

Little Labels -Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music

Rick Kennedy, Randy McNutt

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#1128291 in Books Rick Kennedy Randy McNutt 2001-03-01 1999-05-22Original language:EnglishPDF #1 9.00 x .61 x 6.00l, .72 #File Name: 0253214343224 pagesLittle Labels Big Sound Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music | File size: 27.Mb

Rick Kennedy, Randy McNutt : Little Labels -Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Little Labels - Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music:

12 of 12 people found the following review helpful. Little labels played a huge role in the evolution of Amercian

popular music

By Paul Tognetti

O how the landscape has changed! Fifty years ago there were literally hundreds of independent record labels operating in cities and towns all across the USA. Many of these companies were fly by night operations that lasted for only a short period of time. Some managed to stick around long enough to have a hit record or two before disappearing from the scene forever. But, a fair number of these independent labels were quite successful and would leave an indelible mark on American popular music. This is what "Little Labels-Big Sound" is all about. Whether you are a fan of the blues, rock and roll, R B, group harmony or jazz, there is little doubt that these "little labels" made a significant contribution to the development of your kind of music. Authors Rick Kennedy and Randy McNutt have focused on 10 of these important independent labels. It is a very readable and highly entertaining book that both record collectors and history buffs are sure to enjoy. Hoagy Carmichael and Louis Armstrong spent their formative years in the 1920's at Gennett Records, a small indie based in Richmond, In. When a young and dynamic James Brown auditioned for King Records in the mid 1950's, label owner Syd Nathan remarked "Nobody wants to hear that noise." History would indeed prove him wrong. Most critics agree that jazz legend Charlie Parker made his finest recordings at Ross Russell's Dial records. "Little Labels-Big Sound" tells the story of how Charlie Parker wound up at Dial. There are also chapters devoted to seven other notable indies including Sun, Riverside, Monument and Duke-Peacock. I enjoyed reading about them all. Today, a few major conglomerates dominate the music business. There is little for most of us to get excited about. "Little Labels-Big Sound" fondly recalls that time in America when small record labels flourished and creativity thrived. It is worth remembering. Recommended.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Little Book - Big Info

By Robert E. Davis

A little book with big information about independent record labels mainly from 50-70s. Some people will grouse that this or that label isn't included, but the ones that are written about provide bountiful information on records and artists one may have forgotten or never heard of (already made me spend some \$\$ on finding these recordings). If you want to know how we got where we are, you have to see where we've been and this book helps shed some light on the subject.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Small but potent

By B. Washer

I originally bought this book for a report in one of my Recording Industry classes and found that it was a pretty good read. Buy it, check it out from the library or borrow from a friend, anyone in the biz should read it to get a glimpse of how much power the little labels have - and maybe you can help influence the big labels to 'see the light' that mass production and high sells don't mean you are releasing good product; however 'good' is in the eye of the beholder as they say. Think of all your favorite artists, the ones that really did something, the ones that made the history books...more times than not they started at a small label, became well-known then either the big labels copied them with similar acts or the big labels waved lots of cash in their faces to entice them over. If it wasn't for the small labels giving more freedom to artists I'd bet we'd all be spoon-fed the likes of "How much is that doggy in the window" from the days of conformity.

Now in paperback!

Little Labels Big Sound

Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music

Rick Kennedy and Randy McNutt

Foreword by Al Kooper

A wild ride through American popular music. [T]hese cats had their ears to the ground and cut vinyl that created the hip sounds of the day, sounds that still reverberate today.... Little Labels Big Sound is a great primer into the history of these... independent record labels. "Blue Suede News [L]ike the labels it celebrates and the 45s and the 78s those labels put out... full of exciting and vital content." San Francisco Chronicle

In this straightforward and engaging collection of histories and profiles, the authors present a brisk overview of important indies and a look at several distinctive companies and the men who ran them..." Billboard

Show me a man today who could stand up to a Syd Nathan or a Don Robey, and Ill show you a man behind bars not behind a desk. Why, without Sam Phillips, the founder of Sun Records and the man who unearthed Elvis, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, Roy Orbison, Jerry Lee Lewis, Rufus Thomas, and Howling Wolf to name but a few, there might not even have been any rock n roll, electric blues, or rockabilly music." Al Kooper, from the Foreword

Rick Kennedy, a media relations manager and former journalist, is author of Jelly Roll, Bix, and Hoagy (Indiana University Press).

