



Comin' Right at Ya: How a Jewish Yankee Hippie Went Country, or, the Often Outrageous History of Asleep at the Wheel (Brad and Michele Moore Roots Music)

Ray Benson, David Menconi

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A six-foot-seven-inch Jewish hippie from Philadelphia starts a Western swing band in 1970, when country fans hate hippies and Western swing. It sounds like a joke but—more than forty years, twenty-five albums, and nine Grammy Awards later—Asleep at the Wheel is still drawing crowds around the world. The roster of musicians who've shared a stage with the Wheel is a who's who of American popular music—Van Morrison, Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton, Emmylou Harris, George Strait, Vince Gill, Lyle Lovett, and so many more. And the bandleader who's brought them all together is the hippie that claimed Bob Wills's boots: Ray Benson.

In this hugely entertaining memoir, Benson looks back over his life and wild ride with Asleep at the Wheel from the band's beginning in Paw Paw, West Virginia, through its many years as a Texas institution. He vividly recalls spending decades in a touring band, with all the inevitable ups and downs and changes in personnel, and describes the making of classic albums such as *Willie and the Wheel* and *Tribute to the Music of Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys*. The ultimate music industry insider, Benson explains better than anyone else how the Wheel got rock hipsters and die-hard country fans to love groovy new-old Western swing. Decades later, they still do.

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