

# THE BEATLES - THE U.S. ALBUMS

Box Set (Apple/Capitol UMG 602537614127)

Apple stated in 1987 that for CD release the Beatles back catalogue would from thence forth adhere to the UK album configurations, as originally planned by the group and their producer. Since then there have been a few exceptions to this rule, notably with the The Capitol Albums Vol.1 in 2004 and The Capitol Albums Vol.2 in 2006 and of course The U.S. Albums box set in 2013. Former independent



producer/engineer Shane O'Neill casts his perfect pitch hearing over these recent CD releases as compared to the original Capitol U.S. vinyl albums....

I'm British and was brought up listening to the UK albums. I discovered the US ones in 1970 and became a fan of the different listening experience these mixes offered. The U.S. Albums CD box set certainly looks great, but was it just another marketing ploy: a total waste for fans? Or were these albums so good I bought them again and again and...again! The packaging of the CD's is superb and includes an interesting booklet, in which the production notes set you straight in the final two pages. Quote:

*'For some mono songs Capitol's engineers created fold-down mixes from the stereo mixes by blending the two discrete stereo channels into one mono master, believing that doing so would add more punch to the sound... Many of the songs used on the original U.S. albums were made from second- third- and even fourth generation tapes. In compiling this box set, the decision was made not to remaster from the original Capitol master tapes... The masters used in this box set are, in most cases, the same as the stereo and mono remasters released in 2009 as part of the Parlophone/Apple core catalogue all approved by George Martin and The Beatles.'*

Q: So why do it at all then?

A: I'm fucked if I know!

Q: What about the unique American sounds?

A: Some have been left as they were. Many have been warmed up a bit, but nearly all are simply the 2009 UK mixes in flimsy digi-disguise.

Q: Is there no other way to hear the original US versions?

A: Get the 2004 Capitol Albums Volume 1 and 2006 Capitol Albums Volume 2 sets as they are the original US mixes, although there are two versions of "Rubber Soul" on vinyl (see below)... There are also two stereo vinyl versions of "Yesterday...And Today" with the tracks 'I'm Only Sleeping', 'And Your Bird Can Sing' and 'Dr Robert' in Duophonic on original pressings and in true stereo from 1971 onwards.

Q: Where is "Magical Mystery Tour"?

A: Where Indeed! It was deemed a duplication of the 2009 CD, so left off The U.S. Albums set. However, the original US vinyl album had great super-clear sound, like no other version worldwide, including three loud Duophonic tracks. When "Magical Mystery Tour" was later released in West Germany in 1971 and the UK in 1976 it had true stereo mixes and a more subtle sound.

The 2004 and 2006 Capitol Albums Volume 1 and Capitol Albums Volume 2 used, for better or worse, the original 'Dexter' masters (apart from the temporary initial cock-up with "Rubber Soul"). These two sets included all the various / rushed earlier remixes, sometimes with different vocal tracks altogether. All well and good, and especially great for us geeky types.

The Capitol Albums Vol.3 of course never appeared. In its place came the full The U.S. Albums box set. However, this did not contain the same volumes and mixes as the two earlier Capitol Albums Volume 1 and Volume 2! Instead, on a lot, but not all tracks, the 2009 UK remasters replaced the US mixes, making the expensive box set a completely pointless exercise in marketing. The same stuff yet again minus much of the original quirkiness. Genius!

Some original US mixes were kept such as 'I Feel Fine' and 'She's A Woman' (weird slushy EQ's), 'The Word' (complete with double-track vocals) and of course the completely different stereo mix of 'I'm Only Sleeping'... well, actually, er, no. That was replaced with the standard 2009 UK mix as well, although I read it was meant to be the unique US mix!

At least the box set includes "The Beatles Story" documentary (we really needed that one, did we not?).

A last point I raise is the dreaded DUOPHONIC:

I actually like it. Taking the Duophonic away, plus all the loud compression, reverb and other groovy Dave Dexter Jr. tricks makes for a squeaky-clean and somehow Spartan sound. Whether Capitol used 2nd or 3rd or 4th generation tapes during mixing is neither here nor there. What was encapsulated on the US albums was the exhilarating excitement of the time and Dexter & Co's uncanny ability to bring that into your home far more than any clean UK versions managed to do for me.

So, on to the comparisons, being my subjective, but as thorough as can be, point of view:

#### **The U.S. Albums Box MONO**

**Meet The Beatles** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. Less punch on some tracks than the original vinyl LP.

**The Beatles Second Album** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. Less punch than vinyl LP. 'Devil In Her Heart' not as clear as vinyl. 'Thank You Girl' is now UK mix, losing extra harmonica on final notes. 'Money' now original mono whereas version on vinyl was fold-down 'B-mono' but excellent.

