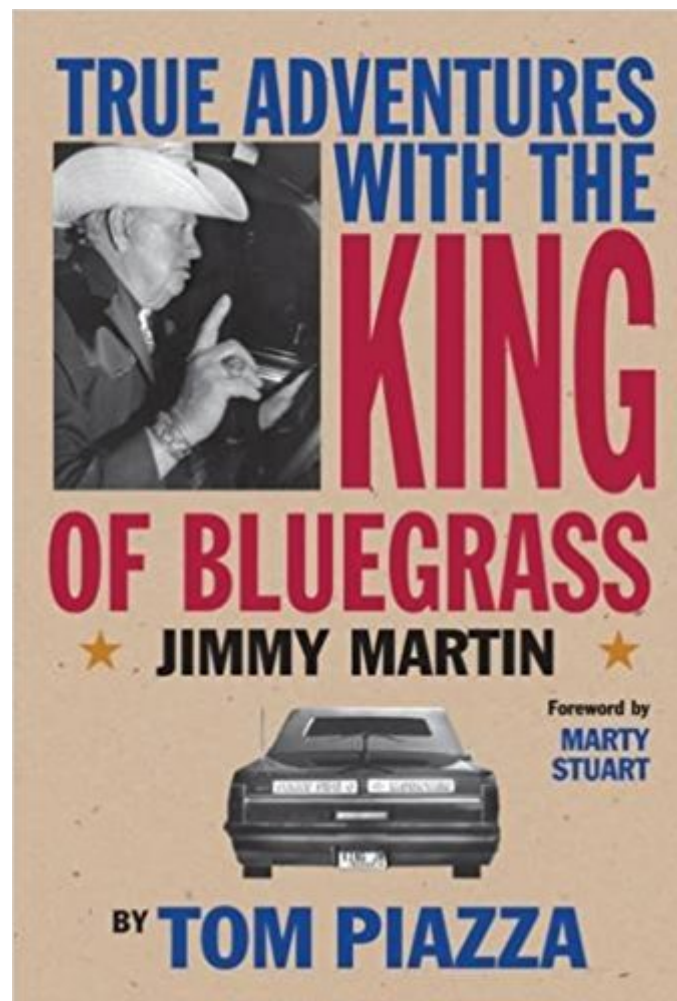




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# True Adventures With The King Of Bluegrass: Jimmy Martin



## Synopsis

Jimmy Martin was just twenty-two years old when Bill Monroe asked him to join the Blue Grass Boys. That invitation was the start of a career that spanned half a century and culminated with Martin's induction into the International Bluegrass Music Association's Hall of Honor. Always an enigmatic figure, Martin was as famous for his temper as he was for his talent. On assignment from the Oxford American magazine, fiction writer and music critic Tom Piazza drove from his home in New Orleans to Nashville to interview Martin and found himself pitched headlong into a world he couldn't have anticipated. Martin's mercurial personality drew the writer into a series of escalating encounters (with mean dogs, broken-down cars, and near electrocution), culminating in a harrowing and unforgettable expedition, with Martin, to the Grand Ole Opry. Though, or perhaps because, visits to the Opry like the one Piazza recounts were common for Martin, and though he frequently played on its stage and always hoped to become a member, he died before seeing his dream fulfilled. *True Adventures with the King of Bluegrass* is the funny, scary, and powerfully poignant portrait of one of the legends of American music. Co-published with the Country Music Foundation Press

## Book Information

Paperback: 112 pages

Publisher: Vanderbilt Univ Press - Country Music Foundation Press (September 18, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0826516807

ISBN-13: 978-0826516800

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.4 x 7.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.4 out of 5 stars 17 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #545,017 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #7 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Bluegrass #254 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Country #271 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Biographies > Country & Folk

