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Review of Country Music Annual 2000

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introduction, Sutcliffe emphasizes a distinct difference in content and tone from the Fisk narratives and the WPA narratives. In accounting for the difference, she explains that the Fisk interviews were the work of Ophelia Settle Egypt, a black researcher. The WPA interviewers were middle and upper class white women. Hence, the Fisk interviewees were much more open and outspoken. The WPA respondents, on the other hand, were much more reticent according to Sutcliffe, because of their fear of retribution from the various charities and government organizations on which they were dependent. A former slave from the Fisk narratives anonymously recounts, “Stock would be treated better than darkies sometimes. They wouldn’t whip horses half as hard as they would darkies.”

Compared with other states, Tennessee had a small slave population and many union sympathizers. However, in Mighty Rough Times, I Tell You, the former slaves, all in their eighties and nineties, recount a very tragic time in their lives when times were very difficult. Although most respondents mentioned their preference for freedom over slavery, many of their lives did not significantly improve after 1865, a fact revealed repeatedly in the narratives. Many of the former slaves mentioned post-war economic hardships and continued discrimination.

Mighty Rough Times, I Tell You is a personal look at slavery and how it affected these thirty-six former slaves’ day-to-day lives. The candor of these oral histories helps us to understand the real experience of slavery, not the abstract and somewhat distorted view many of us have. Recommended for academic and public libraries.

Rick Bower
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Serving as a conduit for original research while providing a forum for the country music research community, this volume fills a void in American music scholarship. Targeted at scholars, laypersons, students, and music fans, the essays in this volume are highly accessible for all readers, though the esoteric nature of some essays may not appeal to the general country music fan. Lacking specialized terminology that many scholarly works include, the vernacular language and straightforward writing style simplifies comprehension of the subject matter. Receptive to long, extensive articles, the
editors and advisory board intend for the serial to complement *The Journal of Country Music*, which presents good journalism and reviews. The majority of articles in the first volume were presented at the International Country Music Conference; however, this is not a requirement for publication.

Charles K. Wolfe, noted country music historian, expert on American popular music and author of 16 books, lends his expertise as editor, thus boosting the integrity of the project. Additionally, James E. Akenson, founder of the International Country Music Conference and professor at Tennessee Technological University imparts his knowledge, also serving as editor. Respected scholars in the field comprise the advisory board, including noted dean of country music scholarship Bill Malone.

Guaranteeing that each reader finds something to pique their interest, the assortment of topics covered within the volume ranges from biographical studies to cultural geography, to gender and race issues, and much more. A smattering of essays included within the 2000 edition are: “Careers in Country Music”, a fascinating social study of careers in country music by Charles Faupel that presents an insider’s look at the inner workings of the music industry. Jimmie N. Rogers and Miller Williams offer an interesting study of linguistics and the clever use of language by songwriters in “Figure it Out.” Biographical entries include Kristine Fredriksson’s “Minnie Pearl and Southern Humor in Country Entertainment”, W.K. McNeil’s “In search of Fiddlin’ Sam Long of the Ozarks”, and Francesca McLean McCrossan’s “Mandolins and Metaphors: Red Rector’s Musical Aesthetics.”

Most articles include works cited, notes, or a discography. Several include black and white photographs, illustrations, or tables. In addition, the list of contributors provides biographical information about each writer. Recommended for academic and larger public libraries with strong collections in country music.

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