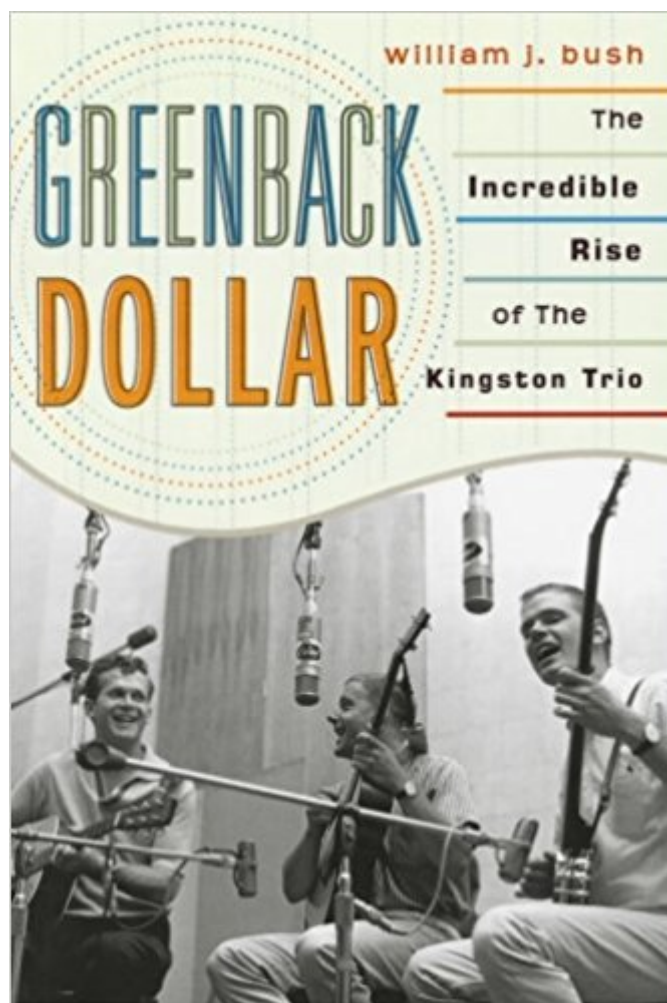


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Greenback Dollar: The Incredible Rise Of The Kingston Trio



Synopsis

How big an act was the Kingston Trio? Big enough that their first 19 albums not only reached Billboard's Top 100, but 14 of them entered the top 10, with five albums alone hitting the no. 1 spot! At the height of their popularity, the Kingston Trio was arguably the most popular vocal group in the world, having single-handedly ushered in the folk music boom of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Their meteoric rise quite literally paved the way for Bob Dylan; Joan Baez; Peter, Paul & Mary; and the many acts that followed in their wake. With the release of their version of "Tom Dooley" in fall 1958, the Kingston Trio changed American popular music forever, inspiring legions of young listeners to pick up guitars and banjos and join together in hootenannies and sing-alongs. In *Greenback Dollar: The Incredible Rise of The Kingston Trio*, the first in-depth biography of America's first recording super-group, William J. Bush retraces the band members' personal and professional lives, from their rapid rise to stardom to their early retirement in 1967. Through interviews with Trio members, their families, and associates, Bush paints a detailed portrait of the Trio's formative early years and sudden popular success, their innovations in recording technology, pioneering of the college concert and intensive tour schedule, their impact on and response to the 1960s protest movement, the first break-up of the Trio with Dave Guard's departure, and its re-formation with John Stewart. Lovers of folk music and students and scholars of the history of popular music and the music business, the counterculture movement, and the American folk tradition will find in *Greenback Dollar* a remarkably detailed view of the musical and cultural legacy that resulted in the Kingston Trio receiving a 2011 Lifetime Achievement Award at the 53rd Annual Grammy Awards.

