



In Tune: Charley Patton, Jimmie Rodgers, and the Roots of American Music

Ben Wynne

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Born into poverty in Mississippi at the close of the nineteenth century, Charley Patton and Jimmie Rodgers established themselves among the most influential musicians of their era. *In Tune* tells the story of the parallel careers of these two pioneering recording artists -- one white, one black -- who moved beyond their humble origins to change the face of American music.

At a time when segregation formed impassable lines of demarcation in most areas of southern life, music transcended racial boundaries. Jimmie Rodgers and Charley Patton drew inspiration from musical traditions on both sides of the racial divide, and their songs about hard lives, raising hell, and the hope of better days ahead spoke to white and black audiences alike. Their music reflected the era in which they lived but evoked a range of timeless human emotions. As the invention of the phonograph disseminated traditional forms of music to a wider audience, Jimmie Rodgers gained fame as the "Father of Country Music," while Patton's work eventually earned him the title "King of the Delta Blues."

Patton and Rodgers both died young, leaving behind a relatively small number of recordings. Though neither remains well known to mainstream audiences, the impact of their contributions echoes in the songs of today. The first book to compare the careers of these two musicians, *In Tune* is a vital addition to the history of American music.

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