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[Review of] The Unsung Songwriters: America's Masters of Melody

Robert A. Aken
University of Kentucky, robaken@uky.edu

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Vaché, Warren W. **The unsung songwriters: America's masters of melody.**
Scarecrow, 2000. 737p bibl index afp (Studies in jazz, 34) ISBN 0810825703,
\$95.00

Jazz bassist Vaché is associated with three other works in this series, including *Pee Wee Erwin: This Horn for Hire* (CH, Mar'88) and *Back Beats and Rim Shots* (1997). The scope of *Songwriters* is much broader, covering popular music and standard genres (but not country or rock), focusing on US music, 1917-50. Although giants of the period are excluded (e.g., Berlin, the Gershwins), many unsung composers are familiar, sometimes as performers rather than writers (e.g., Count Basie, Sammy Cahn, Hoagy Carmichael, Mel Tormé). Many song titles ring familiar, but not their creators (e.g., "Sweet Georgia Brown" by Maceo Pinkard). The entries (nearly 500, alphabetically arranged, one to three pages long) list popular songs within biographical sketches. Unhappily, discographies are not included, label and record numbers are rarely provided for the songs, and references to further sources of information are not supplied except in a very brief bibliography. The superfluous appendix includes "one hit wonders" and chronologies, while the essential index lists roughly 6,400 song titles but no name or subject entries. For the first half of the 20th century, this work is more extensive than Mark White's *You Must Remember This* (CH, Sep'85) or Nigel Harrison's *Songwriters* (CH, May'99) and is therefore a convenient snapshot of a wide range of pop music composers. General readers and undergraduates.

--R. A. Aken, *University of Kentucky*

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