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St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture - 5 Volume set

St James Press

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St James Press : St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture - 5 Volume set before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised St. James Encyclopedia of Popular Culture - 5 Volume set:

Book by St James Press

From BooklistThis alphabetically arranged, 2,700-entry encyclopedia treats aspects of U.S. popular culture, defined as "all the experiences in life shared by people in common, generally though not necessarily disseminated by the mass media." In the process of winnowing the 4,000 or so potential topics that were suggested by an advisory group to a manageable number of entries, the editors sought balance, though not necessarily equal coverage. Content breaks down into articles that address social life (23 percent of the articles), music (16 percent), print culture (16 percent), film (15 percent), television and radio (14 percent), sports (10 percent), and art and performance (6 percent). A few entries, such as Currier and Ives and Dime novels, relate to the culture of the nineteenth century, but treatment is purposely slanted toward the twentieth century, and the latter half of the twentieth at that. Articles range from 75-to 150-word introductions to 3,000-word analyses. Each of the 450 contributors, mostly college or university professors and freelance writers, was asked to describe his or her topic and analyze its relevance to American popular culture, a charge successfully carried out in uniformly zesty and interesting prose, accompanied by numerous clear black-and-

white illustrations. There are entries covering broad topics (Advertising, Jazz, Radio) and specific activities, comic strips, companies and consumer products, films, foods, individuals, musical groups, publications, social issues, sports teams, television and radio programs, and various other trends and phenomena, such as Advice columns, AARP, Aerobics, Air travel, and Astrology. Reflecting pop culture's inherent inclusiveness, there seems to be almost nothing missing, and an examination of the impact of Sigmund Freud keeps company with entries on Frederick's of Hollywood, Frosty the Snowman, and frozen food. This is one of those rare encyclopedias that is good not only for research but for casual browsing, and readers will find much that is fascinating. Each entry, laid out in an easy-to-read typeface in double-column format, concludes with a list of further readings that includes references to both standard print and online sources. The introduction, list of contributors, and alphabetical list of entries are repeated in each volume. The indexing in volume five is superlative and broad, consisting of three different indexes--one general, one organized by subject, and one organized by decade, creating linkages and widening access to the information available on any given topic. Cross-referencing is limited to see references that refer readers to appropriate headings. The indexing helps make up for the lack of see also references, although these would more easily guide readers between entries for Orson Welles and War of the Worlds, to take one example. Other reference works, such as the Museum of Broadcast Communications Encyclopedia of Television [RBB Ag 97] and The Sixties in America [RBB S 1 99], cover specific aspects of popular culture or specific periods in greater detail, but none can match this set's broad sweep. A superb source for high-school, public, and academic libraries. Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved