



# Still the Greatest: The Essential Songs of The Beatles' Solo Careers

By Andrew Grant Jackson author 1965: *The Most Revolutionary Year in Music* and *Still the Greatest: The Essential Songs of the Beatles' Solo Careers*

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As recommended by *USA Today* and excerpted on Rolling Stone.com!

More than forty years after breaking up, The Beatles remain the biggest-selling and most influential group in the history of popular music. Fans endlessly replay their songs, craving more, while thousands of cover versions of their songs have been recorded and performed. Band biographies, pop music histories, song books, and academic titles on the Fab Four clutter shelves. But never has there been a definitive guide to the finest songs of The Beatles *after* they called it quits.

*Still the Greatest* is a love song to the songwriting and recording achievements of Paul, John, George, and Ringo after each struck out on his own. In this creative history, Jackson selects the best songs in each solo career and organizes them into fantasy albums they might have formed had the legendary group stayed together. This romp through the post-Beatles history of each artist delves into the circumstances behind the composition, recording, and reception of each work, offering a refreshing take on how spectacular much of The Beatles' second act truly is.

Jackson assesses the more than seventy albums and nine hundred songs the four collectively released, selecting the crème de la crème of their output. *Still the Greatest* brims with facts (release dates, writing and performing credits, and information about production techniques) and insightful analyses of the music and lyrics. In telling the stories behind the songs, Jackson recounts the remarkable influence the Post Fab Four continued to have long after the big split. Both a handy reference and an engrossing cover-to-cover read, *Still the Greatest* is an invaluable companion for those who thought it all ended with the 1970 album *Let It Be*.

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## Editorial Review

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In this creative history of the solo careers of John, Paul, George, and Ringo, Jackson reimagines the artists' individual output into "fantasy albums" that could have been put out had the Fab Four remained an intact group—"The Beatles Albums That Should Have Been" (which would have made a fine subtitle). Nearly 200 songs have been cherry-picked, with extensive information offered, such as musicians, chart history, story behind the creation of the song, and the meaning of the lyrics. The chummy tone and the sheer subjectiveness make this unsuitable as a reference work but loads of fun for Beatles fans. --Rebecca Vnuk

### Review

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The celebration of the Fab Four's 50th anniversary continues with *Still the Greatest: The Essential Songs of the Beatles' Solo Careers*. Author Andrew Grant Jackson, a music journalist and filmmaker, delves into the more than 70 albums and 900 songs collectively unveiled by John, Paul, George and Ringo since they disbanded 42 years ago. "There are a dozen brilliant Beatles albums to be carved out of their solo albums," Jackson has observed. Included, too, are collaborations with other icons such as Phil Spector, Eric Clapton, Elton John and Elvis Costello. (*USA Today*)

Analysis, commentary, and biography on the Beatles abound, but relatively little has been written about John, Paul, George, and Ringo's post-Beatles recordings. Freelance music writer Jackson's first book spotlights what he considers the best of the ex-Beatles' oft-underrated post-1970 recordings as solo artists, and as members of Wings and the Plastic Ono Band. Jackson, an obvious Beatles fanatic, compiles his chosen cuts into 12 fictitious albums spread across the past 40 years. Jackson critiques and analyzes each song and puts it into biographical context, adding detailed studio session information, recording credits, and sales-chart peaks. The analyses are insightful and informed, with the author relying heavily on previous scholarship and interviews with the ex-Beatles and associates, and adding his own strong opinions. Jackson admirably digs beneath the obvious hits to uncover and discuss deep album tracks, commercial flops, and rare b-sides. Ringo fans will be delighted by Jackson's insistence on finding room on each "album" for at least one of the funny Beatle's tracks....VERDICT This creative, enlightening, and informative work by a welcomed entrant to Beatles scholarship is highly recommended to anyone interested in learning more about the Fab Four's sporadically great post-breakup recordings. (*Library Journal*)

Overall, it's an interesting take on what might have been; an imaginary glimpse of what The Beatles may have released to the world as a group had they remained together....Going over each track with a fine-toothed comb, Jackson not only gives us details of where each Beatle was at that stage of their career but also what lead them there. On top of that he includes extensive production details for each song, including session musicians and where and when it was recorded. (*Examiner*)

