



Heartaches by the Number: Country Music's 500 Greatest Singles

David Cantwell, Bill Friskics-Warren

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This book constitutes a popular, and decidedly populist, history of country music. Its interwoven essays showcase the music's myriad roots and influences: stringband stomps and western swing, hillbilly boogie and honky-tonk, the Nashville Sound and the neo-traditionalist movement, plus everything from blues and bluegrass to rockabilly and country-rock, even soul. What's more, by focusing on the records that defined the music to generations of fans, as well as on the singers, songwriters, producers, and pickers who made them, the book offers a fresh, inclusive, at times provocative way of listening to country music--one that champions innovation and tradition even as it challenges many of the genre's prevailing assumptions.

Heartaches by the Number takes the reader all the way from Patsy Montana's "I Want to Be a Cowboy's Sweetheart" and Hank Williams's "I Saw the Light" to Merle Haggard's "Mama Tried" and Lee Ann Womack's "I Hope You Dance." It includes classics like Patsy Cline's "Crazy," Gene Autry's "Back in the Saddle Again," Dolly Parton's "I Will Always Love You," George Jones's "He Stopped Loving Her Today," and Garth Brooks's "The Dance," plus surprises from the likes of Bing Crosby, Elvis Presley, and Ray Charles, among others.

Part encyclopedia, part history, part collection of record reviews, yet not quite any of these things, *Heartaches by the Number* is instead an argument for a sensibility, a way of hearing. It's comprised of critical essays that each can stand alone, but that, when read in sequence, comment upon each other and tell a larger story--one that challenges and redefines what country music is and what it can mean..

Co-published with the Country Music Foundation Press

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