



Whiskey Bottles and Brand-New Cars: The Fast Life and Sudden Death of Lynyrd Skynyrd

Mark Ribowsky

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This book tells the intimate story of how a band of lost souls and self-destructive misfits with uncertain artistic objectives clawed their way to the very top of the rock 'n' roll peak, writing and performing as if beneficiaries of a deal with the devil—a deal fulfilled by a tragic fall from the sky. The rudderless genius behind their ascent was a man named Ronnie Van Zant, who guided their five-year run and evolved not just a new country/rock idiom but a new Confederacy in constant conflict with old Southern totems and prejudices.

Placing the music and personae of Lynyrd Skynyrd into a broader cultural schema for the first time, *Whiskey Bottles and Brand-New Cars* is based on interviews with surviving band members and others who watched them. It gives a new perspective to a history of stage fights, motel-room destructions, cunning business deals, and brilliant studio productions, offering a greater appreciation for a band that, in the aftermath of its last plane ride, has sadly descended into self-caricature as the sort of lowbrow guns-'n'-God cliché that Ronnie Van Zant wanted to chuck from around his neck.

No other book on Southern rock has ever captured the “Free Bird”-like sweep and significance of Lynyrd Skynyrd. Ribowsky’s cohesive narrative gives the band its full due while not ignoring the cruel irony and avoidability of the band’s tragic end.

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