



Bluegrass Odyssey: A Documentary in Pictures and Words, 1966-86 (Music in American Life)

Carl Fleischhauer

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The fruit of four decades of collaboration between bluegrass music's premier photographer and premier historian, Bluegrass Odyssey is a satisfying and visually alluring journey into the heart of a genuinely American music. Combining Neil V. Rosenberg's commentary with more than two hundred of Carl Fleischhauer's matchless photographs, this elegant visual documentary captures the music making, the culture and community that foster it, and "the places where bluegrass is at home." Fleischhauer's striking photographs take the reader to the festival stages, taverns, grassy hillsides, country music halls, upscale clubs, barbershops, hillbilly storefront bars, and parking-lot jam sessions where bluegrass thrives. Inviting us in to the process of creating and celebrating this exuberant art form, his images offer an authentic and direct vision of the bluegrass community, including fans, instrument dealers, disc jockeys, and revered performers. In addition to wide-angle photographs that document the places in which bluegrass and its people are found, Fleischhauer offers arresting performance portraits of musicians such as Bill Monroe and his Blue Grass Boys, Lester Flatt, Earl Scruggs, Ralph Stanley, Ricky Skaggs, the Lewis and Stoneman families, the New Grass Revival, J. D. Crowe and the Kentucky Mountain Boys, the Dillards, and dozens of others. Rosenberg's narrative explores the dynamics of bluegrass performance, from the practice of "ganging around the mike," as bands bring one musical strand after another to the fore, to the tight harmonies and intricate exchanges as players respond to each other's musical ideas. Noting the blend of influences that have shaped bluegrass—ranging from rural and small-town "preachin' and prayin'" to an assembly-line precision and coordination that reflect the factories and offices to which many rural southerners migrated—Rosenberg traces the genre's emergence as a fully realized musical culture deeply rooted in community and family.

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