

Don Cusic Bio

Don Cusic is one of the premier historians of country music and an internationally known scholar and writer. As an author, teacher, historian, songwriter, producer and executive, Cusic has been actively involved in the music business since 1973.

Cusic is the author of twenty-five published books, including the biographies *Roger Miller: Dang Him*, *Elvis and Nashville*, *Eddy Arnold: I'll Hold You In My Heart*, *The Life and Career of Gene Autry*, *The Cowboy Way: Riders In The Sky*, *James Weldon Johnson: Songwriter* and *The Trials of Henry Flipper*. He wrote an encyclopedia of cowboys, *Cowboys and the Wild West: An A-Z Guide from the Chisholm Trail to the Silver Screen* and edited (and was the primary writer of) *The Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music*. Other books include *Johnny Cash: The Songs*, *The Sound of Light: A History of Gospel and Christian Music* (re-published as *Saved by Song*), *The Cowboy in Country Music*, *Music in the Market*, *Baseball and Country Music*, *Poet of the Common Man: Merle Haggard Lyrics*, *Willie Nelson: Lyrics 1959-1994*, *Hank Williams: The Complete Lyrics*, *Reba McEntire: Country Music's Queen*, *Randy Travis: King of the New Traditionalists*, *The Poet as Performer*, and *Sandi Patti: The Voice of Gospel*. Cusic is also the author of two novels: *Sharecropper's Son* and *Dressed in Grey and Blue* (a Civil War novel).

As a record producer, Cusic has produced albums on Bobby Bare and Melinda Doolittle (with Mike Curb) and co-produced (with Cheetah Chrome) the Eddy Arnold Tribute album, *You Don't Know Me: Rediscovering Eddy Arnold*.

Don Cusic has contributed entries to a number of encyclopedias, including the *Grove Dictionary of Music*, *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Blues and Gospel*, *The Encyclopedia of United States Popular Culture*, *The Protestant Encyclopedia*, *The Tennessee Encyclopedia* and the *Country Music Encyclopedia* published by the Country Music Foundation. He has two entries ("Johnny Cash" and "Loretta Lynn") in the three volume source book *Icons* published by Greenwood Press. In addition he wrote a chapter, "Cowboys in Chicago" in the book *The Hayloft Gang: The Story of the National Barn Dance* and "Johnny Cash and C.S. Lewis" in *Literary Cash*.

Don Cusic has had over 500 articles published since he began writing. He has been the Country and Gospel Editor for *Record World* and *Cashbox*, a columnist for *Music City News*, editor of *The Western Way* (the quarterly publication of the Western Music Association, album reviewer and special correspondent for *Billboard* and book reviewer for *Music Row Magazine*.

He has written liner notes for albums by Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Ray Stevens, Bobby Bare, George Jones, Ray Stevens, Eddy Arnold, Sonny James, Gary Paxton, George Beverly Shea, Sheb Wooley, the Oak Ridge Boys, Lulu Belle and Scotty, Jimmy Long, Skeeter Davis, Lynn Anderson, Roy Drusky and Floyd Cramer. Cusic and Mike Curb produced the album *Lift Every Voice: The Historic Songs of James Weldon Johnson* sung by Melinda Doolittle. He was Compilation Producer with Mike Curb and wrote the liner notes to the *Sun Records 60th Anniversary* set, assisted with the Time-Life series on Country Music and wrote the booklet notes on the songs for Tammy Wynette. He wrote the liner notes for the Reader's Digest album on George Beverly Shea.

As a scholar, Don Cusic has presented academic papers for the Popular Culture Association, the Popular Culture Association of the South, the American Studies Association, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music, the International Country Music Conference, the International Popular Culture Conference (in Oxford, England), the Tennessee

Philological Society, the Tennessee Folklore Society, the Western Music Association, the Baseball Symposium, the International Association for the Study of Popular Music and the Music Educators Industry and Entertainment Association (MEIEA)

In addition to his articles, liner notes and papers, Don Cusic has had songs recorded by the Lewis Family, Lynn Morris, Bobby Bare, Peter Noone, Linda Davis, Eve Goldberg, Pam Mark Hall, Carroll Baker, Darrell McCall, Chris LeDoux and Bobby Bare. His photography won a Tennessee Press Association award in 1973 and he did the cover and liner photography for a Word album by Teddy Huffam and the Gems. He has hosted a television show, "The Music Biz," written for The Nashville Network and appeared a number of times on CMT programs, including the "Controversy" series, "Greatest Patriotic Songs," "Waiting in the Wings" and others; he appeared on a number of TNN shows, including "Life and Times" of Eddy Arnold" and the A&E Biography Series (on Hank Williams). He also appears on the BBC series "Lost Highway: The History of Country Music" and "White Gospel." He had roles in two movies, *Country Gold* (a CBS TV movie) and *Wish Me Away*, the documentary on Chely Wright.

Don Cusic was born in St. Mary's County, Maryland. He attended St. Mary's College and the University of Maryland where he received a B.S. in Journalism. Cusic moved to Tennessee in 1972. His first job in the music industry was with the Country Music Association as a staff writer, then with *Record World*, a trade publication as Nashville editor. From there he joined Monument Records where he served as head of Artist Development and International Liaison (Monument was distributed by CBS International). After leaving Monument, Cusic and Dan Beck formed a management and public relations company where they managed Riders in the Sky and Dickie Lee. After the management/pr company Cusic became the first Nashville editor for *Contemporary Christian Music* magazine, then joined *Cashbox* as Country and Gospel Editor. During this period he served for three years on the Gospel Music Association's Board of Directors.

Don Cusic joined the faculty at Middle Tennessee State University in 1982 teaching courses in the music business. He earned a Masters and Doctorate in English from MTSU. Since August, 1994 he has been Professor of Music Business at Belmont University and since 2006 has held the professorship of Curb Professor of Music Industry History, endowed by the Mike Curb Family Foundation.

Cusic is the founding member and Chair of the Belmont Book Award, given each year to the best book in country music. He is editor of the International Country Music Journal, an outgrowth of the International Country Music Conference, of which he is co-chair with James Akenson.

He is a member of the Country Music Association (Lifetime), Western Music Association (Lifetime), the Gospel Music Association (Lifetime), the Recording Academy (formerly the National Association of Recording Arts and Sciences-NARAS), the International Bluegrass Music Association and the Music Educators Industry and Entertainment Association (MEIEA). Cusic is a Commissioner on the Metro Historical Commission in Nashville.

Don Cusic supports Free Burma Rangers, Heifer, International, W.O. Smith School, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Don Cusic may be reached at:

P.O. Box 120751
Nashville, Tennessee 37212

Phone: 615.460.5438

Email: don.cusic@belmont.edu