



The Hank Williams Reader (Readers on American Musicians)

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When Hank Williams died on New Year's Day 1953 at the age of twenty-nine, his passing appeared to bring an abrupt end to a saga of rags-to-riches success and anguished self-destruction. As it turned out, however, an equally gripping story was only just beginning, as Williams's meteoric rise to stardom, extraordinary musical achievements, turbulent personal life, and mysterious death all combined to make him an endlessly intriguing historical figure. For more than sixty years, an ever-lengthening parade of journalists, family and friends, musical contemporaries, biographers, historians and scholars, ordinary fans, and novelists have attempted to capture in words the man, the artist, and the legend.

The Hank Williams Reader, the first book of its kind devoted to this giant of American music, collects more than sixty of the most compelling, insightful, and historically significant of these writings. Among them are many pieces that have never been reprinted or that are published here for the first time. The selections cover a broad assortment of themes and perspectives, ranging from heartfelt reminiscences by Williams's relatives and shocking tabloid exposés to thoughtful meditations by fellow artists and penetrating essays by prominent scholars and critics. Over time, writers have sought to explain Williams in a variety of ways, and in tracing these shifting interpretations, this anthology chronicles his cultural transfiguration from star-crossed hillbilly singer-songwriter to enduring American icon. *The Hank Williams Reader* also features a lengthy interpretive introduction and the most extensive bibliography of Williams-related writings ever published.

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Adam McGrath:

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