

The Beatles - With The Beatles (1963)

Written by bluesever

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01. *It Won't Be Long* 02. *All I've Got To Do* 03. *All My Loving* 04. *Don't Bother Me* 05. *Little Child* 06. *Till There Was You* 07. *Please Mr. Postman* 08. *Roll Over Beethoven* 09. *Hold Me Tight* 10. *You Really Got A Hold On Me* 11. *I Wanna Be Your Man* 12. *Devil In Her Heart* 13. *Not A Second Time* 14. *Money (That's What I Want)* Musicians: John Lennon , Paul McCartney , George Harrison , Ringo Starr

Would that today's PRs had the honesty of Beatles pressman Tony Barrow. On the original sleeve notes for *With the Beatles* he cheerfully admits that the group were following the formula of *Please Please Me*, going so far as to make several track-by-track comparisons. "[Paul McCartney] recalls the numerous Cavern Club occasions when this item ['Money'] brought forth the same type of overwhelming response given to 'Twist and Shout'."

Barrow's notes are direct and descriptive-- crediting each R&B find, noting which tracks were live favorites and who played what. They're an intriguing glimpse of how the band related to its audience in this first shock of pop success: as curious, educated listeners, not the blind screamers of Beatlemania legend. By this point, though, the Beatles were kings of Britain with the world about to follow. Their success was already game-changing: The band who would go on to invent the concept album invented the boy band first. The cheek, the gang mentality, the picking favorites-- all this would be formularized by later svengalis but emerged initially out of Beatle fandom.

So *With the Beatles* is simultaneously a quickly turned-around cash-in and a record of real generosity and integrity. And if the structure of the album is pretty similar to *Please Please Me*, the extra studio time is already starting to tell. On McCartney's romantic spotlight, showtune "Till There Was You", producer George Martin builds a wholly convincing soft-focus soundworld around Ringo Starr's bongos. The group harmonies on tracks like their rumbustious "Please Mr.

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Postman" are even more gorgeously thick. The way the drums rumble in on "Roll Over Beethoven" is a moment of simple joy.

And those are just the covers. With the Beatles starts with aggressive confidence, "It Won't Be Long" taking the "yeah yeah" chants that were the group's early calling card and turning them into missiles. We're back, it says, and it's one of their most thrilling songs. On "All My Loving" the guitars bubble and tumble and the band finds a new way to marry prettiness and drive. "I Wanna Be Your Man"-- Ringo's best early vocal-- has a wolfish, hustling urgency. Not everything the band tries, as writers or interpreters, comes off: draggy girl group revival "Devil in Her Heart" is an obscurity too far, and George Harrison wins a first songwriting credit for the Shadows-esque "Don't Bother Me", but it doesn't get much spark until the guitar solo.

As for "Money", well, there simply is no second "Twist and Shout" in the catalogue, but neither was there any shame in the Beatles trying. And it has its own thrills to offer: Less demonic and frenetic than that previous album-closer but by some way the heaviest thing they'd yet recorded, a quality the remaster brings fully out. Ringo's booming drums, John Lennon's sneer, and the others' banshee backing vocals all create an air of menace, repressed violence: the black leather and Bierkeller vibe of the band's 1961 proving grounds.

It's a superb way to end an album that doesn't quite flow as well as Please Please Me, but never cheats the fans either. A week after its release the band would drop "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and rewrite the entertainment pecking order: For now they were living up to high expectations. --- Tom Ewing, pitchfork.com

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