

***Bluegrass Odyssey: A Documentary in Pictures and Words, 1966-86.* By Cari Fleischhauer and Neil V. Rosenberg. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001, xii + 189 p., 200+ black and white photographs, index, US \$ 35, ISBN 0-252-02615-2)**

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producer and consumer may explore divergent identities, the collection is an indication of the many directions available to the social scientist in the area of food and culture.

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Bluegrass Odyssey: A Documentary in Pictures and Words, 1966-86.

By Carl Fleischhauer and Neil V. Rosenberg. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001, xii + 189 p., 200+ black and white photographs, index, US \$ 35, ISBN 0-252-02615-2)

Bluegrass Odyssey is a collection of six photographic and textual essays, offering a personal account of the authors' love affair with the musical genre created by Bill Monroe in the middle of the twentieth century. Neil Rosenberg is well known to bluegrass fans, ethnomusicologists, and folklorists. As the author of *Bluegrass: A History*, he not only pioneered an academic field, he produced a folkloric venue: apparently that book has become an autograph manual for fans. (I assume that some of these artifacts will have made their way into archival collections by now.) Carl Fleischhauer, who has worked in video and photography at West Virginia University and the Library of Congress, will be somewhat less well known to fans, but those who read the small print will surely at least recognize the name from album titles, from magazines like *Bluegrass Unlimited*, and from Rosenberg's previous books. The men are long time collaborators.

Because the photos are all by Fleischhauer, nothing that occurred before he began to document the music in 1966 is presented here, except in text. We cannot see Monroe sharing a stage with Lester Flatt and Earl Scruggs or with Bill Keith and Peter Rowan, two significant stages in Monroe's career and the music's history. There is only one shot of Flatt and Scruggs, who *were* bluegrass for so many people throughout the 60s; the group dissolved before Fleischhauer was committed to documenting the genre.

I was puzzled that Bill Keith (whom many would say reinvented bluegrass banjo) does not appear in the book. Was it simply that Carl Fleischhauer didn't catch him? Jerry Garcia (best known as a rocker) and Doug Green (of the western vocal group, Riders in the Sky) make

the index although neither are pictured, but Dave Grisman, Peter Wernick and Tony Trischka do not, which seems peculiar. The authors cannot be condemned for failing to do the impossible (getting everyone in); still, the choices they in fact made are interesting and ought to be pondered by serious readers.

Bluegrass Odyssey features relatively few shots of the newgrass movement (though it is neither hidden nor denigrated by the book), and the Stoneman Family is about as close as the book gets to the tackier side of bluegrass commercialism; both of these are, I think, part of bluegrass history. I could find reasons to say "Well and good!" in both cases, but the word "documentary" in the title may be a bit troublesome, given these lacunae; perhaps a term more suggestive of the personal element would have been useful in the subtitle.

The title itself is both obvious and, if taken seriously, technically misleading. An odyssey is a voyage, and the authors specifically refer to the book as a "narrative", but not only is the chronological dimension downplayed in the presentation (which is thematic), my sense of the subject, after reading the book, is of synchronic continuity, not of diachronic change. After the years of newgrass, retro, revival, and so on, this genre has maintained enough *même chose* that *plus ça change* seems nearly irrelevant. This at least is the strongest impression I take away from this book.

Bluegrass Odyssey suggests other metaphors for the music; Bill Monroe referred to his band as a baseball team, Flatt and Scruggs to football. (Does the latter more aggressive image reflect the more aggressive commerciality of the duo?) Rosenberg seems to prefer Monroe's choice of game-metaphor, which he expands a bit. Unfortunately, *Bluegrass Ball Game* would probably have less sales value than *Odyssey*. However, Fleischhauer once mounted an exhibit entitled "The Bluegrass Landscape", and this might have been worth recycling. Not only does the word invoke the music's concern for rural lifeways, it also suggests that one is scanning a horizon, and while Rosenberg and Fleischhauer are certainly living a journey into the music, the book surveys more than it narrates.

