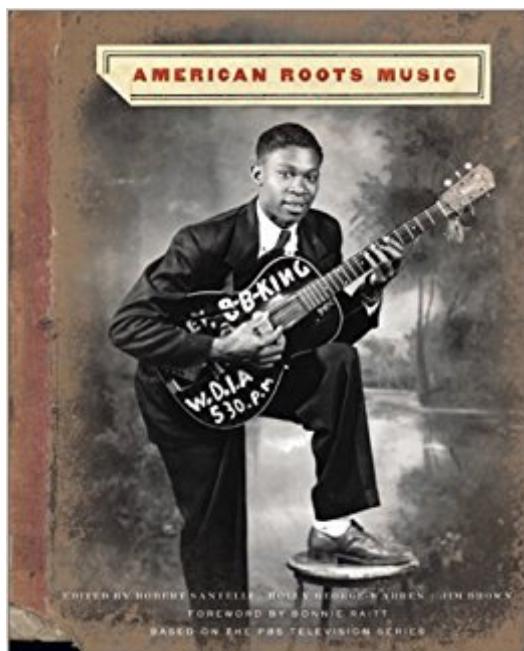


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# American Roots Music (Based On The PBS Television Series)



## **Synopsis**

In the 20th century, American roots music - gospel, blues, country, western, folk, cajun, zydeco, tejano and Native American - was invented and nurtured in small communities and spread across the nation and the world. Eventually these traditional forms gave rise to the popular music that conquered the world: rhythm and blues, rockabilly, and rock and roll. "American Roots Music" tells the story of this creative outpouring, spotlighting the pioneers who wrote the music and sang the songs, the entrepreneurs who used radio and recordings to convey the new sounds to the public, the innovative musicians who cross-pollinated traditional types of music, and the contemporary artists who have an international following with their own interpretations. This book includes: essays on the major musical genres, sidebars on pivotal events, narrative from key artists (including B.B. King, Bessie Smith, Elvis Presley, Muddy Waters and Hank Williams), and outlines of musical and social history. Portraits, performance shots and ephemera such as sheet music and record sleeves illustrate the text.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

To unite the "uniquely American genres of folk music such as blues, gospel, country, Western swing, Cajun, zydeco, Tejano and Native American" under the designation of roots music and to attempt to explore such a diverse category sufficiently is to invite charges of folly or hubris or both. But this large volume, the companion text to a four-part PBS series of the same name, boldly does so and largely succeeds. While the 11 essays cover material that has been studied in-depth

elsewhere, together they make a convincing case that the tradition of "pre-rock" folk music is worthy of respect and reinvestigation. Singer Raitt's claim that "without roots music there would be no... modern popular culture today" might be overstated, but there's no doubt that the form has been profoundly influential (as well as increasingly popular). Profiles of artists like Hank Williams, B.B. King and Emmylou Harris and careful considerations of the role roots music played in American culture are interspersed with interview excerpts, time lines and song lyrics. Manuel Peña's "Musica Tejana: The Music of Mexican Texas" is especially good. Aside from the excellent essays, the book stands out for its selection of rare and fascinating photographs. A rich and thoughtful investigation of "vernacular" music, this is essential reading for neophytes and connoisseurs alike. (Nov.) Forecast: With the PBS series this fall bound to attract a large audience, this should be a big seller. It should also have a long shelf life as a reference work and a gift book. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

If the Billboard 200 chart is any indication, more and more Americans are abandoning the fruitless quest for aesthetic fulfillment in megacorporate McMusics. For instance, the soundtrack to the Cohen brothers' Dustbowl odyssey, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, which showcases American roots classics, has sold a staggering two million copies. Edited by Santelli (deputy director of public programs, Experience Music Project), Holly George-Warren (editor, Rolling Stone Press), and producer/director Jim Brown, this magnificent new book encyclopedically explains and explores such strains as early blues, gospel, musica tejana, and Cajun/zydeco using vivid historical summaries, first-person interviews, and hundreds of rare archival photographs. Indeed, the astonishing illustrations W.C. Handy as a young cornet player circa 1909, a young Johnny Cash and an even younger Elvis Presley in the Sun recording studios, the cover of a Gene Autry "Oklahoma Yodeling Cowboy" songbook are alone well worth the price. While each individual American roots idiom has been covered by numerous worthy works, this coffee-table collaboration among the Library of Congress, the Smithsonian Institution, the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and Museum, the Experience Music Project, Ginger Group Productions, Abrams, and Rolling Stone Press is the only publication to date that so remarkably treats the entire spectrum. The only downside is the lack of an index. Although it was developed as a companion to the PBS documentary of the same name (to premiere October 29), American Roots Music easily stands alone and is very highly recommended for all public and academic libraries. Bill Piekarski, Lackawanna, NY Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

A great review of what makes American music and musicians loved all over the world.

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