



Wildflower

Alecia Whitaker

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The best songs come from broken hearts.

Sixteen-year-old Bird Barrett has grown up on the road, singing backup in her family's bluegrass band, and playing everywhere from Nashville, Tennessee to Nowhere, Oklahoma. One fateful night, Bird fills in for her dad by singing lead, and a scout in the audience offers her a spotlight all her own.

Soon Bird is caught up in a whirlwind of songwriting meetings, recording sessions, and music video shoots. Her first single hits the top twenty, and suddenly fans and paparazzi are around every corner. She's even caught the eye of her longtime crush, fellow roving musician Adam Dean. With Bird's star on the rise, though, tradition and ambition collide. Can Bird break out while staying true to her roots?

In a world of glamour and gold records, a young country music star finds her voice.

Wildflower Details

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Author : Alecia Whitaker

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From Reader Review Wildflower for online ebook

Nancy says

This is a fun, clean YA fiction without the usual suspects. For instance, Bird is not orphaned. In fact, the story is a solid building block for a series, featuring 16 year old Bird, the youngest surviving of the B family who travel around in a Winnebago and do Bluegrass gigs in dives. Okay, so yeah. There is one of the usual suspects which is a tragic death of her 5 year old brother 10 years ago. This is not the main story but the reason the family took up music. Their pastor suggested they find something they enjoyed together in order to grieve and heal, growing closer together. Music took on a life of its own.

The book stands out because it gives a realistic and not glossed over look at the life of a rising star. Small spoiler, Bird gets discovered and signed with a label in Nashville. Her muse is unrequited love interest, Adam Dean, who is a family friend.

It's a nice break from the books that make me throw up a little bit in my mouth when I'm surprised by a scene or an outburst. Even though Bird is living the life of being discovered, her 16 year old life experiences are more similar to the bulk of 16 year old girls reading this book. She is discovering first and young love, navigating friendship with Stella, and trying to find balance in her life that seems to be consumed by one aspect.

Highly recommend to my children and my children's friends.

<http://amusingreviews.blogspot.com/20...>

Ciara Ryan says

I really enjoyed this book! The theme in this book was to follow your dreams. Bird, the main character, was in a band with her family for her entire life since her younger brother died. It was a way for her and her family to distract themselves. But the band gets split when the president of the biggest music label notices her, but only wants her and not the entire family band. The author passes the theme throughout the entire book by making Bird make choices that could change her entire life. Rate: 5 stars

Sarah says

For the past several years, Bird Barrett has travelled the American heartland in an RV with her family. By day, her parents homeschooled Bird and her two older brothers. By night, they light up honky-tonks and local bluegrass/country music festivals as the Barrett Family Band.

Seventeen-year-old Bird can sing, but feels best playing her fiddle—she loves her instrument so much she named it (Maybelle). But when her dad gets a cold, Bird, the second strongest vocalist in the family, has to do lead vocal duties at the next gig. Her father's minor illness changes the course of her life.

For there are two talent scouts in the audience: one from the (in-universe) giant label of country music, Great American Music, and the other from the (also in-universe) indie label Open Road Records. Both think Bird

could be the next big thing and want to sign her. Our heroine wants a bit of artistic control and opts for Open Road, although she's quick to learn that even a small indie label will force her to change some things...

A well-timed music video propels Bird to sudden superstardom. She's thrilled to earn money for her family and share her original music with the world, but she's not prepared for how the change will affect her family, especially her brothers, and their friend Adam, the boy she's had a crush on for as long as she can remember.

Content Advisory

Violence: None.

Sex: Bird and her friend Stella giggle themselves silly over Adam and several other boys. The male model costarring in Bird's music video has his shirt unbuttoned and his chest oiled at one point, which makes our heroine feel a bit awkward. When Bird's brothers inform Stella that they're sick of her rhapsodizing over her celebrity crush and his beautiful eyes already, she retorts, "Okay, then, I'll talk about his cute butt."

