

The Encyclopedia of Country Music

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Since its publication in 1995, Barry McCloud's *Definitive Country: The Ultimate Encyclopedia Of Country Music And Its Performers* (Perigee Books) has been the most comprehensive and useful guide of its kind on the market. While *The Encyclopedia of Country Music* won't dispossess the older guide, it will certainly give it a run for its money. Like the McCloud book, the newer resource relies for its depth on entries and essays by a number of distinguished country music scholars and journalists. Paul Kingsbury, former editor of the *Journal of Country Music* and author of *The Grand Ole Opry History of Country Music*, directed the project.

Beyond providing basic biographical details for around 1,000 country artists, past and present, *The Encyclopedia of Country Music* also covers influential songwriters, record producers, record company chiefs, types of instruments and country music venues. Salted throughout the text are multi-page essays on country music roots, costuming, literature, songwriting, touring and other large topics. There are nearly 500 color and black-and-white photos.

Topping off this mammoth compilation are appendices that list the bestselling country albums, major award-winners, Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame members and full-time country radio stations.

While a few significant performers are unaccountably left out—including Patti Page and Shelly West—these omissions are microscopic in context. This book is a standard-setter.

EDWARD MORRIS (January / February 1999)

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