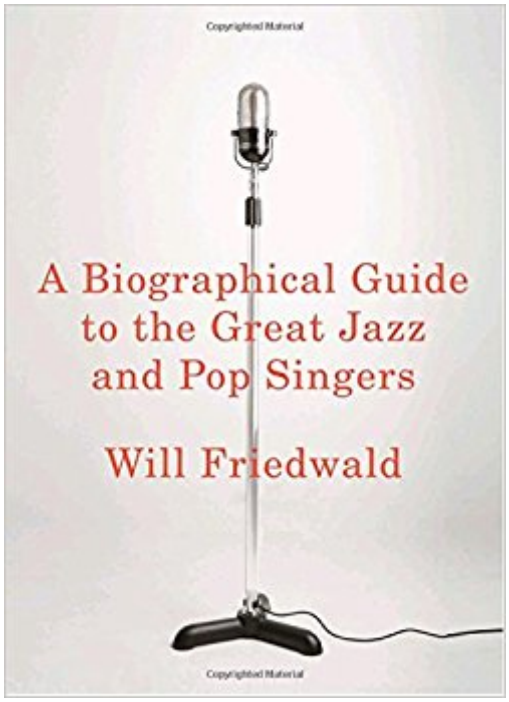
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A Biographical Guide To The Great Jazz And Pop Singers



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Synopsis

Will FriedwaldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s illuminating, opinionated essaysÃ¢â ¬â •provocative, funny, and personalÃ¢â ¬â •on the lives and careers of more than three hundred singers anatomize the work of the most important jazz and popular performers of the twentieth century. From giants like Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Frank Sinatra, and Judy Garland to lesser-known artists like Jeri Southern and Joe Mooney, they have created a body of work that continues to please and inspire. Here is the most extensive biographical and critical survey of these singers ever written, as well as an essential guide to the Great American Songbook and those who shaped the way it has been sung.Ã Â The music crosses from jazz to pop and back again, from the songs of Irving Berlin and W. C. Handy through Stephen Sondheim and beyond, bringing together straightforward jazz and pop singers (Billie Holiday, Perry Como); hybrid artists who moved among genres and combined them (Peggy Lee, Mel TormÃƒÂ©); the leading men and women of Broadway and Hollywood (Ethel Merman, Al Jolson); yesterdayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s vaudeville and radio stars (Sophie Tucker, Eddie Cantor); and todayÃ¢â ¬â„¢s cabaret artists and hit-makers (Diana Krall, Michael BublÃƒÂ©). Friedwald has also written extended pieces on the most representative artists of five significant genres that lie outside the songbook: Bessie Smith (blues), Mahalia Jackson (gospel), Hank Williams (country and western), Elvis Presley (rock Ã¢â ¬â„¢nÃ¢â ¬â„¢ roll), and Bob Dylan (folk-rock).Ã Â Friedwald reconsiders the personal stories and professional successes and failures of all these artists, their songs, and their performances, appraising both the singers and their music by balancing his opinions with those of fellow musicians, listeners, and critics. Ã Â This magisterial reference bookÃ¢â ¬â •ten years in the makingÃ¢â ¬â •will delight and inform anyone with a passion for the iconic music of America, which continues to resonate throughout our popular culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Starred Review. In this passionately opinionated encyclopedia of the old-school virtuosos of the American songbook, music writer Friedwald (Sinatra!) celebrates 200-odd performers of jazz and pop standards, from the mid-20th-century titans--Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, Ella Fitzgerald, Frank Sinatra--to latter-day acolytes like Diana Krall and Harry Connick Jr., with a raft of unjustly obscure singers in between. (Forget the Andrews Sisters--get a load of the Boswell Sisters!) Friedwald is all about the music; he primly shies away from his subjects' scandal-prone personal lives, but accords each a substantial career retrospective, selected discography and wonderfully pithy interpretive essay. His tastes are wide-ranging and idiosyncratic: he plumbs the artistry of Jimmy Durante's and Shirley Temple's novelty voices, decries the bombastic narcissism of "sacred monster" Barbra Streisand--"I remain completely unconvinced that she's a person who needs people"--and considers perky Doris Day's pop gems "the most erotic vocalizing you'll ever hear." However unconventional, his judgments are usually spot-on, as in his compelling reassessment of Elvis as the last great Crosbyesque crooner. Friedwald's exuberant medley is that rarest of things: music criticism that actually makes you sit up and listen. (Nov. 2) (c) Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ã¢â ¬Å“Top Five Books of the Year 2010: Friedwald chronicles the Great American Songbook, its creators, and its interpretersÃ¢â ¬â •a body of work that stands at the apogee of this nationÃ¢â ¬â„¢s civilization. Quirky, opinionated, shaped by exquisite taste and judgment, this feat of musical and cultural criticism offers an exuberant glimpse into the American character.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Benjamin Schwarz, The AtlanticÃ¢â ¬Å“A perfect holiday gift . . . An authoritative, comprehensive and oft-amusing guidebook that leads readers through the lives and recordings of hundreds of singers, from Louis Armstrong to Hank Williams.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street JournalÃ Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Incisive and useful . . . In this mammoth volume, jazz critic Will Friedwald does for jazz and pop vocalists what David Thomson has done so brilliantly in his New Biographical Dictionary of Film. . . . The author also acts as a consumer guide, steering the reader toward particular songs or albums. . . . Vastly entertaining.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Dennis Drabelle, The Washington PostÃ Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“In this passionately opinionated encyclopedia of the old-school virtuosos of the American songbook, music writer Friedwald celebrates 200-odd performers of jazz

