

THE POWER OF LENNON

It was only recently that I played the album 1 that I suddenly realised what a powerful influence that John Lennon's vocals had on The Beatles. We all know that 'Twist and Shout' on their first album was recorded at the end of a marathon session and needed to be got in one take. John's voice was shot, but he managed to get it in that take, and what a magnificent take that was.

However, looking back at The Beatles early singles, John had the lead vocal on eight of the ten singles issued in the UK from 1963-1965. Of the remaining two he shared vocals with Paul on one of those songs ('A Hard Day's Night'). Indeed only 'Can't Buy Me Love' featured no vocal by Lennon over that period. It is something I've not seen written about before but shows how John has maybe been underrated in terms of his vocal ability. His song writing is second to none and needs no words from me. The Beatles singles were what propelled them to global fame. Those UK singles such as 'Please Please Me', 'She Loves You' and 'Help!' all had John at the forefront.

I've always listened to their albums and was always fascinated by John's great vocals on tracks like 'It Won't Be Long', 'Money', 'Please Mister Postman' and 'No Reply' and it is clear he had such a powerful voice, that without it The Beatles would not have been such a great band and live act. The change of vocal in 'No Reply' is particularly brilliant. The song starts with a soft vocal but changes with the line 'I saw the light' and gets even stronger by the end of the track with the line 'I nearly died'. That sums up how great John's vocal ability was. *Beatles For Sale* probably has the best selection of Lennon vocals. 'Baby's in Black', 'I'm A Loser', 'Rock and Roll Music', 'Words of Love' and 'No Reply' show the diversity of his talent. The voice is even stronger when double tracked on songs like 'Mr. Moonlight'. Indeed, the deeper you dig the more you find. Their first album *Please Please Me* features Lennon on some fantastic vocals like 'Anna (Go to Him)' showing how he could mix rock and roll with a ballad when needed. The same can be said of 'All I've Got to Do' on the second album *With The Beatles*. By 1965 Lennon was writing more biographical songs like 'Help!' and 'Norwegian Wood', but this didn't distract from his superb vocals, particularly on songs like 'Nowhere Man' and 'In My Life'.

As The Beatles developed, so did Lennon's song writing and when they announced the end of touring in 1966, Lennon and The Beatles could concentrate more on working in the studio. Lennon's song writing flourished in this period with songs like 'Lucy In the Sky with Diamonds' and 'Julia'. Many of his compositions from 1966 onwards would move away from his rock 'n' roll roots, but the occasional rocker would surface such as 'Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except For Me and My Monkey' and 'Revolution' but on the whole he was writing material from the heart which saw the softer side of Lennon emerge, before The Beatles split in 1970.

Solo songs 'Cold Turkey', and 'Power to The People' saw John back to his raw best. The first solo album *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* was a mixed bag in terms of vocals. 'I Found Out', 'Well, Well, Well', and 'Mother' were complimented by the softer vocals on songs like 'Love', 'Look at Me' and 'Hold On'. The albums *Mind Games* and *Walls and Bridges* saw Lennon writing fewer rockers.

However, John would return to his roots in 1974 and record the album *Rock 'N' Roll* released the following year. This album saw John at his raw best and back to those powerful vocals on those early Beatles albums. After the release of this album, John would not release another album until his final album *Double Fantasy* in 1980.

Lennon had a wonderful and powerful voice. This is one of the main reasons those early Beatles singles were so successful, propelling them onto global fame. With 2020 being the 80th anniversary of John's birth his presence is still felt the world over - Long live Lennon!!!!

We all shine on!

Ernie Sutton

