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The New Rolling Stone Record Guide Ed. Dave Marsh with John Swenson ===== The second edition of The New Rolling Stone Record Guide has been updated and revised, offering a fresh perspective on over 12,000 albums currently available. According to editor Dave Marsh, the new version features "thousands of fresh entries" and reevaluates the original's assessments in some cases, resulting in upgraded or downgraded ratings. This guide is essential for both neophyte rock fans with limited budgets and hard-core enthusiasts seeking evaluations of overlooked performers. The guide reviews a diverse range of genres, including country & western, mainstream pop, blues, folk, and gospel, as well as rock-related selections of older figures from rhythm & blues. It also lists foreign labels now available on the American market for the first time. The revised edition maintains the spirit of Rolling Stone magazine, offering witty, opinionated, and knowledgeable assessments. The book provides critical analysis of new albums from 1978 to 1981, written by John Swenson, alongside unchanged descriptions of Frank Zappa's catalog from 1966-1978. The rating system remains consistent, with five stars for "indispensable" records, one star for "poor," and a bullet or no-star rating for less favorable entries. Thirty-five years after its initial publication, some fans may still disagree with the guide's assessments, particularly regarding albums by AC/DC and certain cult favorites. However, the revised edition remains a valuable resource for music enthusiasts seeking informed opinions on a wide range of records. I recently looked through my collection of Rolling Stone Record Guide albums, including some that were deemed "worthless" by the publication's critics. The guide's 1979 edition featured only four albums in my possession that received a no-star rating, suggesting that their incompleteness might be more significant than any personal taste discrepancy. ===== Looking forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow, let me tell you about my experience with two albums that got a bad rating. The Incredible String Band's U is one of them, and I don't understand why it's so low-rated. Many critics think their best albums are 5000 Spirits or The Layers of the Onion and The Hangman's Beautiful Daughter, which makes sense since they took a hit after joining Scientology. However, my opinion is that U isn't that bad. In fact, it's quite good. Another album that deserves criticism is Dan Hicks's 1969 debut Original Recordings. This album has some of his most famous songs like "How Can I Miss You When You Won't Go Away?" and "I Scare Myself." But what if the rating was given by someone who praises backup singers Maryann Price and Naomi Eisenberg? They weren't on Original Recordings, but their presence is felt in the album. Context might be key to a low rating. Ariel Swartley gave it a bad mark, while Dan Hicks's pre-Hot Licks band the Charlatans recorded a different version of "How Can I Miss You When You Won't Go Away?" years later. Despite its rough edges, Original Recordings is an enjoyable and twisted country swing record that feels like an underproduced demo. Another album that got a bad rating is the Rolling Stones's Metamorphosis from 1975. It's a collection of 1960s outtakes not assembled by the band. I think it's essential Stones history, but some fans might disagree. The album has one ugly cover, which is surprising for a major rock group. Yet, it's full of interesting tracks like "If You Let Me" and "Downtown Suzie," which showcase Bill Wyman's compositional skills. However, the mid-1960s demos are lacking in certain areas. Many songs were recorded with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, but others feature only one or two band members. Additionally, these early compositions often have wimpy pop arrangements that don't compare to their own original works like "Satisfaction." The US version of this album was cut off to include two less prominent songs from the UK version, making it feel like a rip-off even as an unofficial release. ===== The 1970 film Performance, in which Mick Jagger starred, featured The Rolling Stones' last solo single. Unfortunately, some annotators displayed shabby annotation devoid of detail. As a final insult, the US version was cut off to include two songs that appeared on the UK version, cementing the feeling it was something of a ripoff. The album would be valuable as an unofficial release because of its insights into little-known corners of the early Stones' career. However, even in this light, it does not deserve a low rating. Rolling Stone Magazine's Album Guides: A Love-Hate Relationship with a Critical Eye ===== I have always had a complicated