

# TRY SOME, BUY SOME - NEW RELEASES

## John Lennon

### Imagine: The Ultimate Collection

Limited Edition, CD and Blu-Ray - Apple Records, 2018

This 6-disc box set was released in October to celebrate what would have been John Lennon's 78th birthday. There are 4 CDs and 2 Blu Ray discs plus a book. This box set is virtually as complete as you can get. It includes the singles 'Power to The People' and 'Happy Xmas (War is Over)', plus John's work with Bill Elliot and the Elastic Oz Band. The box set is full of unreleased demos and out-takes. It tells the story of John's most commercially successful album although *Plastic Ono Band* is the more acclaimed by fans. However, *Imagine* is a fantastic album and should be celebrated. It was the final album John recorded in the UK before he and Yoko moved to the United States. The box set is a document of John and Yoko's entire work in 1971. At this time, Lennon was recording songs relevant to the period. 'Gimme Some Truth' is a clear message to President Nixon to come clean. 'I Don't Wanna Be a Soldier' refers to the Vietnam War and 'How Do You Sleep' is a dig at former bandmate Paul McCartney (Lennon refuted this in his 1975 interview with Bob Harris for *The Old Grey Whistle Test*, claiming it was about him and not about Paul). Many of the tracks feature just part of the production (e.g. strings only) and in total there are 140 tracks. The discs therefore give us an insight into how the album emerged and the creative work that went into it. The Blu-rays also contain some of Yoko Ono's tracks from her album *Fly* which was being recorded at the same time. The stand out track for me from this album is 'Mind Train' which was released as a single by Apple in 1971 featuring John on lead guitar.



**Disc 1** features the remixed album plus singles including 'Do the Oz' and 'God Save Us'. John's work with Bill Elliot is a great addition to the set. Bill Elliot went on to work with George Harrison as part of the band Splinter.

**Disc 2** features new mixes in stereo of just strings only/vocals only tracks and album out-takes. Listening to these tracks gives you a great insight into the creation of the album. One interesting point here is that the song 'Oh Yoko!' dates back to 1969 and we hear it in an out-take recorded in the Bahamas. The original 'Imagine' demo appears on track 5 of this CD. The out-take to 'Power to The People' reveals it clearly needed more work, on the vocal particularly. It was a work in progress as they say. By far the best track for us fans though must be the original demo of 'God Save Us', later given to Bill Elliot and released as a single on Apple.

**Disc 3** features extended out-takes that Rob Stevens, engineer, recorded at John's studio in Tittenhurst Park. We can hear John and Yoko working on the songs. The very first take of 'Imagine' is at track 11 (this did feature on the *John Lennon Anthology* box set). Tracks 11 to 15 are the most interesting on this disc as they feature out-takes. The songs 'Imagine' and 'How Do You Sleep?', particularly, are fascinating to listen to in terms of how they differ from the final album track. 'Jealous Guy' has a different piano sound to the finished piece as well as no whistling and orchestral arrangements that made it on the album.

**Disc 4** features ten new mixes in mono engineered by Sam Gannon. A total of 61 tracks on these 4 CDs extends to 140 when you include the Blu-Ray additions.

**Disc 5** Blu-Ray has engineer Paul Hicks remixing the original album, plus some quadrophonic mixes. The album had been released in quadrophonic sound on vinyl in 1971.

**Disc 6** Blu-Ray features the album in surround sound and also includes outtakes and element mixes. Elliot Mintz, who was befriended by the Lençons in 1971, writes a tribute and the entire project was overseen by Yoko Ono.

Yoko gives the inside story of the making of the album in the book which features previously unpublished material and photographs, a guide and complete lyrics to each track on the album and singles from 1971 and the story of their work with Bill Elliott. An expanded version of the book is available separately at between £30 and £35 and there is a super deluxe version which can be found for around £100.00. The set is also available as a 2-LP clear vinyl, 2-LP black vinyl, double CD and single CD remaster. The expanded and deluxe versions of the book, called *Imagine John Yoko*, contains contributions from those who were there at the recordings including Julian Lennon, Jim Keltner, Alan White and Klaus Voormann. It really is the closest we will get to the complete works of John Lennon from 1971 and for me this deluxe set is by far the best version to have. The entire set is a superb document of one of the greatest albums of the 20th century.