



Old Roots, New Routes: The Cultural Politics of Alt.Country Music

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Old Roots, New Routes takes an in-depth look at the many influences, meanings, and identities of this contemporary music form. Because the definition of the term alt.country changes continually, even the genre's own mouthpiece, the Web site nodepression.com, declared its terrain to be "alternative country (whatever that is)."

Despite alt.country's murky parameters, its origins, indeed, its patron saints, are generally acknowledged to range from the Carter Family and Hank Williams---as interpreters of traditional American country---to the country-rock fusions of Gram Parsons and Steve Earle.

Just as other musical genres before it have distanced themselves from the popular and commercial center, from the start alt.country has positioned itself as a different kind of music than the slick country sounds emanating from Nashville hit machines such as Garth Brooks and Shania Twain. And yet alt.country's embrace of authenticity and disdain for commercialism---while simultaneously injecting into a traditional, working-class music form an often cosmopolitan flavor and "Generation X" values---has resulted in a fascinating hybrid full of contradictions.

In *Old Roots, New Routes*, Pamela Fox and Barbara Ching bring together a range of scholars to investigate as never before this significant contemporary music form, providing in addition new ways to approach the worlds of country and alternative music more generally. Individual essays explore the work of a variety of artists, including Neko Case, Jay Farrar, Justin Treviño, and alt.country "hero" Gram Parsons, along with promotional rhetoric, album art, advertising, and fan Web sites, to offer readers a comprehensive understanding of how alt.country functions as a distinct musical form.

Pamela Fox is Associate Professor of English and currently the Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at Georgetown University. She is the author of *Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945*.

Barbara Ching is Associate Professor at the University of Memphis. Her previous books include *Wrong's What I Do Best: Hard Country Music and Contemporary Culture* and *Knowing Your Place: Rural Identity and Cultural Hierarchy*, coedited with Gerald Creed.

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