



# Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era

*Ken Emerson*

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## **Always Magic in the Air: The Bomp and Brilliance of the Brill Building Era** Ken Emerson

*Always Magic in the Air* is a family portrait of fourteen remarkable young songwriters who, huddled in midtown Manhattan's Brill Building and in 1650 Broadway during the late 1950s and early '60s, crafted rock 'n' roll's first entries in the Great American Songbook—classics like Elvis Presley's "Jailhouse Rock," Dionne Warwick's "Walk on By," the Crystals' "Uptown," the Shirelles' "Will You Love Me Tomorrow," and the Righteous Brothers' "You've Lost That Lovin' Feelin'." Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, Burt Bacharach and Hal David, Doc Pomus and Mort Shuman, Neil Sedaka and Howie Greenfield, Carole King and Gerry Goffin, Barry Mann and Cynthia Weil, and Jeff Barry and Ellie Greenwich melded black, white, and Latino sounds before multiculturalism became a concept, integrated audiences before America desegregated its schools, and brought a new social consciousness to pop music.

Evoking a period when fear and frivolity, sputniks and hula-hoops simultaneously girdled the globe, Ken Emerson—author of the acclaimed *Doo-Dah!: Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture*—describes the world that made these songwriters, the world they in turn made in their music, and the impact on their careers, partnerships, and marriages when the Beatles, Dylan, and drugs ripped those worlds asunder. The stories behind their songs make the "golden oldies" we take for granted sound brand new and more moving and eloquent than we ever suspected.

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