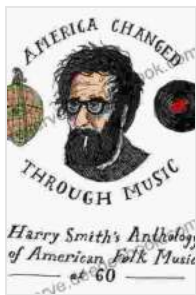


Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music: A Tapestry of Lost and Found American Sounds

In the annals of American music, Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music stands as a towering achievement, a groundbreaking collection that ignited the folk revival of the 1950s and 1960s and continues to captivate and inspire musicians and music lovers alike.



Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music: America changed through music by Thomas Ruys Smith

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English
Text-to-Speech : Enabled
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
File size : 3959 KB
Print length : 273 pages
Screen Reader : Supported



This seminal anthology, released in 1952, is a testament to the tireless efforts of Harry Smith, a self-taught ethnomusicologist and collector of traditional American music. Smith spent years scouring libraries, flea markets, and record stores for forgotten and obscure recordings, unearthing a vast treasure of lost and virtually unknown folk songs.

Origins and Contents

Smith's vision for the Anthology was ambitious: to create a comprehensive survey of American folk music from its earliest known origins to the present day. He drew from a diverse range of sources, including commercial recordings, field recordings made by folklorists, and even cylinder recordings from the late 19th century.

The Anthology was released on three LPs, each with its own unique character. The first volume featured early rural recordings, including ballads, fiddle tunes, and spirituals. The second volume explored the rise of commercial folk music, with recordings by artists such as the Carter Family and Lead Belly. The third volume showcased more contemporary folk and blues artists, including Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Elizabeth Cotten.

Rediscovering Lost Gems

One of the most significant contributions of the Anthology was its rediscovery of long-lost and forgotten songs. Many of the tracks featured on the collection had never been commercially released or had fallen into obscurity. Smith's meticulous research and dedication brought these hidden gems back to life, introducing them to a new generation of musicians and listeners.

Among the most iconic songs on the Anthology are "John Henry," "Casey Jones," "Barbara Allen," "Oh Death," and "Amazing Grace." These songs, once on the verge of disappearing, were given a new lease on life and became staples of the folk revival movement.

Impact on the Folk Revival

The release of the Anthology had a profound impact on the American folk music scene. The collection sparked a renewed interest in traditional folk

songs and helped to inspire a generation of musicians, including Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, and the Grateful Dead.

Smith's Anthology provided a blueprint for the folk revival movement. It demonstrated the richness and diversity of American folk music, and it encouraged musicians to explore their own musical heritage. The collection also helped to bridge the gap between traditional and contemporary folk music, paving the way for a new era of American music.

Legacy and Preservation

Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music is considered one of the most important recordings in American music history. It has been reissued and remastered numerous times, and it continues to inspire and inform musicians and scholars alike.

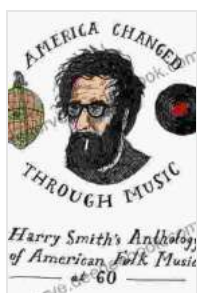
In 2019, the Anthology was inducted into the National Recording Registry by the Library of Congress, recognizing its "cultural, historical, and artistic significance." The collection is currently housed at the Smithsonian Folkways Recordings label, where it is preserved for future generations.

Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music is a testament to the power of music to connect us to our past, inspire our present, and shape our future. It is a living legacy that continues to perpetuate the timeless tradition of American folk music.

Further Reading

- [Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music on Smithsonian Folkways](#)
- [2019 National Recording Registry Inductees](#)

- Harry Smith's Anthology of American Folk Music at 65
- The Anthology That Changed American Music



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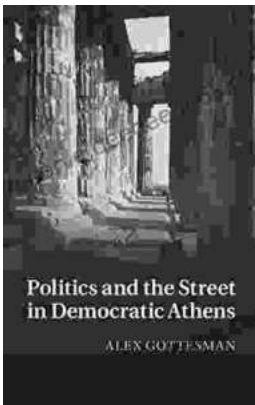
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