



Cowboys and Indies: The Epic History of the Record Industry

By Gareth Murphy

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Cowboys and Indies is nothing less than the first definitive history of the recording industry on both sides of the Atlantic.

From the invention of the earliest known sound-recording device in 1850s Paris to the CD crash and digital boom today, author and industry insider Gareth Murphy takes readers on an immensely entertaining and encyclopedic ride through the many cataclysmic musical, cultural, and technological changes that shaped a century and a half of the industry.

This invaluable narrative focuses especially on the game changers---the label founders, talent scouts, and legendary A&R men. Murphy highlights:

- Otto Heinemann's pioneer label Okeh, which spread blues and jazz "race" records across America
- how one man, Henry Speir, discovered nearly all the Delta blues legends (Robert Johnson, Charlie Patton, Son House, Tommy Johnson)
- Sam Phillips's seminal work with Chess and Sun Records
- John Hammond's discoveries (Billie Holiday, Aretha Franklin, Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Bruce Springsteen)
- the behind-the-scenes players of the British Invasion
- Clive Davis, Ahmet Ertegun, David Geffen, and the corporate music machine
- the Machiavellian moves of punk impresario Malcolm McLaren (Sex Pistols)
- Chris Blackwell's triumphs for Island Records (Bob Marley, U2)
- Sylvia Robinson and Tom Silverman, the hip-hop explorers behind the Sugarhill Gang, Grandmaster Flash, and Afrika Bambaataa

...and much, much more. Murphy also offers a provocative look at the future through the ruminations of such vanguard figures as Martin Mills (4AD, XL

Recordings, Matador, Rough Trade) and genre-busting producer Rick Rubin (Run-D.M.C., Red Hot Chili Peppers, Metallica, Johnny Cash).

Drawing from memoirs, archives, and more than one hundred exclusive interviews with the legends of the record industry, including the founders and CEOs of Atlantic, Chrysalis, Virgin, A&M, Sub Pop, and Sire, this book reveals the secret history behind the hit-making craft. Remarkable in scope and impressive in depth, *Cowboys and Indies* chronicles the pioneers who set the stylus on the most important labels and musical discoveries in history.

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Editorial Review

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This is a straight-ahead chronological history of the record business—the performers and record men in America and the UK—from early innovations in sound technology to the present: from Enrico Caruso through big-band jazz, Elvis Presley (and Tom Parker), R&B and rock (Ahmet Ertegun, Jerry Wexler), the Beatles (and Brian Epstein) and Stones (Andrew Loog Oldham), Bob Dylan (and Albert Grossman), Motown (although otherwise very little on black music), the Beach Boys, Jim Morrison, and Jimi Hendrix, through disco, rap, hip-hop, and synth-pop. Much of it is familiar and conventionally told, and the emphasis on the business rather than the creative side of the industry (and not enough about the conflict implied by the cutesy title) dampens one's interest, but there are enough gems and oddities (a brawl between the burly Grossman and Alan Lomax; the Beatles first experiences smoking marijuana, when meeting Dylan; and, apparently unrelatedly, a quite funny misunderstanding of Beatles' lyrics by Dylan) to make the book an enjoyable, if not quite indispensable, addition to the musical bookshelf. --Mark Levine

Review

“A must-read for any music lover.” *?Parade.com, "20 of the Summer's Best Books"*

“Murphy's exhaustive research is complemented with an engaging prose...[the] account highlights a cast of fascinating characters, and it's these, individual stories, and anecdotes that make Murphy's book as engaging as a good TV-show can be, and a worthwhile read for any scholar of music, history, and society.” *?Future of Music Coalition, "Our Favorite Music Books of 2014"*

“The book is more than an index of famous names and iconic record labels. It's a humanistic, historical and cultural approach to an iconic industry. Mr. Murphy shows the business behind the music, and the music behind the business -- a rare and insightful treat.” *?Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

“This lovingly written book...is a celebration of the indie heroes who shaped the industry while giving groundbreaking artists a platform... Like the *Last Shop Standing* of record labels, *Cowboys And Indies* tells their story.” *?Record Collector, 5 star review*

“A new, impressively wide-ranging history of the record biz.” *?Eric Alterman, The Nation*

“Indeed, the very backbone of what makes *Cowboys & Indies* so compelling is the stories that wind up making the careers of these numerous figureheads....he has ended up crafting a hell of a book that over time may not only become any music-person's historical go-to, but may just very well become a cornerstone of the genre.” *?PopMatters.com*

“A fascinating account of the way recorded music has evolved, touched people and helped shape popular culture as we know it today.” *?Sir George Martin, legendary record producer, arranger, composer, conductor, audio engineer and musician*

“Record labels, at their best, are invariably driven by the taste, the personality, and the ambition of one man, or woman - this book fascinatingly charts their course, their perversity, their bloody mindedness. It's those men, those labels, that found and broke the artists who have created our musical world.” *?Martin Mills, founder of Beggar's Group*

“Just when you thought the record label beast was dead and buried, along comes Gareth Murphy with a tour de force that makes you almost want to dance with that devil again. Through COWBOYS AND INDIES, new artists will get a sense of history that will enlighten their success and lessen the pain of being ripped off!” ?Andrew Loog Oldham, *Rolling Stones producer, Immediate Records founder*

“Murphy captures the ever-changing nature of the record industry as it ebbs and flows with trends, technology and time... He lets the record execs, producers, and talent scouts tell their own stories, giving this work a personal feel and providing music lovers with first-hand accounts of how many great artists were discovered, what it is like when labels fight over bands, and the perilous nature of being too big or too small... Through setting out to document the lineage of the record industry, which he's done, Murphy has as well created a history of popular music told from the inside out to give music fans and historians a new and dynamic perspective of this oft-covered topic.” ?*Publishers Weekly*

“*Cowboys and Indies* details the juicy history and monumental egos of record companies...[it is] a fascinating subject and is packed with interesting facts ...a worthwhile read.” ?*Montreal Gazette*

“Gareth Murphy's *Cowboys and Indies: The Epic History of the Record Industry* comes just as billed...this is a rich and rewarding tale, a survey course on the history of recorded music.” ?*Relix Magazine*

“Snappily-written...The result is the ever-evolving story of the record industry and thus of popular culture itself...it is indispensable as a single-volume overview...it's an immensely satisfying appetizer, served up on a platter of paper instead of vinyl.” ?*The Houston Press*

“Spectacular, compelling, evocative - this book places you at the heart of the record industry's defining moments. Far more than a recounting of the history, it's an artful and long-overdue look at the fantastic characters, companies, and shifting cultures that have given birth to the soundtrack of modern life. Essential reading.” ?*Craig Kallman, CEO at Atlantic Records*

“Thought I knew everything about the music business. Must admit, I learned quite a bit inside these pages. Highly recommended!” ?*Seymour Stein, co-founder and chairman of Sire Records*

“*Cowboys & Indies* passionately tells the story of those driven individuals who trusted their own taste and instincts and, in turning a deaf ear to the commonplace, gave shape to the world of modern music. Essential reading!” ?*Jac Holzman, founder of Elektra*

“If this book was a group, I would definitely sign them. It is *that* good.” ?*Geoff Travis, founder of Rough Trade*

About the Author

Gareth Murphy was raised in Dublin surrounded by music and the musicians with whom his father worked as a concert promoter. A graduate of University College Dublin, Murphy has worked at various record companies and has produced thirty electronic compilations. Composing and producing original music, he is a freelance writer and researcher for journals and think tanks. Murphy lives in Paris with his wife and four-year-old son.

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