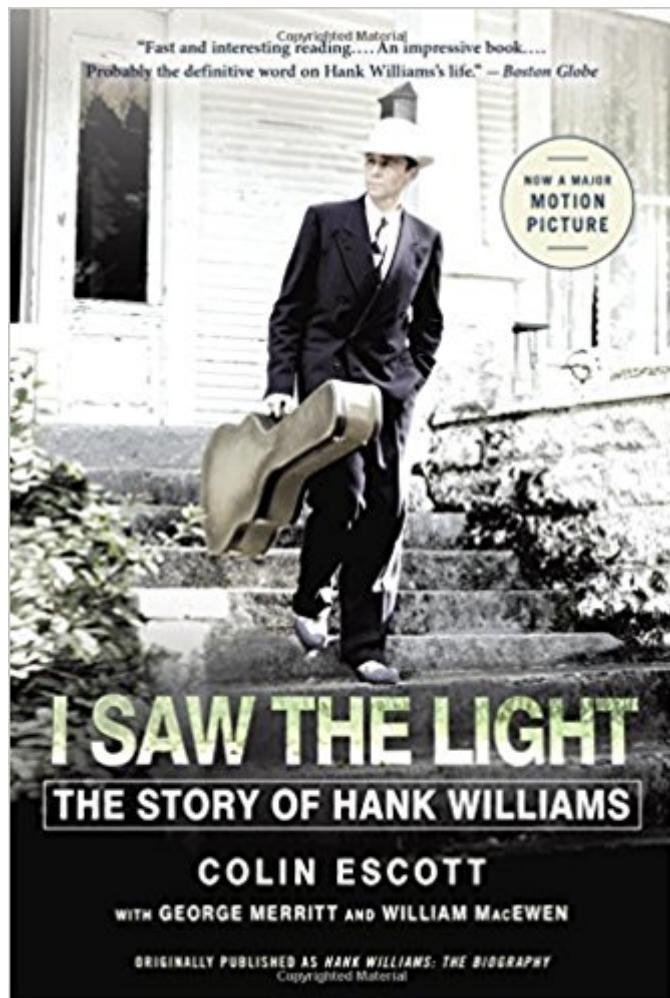


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I Saw The Light: The Story Of Hank Williams



Synopsis

The book that inspired the major motion picture I Saw the Light. Originally published as Hank William: The Biography. In his brief life, Hank Williams created one of the defining bodies of American music. Songs such as "Your Cheatin' Heart," "Hey, Good Lookin'," and "Jambalaya" sold millions of records and became the model for virtually all country music that followed. But by the time of his death at age twenty-nine, Williams had drunk and drugged and philandered his way through two messy marriages and out of his headline spot on the Grand Ole Opry. Even though he was country music's top seller, toward the end he was so famously unreliable that he was lucky to get a booking in a beer hall. Colin Escott's enthralling, definitive biography--now the basis of the major motion picture I Saw the Light--vividly details the singer's stunning rise and his spectacular decline, revealing much that was previously unknown or hidden about the life of this country music legend.

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Customer Reviews

I bought this book after seeing the movie, "I Saw the Light", with Tom Hiddleston as Hank Williams. (The movie has received mixed reviews, but I thought it was quite good.) Colin Escott's biography of Williams - formerly titled "Hank Williams: The Biography" - is one of the best biographies I've read. From the beginning of his life to the end, Hiram "Hank" Williams was a walking country-western song. Beset by alcoholic and pill addictions that may have stemmed from physical pains, Williams flashed onto the musical scene before his life ended in the back seat of a car, while being driven to a concert in Canton, Ohio, a mere 4 years after gaining prominence. Country music historian Colin

