



Merle Haggard: The Running Kind (American Music (University of Texas))

David Cantwell

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Merle Haggard has enjoyed artistic and professional triumphs few can match. He's charted more than a hundred country hits, including thirty-eight number ones. He's released dozens of studio albums and another half dozen or more live ones, performed upwards of ten thousand concerts, been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, and seen his songs performed by artists as diverse as Lynryd Skynyrd, Elvis Costello, Tammy Wynette, Willie Nelson, the Grateful Dead, and Bob Dylan. In 2011 he was feted as a Kennedy Center Honoree. But until now, no one has taken an in-depth look at his career and body of work.

In *Merle Haggard: The Running Kind*, David Cantwell takes us on a revelatory journey through Haggard's music and the life and times out of which it came. Covering the entire breadth of his career, Cantwell focuses especially on the 1960s and 1970s, when Haggard created some of his best-known and most influential music, which helped invent the America we live in today. Listening closely to a masterpiece-crowded catalogue (including songs such as "Okie from Muskogee," "Sing Me Back Home," "Mama Tried," "Working Man Blues," "Kern River," "White Line Fever," "Today I Started Loving You Again," and "If We Make It through December," among many more), Cantwell explores the fascinating contradictions—most of all, the desire for freedom in the face of limits set by the world or self-imposed—that define not only Haggard's music and public persona but the very heart of American culture.

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