Randy McNutt, a longtime reporter with the Cincinnati Enquirer, is author of We Wanna Boogie and a book on Ohio ghost towns.

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From Publishers Weekly

Beginning with Henry Gennett, whose modest Midwestern record company, a piano dealership spinoff, helped launch the careers of jazz immortals King Oliver and Louis Armstrong, Kennedy (Jelly Roll, Bix, and Hoagy) and McNutt (We Wanna Boogie) tell how 10 independent record labels shaped the course of American popular music. Predictably, Sam Phillip's Sun Records, perhaps the most celebrated little label in music history, merits a chapter. More interesting, though, are profiles of less familiar independents such as Don Robey's gospel-oriented Peacock Records and John Vincents pioneering rhythm-and-blues label, Ace. The authors skillfully lay out the complex racial politics of their story, showing, for example, how a shared interest in profits and fresh sounds could bring together personalities as diverse as Soul Brother Number One, James Brown, and Syd Nathan, the feisty Jewish entrepreneur whose Cincinnati-based King Records made Brown a million-seller. The book includes scores of fascinating label-artist dramas, some well known (Dial and Charlie Parker; Riverside and Thelonious Monk),

others long forgotten (Peacock and white soul singer Roy Head; Sun and rockabilly visionary Billy Lee Riley). An invaluable guide to the businesspeople, musicians and hangers-on who transformed regional musical styles into a national soundtrack, this book belongs on the same shelf as Peter Guralnick's *Sweet Soul Music* and Alan Lomax's *The Land Where the Blues Began*. Bw photos. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* One of the enduring legends of the music business is the record company honcho, huge cigar clenched in his teeth, signing the naive country boy to a one-sided contract. The problem with this cliché is that usually a small, independent label has been the company out there beating the bushes for new talent and fresh trends. No label exemplifies this better than Chess Records. When Chess released a record in 1950 by an unknown (to white audiences anyway) blues singer named Muddy Waters, an empire was born, built on the foundation of blues and later rock'n'roll. Some of the greatest names in both genres recorded for Chess, from Howlin' Wolf to Chuck Berry to Bo Diddley to Buddy Guy. But along with the musical success came the almost inevitable charges of withholding royalties from artists. Freelancer Collis includes a liberal sprinkling of vintage photos to break up a sometimes overwhelming catalog of artists and hits. Chess was not the only trailblazing record label; in *Little Labels? Big Sound* we get a rundown of ten of the best, featuring such labels as Dial Records, instrumental in starting the bebop revolution with Charlie Parker, and Sun Records, which jump-started rock'n'roll by recording Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Carl Perkins. Journalists Kennedy and McNutt have produced an extensively researched look at a time when primitive recording equipment was the standard and hunger for a quick buck was the rule. A guide to reissue anthologies for each of the labels covered is an added treat. Both books are recommended for music libraries. Dan Bogey, Clearfield Cty. P.L. Federation, Curwensville, PA Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Kirkus* sBuilt around the names, including Charlie Parker, James Brown and the "King," that helped define 20th-century American music, a history of the independent record label in America. Kennedy (*Jelly Roll, Bix and Hoagy*, 1994) and McNutt (*We Wanna Boogie: An Illustrated History of the American Rockabilly Movement*, not reviewed) tell their tale of how the independent label and the music business as a whole have evolved by looking at ten storied labels, ranging from early jazz giant Paramount to the legendary Sun Records. The pair begin with 1920s start-up label Gennett Records, home to some of the earliest known jazz recordings and to a then unknown musician by the name of Louis Armstrong. The Gennett history, as is the case with each of the other nine stories, is brimming with fun, interesting tidbits, such as a detailed explanation of the genesis of Hoagy Carmichael's classic "Stardust," originally named "Star Dust." The two authors clearly know their music and the circumstances surrounding how that music was made, but the facts suffer at times from the dryness of the writing. In his preface, noted session man and current Berklee School of Music professor Al Kooper writes of the importance of passion and how that motivated the giants who started these labels. Kooper also speaks of how that passion has filtered into this volume; would that it were so. The fervor evident from their research doesn't filter into the writing, with the exception of the first-hand accounts that appear too infrequently. A retelling from Ace Records' John Vincent of how a conversation with Sam Phillips prompted him to go into the music industry has both the humor and excitement often lacking in the rest of the book. Still, those interested in the subject will find enough historical information to keep their attention until the end. -- Copyright 1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.