[Review of] Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Albums

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Whitburn, founder and president of Record Research, Inc. and compiler of Billboard chart publications based entirely on sales figures, has revised Joel Whitburn's Top Pop Albums, 1955–1992 (1993), the fourth edition in a series that began in 1972. Other Whitburn titles draw on the same data (e.g., Billboard's #1, 1950–1991 and Music Yearbook), but this volume provides the most focused and up-to-date coverage of popular music recordings. The 4,484 artist entries (arranged alphabetically) list 18,594 charted albums (up from 4,700 in 1987). Each entry contains brief biographies (with boldfaced cross-references), names and primary instruments of band members, a chronology of charted albums, an alphabetical title index of all tracks on charted albums (with “Hot 100” peak positions noted), up-to-date, “near-mint” album prices, top three to five albums of major artists, and the year of the artist's peak popularity. Rankings are included for the top 500 artists, with black-and-white photographs for the top 200. The fine-print data include album debut date, peak position, weeks charted, gold/platinum designation, and original label and record number. The work also has sections for soundtracks, original casts, albums by category (e.g., benefit, comedy, compilation, and tribute albums), Christmas recordings, top artists, top albums, and #1s by year. An essential guide for the study of popular music.

—R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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