**A Hard Day's Night** mono = No appreciable differences between versions. 'And I Love Her' uses same soundtrack single-track vocal on all editions.

**Something New** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. 'I'll Cry Instead' lacks fret sound at start on Box Set. 'Matchbox' is fractionally shorter on Box Set. Less compression than vinyl.

**The Early Beatles** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. No appreciable differences between versions.

**Beatles VI** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. No appreciable differences between versions.

**Help!** mono = 'Ticket To Ride' loses its slight echo on Box Set. 'You're Going To Lose That Girl' loses its 'intimacy' on Box Set. Stereo to mono fold-down on vinyl.

**Rubber Soul** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. 'Michelle' on Box set uses the longer fade out mix (by 7 seconds) as on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Vol.2.

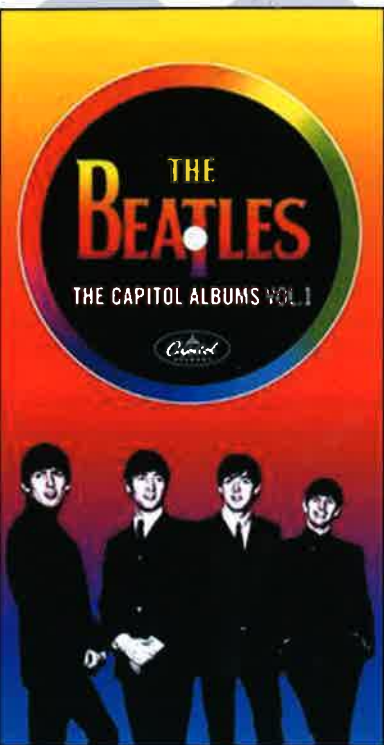
**Beatles '65** mono = Both versions virtually identical including the 'Dextered' 'I Feel Fine' and 'She's A Woman'. Vinyl is slightly clearer on some tracks.

**Yesterday... And Today** mono = 'I'm Only Sleeping' is the same US-poached remix on both versions, I'm glad to say. Both Box Set and vinyl are identical, as far as I can make out.

**Revolver** mono = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. No appreciable differences between versions.

**Magical Mystery Tour** is not included. The original US vinyl LP version, apart from being brighter, is identical to the UK mono mix.

**Hey Jude** was only released in stereo.



## The U.S. Albums Box STEREO

**Meet The Beatles** stereo = OK, so maybe Capitol used copies of copies, whatever. The vinyl mixes are identical, but all else from superb blistering clarity and punch, plus wider stereo image is only available on the vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 1. No contest.

**Beatles Second Album** stereo = All tracks have been substituted for the UK 2009 remasters. 'Roll Over Beethoven' lacks punch and extra reverb on the Box Set. 'Thank You Girl' lacks punch and extra reverb, not to mention extra harmonica at various points. Same with the other tracks really. Proves to me that Dave Dexter Jnr. really knew a thing or two about the American market. 'I Call Your Name' is actually a different mix on the vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 1 to the one used here. The double-track vocals come in at different points too. 'She Loves You' and 'I'll Get You' were issued in Duophonic on Vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 1. Fabulous BIG sound can't be compared to the UK mix on the Box Set.

**A Hard Day's Night** stereo = Weird differences. Box Set has all the standard UK 2009 versions. Vinyl has 'panned mono' pretending to be stereo (someone on the controls just fiddling a bit occasionally). Oh well, takes all sorts I suppose. One notably different mix on the vinyl is 'And I Love Her', which is a rarer single-track vocal mix instead of the standard double-tracked Paul vocal.

**Something New** stereo = Again, beautifully more punchy and greater clarity to the ears on the vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 1, plus wider stereo on all tracks on original versions. On 'Komm Gib Mir Deine Hand' the word "coming" has been cut from the start in the Box Set version.

**The Beatles Story** stereo = Just a mention about this rather quaint Rockumentary, which was never released in mono. Still good to see it available on a CD. A superb live snippet of 'Twist And Shout' from The Hollywood Bowl is included... so...WHY NOT RELEASE THAT ALBUM???? (just a personal rant).

**The Early Beatles** stereo = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. 'Love Me Do' and 'P.S I Love You' are in mono on Box Set but were Duophonic on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2. All tracks on vinyl are highly charged with extra compression. 'Please Please Me', with its mistake in the final verse lyrics at 1:28 is much easier to make out.

**Beatles VI** stereo = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. Mostly identical, except 'You Like Me Too Much' has wider and more compression on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2, 'Yes It Is' was duophonic on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2 (as stereo mixes didn't yet exist) and 'Tell Me What You See' has wider stereo, clearer top end (making chatting on right channel during intro easier to hear). 'Dizzy Miss Lizzy' blasts through on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2 with more top end and compression. Stunning...in my humble opinion.

