



Traveling the High Way Home: Ralph Stanley and the World of Traditional Bluegrass Music (Music in American Life)

By John Wright

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This portrait describes and evaluates Ralph Stanley's more than 40-year career with his Clinch Mountain Boys. Wright also reveals how Stanley's life and music developed after the death of his brother, Carter. An appendix covers Stanley's prolific recording activity, including 45 albums over a 20-year period. 23 photos.

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Editorial Review

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This is not a formal biography of Ralph Stanley--"America's finest traditional singer," according to country music historian Bill C. Malone. That's too bad, because Wright may be the best writer, technically, writing about country music; we need vernacular music biographies and histories by such as he rather than by the press agents manqu{, }e and stilted scholars who usually write them. But then, Wright renders the set of depositions (which is what this is instead of biography) from Stanley, fellow bluegrass musicians, and other Stanley associates into a reading experience far smoother than most examples of oral history. As the subtitle suggests, the big subject here is not the man Ralph Stanley or his career (though we learn much about the latter; as for the former, Stanley is a model of the famous deep reserve of the mountaineer about matters deemed personal); it is the culture that gave rise to Stanley's particular artistry, which Wright characterizes as "impersonal" and "classical, not romantic" and which Stanley himself says is "the *old-time* style of what they call bluegrass." Stanley is an instinctive archaist, Wright argues, as unique and important in his musical domain as Sinatra in his or Caruso in his. This book begins to give the man's measure. *Ray Olson*

From the Back Cover

'A very enjoyable book...makes you feel that you are listening to the persons Wright interviewed talk about treasured memories.' -- Suzanne Denison, *Bluegrass Breakdown*

About the Author

Epling began his writing career in 1960 with a work on the history of the Baptist Church, called the *Baptist Triumph*.

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