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'Butcher Covers': Early Clue To The New Direction?

By Alban Klozpin

The outstanding English composers of 1963, whoever they may be, are entirely responsible for collections such as "Butcher Covers", whose combined talents have been sweeping the nation. If you don't believe me, may I suggest that you exhume this collection in twenty years time and ring me up if this perspicacious musical package isn't being championed as the quintessential Beatles tribute tape of all time. No collect calls, of course.

As usual, we cannot concern ourselves with the cultural and social phenomenon concomitant with general phenomenological hysteria over their *ouevre*. It is proper of course to focus on the aesthetic as expressive of the major and minor triads, naiads, and dryads so typical in rock *milieux*. Not even the Beatles could have done what these intrepid pop-meisters have done in "Butcher Covers", but I'm certain that they now wished they'd tried.

There's no question that **Michael Barrett's** unique interpretation of "It Won't Be Long" brings fresh enthusiasm to the inherent chronology of the lyrical structure, melodically suggesting hesitance yet compulsion toward precision timekeeping. **Jeff Hart's** "Tell Me Why" evokes the poignant melodic imperative of the tonic sevenths while simultaneously, if not elegantly, challenging the listener to explore his or her inner child (the inchoative unisyllabic query about the meaning of meaning). Bipolar disorders become the theme for **Benjamin Lukoff's** sprightly rendition of "Misery"; notice the inventive sans-percussive syncopation adapted from blues and skiffle antecedents.

Harrison Sherwood's tranquil preface to "Hello Little Girl" reminds the lyrically-obsessed analyst of composition just how vital is subtlety as one explores themes of acquisition and merger; to borrow imagery from economics, is this a bullish or bearish first encounter? **Dave Greenfield's** "Flying" takes wordless profundity to new heights by jettisoning completely the lyrics of the original version, encapsulating the tropospheric nexus of its pandiatonic clusters. Rarities are no surprise to scholars; **Bob Stahley's** heretofore unreleased takes of "The Honeymoon Song" (Takes 3 and 4) are dovetailed with the full version (Take 5) for scholars who wish to investigate the subtext---and this archival recording clearly show the progression from flirtatious uncertainty to romantic resolution.

Existentialists had some influence on the Beatles, and not surprisingly **Nickey Davies** renders a Kierkegaardian "Love of the Loved" admixed with cool Carnabyesque vocalization *a la* Julie Driscoll; is perhaps the best interpretation to date, according to music critics across the country, and I can only concur. **Mark "Monz" Simons** focuses on the mounting tension of octave-leaping in "Love You To", a paean that successfuly beliesthe sepulchral fulminations of standard love ballads while simultaneously evoking the quintessential otherness of augmented sixths and sevenths, plus a few Eastern-tinged eighths. Finances provide the metaphorical fabric for **Kevin McGuire's** "Baby You're a Rich Man", as clever and well-versed a make-money-fast scheme as has ever been realized (though its message may be illegal in some states), and so nicely on-beat on the off-beat. **Dennis Alstrand** enhances the original version of "Everybody's Got Something To Hide Except Me And My Monkey" by transforming the Beatles' slow, lugubrious version into a stunning rocker of Stockhausenesque monumentality---nothing like it has ever been heard, I think it's safe to say.

Joe LaRose gives "Please Please Me" a reduplicative restatement of purpose --- one gets the impression that he thinks simultaneously in triplets and doublets, so deft are the singularities of the whole. "If I Needed Someone", as rendered by **Damon Beals**, retains its inherent cross-rhythmic submediants and epitomizes the prevarication of its lyrical message. **Richard Cook** manages a multiplicitously enviable rendition of "Rain", the Beatles' erstwhile link to meteorologic yearnings; note the extraordinary mellotronic imitation of the rainstorm at the end (though rumors continue to abound that it's an actual recording of a real cloudburst outside Abbey Road Studios, recorded on April 4, 1964; premiere archivist Mark Lewisohn is checking the session documentation for verification). **Rachel Carter**, who at the age of thirteen shows extraordinary musical promise, translates "Yesterday" into a ballad of true poignancy by following McCartney's recently-unearthed hand-written directions for session instrumentation, which her father (rec.music.beatles's own **Steve Carter**) purchased for her at Sotheby's.

