



Woman Walk the Line: How the Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives

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Full-tilt, hardcore, down-home, and groundbreaking, the women of country music speak volumes with every song. From Maybelle Carter to Dolly Parton, k.d. lang to Taylor Swift--these artists provided pivot points, truths, and doses of courage for women writers at every stage of their lives. Whether it's Rosanne Cash eulogizing June Carter Cash or a seventeen-year-old Taylor Swift considering the golden glimmer of another precocious superstar, Brenda Lee, it's the humanity beneath the music that resonates.

Here are deeply personal essays from award-winning writers on femme fatales, feminists, groundbreakers, and truth tellers. Acclaimed historian Holly George Warren captures the spark of the rockabilly sensation Wanda Jackson; *Entertainment Weekly's* Madison Vain considers Loretta Lynn's girl-power anthem "The Pill"; and rocker Grace Potter embraces Linda Ronstadt's unabashed visual and musical influence. Patty Griffin acts like a balm on a post-9/11 survivor on the run; Emmylou Harris offers a gateway through paralyzing grief; and Lucinda Williams proves that greatness is where you find it.

Part history, part confessional, and part celebration of country, Americana, and bluegrass and the women who make them, *Woman Walk the Line* is a very personal collection of essays from some of America's most intriguing women writers. It speaks to the ways in which artists mark our lives at different ages and in various states of grace and imperfection--and ultimately how music transforms not just the person making it, but also the listener.

Woman Walk the Line: How the Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives Details

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From Reader Review Woman Walk the Line: How the Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives for online ebook

Bree Hobgood says

This book may not be for everyone, but if you were raised on Emmylou Harris, Linda Ronstadt and Roseanne Cash; if you prefer your music with a heavy dose of heartfelt lyrics, a little twang, and a few bars of fiddle; if you turn to your own well-loved guitar in times of sorrow, stress and joy, then it probably is for you....

Jen Hamilton says

I reviewed this book for the Fixin' to Write Blog, so check that out for a more detailed review, including some quotes from the book.

Here's the shorter Goodreads version of my review: I'm from San Antonio, TX and grew up with country as the first genre of music I was exposed to, but that is not a prerequisite to enjoying this book.

These essays are written by women about women and they explore issues that affect all women (and in the case of country music, women working in a male-dominated field). They also discuss the women and people of color behind country music. And, the essays are fun and uplifting too. There are themes here of grit and perseverance, and many of the writers discuss the ways in which their icons helped to bolster them during important life transitions (from career transitions to gender transitions to the transition to motherhood).

This book is AMAZING, and it will have you venturing over to YouTube or Spotify for music you haven't given consideration to before or to listen to old favorites with new perspective.

Jake Harris says

A powerful, poignant and boisterous examination of why music has such power over us. My favorite essays were the ones about the artists I knew nothing about, like Lil Hardin.

Read my full review here, with an interview with Holly Gleason:

<http://www.austin360.com/news/woman-w...>

Eric Lawless says

Good book about how The women of classic country music changed society and, in turn, society changed them to a small degree.

Travis Rountree says

This book is just amazing. Every essay is just as good as the other. A MUST for country music fans. One of my favorites is Lady Goodman's essay about Lucinda Williams. It starts: "She was the girl at the bar. Lanky, blonde, big eyed that drank everything up: she had a will to know and understand all the things that went on around her. Always a little sad underneath the kindness, always asking how you were and really meaning it, she had a voice that sounded a bit like a crow gargling kerosine in a raw wind-and some how it soothed you rather than set you on edge." Damn. Good. Writing.

Douglas Fugate says

Woman Walk The Line: How the Women In Country Music Changed Our Lives edited by Holly Gleason
This is NOT a collection of Country Music female biographies.

This is a collection of essays, written by ladies, about how Country Music females changed or influenced their lives.

This is a young lady's "how to prepare for the rest of your life" guide using successful female Country Music performers. Each essay is written by a young lady either relating how the performer encouraged the writer or how the performer succeeded and overcame obstacles to be where they are. The message throughout the book is clear – Young Ladies... You Can Follow Your Dream and Succeed.

The music, the relationships, the heartache, the joys are real. You will face choices, struggles and defeats. Life has its ups and downs, but regardless of your current station in life, you have the power to change it. Pick up the book and read just a few essays of your favorite artists. Then reach out and experience a real treat by reading those you know little about or have yet to hear.

A bonus result of these essays is the desire to listen to these artists. As you listen, enjoy the music and attempt to identify what the author of the essay has experienced.

Three Stars

Linda says

An interesting collection of essays on woman who have shaped country music from the honky tonk days of the past to today's stars. In the case of Roseann Cash and Taylor Swift, they offer heartfelt tributes to their own extraordinary role models and have their own turn in the spotlight later. Some of the choice are unexpected: Mary Chapin Carpenter, Rita Coolidge, The Mandrell Sisters and Taylor Swift. You won't find Tammy Wynette, Reba McEntire, Martina McBride or Loretta Lynn. Maybe next time.

