

Bing Crosby - The Definitive Collection (2006)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 06 November 2011 11:57 - Last Updated Thursday, 31 July 2014 19:52

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01. *Where The Blue Of The Night (Meets The Gold Of The Day)* 03:01 02. *Stardust* 02:48
03. *Blue Hawaii* 03:09 04. *Pennies From Heaven* 03:12 05. *Sweet Leilani* 03:19 06. *You Must Have Been A Beautiful Baby* 02:57 07. *Home On The Range* 03:12 08. *White Christmas* 03:00
09. *Sunday, Monday Or Always* 02:35 10. *Swinging On A Star* 02:32 11. *Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral (That's An Irish Lullaby)* 02:59 12. *Don't Fence Me In* 03:07 13. *Road To Morocco* 02:37 14. *It's Been A Long, Long Time* 02:59 15. *MacNamara's Band* 02:43 16. *Alexander's Ragtime Band* 03:00 17. *Now Is The Hour (Maori Farewell Song)* 03:09 18. *Dear Hearts And Gentle People* 02:41 19. *Play A Simple Melody* 02:55 20. *In The Cool, Cool, Cool Of The Evening* 03:26 21. *Ol' Man River* 02:22 22. *Around The World (In Eighty Days)* 02:56

The chief drawbacks to this album lie in its title and its marketing, not its contents. In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, Universal Music, repository of the largest catalog of vintage music in the world, embarked on several reissue programs with different price points aimed at different consumers. There was the 20th Century Masters/The Millennium Collection of best-ofs, relatively short single-disc packages at a discount price. And there was the Gold series of two-disc compilations. In between was a series called The Definitive Collection, full-priced, single-disc collections. A given artist might have releases in each of the series. The trouble, of course, lies in the word "definitive," and when it comes to Bing Crosby, co-compiler and annotator F.B. "Wig" Wiggins, an official of the International Club Crosby, immediately acknowledges the problem. "The 'definitive' Bing Crosby -- on a single disc -- is almost a contradiction in terms," he admits at the outset. Instead, Wiggins prefers the word "representative," which he uses twice in his liner notes to describe the album. Unfortunately, it is the word "definitive" that appears in the title, and it is reinforced by a sticker on the shrink wrap declaring, "His 22 Greatest Hits." The album contains nothing of the sort. It is what Wiggins calls it, representative. Starting with Crosby's radio theme song, "Where the Blue of the Night (Meets the Gold of the Day)," the album attempts to cover the bases of Crosby's extensive discography, which Wiggins, the author of a book on the subject (*Bing Crosby's Commercial Recordings: From 78s to CDs*, self-published, 2001), estimates to run to 2,000 titles. There are examples of Hawaiian music ("Blue Hawaii," "Sweet Leilani," "Now Is the Hour [Maori Farewell

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Song]), western music ("Home on the Range," "Don't Fence Me In"), Christmas music ("White Christmas"), and Irish music ("Too-Ra-Loo-Ra-Loo-Ral [That's an Irish Lullaby]," "MacNamara's Band"), as well as pop standards ("Stardust," "Pennies from Heaven," "You Must Have Been a Beautiful Baby"), some of them written specifically for Crosby ("Swinging on a Star"). The arrangements range from swing band accompaniment to jazz groups to a cappella groups, with Crosby handling everything from ballads to jump tunes ably. There are pairings with some stellar partners including the Andrews Sisters, Bob Hope, and Al Jolson. And the collection has breadth as well as variety, spanning 25 years from 1931 to 1956. Add it all up, and you've got a sampler that would make an ideal introduction to a listener trying to get an idea of Bing Crosby's music from an hour's worth of music. And that would be fine, if only marketing exigencies didn't require that the package be called The Definitive Collection instead of, say A Representative Collection. --- William Ruhlmann, Rovi

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