and pop standards, from the mid-20th-century titans to latter-day acolytes, with a raft of unjustly obscure singers in between. . . . [Friedwald] accords each a substantial career retrospective, selected discography and wonderfully pithy interpretive essay. His tastes are wide-ranging and idiosyncratic . . . However unconventional, his judgments are usually spot-on . . . FriedwaldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s exuberant medley is that rarest of things: music criticism that actually makes you sit up and listen.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers Weekly (starred review)Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A fun reference book to dive into, get lost inÃ¢â ¬â •and use to add more songs and singers to your collection. . . . When it comes to the Great American Songbook, Will Friedwald is the keeper of the flame. HeÃ¢â ¬â„¢s written some of the best books on popular song of the past quarter-century, from his engaging Jazz Singing to . . . his Sinatra! The Song is You [which] is one of the best studies of a singerÃ¢â ¬â„¢s craft ever written. With A Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers, Friedwald gave himself a daunting task: put together essays on every singer he can who made a career singing those great songs. Ã¢â ¬ËœEveryÃ¢â ¬â„¢ is a lot, but Friedwald doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t miss too many, from the early 20th century to the cabaret singers of the post-swing revival. The essaysÃ¢â ¬â •more than 200 in all, including pieces on multiple artistsÃ¢â ¬â •are part biography, part career overview, focusing on the singersÃ¢â ¬â„¢ highs and lows while tossing in bits of fun trivia.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Chris Foran, Milwaukee Journal SentinelÃ Â Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“I think Will FriedwaldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers will be of real interest to anyone who cares about the music.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Hugh Hefner, editor-in-chief of Playboy Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“If there were such a volume as the Great American Songbook, this book should be right next to it on your shelf.Ã Â It is truly the definitive work on those who sing and swing those songs.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Alan Bergman, Grammy and Academy AwardÃ¢â ¬â œwinning songwriterÃ¢â ¬Å“Will Friedwald has created an instant classic reference tome with his Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers, the wealth of information and the breadth of knowledge being quite staggering. It is written without academic posturing but with wit and warmth and accessibility, covering in fascinating detail the careers of everyone from Jolson and Sinatra, of course, to Lee Wiley, Noel Coward and Marlene Dietrich; from Armstrong to Doris Day, and everyone in between. It will surely be considered an essential text.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Peter BogdanovichÃ¢â ¬Å“This extensive work is essential and comprehensive. In opinionated, sometimes witty essays, Friedwald sorts out the lives and careers of more than three hundred singers, some of the greatest vocalists of the twentieth century including such giants as Ella Fitzgerald, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, and Bessie Smith. There are also dozens of unexpected inclusions. For example, Martha Raye merits almost seven pages and her entry helps dusts off her

historical reputation as not just a zany character but rather an incredibly gifted and complex artist. . . . Friedwald spent ten years researching this magisterial reference book and it is certain to delight and inform anyone with a passion for the iconic music of America.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Larry Cox, Tucson Citizen Stardust MelodiesÃ¢â ¬Å“The closest thing we have to a standard text on American pop from the first half of the twentieth century . . . Friedwald is a deeply attentive and emotionally attuned listener. His descriptions of performances are so precise and detailed that Stardust Melodies could serve as a primer for how to listen to prerock music.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Book ReviewÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Excellent . . . [With] good humor and lively anecdotes, Friedwald brings an open mind to the kaleidoscope of musical stylings that these songs have been treated (or subjected) to.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The Wall Street JournalÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“FriedwaldÃ¢â ¬â„¢s writing, both erudite and funny, complements the standards he so clearly loves, like a melody set to the perfect lyric.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Entertainment Weekly, Ã¢â ¬Å“AÃ¢â ¬Â•Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Informative and witty . . . So full of good stuff that I kept being distracted and forgetting what I was looking for.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Chicago TribuneÃ Â Sinatra! The Song Is YouÃ¢â ¬Å“The most important book published about Frank Sinatra to date.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Book ReviewÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Indispensable . . . A man with unexcelled knowledge of American popular song, Friedwald looks intensively at [SinatraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s] career . . . Sinatra! hits a welcome high note . . . Excellent.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Cleveland Plain DealerÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Blithe, respectful, snappy, and smart, Friedwald catches the creative fire of the singer . . . This is the best book ever written about SinatraÃ¢â ¬â„¢s deepest secret: his craft.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Time

