



Easy Riders, Rolling Stones: On the Road in America, from Delta Blues to 70s Rock (Reverb)

John Scanlan

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Easy Riders, Rolling Stones delves into the history of twentieth century American popular music to explore the emergence of 60s “road music.” This music—which includes styles like blues and R&B—took shape at pivotal moments in history and was made by artists and performers who were, in various ways, seekers after freedom. Whether journeying across the country, breaking free from real or imaginary confines, or in the throes of self-invention, these artists incorporated their experiences into scores of songs about travel and movement, as well as creating a new kind of road culture.

Starting in the Mississippi Delta and tracking the emblematic routes and highways of road music, John Scanlan explores the music and the life of movement it so often represented, identifying “the road” as the key to an existence that was uncompromising. He shows how the road became an inspiration for musicians like Jim Morrison and Bob Dylan and how these musicians also drew stimulus from a Beat movement that was equally enthralled with the possibilities of travel. He also shows how the quintessential American concepts of freedom and travel influenced English bands such as the Rolling Stones and Led Zeppelin. These bands may have been foreigners in the US, but they also found their spiritual home there—of blues and rock ‘n’ roll—and glimpsed the possibility of a new kind of existence, on the road.

Easy Riders, Rolling Stones is an entertaining, rich account of a key strand of American music history, and will appeal to both road music fans and music scholars who want to “head out on the highway.”

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