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Books

Steve Goodman: Facing the Music

by **Clay Eals**

ECW Press (2007); ISBN-13: 978-1-55022-732-1; \$29.95
US, \$32.95 CDN; w/CD

Chicago singer/songwriter Steve Goodman was one of those artists who profoundly touched everyone he met or who saw him in concert. Best known as composer of “City of New Orleans,” that sweeping anthem to the twilight of American railroads, Goodman was also an immensely entertaining performer and produced an extraordinary body of work during his all-too-short lifetime. (Goodman passed away at age 36 in 1984 after a 15-year battle with leukemia.) Journalist Clay Eals is uniquely qualified to serve as singer/songwriter Steve Goodman’s biographer. A longtime fan of Goodman’s work, he also spent much of his career writing for the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center. The depth of Eals’ research is evident in this massive tome, which is culled from scores of interviews he did with Goodman’s family, friends, and fellow musicians. Eals thoroughly documents Goodman’s early years, his complex relationship with his father, his fairytale marriage, and in particular his struggle throughout his performing career with the disease that ultimately cut short his life. The text is accompanied by hundreds of rare and moving photographs, and the book comes with a CD of tributes to Goodman by friends such as Chris Farrell, Harry Waller, and Brian Gill. The very length and depth of Eals’ scholarship might deter many readers, but those who knew the singer from more than “The City of New Orleans” and “Go, Cubs, Go” will enjoy this insightful, well-researched exploration of this remarkable writer and performer.

— *Michael Parrish (San Jose, CA)*