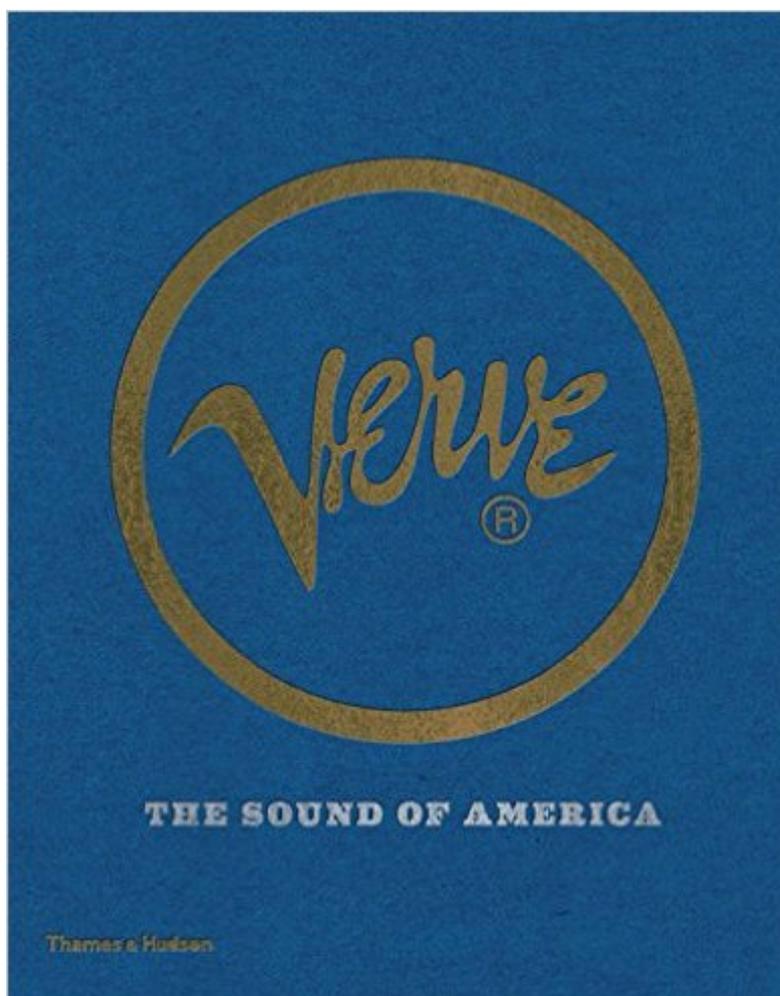


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Verve: The Sound Of America



Synopsis

The entire story of jazz—from its earliest days in New Orleans to the 1970s and beyond—told through archival material from Verve, the genre's most important label. Verve signed practically every major jazz artist of the 1950s and 1960s and is home to some of the greatest music ever recorded. Charlie Parker, Count Basie, Billie Holiday, Dizzy Gillespie, Oscar Peterson, and Ella Fitzgerald all released records through Verve. This superb new volume presents some of the rarest records and unseen ephemera from the label that helped define the world of jazz. Hundreds of the best examples of iconic seven-inch, ten-inch, and twelve-inch records appear, along with publicity reports, news clippings, ledger books, telegrams, and contracts. The ultimate music guide, the book includes features on key artists as well as infographics and timelines that reveal the connections between leading artists and Verve. Looking beyond the music scene, the book discusses segregation in America, the missions to take jazz to Europe and the world, the clubs, the places, and the people who made jazz vital. Commentary from the biggest names in jazz today, including some of Verve's own artists, complements the text. 1,200 illustrations in color and black and white.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A wonderful visual cornucopia for jazz fans of a certain age. I'm surprised that a book like this hasn't been published before considering the importance of Norman Granz to the politics of jazz let alone the stunning amount of the music he recorded. There was slightly similar book included with the ten CD PolyGram box set: 'The complete Jazz at the Philharmonic', released in 1998. That book was