Escott seems to understand Hank Williams and his times and his songs and his influence on both those times and those songs. Born in 1923 in a southern Alabama town to a family that seemed to have the vicissitudes of life down pat. The father, Lon, was a drifter, and the mother, Lillie, saw musical promise in her young son. He grew up in small towns, eventually ending up in Montgomery, where he began working with other singers with a purpose of singing at the "Grand Ol' Opry". He wrote songs - never as successful for other singers as they were for himself - and began a rise through the Shreveport, LA radio barn shows. He married a firecracker - Audrey - who battled his mother for managing Hank's career and their marriage was combustible from the start. Depressing drinking and fighting and philandering on both sides of the marriage. Divorce...then musical fame, beginning in 1949. But the good times - and the bad marriage - didn't last through the haze of liquor and prescription pills. Another marriage followed and so did what seemed to be an untimely death...but probably wasn't. The man was just "wore out" in both body and spirit by his 29th year. Escott's biography is a straight forward one. He's kind and sympathetic to his subject and understands America of the times (though he does refer to a politician as "standing" for office, rather than "running" for office.) and how country music was never as "pure" after Williams' death. Would Hank Williams be as much of a success today? Escott reminds the reader of how "packaged", "molded" and "handled" today's music makers are. Williams doesn't seem to have been the type that took to handling. He was his own man and his music proved his individuality.

This is a difficult review to write. The book itself is well researched and well written. Hank is an incredible song writer and this biography chronicles his life very well. As someone who has been a long time fan, for at least 40 years, it was depressing. Of course I knew about his drinking, his domineering mother and volatile wife Audrey but I had idea just how deplorable some of his acts were. This family makes the Kardashian clan look like saints. Most of the main characters in his life seem sociopathic. I have of empathy for him, I know he was in a great deal of pain and some of his acts may have been due to the times in which he lived. I honestly think I would have preferred to be left in the dark about how he really lived.

It would be hard to imagine a better rendering of the life of arguably country music's most influential artist than Colin Escott's exhaustive and beautifully written biography of Hank Williams. This book is brilliantly well-researched, moves like a house afire, and gives the reader a compelling perspective on the life, times, and demons of a man who, in the space of only six years, compiled one of the most essential discographies in all of American song. Escott wisely never attempts to definitively

pinpoint a cause for Williams' demons; by anatomizing them in detail, the book does enough to illustrate how the artist was ruled and ultimately destroyed by compulsions and sadnesses beyond his control. The book is also a clear-eyed yet never overly nasty depiction of the battles that have been waged in the aftermath of Williams' death over the rights to his catalog and legacy; it's heartbreaking to see how people who were never there enough for Hank when he was alive have become literally invested in his earnings after his death. Nobody comes off as an angel here, and some people are downright hateful in their willingness to turn every last earthly scrap of Hank's life into gold. (Hank Williams Jr. arguably comes off better than anyone else, though it's odd that the book never even mentions Hank 3, who has carved his own unique outlaw-country niche, one that I honestly think Hank himself would approve of.) This book was the basis for the new biopic starring Tom Hiddleston as Hank. The film smoothly condenses the narrative presented here, even as it somewhat dilutes the raw, often tragic events depicted here. The film is recommended. The book is damn near essential.

I love it!!! Well written....lots of facts I wasn't aware of....a very interesting account of one of the greats of Country Music. Hank Williams was special.....his legend will live forever....as long as music is written and listened to!

Truly enjoy reading the biography of Hank Williams in this newest edition of 'I SAW THE LIGHT: The Story of Hank Williams' by Colin Escott with Tom Hiddleston as Hank Williams on the cover. What a colourful life he's been in his short years on earth, died at the tender age of 29, but his songs will be remembered by many generations to come. So excited to see the movie that will be released on March 25, 2016 in the US.

I saw the movie and while the movie wasn't great, it was enough to spark my interest to read this book. Well researched, unsparing, you get all the details about the doomed life of Hank Williams. Sometimes I wish the author would have explored his music genius more, through the eyes of others particularly, musicians and fans. We never really feel like we know Hank, but I suspect the author would say nobody did, including Hank. His wife Audrey comes across as one of the most miserable people to ever walk the earth. I guess her and Hank were a match.

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