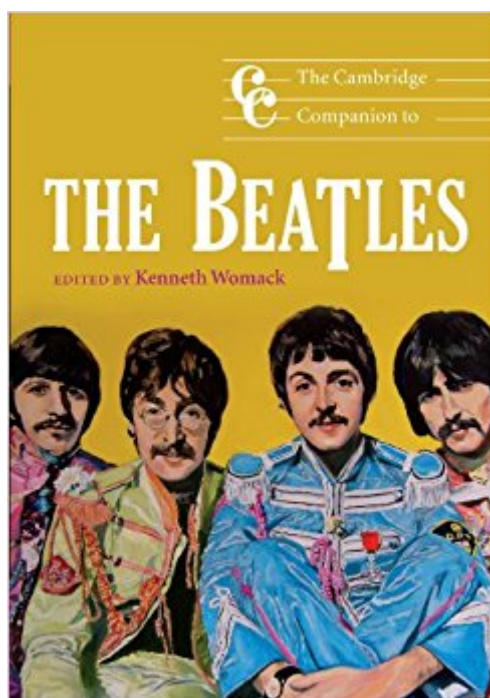


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The Cambridge Companion To The Beatles (Cambridge Companions To Music)



Synopsis

From Please Please Me to Abbey Road, this collection of essays tells the fascinating story of the Beatles - the creation of the band, their musical influences, and their cultural significance, with emphasis on their genesis and practices as musicians, songwriters, and recording artists. Through detailed biographical and album analyses, the book uncovers the background of each band member and provides expansive readings of the band's music.

- Traces the group's creative output from their earliest recordings through their career
- Pays particular attention to the social and historical factors which contributed to the creation of the band
- Investigates the Beatles' unique enduring musical legacy and cultural power
- Clearly organized into three sections, covering Background, Works, and History and Influence, the Companion is ideal for course usage, and is also a must-read for all Beatles fans

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Given its academic pedigree, it is hardly surprising that this tome is devoted to the art of the Beatles, their songwriting and the recording processes they evolved. Editor Womack has summoned an impressive number of scholars to examine the band's background, work, history, and influence. They follow the group's creative arc from its early days in Liverpool and the earliest recordings to the final, often painful recording sessions and each member's solo output. The groundbreaking Rubber Soul, Revolver, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, and The Beatles (the

White Album •) receive thoughtful consideration for their innovations as well as the lyricism of their pop poetry. In the final section, several pieces scrutinize the band's enduring popularity, opining and theorizing as to why the music has survived so many years beyond the group's break-up. A must for serious Fab Four fans, in particular, and probably for music lovers in general, the volume includes a chronology, a general discography of the band's UK and U.S. recordings, and an extensive bibliography. --June Sawyers

"If you are a Beatles fan looking to study their music and impact, The Cambridge Companion to The Beatles provides an excellent starting point. Chapters will make you rethink what you already know, and perhaps change your interpretations of their music. At the very least, the text spurs spirited discussion about various topics. Those interested in a straightforward history of the group may be disappointed in the book, but researchers and scholarly fans will find The Cambridge Companion a valuable addition to their Beatles library." --Blogcritcs.org "an admirable and largely successful attempt to cover all major aspects of the Beatles as both musical and sociocultural phenomenon. . . . even in the most well-trodden areas, insights and intriguing reinterpretations are never far away." --Montreal Gazette "...this in-depth compendium is a must read for all who love the band, want to reminiscence, or want to learn almost everything about those four mop tops from Liverpool. This book is 'toppermost of the poppermost.' Highly recommended." --Choice "Highly recommended for all readers" -T.Emery, Austin Peay State University

About half of this book makes for some highly enjoyable, often insightful reading about the music we all know. The down side is that many stories, events and recording sessions that have already been narrated hundreds of times reappear here with puzzling frequency -- one can claim "Just in case there are new listeners" only so many times before the appearance of new Beatles books appears largely superfluous. But there's some great stuff here, if you're willing to be patient about the age-old anecdotes. But we now have at hand an excellent example of why irresponsible history-skewing should be taken out of print before it bleeds into other texts and muddles the relevant knowledge base. Geoff Emerick's -Here, There and Everywhere- is cited often, especially in "The Beatles as Recording Artists" by Jerry Zolten (an essay that's also grammatically disastrous). Emerick's book is well known to be filled with errors, outright fabrications, and Emerick's taking credit for things that George Martin actually did. Anything that Cambridge allows to be published as an academic "Companion" should, one would immediately assume, be combed over, fact-checked, and basically made to adhere to responsible literary practices. There are mistakes in