CD size with 224 pages with about seventy-eight devoted to Granz and JATP (the rest of the book was about the tracks and musicians). This latest title, with four hundred pages, is a much more ambitious look at the man and his music. The first few pages have a quick overview about the origins of jazz then the pages come alive with a detailed description about the start of JATP and the various tours in the US and overseas during the forties and fifties. These are all annotated with dates, locations and musicians. The rest of the pages look at the various labels Granz ran. Two things break up the book's basic text: spreads with biographies with a page size photo of several dozen musicians; dozens of LP covers. I think it's safe to use the term 'jazz greats' for all those who have biographies here. For me the covers are one of the strengths of the book because they show the talent of David Stone Martin who probably did a few hundred covers for Clef, Norgran and Verve. He did the trumpet player illustration which is sort of a JATP logo. As well as the personality photos and LP covers there are plenty of other pictures and ephemera. The book runs up to the late nineties (the last biography is for Diana Krall) and page 371 mentions Granz's ability to repackage the music via his Pablo label though he sold it to Fantasy in 1987.

Mainly one star for the construction of the binding which is very substandard. Skip to end of this review for more on that, however the book has other issues-I found major frustration in that the album covers, By David Stone Martin are really super but they do not match up with the brief thumbnails on each artist. Illinois Jacquet gets 7 paragraphs followed by Nat Cole with 5 paragraphs and then one must look through the whole volume to find the album covers by these artists- Some of these biographies seem phoned in, and often there is no mention of the verve sessions that individual artists recorded. I opened the book to Jacquet, when I first got the book, as I'm really interested in "Swings The Thing" release, yet, one must look through the entire book to find his albums. The bio does not mention anything about the details of the sessions done, and this is true for majority of artists. The photos are great, but the book is frustrating to research individual artists. The index is no help, as in this 500 page book the index has only a 3 (!) page index. This is unacceptable. The Bios are confusing, take Clifford Brown: possibly the greatest post bop trumpeter of all time, the photo of Clifford is from a Blue Note recording and the essential albums noted on the page are sessions on Emarcy (Mercury), reissued by Verve, Norman Granz work with Clef and later Mercury notwithstanding. Dinah Washington is another artist who's Mercury sides are essential, and the book represents these sides as Verve, when they only own these sides-years after the recordings. For the majority of casual listeners of jazz one might think these were Verve artists. Am I the only one to think this is wrong to include them in a book about Verve? Shameless? Confusing to

say the least.

"Without (Granz) there could have been no modern jazz, cool or turbulent." Nat Hentoff. "Jazz came to America 300 years ago--in chains." Paul Whiteman. "The whole reason for Jazz at the Philharmonic was to take it to places where I could break down segregation." Norman Granz. Yes, I know this book is pretty expensive--but it's very well done. From the thick boards used for the covers (there's no jacket), to the many quality reproductions of photographs and album covers (in both color and b&w), to the paper stock and font, this is a quality book. And the text is intelligent, informative, and works well in conjunction with the graphics. Suffice to say, if you're a jazz fan and/or especially a fan of artists who've recorded for Norman Granz' labels (Verve, Clef, Nogran) you'll probably like this book. Artists who've recorded for Granz include Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Stan Getz, Charlie Parker, Count Basie, Ben Webster, Jimmy Smith, George Benson, Billie Holiday, Astrud Gilberto, Dizzy Gillespie, Wes Montgomery, and many more, both on stage and in the studio. And these artists and a number of others are represented here in this great book on Verve Records. Included are one page essays (with a full page photograph of that artist on the opposite page) of artists like Armstrong, Ellington, Holiday, Jacquet, Krupa, Lester Young, Nat King Cole, Flip Phillips, Parker, Hodges, and many more. Plus there's an essay on David Stone Martin (a personal favorite), who designed a number of iconic album covers which are highly collectable. A number of years ago a book was published on his artwork which I wish would be published again. His individual style was a good fit for jazz of the period.

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