The Remainders sing "All My Loving" with precipitous urgency, translating a pulsing modality into potent yearning on the simultaneous downbeat/upbeat motif of young love. And here's a real treasure---a legitimate relic from the past: **Jackie & Jill** in the first anthologized performance of "I Want A Beatle for Christmas", released as a single on Cuca Records in December 1964 --- perhaps the rarest Beatles tribute song ever; no one has ever heard it! And rounding off Side One is **AC30's** "What You're Doing", whose quintessential parallel shifts into subtonic ninths, elevenths, and thirteenth notes are worth listening for --- but pay particular attention to the asymptotic percussive effects, virtually Purdie-esque in their complexity.

Side Two begins with **Tom Hartman's** lyrical as well as melodic rendition of "I Don't Want To Spoil the Party", which strikes this reviewer as bristling with open-bar crescendos on the dominant as well as submissive keys, suggesting the songwriter's lyrical ambiguity. **Edward of Sim** and **Joe LaRose** team up on "We Can Work It Out", whose unorthodox mannerism enhances their trademark penultimate emphasis on the diphthonic euphony. A throwback to barroom ennui might best describe **saki's** "Crying, Waiting, Hoping", whose phrasing suggests steep yet foggy vocalisms enabling a harmonic ascent into a well-resolved melodic climax with a secondary double-tracked voice. To which a particularly apt lyrical panacea is **Michael Carpenter's** "A Shot of Rhythm and Blues", an elliptical response to the growth of the medical industry in the late nineteen-fifties; Carpenter's scalar production offers a droll coda to Hippocratic *joie de vivre*.

Blue Boy Orlis and the Stompers' "Piggies" restructures the thematic arabesque of the Beatles' original with arpeggiated chords, and provides a seductive enticement to **The Ram Army's** "The Inner Light", which blends psychedelic omniscience with the twin Freudian theorems of internal vs. external foci inherent in the unyielding G chord; note Wilburyesque allusions! "Julia" is performed with touching resonance by **Bruce Dumes**, harmonizing with his own voice via a bit of session trickery --- no one knows how its done! **Paul Overly** handles "There's A Place" with Myxolydian aplomb, and vocally presents the conundrum of excursive and incursive desires for spatial coordinates.

Kirsten Grandahl provides a new harmonic reading of "All I've Got To Do", and this very rare live performance demonstrates an impressive musical panache. **Nicole Dumes** (at sixteen, one of the younger contributors to this package), graciously left her starring role in "Les Miserables" to perform a heartrendingly perceptive rendition of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" (Eric Clapton is rumored to be heard doubling with the lead guitarists on this track; this cannot be confirmed at press time).

"Ticket To Ride" is performed by **Jeff Grottnick** with tongue-in-cheek deftness intended to bring out the Sartrian irony which undelies the social conflict over the privatization of the railways. Unusually perceptive emphasis on the saturnine extremes of "And I Love Her" is brought beautifully to fruition by **Mark Daly**, whose spare instrumentation enhances the proximal triplets of his chromatic ascent. And if that weren't enough, we have **Steve Sorenson** and crew with their explosively enthusiastic rendition of "Birthday", whose well-known Czechoslovakian polka antecedents provide the inspiration for the middle-eight crescendo and contrapuntal subthematic propulsion into Dionysian revelry.

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A rare treat indeed is **Joe LaRose's** "Run For Your Life", a song that has never been heard since its original release since it was subjected to a worldwide ban and particular censorious treatment in Canada, where to this day you can be incarcerated for just thinking about the lyrics. **Barry Nesmith's** "Got To Get You Into My Life" brightens the original melissimas and refocuses the aural attention on strains of ironic recitative. And **Kent (bongo) Stewart's** melodious reading of "Free As A Bird"brings to closure this remarkable amalgam of individual yet collective works, metaphorically expressing the spirit of fragmentation as well as the searing meld of mutuality.

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