*Still the Greatest* is a very interesting and creative look at The Beatles' solo careers, and makes for a more enjoyable read than a typical reference volume. *Still the Greatest* is an excellent volume and definitely a worthwhile read for music scholars, music enthusiasts, or fans of The Beatles. (*American Reference Books Annual*)

If God is truly in the details, this exhaustive second-act gospel radiates holy ghostliness. (*The Austin Chronicle*)

[This book] skillfully manages to blend in the right amounts of reference material and imagination to make this one of the most enjoyable Beatles books in years ... An inevitable yet delightful by-product of reading the book is the "I'd have chosen this song instead of that one" factor (witness the author's presentation in front of a captive audience at the recent Fest for Beatles Fans in Chicago) ... And while subjectivity naturally comes into play here, Jackson demonstrates not only a solid knowledge of post-Beatles history, but he astutely balances the biographical back story for each of the songs as well. Beyond the musicians' credits, release dates, chart positions and such, he captures the songs' essence eloquently ... Aesthetically, Jackson demonstrates an uncanny ability to turn words (his, and the artists) into mini aural landscapes in his descriptions of the songs' musicality. His take on "Uncle Albert / Admiral Halsey" paints a picture of the sound so vivid that if one had never heard the actual record, they could virtually imagine it quite precisely. Jackson demonstrates a deft command of pop/rock culture as well, connecting the dots beyond the Beatles' world ... Intellectually stimulating and at the same time lots of fun, this one should be on every Beatle fan's bookshelf. (*Beatlefan Magazine*)

Great addition to any Beatles library. (*Houston Press*)

I love his book. Over the course of 300 or so pages, Jackson explores the high points from the solo careers of John, Paul, George and Ringo. More than simply presenting release dates, recording info and chart positions, Jackson delves into the inspiration for the lyrics and where the key players were at in those moments. It's a new take on a much-chronicled band. (Bobby Tanzilo, *OnMilwaukee.com*)

Andrew Grant Jackson gives us an indispensable book with the inside story of the second career of the Beatles. The most exciting aspect—the stories of each song and the unusual motives of the writers. The book is a winner! (Larry Kane, author of *Ticket to Ride* and *Lennon Revealed*)

I'm happy to be able to recommend a new book by a man with the interesting name of Andrew Grant Jackson and it's called *Still the Greatest: The Essential Songs of the Beatles' Solo Careers*. Many of us were traumatized by the breakup of the Beatles and you would not believe how often it keeps coming up in my class on the culture and politics of the seventies. The fellow is pretty smart and the book is wonderfully well researched ... With the Beatles having been covered to death, this is really new territory, at least for me ... It's really both quite fun and impressive, though he does not hate the songs I hate and I find this a bit unnerving, given how on the ball he is otherwise. Do I really need to rethink My Love?" (Eric Alterman, *The Nation*)

Jackson (independent scholar) bases his chronological study of the Beatles' solo careers on the idea that solo tracks recorded after the Beatles' breakup can be grouped into theoretical Beatles albums. Each tune included in his list of essentials receives detailed and knowledgeable commentary covering session locations and dates, personnel, production credits, release information, and UK and US chart positions. Themes emerge, linking the solo outputs of the various Beatles to evolving trends in pop music. Jackson's treatment of each band member is evenhanded and appreciative, and his book succeeds in inspiring readers, both serious fans and novices, to return to the recordings. This volume does not aim to replace or supersede *The Beatles Solo*

*on Apple Records*, compiled by Bruce Spizer (2005), but it ably supplements this key resource. Jackson's commentary situating the output of solo members of the Beatles within contemporary music is particularly enlightening. This one-of-a-kind study of a cultural phenomenon discusses 70-plus albums and some 900 songs. Excellent appendix; discographies. **Summing Up:** Recommended. Collections emphasizing contemporary pop music; general readers. (CHOICE)

"The Beatles was just the beginning--the four fabs had extensive solo careers. Here, a comparison." (*Sunday Denver Post*)

#### About the Author

**Andrew Grant Jackson** has written for *Rolling Stone*, Yahoo!, Slate's "Blogging the Beatles," Baseline Studio System, music magazines *Burn Lounge*, *Mean Street*, and *Dispatch*, and copyedited the Hollywood monthly magazine *Ingénue*. He directed and cowrote the feature film *The Discontents* starring Perry King and Amy Madigan and served as actor Jeff Bridges's development associate at AsIs Productions.

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