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Review of "King of the Cowboys, Queen of the West: Roy Rogers and Dale Evans" by R.E. White

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man's persistent drive to be a successful author. He eventually published seven books, all in part or wholly autobiographical, starting with *A Texas Cowboy* in 1885 and ending with *Riata and Spurs* in 1927. He battled not only the usual fickle whims of publishing but also a long-running feud with the target of one of his books, the powerful Pinkerton National Detective Agency, which fought him relentlessly with informal and legal pressures. The picture that emerges from these sections is of a cohort of friends, including Will James, Andy Adams, Charlie Russell, Jack Cole, Will Rogers, and William S. Hart, creating a public image of the West from the inside out. This complemented the one made from the outside in by Frederic Remington, Owen Wister, and other Easterners. It is one of many reasons Lamar's fine book is both an education and a delight.

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ELLIOTT WEST

King of the Cowboys, Queen of the West: Roy Rogers and Dale Evans. By Raymond E. White. (Madison, Popular Press [University of Wisconsin Press], 2005. xvii + 530 pp. \$65 cloth, \$29.95 paper)

In a show business career spanning eight decades of the twentieth century, entertainers Roy Rogers and Dale Evans rode their mounts Trigger and Buttermilk across a mythic American West, outwitting "bad guys," building community, religious faith, and patriotism, and singing "Happy Trails to You" as they rode off into the sunset. Raymond E. White's new book is the most broadly framed and meticulously documented study to date of the King of the Cowboys and the Queen of the West.

This book possesses a dual scope. In the first quarter, the author traces the careers of Roy Rogers and Dale Evans in six scholarly essays. A mammoth reference section—a bibliography, filmography, and discography—comprises the last three-quarters of the work. This framework enables White to "focus on the major aspects of their professional lives . . . with chapters and reference lists on their radio careers, their films, their recording pursuits, their comic books, their television programs, and their use of Christianity in their public performances" (p. xiv).

Themes recur throughout the narrative. Rogers and Evans arose from humble and difficult circumstances in America's heartland (southern Ohio and Arkansas, respectively) and endured marital instability before finding one another and achieving Hol-

lywood stardom. Their phenomenal popularity was based on their vocal and instrumental talent, songwriting skills, compelling performances, good looks, and sincerity. Dale Evans's performances, White notes, combined femininity with a spirit of "self-reliance," creating a more "complex" heroine than heretofore seen in Westerns (p. 15). "Certainly Christianity occupied a core position in the Rogers' family life, and . . . they deliberately made it a part of their professional performances, along with strong doses of patriotism and family values" (p. 115).

This book is long on narrative and bibliography and a little short on theory. To be sure, the absence of politically correct posturing, post-structuralist jargon, and "new" western history is refreshing. Yet White might have delved more deeply into the *why* of their success. For example, one under-analyzed theme is the couple's important role in the development of the *contemporary western* sub-genre. Alongside Gene Autry, Roy and Dale portrayed movie and television cowboy and cowgirl heroes who were *contemporary ancestors*—incongruously riding horses on the open range and shooting six-guns amidst a modern world of telephones, radios, organized crime, world war, automobiles, and a Jeep named "Nellie Belle"! White alludes to this, and he has read William Savage, Jr., but he could do more with the theme.

Nevertheless, *King of the Cowboys, Queen of the West* is a very important study and reference work that every scholar of the myth of the West, and every university acquisitions librarian, should purchase. White's meticulously documented book is now the standard work on the subject. This handsomely illustrated volume shows how Roy Rogers and Dale Evans became "icons . . . unique and significant cultural figures of the twentieth-century mythic American West" (p. xv).

University of Washington, Tacoma

MICHAEL ALLEN

From My Cold, Dead Hands: Charlton Heston and American Politics. By Emilie Raymond. (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 2006. x + 376 pp. \$27.95)

Many educated, liberal-minded Americans are loath to decide which Charlton Heston they dislike more: the wooden actor famous for playing heroic figures, biblical or otherwise, in old-fashioned film epics, or the gun-toting, Second-Amendment-defending president of the National Rifle Association. But Heston-haters should