



Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music

Nadine Hubbs

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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'll 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.

Rednecks, Queers, and Country Music Details

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Sabrina says

Despite what Goodreads will inevitably say, I did not finish this book. However, the author's thought-provoking thesis about the relationship between country music and class in America saved it from being a single star rating. Unfortunately, that thesis is pretty much laid out in the introduction and from there on, the book feels repetitive, full of examples that don't add anything new to the argument. The title is also misleading; the queer aspect feels like an example of the thesis at best and an afterthought at worst. As far as academic nonfiction goes, this fell flat as a quality, interesting idea was rendered boring by mediocre execution.

Dalice says

Overly academic in a way that made simple points feel drawn out and convoluted. Clearly the final result of a dissertation. Beyond these faults, Hubbs draws a pretty clear line from disavowing country music to classism and middle-class reaffirmation. A point barely even considered when people exclaim that they will listen to "anything but country." Certainly not a book for everyone, but those queer, redneck, country-loving academics out there will probably appreciate the time, research and energy Hubbs puts into Redneck, Queers, and Country.

Andrea Goldston says

A thoughtful book about classism and particularly the relationship between classism and the hate of "country" as a lifestyle. I wish there had been more of an awareness about race. Often, Hubbs used the term "working class" to mean "white working class" and while Hubbs did note that distinction in several moments, it was not in all the moments it could have been in. A very good read for anyone who has said "I like all music except country" or to anyone who has heard that and been frustrated with that answer.

Mel says

I thought this was very much worth reading but I could only give it three stars, okay well three and a half, because it was so damn difficult to get into. It started out extremely academic and was super dry. It also focused on mostly contemporary country, most of which I can't get into as much (so don't know the song references she used as well) as old 1970s and earlier country or even Alt-Country. Most (not all) contemporary country just has a super slick over produced sound I just don't like as much. To each his/her own.

I really liked that it made me examine and think about some things in a very different way, which almost made me up the review one star but nope, I just could not do it because 4 = "really liked" and I can't say that about this book, but I "really liked" that it made me think, so yeah, it gets four stars on that point. The chapter on David Allen Coe, and his song "Fuck Aneta Briant" made digging into this book totally worth it,

and that part of the book is the best part. This is where the author really gets into a lot of what I think is the real meat of this book. Parts of this are a total slog fest though so not sure who I would recommend this to, but I do think it was worth digging into and it certainly wasn't a long book or anything as 25% of it, is all of her research, of which she did a ton, so I can also give her credit for that. She has a ton of references to back up all of her theories. This is an older book, so would love to see maybe a newer addition or something with an addendum or additional chapters talking about some of her theories, and how they relate to what is happening now.

So all in all, worth reading, interesting theories, and very well researched, but be prepared for an academic slog fest at the beginning.

Ash says

Didn't tell me much I hadn't already figured out from years of listening to and mentally analyzing country (as it is one of my favourite genres) but it was a good read nonetheless.

Chris Bacon says

Interesting premise

The book contains some interesting premises most notably that rural (redneck) America may not be as homophobic as people think. Unfortunately, the book is way too long and repetitive. If could have made a great article for The New Yorker.

Jennifer says

I heard an interview with the author a while back on NPR, and I thought this might be an interesting book. It is, although I wasn't expecting it to read like a college textbook. I would actually give it 3.5 stars. It was fascinating, if a bit repetitive in its assertions.

Corey says

Particularly relevant in today's political climate - a fascinating look at how class and culture affect our perceptions of right and wrong and identity (including how we view working class politics and queer stereotypes).

John says

Did not know that Tina Turner's first album was country...I digress. Hubbs did a great service to country music, the white working class, and LGBT Americans by showing in this work how class values frame and distort the message of country songs. Basically, in American social history, the middle class has always been

right and the working class has always been wrong. And Toby Keith wrote an antihomophobic song? I am impressed with her research.

Garren says

Hard to evaluate this one fairly. It has a pop-sociology cover, but it's an academic book. Since I don't read in this field, I have no idea how well Hubbs is doing the sum-up-and-add-a-little strategy common to such books.

But there is a lot of stuff here so I can tell other people in a similar situation that it's primarily a book about the working class vs. middle-class divide in the United States from the early 20th century until now. Country music is invoked heavily as a way to talk about working class values and self-image, with disdain for country music and working class perspectives as a way to talk about middle class people trying to distinguish themselves. The queer bit is slight.

I learned some things about class, or at least how some contemporary sociologists view class. What's not here is an argument that "rednecks" are affirming of queer identities, but you will find arguments that middle-class acceptance is not as broad and enlightened as you might think. There is a repeated warning here about not writing off working class people with assumptions of middle-class superiority in all ways.

I took all of this as a suggestion that the paths to affirmation for working class people may be different than for others, and some of these paths may be needed to grow past the attitude of "queer people who are just like me but have their orientation switch toggled, so they're okay" which is held by many supposedly open minded people of middle class and up. Maybe the key is toughing out discomfort, not being accepting of what's been made comfortable for you.
