



Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings (Volume 1 and 2)

By Steve Sullivan

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From John Philip Sousa to Green Day, from Scott Joplin to Kanye West, from Stephen Foster to Coldplay, *The Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings, Volumes 1 and 2* covers the vast scope of its subject with virtually unprecedented breadth and depth. Approximately 1,000 key song recordings from 1889 to the present are explored in full, unveiling the stories behind the songs, the recordings, the performers, and the songwriters.

Beginning the journey in the era of Victorian parlor balladry, brass bands, and ragtime with the advent of the record industry, readers witness the birth of the blues and the dawn of jazz in the 1910s and the emergence of country music on record and the shift from acoustic to electrical recording in the 1920s. The odyssey continues through the Swing Era of the 1930s; rhythm & blues, bluegrass, and bebop in the 1940s; the rock & roll revolution of the 1950s; modern soul, the British invasion, and the folk-rock movement of the 1960s; and finally into the modern era through the musical streams of disco, punk, grunge, hip-hop, and contemporary dance-pop. Sullivan, however, also takes critical detours by extending the coverage to genres neglected in pop music histories, from ethnic and world music, the gospel recording of both black and white artists, and lesser-known traditional folk tunes that reach back hundreds of years.

This book is ideal for anyone who truly loves popular music in all of its glorious variety, and anyone wishing to learn more about the roots of virtually all the music we hear today. Popular music fans, as well as scholars of recording history and technology and students of the intersections between music and cultural history will all find this book to be informative and interesting.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Each year, radio stations of all types bring together their best-of-the-year songs, albums, artists, and so on, and present them in marathon programs. Going far beyond the focus of a single year, author Sullivan puts forward, essentially, a best-of-the-best list of great songs in this new two-volume set. Sullivan consulted multiple sources, including published greatest-hits lists for specific styles and genres, song inductees from various musical halls of fame, and articles and books offering top song choices of music-industry writers and performers. Sullivan's compilation is not simply a list of popular songs, as he states in the introduction: Instead, my intent is to provide a journey through all eras and genres of popular music over the past 120-plus years. Few readers would have qualms about the inclusion of the majority, if not all, of these songs. Some might decry the inclusion or exclusion of specific titles in a work that, because of the author's editorial eye, cannot possibly contain every recorded hit song. Sullivan breaks up the selections into 10 playlists of 100 songs each. The lists are loosely connected by theme, although the songs in each cover many genres and span roughly a century. Each entry is exceptionally detailed with historical backstories, quotes from artists and authors, and Sullivan's own fresh take on the song's importance. Most entries are at least several paragraphs long, and many are quite lengthy. For example, Scott Joplin's *Maple Leaf Rag* and the Beatles' *A Day in the Life* each receive a full four columns (two pages), providing much more detail than the average album-liner notes. A smattering of black-and-white photographs and a 20-page bibliography add value to the text. Sullivan admirably accomplishes his goal of bringing together important pieces of our musical past into a form that lets readers learn historical details about these songs and reminisce about their meaning in their own lives. Highly recommended for most academic and public libraries. --Steven York

Review

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Sullivan explores the diversity of popular music in one- to three-page entries covering some 1,000 recordings from 1889 to 2012. Selections are chosen from well-known lists such as those of the Grammy Hall of Fame,

National Recording Registry, *Rolling Stone*, and the top 100 hits from *Joel Whitburn's Pop Memories, 1890-1954* (1986)—the final example a sometimes maligned (for misinformation) publication ghostwritten by Sullivan. This well-documented encyclopedia draws on many respected sources, including *Music Trades*, which is particularly pertinent for earlier works. Popular music herein includes rock, soul, country, jazz, blues, gospel, and ethnic music. Entries are chronological within ten 'playlists,' providing charting/list information, performer, writer, recording specifics, and documented history and commentary covering the song and the creators and performers. . . . The indexes are superb. For breadth of coverage and currency, this set (also available electronically through ProQuest and EBSCO) is a useful, superior complement to David Ewen's *American Popular Songs*. Summing Up: Highly recommended. Lower-division undergraduates through researchers/faculty; general readers. (*CHOICE*)

