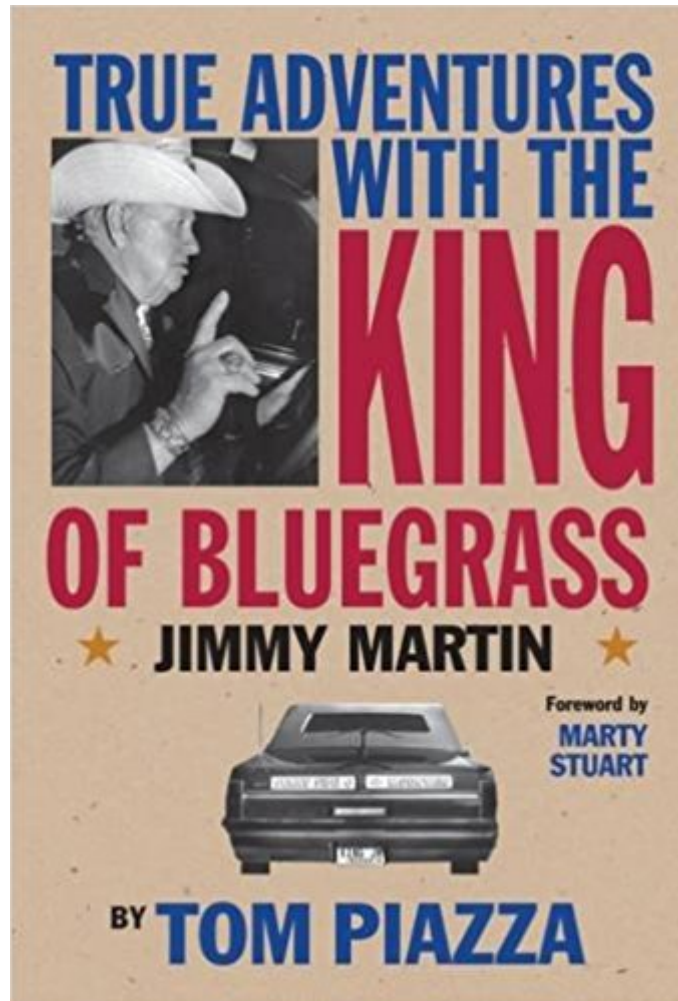


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True Adventures With The King Of Bluegrass: Jimmy Martin



Synopsis

Jimmy Martin was just twenty-two years old when Bill Monroe asked him to join the Blue Grass Boys. That invitation was the start of a career that spanned half a century and culminated with Martin's induction into the International Bluegrass Music Association's Hall of Honor. Always an enigmatic figure, Martin was as famous for his temper as he was for his talent. On assignment from the Oxford American magazine, fiction writer and music critic Tom Piazza drove from his home in New Orleans to Nashville to interview Martin and found himself pitched headlong into a world he couldn't have anticipated. Martin's mercurial personality drew the writer into a series of escalating encounters (with mean dogs, broken-down cars, and near electrocution), culminating in a harrowing and unforgettable expedition, with Martin, to the Grand Ole Opry. Though, or perhaps because, visits to the Opry like the one Piazza recounts were common for Martin, and though he frequently played on its stage and always hoped to become a member, he died before seeing his dream fulfilled. *True Adventures with the King of Bluegrass* is the funny, scary, and powerfully poignant portrait of one of the legends of American music. Co-published with the Country Music Foundation Press

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Customer Reviews

Tom Piazza has captured Jimmy Martin to a T! This story was originally published in the Oxford American and was copied over and over by bluegrass fans and mailed all over the world. It was such an underground hit that it was published in book form along with some additional musings by

the author. Piazza recounts a visit he and Martin made backstage at the Grand Ole Opry. It's the kind of thing you will never read in *Bluegrass Unlimited*. It is just too real! If you've ever seen Jimmy in person, you know what an outrageous character he is, and you'll love this book. Don't miss it.

Tom Piazza has written a piece which captures with photographic detail several hours spent in the company of the Mad 3-chord Genius (as Marty Stuart writes in his forward) and Self-Proclaimed King of Bluegrass, Jimmy Martin. This "book" is essentially a fleshed out magazine article, but it's a good one. Less than 100 pages and written in a style that moves right along while giving you a "you are there" first person sense, it's an enlightening way to pass an hour or two. Mr. Piazza has a keen and insightful sense of Jimmy Martin's musical genius and place in Bluegrass History, and to me the most poignant moments in the book are when the writer is moving to shield or protect the intoxicated, loud-mouthed King of Bluegrass from injuring his already mussed reputation. As he observes, much of what makes Jimmy Martin "great" also dooms him to the edges of the limelight and that Grand Ol' Opry Membership that Jimmy Martin yearns for so badly will likely never happen, exactly for the reason of his unwillingness to back down or compromise. This isn't a "biography" so much as a thumbnail sketch of who Jimmy Martin is framed in a skillful depiction of a few volatile hours spent with a prime example of the "Tortured Artist". I can't help but wonder if a well-written first-person account of a weekend spent with Van Gogh would have been eerily similar.

I'm so tired of music biographies where the subject is either villainized or practically canonized; none of us are perfect saints, nor are we completely evil. That's why I always find it refreshing when a writer presents the true person, most of whom are a little of both. Piazza has done that here. Martin is something of a tragic figure; a mad genius. In candid interviews, Piazza has found all the good in the man, as well as peeled back some of the bad. He shows that if Martin had been born in another era, or been a king of another genre, he would have been a hero, but in the holier-than-thou bluegrass scene, the hard-living Martin was considered something of a black sheep, despite his obvious brilliance. This is a great book, and definitely one of the best music biographies ever written.

How would you like to be backstage at the Grand Old Opry live on Saturday night? All you need to do is get past the guards at the gate, find a parking spot, get through the stage door, and have a knowledge of where the narrow passages go. Tom Piazza received a 2 hour tour that neither he nor the reader will ever forget. Take this opportunity to watch as one of music's icons comes to real life

through the words and photos in this adventure. The glimpse into the private life of one of music's icons is not always pleasant. This emotional roller coaster will require a brave heart and an open mind. Be warned, when you pick up this book you may not want to put it down.


What a great little book! Jimmy Martin, arguably the greatest bluegrass singer who ever lived, is one of music's most colorful and fascinating studies. I've seen films about him, and even wrote a song about him ("Jimmy Martin", recorded by the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band recently), and listened to many recordings. This book gracefully captures the absurdity of the singer's life, a wry yet sympathetic document. Marty Stuart's introduction is fabulous and makes me want to read his book as well. This is one of the few books I've ever read where I'm audibly laughing. It is a hilarious, frightening, and sad ride. I just wish it was longer.

Double thumbs up to Tom Piazza. Looking forward to a sequel. Love this Bluegrass Artist. A must read for Jimmy Martin fans. Thanks Tom for showing the sensitive caring side of this great artist who stands firm for what he believes in (his music).

I knew Jimmy and this is about as Jimmy Martin as you can get.... He was a great friend.... Definitely one of a kind... Great book

I wish it was longer, I didn't want it to end! The writing is terrific and Jimmy Martin was one of a kind.

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