



# Calling Me Home: Gram Parsons and the Roots of Country Rock

*Bob Kealing*

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On September 19, 1973, Gram Parsons became yet another rock-and-roll casualty in an era of excess, a time when young men wore their dangerous habits like badges of honor. Unfortunately, his many musical accomplishments have been overshadowed by a morbid fascination with his drug overdose in the Joshua Tree desert at the age of twenty-six.

Known as the father of country rock, Parsons played with the International Submarine Band, The Byrds, and the Flying Burrito Brothers. In the late 1960s and early 70s, he was a key confidante of Keith Richards. In 1972, he gave Emmylou Harris her first big break. When Tom Petty re-formed his Florida garage band Mudcrutch, he invoked the name of Gram Parsons as an inspiration. Musicians as diverse as Elvis Costello, Dwight Yoakam, Ryan Adams, Patty Griffin, and Steve Earle have also paid homage to alt-country's patron saint.

In *Calling Me Home*, Kealing traces the entire arc of Parsons's career, emphasizing his Southern roots. Drawing on dozens of new interviews as well as rare letters and photographs provided by Parsons's family and legendary photojournalist Ted Polunbaum, Kealing has uncovered facts that even the most stalwart Parsons fans will find revealing.

Travelling from Parsons' boyhood home in Waycross, Georgia, to the southern folk mecca of Coconut Grove, Florida, from the birthplace of outlaw country in Austin, Texas, to the Ryman auditorium in Nashville, Tennessee Kealing celebrates Parsons's timeless and transformative musical legacy.

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