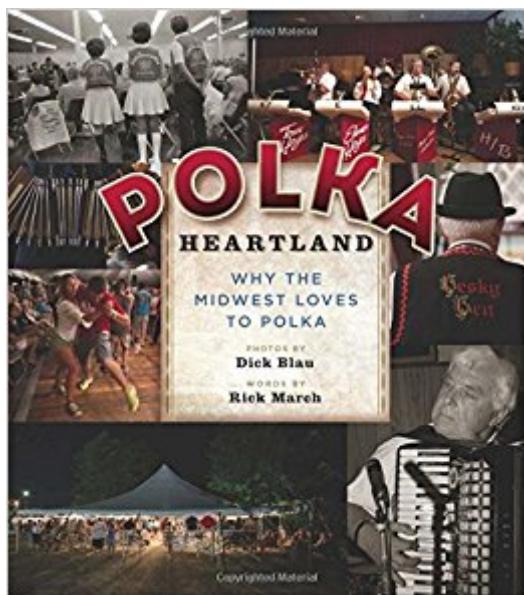


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# Polka Heartland: Why The Midwest Loves To Polka



## Synopsis

"Polka Heartland" captures the beat that pulses in the heart of Midwestern culture--the polka--and offers up the fascinating history of how "oompah-pah" came to be the sound of middle America. From the crowded dance tent at Pulaski Polka Days to an off-the-grid Mexican polka dance in small-town Wisconsin, "Polka Heartland" explores the people, places, and history behind the Midwest's favorite music. From polka's surprising origin story as a cutting-edge European fad to an exploration of the modern-day polka scene, author Rick March and photographer Dick Blau take readers on a joyful romp through this beloved, unique, and richly storied genre. "Polka Heartland" describes the artists, venues, instruments, and music-makers who have been pivotal to polka's popularity across the Midwest and offers six full-color photo galleries to immerse readers in today's vibrant polka scene.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 208 pages

Publisher: Wisconsin Historical Society Press; 1 edition (August 17, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0870207229

ISBN-13: 978-0870207228

Product Dimensions: 8 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,203,782 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #82 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Ethnic & International > Salsa #96 in Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Dance > Folk #114 in Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Dance

## Customer Reviews

Polka Heartland, a rollickingly entertaining and educational book that traces its origins as a cutting-edge European fad to its current status as a festival favorite in cities, towns and villages across Wisconsin. (Michael Popke, The Isthmus, November 2015) In the introduction to Polka Heartland, March (state folklorist for Wisconsin, 1983-2009) writes that he and photographer Dick Blau "aim for in-depth, visually oriented views into the active polka scenes of [their] region" and that it is a project they do not "take lightly." Blau did the photography for Charles Keil and Angeliki Keil's Polka Happiness (CH, Mar'93, 30-3740), and he and March have long been

immersed in the Midwestern polka scene. As a result, the present title is a well-plotted survey of what polka is, where it originated, and how it made its way to the Midwest. What is more, they provide engaging synopses of the various styles of polka in the Midwest. Between chapters are "polka interludes"—brief passages that address such things as the difference between a concertina and an accordion, and why beer and polka go well together. Blau's charming color photos are an excellent complement to March's eloquent prose. The selected readings and recordings listed at the end of the book will be a boon for readers curious about this dance form. (Choiceconnect.org, S. Tharp, University of Wyoming Libraries, January 2015) A unique, engaging, informed, informative, and inherently fascinating cultural history from beginning to end... (James A. Cox, Midwest Book Review, Reviewer's Choice, Wisconsin Bookwatch: January 2016) Rick March takes us through the small towns of Wisconsin to outline the continuing attraction polka music still holds for many people. Supplemented by excellent photographs by Dick Blau, Polka Heartland is a personal and heartfelt look at this interesting and unique popular music ... Whether it be the Pulaski Polka days or the Las Vegas Latin Night Club, ... polka plays a vital role in the lives and the identity of these communities...the enthusiasm for the music, and the recent attraction by a younger audience, suggest that the music is evolving yet again... As a music that seems to define the midwest, this is welcome news... (Professor Kenneth J. Bindas, The Annals of Iowa, Vol. 75, 2015) Polka Heartland serves a dual purpose. It is both a "coffee table book" that would be enjoyed by a general audience interested in the photographs and vignettes of the musicians and dancers, and a solid academic study of polka, particularly as seen in Wisconsin but also strongly applicable to polka throughout the United States. It not only fill gaps in scholarly materials that document the traditional and popular music of the Upper Midwest, but more generally represent valuable additions to the literature on American music. (Carl Rahkonen, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, June 2017) .

Author and folklorist Rick March has participated in the Midwest polka scene for more than three decades. He is a preeminent scholar of Midwest music history and culture, a longtime radio host on Wisconsin Public Radio, a producer of polka CDs for Smithsonian Folkways, and a polka musician in his own right. March is retired from the Wisconsin Arts Board. Dick Blau has a BA from Harvard and a PhD from Yale. A self-taught photographer, filmmaker, and performer, he co-founded the highly regarded Department of Film at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Blau calls his work an ethnography of the feelings. His subjects range from highly personal dramas to huge communal

events. Blau has co-authored three books on the culture of celebration: Polka Happiness, Skyros Carnival, and Bright Balkan Morning. Blau lives with writer Jane Gallop in downtown Milwaukee.

