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Reviews

Alison Ellwood (Director). *Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time*. Epix, 2020. [epix.com/series/laurel-canyon](https://www.epix.com/series/laurel-canyon)

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Popular music history is a critical component in many music business curricula. Studying pop music history is enlightening, from developing an understanding of musical foundations to facing historical challenges with an eye toward a more enlightened approach to helping students relate with their future (and older) colleagues through common pop music knowledge. A challenge is bringing to life the music, artists, companies, executives, and systems that might seem increasingly distant and unrelatable to students as time marches on. There are helpful textbooks, journals, magazine articles, and foundational recordings by artists known and unknown to the student population. Offerings with visual aspects, such as documentaries, allow the people who created pop music history to tell their stories and keep students engaged. Unfortunately, while there are some undeniable classics, much material becomes dated over time.

A new “rock doc” rarely comes along that grabs the viewer by revealing meaningful, unique information. However, a great resource that does just that is the 2020 Epix documentary *Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time*. It looks and sounds like a big production, directed by Alison Ellwood (*History of the Eagles*) and with opening credits including MGM, Amblin Television, and Warner Music Entertainment. *Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time* also stands out as a deeper dive, with commentary from less celebrated but consequential musicians such as Richie Furay (Buffalo Springfield) and Johnny Echols (Love), in addition to more famous figures including David Crosby and Joni Mitchell.

This two-part film features up-to-date interviews with many who were part of the Laurel Canyon scene. It comes to life with stunning pictures from two primary narrators, photographers Henry Diltz (also of the Modern Folk Quartet) and Nurit Wilde. In addition, rare home movies, photos, and music from Joni Mitchell, Jackson Browne, the Doors, the Byrds, and more, add tremendous value. New interviews for the two-part production include those with Linda Ronstadt, Graham Nash, Bonnie Raitt, Don Henley, and others from this legendary time and place. Besides

on-camera interviews with Diltz and Wilde, a standout aspect is that this film primarily utilizes new and old dialog from those in the Laurel Canyon music community underneath the visuals. For example, the viewer sees the actual “Our House” as Graham Nash explains how he wrote the song.

Episode one begins shortly after pop music’s shift to Los Angeles when native Southern California surf rock bands and newly relocated folk rock groups defined the LA pop sound. The second episode moves from the Woodstock era of the late sixties to the mid-seventies with groups like the Eagles. A stark difference is apparent in the first episode being idealistic and the second revealing the growing industry soon to become the behemoth record business. Throughout, there is a robust sociological aspect to this production. Artists from the Byrds to the Monkees to Frank Zappa to Alice Cooper and the Mamas and the Papas were friends and neighbors, often showing up randomly at each other’s houses, with one such occurrence leading to the formation of Crosby, Stills and Nash. Viewers might also become more aware of a blurring of pop/rock and commercial/non-commercial that defined Laurel Canyon as a unique locale and era in popular music history.

Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time is a modern and thorough look back, expertly and lovingly told by those who were there, matched with well-placed photos, films, and recordings, via big-budget Hollywood production values. Additionally, it does an outstanding job of weaving (even previously well-known) anecdotes about each group together to tell the larger story of Laurel Canyon.

As an educational tool, *Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time* brings to life the roughly 1964-1976 period in which Los Angeles became the epicenter of the music industry. This documentary reverently captures an era that forever changed the music business and could be part of a course section about the sixties or seventies. Moreover, such a top-notch presentation of engaging content will pique the interest of students whose grandparents are contemporaries of the pop music icons featured in it. As a result, *Laurel Canyon: A Place in Time* is an excellent resource for any twentieth-century pop music history course.

Cutler Armstrong

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Ross Cole. *The Folk: Music, Modernity, and the Political Imagination*. Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2021. ucpress.edu

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Folk music enjoys an almost mythic place in our popular imagination, a fact perhaps best evidenced by the cyclical revivals it experiences in public interest and the frequency with which major artists “return to their roots” in late career retrospectives. The aura of purity and sacredness that permeates popular understanding of folk music means that we rarely stop to question its origins, its ideological underpinnings, or its cultural effects. Ross Cole has expertly addressed this gap in our understanding in a book that is especially deserving of attention in our current political moment.

