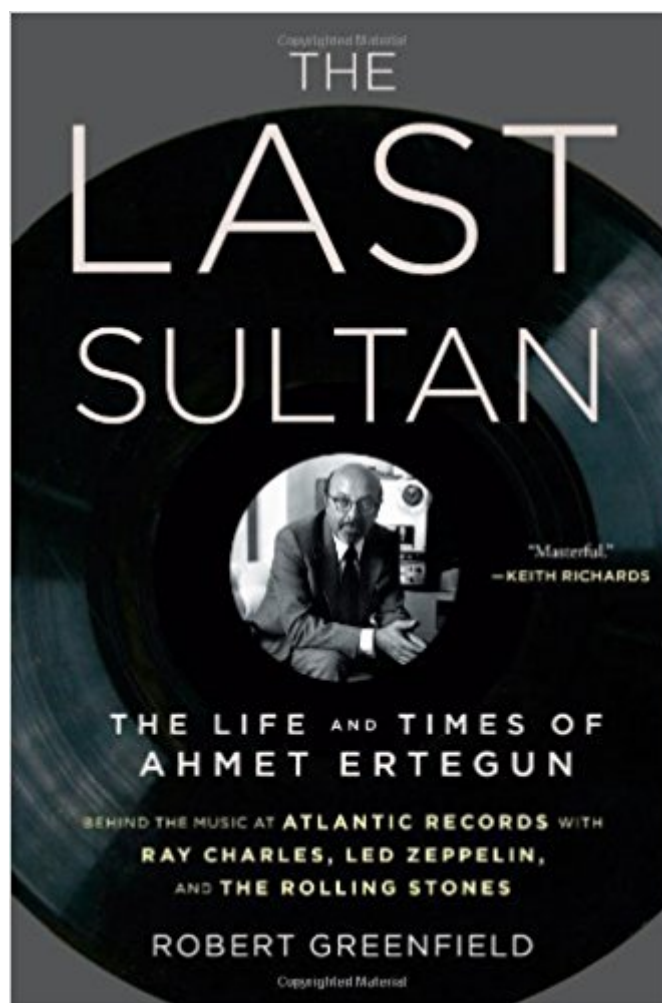


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The Last Sultan: The Life And Times Of Ahmet Ertegun



Synopsis

The Last Sultan is the definitive biography of a man who changed popular culture throughout the world. As the founder and head of Atlantic Records, Ahmet Ertegun signed and/or recorded many of the greatest musical artists of all time, among them Ruth Brown; Big Joe Turner; Ray Charles; Bobby Darin; Sonny and Cher; Eric Clapton; Buffalo Springfield; Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; Led Zeppelin; the Rolling Stones; Bette Midler; and Kid Rock. Working alongside his older brother, Nesuhi, one of the preeminent jazz producers of all time, and the legendary Jerry Wexler, who produced great soul artists like Wilson Pickett, Solomon Burke, and Aretha Franklin, Ertegun transformed Atlantic Records from a small independent record label into a hugely profitable multinational corporation. In successive generations, he also served as a mentor to record-business tyros like Phil Spector, David Geffen, and Lyor Cohen. Brilliant, cultured, and irreverent, Ertegun was as renowned for his incredible sense of personal style and nonstop A-list social life as his work in the studio. Born into great privilege as the son of a high-ranking Turkish diplomat during the last days of the Ottoman Empire, Ertegun spent his life bringing the black-roots music he loved to the world. A larger-than-life figure, always hip, Ertegun lived in the grand manner but was never happier than when he found himself in some down-and-out joint listening to music late at night. Blessed with impeccable taste and brilliant business acumen, he brought rock & roll into the mainstream while creating the music that became the sound track for the lives of multiple generations. With supporting characters like Steve Ross, Henry Kissinger, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Jann Wenner, and a host of others, The Last Sultan is the fascinating story of a man who always lived by his own rules.

