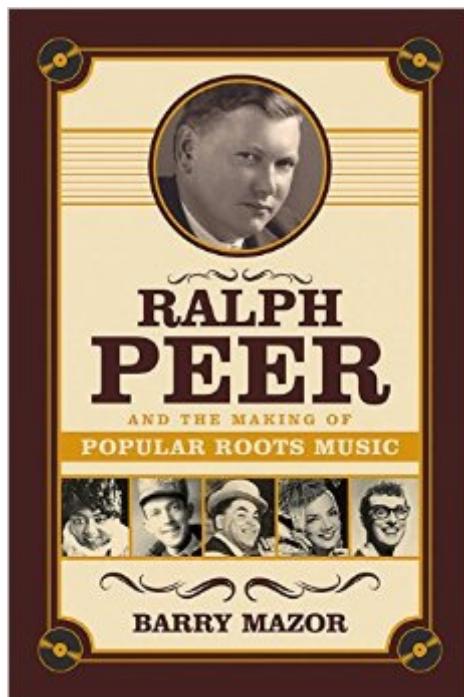


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Ralph Peer And The Making Of Popular Roots Music



Synopsis

This is the first biography of Ralph Peer, the revolutionary A&R man and music publisher who pioneered the recording, marketing, and publishing of blues, jazz, country, gospel, and Latin music, and this book tracks his role in such breakthrough events as the recording of Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues," the first country recording sessions with Fiddlin' John Carson, his discovery of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family, the popularizing of Latin American music during World War II, and the postwar transformation of music on the airwaves that set the stage for the dominance of R&B, country, and rock 'n' roll. Ralph Peer changed our very notions of what pop music can be.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

To flog an oft used cliche - but true and apt here - it is *impossible* to overstate the influence of Ralph Peer on American popular music. Many music aficionados are familiar with, at least the legend of, the so-called "Country Music Big Bang" - that is the auditions for Victor Records held by Peer in Bristol, TN July 25 - Aug 5 1927 where he signed Jimmie Rodgers and The Carter Family, among others (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bristol_sessions). But previous to the Bristol Sessions, Peer'd made Mamie Smith a star and started a blues craze; he enabled and supervised Louis Armstrong's Hot Five and Hot Seven sessions (if not the "Jazz big bang" - something akin to it); he was a key figure in the popularization of Latin Music in the US, helping manage the careers of Xavier Cugat and Carmen Miranda and many Latin American composers and his last big discovery and client was

Buddy Holly (who met his wife in Peer's office). (And ... he was an accomplished amateur botanist specializing in and making important contributions to the study and growth of camellias.) No question this giant of world-wide popular music must have been a fascinating man with multiple compelling arcs to his story - and that is certainly the case. Music! Botany! Loves lost and won ... Barry Mazor has done a formidable job of research - interviewing many Peer's surviving associates or their survivors, gaining access to correspondence, archival material, primary sources. He has a great story to tell, hard to go wrong. He's a more than-competent story teller and this book is indeed hard to put down - I always knew Peer was a great giant of American music - but I hardly knew the half of it - pleased to know so much more and had fun learning it ... but ...

This is an excellent biography of Ralph Peer and a history of Peer's accomplishments in music history. I bought the book to research Ralph Peer's activities in 1920s and 1930s blues and country (then called "hillbilly" music) as an A&R man for Okeh Records and for Victor Talking Machine, later RCA-Victor. Ralph Peer made the first recordings of Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter Family at an historically significant recording session in Bristol, Tennessee in 1928. He also made the first recordings of Mamie Smith, generally considered the first blues recordings ever made. When Harry Smith published the Anthology of American Music in 1952, roughly one third of the songs included were originally recorded by Ralph Peer. Until I read the book I wasn't aware that Ralph Peer went on to carve out a significant place in the history of music publishing. That, in itself, is a fascinating story for anyone interested in music history. Among other things, he pioneered Latin and South American music publishing and the introduction of Latin American and South American music to North American and European audiences; he published Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper - Buddy Holly met his wife, Maria Elena, in Ralph Peer's office, where Maria Elena worked as a receptionist. He was ethical in an industry not renowned for ethical behaviour - he made sure musicians and composers received their royalties and, unlike so many other promoters, publishers and label managers, he refused to insert his name in song writing credits to get a larger piece of the royalty action. The list of songs published by Peer's companies include many familiar titles - too many to include here but read the book and you'll see what I mean.

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