

1956

Bertelsmann "Schallplattenring" is founded

1958

Sonopress and Ariola take up their work

1961

"Europaring der Buch- und Schallplattenfreunde" is founded

1962/63

Takeover of the clubs "Ring der Musikfreunde", "Europäische Buchgemeinschaft" and "Europäischer Buch- und Phonoklub"

1963

Launch of Eurodisc (classical music label)

1964

Bertelsmann acquires UFA's music publishers

1965/67

Superstars Peter Alexander and Udo Jürgens sign exclusively to Bertelsmann. Child star Heintje breaks all sales records in Germany

1969

Internationalization of Bertelsmann's music business begins

1979

Bertelsmann acquires the American label Arista

1981

Launch of "Bertelsmann Club" brand for the book and record clubs

1986/87

Bertelsmann acquires RCA music division and integrates its entire music business into the new Bertelsmann Music Group/BMG

1992

Bertelsmann Club stops selling vinyl records – Sonopress discontinues vinyl production after having pressed more than 1.1 billion records over the years



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Bertelsmann
Vinyl Collection

BERTELSMANN

The Bertelsmann Vinyl Collection

From 1956 to 1992, the Bertelsmann Clubs offered their members an extensive program of records. Now, the Bertelsmann Corporate Archives presents its "Vinyl Collection" in an illustrated database.

"Good sounds to accompany good books"

When the Bertelsmann "Schallplattenring" was founded in 1956, no one had any idea how strongly it would influence German musical life over the next few decades. The founding idea was to provide affordable entertainment for a broad audience – just as the Bertelsmann "Lesering" book club had done so successfully since 1950.

But the records didn't get off to such a smooth start. The big music companies refused to grant licenses from their repertoire – and there was a lack of popular artists who could be exclusively signed. There were also bottlenecks in production, as the pressing plants were contractually bound to other music companies.

It was time to be proactive about the matter. In 1958, Bertelsmann started up operations at its own pressing plant, Sonopress. Concurrently, it founded the Ariola record label/company, which went on to become a real hit factory. As early as 1959, Dalida landed the new record label's first number one hit, "Am Tag, als der Regen kam."

A huge hit: records for club members

Success proved attractive to the artists as well: In 1965, Ariola signed Peter Alexander, its first Schlager (German pop) star. Heintje, Udo Jürgens and Tony Marshall soon followed. Next, Ariola acquired licenses from major international labels and was soon distributing stars including Shirley Bassey, The Equals, The Hollies and The Troggs. In the 1970s, more "wild things" were added: Jethro Tull, Patti Smith, Bob Marley, Cat Stevens, and Roxy Music. Boney M.'s disco sound reached the top of the charts worldwide. Nor were lovers of classical music neglected: Rudolf Schock, Anna Moffo, Emil Gilels, David Oistrach, Robert Stolz – the Eurodisc catalog of classical music is one of the most renowned in the world.

The club members were thrilled, and bought the inexpensive club records by the stack. Bertelsmann's clubs rapidly grew to several million members. The musicians, meanwhile, also benefited from the soaring sales figures. Many club editions of their albums regularly shipped gold and platinum. In the mid-1980s, Bertelsmann acquired the American RCA label and founded BMG, one of the world's largest music companies with international top stars like Whitney Houston, U2 and Eurythmics.

Discover & Explore: Our Online Database

Interest in the records sold by the club is still high. What did the cover look like? Who were the contributing artists? When did a record appear as a special edition in the Bertelsmann Clubs? All these questions are now answered in a new online database. It contains detailed documentation of more than 12,000 records. We invite you to take a look around, and hope you enjoy your journey of research and discovery!

vinyl.bertelsmann.com