relationship with Rolling Stone's album guides, which I remember to be bible-like in my youth, introducing me to a lot of good music but also labeling popular music as crap. The magazine's reviewers often made high-minded, snide remarks about music that didn't fit their mold. Over time, I have become more comfortable with myself and my musical tastes, allowing me to coexist with a wide range of artists on my iPod, from the Velvet Underground to Barry Manilow. While Rolling Stone's guides were once a reliable source for Western rock music up until 1979, they can be opinionated and critical at times. A great example of this is the criticism levied against lesser-known bands, with some albums being dismissed as "third-rate pop-rock" or even more scathing put-downs. However, these guides also provide valuable historical context and insights into the music of a bygone era. Despite their flaws, Rolling Stone's album guides remain a valuable resource for those looking to explore new sounds and genres. The series has been updated over the years, but some editions still lack certain artists or albums, making them a nostalgic reminder of the past. For me, revisiting these guides is like re-exploring old friends - it brings back memories and encourages me to dig deeper into music that might have otherwise slipped my attention. The Rolling Stone Record Guide 1979: A Comprehensive Review System ===== This first edition of The Rolling Stone Album Guide, published in 1979, marked a significant milestone in the development of rock music criticism. Edited by Dave Marsh and John Swenson, with contributions from 34 other music critics, this guide revolutionized the way people approached album reviews. The book is divided into sections based on musical genres, allowing readers to explore various styles within their preferred categories. Artists are listed alphabetically within each genre, while albums are also listed in alphabetical order by artist. Dave Marsh drew inspiration from earlier works such as Leonard Maltin's TV Movies and Robert Christgau's review column in the Village Voice. He relied on raw sources like Phonolog and Schwann's Records & Tape Guide for information. Notable features of this edition include: * Black-and-white photographs of albums with five-star reviews, listed together in a special section. * Reviews for comedy artists, including Lenny Bruce, Lord Buckley, and Richard Pryor. * A catch-all section "Rock, Soul, Country and Pop" that includes genres like folk, bluegrass, funk, reggae, and comedy. * Exclusion of traditional pop performers, with exceptions made for Frank Sinatra and Nat King Cole. * Inclusion of difficult-to-classify artists who might now be considered as world music. Rolling Stone's basic library of rock, covering over 3,500 albums, provides a foundation for readers to dive into and discover new music. A selection of "5 star" albums from this initial guide have been highlighted in red below. # Mainly due to Dave Marsh's hatred of the Doors and Yes! The following are all the "5 star" albums from the rock and pop section of the first guide that didn't get included in the second. ## Collins, Judy - Who Knows Where the Time Goes ## Edmunds, Dave & Love Sculpture - the Classic Tracks 1968-72 ## Four Tops - Anthology ## Haggard, Merle - Best of the Best ## Holly, Buddy - Buddy Holly ## Holly, Buddy - Legend ## Jordan, Louis - Greatest Hits ## Reed, Lou - Rock 'n' Roll Animal ## Sinatra, Frank - What is This Thing Called Love? (twinned with Night we Called it a Day? aka Where Are You) [1970, Capitol] ## Wagoner, Porter - Best of # Complete list of albums that received a 5-star rating in the blues section of the guide. Most of these are included in the second guide. ## Carter, Bo - Greatest Hits 1930-40 ## Hooker, John Lee - Greatest Hits of (Kent) ## Howlin' Wolf - Evil ## House, Son - Son House (Arhoolie - Library of Congress recs) ## Jacobs, Little Walter - Boss Blues Harmonica (Chess) ## Jacobs, Little Walter - Little Walter (Chess) ## James, Skip - Devil Got My Woman ## Johnson, Robert - King of the Delta Blues Singers ## Johnson, Robert - King of the Delta Blues Singers Vol 2 ## King, BB - Live (Kent) ## King, BB - Live at the Regal ## King, BB - Live in Cook County Jail ## King, BB - Back in the Alley ## King, BB - From the Beginning ## King, BB - On Stage (Kent) ## King, BB - Pure Soul ## King, BB - Underground Blues ## Muddy Waters - McKinley Morganfield (Chess) ## Muddy Waters - Sail On ## Robinson, Fenton - I Hear Some Blues Downstairs ## Robinson, Fenton - Somebody Loan Me a Dime ## Rush, Otis - Right Place, Wrong Time ## Smith, Bessie - Any Woman's Blues ## Smith, Bessie - Empty Bed Blues ## Smith, Bessie - Nobody's Blues But Mine ## Smith, Bessie - the Empress ## Walker, T-Bone - T-Bone Walker (Blue Note) ## Wells, Junior - Hoodoo Man Blues ## Williamson, Sonny Boy - This is My Story (Chess) # Complete list of albums that received a 5-star rating in the jazz section of the guide. Hardly any of these are included in the second and third guides, as the first edition was the only one to have a separate jazz section. ## A Adderley, Cannonball - Mercy, Mercy, Mercy ## Armstrong, Louis - Genius of Vol 1 (CBS) ## Armstrong, Louis - Louis Armstrong Vol 3 (CBS French import) ## Armstrong, Louis - Louis Armstrong Vol 4 (CBS French import) ## Armstrong, Louis - & Earl Hines 1928 (Smithsonian mail order only) ## Armstrong, Louis - & King Oliver (Milestone) ## Armstrong, Louis - July 4, 1900 - July 6, 1971 (RCA) ## Armstrong, Louis - Sidney Bechet with the Clarence Williams Blue Five ## Armstrong, Louis - Story: Vols 1-4 (CBS) ## Armstrong, Louis - Young... ## Art Ensemble of Chicago - with Fontella Bass ## Art Ensemble of Chicago - les Stances à Sophie ## Art Ensemble of Chicago - People in Sorrow ## Ayler, Albert - New Wave in Jazz ## Ayler, Albert - Vibrations ## Ayler, Albert - Witches & Devils ## B Basie, Count - Best of (MCA) ## Basie, Count - at the Savoy Ballroom ## Basie, Count - Good Morning Blues ## Basie, Count - Super Chief ## Bechet, Sidney - Jazz Classics Vol 1 (Blue Note) ## Bechet, Sidney - Jazz Classics Vol 2 (Blue Note) ## Bechet, Sidney - Master Musician (RCA) ## Benson, George - It's Uptown ## Blakey, Art - A Night at Birdland with the AB Quintet Vol 1 ## Blakey, Art - A Night at Birdland with the AB Quintet Vol 2 ## Blakey, Art - Jazz Messengers at the Café Bohemia Vol 2 ## Blakey, Art - Jazz Messengers with Thelonious Monk ===== Gates of Jazz: A World Tour Through the 1970s Avant-Garde in the United States, particularly in cities like New York and Paris. The scene was characterized by experimentation, pushing the boundaries of traditional music. This was the era of John Coltrane, known for his unique sound and spiritual explorations, as well as Anthony Braxton, who pioneered a new style of jazz that incorporated elements of classical music and avant-garde techniques. Coltrane's music was deeply influenced by his spirituality, which led him to explore themes of meditation and self-discovery. His album "A Love Supreme" is considered one of the greatest jazz albums of all time, with its intricate melodies and introspective lyrics. Meanwhile, Anthony Braxton was also exploring new sounds, incorporating elements of classical music into his work. His compositions were characterized by complexity and nuance, often featuring extended instrumental passages and improvisational sections. Other notable figures from this era include Carla Bley, who created a distinctive sound that blended jazz with classical and rock influences; Betty Carter, whose unique voice and style made her a standout in the jazz world; and Ornette Coleman, who revolutionized jazz with his free-form approach to improvisation. The 1970s also saw the rise of other influential figures such as Clifford Brown, Gary Burton, Don Cherry, Charlie Christian, Chick Corea, and Miles Davis, among many others. Their music continues to inspire new generations of jazz musicians and fans alike. Their contributions to the world of jazz not only expanded its boundaries but also enriched our understanding of this powerful and expressive art form. ===== Looking at this extensive discography of jazz greats and collaborators, one can't help but feel a sense of awe at the sheer scope of musical exploration. From Charlie Haden to Thelonious Monk, Herbie Hancock to Sonny Rollins, and Billie Holiday to John Coltrane, each artist has left an indelible mark on the genre. Hancock's albums - Empyrean Isles, Maiden Voyage, Quintet, V.S.O.P., and others - showcase his mastery of jazz harmony and melody. Meanwhile, Hawkins' collaborations with Duke Ellington and Coleman Hawkins demonstrate a deep understanding of big band music. Holiday's stories - God Bless the Child, Lady Day, Story Vol 1-3 - offer a glimpse into her unique voice and style. Other notable artists include Dave Holland, Freddie Hubbard, Keith Jarrett, James P. Johnson, Elvin Jones, Oliver Lake, Jackie McLean, Charles Mingus, Roscoe Mitchell, Modern Jazz Quartet, Thelonious Monk, Wes Montgomery, Lee Morgan, Jelly Roll Morton, Theodore Navaro, Charles Parker, Earl Powell, Dewey Redman, Max Roach, Sonny Rollins, George Russell, and many others. These musicians have not only pushed the boundaries of jazz but also influenced generations of musicians to come. Saxophonists of the Modern Era ===== Charles Tolliver Live at Slugg's Vol. 1 McCoy Tyner Enlightenment Art Tatum God is in the House Shorter, Wayne - Native Dancer Silver, Horace - Blowin' The Blues Away Shepp, Archie - Four for Trane

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