



Country Comes to Town: The Music Industry and the Transformation of Nashville (American Popular Music)

Jeremy Hill

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Country music evokes a simple, agrarian past, with images of open land and pickup trucks. While some might think of the genre as a repository of nostalgia, popular because it preserves and reveres traditional values, Jeremy Hill argues that country music has found such expansive success because its songs and its people have forcefully addressed social and cultural issues as well as geographic change. Hill demonstrates how the genre and its fans developed a flexible idea of "country," beyond their rural roots, and how this flexibility allowed fans and music to "come to town," to move into and within urban spaces, while retaining a country "character."

To understand how the genre has become the far-reaching commercial phenomenon that it is today, Hill explores how various players within the country music fold have grappled with the notion of place. He shows both how the industry has transformed the city of Nashville and how country music?through song lyrics, imagery associated with the music, and branding?has reshaped ideas about the American landscape and character. As the genre underwent significant change in the last decades of the twentieth century, those who sought to explain its new styles and new locations relied on a traditional theme: "You can take the boy out of the country, but you can't take the country out of the boy." Hill demonstrates how this idea?that you can still be "country" while no longer living in a rural place?has been used to expand country's commercial appeal and establish a permanent home in the urban space of Nashville.



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