I purchased this for a friend who is into Polka music. It was a big hit. Couldn't wait to read it. I also read it, and enjoyed reading how it all got started, and recognized several musicians named in the book.

My dad loves polka and he's the guy that it is hard to buy for as he has everything, this book just takes the cake and is the perfect christmas gift.

What this book does so well is explain how polka music came about, flourished, and how it exists today in its various styles. A lot of history is covered, yet the book is not too wordy or lengthy. The book concentrates on the more influential bands over the decades, and discusses a few of the other bands that have come after and them and still play to this day. It probably would have been easy to overload the book with band and musician data, but in my opinion, Rick March did a perfect job of condensing all of his research into a superb read. The average person on the street doesn't know polka music comes in very specific, different styles. They think it's all tubas and accordions, and it's either Polish or German depending on who you talk to. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Therefore, I highly recommend this book to anyone who wants to broaden their knowledge of polka music. Dick Blau's professional photography is second to none. His photos don't just compliment the reading; they invoke emotion. The main reading of the book is interspersed with interludes that focus on specific people, places, and things that are uniquely relevant to Midwest polka music. Whether they were Iowa farmers or Chicago foundry workers, your parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents kicked up their heels to polka music. Though the polka's heyday is long gone, the music is likely still in your blood, waiting to be tapped and enjoyed. Reading this book will take you all around the heartland of America and teach you about the music of your ancestors, and share with you the joy it brought to them and still brings to so many people today.

My Thoughts: This is an amazing tribute to Polka music. It seems like my entire childhood was lived with Polka music playing in the background. My mother's family is Polish on both her maternal and paternal sides. We listened to polka EVERYWHERE. In the car, at family get togethers, on holidays, and Saturdays and Sundays. When we went out for fun we would always end up at some place

playing Polka. I remember getting picked up from every Tuesday and Thursday by my grandmother who would have Polka blasting from her car speakers. I, being a teenager, was of course embarrassed by this, but my friends thought it was just the neatest thing ever. I fund now that my family has all passed on that I miss that Polka backround music. For me, this was a fun reminder of so many memories. This is an in depth look at the culture and history of Polka music. It is filled with bright photos and neat facts that I didn't know. I always thought that Polka was just a Polish thing, but it's not. The way the author wrote this makes it fun and interesting. This inspired me to dust off Granny's record player and teach my children, and all the neighborhood children, some of the things that I loved about my childhood. We all ended up in my backyard twirling and hopping around. Now, I want to point out the cover of this book. Bravo to the cover artist. This book screams "Pick me up!" Things of Interest:-Queen Victoria prohibited polka dancing n her presence. No doubt that helped spark the polka craze!-In 1829, Cyrillic Demian developed the Akkordeon.-Polka and religion? A Polka Mass is a worship service that is the same basic worship service as the Roman Catholic tradition, but utilizing a unique mode of music-- polka! The first Polka Mass was held on May 5, 1973. Recommendation: People who want to learn more about the history of Polka, and especially people who have a love for it.

I received this book via giveaway in exchange for an honest review. I want to thank the peeps over at LibraryThing for my win, to Wisconsin Society Historical Press(that also sent me a catalog showcasing other amazing books by them) and to Rick March and Dick Blau for putting together such a wonderful book. From the moment I received this book in the mail to now I can't stop going over it. I absolutely love it. Next to books I have an obsession for music....all kinds of music so it was especially nice to embrace the world of Polka. I am not very familiar with Polka music but this book gives it all to me...and I have become quite fascinated. It is beautifully put together...every page containing some interesting tidbit, a piece of history, gorgeous photos with such rich colors. From the Slovenian Americans, the Croatians, Frankie Yankovic, Pulaski Polka, Jolly Bashell, the entire past Polka history all the way to Polka's present with Tom Brusky, Mike Schneider, Molly Busta's Polka Party on cable t.v, it is a rich and beautifully cultured world. I was most fond of the section on Mexican Polka. Obviously being Mexican myself, anything within that culture being near and dear to my heart...the mention of Flaco Jimenez, someone I heard growing up with my grandparents..took me back to my childhood. Mexican music is filled with the signature Polka sound. And as mentioned, the photos...I can not say enough about the beautiful pictures within these pages. Rich in color..majestic...stunning...captures the heart of Polka music through the people that love it.

There is even mention of Charles Dickens and how fond of Polka music he was. So fascinating. This is one of those books that you want to keep on a coffee table for display..you want to encourage guests to pick it up and take a look at it. You want to share all that you have learned about the Polka culture. This book has made me wish my grandparents were still around so that I could share this with them. This truly is a beautiful book to have...a wonderful gift idea for anyone who loves all types of music history, either lived it and/or enjoy to this day. I am pleasantly pleased to have this wonderful book in my possession and will cherish it for many years to come.

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