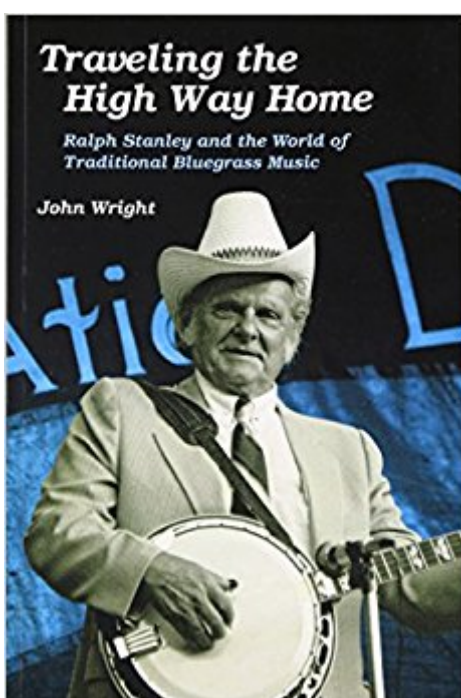


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Traveling The High Way Home: Ralph Stanley And The World Of Traditional Bluegrass Music (Music In American Life)



Synopsis

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. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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 manqué 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 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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

Very enjoyable. John Wright went to the trouble of collecting reflections and recollections from many of Ralph Stanley's bandmates, friends, neighbors, and relatives. This fine book took me back to in the mid-1980's at The Barn at UC Riverside where I took my family to see Ralph Stanley and the Clinch Mountain Boys, featuring Curley Ray Cline. Highly recommended.

I was born in Mc Clure, Virginia the same area where Ralph Stanley is from. I wanted to know more about him personally. I know his music well and I knew some of his history. The book provides a good way to get to know Ralph Stanley through interviews with friends, fellow pickers and admirers. The stories allow you to get an up close and personal view of Ralph Stanley and is fun reading.

This book begins with a personal account of Ralph Stanley's life that may have been the basis of his autobiography, "Man of Constant Sorrow". The succeeding chapters are accounts of those who knew Ralph and worked with him in the band over the years. Their memories offer a lot of history about Ralph Stanley, particularly in the years after Carter's death, and the kind of person he was and the times he lived in. Unfortunately, we don't hear from Carter, or Bill Monroe or many others who passed on before Ralph, who was 89 when he died earlier this year. Fascinating!

Just finished reading John Wright's book called "Traveling the High Way Home: Ralph Stanley and the World of Traditional Bluegrass Music." It was published in 1993 by the University of Illinois press. I think all of you would enjoy this interesting look into Ralph Stanley's world and should add this book to your library. The book is not a personal biography. Rather, it starts with one chapter of biographical information, but the bulk of the book is testimony from people in Stanley's world to provide a portrait of him. Most of these transcribed statements are from interviews that John Wright conducted in the mid-80s. I enjoyed reading these insider views from musicians, record company executives, promoters, producers, and fans. This oral history compilation includes statements, in their own words, from individuals like J.E. Mainer, Ruby Rakes Eubanks, George Shuffler, Melvin Goins, Larry Sparks, Curly Ray Cline, Jack Cooke, Dick Freeland, Junior Blankenship, Charlie

Sizemore and many others. I personally would have liked the author to further research and explore Ralph and Carter's upbringing and life. Reading all of the interviews is another approach to gain an insight into Stanley's life, but it does require the reader to assimilate a large quantity of information and draw their own conclusions. After reading this book, my basic conclusions are pretty much what I already knew: that Ralph Stanley is a man of much integrity and high ideals who adheres to the code of the mountains. His own interview in Chapter 5 of the book is actually a composite of material from eight interviews conducted by various people between 1966-1987. This chapter should be required reading for everyone involved in bluegrass music. The subtitle of this book ("Traveling the High Way Home") is based on a classic Molly O'Day song which Wright feels could "easily serve as a theme song for Ralph Stanley, personally as well as artistically." This book paints a picture of Ralph Stanley as a man who is an astute and confident professional, who "holds himself up and respects the music." Stanley is still presenting his art, which he calls "the old-time style of what they call bluegrass music." Wright's book is an important and fascinating look at the man and his old-time style. (Joe Ross, staff writer, Bluegrass Now)

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