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Review of *Telling Stories, Writing Songs: An Album of Texas Songwriters* By Kathleen Hudson

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Telling Stories, Writing Songs: An Album of Texas Songwriters. By Kathleen Hudson.

Foreword by Sam Phillips. Introduction by B. B. King. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001. xviii + 300 pp. Photographs, biographies, and selected discographies. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.

On the surface, a book chronicling interviews with prominent and influential Texas songwriters would be quite welcome to students of regional American music styles. Many of the artists included are unfamiliar to the general public, but have contributed much to the development of folk, country, and rock styles in the past half-century.

Author Kathleen Hudson selected thirty-four subjects to profile, from honky-tonk and western swing pioneer Floyd Tillman to Tex-Mex chanteuse Tish Hinojosa. Unfortunately, Hudson chose to structure her book as a series of oral histories, her questions and her informants' responses transcribed verbatim in each chapter. Her unchallenging, simplistic questions, name-dropping, and fawning quickly prove wearisome. Is it really important that we learn that Hudson went to a music conference in Cannes, France, with Gary P. Nunn?

As a result, any one of the chapters would have made a fine Friday article in the enter-

tainment section of a regional newspaper or fan magazine, but as literature, thirty-four such interviews are thirty-three too many. Hudson would have been far better served by turning the interviews into either first person narratives or chapters using her respondents' answers to elucidate the Texas songwriting scene, something sorely missing from this book.

Hudson's questions interrupt rather than amplify the flow of information from her informants, which is what we are really interested in reading. Unchallenging queries such as "Is there a song that is special to you?" "Any advice to young writers?" and comments like "Let's talk about your new album" are strictly "Entertainment Tonight" fodder and not something a seasoned oral historian should resort to using, much less printing in a book. The three-hundred-page tome easily could have been cut by a third by eliminating Hudson's questions and including more from her subjects.

Considering the wealth of information and attitudes offered by these subjects, one can still find much of value here—if one can skip past the inane questions.

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