Language: A few uses of "freaking" is about as strong as it gets.

Substance Abuse: None.

Nightmare Fuel: Bird quickly learns that, having become a celebrity, she has absolutely no privacy. Everything she does will be taken out of context, sensationalized or outright lied about, and judged. That said, there are absolutely zero frightening images or instances of gore in this book. Bird tells us that the Family Band got started (view spoiler)

Conclusions

This is a very cute book. It set out to be a light-hearted look at the rise of a fictional teen star who is not unlike many real teen stars of recent memory, and it does exactly that. It also manages to address the pitfalls of young fame without wallowing in—or even bringing up—drugs, sex, and alcohol. It doesn't have a whole lot of darkness or depth, and sometimes seemed more like a Disney Channel movie from the late 2000s than a novel in its own right. But still, it's cute and very good at what it does.

The part that bothered me most was when Bird gets assigned some stylists, whose first job is to determine if her naturally strawberry-blonde hair should be dyed pure blonde or pure red. Is this something that really happens in Hollywood and at music labels? Do they think that people are too stupid to accept that there are intermediary shades of hair color? And when *this* is someone's natural color, why on Earth would you mess with it?

[image error]

Anyway. This was a nice, breezy, clean little story, and a welcome break from all the angsty stuff I've been reading lately. I think a lot of young teen girls will enjoy it, and I will happily read more stuff by Alecia

Whitaker.

Paige (Illegal in 3 Countries) says

See more of my reviews on The YA Kitten!

Diversity Rating: 0 – What Diversity?

Racial-Ethnic: 0 (a character with brown skin has all of one scene)

QUILTBAG: 0

Disability: 0

Intersectionality: 0

Like many little kids did, I dreamed of being a singer when I was a wee thing. I wrote songs in my notebooks, I sang when I thought no one could hear me, and Ibr, I still sing in the shower without caring if anyone hears me. When a Hamilton song is on and you know the lyrics, you sing along. It's simply how it goes. Bird is the character who gets exactly what we wanted and we get to live the dream through her, but she's lucky enough to never have to write a song about dead teenage boys! (Just don't ask.) Wildflower is an utterly adorable novel, but it's pretty forgettable too.

Make no mistake, Wildflower and its main character Bird exist purely for wish fulfillment. The book isn't concerned with presenting strong, compelling characters or a driving conflict. Readers will keep reading solely because they want to live the dream through Bird. And it somehow works. It really shouldn't, but the book knows its audience and does what will work for them. Wildflower's overwhelming cuteness is an additional point in its favor. Need fluff? You've got it! It's an inoffensive book perfect to pass the time with.

Still, there's room to dig into the culture surrounding country music and Wildflower doesn't even glance in that direction. A favorite novel of mine, Dahlia Adler's *Under the Lights*, is equally fluffy and insightful about the film industry as its female lead Vanessa realizes she's a lesbian but faces pressure to continue presenting herself as heterosexual. Had Wildflower gone in a similar direction, that would have been fantastic. Even if Bird remained het but we got some criticism at the conservative, heteronormative values at country music's core, that would have been fantastic!

Alas, we get none of that. Wish fulfillment and fluff is nice, but they're not irreconcilable with cultural criticism in fiction.

Wildflower is largely forgettable, especially in its writing and characters. As previously mentioned, neither characters nor conflict drive the story. Stuff just happens and the target audience is expected to keep reading solely to live the dream vicariously. That's why it took me a week to read a book that comes in at just over pages. Not very long, huh? There's just no hook.

One particular detail that caught my eye in a bad way is how Bird believes Open Highway is a better record label than her could-have-been label Great American Music (GAM) because they ~believe in her~ and let her have control of her music. Meanwhile, OH won't let her play her own fiddle anymore because a guitar-wielding girl is more marketable and it took revealing the family's sob story to get permission for them to play on her album. OH and GAM look equally terrible and controlling to me, but Bird overlooks it and there's no critical analysis of her chosen record label. Maybe this will be a plot line in later books or it's

meant to highlight how naive Bird is. Still, remarking on it once or twice would have meant so much and created a better hook for the sequel.