Each lady profiled has a special meaning to the contributor. The most successful pieces are the ones with genuine interest in their subjects and less interest in tooting their own horn and listing their own credits. I would have liked the authors' bios at the end of each chapter instead of at the end of the book.

Some of my favorites are featured: now I want to pull out some Rita Coolidge and Mary Chapin Carpenter.

Molly Jeanne says

I am a huge country music fan, so when I heard about this book, I was really excited. *Woman Walk the Line* looked like a really interesting depiction of the role of women in country music history. Then it came out, and it was so much more than that. *Woman Walk the Line* isn't just about women in country music – it's about women in all types of music. From country and bluegrass to pop and rock, the book features twenty-seven essays written by women about women, describing accomplishments, recordings, and deeply personal connections to the music that we all know and love.

One of the cool things about the book is how personal the stories are. Each essay doesn't just relay the artist's story, but also that of the writer – the vulnerability and struggles that brought the person and the music together. One of my favorite essays is written by Holly Gleason (the editor of the book) about Tanya Tucker and the stigma of being yourself. Holly says about Tanya, "Hearing Tucker deliver what felt like a combustive eulogy for expectations, I was both uneasy and unsettled by how unabashedly she put it out there." Her point is that Tanya wasn't afraid to put herself – her experiences, her interests, and the truth of life – on the table for the world to see. Another very cool personal anecdote can be found in Wendy Pearl's essay on Patty Loveless. Wendy recounts the story of a biker at a bar who told her that he was going to do her a favor and then said, "Play anything by Patty Loveless" on the jukebox. She went over and turned on one of the songs and fell in love. She said that listening to Patty's music was like, "for the first time in my life, feeling music in my core." Anecdotes and stories like these help drive home the bigger picture of the entire book – women in music tell stories in their music that only they can tell, stories that paint a picture of life.

Even the description of the writers is interesting – it shows that they are incredible talents of their own. For example, Alice Randall, who wrote about Lil Hardin, is a songwriter – the only African-American woman to write a Number 1 country song. Aubrie Sellers is the daughter of country singer Lee Ann Womack and is a songwriter of her own. Some of the people who wrote essays are popular singer/songwriters, like Grace Potter, Roseanne Cash, and Taylor Swift. Each writer's point of view – as a songwriter, a reporter, a magazine editor, or a music critic – helps further her narrative: the women in music that have influenced their lives.

So be sure to pick up a copy of *Woman Walk the Line* – not just for its musical connections, but for the stories that emphasize how important the music is. The songs mentioned in the book are more than just hits on the radio – they're tales of finding yourself and figuring out who you truly are in the grand scheme of the world. The essays take the songs and their stories and show how they relate to everyday life and the kind of life you try and keep behind closed doors. The book is a must-own for any fan of music, even if you don't know the names of the artists mentioned. Who knows – you might even find music that you never knew existed, but you absolutely adore. And to be honest, that's the point – the book shows that, no matter how you discover them, your life either has been or will be changed by the women of music.

Ted Lehmann says

Woman Walk the Line: How Women in Country Music Changed Our Lives edited by Holly Gleason (University of Texas Press, 2017, 236 pages, \$19.65) is a brilliantly conceived and executed project on which twenty-seven women associated with music as writers, publicists, performers, or in some other capacity write about twenty-seven noted woman country and bluegrass performers chosen chronologically from Mother Maybelle Carter and Lil Hardin to Rhiannon Giddens and Partty Griffen. While much of the coverage seems to linger in the rich transitional period from the late sixties into the late eighties, from classic

country to more rock influenced and overtly feminist takes on the importance of the artists, the scope of artists considered and the range of interests and backgrounds of the women writing the profiles is sweepingly broad.

The writers are both highly personal and deeply analytical, using their experience to enrich their understanding of artists and eras, thus rewarding the reader with much needed perspectives on the contributions of these marvelous women, not just as singers, but as cultural icons, too. The writing varies from luminous rock and roll journalism to self-indulgent self-puffery, but generally is of such high quality as to shine spotlights on the performers as well as their own era from a later and more highly self-aware historical perspective. The chapter on Hazel Dickens (written by Ronni Lundy, winner of this year's prestigious James Beard award for book of the year) called "Plangent to the Bone," is worth the price of this book. Like the other chapters in this volume, it celebrates Hazel through her own life and its testimony as well as her effect upon the writer as both a woman and a musician/writer about music. As such it captures the rich interplay of experience between music producer and consumer in beautiful, sisterly language which crosses gender lines with, as should be the case in anything written about Hazel, scorching plain talk about love, life, work, and relationships.

