: A Musical Odyssey

Don Tolle

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Tolle provides a compelling and entertaining behind-the-scenes look at making it in the music business.

For the Record: A Musical Odyssey, by Don Tolle, is an honest, entertaining memoir of a life spent in music.

While some musicians are “discovered” and some burn out after one hit record, Tolle’s career begins with him cold-calling record companies and rises, stagnates, and rises again over the course of more than four decades. His initial goal is to be a singer-songwriter in the tradition of Roy Orbison and Neil Diamond, but beginning with a record promotion job, he’s absorbed into the business side of music. He finds success in a variety of positions, including as a producer, but his heart never changes: he wants to sing and write. This longing carries him through the years and creates a tension and goal that keeps the narrative moving forward—it also leads to the difficulties and disappointments that give the narrative shape and depth. While it’s not a juicy tell-all, this is a real, honest, and ultimately redemptive behind-the-scenes look at the music life.

Nearly every music lover has dreamed of a career in the recording industry. Tolle got the chance to realize the dream, and he shares the highs and lows of his experiences in this book. As a result, this is a tantalizing read for everyone who dreams of making it as a musician. His voice and experience will resonate most with those who relate to his musical preferences, which, though broad, swing toward a southern country feel, and those who came into their own during the same era—Tolle began his music career in the 1970s on the heels of his time in Vietnam. This book will appeal to those who’ve had the chance to live their dreams and see the multifaceted realities behind their glossy, optimistic hopes.

Tolle’s narrative skills set this memoir apart. While it’s detailed and showcases both life-changing and seemingly insignificant events, the pace keeps the book oriented and moving toward the heart of the story. His voice is friendly and open, but it’s not so conversational that it slows the story—his diction gives the book a comfortable, casual feel. Tolle balances introspection with engaging storytelling, crafting a book that was likely cathartic to write, but is also interesting to read.

The cover conveys the topic of the book—music—well, but it doesn’t give the sense that this is a personal story of one man’s life and experiences. The design of the chapter opener pages is clear and visually appealing.

For the Record is a personal, compelling story of the real world of music.

MELISSA WUSKE (January 12, 2015)

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