



## Synopsis

The musical adventure of a lifetime. The most exciting book on music in years. A book of treasure, a book of discovery, a book to open your ears to new worlds of pleasure. Doing for music what Patricia Schultz—author of the phenomenal *1,000 Places to See Before You Die*—does for travel, Tom Moon recommends 1,000 recordings guaranteed to give listeners the joy, the mystery, the revelation, the sheer fun of great music. This is a book both broad and deep, drawing from the diverse worlds of classical, jazz, rock, pop, blues, country, folk, musicals, hip-hop, world, opera, soundtracks, and more. It's arranged alphabetically by artist to create the kind of unexpected juxtapositions that break down genre bias and broaden listeners' horizons—it makes every listener a seeker, actively pursuing new artists and new sounds, and reconfirming the greatness of the classics. Flanking J. S. Bach and his six entries, for example, are the little-known R&B singer Baby Huey and the '80s Rastafarian hard-core punk band Bad Brains. Farther down the list: The Band, Samuel Barber, Cecelia Bartoli, Count Basie, and Afropop star Waldemar Bastos. Each entry is passionately written, with expert listening notes, fascinating anecdotes, and the occasional perfect quote—"Your collection could be filled with nothing but music from Ray Charles," said Tom Waits, "and you'd have a completely balanced diet." Every entry identifies key tracks, additional works by the artist, and where to go next. And in the back, indexes and playlists for different moods and occasions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"1,000 Recordings To Hear Before You Die" represents a challenge Martin Landau and the IMF would love: "How do you present a mere 1,000 musical recordings across all major genres, across an entire century, and sufficiently global as to be credible while not esoteric?" Put shorter, "Who made YOU the judge? And why are you such a snob?" There are no upsides to undertaking such a project for the arbiters of musical taste. While I was duly impressed with Tom Moon's boldness, I was fully prepared to gut him for his shortcomings in selecting these "essential" recordings. First, the boring stuff: The book is sorted alphabetically by artist. This presents some difficulty for, say, opera composers, as a given performance of "Madame Butterfly" might be under the composer or the artist. Fortunately, indexes refer to both. Unfortunately, whomever compiled the index (probably that Microsoft Word fella) didn't check for relevance---when I look up Beethoven's 9th Symphony, it takes me to a parenthetical reference to it (main subject: the "Missa Solemnis"), the page where it's truly discussed is not in the index. As a reference book, this poses some trouble. As a skimmer, it poses none. Now, let's get to the content. Many, many genres are represented here. Classical music and opera are given due prominence; country, metal, and Southern Rock are an afterthought; folk is way overrepresented; blues, rap, world, disco, and pop are about right. I'd say this compilation reflects the usual Baby Boomer view of the world of music leavened by a bit of "Empire Records" snobbery. So how'd the artist and recording selection by genre fare? Quite well, surprisingly.

Coming late to the review party on this book, I will not analyze structure and organization, for others have aptly covered those points. I am impressed that anyone could take on such a monumental project and do as apparently well as he has. kudos. To make my biases clear from the outset, though, it's worth noting that my areas of special interest and musical knowledge are classic rock (some pop) and classical music (including opera). This makes my perspective perhaps a little different from others, and from the author's, because he admits up front that his weaknesses are classical and opera. While I can't say I either totally agree with his choices (or recordings of the pieces he chooses), there's really nothing "wrong" with his selections in these areas that I've found -- they're mostly rather "safe" choices that a new listener can't go wrong with, though many of the standards I looked up were very old (granted, to a skilled listener, many OLD recordings are the BEST recordings), but with old tech, you don't get the clearest production of sound and detail that a new listener would obtain from a newer (DDD) recording. But there are exceptions to that rule. I was quite surprised that he chose Zinman and the Zurich Tonhalle's recording of the 9 Beethoven Symphonies -- Beethoven: The Nine Symphonies. This is a VERY fine recording, but it's of a new

edition ("Barenreiter") that still has some critics unconvinced. It's a great recording, and I own it, but there are so many other cycles of Beethoven's Symphonies that have been around for decades and have passed the test of time.

Are you tired of being assaulted by prefabricated, disposable music? Are you irritated by incessant media coverage of the lip-syncing teen flavor-of-the-month? Are you sick of music guides based on online popularity contests? If so, you need to own this book! This is the rare book that completely lives up to its product description. It's interesting and well written. It will cause you to revisit stuff that has been submerged in your collection. It will help you to discover music that lies beyond your usual listening boundaries. Most importantly, Tom Moon is enthusiastic and well informed about an incredibly wide range of styles and genres. The best aspect of this book, however, is that it reflects the taste and experience of one person. Let's face it: the Zagat's/American Idol/MySpace/Yelp method of mass voting ends up glorifying the lowest common denominator. Anything that is unique, quirky, or challenging gets buried and marginalized. Moon, on the other hand, is able to establish a consistent tone and viewpoint that gives him the space to include both the expected (come on, you know Dark Side of the Moon, Kind of Blue, and Beethoven's Ninth are going to be included in a book like this) and the unexpected. For instance, Learning to Crawl instead of Pretenders?

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