



Twentieth Century Drifter: The Life of Marty Robbins (Music in American Life)

Diane Diekman

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During his three decades as a country music performer, Marty Robbins (1925-1982) placed 94 songs on Billboard's country music charts, with sixteen number-one hits. In addition to two Grammy awards, he was also honored with the Man of the Decade Award from the Academy of Country Music in 1970. His Hawaiian songs, rockabilly hits, teen-angst ballads, pop standards, and country & western classics showcased his exceptional versatility. Yet even with fame and fortune, Robbins always yearned for more. *Twentieth Century Drifter: The Life of Marty Robbins* is the first biography of this legendary country music artist and NASCAR driver. Drawing from personal interviews and in-depth research, biographer Diane Diekman explains how Robbins saw himself as a drifter, a man always searching for self-fulfillment and inner peace. Born Martin David Robinson to a hardworking mother and an abusive alcoholic father, he never fully escaped the insecurities burned into him by a poverty-stricken nomadic childhood in the Arizona desert. As Diekman describes, he spent his early teens in trouble with the law and worked an assortment of short-term jobs after serving in combat in World War II. In 1947 he got his first gig as a singer and guitar player. Too nervous to talk, the shy young man walked onstage singing. Soon he changed his name to Marty Robbins, cultivated his magnetic stage presence, and established himself as an entertainer, songwriter, and successful NASCAR driver. As NASCAR's Bobby Allison said, "He started out being a singer driving a race car, but he became a race car driver who could sing." For fans of Robbins, NASCAR, and classic country music, *Twentieth Century Drifter: The Life of Marty Robbins* is a revealing portrait of this well-loved, restless entertainer, a private man who kept those who loved him at a distance.

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