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Customer Reviews

As a professor of music at an ivy league institution, a huge fan of early R+B and soul music and a total Stones freak, I pre-ordered 'The Last Sultan', was up all night reading it and am currently considering making it required reading for my course on popular music. I have followed Greenfield's writing since his STP: Stones Touring Party book, and fell in love with his oral biography of the great rock promoter Bill Graham from reading 'Bill Graham Presents', which I consider to be the Bible of what used to be known as the music biz. I also enjoyed his bios of Jerry Garcia and Timothy Leary and of course Exile on Main Street: A Season in Hell with the Rolling Stones. I've always appreciated Greenfield's writing because he tells it like it is, and isn't some fanboy poseur impressed by fame or stardom. At the same time, he isn't a muckraker. I'm about 3/4 through 'The Last Sultan' and I think it's his most readable book to date, and pleases much like the great pop music which Ahmet Ertegun himself produced. The stories in this book are utterly priceless. My favorites include a scene in which a large woman wearing a muumu happily greets Ahmet at some social function only to have him respond, 'sorry, but I don't think we've met', to which she responds, 'Well, I'm your ex-wife'. In another scene, an extremely hungover Kid Rock (whom Ahmet refers to as his 'young elvis') comes over to Ahmet's house for lunch and complains that he hasn't slept and is having girl trouble, to which Ahmet responds 'You want a Baby Ruth, man? That'll make you feel better', at which point a butler brings out a silver platter of Baby Ruths and Butterfingers. On a more serious note, the amazing history of Ahmet's father, a Turkish diplomat to the United States, and Ahmet's childhood with his brother Nesuhi (a jazz fanatic who ran his own label and recorded and produced everyone from Ornette Coleman to Sonny Rollins and even designed their album covers) is extremely interesting and noteworthy. Of all the people Greenfield has written about, Ahmet Ertegun is the most fascinating and unbelievable personality of all, trumping even Bill Graham IMHO. To be able to have lunch with Henry Kissinger and then 'do coke with the bass player' in the same day is hardly understandable. As Kid Rock notes, Ahmet had more energy and partied harder at 75 years old than people half his age. But more importantly than the sex and drugs was the music. Ahmet was one of the few 'record men' who actually wrote songs and produced them in the studio. (Ray Charles' 'Mess Around' comes to mind) In another great scene, a young Andy Johns (who recorded 'Exile') is mixing a Stones song in the studio when 'some old guy walks in and says Hey, kid, you should turn up the bass and add some bottom to the guitars', and as Johns says, 'I did, and the thing gelled'. Asking Keith Richards 'who was that?', Keith responds, 'that's Ahmet

Ertegun and he's been producing hits since before you were born'. Anyhow, I've written too much, but as someone who loves and teaches the history of this music for a living, all I can say is, this book ROCKS.

The life of Ahmet Ertegun was truly an amazing one, and this alone makes this book worth reading. But this is not biography at its best. The author often gets caught up in a "this happened, then this happened" sort of chronological storytelling that tends to get stilted. The author too often loses sight of the bigger picture and historical context during some chapters (particularly towards the end of the book), when he lapses into recounting a series of details and events of questionable relevance. Still, if the history of popular music in America holds any interest for you, this is worth reading, and it's not too much of a time investment at 350 pages. But if you're looking for scintillating biographical writing, you may be frustrated by the lack of a compelling narrative arch to the book.

I was born in 1952. Along with the Beatles, Stax/Volt and Motown, this man made the background music to my life. Thank You Ahmet Ertegun and thank you Robert Greenfield for bringing us this excellent and wonderful biography. This is a must read for anyone who enjoys American music. It can be argued that Ahmet Ertegun's vision changed the world's music forever.

A well written look behind the scenes and into the life of one of the music businesses most influential figures. Ahmet Ertegun Grew up as the son of a Turkish diplomat. His passion for Jazz and american black music inspired him to start what later became the largest and most successful independent record label in the world, Atlantic Records. Ertegun's personal life, friendships, exploits, musical taste, and views on the music business, make for a great read.

A great read about one of my favorite Record Label Executives! even got to Work With Tom Dowd the Engineer from Atlantic. He was a really great man! I was very fortunate to work in the real recording industry in the Late 80's and 90's up until the music business fell apart from the computer age. These old guys did not understand the computer age and they died before it was what it has become today. If Ahmet was alive today he would have had a better set up then itunes you would have downloaded direct from the labels this computer company selling records is horses***!

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