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[Review of] Encyclopedia of Indie Rock

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Smith, Kerry L. Encyclopedia of indie rock. Greenwood, 2008. 400p bibl index afp ISBN 9780313341199, $75.00

Smith (freelance music journalist) covers 152 independent rockers and related topics. The entries and 1952–2007 time line both give priority to the period 1980 to present. Entries, which are one to four pages long, are up–to–date and accurate, and include suggested readings. A list of the 75 "most significant albums" includes works by 10 artists not included in the main entries. The index would be much improved by the addition of all works and individuals mentioned in the entries. "Indie rock" is variously defined in the few reference works focusing on such artists, and content therefore varies widely. Colin Larkin's edited work The Virgin Encyclopedia of Indie and New Wave (1998) provides coverage from the punk 1970s to 1997. Steve Taylor's The A to X of Alternative Music (2004) discusses 190 performers that most would consider indie artists, yet 80 percent of his listings are not in Smith's work, which the preface calls a "comprehensive reference." With so many important independent artists, one volume cannot provide adequate coverage. Comprehensive rock collections could use both Taylor and Smith, but all collections will find AMG Allmusic http://www.allmusic.com/ (CH, Sup'06, 43Sup–0163) (for which Smith writes) invaluable, with hundreds of artists discussed in 57 alternative/indie rock subcategories, along with recording samples. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower–level undergraduates through faculty/researchers; general readers.

--R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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