"He and the rest of the ragged island squad didn't even have a single towel to share between them, and their coach was a fifth-grade schoolteacher who didn't know how to swim."

~ from Julie Checkoway's *The Three-Year Swim Club*

**Recent Releases**

*The Three-Year Swim Club: The Untold Story of Maui's Sugar Ditch Kids...*  
by Julie Checkoway

It was a lofty goal: Japanese-American school teacher Soichi Sakamoto, who knew nothing about swimming or coaching, decided to create an Olympic swimming team from among the poor children of a segregated Hawaiian sugar plantation. Lacking a pool, they were to practice in the filthy irrigation ditches of the plantation. But it was 1937, and war intervened: the 1940 Games were canceled. Then so too were the 1944 Games. But finally, in 1948, members from his team were able to compete. Fans of the inspiring story found in Daniel Brown's *The Boys in the Boat* will likely enjoy this rousing tale of another set of underdogs.

*Sam Phillips: The Man Who Invented Rock 'n' Roll*  
by Peter Guralnick

Rock historian and author Peter Guralnick is known for extensive biographies on Elvis Presley (among other music greats), and he's now given the same treatment to his friend, legendary record producer Sam Phillips. Lauded for discovering Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Johnny Cash, Phillips was also a force behind B.B. King and Ike Turner, brought African American music to white audiences, and created the iconic Sun Records. Exhaustive at nearly 700 pages, this passionate biography is a must-read for rock 'n' roll devotees.

*The Comedians: Drunks, Thieves,*
**Scoundrels, and the History of...**  
by Kliph Nesteroff

Write what you know, the saying goes, and former stand-up comedian Kliph Nesteroff has done exactly that with this history of American comedy. Starting with burlesque and vaudeville, continuing with radio and TV broadcasts, and moving into non-traditional outlets like podcasts and Twitter, Nesteroff provides an engaging overview. He also offers biographies of both extremely well known (Abbott and Costello, Chris Rock) and lesser-known comics (including Frank Fay, the first to deliver a routine while standing in one place). It's an entertaining, informative history; for more specifically on the golden era of stand-up (the 1970s), try Richard Zoglin's *Comedy at the Edge.*

**The Song Machine: Inside the Hit Factory**  
by John Seabrook

Why is it that some songs, singers, or videos just seem to strike a chord in listeners, like Adele's "Hello," or Pharrell's "Happy"? *New Yorker* writer John Seabrook travels the world to find out. Though he focuses on the American popular music scene, his explorations delve into chord progressions, camera angles, songwriting teams, and other hit-making aspects of the music industry. From one-name wonders like Rihanna and Beyoncé to conflicts between stars and their managers (the Backstreet Boys come to mind), this "clever, lively, and well-researched book" (*Library Journal*) offers an excellent musical complement to readers of Anita Elberse's *Blockbusters.*

**Focus on: Football**

Whether you're waiting to read Jeanne Marie Laskas' *Concussion* (or you've already seen the Will Smith movie based on it) or you're eager for *The Game's Not Over: In Defense of Football* by Gregg Easterbrook, the books below should give you something to read in the meantime.

**Monsters: The 1985 Chicago Bears and the Wild Heart of Football**  
by Rich Cohen

Football fans love debating the relative merits of the greatest football teams of all time, and for author Rich Cohen the greatest team of them all is the 1985 Chicago Bears. His account of that championship season is as much a fan's love letter as it is a journalistic exploration. Examining the origins of both the Bears and the NFL as a whole as well as the elements that made the mighty '85 team, Cohen provides plenty of anecdotes about the personalities involved, from coach Mike Ditka and quarterback Jim McMahon to...
NFL founder and team owner George "Papa Bear" Halas.

**Collision Low Crossers: Inside the Turbulent World of NFL Football**
by Nicholas Dawidoff

Like journalists Stephan Fatsis (A Few Seconds of Panic), John Feinstein (Next Man Up), and George Plimpton (Paper Lion) before him, professional writer Nicholas Dawidoff somehow managed to join an NFL team, gaining the kind of access to players, coaches, and other staff that fans can only dream of. Unlike Fatsis and Plimpton, however, Dawidoff wasn't on the field. Rather, he got to examine "operations," including the scouting season and the trials and tribulations of the coaches, especially Jets head coach Rex Ryan. If you're a Jets fan, a football fan, or just need a crash course in football, you won't want to miss this "superlative insider's portrait" (Booklist).

**Slow Getting Up: A Story of NFL Survival from the Bottom of the Pile**
by Nate Jackson

For six years, Nate Jackson played for the Denver Broncos, sometimes as a tight end, sometimes as a wide receiver. He was never a household name, but considering that he came from a Division III school he was living the dream of many a football player. In his candid and often witty memoir (his writing skills got him gigs at Slate and The New York Times, among others), he shares the highs and lows of his time with the NFL. Football fans might want to compare his experiences with those found in the brand-new memoir NFL Confidential by "Johnny Anonymous."

**Their Life's Work: The Brotherhood of the 1970's Pittsburgh Steelers, Then and Now**
by Gary M. Pomerantz

In the 1970s, the Pittsburgh Steelers won four Super Bowl trophies, as fans certainly know. How those teams were created and why they were so good are two of author Gary Pomerantz's focal points, but he also portrays those involved, whether players, coaches, or owners, and the bonds between them. Drawing on over 200 interviews, he also explores what has happened to the men in the years since, from Terry Bradshaw's career as a sports analyst to the many Steelers who have since died before reaching age 60. Don't miss it, especially if you're interested in the toll that professional sports takes on those who play it.
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