The Folk centers on Anglo-American folk traditions and cultural memory circa 1870-1930. Central to Cole's argument is the idea of a “folkloric imagination” which he defines as a “paradigmatic trope: the folk as distant, waning, but eternal, and the modern world as over-bearing,

insubstantial, and fake” (p. xii). On the first page of the Introduction we see mention of names we expect in a book about English language folk music such as Alan Lomax, Woody Guthrie, and Bob Dylan. The narrative quickly turns, however, as the book establishes itself as deeply historical in methodology and taking a critical cultural stance in its theoretical outlook. This book goes beyond a romantic view of folk music informed by popular revivals of the mid-twentieth century to interrogate how its underlying ideologies might manifest in myriad ways from utopianism to socialism to fascism.

Chapter 1 explores how the practice of “collecting” folk music in mid-nineteenth-century England eventually reified the mythological status it enjoys today. A focus on collecting “material” as opposed to documenting individual or community expression helps to explain why we view folk music now as authored anonymously or collectively. Reification can be defined as the conversion of the ephemeral to the repeatable, and *The Folk* contains several interesting discussions of how the phonographic and photographic technologies that enabled mechanical reproduction figure into our folkloric imagination. The central irony of this phenomenon is, of course, that folk collectors enthusiastically used the very technologies of a modern world that they simultaneously decried for destroying a disappearing culture. Chapter 2 documents counterpoints to such mainstream practices and views. Even before the twentieth-century, voices such as Joseph Jacobs could be heard at London’s Folklore Society describing the imaginary nature of “the folk” and pointing out that publishing firms had a vested interest in popularizing anonymously authored material for which they had to pay no royalties. In this sense, collecting can be understood “not as the discovery, but as the *manufacture* of culture” (52) and can be viewed as part of a colonialist mindset in which the creative labor of lower classes is appropriated by the intelligentsia for their own economic and political ends.

Chapter 3 centers on the interweaving of politics and culture by Arts and Crafts Movement pioneer William Morris. For Morris “folk revivalism manifests a special kind of utopian thinking” (74) that meshed perfectly with his ideas about the centrality of art to a truly fulfilled life. Morris believed that folk arts could awaken the political consciousness of subjugated classes. His vision was also an explicitly socialistic one at the turn of the twentieth century that would influence subsequent cultural revolutionaries who sought to wed music and politics. Chapter 4 shows

the wide variety of perspectives taken by collectors and scholars of black folk music. The contrast between white collector's working in colonialist modes and black scholars working to celebrate and preserve the traditions of their own communities is stark. But perhaps even more interesting is the range of opinion among black scholars themselves. W.E.B. Du Bois's *The Souls of Black Folk*, from which the chapter's subtitle takes its name, is unsurprisingly discussed at length. But the perspectives of black artists and authors like W. C. Handy and Jean Toomer, who actually created work inspired by the black folk tradition, are given attention as well. These histories remind us that no group is a monolith and help to uncover perspectives of folk music that have been obscured by dominant narratives.

Chapter 5 focuses on that most prolific of turn-of-the-century folk collectors: Cecil Sharp. This chapter becomes the full statement of the book's theme about the malleability of folkloric imagination to be shaped by who gets to do the imagining. Sharp's internalized racism, his commitment to Social Darwinism, and above all his "position[ing of] himself at the helm of the movement serving as a gatekeeper to the folk" (143) help to shine light on the darker aspects of Anglo-American folk music history (Sharp famously entwined the two nation's folk histories when he crossed the Atlantic in the early twentieth century to collect songs among the descendants of Scotch-Irish in the Appalachian Mountains). Especially interesting is the discussion of Sharp's emphasis on the use of traditional folk music in education, an emphasis that resonated with Nazi Germany's educational projects a few decades later. By shining a critical lens on lionized figures like Sharp, *The Folk* helps us to see beyond a folk mythology that obfuscates and perpetuates inequality in the music industry and creates a breeding ground for reactionary messages disguised as sacred history to circulate. In fact, as Cole discusses in the book's Coda, folk music is being put to such uses in the present day as those styling themselves as minstrels of the alt-right remake popular folk melodies to spread their racist, fascist, and nationalistic ideologies.

This book has interesting intersections with many current trends in the study of popular music. Personally, I found Cole's insight about the appropriation of black folk culture as communal property by John Lomax to be particularly salient. While notions of collective, anonymous authorship might seem to have an air of nobility that puts the focus on the music rather than the musician, in practice such ideas have often been used to classify the creativity of minorities and marginalized groups as public

domain. More generally, this book provides an excellent example of using cultural phenomena to examine political communication. Perhaps the most generalized takeaway is that folk music is truly music of the people in that its actual history reflects all the complexity and contradiction of human life. Folk music does not have any mystic power to heal or destroy on its own, its power resides in who gets to play it and to what ends.

Cole has done popular music studies a great service in tackling the central questions of folk music scholarship: How do you critically analyze something so many view as sacred? As much as this book might benefit political pundits who exploit folkloric imagination to make their audiences nostalgic for a past that never existed, it is unlikely that they will take its lessons to heart. This book would be excellent for use in a graduate seminar, but for those of us who primarily teach undergraduates the book's deep engagement with theory may be challenging for many students. Still, we who teach students aspiring to enter music industry careers bear some responsibility to push back against mythologies that obscure harmful realities. Just as Cecil Sharp understood the power of education to shape worldview, we can teach our students this book's lesson that folk music, or any kind of creative expression, is not inherently any particular thing. It is what we make it.

Jason Lee Guthrie

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Scott Orr. *How to Start a Record Label: A 30 Day Guide. Other Record Labels*, 2021. [otherrecordlabels.com](https://doi.org/10.25101/23.8)

<https://doi.org/10.25101/23.8>

In recent years, the industry has undergone a drastic shift from the physical product model to the digital streaming model.¹ Releasing music digitally has lowered the cost of distribution and made it possible for the average person to release music without a record label. Essentially, these artists are their own record label. The rise in streaming and the low cost of releasing music has also spawned many entrepreneurs to start record labels and sign artists. As a music educator teaching at the college level, I have been searching for a supplement for my courses that will help to add the do-it-yourself (DIY) record label component to reflect the changing times of the music industry. In university music business programs, knowledge of record labels, their history, and their structure are important aspects that should be covered, but it is also important that the DIY style of record labels be considered given today's market changes. Author Scott Orr adds to this discussion and the literature on DIY record labels in his 2021 book *How to Start a Record Label: A 30 Day Guide*. His book focuses on releasing music independently and gives a step-by-step guide on creating an independent label entity and releasing music. Orr is a Canada-based entrepreneur, podcaster, musician, and author. In 2010, he started his independent record label Other Songs for the release of his own music, which has garnered over thirteen million streams. His podcasts include interviews with industry executives and advice about the art and culture of running a DIY record label.

How to Start a Record Label is divided into four parts with a total of forty-seven chapters. The first part is separated into two chapters with an introduction to the book and an explanation of what Orr considers the four pillars of building a successful record label: be consistent, persistent, intentional, and generous. He describes consistency as creating a plan and sticking to it and persistence as focusing on that consistency over the long term. The chapter also recommends having a clear strategy in everything you do. The fourth pillar, generosity, applies to signing new artists and giving them the tools they need to achieve their goals. The author dis-

1. Dan Galen Hodges Jr., "Cultural Implications of International Companies Acquiring Nashville Publishers," *College Music Symposium* 62, no. 1 (2022): 69-81. <https://doi.org/10.18177/sym.2022.62.mbi.11560>.

cusses generosity with the idea of helping to provide others knowledge gained from experience. The section provides a good foundation for Orr's step-by-step guide and a philosophy or mindset to follow as a record label entrepreneur.

