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Solid State – The Story of Abbey Road and the End of The Beatles

By Kenneth Womack

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Just in time for all the 50th anniversary hype for the *Abbey Road* album comes this book tracking the creative process throughout the album's recording process. The book begins with the installation of innovative, ground-breaking equipment that opened doors to new creative options, and tracks the story of each song from its origin through its final album recording. Simultaneously, the stories of The Beatles' personal lives are superimposed, showing the forces pushing each Beatle and influencing not just the music but their recording process.

The best parts of the book, for me, were the stories behind the people and the songs. For example, how Ringo was finally persuaded to do a drum solo on the album and how the Lennon's traffic accident in Scotland impacted the album beyond the widely known story of Yoko and her recovery bed in the studio. As the book nears the end, it is interesting and sad to read about the struggles as they tried to remain 'The Beatles' while also branching out into solo careers. By the end of 1969, they were all hurting and lashing out at each other with press releases and press interviews and the pain comes through in the book.

For sound enthusiasts and those who hunger for anthology level detail, there is a lot of information in this book. I found it too detailed. For example, although I appreciate that the new mixing console that EMI installed just in time for the *Abbey Road* recording had a huge impact on the completed album, I also now know that it was called TG12345 and why it was called that. There is a lot of detail in the first two chapters about how it was installed, how it was better and what it could do. To some fans this will be far more interesting than it was for me. Similarly, there is a wealth of information about the number of takes that were made for each song, which track the vocals were on, which version was eventually selected for the album. Some people (not me) revel in this level of detail about Beatles music and they will soak this up.

There is a very nice forward in the book written by Alan Parsons who was a sound editor at the time at EMI, as Abbey Road Studios was still called in 1969. The author also interviewed a cadre of other people who were there at the time including Geoff Emerick. After reading this book, I feel like I was a fly on the wall during 1969 watching the album being born. For anyone interested in the final year of the Beatles as they tried one last time to stay together, this book is a must read.

Michele Copp