## Customer Reviews

...one of the most engaging, revealing, funny and sad books ever written about a Nashville musician.--The Tennessean  
Tom Piazza unlocks the back door of bluegrass in his three-hundred-and-sixty-degree portrait of Jimmy Martin's tragic genius. Step inside--it's a fascinating, scary world, and you'll never be the same again.--Tim O'Brien  
Baptized in the same fire

that gave us Little Richard and Jerry Lee Lewis, this reigning King of Bluegrass [Jimmy Martin] is no doubt a charter member of the elite fraternity of southern musicians that helped forge what the world now knows as bluegrass, rockabilly, country, and rock 'n' roll music. ... Time spent with the King of Bluegrass is not for the lily-livered or the faint of heart.--Marty Stuart, from the Foreword

Tom Piazza's writing on American music has appeared in the Sunday New York Times, The Atlantic Monthly, The New Republic, and The Village Voice. He is the author of *The Guide to Classic Recorded Jazz* (University of Iowa Press), which won the ASCAP-Deems Taylor award for music writing, and *Blues and Trouble* (St. Martin's Press), which won a James Michener award for fiction. He lives in New Orleans and is working on a novel.

How would you like to be backstage at the Grand Old Opry live on Saturday night? All you need to do is get past the guards at the gate, find a parking spot, get through the stage door, and have a knowledge of where the narrow passages go. Tom Piazza received a 2 hour tour that neither he nor the reader will ever forget. Take this opportunity to watch as one of music's icons comes to real life through the words and photos in this adventure. The glimpse into the private life of one of music's icons is not always pleasant. This emotional roller coaster will require a brave heart and an open mind. Be warned, when you pick up this book you may not want to put it down.

Tom Piazza has written a piece which captures with photographic detail several hours spent in the company of the Mad 3-chord Genius (as Marty Stuart writes in his forward) and Self-Proclaimed King of Bluegrass, Jimmy Martin. This "book" is essentially a fleshed out magazine article, but it's a good one. Less than 100 pages and written in a style that moves right along while giving you a "you are there" first person sense, it's an enlightening way to pass an hour or two. Mr. Piazza has a keen and insightful sense of Jimmy Martin's musical genius and place in Bluegrass History, and to me the most poignant moments in the book are when the writer is moving to shield or protect the intoxicated, loud-mouthed King of Bluegrass from injuring his already mussed reputation. As he observes, much of what makes Jimmy Martin "great" also dooms him to the edges of the limelight and that Grand Ol' Opry Membership that Jimmy Martin yearns for so badly will likely never happen, exactly for the reason of his unwillingness to back down or compromise. This isn't a "biography" so much as a thumbnail sketch of who Jimmy Martin is framed in a skillful depiction of a few volatile hours spent with a prime example of the "Tortured Artist". I can't help but wonder if a well-written first-person account of a weekend spent with Van Gogh would have been eerily similar.

What a great little book! Jimmy Martin, arguably the greatest bluegrass singer who ever lived, is one of music's most colorful and fascinating studies. I've seen films about him, and even wrote a song about him ("Jimmy Martin", recorded by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band recently), and listened to many recordings. This book gracefully captures the absurdity of the singer's life, a wry yet sympathetic document. Marty Stuart's introduction is fabulous and makes me want to read his book as well. This is one of the few books I've ever read where I'm audibly laughing. It is a hilarious, frightening, and sad ride. I just wish it was longer.

Perhaps the best piece of writing about Country/Bluegrass music ever. Piazza is good. Very good.

I knew Jimmy and this is about as Jimmy Martin as you can get.... He was a great friend.... Definitely one of a kind... Great book

Powerful writing from Piazza, showing that Martin was indeed sometimes his own worst enemy

I wish it was longer, I didn't want it to end! The writing is terrific and Jimmy Martin was one of a kind.

Tim Piazza and Marty Stuart should have limited their ramblings to an article in Bluegrass Unlimited. Not enough here to make a book and certainly nothing we haven't heard before... The book covers the details of a couple of road trips but provides very little else. I was disappointed.

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