



AMERICAN SONGWRITER
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reviews further reading



WILLIE NELSON

WILLIE NELSON: AN EPIC LIFE By Joe Nick Patoski
(LITTLE, BROWN, AND CO.) ★ ★ ★ ★

Willie Nelson may well be the cosmic Frank Sinatra, and like the king of popular song stylists, Nelson's led a singular and storied life. Certainly it's a life that begs telling, but truly capturing the essence of his grace, his gift and his ability to roll through mishaps, adventures and culturally defining moments seamlessly, it takes someone who can write without seeming labored. Joe Nick Patoski is, frankly, the only choice. An equally celebrated Texas journalist who first interviewed Nelson in 1973—and followed the evolution of a career that refused to be bound by any conventional wisdom, norm or rule, JNP has lived the music and known the man in real time for a quarter of a century. That sort of proximity provides the details that define and the context that is spot-on. Focusing on his formative years, the tenacity and need to write, sing and perform that sustained him over the lean years, this is

not another glossy celebrity name-drop celebration, but a look at the truths and experiences that forged enduring American classics "Crazy," "Nightlife," "Family Bible," as well as Nelsonisms "Whiskey River," "Angel Flying Too Close To The Ground" and the global "Always On My Mind." It is his rise that crescendos; then Patoski strings the superstar and legend years together with laces of normalcy maintained throughout. Leaning into Nelson's gentle, almost Buddha spirit and talking to his myriad friends for their reflections, this is comprehensive, well-told and inspiring creatively and humanistically.—HOLLY GLEASON