Yikes, this really sounds negative, huh? But there's a reason this is rated three stars! It's easy to quickly summarize what Wildflower does right, but it takes more words to explain what the book does wrong. Don't let my lengthy criticism undermine what I said about this being incredibly cute fluff that numbs your brain. Everyone needs exactly that in their books at some point in their life!

Like I said, wish fulfillment is okay. Fluff is okay. But a book can be both critical of a concept and still cute, fluffy fun. There's so much Wildflower could have done but doesn't do, which leaves me wanting and generally underwhelmed. If you need something to numb your brain or you just want a book about a Taylor-Swift-pre-Red musician, this series is a good bet. The third book will be out in July 2016, so you'll be able to binge-read it shortly too!

Arianna M says

This was such a fun, quick read! As a music lover, I really enjoyed this book. Bird was very likeable and I was rooting for her the whole time. I loved it!

Rita Shaffer says

Closer to a 3.5 - This was in my first book box. I enjoyed the story, but it was a bit predictable. I can think of many students who would like it.

Crystal ☆ Lost in Storyland says

Another fantastic book from Alecia Whitaker! I read and loved The Queen of Kentucky back when it came out in 2012. What I remember (and love best) about Whitaker's writing is that she writes about teen girls in the midst of forging their identities and struggling to come to terms with who they are, and she's done it again in Wildflower. And, once again, she had me feeling the feels. So much I don't want to write this review because I was so busy enjoying the novel I forgot to take notes on what I'm supposed to be writing about.

Bird's voice is light and youthful. From the first pages, it had me hooked. So bad that I noticed during the couple times I came out of my reading reverie that I hadn't heard my family members talking in the same room—loudly. Her youthfulness means that she has big dreams, which sets her up for the crash when she realizes they aren't as easy to obtain as she hoped. Like Ricki Jo from The Queen of Kentucky, she plunges forward without much thoughts to the consequences, choosing instead to live on the thread of hope that everything will come true only to despair when they don't. She's also prone to thinking that she doesn't know the best for her, which made me sad since she relies on other people so much, and not all of them want the best for her as a person. Sometimes, I just wanted to slap some sense into her, but most of all I wanted to hug her and tell her to take the time to slow down a little and think about what she really wants instead of what she thinks she wants.

Two things really brightened this novel for me (other than Bird herself): family and the country vibes.

Frequent blog visitors know that I'm big on family and always appreciate a good novel that has a present family (that sticks around and doesn't fade into the background). Having lived on the road with her family for most of her life, Bird is very close to her family, and they're so strong and supportive. I'm half in love with them. (The other half is with Adam and yearning for him alongside Bird. I have to know what happens between them!!! And no, I'm not speaking up about this anymore because spoilers!) I also love a good Western setting, which is the number one reason I picked up this book!

If I have any complaints, it's that time tends to skip a little in this book. The story doesn't really spend much time exploring any one events or time in Bird's life; rather, the big picture comes together through all these snippets. But this is a minor complaint. I don't know much about a singer's life, being far removed from this scene, but I probably don't need to or want to know about all the in-betweens in Bird's life. That said, it is a little jarring, especially when combined with Bird's tendency to rush into things and think later.

After this book, I'll probably give most anything Alecia Whitaker publishes a try. I'll definitely be on the lookout for Wildflower book two! I'm both happy and sad for Bird's success, and I look forward to seeing where she goes and how she matures from here on out!

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For more of my reviews, visit my blog [Imaginary Reads](#).

