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[Review of] All-music Guide

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Internet Resource

All-music guide.Internet Resource. <http://www.allmusic.com/>

Michael Erlewine and associates at Matrix Software have led the *All-Music Guide* through many incarnations--starting as a gopher site at Ferris State University; in a print publication (CH, Jul'93), now in a third edition; on CD-ROM; and in Musicland in-store kiosks. The Web site enhances features that made the other versions some of the most useful music guides available. It covers over 307,000 recordings and over 1.5 million song titles, with 45,000 biographies and over 107,000 reviews, available via a search form (accessible by album, artist, song title, style, and record label), which can be found on both the introductory page and the results page. Hotlinks from the initial page lead to over 250 "Music Maps" (flow charts covering instruments, genres, or musical styles), over 1,400 "Music Styles" (including those as specific as Garage Techno, Shoegazing, Skiffle), "Essays & Articles," and a "Music Glossary." Major artist entries include artist's name, birth date and birthplace (with hotlinks to others born on that date or in that place), years active, genre and style (hotlinked), instruments played, record labels; links to other Web sites, including the All-Movie Guide <http://www.allmusic.com>; signed biographies (often including a picture); and cross-references to "similar and related artists," "roots and influences," "followers," "performed songs by," and "worked with." Discographies--with albums, compilations, bootlegs, and singles listed separately--include ratings by reviewers and other experts that compare each artist's work against other works *by that artist*, links to album pages, appearances on others' recordings, and a biographical bibliography. Recording entries include date of release; genre (hotlinked); play time; often a short, signed review; release information (date, format, label, record number); personnel (hotlinked name and role); tracks (often with songwriter credits and time of play); and links to online stores for purchase.

The links of performing artists on each recording are a major strength of the Web version: for example, one can see the 190 albums on which Vanetta Fields has appeared as a backup singer. The site stays current: entries for newcomers Moloko and Days of the New are available and substantial. The search engine is flexible (although Hunters & Collectors comes up only when an ampersand is used). This reviewer found few bad links; corrections are encouraged by reader feedback forms. A straight alphabetical list of all entries would help overcome some of the deficiencies in the search engine (this approach works well on the Ultimate Band List <http://ubl.com>, the Web's premier annotated guide to Internet sites on specific musical artists). Other guides to recordings do exist on the Web: Trouser Press <http://www.trouserpress.com/> covers selected artists from 1970 to the present; The Rough Guide to Rock Music <http://www.roughguides.com/rock/index.html> covers 1,100 artists. And useful paper tools provide more detailed reviews (e.g., *The Rolling Stone Album Guide*, 3rd ed., CH, Jul'93) and more detailed biographical data (e.g., *The Guinness Encyclopedia of Popular Music*, ed. by Colin Larkin, 2nd ed., CH, Sep'96). This Web site is strongly recommended for its breadth of coverage and excellent cross-references. All collections.

--R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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