

*Lost Highway*, by Richard Currey

reviewed by [Sondra B. Willobee](#) in the [August 26, 1998](#) issue

By Richard Currey, *Lost Highway*. (Houghton Mifflin, 258 pp.)

How country music star Sapper Reeves lost his way and was found again is the theme of Richard Currey's second novel. It is a story as haunting and beautifully crafted as an old ballad. Spanning the years from World War II to Vietnam, *Lost Highway* vividly depicts the toll that life on the road takes on musicians: the ramshackle road houses where patrons brawl; restless sleep in a car's front seat; simmering, alcohol-fueled tensions between band members; unpaid bills from the gas company and the grocer; a promoter's unkept promises; the distance in a far-away spouse's voice; the disappointment when the music doesn't get the hearing it deserves.

The story of Sapper Reeves parallels that of Mac Sledge, the has-been singer and songwriter played by Robert Duvall in Horton Foote's film *Tender Mercies*. Both men rebuild their lives slowly and quietly, prompted by the love of a woman, the trust of a boy and music itself. Reeves describes music as "a welcome heat that arrives of its own accord and when least expected from some proud and mysterious heaven." He plays his banjo as if he were praying.

The novel honors the simple things that help people heal and endure: the changing of the weather, the beauty of the land, the gift of music, the fidelity of family and friends. Like the old ballads Reeves plays, his story is also ours. "I once was lost, but now am found, was blind but now I see," is a refrain with which we all can identify. We sing it with Reeves, and let the music take us where we need to go.