



Earl Scruggs: Banjo Icon (Roots of American Music: Folk, Americana, Blues, and Country)

Gordon Castelnero, David L. Russell

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In 1945 at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium, the original home of the Grand Ole Opry, a skinny twenty-one-year-old from North Carolina stepped onto the stage and lit a firestorm by picking the five-string banjo like no one had ever heard before. His rapid three-finger style and clarity of notes sent the audience into a cheerful frenzy. In just one night, Earl Scruggs transformed the banjo, which had been widely associated with clowns and background accompaniment, into a mainstream solo instrument pursued by countless musicians. After a short stint with the Father of Bluegrass music, Bill Monroe, Earl and fellow band member, lead singer/guitarist Lester Flatt, started their own group in 1948, the Foggy Mountain Boys, more commonly known as Flatt and Scruggs. Following his breakup with Flatt in 1969, he formed the Earl Scruggs Revue with his sons and then later on his Family & Friends band in 1998. Over his long career, Scruggs received numerous accolades in addition to performing and recording with some of the music industry's biggest stars like Billy Joel, Elton John, Sting, the Pointer Sisters, Johnny Cash, Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Linda Ronstadt, Vince Gill, Travis Tritt, the Byrds, and Steve Martin.

Gordon Castelnero and David L. Russell explore Scruggs's rise to fame and lasting legacy in bluegrass music and banjo playing traditions. Through interwoven interviews with the Scruggs family and more than 40 notable banjo players as well as other musicians/entertainers, this narrative biography will shed light on the history of bluegrass for both amateur and professional musicians, students of music and American history, and any reader entranced by Scruggs's unmistakable sound.

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