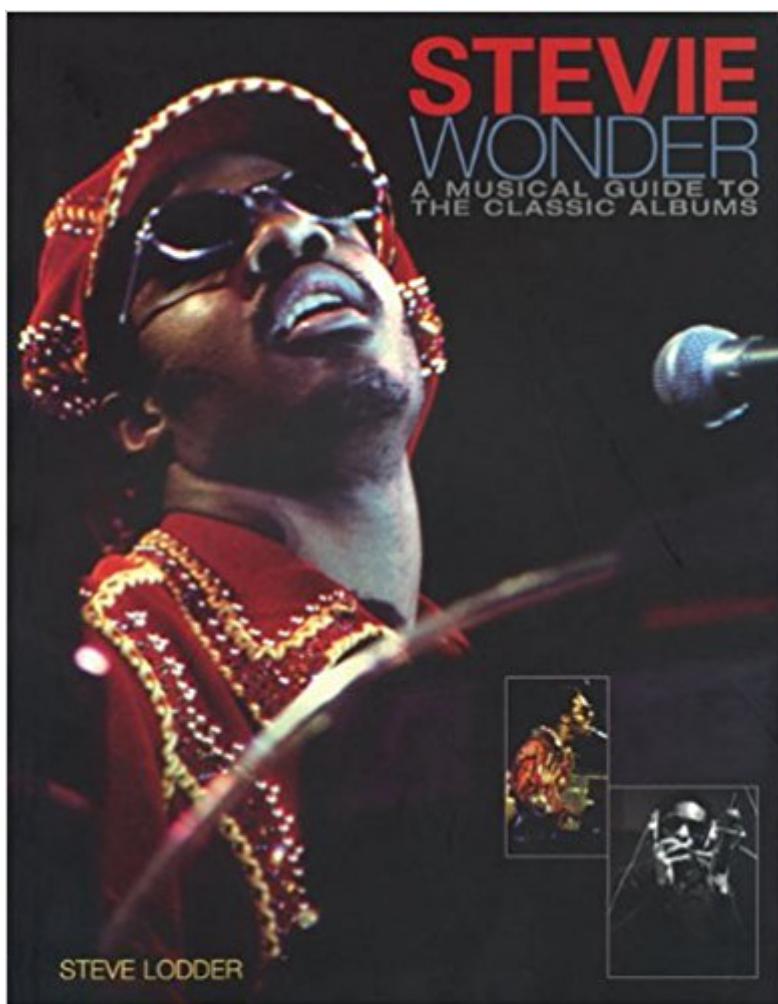


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Stevie Wonder - A Musical Guide To The Classic Albums (Book)



Synopsis

(Book). Stevie Wonder is a much-beloved American icon and an indisputable genius not only of soul and rhythm & blues, but popular music in general. Author Steve Lodder tells Wonder's story from a fresh musical perspective, concentrating on his most productive period, 1971-1981. After an in-depth look at Wonder's background and his early history with Motown, Lodder explores in detail the musical characteristics and influences found on the classic albums from the '70s: *Music of My Mind*, *Talking Book*, *Innervisions*, *Fulfillingness' First Finale*, and *Songs in the Key of Life*. Taking full advantage of the new opportunities afforded by the synthesizer technology and multi-tracking, and inspired by the lyrical depth of Marvin Gaye and Sly Stone, Wonder created a series of albums as popular as they are acclaimed.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

