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[Review of] All-music Guide

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Internet Resource

All-music guide.

Internet Resource. <http://allmovie.com/amg/music^U^Rroot.html>

Michael Erlewine and associates at Matrix Software have seen 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 popular music guides available. It covers 192,000 recordings and provides 62,000 biographies, accessible via a simple and fairly reliable search form (accessible by album, artist, and song title) available on the introductory page only. Hotlinks from the initial page include "Key Artists" and "Key Albums" (arranged by genre and decade); "Music Styles" (16 genres, each further subdivided); "Music Essays" (by genre); and "Music Glossary." A typical artist entry includes 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; it may also include links to other Web sites, including All-Movie Guide <http://www.allmusic.com>; signed biographies; and cross-references to "similar and related artists," "roots and influences," and "performed songs by." Discographies--with albums, compilations, bootlegs, and singles listed separately--include star ratings by reviewers and other experts, links to album pages, appearances on others' recordings, and a biographical bibliography. Entries for recordings include date of release (hotlinked to "best albums" of that year); genre (hotlinked); play time; sometimes a short, signed review; 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 175 albums on which Vanetta Fields has appeared as a backup singer. The site stays current: entries for newcomers Sneaker Pimps and White Town are available (but skimpy). The pages load fairly quickly, and 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: the Trouser Press page <http://www.trouserpress.com/> gives biographical and recording reviews and discographies for selected artists but covers only the 1970s and 1980s; The Rough Guide to Rock Music <http://www.roughguides.com/rock/index.html> covers 1,100 artists. And useful print 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). The Web site is recommended for its breadth of coverage and excellent cross-references. All collections.

--R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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