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Book Review: *The Only Song Worth Singing* by Randee Dawn

by [CHRIS KLUWE](#)

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The Only Song Worth Singing

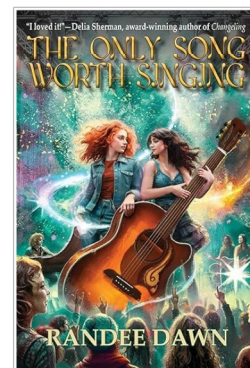
Randee Dawn

Paperback / eBook

ISBN: 9781647101572

Caezik/Arc Manor, April 2025, 250 pages

Greetings, readers, and welcome back to another book review! This month we're going to rock out to a wildly entertaining fairy tale about music and magic as we follow a band of three Irish friends who try to survive their first tour in late '90s America—that's right, it's *The Only Song Worth Singing* by Randee Dawn.



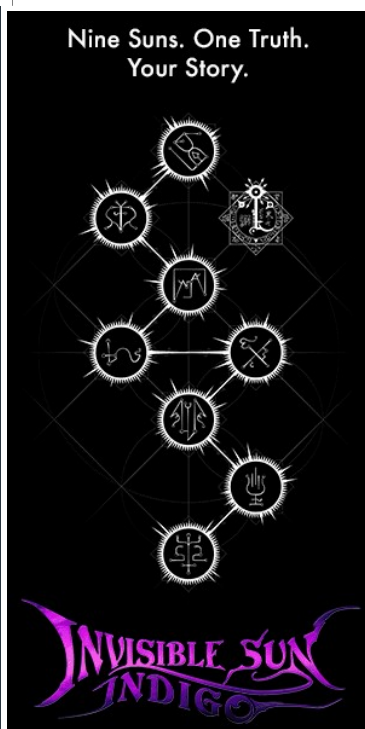
The plot to *The Only Song Worth Singing* seems fairly simple at first glance—childhood friends Patrick (nee Paidrig), Ciaran, and Malachai are fresh off a label signing and just starting their American tour. They are full of hope for the future and love for each other, and ready to live fast and hopefully not die young as they pursue their rock and roll dreams. Unfortunately for the trio, a bit of the old country (Ireland) has traveled to America with them, and the normal chaos of a touring band turns decidedly more sinister when a matching trio of three sídhe (the OG faeries) decide to tag along and have some fun of their own. Heated words fly, bonds fray, and the lads come face to face with the fact that the reality they thought they inhabited isn't quite the reality that's real, but such is the life of a rock and roll band.

The first thing that I really enjoyed about *The Only Song Worth Singing* is how cleverly it mixes up the surreality of being a professional entertainer (from personal experience I can tell you it's weeeeeiiirrrd) with the otherworldliness of an old school fairy tale (the kind that generally doesn't have a happy ending). Dawn manages to capture both the day-to-day drama and strangeness of the music industry as well as the looming unease of classic Fair Folk



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myth and weave them together in a story that rapidly becomes its own peculiar thing, one where you're never quite sure what is going to happen next but are certain that it's going to be something you didn't expect. It's clear that Dawn has a passion for the history of faeries in Ireland, as well as the culture itself, and she also does an excellent job of sprinkling in Gaelige (Irish) words and phrases throughout the book that really brings the characters to life.

The second thing I really liked in this book is how Dawn portrays Patrick, Ciaran, and Malachai as an optimistic view of positive masculinity. The trio are hard-partying, rock and roll playing, fisticuff-throwing boys straight from the streets of Dublin, but it's also extremely evident that they care for each other, and they're not afraid to apologize for their mistakes. In our current culture of toxic, 'roided out failsons who think being right at all costs is the only goal that matters, it takes real courage to show that men can love and be there for one another. Dawn absolutely nails the dynamic between the three. They bicker, sure; they squabble, because who doesn't, but at the end of the day they're willing to sacrifice ambition on the altar of friendship, and I think that's a lesson worth emphasizing when we see it.

The final bit of *The Only Song Worth Singing* that I want to point out is that it's also a fun dang book to read. I found myself rooting for Patrick, Ciaran, and Malachai to overcome the various obstacles in their way, and I was legitimately happy when I turned the final page, and the story came to a close. This book didn't feel like a classic fairy tale: it felt like a modern one, with plenty to say about the world we find ourselves in, and that's definitely to Dawn's credit as an author. It can be very difficult to create something new out of something old, but this story very much contained the roots of those dark, foggy nights our ancestors huddled in, where you're not quite sure what might be lurking beyond the door, so keep the candle lit and a bowl of milk out and hopefully all your children are still there in the morning.

Overall, if you're looking for a more modern take on some timeless mythology, you won't go wrong with *The Only Song Worth Singing*, and who knows, you might even learn some Irish while you're at it. Just be careful what bargains you make and remember that music is the most ancient magic in the world.

Chris Kluwe

Chris Kluwe grew up in Southern California among a colony of wild chinchillas and didn't learn how to communicate outside of barking and howling until he was fourteen years old. He has played football in the NFL, once wrestled a bear for a pot of gold, and lies occasionally. He is also the eternal disappointment of his mother, who just can't understand why he hasn't cured cancer yet. Do you know why these bio things are in third person? I have no idea. Please tell me if you figure it out.

