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Review of *The History of Texas Music*. By Gary Hartman

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The History of Texas Music. By Gary Hartman. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2008. xii + 304 pp. Photographs, notes, bibliography, index. $45.00 cloth, $19.95 paper.

Texas encompasses a uniquely wide-ranging and diverse blend of ethnic and regional cultures that have in turn fostered an amazingly rich and creative musical environment. It has arguably contributed more, in both quality and variety, to the overall development of American music than any other single state. While much has been written about specific aspects of Texas music, this book is one of the first to attempt a comprehensive treatment of the subject.

Hartman's first major theme concerns "tejana" musical traditions, the blending of Spanish/Mexican with Anglo-American music in the Southwest borderlands. Mariachi, canciones, and corridos were the foundations for conjunto, and later norteña and chicana variations that culminated in the Tejano music popularized by the tragically short career of Selena Quintinilla in the 1980s.

The centrality of African American contributions to American music is widely known, as spiritual, gospel, and "call and response" traditions gradually developed into blues, jazz, boogie-woogie, and eventually rock and roll and rap and hip-hop. Texans Huddie Ledbetter (Leadbelly), Blind Lemon Jefferson, Lightnin' Hopkins, T-Bone Walker, and Big Mama Thornton played an important role in the birth of the blues, while Lone Star native Scott Joplin was the pivotal figure in ragtime. Later both black musicians and white artists like Stevie Ray Vaughan and Janis Joplin helped

carry African American music into the mainstream of modern rock.

When most people think of "Texas" music today they are likely to think of the broadly diverse genre labeled "country." From the beginnings of country to the present day, from "singing cowboys" to western swing to progressive and outlaw country to neotraditionalists like George Strait, Texas has been a major center for the development of country music. Only slightly less impressively, Texans Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison participated in the birth of rock and roll, and the state still remains a central location for contemporary rock music, especially through the dynamic Austin music scene.

Hartman takes a latitudinarian approach to defining Texas music, and this book is as much about music in Texas as specifically "Texas" music. In addition to the themes mentioned above, this work covers Native American music, ethnic European influences—German, Czech, Polish—and even classical music. Hartman is also adept at exploring the relationship between music, culture, and regions. Unfortunately, students of the Great Plains will not find much consideration of Plains culture or music here. The regional cultures that matter for Hartman are primarily the Southwest and Old South, and to a lesser extent Cajun/Creole Louisiana.

That shortcoming aside, this is an engaging and readable summary of important aspects of American music, suitable for both fans and general readers.

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