

THE BEATLES **ABBEY ROAD** TRACK-BY-TRACK 50 YEARS ON

September 28, 2019, saw the release of *Abbey Road* in its definitive form. So, what do we find within those hallowed grooves? Answer, we find perfection as a mark in time and yet so far ahead of everyone; it's confirmation that The Beatles are still the greatest band ever to grace this planet.

Coming after the back to basics *White Album*, the music had moved on so much. So much so, that its very release showed us, all way back then, that the fabs were incapable of being surpassed as the world's No. 1 band. It is not just sheer brilliance; it's frightening to even listen to now! Even 50 years later, this reissue confirms what we already knew— that the world is a much more joyous and a better place for its existence. The music is a welding of so many styles, facets, and forms, that coupled with stellar song writing and production, it defies all logic to realise it was all done some many years ago.

Electronics were nothing then, but the subtle use of the synthesiser, not only decorated several songs, but it became an integral part of them and signposted the way ahead. Disco bass lines were there 6 years before they became the norm. Heavy progressive rock was neatly packed away to be extolled and immediately ended in a group slash ending, bringing back that idea of the ending chord from *Sgt Pepper*. The immaculate little bonus, 'Her Majesty', some 16 seconds after the end, still has the power to surprise us all. It is like a declaration that they are still here, only now so much stronger. We can safely now bow our heads in acknowledgement of the superior force.

'Come Together', that perfect opener, bass driven by McCartney with that superb drumming from Ringo is played into the background by John's driving vocal, personifying menace, yet urging togetherness in an orgasm of expression. Rip away the song except for the bass line and you have that disco driver long before anybody else got on the bandwagon.

'Something' written by George is perhaps the greatest love song ever written. If it's not, then blame Paul for 'Yesterday', it's that good. The adoration George felt at the time for Patti oozes out via a multi-layered collage of drums, bass and electric guitars, coupled with sublime singing from Paul and George. It's hypnotic and just blows you

away. Yet there is more. With that oh so fabulous string score, only now can the ignorant finally open their eyes and ears in wonder. We (everybody else) knew it all the time, but until now, we only ever imagined the full beauty.

'Maxwell's Silver Hammer', that annoying, cloying comedy song, irritates, then etches itself into your brain with affection then endears itself like no other can. Will we ever be rid of Rose and Valerie screaming from the gallery? We know that answer better by far.

'Oh Darling!' is purely Paul leading the band via 1969 'Blue Eyed Soul'. A firm rock beat drives it along with such power, that it shows this band could take one type of music, fuse with another, and end up with a song firmly planted in both fields. It's masterful and displays that long-overlooked talent that the band held within; they were gifted backing vocalists. We just took that for granted without ever really realising it, except on the odd occasion. 'Lady Madonna' comes instantly to mind.

Ringo's lead with 'Octopus's Garden' takes us back to 'Yellow Submarine' only this time we did dive beneath the waves to feel the water surround us and rest our weary heads. Absolute charm. Thank you boys! We needed it!

'I Want You (She's so Heavy)' is a tortuous piece lasting nearly seven minutes and encapsulating multiple styles including rock, blues, and rousing vocals. Yet, it was two recordings fused into one and introducing deliberate "electronic white noise" halfway through unexpectedly. This notorious bane of recording engineers is normally kept to a minimum, yet here John is deliberately introducing it, feeding it and allowing it to envelop the whole proceeding until that final urgent slash to end it all!!

The first two tracks on side two 'Here Comes the Sun' and 'Because' really endear themselves together like no two other tracks side by side on any other album. From the acoustic based opener to the sublime Beethoven inspired piece, those wonderful hypnotic vocals are brought to the fore and accompanied by that tasty Moog. This just extols the sheer talent they possessed. Others deemed it so unfair, yet The Beatles just used it to full effect and left it there for all to hear.

The piano opening of 'You Never Give Me Your Money' ushers in the Long One as it was called yet brings in that collage of styles and craft that no other has even tried. Each track finely tuned and segued together shows a full face of vision and style that simply cannot be defined. From boardroom scuffles, to laying in the Spanish sun with 'Sun King', to the unsavoury side of London life with that 'Mean Mr Mustard' with his sister Pam dressed in Jackboots. The lady coming through the bathroom window shining like a brilliant sun, is perfectly portrayed by the joyful playing of the four leaving us all with a bright expectation of what was to come.

'Golden Slumbers'/ 'Carry That Weight'/ 'The End' is the second collage or medley you encounter. Starting with an old English lullaby and ending with the impression that they were all carrying that weight of expectation, pressure, and money problems. It shatters the illusion that the band would be around forever. We needed them. "You can't quit now can you"? The world seemed to be asking.

The sheer musical vision within on this part is staggering. The trick of the whole orchestra coming out on the back of a bass note has never been done again. Ringo's amazing drumming ushers in his only ever drum solo, and the peerless guitar playing fuse the whole spectacle together for that cataclysmic ending where the band sound like Led Zeppelin before Led Zeppelin got there. It is irreplaceable and still so inspiring.

That sudden ending slash again leaving the piano and Paul reminding us that the love you take equals the love you make sums it all up so eloquently. It is quite simply beyond belief.

Then that little acoustic bonus of Paul telling all of his love for The Queen is so British. It is taken not for granted but understood in its sheer simplicity and cheek that only The Beatles could ever get away with.

In 2019, it stands as possibly the best sounding album of all time, not merely, because it's that good, because it is. Or not because it's The Beatles, or finally, it's not because of the songs encased within. It's all those facets, coupled with the fact that so many things were started here and fused into sheer musical excellence, that one is still left in total awe 50 years later.

Quite simply, *Abbey Road* is, without doubt beyond reproach. No other artist can compete. The only regret is that, there should have been more, oh so much more.

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