
Book Reviews

You're The Top: Cole Porter in the 1930s. Cole Porter Centennial Collection. Produced by Robert Kimball, Richard M. Sudhalter, and Susan Elliott. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society and Koch International Classics, 1992. Illustrations, discography, bibliography. Book and compact discs or cassettes. Compact discs, \$49.95; cassettes, \$42.95.)

Cole Porter poses a problem for the Indiana historian. Indiana can claim credit for producing Cole Porter, but the state does not really explain him. Hoagy Carmichael's music, the subject of an earlier set from the Indiana Historical Society, had obvious roots in Hoosier culture. Cole Porter's connections to Indiana, however, are much less obvious. Born to an upper-class family in Peru, he was sent off to prep school in Massachusetts, to college at Yale, to law and music school at Harvard, and to the study of music in Paris. Porter's music evokes New York more than Indiana, Paris more than Peru. Hoagy Carmichael testifies to the continuing diversity of American culture, to the persistence of regional folk traditions in modern music. Porter stands much more for the centralizing, cosmopolitan forces that shaped twentieth-century culture. Still, he is a Hoosier product, and the Indiana Historical Society had the very good sense to produce this fine collection.

You're the Top focuses on the Great Depression, the years of Porter's greatest success. During the 1930s, he wrote such shows as *Gay Divorce*, *Anything Goes*, and *Leave It to Me*, and such songs as "Love for Sale," "Night and Day," "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Begin the Beguine," "My Heart Belongs to Daddy," and, of course, "You're the Top." Those songs are all here, along with other, less known efforts, such as "When Love Comes Your Way" and "When Love Beckoned (on 52nd Street)." The producers of this set have made a generally fine, sensible selection of songs. And they have turned to a wide range of performers, from the expected—Ella Fitzgerald, Ethel Merman, Mary Martin, Artie Shaw, and Bobby Short—to the obscure—Hubbell Pierce and Casper Reardon. One of the pleasures of this collection is the chance to hear the same song interpreted quite differently by different artists—for instance, "I've Got You under My Skin" sung by Lee Wiley and then Cesare Siepi.

One can always quarrel with the selections in a collection like this one. It would have been interesting to hear more of the performances Porter himself recorded of songs from *The Cocotte*. The jazz selections could have been a bit more daring: in particular, it would be interesting to hear how more modern musicians such as Miles Davis and Jackie McLean have reworked "Love for Sale"



COLE PORTER AT EIGHTEEN

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and other Porter songs. The most unfortunate omission was forced on the producers: they could not obtain permission to include any of Frank Sinatra's absolutely essential interpretations of Porter lyrics.

Still, this is an absolutely first-rate production. The music has been well transferred to compact disc; much of the work was apparently done by John R.T. Davies, the unsurpassed master of transfers from 78 rpm records. The accompanying booklet is handsome, with plenty of illustrations and an intelligent, informative essay by Porter expert, Robert Kimball. Whatever Cole Porter's roots in Indiana, this collection is a splendid chance to sample the genius of a great American songwriter.

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The Main Stem: The History & Architecture of North Meridian Street. By David J. Bodenhamer, Lamont Hulse, and Elizabeth B. Monroe. (Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1992. Pp. [ix], 149. Illustrations, catalog of buildings, index. \$37.95.)

David J. Bodenhamer, Lamont Hulse, and Elizabeth B. Monroe have chronicled the development of Indianapolis's most his-



MERIDIAN STREET IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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