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3990 West Lakeshore Drive
Baton Rouge, LA 70808-4684
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www.lsupress.org

BOOK NEWS

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Behind the Scenes at Sun Records

Barbara Barnes Sims Remembers the Legendary Music Studio

"You were one of the first females I admired in our business. . . .In my mind you were as big a star as Elvis and Sam."—Dick Biondi, legendary rock DJ

Baton Rouge—An American institution, Sun Records has a history with many chapters—its Memphis origins with visionary Sam Phillips, the breakthrough recordings of Elvis Presley, and the studio's immense influence on the sound of popular music. But behind the company's chart toppers and legendary musicians there exists another story, told by **Barbara Barnes Sims**. In the male-dominated workforce of the 1950s, 24-year-old Sims found herself thriving in the demanding roles of publicist and sales promotion coordinator at Sun Records. Sims's job placed her in the studio with Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, Charlie Rich, Carl Perkins, and other Sun entertainers, as well as the unforgettable Phillips, whose work made the music that defined an era.

The Next Elvis: Searching for Stardom at Sun Records chronicles Sims's career at the studio, a pivotal time at this recording mecca, as she darted from disc jockeys to distributors. A Peggy Olson figure to Phillips's kinder version of Donald Draper, Sims not only entertains with personal stories of big personalities, she brings humor to the challenges of a young woman working in a fast, tough, and largely male dominated industry.

Her disarming narrative ranges from descriptions of a disgraced Jerry Lee Lewis to the remarkable impact and tragic fall of DJ Daddy-O Dewey to the frenzied Memphis homecoming of Elvis after his military service. Collectively, these vignettes offer a rare and intimate look at the people, the city, and the studio that permanently shifted the trajectory of rock 'n' roll.

Barbara Barnes Sims worked in promotion and publicity during Sun's golden years, from 1957 to 1960. She published newsletters, liaised with distributors, and wrote liner notes for the first albums of Johnny Cash, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Charlie Rich. In 1960 she began a 36-year career teaching English at Louisiana State University. She lives in Baton Rouge.

September 2014

240 pages, 5.5 x 8.5, 31 halftones

978-0-8071-5798-5

Cloth \$26.00, ebook available

Music / Cultural Studies

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