

John Lennon – Acoustic (2004)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Love*
2. *Working Class Hero*
3. *Well Well Well*
4. *Look at Me*
5. *God*
6. *My Mummy's Dead*
7. *Cold Turkey*
8. *I'm a Man*
9. *Luck of the Irish (Live)*
10. *John Sinclair (Live)*
11. *Woman is the Nigger of the World*
12. *What You Got*
13. *Watching the Wheels*
14. *Dear Yoko*
15. *Real Love*
16. *Imagine (Live)*
17. *It's Real*

John Lennon - guitar, vocals

The 2004 compilation *Acoustic* collects 16 tracks featuring John Lennon alone (more or less) backed only by his acoustic guitar. It's a good idea for a compilation, but the execution is problematic. First of all, Lennon's solo albums didn't have all that many solo acoustic songs on them; they were carefully constructed in a studio, often featuring layers of overdubs, even on such emotionally direct albums as *Plastic Ono Band*. So producer Yoko Ono has chosen to rely primarily on demos and home recordings for this compilation -- a choice that may not sit well with casual fans lured in by the simple, classy title, thinking that this is a more polished affair than it is. More problematic is that this 16-track collection is a hodgepodge of nine cuts previously released on the 1998 rarities box *Anthology* and seven previously unreleased tracks. Home recordings and demos are by their nature music that appeals primarily to die-hard fans,

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of which Lennon has many. However, those very fans will already own over half of this collection on the box set, and they'll not only wonder why they have to buy these songs again, but why the seven "new" songs didn't appear on Anthology in the first place, especially since they are very good. Of particular note: a lean, mean version of "Well Well Well" with a heavily phased vocal; a folky, laid-back "God"; a revved-up, tense "Cold Turkey" where John uncannily mimics Marc Bolan's high-pitched, lamb-like warble; a terrific, rollicking "What You Got" that cuts to the quick of the song; and a simple, light "Dear Yoko." These are all well worth hearing, but it's hard to recommend Acoustic as an album not only because of the recycling but because of the haphazard liner notes that never acknowledge when the recordings were cut (outside of the live tracks taken from a 1971 Ann Arbor, MI, rally for John Sinclair and a cut from an Attica benefit concert that year), nor offer any liner notes or context. The booklet simply offers fake book arrangements for the 16 tracks here, complete with lyrics, a chord chart, transcribed chatter ("I just wanted you to go and A&R it. OK, I'll try it."), and the meaningless instructions of "Flat Tuning," which presumably means that John's guitar was slightly out of tune when he cut the song (it's hard to tell, since "flat tuning" is not a musical term). This booklet along with the repeated recordings makes Acoustic feel like less than the sum of its parts, but those hardcore fans will likely buy it anyway because these seven previously unreleased tracks are worth hearing. But they'll grumble when they lay their money down. ---Stephen Thomas Erlewine, AllMusic Review

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