



*An insider's view of the country music industry, as told  
by one of America's most respected folk talents*

## **Nashville City Blues**

### *My Journey as an American Songwriter*

By James Talley

Foreword by Peter Guralnick

For many diehard music fans and critics, Oklahoma-born James Talley ranks among the finest of American singer-songwriters. Talley's unique style—a blend of folk, country, blues, and social commentary—draws comparisons with the likes of Woody Guthrie, Merle Haggard, and Johnny Cash. In this engaging, down-to-earth memoir, Talley recalls the highs and lows of his nearly fifty-year career in country music.

Talley's story begins in the hardscrabble towns of eastern Oklahoma. As a young man, he witnessed poverty and despair and worked alongside ordinary Americans who struggled to make ends meet. He has never forgotten his Oklahoma roots. These experiences shaped Talley's artistic vision and inspired him to write his own songs.

Eventually Talley landed in Nashville, where his first years included exciting brushes with fame but also bitter disappointments. As an early champion of social justice causes, his ideals did not fit neatly into Nashville's star-making machine. By his own admission, Talley at times made poor business decisions and trusted the wrong people. His relationship with the country music industry was—and still is—fraught, but he makes no apology for staying true to his core principles. *Nashville City Blues* offers hard-won wisdom for any aspiring artist motivated to work hard and handle whatever setbacks might follow. Readers will also gain valuable understanding about the country music industry and the inescapable links between commerce and artistry.

**James Talley** is a Nashville-based guitarist, singer, and songwriter. Through the years, Talley's songs have been recorded by the likes of Alan Jackson, Johnny Cash, Gene Clark, Johnny Paycheck, and Moby. **Peter Guralnick** is an American music critic, author, and screenwriter. He specializes in the history of early rock and roll and has written books about Elvis Presley, Sam Phillips, and Sam Cooke.

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