Part two includes thirty chapters and is Orr's daily breakdown of what to do in the first thirty days of the process of starting a record label and releasing music. The book starts with the basics of planning, which is a process that many overlook due to the emotional tug of releasing their music to the world. A good plan is an example of what Orr describes in part one as the pillar of being intentional and can help set a label and its music up for better success. Starting with picking a name and defining goals and audience, labels and artists must create a brand that they want to emulate and for the public to see. Next, the author explains setting up the infrastructure for the label and its releases. Advice is given on building a proper website, finding artists, finding a music attorney to create contracts, and deciding on royalty splits with artists. Next, Orr explains that label owners should decide what type of medium fits their possible consumer base. If the primary consumers are identified as vinyl album purchasers, then a manufacturing plan is necessary. The book outlines some great things to consider when going the manufacturing route. If the primary consumers are identified as streaming customers, the label can save manufacturing expense and focus monetary efforts elsewhere. Only after all the preliminary planning does Orr suggest launching a record label.

The author explains that the launching of a label and its recorded product should include some crucial elements. The first is to build an email list of possible customers for a direct connection between fans and the label's artists. Next, build a press list of potential companies with individuals to review the label and its product. Press is essential in an album or single-release campaign. The power of lead time is also explained pertaining to a release. Focusing press releases on a future release can help build anticipation for the product, which can help generate sales or streams. As expenditures mount for releasing and promoting your product, Orr recommends that label owners always be mindful of their budgets. As a label gains traction, cash flows may need to be diversified. The author explains that offering label services for other labels can be a good source of additional income, while also displaying the pillar of generosity discussed in part one.

Part two wraps up with discussions on releasing music product as well as furthering your product once it is released. First, Orr explains to not be afraid to ask for advice from others. Always strive to learn and improve based on entrepreneurs that have gone before you. The author stresses the necessity of social media in targeting your specific audience so you can maximize promotion efforts. Regular posts on relevant platforms can be a great boost for a release. “Thinking outside the box” is an over-used term in business, but the author does have some good points on how to do so. Grassroots efforts like engaging the community or offering special offerings depending on where the consumer connects with the product can be great tools. An independent label owner cannot simply upload music to Spotify or Apple Music without employing an external aggregator. Orr suggests the aggregators CD Baby, DistroKid, and TuneCore as viable options. Once released, pitching to the press and promoting daily on social platforms is extremely important in keeping the release at the forefront of consumers’ minds.

At this point in the book, the author veers off topic and inserts a section on publishing. While the songwriter side of the music business and how songwriter royalties are earned are important topics to understand, they are more complicated than a three-page description and don’t relate to record labels unless the label is also acting as the artist’s publisher of their written works. Part two begins to wrap up with discussions on physical distribution and streaming playlists. If you are releasing physical product, you need to decide where that product is going to be offered and how to place it in those locations. There are independent companies available that can offer distribution services. For digital streaming, it is important to get to know playlist curators at the various streaming platforms and attempt to get them interested in your music. The final thoughts that Orr shares in part two is to always be mindful of the artwork for your releases. The visual element can help draw consumers to your product. Lastly, the author says to have fun, celebrate every win, plan long-term, and maintain the pillars of consistency and persistence by staying connected to your community and fans.

Part three offers six chapters, a conclusion, and some final thoughts encouraging readers to take the leap to becoming record label entrepreneurs. In addition, the section includes FAQs with common questions from those thinking about starting their own label. Orr gives a checklist outlining the main points of part two’s thirty-day process as an easy ref-

erence for label owners. The section closes with some marketing ideas as well as a short biography on Orr. Part four of the book does not offer new information but does include some valuable supplemental resources: worksheets for release schedules, contact lists, branding, objective/goal sheets, yearly and weekly calendars, catalog listings, and to-do lists. There is also a supplemental workbook available with more worksheet resources to help in the planning process.