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Customer Reviews

Guitar expert and folk music aficionado William J. Bush's in-depth biography of the Kingston Trio, one of America's premier folk acts, may not be all that revelatory to devotees, but to those only familiar with hits like "Tom Dooley", the group's contributions and resounding legacy may come as a surprise. Drawing from multiple interviews with band members, friends, and family, Bush chronicles the group's quick rise from early performances at cafes and bars to multiplatinum success in the late 1950s and 1960s. Though hardly members of the Beat Generation, the Kingston Trio cut their teeth in a number of jazz clubs, rubbing elbows with giants like Thelonious Monk, Bill Evans, and Dave Brubeck. This exposure helped lay the groundwork for the success sparked by their hit "Tom Dooley" and opened the door for a litany of other folk performers. Despite a lily-white appearance, the group's live shows were often laced with caustic commentary that lent a vaudevillian aspect to their performances. Readers hoping for a lurid tell-all will find the book to be exceedingly tame; still, this is a warm and fitting appreciation of an act that's often been overshadowed by those who followed in their footsteps. (Publishers Weekly)

My favorite among this crop of recent material is the long awaited biography of my all-time favorite musical group. William J. Bush's *Greenback Dollar: The incredible rise of the Kingston Trio* tells the story of the act that not only launched America's folk music boom of the 1950s and 60s, but in its way helped pave the way for the even more phenomenal success in this country of The Beatles. . . . *Greenback Dollar* is a book that will appeal not only to fans of this group in particular but to students of American pop music in general. This is one I simply cannot recommend highly enough. (The Capital)

After the huge success of Elvis Presley there was a moment when it looked as if rock & roll might, indeed, be nothing more than a fad. Its successor in the world of popular music would be folk music, and its undisputed leader was the Kingston Trio. In *Greenback Dollar: The Incredible Rise of the Kingston Trio* William J. Bush details the history of this landscape altering band. In it, Bush details the biographies of, first, the original three members of the band — Nick Reynolds, Bob Shane, and Dave Guard — and their meteoric rise to fame from 1958 through 1961. He then tells of the falling out and eventual replacement of Guard with John Stewart and the continued artistic and commercial success of the band through the sixties. Along the way, Bush (a friend of all the members of these two incarnations of the band) describes

the important places and events that led to the massive popularity that followed the Trio. So rock music never did fade away, but the influence of folk, thanks in large part to the Kingston Trio, became an integral part of popular music for decades to come. (New Books Network) Finally someone has written the definitive story of the late 1950s/early 1960s group that changed American popular music forever. It's fascinating and informative, and it will keep you up way past your bedtime. (Inland Northwest Bluegrass Music Association) This is a thrilling biography of one of America's greatest folk singer groups. A book that will be enjoyed by the baby boomer generation and others who enjoy folk music singing groups. (Lone Star Newsletter) Greenback Dollar is a major contribution to the history of the folk revival. This volume is especially important considering the central, indeed formative, place of the Kingston Trio within the revival. Bush's biography is deeply informed by his background as a music journalist specializing in acoustic music. He digs into the business and professional life of the group, drawing on primary resources by relying largely on interviews with the surviving members of the Trio and with those who knew them. The greatest strength of this book, by far, is the ready access the author had to his subjects and the lengthy interviews that illuminate numerous issues in the Trio's tumultuous history. Another aspect of this biography that is especially welcome is the attention paid to the Trio's various bassists, who were often at least as, if not more, musically sophisticated than the Trio members themselves (e.g., p. 88 on David 'Bucky' Wheat). . . . This book is an important contribution to the history of the folk revival, and deserves a place in any comprehensive music collection. As a history, however, it is a starting point that will provide a strong, if sometimes flawed, foundation for future research into the social context of the Trio, the copious primary literature surrounding the group and other folk revival performers, and the political, social, and musical aspects of the Trio's legacy. (Notes: Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association) The whole story is told in Greenback Dollar, and it's a good one: conflict, joy, suspense, manipulation, poor management decisions, the ups and downs of a show business career. It's all here and all spelled out. . . . An additional bonus is the author's complete and detailed discussion of each of the Trio's albums, along with a look at the technical things that made their sound unique. (Rambles.NET)

William J. Bush is an advertising writer, music journalist, photographer and perennial student of Martin guitars, Buddy Holly and The Kingston Trio. His articles have been featured in Guitar Player, Frets, Acoustic Guitar, Flatpicking Guitar, The Sounding Board (Martin Guitar Company), Pennsylvania Heritage, The Guitar Player Book (Grove Press) and Artists Of American Folk Music

(Quill Books). He has also written for EMI/Capitol Records, Folk Era Records, Bear Family Records and Shout! Factory (Sony). In 2006, he appeared in the PBS documentary, *The Kingston Trio: Wherever We May Go*. His photography of rock legend Dion DiMucci has been featured in *New York Magazine* and the cover of Dion's 2006 Grammy-nominated blues CD, *Bronx In Blue*.

