



Doo-Wop Acappella: A Story of Street Corners, Echoes, and Three-Part Harmonies

Lawrence Pitilli

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Doo-Wop Acappella: A Story of Street Corners, Echoes, and Three-Part Harmonies, scholar and musician Lawrence Pitilli details this too-little-explored area of 1950's - early 60's American culture. As Kenny Vance and the Planotones suggested in their classic song "Looking for an Echo," every doo-wop acappella group's mission—the search "for a sound, a place to be in harmony, a place we almost found"—was more than the story of street kids seeking recording glory. It is the tale of urban change, mass migrations, ethnic acculturation, a changing radio and recording industry, and the dynamics of cultural change in the "sounds"—sonic and linguistic—that every generation seeks to make and re-make for itself.

In his study of this neglected period, Pitilli uncovers a rich musical tradition practiced largely by amateurs in an almost mythologized urban America. Although most of these practitioners were musically untrained, their lack of formal music education and financial support neither diluted their passion for singing or their quest for possible fame and fortune. In this engagingly written and celebratory work, Pitilli further demonstrates that doo-wop acappella was closely tied to broader issues, including the self-invented individual, gender roles, and ethnicity, race, and class.

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