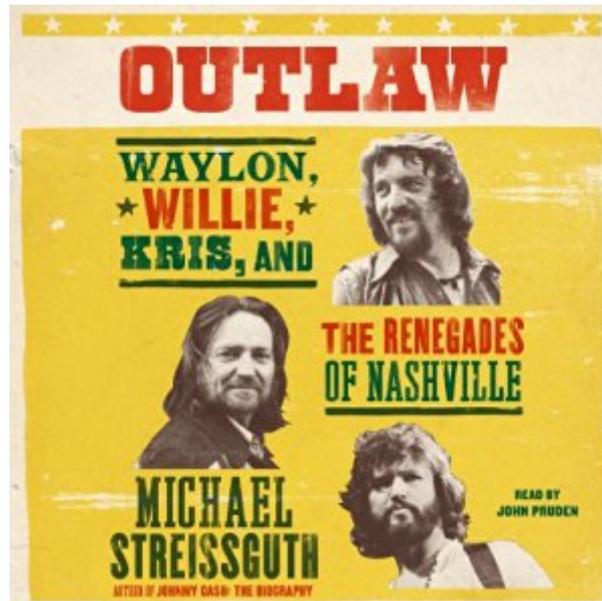


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# Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, And The Renegades Of Nashville



## Synopsis

Waylon Jennings. Willie Nelson. Kris Kristofferson. Three renegade musicians. Three unexpected stars. Three men who changed Nashville and country music forever. By the late 1960s, Nashville, Tennessee, was firmly established as the center of the booming country music industry and home to what was known as the Nashville Sound, characterized by slick production and adherence to an increasingly overused formula. But the city was changing. Young people from all over the country were streaming into the bohemian West End and colliding with three trailblazing artists who would soon rock the foundations of Nashville's music business. Surrounded by the street vibes of the West End's burgeoning underground scene and the outlaw protest tradition of Nashville's unlikely civil rights leaders and antiwar protestors, Waylon, Willie, and Kris began resisting the unspoken rules of Nashville's music-making machine and instead forged their own creative paths. Their music, personal and not easily categorized, was more in the vein of rock acts like the Allman Brothers and Bob Dylan, and it communicated a stark rawness and honesty that would influence artists of all genres for decades to come. Studded with a diverse secondary cast including Johnny Cash, Rodney Crowell, Kinky Friedman, Billy Joe Shaver, and others, Streissguth's new book brings to life an incredible chapter in musical history and reveals for the first time a surprising outlaw zeitgeist in Nashville. Based on extensive research and probing interviews with key players, what emerges is a fascinating glimpse into three of the most legendary artists of our times and the definitive story of how they changed music in Nashville and everywhere.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I saw this book and started in one direction, where I ended up was a completely different place. The title is a bit...misleading. Maybe it's just a product of many of the other music bios I've read, but I went into this expecting a wild tales of the Country Music Outlaws, and their excesses. Instead, the book really is a glimpse into the network of musicians that mainly built up the wave of Nashville artists in the 60's and 70's. The book attempts to weave the tale around three of the most respected artists of the Outlaw era. Kris Kristofferson, Waylon Jennings, and Willie Nelson. Unfortunately, for the author, the delivery comes off as very unfocused. Waylon is the biggest piece to most of the book, but none of the three really assert themselves. There's a weird sense that it hits their personal lives, hurdles in their way, a few demons of theirs, but still doesn't go deep enough into these three, or anyone else for that matter. It lacks a committed, strong voice. The specters of both Johnny Cash, and Elvis loom largely over the narrative, though aren't a true focus (barring a few pages with the ramifications of Elvis's death), The feeling as they appear and disappear matches the larger than life statures they've attained. I liked the way they were there...but let the others have the stage (so to speak). The author also does a fair job of showing the impact of the era on popular culture. The ties to Hollywood, the celebrities involved, and how it blended into society, but ultimately falls short in the way many other of the topics in this book did...just not quite focused enough. The book has two truly positive sides to it. First, this can be a good book from a business sense.

... there were three princes who were the dutiful sons of a king named Cash. When word reached King Cash that the village of Nashville had taken to such wickedness as to have lush full harmonies backing up the same lap steel guitar solo on every solo he was furious and shot his TV (all king's seem to do this at one time or another). Nashville was a special village to him and he writhed with anger and shouted, "You three princes, my sons, shall ride this very day, guitars in hand and save my beloved Music City." And ride they did, stomping over wasted tundra that had been poisoned by the village as far as the eye could see. And when they got to the village they were aghast. Every citizen was wearing polyester of colors the sons had never seen, peppered liberally with what they thought were diamonds but they soon found out were worthless things called "rhinestones". The three princes looked at one another -- dusty from their ride, their worn out jeans, shirts, and boots that had sprung open on the sides were worn as signs of respect and awe for the music that could be made and kept them humble in the eyes of their father, the king. \*You'll have to read the book to find out how it ends\* ;) I've been waiting for a book like this for many, many years. I played guitar and sang in bars for over a decade and these three princes' music were mainstays of my set lists.

Especially Kristofferson since we have a very similar voice range. But Streissguth has done exhaustive research from many angles and directions and pulled it all together into a fine narrative that flows like good prose. So many times when authors try to do books like this they write it seems straight from their notes without thinking and you get every other paragraph starting "and then he..."

I picked this up in the library for two reasons: I've been a big fan of Willie, Waylon and Kris since the 70's, and I noted that it covered what was happening in Nashville from about 1965 on. Well I have a love affair with that city. I spent April 1968 there (the month Martin Luther King was murdered in Memphis) on my pre-Vietnam Army leave. I had a girlfriend who was a nursing student at Vanderbilt. I stayed in a cheap and terrible room on the second floor of what was then called "Johnny's Cash Market" in the West End near campus. I had almost no money, and neither did my girl. It wasn't hard for me to imagine I might be a struggling songwriter hoping for the big time. During that month, my girl and I could only afford free events, but I got to see a recording session produced by Chet Atkins for the country comic singers Homer and Jethro, featuring Jerry Reed, soon to be a star, as session guitarist. We also got to see George Hamilton IV, then a moderate star, try out a new direction, Gordon Lightfoot style folk songs, in a church coffee house. Both were wonderful. The third big event was a debate between Julian Bond, then a prominent civil rights activist, and William F. Buckley, at that time the leading media personality among political conservatives. It was a tense time that month in the Athens of the South, and this book, although it has no specific references to that month, does capture the Nashville of that general time well. The problem is that in telling how Nelson, Jennings and Kristofferson got to be superstars, the author allows himself so many diversions into the lives of lesser talents, record company executives, and the activities of Vandy students of the '70's, that even my interest sagged in many spots.

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