The strategy of having women writers, many of whom are musicians in their own right (write) works in most of the profiles. Each contributor brings to life the character of the performer she writes about by examining the influence she wields on the the writer's own life. Many of the profiles are the result of personal relationships developed through interviews, while others are written at a greater distance. For instance, Ali Berlow, a producer at Access Hollywood, writes about her deep sense of loss when her gay friend Dennis sends her home from Africa. Soon, he returns to visit, dying of AIDS. She connects her own loss to Emmylou Harris' career, based so much on the loss of her one great love, Gram Parsons. The duality works, deepening my own understanding of both women, and, in a larger sense, of women. Through the struggles for finding self, the writers are able to dig into the person inside the performer, struggling for expression and recognition in the male dominated world of country music. Berlow writes a paean to finding ones own voice as she allows Emmylou to give her permission.

Writing about Barbara Mandrell, Shelby Morrison says, "Barbara Mandrell helped to shape who I am, a confident woman, a woman who believes in herself. Barbara was in charge, she had a purpose and she inspired me to tuck my tiny Wranglers into my red Roper cowboy boots, cinch my belt buckle, crack my knuckles and get to work to find my purpose. She was everything I wanted to be." In a sense, most of the writers describe a process and purpose much like the one Morrison explicitly identifies. Some use prosaic approaches, while others reach poetic heights. The essays vary in length and complexity. Each, however, tells almost (maybe more) as much about the writer as it does about the subject. If you're looking for biography, look elsewhere. If you seek insight, revelation, and inspiration to boot, this is the book for you.

Each entry is an intertwining of a building relationship between a singer, for most of the women profiled are singers or singer/songwriters, and the profiler to create an intertwined portrait, like fine art and the artist. While reading, I realized these women were offering me more about their world, its glories and problems, than I had known, while teaching me how to write better about music as well as to listen to it more intelligently. Reading this book requires a new understanding of reading, since it asks the reader, no, commands the reader to become a participant in the enterprise. Many good readers do this anyway, but *Woman Walk the Line* helps define the line and then forces you to teeter along the tightrope with those actually having the experience.

Editor Holly Gleason is a music critic, academic, and artist development consultant. Her work has appeared in *Rolling Stone*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, *HITS*, *Musician*, *CREEM*, the *Oxford*

American, No Depression, and Paste. She lives in Nashville. The contributors, too many to name, include poets, television producers, activists, teachers, historians, curators, Grammy-winners, and music critics. David Menconi, of the Raleigh News-Observer, is the co-editor of the University of Texas Press American Music Series, which published this remarkable book.

Holly Gleason, in *Woman Walk the Line* (University of Texas Press, 2017, 236 pages, \$19.65) has presented twenty-seven women who are country singers profiled by twenty seven woman writers each of whose experience has been enriched by they relationship to the woman they have profiled. The writers' perspective in the contemporary world, young-middle aged, parent, child, straight, gay, trans, newbies, established, performer who writes, writer who performs inform, and are informed by the world in which they live and which they observe, just as the singer/songwriter seeks to do as a participant observer. What a way to develop postures toward the world of music! As the songs themselves move from abstracted reflections on life and love to increasingly personal and revelatory through, now, nearly 90 years of music covered in this marvelous volume, the book projects elements of society and changes in music that many might decry. Lovers of Maybelle Carter or Hazel Dickens may find themselves turning away from Taylor Swift or Kacey Musgraves as too self-revelatory. Loretta Lynn and Dolly Parton fans might decide that Lucinda Williams and Patty Griffin aren't their cup of tea. But Holly Gleason has unleashed a lushly written, highly personalized book of profiles that captures the artists and the writers in revealing ways that make this book irresistible. I read the *Woman Walk the Line* as a digital download provided by the publisher through Edelweiss on my Kindle app. It gets my highest recommendation.

Courtney Smith says

I have an essay in this excellent book, I can't recommend it strongly enough.

Jay Gabler says

Such a fascinating, important book. I reviewed *Woman Walk the Line* for The Current.

Oleva Berard says

loved it, usually anthologies tend to be a pretty mixed bag for me but almost every essay seemed to hit the mark.

Scott Stem says

Best book I've read his year. Excellent stories of trailblazing country music female artists and the influence they have had on talented female journalists. I learned so much in this book. Highly recommended.

Leonard says

This is a book about 27 female country music singers, each chapter about a different singer and written by a different reviewer, also all women. I checked it out of the library planing to read only about a few of the singers I liked the best, like Emmylou Harris and Lucinda Williams. I kept on reading, and read more than half of them. The writing is excellent, informative, and personal. There doesn't seem to be any strict guidelines for the writers. Some write only about the singer and others reveal as much about themselves as the person they're writing about. Some are informing and others are advocating. Elisa Gardner writes a very supportive essay about Taylor Swift (not that she needed it), and this collection includes one written by Swift when she was eighteen years old about Brenda Lee. I learned a lot about Mary Chapin Carpenter's life and more about Kacey Musgraves' music, but not much about Musgraves herself. This is a fine book with the kind of skilled writing that is interesting to any reader, not just to fans of country music, and I'm not a big country music fan.

Katie says

Loved reading how different female country and folk artists impacted successful women's lives. Country music has not been kind to female artists for many years, but now, perhaps more than ever, it's reassuring to know the lasting power their words have with women in all walks of life.