other sections, as well; for instance, Howard Kramer, in "Rock and Roll Music," claims that the Beatles had to record twelve new songs for their first album, when in fact they only needed ten (the other four were the already-recorded A and B sides of their first two 45s). Clearly, politics, rather than offers of fresh insight, figured strongly in which writers were chosen to write pieces for this collection. For some reason, critics' opinions (credentials, please? It's like telling someone to immediately switch tastes in food...there's no right or wrong in music) are cited often, along with chart positions -- especially in Michael Frontani's mere list of facts in narrative form, "The Solo Years." Why? Talk about irrelevant -- especially in a book with more-intellectual-than-the-other-stuff pretensions. If you've already got all of the other truly great books about the Beatles (Many Years from Now, the group's own Anthology, Recording the Beatles, the Complete Beatles Recording Sessions and, if you're into ultimately irrelevant but fascinating musical discussion, Tell Me Why), then this one won't do you any harm. It's often highly entertaining. But if you're looking for a place to begin reading about the Beatles, how they approached the studio, what they did to revolutionize the recording industry, etc., then I'd strongly recommend starting elsewhere; there are more consistent, more factually responsible volumes available, including those I've just listed. (Incidentally, it's surprising that even the detail-oriented writings on the Beatles still haven't mentioned the speed discrepancies between first two American albums -- at least as they're heard on the Capitol boxed-set CDs -- and their much faster British equivalents. Many songs on Rubber Soul have this UK/US speed difference as well. Surely I'm not the only person to have noticed that the American transfer speeds were off?)

Excellent

Very nice overview of their career and influence.

I found much of the writing in this book to be impenetrable. I happen to consider myself to be a well-read individual with above average intelligence, but I definitely had difficulty in defining many of the uncommon and lengthy words that the various authors used in their essays throughout this book. My first indication that this was not going to be a book for all Beatles fans (despite what the book's description states) should have been the title, "The Cambridge Companion". In exploring the Beatles' music and impact, the various authors come off as overeducated and stuffy and assume that anyone who reads their essays must be the same (in other words, a complete nerd). While I appreciate the considerable effort that went into creating this volume, I must criticize it for its inability

to appeal to the average reader. This book clearly seems designed for some college level course on the Beatles. Before reading any of the text, I saw in the back that all other editions in the Cambridge Companion series were dedicated to composers of classical and opera music. While it's admirable to view the Beatles as composers of music in the 20th Century that ranks in comparison to the classical composers of previous centuries, the fact remains that most of their fans are not scholars and rock'n'roll music is not considered an art form on the level of classical music. Yes, the Beatles helped to make rock into art, but unless there is a graduate degree in Beatleology this book is best avoided. One particularly annoying chapter is the one that dissects the Beatles' music. The author of this chapter has an absurd obsession with using unfamiliar musical terms that only a musician (which I'm not) can comprehend and, even then, said musician would probably have to be a university professor to grasp the meaning of the author's writing. One final disappointment of this book is the fact that it contains absolutely no photos. While I, and, most likely, everyone else who reads a book about the Beatles, am quite familiar with their appearance through countless previously published photos, pictures enhance the text and, for me, at least, make a book more enjoyable. The lack of photos and the apparent attempt to make the book appeal solely to the well-educated few make this a book that I would not recommend to the average Beatles fan. While I admit that I have more knowledge of the Beatles than most (due, mainly, to my vast collection of Beatles books), this book is aimed squarely at the "Beatles snob", a type of person, thankfully, which I'm not. In closing, I'd like to say that I hope that this review has aided you in determining whether or not to purchase this book. I wish that I had had an advance similar warning before I decided to buy it.

This book was a good sourcebook for doing research on the Beatles song writing history. Enjoyable perspectives from different angles gave important insight to the greatest musicians of the 20th Century.

I found this book to be an exceptional bit of musical history. It provided insights not only into the lives of the young Beatles but also into the influences that created and allowed the band to thrive and excel in their careers. An excellent read and reference for any true Beatle fan.

This is an excellent resource, the breadth and depth of which should appeal to Beatle fans, students, and experts, alike. Drawing together top experts in the field, this is a solid addition to the Cambridge Companion series.

The essay, "The Chemistry of Lennon and McCartney" by Ms. Ruth McCartney, Paul's step-sister and very successful business woman in her own right, should have been included in this book. It can be found on her Website. As a serious Beatle fan, I have never read a better summing up than hers of John and Paul's relationship within The Beatles. A future update of this volume must include that essay if it is to truly stand as a reference for generations to come.

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