First of all, happy to have any book that delves into the combination of background/genesis, influence, music theory and production of Stevie's music. Lodder covers the 'classic album period' in most depth, but really Stevie's entire career. 3 1/2 stars right there, close to 4. That doesn't mean I wasn't furious while reading parts. Lodder has a friendly style, but the flipside is that he also feels free to voice his dislikes/critical prejudices within the context of a 'guide'. Hopefully anyone who'd pick up this book knows these albums/songs well enough to laugh these off, disagree, or agree - but it really poisons parts of the book. What makes me madder is that the opinions represent stereotypes I've seen in 70's baby-boomer music criticism, but that are no longer universal. This is

irresponsible, and intellectually lazy, in an otherwise solidly intelligent book. Some examples: - A general predetermined streak against overt sentiment, which is dangerous when reviewing Stevie's work. (To Lodder, strings are almost inherently bad/easy-listening/sentimental/pandering, Major-7 chords are inherently "sugary" (disregarding that they can be used in many contexts). Yes, TONTO's synths do sound fresh and otherworldly vs. strings, but Gaye's What's Goin' On transfigures strings and came out right before the 'classic period', he disregards that orchestration could be anything but a cynical grab at white audiences. That association also ignores Lodder's own book structure, which highlights Stevie's different impulses (funk, ballads, social commentary) and their ability to balance each other. - Stevie is a master of complexity, funk and social consciousness, but he's just as known for the simpler, joyous singles and that aspect of his personality, so to rip apart "Sunshine of my Life" is missing the point. From what I know about Stevie, I think he thinks of that type of song with no less than full dignity, sincerity and importance, and he's no fool for thinking that way. - Lodder calls out some lyrics as "preachy" or "self-important" - again, with Stevie, direct sincerity is one of his primary strategies, esp. on "Songs In The Key Of Life", so why disclaim them? The statement that "no one likes to be preached to" is a loaded one, and discounts a key role for artists. - Suggests changes Stevie should have made to certain songs (take out backing vocals in "For Once in My Life" he suggests, or the orchestration in "Never Dreamed You'd Leave In Summer" (aspects which presumably most people consider either indivisible or indispensable to those songs.) Lodder apologizes for the essential intro to "Ma Cherie Amour" as "blocky"? - Says a few songs are unlistenable - the problem here is you should never disqualify any song (esp. in a master's catalog), because there's always an angle = I've seen other critics get past seemingly "negative" aspects of the same songs ("Wanna Talk To You" for example). You may say none of these are outrageous in and of themselves - but it's also the condescending, 'tsk-tsk', "Stevie should know better" way it's written. I wish Lodder would resist channeling Christgau (and online, Wilson/Alroy) in their overconfident, flippant but often predictable dismissals of certain artistic choices, especially artistic choices that are inherent facets of the identity of that artist. Lodder's obviously a deep Stevie fan, and for every time he criticizes, it's dwarfed by his general praise and in many specific passages. He has a friendly writing style, which may explain why he's so free about expressing opinions. A lot of great information, synthesis, and sheer work/research, to the degree it makes me feel guilty for 3 stars and I leaned towards 4 despite my profound annoyance. I got a lot from it, and I thank him for writing it.

I wanted this book so much and it is not the author's issue, but I have to take my frustration out

here.

Great book. Stevie is a 'musician's musician', and the book is written by a musician. Gives real insight into his career, the early Motown days, and the musical ideas behind the 'classic albums'. Takes also the social developments of the period into consideration.

This book gives a great attempt (although impossible) to illustrate the intentions of Stevie's music--in a musically technical way. Having the songs at hand while Steve Lodder describes the soundscapes really adds another dimension to the book. The songs I've listened to hundreds of times are made new again because the author describes each instrument and performer to such great detail. This book can also be described as a user's guide to Stevie's greatest music.

Fascinating, in-depth exploration of the master's most creative and groundbreaking albums, from the early to mid 70's. If you like learning about the creation of great art by great artists you'll like this book.

i was expecting some sheet music in this book and i just see words talking about musicvery
disapointed

I'm buying one for my friend Jay-Z. I love it! If you love Stevie's "golden period" and you either write, play or produce music this book is a no brainer!

Excellent book. It even accounts some of the music theory behind some of Stevie's sublime compositions (chord progression, etc.). Added bonus talks in detail about some of the keyboards (I'm admitted analog synth freak), and inspirations behind some of most ground-breaking, and funky music of all times!!!! A no brainer!!! Just get it!!!!

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