



# The Best of Times: Motifs from Postwar America—Reflections on Nostalgia

*Wyn Wachhorst*

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# The Best of Times: Motifs from Postwar America—Reflections on Nostalgia

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## **The Best of Times: Motifs from Postwar America—Reflections on Nostalgia** Wyn Wachhorst

Old-time radio, the folk revival, the golden age of science fiction, steam railroads, baseball, the Western, and other genres color our images of the 1950s. But contrary to the countercultural myth that America during this period was a sterile, soulless society, culturally and intellectually empty, it was an introspective era of innovation and creativity, the seedtime of the sixties, the harbinger of which was the urban folk revival. The Best of Times presents a collection of essays, each followed by a related memoir, focusing on postwar popular culture, exploring topics that mark the era but are also nostalgic in themselves—the comforting continuity of long-running radio shows, train whistles that brought the sweet sorrow of distance to small-town nights, lazy summers of baseball, endless stretches of unknown lands to the West that once compelled the imagination, the heroes and vagabonds of folksong who roamed a simpler world, and dreams of alien civilizations on neighboring planets, deepened by the dawning reality of spaceflight. These pieces balance personal, cultural, and mythic nostalgia, recalling author Wyn Wachhorst's youth, the postwar era, and its dreams of a fabled West or Norman Rockwell's small-town America. Blending history, memoir, imagery, and analysis, this collection of essays offers poetic reflections on the nature of nostalgia and postwar America.

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