

= Spin Alternative Record Guide =

Spin Alternative Record Guide is a musical reference book compiled by the American music magazine Spin and published in 1995 by Vintage Books . It was edited by rock critic Eric Weisbard and Craig Marks , who was the magazine 's editor @-@ in @-@ chief at the time . The book features essays and reviews from a number of prominent critics on albums , artists , and genres considered relevant to the alternative music movement . Contributors who were consulted for the book include Ann Powers , Rob Sheffield , Simon Reynolds , Michael Azerrad , and Robert Christgau .

When Spin Alternative Record Guide was published , it did not sell particularly well and received a mixed reaction from reviewers . The quality and relevance of the contributors ' writing were praised , while the editors ' concept and comprehensiveness of alternative music were seen as ill @-@ defined . Nonetheless , it inspired a number of future music critics and helped revive the career of 1960s folk artist John Fahey , whose entry in the book helped renew interest in his music at the time of its publication .

= = Content and scope = =

Spanning 468 pages , Spin Alternative Record Guide compiles essays by 64 music critics on recording artists and bands who either predated , were involved in , or developed from the alternative music movement . In the book , each artist 's entry is accompanied by their discography , with albums rated a score between one and ten . The book 's editors , critic Eric Weisbard and Spin editor @-@ in @-@ chief Craig Marks , consulted journalists such as Simon Reynolds , Alex Ross , Charles Aaron , Michael Azerrad , Ann Powers , and Rob Sheffield , who wrote most of the complete discography reviews . The artist entries are also accompanied by song lyrics and album artwork .

Although " alternative " had been used as a catchall term for rock bands outside the mainstream , Spin Alternative Record Guide covers approximately 500 artists from a variety of genres considered relevant to alternative music 's development . These include 1970s punk rock , 1980s college rock , 1990s indie rock , noise music , reggae , electronic , new wave , heavy metal , krautrock , synthpop , disco , alternative country , hip hop , grunge , worldbeat , and avant @-@ garde jazz . Most artists associated with classic rock are not covered , while some mainstream pop artists are given entries , including Madonna and ABBA . Other non @-@ rock artists reviewed in the book include jazz composer Sun Ra , country singer @-@ songwriter Lyle Lovett , and Qawwali singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan . Weisbard and Marks have said the book was meant to be " suggestive more than comprehensive " of alternative music .

An introductory essay on alternative rock and " alternative sensibilities " was written by Weisbard . In it , he explains alternative music as a category whose principles are " antigenerationally dystopian , subculturally presuming fragmentation " , and " built on an often neurotic discomfort over massified and commodified culture " . He and Marks consulted a number of artists for their top @-@ ten record lists , which were interspersed throughout the book . They also curated a " Top 100 Alternative Albums " list for the appendix , ranking the Ramones ' 1976 self @-@ titled debut album at number one .

= = Reception and impact = =

The first edition of Spin Alternative Record Guide was published on October 10 , 1995 , by Vintage Books . It was the first book compiled by Spin . Having edited their book , Weisbard put his pursuit of a PhD at UC Berkeley on hold and accepted a job offer from the magazine , which marked the beginning of his career as a rock critic . Although the book did not sell well , its entry on 1960s folk artist John Fahey , written by Byron Coley , helped renew interest in Fahey 's music . According to Ben Ratliff from The New York Times , this led to substantial interest in Fahey from record labels and the alternative music scene , helping revive his career .

In a contemporary review , Adam Mazmanian from Library Journal recommended Spin Alternative

Record Guide to " both public and academic libraries " and said that while The Rolling Stone Album Guide (1992) also offers complete discographies of artists ranging from Jonathan Richman to Throbbing Gristle , this book 's reviews are superior in " length and scope " . Mazmanian argued that " this guide fills a gap in the literature of modern music " at a time when " alternative " has developed a ubiquitous presence in the marketing of popular music . In New York magazine , Kim France called it " a well @-@ edited , unpretentious , and comprehensive look at all the crazy stuff the kids are listening to these days " . In a less enthusiastic review , Booklist critic Gordon Flagg was impressed by the accuracy of the artist entries and the quality of the contributors ' reviews , but found Weisbard 's idea of alternative ill @-@ defined and recommended The Trouser Press Record Guide (1991) as a more comprehensive alternative . Billboard magazine 's Beth Renaud was more critical of the book , calling much of the writing biased and the organization unencyclopedic . She said Weisbard 's " obligatory " essay is outdated and vague in defining alternative rock and that the contributors " gush " over artists usually covered by Spin , with many relevant artists omitted in place of more perplexing additions .

American pop culture critic Chuck Klosterman later cited Spin Alternative Record Guide as one of his five favorite books , saying in 2011 , " I fear this might be out of print , but it 's probably my favorite music book of all time . Since its 1995 publication , I doubt a year has passed when I didn 't reread at least part of it . " Robert Christgau , who contributed to the book , wrote that while most music guides and encyclopedia books he has consulted were unremarkable , Spin Alternative Record Guide was one of the few " useful exceptions " because of what he felt was the " sharpest writing " from contributors such as Weisbard and Sheffield . Maura Johnston , on the other hand , said in retrospect that the book 's list of the 100 best albums catered to " hipper , Gen @-@ Xier tastes " .

In 2011 , Spin Alternative Record Guide was included in Pitchfork 's list of their staff 's favorite music books . Contributing writer Matthew Perpetua said the book 's writers ? either top critics at the time or those who have since become important figures in music journalism ? outline the " alternative sensibility " by recognizing and connecting music from disparate genres in " an inclusive , open @-@ minded survey , but it 's defined as much by what 's left out ? pretty much all Boomer @-@ oriented rock ? as what it includes . " According to Perpetua , the " number of young readers [who] pursued music criticism " because of the book was far greater than the copies it sold . Matthew Schnipper , editor of The Fader , bought the book after it was published and said he used it as a consumer guide for 10 years . Along with its influence on future critics , the book was cited by guitarist William Tyler as his only source of music education growing up , having found it in a bookstore around the time it was published : " They had entries for all these different people that I had never heard of : Can , John Zorn , [John] Fahey , whatever ... That was before any sort of Internet presence " .