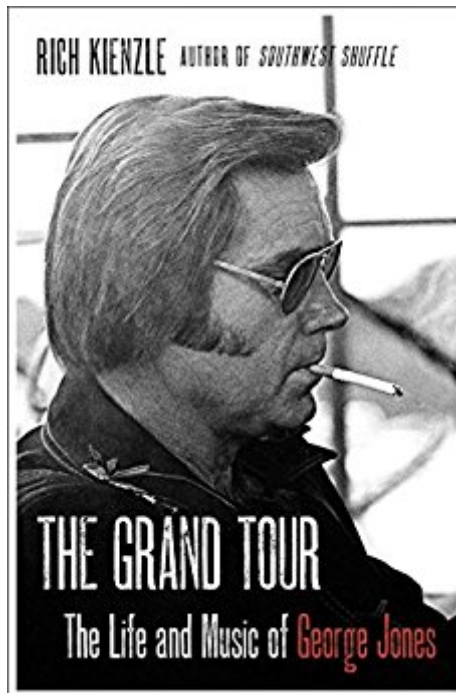




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The Grand Tour: The Life And Music Of George Jones



Synopsis

In the vein of the classic Johnny Cash: The Life, this groundbreaking work explores the wild life and extraordinary musical career of the definitive country singer of the last half century (New York Times), who influenced, among others, Bob Dylan, Buck Owens, Emmylou Harris, John Fogerty, George Strait, Alan Jackson, and Garth Brooks. In a masterful biography laden with new revelations, veteran country music journalist/historian Rich Kienzle offers a definitive, full-bodied portrait of legendary country singer George Jones and the music that remains his legacy. Kienzle meticulously sifted through archival material, government records, recollections by colleagues and admirers, interviewing many involved in Jones's life and career. The result: an evocative portrait of this enormously gifted, tragically tormented icon called the Keith Richards of country. Kienzle chronicles Jones's impoverished East Texas childhood as the youngest son of a deeply religious mother and alcoholic, often-abusive father. He examines his three troubled marriages including his union with superstar Tammy Wynette and looks unsparingly at Jones's demons. Alcohol and later cocaine nearly killed him until fourth wife Nancy helped him learn to love himself. Kienzle also details Jones's remarkable musical journey from singing in violent Texas honky tonks to Grand Ole Opry star, hitmaker and master vocalist whose raw, emotionally powerful delivery remains the Gold Standard for country singers. The George Jones of this heartfelt biography lived hard before finding contentment until he died at eighty-one "a story filled with whiskey, women and drugs but always the saving grace of music. Illustrated with eight pages of photos.

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Customer Reviews

Given that three years have now elapsed since George Jones's passing, I had thought, given the storied credentials of the author, Rich Kienzle, who has written many booklets for country CD reissues including those for the definitive Bear Family/Musicor boxed sets on Mr. Jones, that this book, described as a "definitive biography" would be up there with Colin Escott's bio (written with co-authors Merritt and MacEwen) of Hank Williams and Peter Guralnick's 2 volume bio of Elvis. When the book arrived I became a little concerned that the font size was on the large side further reducing the content of the already modest 258 pages of text and then discovered it lacked an index. This book is thus rather superficial and also condescending with Kienzle's narrative lacking empathy for its subject. While Mr. Jones' life had its ups and downs, what shines through a great many of his recordings is his native talent that has led many, including Frank Sinatra, to contribute to the opinion that George Jones was the greatest country singer of the 20th century. Even today, long after his prime in the charts, his emotional delivery still cuts through the 24/7 classic country airplay on Sirius/XM's "Willie's Roadhouse". While easy to read, Mr. Kienzle's writing focuses more on the demons that plagued Mr. Jones' personal life - at times reflecting more than a little schadenfreude rather than presenting a balanced and objective study of a gifted performer. The early recordings on Starday, Mercury, UA and Musicor receive little in the way of objective analysis other than reflecting on Pappy Daily's limitations as a producer. Midway in the book (p.125 actually) Mr. Kienzle abruptly changes stylistic gears and after a rather strange in depth analysis of the perceived comparisons between the 1962 movie "Requiem for a Heavyweight" and Mr. Jones' life to that point slows down a little to discuss some of the many Billy Sherrill-produced hits Jones recorded for Epic. The commentary on these often seems begrudging if not sour and leaves the reader with the sense that Mr. Kienzle also didn't think a whole lot of Mr. Sherrill. The book is far from a definitive biography of George Jones, nor does it provide any especially valuable insights to the Nashville music scene of the late 20th century. For that, the reader should read Jimmy

McDonough's excellent "Tammy Wynette: Tragic Country Queen" (Penguin Books, 2011) and Jack Isenhour's incomparable "He Stopped Loving Her Today: George Jones, Billy Sherrill, and the Pretty-Much Totally True Story of the Making of the Greatest Country Record of All Time" (University Press of Mississippi, 2011) both of which capture, the time, the place and the genius of George Jones. A minor error (p. 73) - Bobby Vee never toured with Buddy Holly - in fact they never crossed paths - Bobby substituted for Buddy after the fateful Clear Lake plane crash.

This book is a less personal, less detailed, and believe it or not a lesser quality written book than George's Autobiography, "I Lived to Tell it All." It rushes through his career with few quotes, few stories, and basic knowledge of George's life and career. All this writer has accomplished is an obvious attempt at cashing in on George Jones's death without adding any new or detailed accounts of his life and artistry or even adding any personal judgment of George's talent. He glosses over many years and the turmoil of George's personal life. This is a rushed, uninteresting account of a very interesting man.

A good book to read if you like George Jones.

Recommend this book to anyone that loved George and is interested in hearing what he lived through. A fine tribute to one of best country singer that has ever lived

I hated for this book to end. What an interesting man. I have read just about all I can find on George Jones and this is one of the best. I had the pleasure of seeing him four times and he was (no matter how drunk, stoned or sober) the best singer I ever heard and yes that includes Sinatra who said Jones was the second best singer. Sorry Frank, George was the best.

never finished it lost interest

George Jones was a glorious mess and the book explains how and why with plenty of details. The writing isn't particularly sparkling, but it gets the job done for those who are fascinated about the great voice and the not so great man.

Interesting man. He and one of my friends had a brief "encounter" several years ago.

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