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[Review of] Popular Singers of the Twentieth Century: A Bibliography of Biographical Materials

Robert A. Aken

University of Kentucky, robaken@uky.edu

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Cowden, Robert H. **Popular singers of the twentieth century: a bibliography of biographical materials.** Greenwood, 1999. 497p index afp (Music reference collection, 78) ISBN 0313293333, \$85.00

For this unique "preliminary bibliography" Cowden (music, San Jose State Univ. and compiler of several titles in this series--e.g., *Classical Singers of the Opera and Recital Stages*, CH, Dec'94) brings together citations in 376 reference works, full-length autobiographies and biographies, and periodical articles concerning 970 performers (from Lina Abarbanell, German operetta singer/actress, to Mizzi Zwerenz, Hungarian operetta soubrette). The first of three sections lists 115 collective works on singers; the second 231 related collective works; and the third (which serves as the main index) individual performers, including their citizenship, vocal specialty, birth/death data, cross-references to sections 1 and 2, and citations to books and articles (for the latter giving only journal title, volume, and date). Thirty major reference works listed in the front are cross-referenced from the individual singer section. Coverage across the century is broad and includes several French and German publications. The distinction between sections 1 and 2 is often unclear; standard dictionaries like Michael Banes's *Who's Who in Rock* (CH, Feb'82) are listed under "Related Works." The main index (3,200 entries) will deceive those who skip the introductory paragraph: it includes only authors, compilers, editors, translators, and singers who wrote works. "Singers" is used loosely: major bands (e.g., the Beatles, Byrds, and Rolling Stones) have their own listings in section three, as do many individuals in those bands. Among significant exclusions are Lyle Lovett, Eric Clapton, Bruce Hornsby, and David Bowie, but the strength of this work is its broad coverage of several styles of popular music (including music hall, light opera, and musical theater). A time-saving reference source, especially for those seeking information on obscure historical figures.

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

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