



The Downhome Sound

Diversity and Politics in Americana Music

MANDI BATES BAILEY

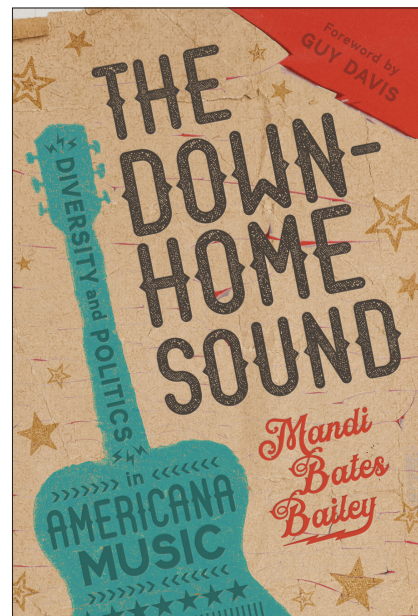
Foreword by **GUY DAVIS**

PRAISE FOR *THE DOWNHOME SOUND*

“Good music is often nebulous and hard to define. Americana is like that, and *The Downhome Sound* cleverly avoids forcing the music into a tidy category to study it. Instead, Mandi Bates Bailey focuses on messages and the people, the songwriters and those who enjoy our work, to understand how it affects others. We may seldom see the stadiums full of fans that more commercial musicians enjoy, but we know the impact of our craft, and this book demonstrates that impact can extend beyond our loyal fanbases.”—John Paul White, American singer-songwriter and former member of the Grammy Award-winning duo The Civil Wars

“Using a sophisticated mixed-methods approach, Bailey elevates our understanding of Americana music, its culture and community, and the power of roots music on unfamiliar listeners. An excellent read.”—Adolphus G. Belk Jr., coeditor of *For the Culture: Hip-Hop and the Fight for Social Justice*

“*The Downhome Sound* is extraordinary in its commitment to drawing attention to Americana’s Black roots. This is an invaluable sourcebook on Americana music and a refreshing read on how it resonates as a quintessentially American experience that was born and bred in rurality, racism, poverty, and resilience.”—H. L. T. Quan, author of *Growth against Democracy: Savage Developmentalism in the Modern World*



American roots music, also known as Americana music, can be challenging to categorize, spanning the genres of jazz, bluegrass, country, blues, rock and roll, and an assortment of variations in between. In *The Downhome Sound*, Mandi Bates Bailey explores the messages, artists, community, and appeal of this seemingly disparate musical collective. To understand the art form’s intended meanings and typical audiences, she analyzes lyrics and interviews Americana artists, journalists, and festival organizers to uncover a desire for inclusion and diversity. Bailey also conducts an experiment to assess listener reception relative to more commercial forms of music. The result is an in-depth study of the political and cultural influence of Americana and its implications for social justice.

MANDI BATES BAILEY is professor of political science, Africana studies, and women’s and gender studies at Valdosta State University.

GUY DAVIS is a Grammy-nominated traditional blues guitarist.

MARCH 2023

200 pages, 6 x 9, 21 halftones, 5 charts,
3 graphs, 1 map

Hardcover 978-0-8071-7916-1, \$60.00s

Paperback 978-0-8071-7960-4, \$30.00s

ebook available

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