This book does a phenomenal job of elevating the importance of The Kingston Trio and clearly establishing them as the most talented, original, and influential American musical group in history. In spite of the perception that they were little more than a laid-back folk trio who just happened to be at the right place at the right time, *Greenback Dollar* shows all these guys were serious performers and musicians from an early age, and that their musical knowledge and influences was so extensive blending folk, jazz, Hawaiian with a Mariachi instrumental sound and harmonies, that as Bob Shane says late in the book, their music was not folk music at all, but world music. The book details that the magic of the Trio was that they produced records and gave performances that made them and their music accessible, yet no one else was ever able to come close to capturing their energy or sound. As someone who has followed the Trio since I was eight years old I was skeptical that a 2013 biography could add much to what I already knew about the group, especially since all but original member Bob Shane have been dead for so long. However it is clear Bush has been researching this book since at least 1986, and he has done extensive interviews with not only all the Trio members, but virtually every important person connected with them from the time they were born through today. This is a well-written and insightful book and will be a delight to not only to KINGSTON TRIO fans, but a good source of inspiration for anyone who really wants to know what it takes to have a successful music career. My only complaint is that this book is not available as an e-Book. I spent several hours carefully cutting the book apart and then scanning it into a PDF file so I could read it on my iPad.

Like one of the earlier reviewers, I've been a fan of the Kingston Trio since 1958, when I was 8 years old and "Tom Dooley" hit the airwaves. I've loved every album they recorded (and that is a LOT of albums) and still play them to this day. While many other folk groups seem to be remembered fondly because they were more "political," the Kingston Trio never attempted to be overtly political nor did they try to capitalize on what was "politically correct" at the time. They concentrated on their music and entertaining, and as founding member Bob Shane has often said, they were entertainers first and foremost. Because of this, they often got a bum rap from the "purist" folk community. This never bothered me all these years, because who cares? Their music was (and

still IS) just so damn good! They put more heart and soul into their music, in my view, than most of the politically correct folk groups whose music was never as entertaining. The Kingston Trio's music was truly some of the first "world" music, with songs coming from the American West and South, Appalachia, Polynesia, the Caribbean, Latin America, Africa, Britain, Ireland... it's incredible, when you think about it. They worked hard, played hard and their concerts and recordings rang with emotion, truly from the heart. These are some of the themes that Bill Bush explores in this meticulously researched and lovingly written history of what is arguably America's most influential folk group. Bill clearly has nothing but the utmost respect and admiration for these guys, yet is not afraid to show them as the all-too-human folks that they are, just like all the rest of us. This kind of writing requires a delicate balance, and Bill nails it somehow. I have always thought it a pity that so little has been written about the Kingston Trio over the years, so this wonderful book is a most welcome addition to the music literature. It is entertaining from start to finish--I read the whole thing in about two sittings. Highly recommended, and thanks Bill, for filling a big gap in the literature of America's musical heritage.

If James Michener wrote a book about The Kingston Trio, I think it would be much like Bill Bush's *Greenback Dollar*. The wealth of background material, including detailed relationships between people, places and events and the just plain in-depth research are very impressive. Like Michener's works, this book illuminates an overlooked, too-often-forgotten, not-well-understood piece of history. Like so many people who were putting the final touches on their identities when The Kingston Trio emerged, I couldn't wait to get their next album or get to their next concert...neither of which ever disappointed. I used to sit in class, half-listening to the professor while practicing 5-string finger picking on a sheet of paper with banjo strings drawn on it. Thanks to Bill Bush's book, I now understand why I did that. And, when I listen to my old Kingston Trio records, see those striped shirts on the album covers, and re-read the liner notes, the memories are better than ever.

This was a fascinating, sympathetic study of a group that, while much maligned by purist snobs, had an immense influence on American popular music. I was a young kid when the Trio's records came out, but they hooked me on music for life. Bush bases the book on years of research and with interviews with the principles. My only complaint is that the book is a little pricey, so I bought the Kindle version. And read it straight through.

This book is a must for Trio fans. In fact it's a must for anyone seriously interested in music between

1957 and 1967. The wealth of information - well footnoted - is first quality. The depth of the information is astounding. These four fellas trusted Bill Bush explicitly. We are the richer for it. The book is well written and non Hagiographic. A fitting center of a Kingston Trio collection.

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