Overall, Orr's book is a valuable guide for the budding entrepreneur record label owner or independent artist. The topics are explained well so that anyone can understand them, and his recommended steps are laid out in a way that the reader can see each step of starting a record label along with the importance of each. The information provided can make the daunting task of chasing one's dreams of being a record label owner possible by laying the process out in an easy-to-follow checklist for maximum success. The book is also an excellent supplemental resource for a college course due to the rising number of DIY record labels and independent artists releasing music to streaming platforms. As a college professor, I see many students releasing music without adequate planning. Orr's guide would be a great help to allow them to see the importance of a solid release strategy over the emotional tug of rushing music out into the marketplace because they are so excited for the world to hear it. I would not, however, recommend this book as a standalone resource for record labels as it lacks discussions on the history of record labels, major label structures, and how labels operated before and during the digital age.

Dan Galen Hodges Jr.



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Hodges has had his research published in the *College Music Symposium* and *The Journal of Business Diversity Journals* and has presented his research at the annual MEIEA Summits in 2022 and 2023.

Paul Saintilan and David Schreiber. *Managing Organizations in the Creative Economy: Organizational Behaviour for the Cultural Sector* (Second Edition). Oxford: Routledge, 2023.

[routledge.com](https://www.routledge.com).

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A second edition of *Managing Organizations in the Creative Economy: Organizational Behaviour for the Cultural Sector* has been released by Paul Saintilan, a creative industries “pracademic,” author, teacher, and industry consultant, and currently CEO of the Australian Performing Arts Conservatory in Brisbane, Australia, and David Schreiber, Associate Professor and Chair of the Creative & Entertainment Industries program at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. This edition builds on the strong base established in the original 2018 version. And, it is a part of the Routledge *Discovering the Creative Industries* series which seeks to “provide essential reading for those studying to enter the creative industries as well as those seeking to enhance their career via executive education.”

This book focuses on organizational behavior which the authors define as the “field of study which investigates human behavior in organizations, for the purpose of improving organizational effectiveness and performance, and the satisfaction of those working within the organization.” Rather than creating a text that solely focuses on theoretical and traditional management practices, this book draws from such disciplines and moves forward to considering how creative and cultural firms implement such theories as they face a “complex system.” It reminds the reader that the creative firms must be “agile, flexible and adaptive and provide space for creative autonomy.”

As posited in the 2018 review in the *MEIEA Journal*, this book remains of “particular benefit to anyone who might attempt to work in the creative industry, as well as professionals and students in arts management, organization studies, music business, and the broader study of the

entertainment industries.” The authors recognize that much has changed in our world since 2018, when the initial edition was released. As such, changes to this edition include more focus on the “increased impact of digitization and social media, the rise of the #MeToo movement, concerning research on mental health issues facing creative industries workers, and the growing attention being paid to sustainability, carbon footprint and climate change.” Additionally, the authors have moved material around to support the changes in this edition, and in some instances, have created additional chapters, such as Chapter 10 “Teams,” due to the importance of the topic. This book is well-structured as its chapters build upon one another and create cohesive learning.

Of particular importance is the last chapter, Chapter 14 “Ethics in creative organizations and conclusion.” It is imperative readers recognize that ethical issues arise especially in the cultural and creative industries, and the response to such issues has great implications for the brand.

This text is highly recommended not only for the classroom but for any industry professional. Readers will appreciate the straightforward, practical, and thorough way the text is built.

Amy Bryson Smith

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At Belmont, she teaches or has taught the courses Music Industry Contract Law, Copyright Law, Intellectual Property Law, Music Business



Survey, Business Law I, and Business Law II. She is a member of the inaugural class (2021-22) of the Nashville Entertainment & IP Law American Inn of Court. Among other journals, she has been published in the *Journal of Critical Incidents*, *Journal of the Music & Entertainment Industry Educators Association*, *Midwest Law Journal*, *Southern Journal of Business & Ethics*, and *Southern Law Journal*. She has also worked with PBS creating educational resources to support *Country Music: A Film by Ken Burns*.

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