EXHIBIT

The Look of Midcentury Sound:
Vintage Record Covers

A new book features 150 album covers from the 1950s and 1960s that offer a portrait of postwar American culture

By Alexandra Wolfe
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Before album covers were reduced to tiny icons on smartphones, they were bold, colorful pieces of art, as much cultural indicators as protectors for the records inside. In a new book, “Designed for Hi-Fi Living” (MIT Press, $34.95), authors Janet Borgerson and Jonathan Schroeder showcase 150 covers from the 1950s and 1960s that offer a portrait of postwar American culture. The albums cut across musical genres, and many are by lesser-known artists such as the Dell Trio (“Cocktail Time”) and Bob Lin Wu and His Orchestra (“Music for a Chinese Dinner at Home”). The covers often advertised an aspirational lifestyle, with scenes of people entertaining guests, having fun while doing chores, bonding with family members and traveling in style.

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