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

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Two academics who worked for the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame and six music journalists produced this 1,700-page set. Each volume follows a common presentation: time line; chapters enhanced with black-and-white photographs and sidebars; an "A-Z of Rock" with brief descriptions of major artists, recordings, and events; appendixes listing significant recordings; reference guide; and index. Most chapters introduce a theme (e.g., "Rockabilly," "The Psychedelic Experience"), which precedes a collection of biographical performer descriptions, not unlike entries found in standard rock encyclopedias. Except for common formatting and chronological sequence, these volumes are independent works. Cross-references between volumes are not available in text or indexes, and there is no index for the set. Though dated, Rock of Ages (CH, Jun'87), by Ed Ward, Geoffrey Stokes, and Ken Tucker, is still the standard for the first three decades. Other works are more scholarly, such as Joe Stuessy's Rock and Roll: Its History and Stylistic Development, 5th ed. (2006), or better interweave the social context, e.g., Paul Friedlander's Rock and Roll: A Social History (1st ed., CH, Jul'96, 33-6211; 2nd ed., 2006). Nonetheless, each Greenwood volume serves as a useful introduction to its respective era. Summing Up: Recommended. Lower-/upper-division undergraduates; general readers.

--R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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