This book is patterned after David Thomson's Biographical Dictionary of Film. The font and page layout is a dead ringer for the Thomson book. This proves to be a perfect model for Friedwald, a jazz journalist, and author of numerous liner notes for cds. He excels at the short essay. Whereas his 1990 book covering much the same ground, Jazz Singing, suffered from serious organization problems, here we are given focussed entries on jazz and pop singers from Jolson and Gene Austin to Peter Cincotti and Ann Callaway. In general, Friedwald's opinions have mellowed somewhat, and are presented in a more balanced, less autocratic manner. He still champions (and for heaven's sake, why not?) Louis Armstrong, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Mel Torme, Doris Day, Nat King Cole, Rosemary Clooney, and Tony Bennett, but without the abrasive denigration of rival singers and differently minded pundits that marked his earlier work. He has also found room in his heart for artists such as Buddy Greco and Barbara Lea, mentioned only in passing in Jazz Singing, and even Bob Dylan, the subject of a loving entry toward the end of the book. As Friedwald notes, he is

probably among the few people around who have been listening to Mel Torme for forty years and Bob Dylan for a mere five.Though light on the biography, like Thomson before him, the entries contain usefully detailed accounts of the performing and recording careers of well over 200 singers. The book is chock full of invitations to listening pleasure. Friedwald is bound to create music collectors, or reinspire established collectors. His luscious descriptions of rare items from the catalogues of Tony Bennett, Lee Wiley, and Doris Day, to name but a few, will kick off some interesting and probably costly treasure hunts. Even if Friedwald only convinces you to get a couple of readily available cds, he will have improved your ear--and one good thing leads to another.A Biographical Guide to the Great Jazz and Pop Singers opens up the history of American popular music in a concise and yet engaging fashion. If you only have time for one book on the subject, this is the indispensable one. Not cheap, but worth every penny. It is to be hoped that the book, again like Thomson's, will be periodically updated. I am already wondering what Friedwald thinks of the new Doris Day release, My Heart.

Will Friedwald's Encyclopedia is beyond belief. This book is filled with facts and information on each of the singers, yet is humorous and insightful. I can't begin to grasp the hours Mr. Friedwald spent on research on the biographies of each subject, and the hours spent listening to the musical output of each subject. It is an Encyclopedia that can be read as one would a novel, full of humor and "inside" puns and jokes that will delight the jazz and pop music lover. (Full disclosure: I have never met Mr. Friedwald, but have seen him at many Jazz venues here in New York. It seems that he goes out as much for pleasure as he does for his business of writing).I am reading this book with joy. I am only up to the D's, (Matt Dennis) and I just can't put it down. My leisure reading has been set aside as I devour this book. I delight in his humor, his turn of phrase, and the research in each biography. One would think in a work this comprehensive that he had countless contributors, but this work is filled with his personal feelings and personal opinions, all provocative.I have read Mr.Friedwald's book on Frank Sinatra's music and recording, which is the best on the subject, as well as his many CD liner notes. His extensive liner notes on the Mosaic Records' reissue of Mildred Bailey's music is exemplary.The book is over 800 pages in length, in small font. If the font was "normal" this would be a two volume work. All fans of the music must buy this book. If you do I know you will get as much pleasure as I have. (I recently bought it as a birthday gift for a friend and he loves it and raves about it as much as I have).Buy This Book.

For anyone who doesn't just enjoy popular music, but who likes to know how we came to be

listening to the music we have now, this book is a must. Will Friedwald has extensively researched jazz and popular music singers of the 20th century (USA) and produced a book that is intelligently written and extensive. Of course, in a volume such as this, there will always be singers who a reader might believe should have been included, but saying that does not in any way reduce the value of this work. Considering that Mr. Friedwald was not alive when many of these singers made their names his research must have been a massive learning experience for him and he has put the results of his work on the page without undue criticism. He has written about each artist from the viewpoint of the times in which they lived an analised (successfully) how they achieved their popularity.It is a wonderful reference work but is also a great read!

You might not agree with the author's favorite picks, but his knowledge on the subject of jazz/pop singers is monumental. Don't think there's a better qualified individual to write such a book. I grew up in the 70s, was a fan of punk, and later on alternative music. This wonderful book sure is helping me explore the jazz and pop singers from before my time. It's about all I care to listen to anymore! Julie London, Frank Sinatra, Dinah Washington, Sarah Vaughn, Dean Martin, etc. They're all here. This book's a keeper. I'll be getting much use out of this book for years to come. It belongs in every music library!I read a couple hundred books every year. If not more than that. This book is my favorite from 2010. It's a masterpiece.

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