By whatever title, however, the present volume successfully serves several functions. First, it documents some of the visual changes bluegrass has gone through during Bill Monroe's final years. In one image, for instance, the man himself wears what are very nearly bells, for example!

I don't suppose I would have paid attention to his trousers at the time, 1975, but this sure stands out (on page 123) in 2001.

Second, *Bluegrass Odyssey* explores and illustrates the position of bluegrass in the music industry. The genre is a part of the industry — it is nothing if not commercial, and its key players are nothing if not professional. And yet, “commercial” in this sense obviously does not mean that the players have sold out, that there are fortunes to be made in this field, or that the central figures make most choices with an eye to a changeable marketplace. The cover photos demonstrate as much: though the front cover features Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys on a large stage before a large (but not stadium-sized) audience, three back-cover photos show The Mountain State Bluegrass Boys playing on a makeshift wooden stage before one young lady seated crosslegged on a grass field (hardly needing the admonition, “STAY BEHIND ROPE”), an overloaded Everett Lilly trudging with four instruments to another outdoor stage, and an unnamed band performing on an even more adhoc stage in a neighborhood bar, one which some people wouldn't even want to enter. Indeed, having finished the book, what struck me was that, while most of the venues of the genre appear to be clean and reasonably well constructed, very few of them suggest that the musicians can expect to live richly in this field; bluegrass professionals must maintain the commitment of amateurs.

Incidentally, I find no groupies, no dope, and relatively little alcohol here. The text refers occasionally to alcohol, rarely to alcohol-related fighting, and, of course, quite a few photos were taken in bars. I'm not close enough to the bluegrass world to know whether this is a deficiency in the book or whether the insistence on *family* in the discourse of bluegrass can be taken at face value. Given the importance of intoxicants and sex in most professional musics (including, I'm given to understand, in the world of gospel music) a discussion of this would have been of interest.

Third, *Bluegrass Odyssey* gives us insight into how the authors (and, by extension, others) joined the world of bluegrass. Of course, neither of these men are typical members of the community, for neither make their livelihood by the music, nor are they simply aficionados — nor are they rural people. But though not typical, they are hardly peculiar (the book documents a variety of other writers, photographers, record producers, magazine editors, festival producers, and such), and, as

Rosenberg points out in the chapter "Community", the bluegrass community is reborn at each event.

Fourth, the book gives a great deal of pleasure. I've put this last, but certainly for most readers this will be the book's primary function. Rosenberg's prose is lucid and interesting, and Fleischhauer's photos are rich and delightful. Readership is an interesting question, of course. For better or worse, I assume, fans will be the book's primary audience. At U.S. \$35.00, this is not an expensive hardcover photographic anthology, but will it be in their budgets? Will they care to have this one scribbled over like a high school yearbook?

Fleischhauer's "Afterword" seems to me to offer valuable information to beginner or intermediate photographers, as well as insights into his own experiences. One comment in particular caught my eye: "My increasing use of wide-angle photography marked my growing interest in context". Magazine editors want performance shots, of which there are plenty here; stars sell. But an important aspect of the book's concern is the context in which this intense music is performed, so in addition to the stage and backstage, we get fascinating shots of radio broadcasts from electronics repair shops, performances in tacky bars and cafes, jam sessions in barber shops, gas stations, and, of course, parking lots, as well as kibbitzing, dealing, and camaraderie.

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Highland Heritage: Scottish Americans in the American South. By Celeste RAY. (Chapel Hill and London, University of North Carolina Press, 2001, 256 p., ISBN 0-8078-4913-8)

Written in a straightforward and compelling style, *Highland Heritage* explores Scottish-American identity and heritage in the Southern United States, focusing on how traditions are created and re-created to suit particular needs. Chapter One, like all of the book's chapters, begins with a snapshot of a contemporary Scottish-American heritage celebration:

Swathed in the tartans of their clans, a procession of men declare their clan's presence and hurl their torches on a central bonfire. Their brief