Lists of popular song recordings and hit books abound, covering various genres and time periods. Rarer are sources that bring these recordings together into one 'great list,' and which also treat readers to a musical journey with an in-depth examination of each song—from little-known root influences to interesting claims to fame, alternate recordings, and other trivia. Sullivan's new two-volume set covers all popular genres, from blues and jazz to country and hip-hop—even world music—and spans all recorded time periods, from 1889 to the present. Interestingly, it presents songs based not only on their established greatness in various compiled lists, but also on the quality of the recordings themselves. . . . Heavily footnoted, Sullivan's enjoyable, worthwhile reference work includes an extensive bibliography including biographical sources and discographies. Separate title and subject/name indexes are included. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

What Sullivan has given us here is not a best-of list, but rather 10 separate road maps to genres and times—an experience to be had through listening, not a purely introspective reflection of taste geared toward shaping the listener's preferences. With the detailed history of each song, he has documented histories and experiences from disparate sources and provided a new reference work to guide us in answering detailed questions about over 1,000 significant recordings across a wide variety of genres. The *Encyclopedia of Popular Song Recordings* will serve both as a destination and as a launching pad for further research, and should be a welcome addition to any library whose patrons are interested in popular music. (*Music Reference Services Quarterly*)

Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings is a good supplementary title for any academic or public library that serves interests in popular music. (*Reference and User Services Quarterly*)

There is a generous bibliography, ideal for the nerd, the cultural historian (especially of American popular songs), the resources librarian, anyone connected with the popular music industry and the general reader. The bibliography is divided up into sections like all-time great records, American pop charts, popular music 1800s 1940s, country music, ethnic and world music (this includes calypso and Cuban, klezmer/traditional Jewish music and Latin American and reggae), gospel/spirituals, jazz and ragtime, movie music, rhythm & blues, Tin Pan Alley and Broadway and rock. Summing up: at the price good value from Scarecrow (who publish a lot on popular and classical music, check out their website); likely purchasers are reference libraries, specialist libraries and specialists. Looking back will remain strong: any good researcher will try to keep up with change. (*Reference Reviews*)

The *Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recording* really is encyclopedic and covers more genre territory than any work I ever thought I'd see. Few, if any, other writers could treat Atilla the Hun, Charlie Parker, Sarah Vaughan, the Stanley Brothers, Ada Jones and the Dixie Hummingbirds in equal measure. What makes the book most interesting to browse is how less familiar material is chronicled next to a sought-for entry and seeing less familiar styles given comparable weight to best sellers, which will have an effect on the way our heirs will understand and evaluate our music. (Dick Spottswood)

About the Author

Steve Sullivan is editor and owner of LDI Publications (starting as a reporter in 1985, becoming managing editor in 1989, and its owner since 1999), which publishes the *Resort Development Law Reporter* and the *Digest of State Resort Development Regulations*, and also serves as associate editor of the *D.C. Real Estate Reporter*. Prior to this, he was a freelance writer for Network News, with individual articles placed with various newspapers around the country including the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. The seeds of this book were planted from 1983-86 when he researched and ghost-wrote *Pop Memories 1890-1954: The History of American Popular Music* (cover author and editor Joel Whitburn contracted Sullivan under his Record Research, Inc.). He is the author of *Va Va Voom; Bombshells: Glamour Girls of a Lifetime*; and *Glamour Girls: The Illustrated Encyclopedia*, and also wrote and edited the magazine *Glamour Girls Then and Now* from 1994-2002. Sullivan has provided secondary material for some of Joel Whitburn's *Billboard*-chart books after 1986, most notably editions of the *Pop Annual*, as well as fresh research data for a contemplated new edition of *Pop Memories*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Priscilla McCreary:

Reading a book tends to be new life style with this era globalization. With looking at you can get a lot of information that could give you benefit in your life. Using book everyone in this world can share their idea. Guides can also inspire a lot of people. Lots of author can inspire their very own reader with their story or maybe their experience. Not only the story that share in the textbooks. But also they write about the ability about something that you need instance. How to get the good score toefl, or how to teach children, there are many kinds of book that you can get now. The authors on earth always try to improve their proficiency in writing, they also doing some exploration before they write on their book. One of them is this Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings (Volume 1 and 2).

Tara Scribner:

The reason why? Because this Encyclopedia of Great Popular Song Recordings (Volume 1 and 2) is an unordinary book that the inside of the book waiting for you to snap this but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning totally. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this anymore or you going to regret it. This phenomenal book will give you a lot of advantages than the other book get such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking means. So , still want to delay having that book? If I were being you I will go to the e-book store hurriedly.

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