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The Very Best Of Bob And Ray: Legends Of Comedy



Synopsis

Before Bob & Ray, comedians told jokes. After Bob & Ray, they told stories. When they first got together in 1946 on WHDH-AM Boston, no one guessed that their subtle, intelligent, deadpan brand of humor would revolutionize the comedic landscape. With a gift for an improvisation and a keen understanding of the absurd, Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding created a universe of wonderful characters and rewrote the rules for what's funny. Consider any important comedy star since "Bob Newhart, Garrison Keillor, Woody Allen, Johnny Carson, George Carlin, Jay Leno, David Letterman, Jerry Seinfeld" and you can hear the debt to Bob & Ray. This collection honors the two and only with selections from their early years (1950s, '60s, and '70s) and public radio years ('80s), their 1984 Carnegie Hall performances, and three previously unreleased archival recordings.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The GOOD news is for anyone who doesn't already own a collection of Bob & Ray recordings. This is an extensive and representative collection of their humor, at a reasonable price. One could argue whether or not these particular routines are the "very best" - that's always going to be a subjective opinion - but the collection is strong throughout and includes all the familiar classics, such as the Komodo Dragon Expert, the Slow Talkers of America, and Wally Ballou with the Cranberry Man. The BAD news is for anyone who does already own a significant number of Bob & Ray releases. All but THREE of the 96 tracks have been previously released, sometimes more than once already. And I don't mean in alternate versions, but in these exact, same recordings. To be honest to the

consumer, this package should have been entitled "The Very Best of Previously Released Bob & Ray." Unfortunately I now understand why HighBridge Company provided virtually no information about content (either to or on their own website) prior to the release. The phrase "previously unreleased archival recordings" -- three, count `em THREE, new tracks out of 96! -- in the product description can only be called deceptive. If you own the collection entitled "A Night of Two Stars: Live at Carnegie Hall," you already have more than 20% of this set. If you also own the "Classic Bob & Ray" releases, you already own 63% of this set. As for my rating: If you did not grow up listening to Bob & Ray, their humor is perhaps an acquired taste. This collection may well help you acquire it. For those who already love Bob & Ray, it will be a pleasure to listen to these 5 hours. Therefore, for content I would rate the collection a 5, BUT ...

If the only sure sign of an entertainer's greatness is that you literally never tire of them, then to me, personally, Bob & Ray were the greatest comedy team that ever lived. None other than David Letterman referred to the mild-mannered Bob Elliott and Ray Goulding as the gold standard of comedy, and indeed there is something irresistible and uncannily reliable about these seemingly gentle puncturers of pomposity, two nimble-minded guys whom for forty years played a huge cast of characters, always with great comic ideas delivered dead-straight serious. So it should be celebrated that there is a brand-new, glossy, handsomely-designed collection gathering the cream of Bob & Ray's huge backlog of radio and stage sketches. And I would celebrate it, were it not for the haphazard editing of the items themselves. This set is really a sampler of producer Larry Josephson's previous Bob & Ray collections, which themselves date back to, I believe, the late 1980s. I was grateful he put those out then as I took them out of my local library and literally laughed myself silly every time. Those albums were divided into themes, rather than recreating complete shows. Josephson's done that again here. The editing is not very good; abrupt cuts where fades, cross-fades or full stops would have been better (See Andre Jacquemin's sterling work on The Monty Python Instant Record Collection for peerless audio comedy editing...should that in fact turn your crank...). The album starts off erratically, with Bob Elliott in mid-sentence (!); indeed the whole first disc is from their Carnegie Hall concert, which, impressive though it may have been to see, makes lousy audio.

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