



# What a Wonderful World: A Lifetime of Recordings

*Bob Thiele*

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Music industry legend Bob Thiele will never forget the first time he heard a demo tape from a group of unknowns from New Mexico billed as Buddy Holly and the Crickets. "I was never as confident in my life anything would be a hit record as I was about 'That'll Be the Day'," remembers the record executive and producer who also worked with Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Jackie Wilson, Henry Mancini, and a constellation of other greats on some of their most memorable recordings. But Thiele's employers at Coral Records wouldn't touch Holly and his "hillbilly garbage," and neither would any of the big major labels. Finally Thiele convinced the powers that be at Coral that they just had to release "That'll Be the Day," if only to keep him happy. The result was a monster hit that launched Holly's career and stayed on the charts for half a year.

The discovery of Buddy Holly is just one of the riveting stories Thiele has to tell in *What a Wonderful World*, a rollicking, no-holds-barred account of an unforgettable life in music, as told to Thiele's friend and collaborator Bob Golden. Over a still-ongoing career spanning six decades, Thiele has been a musician, dance band leader, publisher of one of the first jazz magazines in the world, a record producer, a DJ, a record label owner (several times), an A & R man, and a songwriter. Indeed, Thiele's songwriting credits include the beloved Armstrong classic from which this book takes its title. From his precocious adolescence in Queens, where he began hosting his first radio jazz show at the tender age of 14, Thiele's career has been driven and defined by a genuine love and respect for great music. He tells how he discovered Jackie Wilson, jazz immortal Erroll Garner, Buddy Holly, and others, and takes readers behind-the-scenes to legendary recording sessions with Ellington, Armstrong, John Coltrane, Teresa Brewer (Thiele's wife of 26 years), Jack Kerouac, Steve Allen, the McGuire Sisters, Pat Boone, Frankie Laine, and many other artists. Thiele captures the free-wheeling, anything-could-happen-and-usually-did atmosphere of the jazz and pop recording worlds of decades gone by, and shares uproarious recollections of the heavy-hitting movers and shakers he has locked horns with over the years. Equally important, as an enduring and inventive force in American music, Thiele offers candid and perceptive observations on the increasing corporatization of the business he loves. A fascinating journey from the days before rock 'n' roll to today, *What a Wonderful World* could only have been written by a true insider's insider. It will delight music lovers everywhere.

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