Ellice says

Review originally posted here at [Paper Riot](#)

Unintentionally, 2014 has been the year of country music books for me, and I love it! I grew up on country, and it's still the main music that I listen to, so when I see a book that features it in some way, I snatch it up. Therefore when Gwendolyn Heasley (author of *Don't Call Me Baby*—check it out if you haven't!) recommended *Wildflower* by Alecia Whitaker to me, I immediately requested it on Edelweiss. It did not disappoint! I refer to this book as a “palate cleanser,” because it turned out to be just what I needed to get my reading mojo back after a minor mid-year reading lull. Bird's story was so much fun!

Now, I'm going to warn you that this book won't appeal to everybody. It starts out a little bit slow, and there isn't a lot of action, so if you're looking for a repeat of *Open Road Summer*, you won't find it here. However, that's exactly what I like about *Wildflower*. It's different from the other country music/musician books that I've read this year.

Wildflower initially focuses on the Barrett Family Band, a bluegrass band which consists of Bird Barrett, her mom and dad, and her brothers Dylan and Jacob. Bird is very talented, especially at playing the fiddle and writing songs, particularly songs about Adam Dean, a fellow country artist who tours the same circuits as the BFB. One night in Nashville, Tennessee, when her father is too sick to sing the lead, Bird takes over on vocals and ends up attracting the attention of a talent scout in the audience. By the end of the next day, Bird Barrett has a recording contract and the future of the Barrett Family Band is no longer certain.

The main thing that makes this book different from *Open Road Summer* and *Somebody Everybody Listens To* (the other two books I've read this year featuring country artists) is the strong family element. I love that

the Barretts remain a close family unit throughout the book, even when Bird's fame threatens to cause tension between her and her brothers, who have basically put their music careers on hold for her. It was so nice to read a book that didn't feature some major disaster that split the family up, or that caused best friends to break up, or that ruined the singer's career (although it's true that a record deal doesn't turn out to be quite what she expects...). Though some readers may find this boring, I found it to be refreshing and authentic.

The setting of Wildflower was another aspect that captured my attention because I live very close to Nashville, Tennessee, and it's one of my favorite places to visit. There were a lot of familiar places in this book, including the Bluebird Café, which is an amazing place to visit (seriously, if you're ever in Nashville, go to the Bluebird! You never know what famous face you might see there!). If you haven't been to Nashville, you might recognize the Bluebird from the TV show Nashville, since Deacon often plays there. :)

I've been very rambly in this review, so I hope I've conveyed to y'all how much fun Wildflower is. Not only does it feature Bird's relationships with her family, friends, and fellow artists, she also records her first album, writes an album full of original songs (that are really awesome!), and tries her hand at "acting" in her first music video (hello, sexy video guy with no shirt! Haha). Seriously, Wildflower is just FUN. I definitely recommend it, especially if you've just finished a book that was particularly emotional. You'll fly through the pages of Bird's story. No pun intended. Or maybe it was. ;)

Bird's story was so much fun. This book was a palate cleanser of sorts-- I needed it to help get my reading mojo back. WILDFLOWER won't appeal to everybody because it isn't a book with a lot of action, but I loved the characters & familiar settings that I recognized from my own trips to Nashville. Full review to come.

Jen Ryland says

Wildflower is the first installment in a squeaky-clean YA Cinderella trilogy about a sixteen year old who goes from traveling around in an RV with her musical family, Partridge-style, to being a bona fide country star.

I have nothing against nice or sweet, especially in real life. But Wildflower was like cotton candy topped with marshmallow fluff and sprinkles. Bird and her family are polite and kind. They pray before concerts. Bird's brothers are only a tiny bit jealous when an A & R guy comes to one of the family's performances but only wants to sign Bird, not the rest of the family. The Barretts are exactly the kind of people you'd want in your real life as neighbors and friends, but I guess I prefer fictional characters with a bit more complexity and edge.

Bird is also edge-free: pretty and talented, plus just the right amount of insecure. She's also lucky: one day she's a regular girl, the next she's a rising country star getting a full Cinderella makeover and hearing her song on the radio. When she accidentally does something wrong -- agrees to help out at a charity concert without realizing that she should have checked with her publicist or management company first -- it turns out that her mistake was pure marketing genius.

