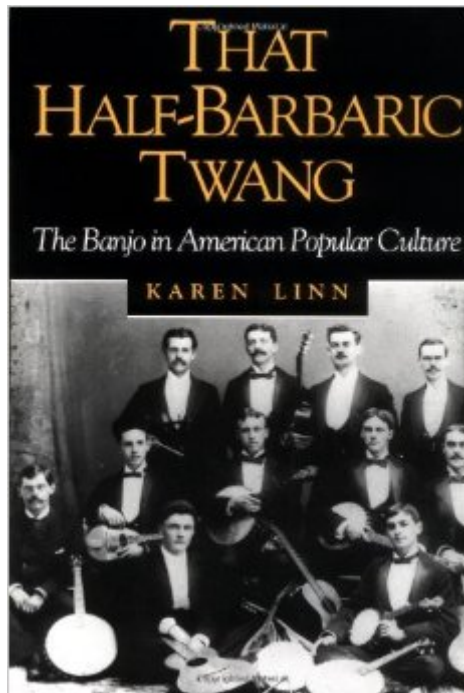


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# That Half-Barbaric Twang: THE BANJO IN AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE (Music In American Life)



## Synopsis

The Banjo in American popular culture.

## Book Information

Series: Music in American Life

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## Customer Reviews

The book is exactly what the title claims- concerned with the \*image\* of the banjo in American \*popular\* culture. In other words, the book is about the ideas (sometimes good, sometimes bad) folks from different parts of society got in their heads concerning the banjo- what they thought about the instrument & the people who played it, why they thought these things, & how this changed through time. Basically, the reputation of the banjo. It is written in a scholarly [dry & impersonal] fashion, and I will admit that I had to wade through parts of it (re-read some sentences, and occasionally put the book down and ponder what was meant) but overall I enjoyed the book for the historical tidbits and for the author's insight. You won't find the music in here, nor is it written in a way that indicates her own musical preferences, but she does give the names of individual artists so you can go hunt recordings down & give a good listen. What you will find is evidence of how American's perceived the banjo- how it was portrayed in advertisements, cartoons, photographs, magazines, paintings, and literature. I found all this really interesting. My favorite was the snippets of literature & illustration from the 1880's that portray saucy young women as banjo players! She discusses the instrument's African origins, the banjo before the Civil War (briefly), the Southern black banjo, the banjo in minstrel shows, medicine shows, vaudeville theatre, 1890's college clubs,

the parlors of upper-class victorian women, the jazz & ragtime banjo, the dance orchestra banjo, the urban banjo, the banjo in Appalachia [mostly how it was viewed by folklorists], the banjo in early country music, what record companies chose to record and why- which affects our perception/ideas/understanding today.

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