



# Hip to the Trip: A Cultural History of Route 66

*Peter B. Dedek*

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Before and since its official closure in 1985, historic U.S. 66 became associated with the deserts, Indians, and cowboys of the Southwest, the "Okies" of the Great Depression, and the millions of vacationers who took to the highway in their streamlined automobiles and found adventure on the open road from the late 1940s to the 1970s. Route 66 has such name recognition that in the past twenty years it has been used to advertise products ranging from blue jeans, to root beer, to automobiles.

The highway enjoyed only about thirty years of dominance as a primary auto and truck route from 1926 to around 1956. Gradually replaced by interstates into the 1980s, Route 66 became forever fixed in the history and lore of the Southwest and the United States. Route 66 provides a unique vantage point from which to better understand American popular culture from the 1920s to the present.

The purpose of this book is not to simply recount the history of Route 66, but to create a comprehensive portrait of the cultural meaning of the highway. What was Route 66 at its pinnacle, what is it today, and what might it become in the future?

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