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Rednecks, Queers, And Country Music



Synopsis

In her provocative new book *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*, Nadine Hubbs looks at how class and gender identity play out in one of America's most culturally and politically charged forms of popular music. Skillfully weaving historical inquiry with an examination of classed cultural repertoires and close listening to country songs, Hubbs confronts the shifting and deeply entangled workings of taste, sexuality, and class politics. In Hubbs's view, the popular phrase "I listen to anything but country" allows middle-class Americans to declare inclusive omnivore musical tastes with one crucial exclusion: country, a music linked to low-status whites. Throughout *Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music*, Hubbs dissects this gesture, examining how provincial white working people have emerged since the 1970s as the face of American bigotry, particularly homophobia, with country music their audible emblem. Bringing together the redneck and the queer, Hubbs challenges the conventional wisdom and historical amnesia that frame white working folk as a perpetual bigot class. With a powerful combination of music criticism, cultural critique, and sociological analysis of contemporary class formation, Nadine Hubbs zeroes in on flawed assumptions about how country music models and mirrors white working-class identities. She particularly shows how dismissive, politically loaded middle-class discourses devalue country's manifestations of working-class culture, politics, and values, and render working-class acceptance of queerness invisible. Lucid, important, and thought-provoking, this book is essential reading for students and scholars of American music, gender and sexuality, class, and pop culture.

Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: University of California Press (March 22, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520280660

ISBN-13: 978-0520280663

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 6.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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Customer Reviews

"Rednecks" is musical history that tells the story of the cultural creation of the powerful American middle class (the "narrating" class) using the concept of taste, detailing how although the middle class has become musically omnivorous of late, distaste for country music in particular defines this cultural group against its nemesis-reflection-- the white working class. Hubbs describes how the latter group, lacking the power of narration, has been characterized in the dominant image as a bigoted, ignorant mass dumbly voting against its own economic interests due to an unhealthy obsession with conservative social exclusionary causes including racism, sexism and homophobia. She explores country music lyrics, presenting a great deal of evidence suggesting that working class America is not inherently homophobic, but that as middle class cultural taste has changed to include formal acceptance of homosexuality, this process has included pinning homophobic ideas on the working class. This insight may be shocking to middle class readers who with the best of intentions have likely absorbed many of these social constructions as truths, thinking of mobs of ignorant working-class Americans as the "problem" with America, the ones voting Republican, the group maintaining all types of blind bigotry, while enlightened and educated middle class members appreciate all the world's cultural forms except country music, of course, and the lead good fight against bigotry in any form. Hubbs destroys this image of the heroic middle class, not only by pointing out how mythological the stereotypes are, but also showing just how the narrating class maintains systemic bigotry while scapegoating voiceless groups.

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