As I read, I kept waiting for some -- any!-- hint of tension or conflict to arise. The only character in the book who ever does anything that isn't nicer-than-nice is a so-called "mean blogger" (ahem...) who interviews Bird

and asks her about her younger brother's death years before, an event that precipitated the creation of the family band.

I love Cinderella stories as much as the next girl, but the original story of Cinderella DID have plenty of tension -- the villainous stepsisters and stepmother, that ticking clock, the lost shoe -- and I was feeling the need for some of that in this modern fairy tale. Even country music is grounded in angst and heartbreak...

I loved Alecia Whitaker's first book, *The Queen of Kentucky*. While *Wildflower* wasn't the best fit for me, it would make a great choice for tween readers or anyone who is feeling the need for a book that's sweet and upbeat.

Thanks to Poppy for providing me with an e-galley to review

Arlene says

Wildflower by Alecia Whitaker was a perfect addition to my summer reading line-up. I enjoyed Bird's story from the very beginning and journeying with her during her rise to fame was both rewarding and memorable. Definitely a great contemporary Young Adult novel that shouldn't be missed by fans of authors such as Sarah Dessen, Jennifer Echols and Leila Howland.

At the age of sixteen, Bird Barrett has enjoyed traveling with her family singing bluegrass at small honky-tonks all over Nashville. Her instrument of choice is her trusted Maybelle fiddle, and her position in the family line-up is back-up vocals to her dad. During a fateful night at the Station Inn, her father falls ill and Bird is asked to take lead vocals for their scheduled performance. That night, she's spotted by a talent agent and shortly thereafter signs a record contract with a newer music label. Life begins to take some sharp, drastic turns for this teen as she learns to manage a grueling schedule and demanding expectations from everyone around her. At a time when simply singing for a live audience is her passion and the boy that captured her heart is pulling away, Bird begins to wonder how much she has to sacrifice for this new life of hers.

Wildflower did an exceptional job of pulling in worthy themes into the novel to add depth and realism to the story. I appreciated learning about the physical, emotional and family strain fame brings to such a young star. Exhaustion from tabloid lies, long hours of songwriting, the stress of social media attention, and falling short of your family and friends' expectations can be tough for anyone, especially someone as young as Bird. Wow! What a huge burden to place on such young shoulders.

I appreciated how throughout the entire novel Bird just wanted to do what was right for everyone involved in her life. She consistently showed that she wanted to help everyone she cared about and not let them down. As quickly as she realized fame, I liked the fact that Bird remained somewhat grounded. She was an easy character to care for, and she won my heart immediately. I loved the family dynamics that played out in the novel as well as the meaningful friendships that were fostered. Truly a story full of honest emotion and depth.

Wildflower is a great novel that explores fame, growing up, and the heartache of first love. Great story, fantastic narration and heartfelt plot that pulled me in and kept me vested. Well done!

Joy N. Hensley says

A very fun read! Can't wait for Bird's next adventures!

Emy says

Meh

Christina (A Reader of Fictions) says

3.5 stars

Karolanne Johnson says

In the book, “Wildflower”, written by Alecia Whitaker the main character, Bird, faces some challenges that are very difficult for her to deal with. Bird gets discovered by a record label and has to decide between breaking up her family’s bluegrass band or become a recording artist. I did not enjoy how she acted once she was discovered. She seemed to act better than the rest of her family even though they were the reason that she was discovered. Also, she always acted as if everyone else’s worlds should revolve around her and her new singing career. I thought of her as a bratty teenager. I did not enjoy this book at all. The author did not make it easy to connect with her except with her relationship issues. The boy that she had always had a crush on told her because of her new career that they wouldn’t have time for each other. It was a very mean move on his part, but I did agree with him. She tried to make him change his schedule to fit into her’s which is not okay. Plus, there wasn’t really an ending which wasn’t cool. She just ended it without any information on what happened to Bird in the later years. I just did not like the way the author wrote this book; now I know not to read anymore like this book.