**Help!** stereo = All tracks on original vinyl have better stereo separation and compression. 'Ticket To Ride' sounds enormous...really worth re-listening to! Surprisingly it's Duophonic, but it really works. 'You're Going To Lose That Girl' is actually a different mix on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2. Vocals actually have LESS reverb and up front.

**Rubber Soul** stereo = Mainly small differences. Box Set stereo is mostly 2009 UK remaster mixes. Vinyl stereo is wider, again, more compressed and punchy. 'Think For Yourself' has more reverb on vinyl, especially at the final note. Oddly, there are two US vinyl versions of 'Rubber Soul', sometimes referred to as 'Loud East Coast' and 'Soft West Coast'. Probably '65 and circa '71 versions. Reverb is longer and more compressed on the 'Loud East Coast' version. I do have these and can vouch that this is true. 'The Word' is actually a truly different mix, mainly on backing vocals. The Box Set kept this one,

so the versions are identical (West Coast anyway). 'I'm Looking Through You', with its strange false start, has also been kept on the Box Set, and is identical to vinyl (West Coast version). I prefer vinyl though. Box Set has just lost the zest and excitement for me.

**Beatles '65 stereo** = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set and almost identical to vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2 editions, with a couple of exceptions. There is more clarity throughout on vinyl and Capitol Albums Vol.2 plus 'She's A Woman' and 'I Feel Fine' are in outrageously 'Dextered' Duophonic with vast reverb.

**'Yesterday'...And Today stereo** = The Box Set uses the 2009 remasters all the way to the final track, then opts for the Capitol mix of 'Day Tripper' with panned guitar on intro. Vinyl has wider stereo and is clearer. On original pressings 'I'm Only Sleeping', 'And Your Bird Can Sing' and 'Dr Robert' were Duophonic, as stereo mixes were as yet unavailable. 'I'm Only Sleeping' used UK mono mix here. 'Nowhere Man' actually has less reverb on vinyl. Finally, 'I'm Only Sleeping', which has no less than four distinct mixes where backward guitar fades in and out at varying points (UK stereo and mono mixes and two US stereo and mono mixes - plus, I suppose 'duophonic' mono EQ) is supposed to have been kept intact on the Box Set, as they "took great care, etc...", but it wasn't. If you wish to hear the fourth released mix with delayed start backwards guitar you'll have to get the vinyl edition only.

**Revolver stereo** = All tracks substituted for UK 2009 remasters on Box Set. No appreciable differences between versions, except for 'I Want To Tell You', which is seven seconds shorter on vinyl and The Capitol Albums Volume 2. The most pointless album in the entire Box Set!

**Magical Mystery Tour stereo** = although a unique US compilation this album was NOT included in The U.S. Albums Box Set! The excitement of the original 1967 Capitol pressing never ceases to amaze me. The extra clarity (to the point of sibilant distortion on Duophonic tracks) and compression make this far and away the most electrifying experience of all the US albums (closely followed by "The Beatles Second Album"). Mixes are the same but 'Penny Lane', 'Baby You're A Rich Man' and 'All You Need Is Love' are all Duophonic (stereo versions being unavailable at the time), and of course 'Strawberry Fields Forever', which has its own slightly different and longer fade at end, so only available on vinyl. If any, this album should be out there in its original Capitol form on CD.

**Hey Jude** = All tracks on the Box Set are the 2009 UK remixes. The original Capitol vinyl LP differs on 'Can't Buy Me Love' (wider, clearer, punchy, extra stereo reverb), 'I Should Have Known Better' (wider stereo), 'Paperback Writer' (reversed stereo - Why?), 'Rain' (clearer top end, faster speed - 2:57 Vinyl, 3:04 UK 2009), 'Lady Madonna' (faster, ending on 2:12 as opposed to 2:20 on UK 2009), 'Revolution' (faster on vinyl at 3:19. UK is 3:27), 'Hey Jude' (Box Set UK mix 7:12. Capitol pressing vinyl 5:03, fading before the infamous 'swear-word'. Later UK pressings of the "Hey Jude" LP use a longer mix at 7:00), 'Old Brown Shoe' and 'Don't Let Me Down' are virtually identical. 'The Ballad of John And Yoko' however seems to be a different mix or EQ'd quite cleverly. Snares are way back on the vinyl version.

That's all folks.

Petitions please to Apple for The Capitol Albums Vol.3 with "Yesterday...And Today", "Revolver", "Magical Mystery Tour" and "Hey Jude" as they sounded on the original US vinyl albums.

Shane O'Neill

