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Russell REISING, 'Every Sound There Is'. *The Beatles' Revolver and the Transformation of Rock and Roll*

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Russell Reising (ed.), *Every Sound there is: The Beatles' Revolver & the Transformation of Rock*, Aldershot & Burlington, Ashgate, 2002.

Russell Reising declares in the introduction to his excellent collection commemorating *Revolver* that "*Revolver* has always been the right answer" (1) to any question concerning the "best" Beatles album of all time. Reising suggests that this album, instead of the more popular and critically acclaimed *Sgt. Pepper*, is rapidly tightening "its grip on our collective imagination" (1) for it introduces the Beatles as true pioneers of musical experimentation. As a "grandly complex and ambitious *statement* about the possibilities of popular music" (1, *italics original*), *Revolver* has become, at least for Reising and the collaborators in this collection, the original album of "firsts and onlies" (11), whose appeal has not waned, even recently surpassing *Sgt. Pepper* in terms of innovation, acclaim, and magic. This collection succeeds in capturing the magic of *Revolver*, both through its deeply personal and highly technical explorations.

One feature of the collection that is particularly appreciated is the section titled " 'When I'm in the middle of a dream': the contributors remember *Revolver*." The contributors (comprised of noted music and Beatles scholars like Sheila Whitely, Ian Inglis, Walter Everett, and Napthali Wagner, to name a few), offer touching, personal, and interesting anecdotes about the staying power of the album. From this brief section, we get a sense of how powerful the album has remained since its 1966 debut, and are reminded that seemingly minor events like hearing an album can shape an entire career. Trite as it is, my own experience with *Revolver* echoes with many of these contributors,

especially the fact that the album has continued to captivate my attention and admiration even after 20 years since I first heard it. These anecdotes set the stage for a powerful and meaningful discussion of the record's more technical merits, which, for the most part, stand as a truly wonderful tribute to the magic, innovation, and genius of the album.

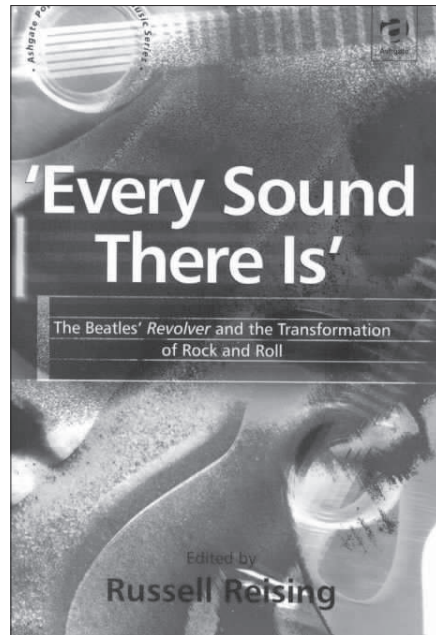
That said, for a lay reader, the more technical articles, while useful in their own right, fall a bit short in the overall goal of capturing the magic of the album. Though I appreciate the sophisticated analysis that these articles offered, (gathered in the middle section entitled " 'It is Shining': *Revolver's* Musicality"), their offerings tended to obscure the "magic," as it were, by introducing musical terms that were not accessible to general audiences. However, the writing and analysis is compelling, to say the least, and for readers more versed in musical theory than I, the articles should promise a welcome and thought-provoking examination of the Beatles' technical merits. While not a part of this section, Everett's fascinating comparison of the album's roots in the Detroit Motown/R&B scene stands as an accessible bright spot in the discussion of the Beatles' musical innovations. Everett compellingly and effectively situates R&B as a key influence of the album's innovations, and I can no longer understand the album separately from this comparison.

Other true bright spots of this collection are Warwick's "*I'm Eleanor Rigby*: female identity and *Revolver*," McDonald and Kaufman's " 'Tomorrow

The Beatles' Revolver & the Transformation of Rock

Never Knows'”, and the pair of articles on the minor Beatles Ringo and George, respectively Baur's “Ringo Round Revolver” and Bannister's “The Beatle who became a man.” These four articles, to me, characterize the spirit of the collection, allowing for a greater understanding of not only how the album was composed and produced, but also of the role that the personal plays in the album's cultural staying power. Warwick's quest to carve space for herself in “Eleanor Rigby” resonates with me as a woman, especially since it is one of the few Beatles songs in which there is a woman protagonist for whom we have sympathy. McDonald and Kaufman's article on the influence of George Martin is particularly welcome, because Martin, while knighted due to his remarkable achievements, has often become swept under the rug in terms of how he shaped the records. Finally, the two articles on Ringo and George offer a fresher perspective on these two perhaps underrated and certainly shadowed Beatles, and show how their contributions to the groundbreaking album were indispensable and technically sound as well.

These four articles, for me, capture the magic of the album, and ultimately achieve Reising's goal of attempting to understand the cultural fascination surrounding *Revolver*, more than 40 years since its release. Perhaps I am a luddite, but for me the most fascinating aspect of the album is the artists who created it, and on this aspect, the collection doesn't disappoint. In an age where we are constantly bombarded with media displaying the latest celebrity scandal, allowing us



to have a brief window into someone else's life, the windows into *Revolver*, still one of the most renowned and appreciated albums of all time, resonate as much more than simple glimpses. The collection as a whole succeeds in trying to understand how our relationships with the album are just as important as the musical and cultural innovations that the artists created, and this is an achievement almost as powerful.

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