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And You Shall Know Us By The Trail Of Our Vinyl: The Jewish Past As Told By The Records We Have Loved



Synopsis

What started out as a mutual affinity for kitschy Jewish album covers—think Neil Diamond baring his chest hair on the cover of *Hot August Night* or Barbra Streisand in hot pants on the cover of *Streisand*—soon became a quest for identity, history, and culture between the grooves of LPs. Together, Roger Bennett and Josh Kun embarked on a thrilling journey, scouring the world to collect thousands of vinyl LPs from attics, garage sales, and dusty archives. Pieced together, these scratched, once-loved and now-forgotten audio gems tell a vibrant tale: the story of Jews in America. *And You Shall Know Us by the Trail of Our Vinyl* spans the history of Jewish recorded music from the 1940s to the 1980s, weaving an account that begins with sacred songs and ends with the holy trinity of Neil, Barbra, and Barry. The LPs found here are also a love letter to forgotten moments in Jewish American pop history, celebrating well-dressed cantors singing Christmas tunes, Long Island suburbanites dancing the mambo, and Chassidic prog-rockers. The music, much of which is no longer available in any format, is brought to life through commentary from writers Aimee Bender, Etgar Keret, Michael Wex, and Shalom Auslander; performers Sandra Bernhard and Motown legend Lamont Dozier; music critics Oliver Wang and Anne Powers; and TV pioneer Norman Lear. A gateway to a forgotten kingdom of sound, the good, the bad, and the ugly of Jewish vinyl gives this aspect of Jewish culture the attention it so richly deserves.

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Customer Reviews

ROGER BENNETT and JOSH KUN are the creators of www.trailofourvinyl.com and cofounders of

Reboot Stereophonic, a nonprofit record label dedicated to rereleasing lost classics from the Jewish past. ROGER BENNETT is a board member of the Academy of the Recent Past (www.academyoftherecentpast.com) and the co-creator of Bar Mitzvah Disco and Camp Camp: Where Fantasy Island Meets Lord of the Flies. JOSH KUN is associate professor at the Annenberg School for Communication and the Department of American Studies and Ethnicity at the University of Southern California. He is the author of *Audiotopia: Music, Race, and America* and a contributor to the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times.

I was sort of expecting some sort of examination of Jewish influences on popular music. There's some of that in this book; but mainly it seems like an excuse for some collector to photograph his collection and show the covers to anybody willing to pay for the privilege. There are some great covers, handsomely presented and solidly packaged. A nice present to somebody else, maybe; not the kind to buy for yourself, hoping to learn much.

It's hard to imagine that a concept of LP covers could stir my memory bank. The authors have done a great research job and classified various chapters based on the covers themselves. Showing over 400 album covers and separating them in the proper chapters was done beautifully. Fond memories of a earlier time were reestablished because of this book. Now part of my reference collection. Well done. (JAS)

It's a fun book to go through and remember all the music from the past 50 or so years. It's focus is on what Jews listened to not just Jewish music. Fun!

Brought me back to the days of WW2 when we danced to so many of the records. Coming from a family of musicians it was especially interesting and informative.

bought this for my brother, the music maven. Nice overview of Jewish influence in the music business.

This book can be a nostalgic gift to an older person who appreciates Jewish music; it can be a unique coffee table book for anyone who enjoys beautiful visuals and interesting text, and it was so different and uplifting that I ended up buying one for myself just because I liked knowing it was a timeless resource for my book shelf.

I heard the authors on NPR, and liked the book very much when I got it. I bought it for a present. He liked it too.

OK, my mom is long gone, but my sweetie got me this book for Hanukah and I know she really loves me. I own a few of the albums shown here. One of them caused me to break my mother's fancy shmancy marble coffee table in two when I was a kid, the music made me dance so hard. Ah, the memories. If you know any (living) Yiddish speaking songwriters (there have to be more than five or ten besides me, I'm certain), this would make a perfect gift. Beyond that, this is the kind of book that would appeal to record collectors, I'm guessing. Warning though: most of these albums are best just for cover gazing. For instance one of the titles here, Bagels and Bongos, has some of the most awful musicianship you could possibly hear (the drummer should have been shot before the recording session to save everyone some ear pain). But there are surprises. For instance, Mickey Katz is often reviled by Yiddish purists, but man those musicians on his albums knew how to play. By the way, Mickey Katz wasn't the one who caused me to break my mom's coffee table. That will stay a family secret.

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