

Beatles

by Ian Holloway

As I began this series with the Beatles' "first" album, I thought it only fitting to end it with their last. The Beatles, more than anyone, signalled the advent of the age of Aquarius, and remained its guiding light throughout the 1960's. They truly were the prophets of their generation. In such a prophetic manner, the release of "Let It Be" signalled the end of that decade of innocence and hope, through the breakup of the heroes.

"Let It Be" is an album of contrasts. It could almost read like a Charles Dickens' book: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Although it contains some exceptional music, it is also the worst produced of all their albums. It lacks the essential element of coherency.

This is not at all surprising if one considers the conditions under which it was recorded. Originally conceived as a movie of the Beatles making a record, it turned into a nightmare. After the death of their manager, Brian Epstein, from a drug overdose in 1966, Paul McCartney fell (or installed himself) into the role of leader. The Magical Mystery Tour and the "movie of the record" which was to eventually materialize as "Let It Be" were his ideas.

The project was doomed from the moment the Beatles filed into Twickenham Movie Studios in January of 1969. Accustomed to recording at their leisure, they found it hard to make music under bright lights and tight schedules. Inevitably, squabbles broke out, and George Harrison actually quit the Beatles, only to be coaxed

back a week later. Eventually, the project was shelved, and in the summer of 1969, the Beatles regrouped to record "Abbey Road" at lightning speed (the fastest recorded Beatles' album since 1965).

The Beatles had lost all interest in the "Let It Be" tapes, and they were given to famed producer Phil Spector to see if he could salvage them. Depending on the listener's point of view, he either saved them or totally ruined them. They finally surfaced in album form, in 1970, just weeks before the official announcement of the breakup.

Yet, under these oppressive conditions, the Beatles still performed some very good music. It is paradoxical to note that the majority of bootleg Beatle recordings stem from this period. A wealth of alternate versions abound from the numerous takes (40 or 50 in some cases). More interesting though, are the Beatles' versions of other peoples' songs that were captured on tape during the warm-ups.

The album opens with what could be a great "Rubber Soul" song, "Two Of Us". It features Lennon and McCartney harmonizing to a melodic acoustic backing. It continues with "I Dig A Pony", a whimsical piece of Lennonesque nonsense.

The third cut is perhaps the most out of place of all the songs on the album. "Across The Universe" was written in 1967 (and incidentally covered by David Bowie), but John Lennon could not decide on a suitable version for release. It finally emerges on "Let It Be", replete with strings and other psychedelic trappings.

LET IT BE



Another significant cut is "Dig It". Only 51 seconds long, Lennon chants a list of institutions: the FBI, the CIA, the BBC, BB King, and Doris Day, followed by the exhortation: "Dig it, dig it, dig it."

"Dig It" is followed by what is generally accepted to be one of the Beatles' best songs, the title cut. "Let It Be" features poignant lyrics, church-like organ, and a superbly dirty guitar solo. The album's version is much better than the single version, in that Harrison's solo is not obscured as in the latter. Rumour has it that McCartney thought he had another "Yesterday" on his

hands and locked himself up for a week composing it.

The side ends with a short version of the popular Liverpool ditty, "Maggie Mae" (not to be confused with the Rod Stewart song of the same name, "Maggie Mae" is the story of one of the inhabitants of Liverpool's infamous Lime Street. Until recently, Lime Street was the site of many fine brothels, and was a haven to sailors all over the world.

Musically, the Beatles had passed the audition long ago, but "Let It Be" definitely lacks that something to rank it beside, say, "Abbey Road", or "Meet The Beatles". As

originally envisioned, it was to show the Beatles "as we really are. With all our warts on," said Lennon. This original ideal was discarded with Spector's over-production. The result is what looks like a hastily thrown together product, and most unlike a Beatles album.

As it was, "Let It Be" appeared as the last relic of the Beatles group, before they descended to their individual nadirs as solo artists. Yet, for all its shortcomings, "Let It Be" contains some gifted music and remains as a fitting final chapter of the 1960's.

Happenings in Halifax

For those of you who will be in Halifax over the holidays here are a few entertainment goodies you won't want to miss.

MOVIES . . . On April 13, 8:00 at the Cohn there will be Dr. Strangelove, a Stanley Kubrick film made in 1963 that stars Peter Sellers. Among the films to look for this spring are The Wicker Man, a horror film written by the author of Sleuth and starring Christopher Lee; Nijinsky, the story of the famous dancer, starring Alan Bates; The Trials of Alger Hiss, a documentary; The Shining, a Stanley Kubrick film by the author of Carrie; and Little Miss Marker, which has a delightful cast. Drive-ins will be opening soon, so all you junk-film connoisseurs can get ready for some thrilling action involving Japanese monsters. Season's best bet for drive-ins: Rock 'N Roll High School, featuring Ramones. Season's worst bet: Anything that warns you to stay away if you're squeamish. **METRO CENTRE . . .** Don's miss Nana Mouskouri on April 20 at 7 p.m. and April 21 at 8 p.m. There are still tickets left for \$8.00.

ARTS . . . The Cohn is holding the N.S. Festival of the Arts on August 7, 8, 9, and 10 once again.

Manuge Art Gallery will feature Ken MacDougall's fine oil paintings of nature for two weeks starting May 22.

The N.S. Gallery will present Charlotte Lidgren's Fibres Structures on April 17 to June 2. David Bolduc and Rada Greg will have exhibitions from June 5 to 30.

Saint Mary's Gallery will feature Wm. Kurvlek's exhibition called A Prairie Boy's Summer from April 9 to May 24. To be followed by Commander Anthony Law's paintings from June 4 to 31.

And now I think it's about time someone explained why the Gazette has the best entertainment section in all of Halifax. Dedicated and knowledgeable reviewers, congenial public relations and enthusiastic assistants have kept the Gazette teeming with entertainment news.

Thanks to Dorothy Reidhorne, at the Cohn, Leigh Learning at Neptune, and Fiona Perina at the SUB for their patience with last minute ticket arrangements.

Even greater thanks is due

to my assistants Larry Brown (movies), Eleanor Austin (art), Sylvia Kaptein (dance), Heather Myers (books), and Bob Campbell (records). Their contacts and information made my job so much easier.

Special thanks to donalee moulton who would review anything, anytime, and Ian Holloway for a column I could always count on. Credit and "thanx" also goes to Glenn Walton and Frank McGinn whose reviews always brightened up the day.

Above all, I'd like to thank everyone that contributed to the section (no matter how great or small). Each student coloured the entertainment section in a different way. Their combined effort and spirit made the section lively and informative.

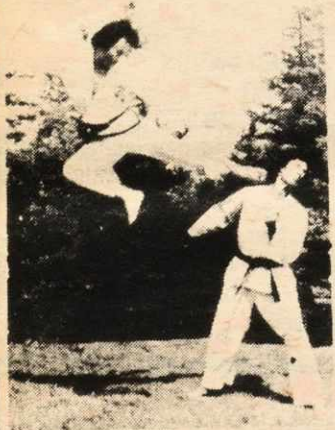
One more thank-you before I finish my editorship and that goes to **you**—the readers. Without your participation—our efforts would have been futile.

And now—no more phone calls, no more lost tickets, no cancellations, no editing arguments, no deadlines, and no more infamous "Happenings" columns.

Margaret Little

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