

# About This Book

Music and song have likely been an intrinsic part of every culture in the world since the beginning of time. Even in ancient Greece, before alphabetic writing was used to record literature, Homer's Iliad and Odyssey were not only spoken as tales but also sung, frequently accompanied by music that was considered a part of the basic form of storytelling. In our own time and culture, there is no question that music is the dominant art form.

*Off the Record* makes no pretense to be the definitive book on songwriting. Its intent is to celebrate songwriters and the powerful role the art of songwriting plays in our lives. The twenty-five songwriters who appear in this book, each of whose own catalogue of work far exceeds their one song shown here, represent a broad cross-section of styles, genres, backgrounds, and creative perspectives. There are literally thousands of classic songs that have profoundly impacted our lives, brought us comfort, and put us in contact with the deepest part of ourselves. This book of twenty-five songs is able to commemorate but a few of them. In spirit, it pays homage to them all.

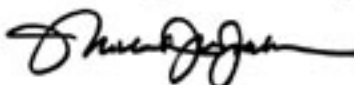
Several years ago, I had the privilege of spending some time with the legendary John Lee Hooker. As his manager and I entered his home, John Lee was seated on his couch, wearing his trademark hat, completely entranced by a football game. The purpose of our meeting was to discuss Manuscript Originals and to have John Lee hand-draw his lyrics for us. I sat down and introduced myself and, at first, got no response. John Lee just continued to watch the TV. A long, awkward moment passed in silence. I looked to the manager in confusion. Was John Lee Hooker unaware of the reason I was there? Suddenly, without ever taking his eyes off the TV, John Lee asked me in that unmistakable voice of his, "Do you love what you do?" Neither the question itself nor an answer would have occurred to me. I'd been a record producer for over twenty-five years, and initially I had thought I would simply help Graham put Manuscript Originals in motion and then return to my own pursuits. But John Lee's question was so succinct, so direct, it made me realize that Graham's concept for this company honored the very thing that had caused me to remain in the music business so many years myself—the impact that great songs always had on me. Consequently, it wasn't hard to look back at him and honestly say, "Yes, I do." Then and only then did John Lee finally turn to me, smile broadly, and say, "That's good. It's good to love what you do." I doubt he would have talked to anyone who didn't.

John Lee Hooker's measuring stick for what is important in life goes to the heart of this book about great songs and the songwriters who created them. It's about having a passion for what you do, for the process, and for the elegant mystery that always accompanies the creative effort.

The text interview portion of this book is intended to give the reader a sense of each writer's background and his or her personal journey through a life of music and songwriting. Most of these twenty-five songs were cowritten with other equally talented songwriters, whose contribution we wish to acknowledge, for without their collaboration these classic songs would never have existed.

The audio interview portion of this book on the enclosed CDs is intended to provide a firsthand account of the genesis of a particular song by one of its writers. Out of necessity, these audio interviews were conducted through a variety of means, ranging from in-person interviews, whenever possible, to remote recording devices, phone lines, and archived materials. Although the quality of these recordings may vary from interview to interview, we felt that by their very nature, their character and color added greatly to a sense of the individual and the process of songwriting.

Manuscript Originals was created in 1993 by Graham Nash and several music industry associates to honor and commemorate the classic songs of our times in the form of museum-quality, limited-edition handwritten lyrics rendered by one of the song's original composers. These limited-edition pieces are available through the Neiman Marcus stores, art galleries and other exclusive venues throughout the country.



Michael James Jackson, President, Manuscript Originals