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[Review of] The Decca Hillbilly Discography, 1927-1945

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Ginell (UCLA) has used his personal Decca catalog collection as a basis for an exhaustive look at the recordings that gave country and other rural music its first recorded success. This work is particularly valuable for the information garnered from interviews with musicians and singers who worked the many recording sessions for which there are no session notes. In all, 1,514 discs are described and listed by catalog record number. Entries include song titles, artists, and legend (primary instrumentation). An excellent introduction tells the history of Decca and “hillbilly” music. Included in the discography are released and unreleased recordings in the Decca 5000 series, released recordings in the Champion 45000 series, released and unreleased recordings from the Decca 17000 (Cajun) series, and all Decca recordings released on the Montgomery Ward label. What makes this work especially estimable are the excellent indexes. The alphabetically arranged artist name index includes complete cross-references. Under each entry, a chronological listing of recording sessions and recorded works is provided. A matrix and location index allows users to follow the locations of recordings and tests, and includes record catalog number and date. Release date listings follow, arranged by series and record number. Composer credits and song title indexes complete the work. Ginell has provided an excellent tool to trace the beginnings of what has become one of music’s major commercial successes.

—R. A. Aken, University of Kentucky

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