



Spoken Word: Postwar American Phonograph Cultures

Jacob Smith

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From the 1940s to the 1970s, the phonograph industry experienced phenomenal growth, both in sales and in cultural influence. Along with hugely popular music recordings, spoken word LPs served a multitude of functions and assumed an important place in the American home. In this book, Jacob Smith surveys a diverse range of spoken word genres—including readings of classic works of literature and drama, comedy albums, children's records, home therapy kits, even erotica—to illuminate this often overlooked aspect of the postwar entertainment industry and American culture. A viable alternative to mainstream broadcasting, records gave their listeners control over what they could hear at home. Smith shows how the savvy industry used spoken word records to develop markets for children, African Americans, women, and others not well served by radio and television.

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