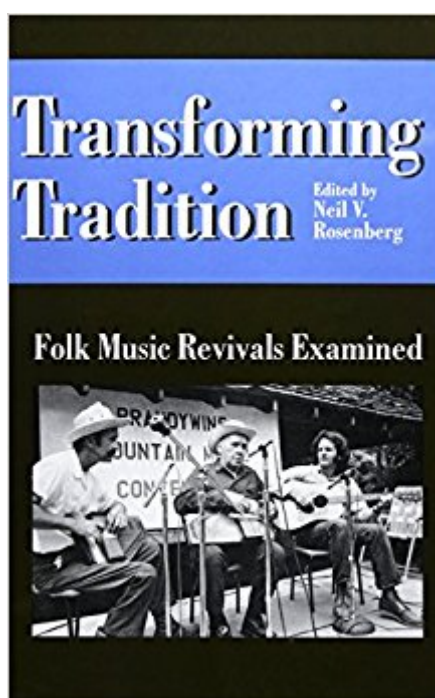


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Transforming Tradition: FOLK MUSIC REVIVALS EXAMINED (Folklore And Society)



Synopsis

Transforming Tradition offers the first serious look at folksong revivals, vibrant meldings of popular and folk culture that captured public awareness in the 1950s and 1960s. Best remembered for such songs as "Tom Dooley" and for performers like the Kingston Trio and Joan Baez, the revival of that era gave rise to hootenannies, coffeehouses, and blues and bluegrass festivals, sowing a legacy of popular interest that lives today. Many of the contributors to this volume were themselves performers in folksong revivals; today they are scholars in folklore, ethnomusicology, and American and Canadian cultural history. As both insiders and analysts they bring unique perspectives and new insights to the study of revivals. In his introduction, Neil Rosenberg explores central issues such as the history of folksong revivals, stereotypes of "folksingers," connections between scholarship and popularization, meanings of the word "revival," questions of authenticity and the invention of culture, and issues surrounding reflexive scholarship. The individual studies are divided into three sections. The first covers the "Great Boom" revival of the late '50s and early '60s, and the next approaches the revival as a self-contained social culture with its own "new aesthetic" and in-group values. The last looks at revival activities in systems of musical culture including the blues, old-time fiddling, Northumbrian piping, and bluegrass, with particular emphasis on perceptions of insider and outsider roles. The contributors display keen awareness of how their own perceptions have been shaped by their early, more subjective involvement. For example, Archie Green explores his service as faculty guru to the Campu Folksong Club at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign during the 1960s. Kenneth S. Goldstein considers how intellectual issues of the "great boom" shaped his work for recording companies. Sheldon Posen uses autobiography as ethnography to explain what happened to him w

Book Information

Series: Folklore and Society

Hardcover: 338 pages

Publisher: University of Illinois Press (July 1, 1993)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0252019822

ISBN-13: 978-0252019821

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1.1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 1 customer review

Best Sellers Rank: #792,892 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #165 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Ethnic](#) #394 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Country](#) #397 in [Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Folk & Traditional](#)

Customer Reviews

Transforming Tradition offers the first serious look at folksong revivals, vibrant meldings of popular and folk culture that captured public awareness in the 1950s and 1960s. Best remembered for such songs as "Tom Dooley" and for performers like the Kingston Trio and Joan Baez, the revival of that era gave rise to hootenannies, coffeehouses, and blues and bluegrass festivals, sowing a legacy of popular interest that lives today. Many of the contributors to this volume were themselves performers in folksong revivals; today they are scholars in folklore, ethnomusicology, and American and Canadian cultural history. As both insiders and analysts they bring unique perspectives and new insights to the study of revivals. In his introduction, Neil Rosenberg explores central issues such as the history of folksong revivals, stereotypes of "folksingers", connections between scholarship and popularization, meanings of the word "revival", questions of authenticity and the invention of culture, and issues surrounding reflexive scholarship. The individual studies are divided into three sections. The first covers the "Great Boom" revival of the late '50s and early '60s, and the next approaches the revival as a self-contained social culture with its own "new aesthetic" and in-group values. The last looks at revival activities in systems of musical culture including the blues, old-time fiddling, Northumbrian piping, and bluegrass, with particular emphasis on perceptions of insider and outsider roles. The contributors display keen awareness of how their own perceptions have been shaped by their early, more subjective involvement. For example, Archie Green explores his service as faculty guru to the CampusFolksong Club at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign during the 1960s. Kenneth S. Goldstein considers how intellectual issues of the "great boom" shaped his work for recording companies. Sheldon Posen uses autobiography as ethnography to explain what happened to him when he moved from revival to academe. And Toru Mitsui explains how and why American country old-time, and bluegrass music became popular in Japan.

Neil Rosenberg wrote the introduction and edited a series of articles on the place of revivalism within folk music. Revivalism refers to a number of movements within traditional music. It can refer to ways in which older forms and genres are repopularized, a common dynamic in folk music.

Revivalism can also refer to ways in which those who grew up outside of a particular musical tradition become interested in a form of musical expression. This dynamic happens a great deal as, for example, teenagers from Philadelphia became interested in old-time music during the 1960s. The book provides a great range of ways to think about revivalism, and it is an excellent historical study of folk music from the 1950s and 60s. Many of the writers take very different approaches and offer different perspectives on the music, and the work should stimulate lively discussion and more study of this facet of musical history. There is a lack of a unified way of pulling together the disparate threads of thought, but perhaps that is task that remains to be done by those at the cutting edge of folklore study.

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