There were a few main characters in this story. Bird Barrett was a dynamic character. The rest of the Barrett family as well as Adam Dean were all static characters. Bird was the fiddle player in the background of the Barrett Family Band- B.F.B. She finally got her turn to sing lead singer in the band because of her father who had no voice because of being sick. To everyone’s surprise she was amazing. After that night Bird’s life changed for the better and for the worse. The rest of her family had to act as if they didn’t have a care in the world about only her receiving a record deal. Bird’s parents were obviously very happy about her achievements and all that she had become in that short amount of time. Her brothers on the other hand were happy and upset at the same time. Dylan put off heading to college to play in the family band and because of Bird the family band was over. While Jacob was just upset because there was nothing else for any of them to do. The whole family changed their entire lives just to go on the road and play in B.F.B. The family never had gotten over the fact that Bird was the only one that seemed to matter anymore. Bird’s longtime crush and Jacob’s best friend, Adam Dean, was a different story. He was super excited at first about Bird’s record deal, but once she became “famous” everything seemed to change. He didn’t treat her the same, even after they had kissed. Adam made it clear to Bird that she meant nothing to him which killed her; he did not seem to

care. Everybody's lives changed all because of Bird and she never seemed to care about the other people in her life. Bird came off as a very sweet girl in the beginning, but by the end to me she seemed kind of stuck up.

This story took place on the family's RV while they traveled the country singing bluegrass music. Once Bird had gotten discovered the family up and moved to Nashville, where they stayed. The story was written in present day around the year 2014.

I would recommend this book any teenage girl ages from thirteen to seventeen. The reading is very easy and for me it wasn't a very good book. The reason why I didn't like it was because I over analyzed the main character too much and thought of her actions as not being very family like. I also did not like that the author didn't give a good ending. Other than that the book was okay. I wouldn't recommend this book to any advanced reader because he/she would end up doing what I did, over analyzing the characters and events that took place.

Nasty Lady MJ says

To see full review [click here](#)

Note: This review is brought to you by Patty Beagle who only reads those books I feel it's bad about reviewing because it's like kicking a puppy.

Apparently, I have to review another sucky book.

I don't get why I never get to review good books. But MJ says I can only read kick the puppy worthy books. Books that are so bad, you almost feel bad about reviewing them poorly.

Whatever. If that's what I have to do, I'll do it.

his book involves country music.

I like country music because it's normally associated with barbecue, apple pie, and anything yummy (like chicken fried steak). It seems this book forgets how yummy country music can be and it just made me want to go to Patty sleepy sleep time.

I mean, the plot is pretty simple. Which isn't exactly a bad thing if the book had more to offer. I like simplicity. But the book lacked spunk, really anything out of the ordinary. You had a Taylor Swift wannabe who wanted to become a star. And one snap and then she had it.

And everyone praised her. They were like.

Bird you sound good.

Bird you're pretty.

Bird you're going to be the next Miley Cyrus-though I don't think anyone in their right mind should want to be Miley Cyrus. She's forever compromised my view of stuffed animals. And that's sad because I love my

Ricky Raccoon.

Screw you, Miley.

But back to Bird, no struggle to fame. It was easy peasey. Just play in your family van traveling round the country and then get a record deal.

It's odd her family can make so much money to play full time, even though they have no record deal. MJ's dad used to belong to multiple bands, but that didn't mean that they traveled round the country in the RV. And he still had to work his day job so that his family could eat.

You know, it's sad when a Beagle notices the lack of logic a book has.

Same with the whole playing the fiddle versus a guitar thing. I mean, I know that my human has spent years perfecting one instrument. You can't simply pick up another instrument and be Taylor Swift.

Well, Bird can.

And she's so perfect. As I was told for three hundred pages.

But not as perfect as me.
