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The Beatles - Composing The Beatles Songbook: Lennon and McCartney (1966-1970)

Blog Name: MuzikReviews.com Reviews & Press Releases
 Wednesday, January 21, 2009

Running Time: 112 minutes plus bonus material

Composing The Beatles Songbook: Lennon and McCartney 1966-1970 provides a refreshing, different spin on the usual Beatles documentary. Instead of generally speaking of The Beatles' lives or pathway to and through success, the film covers the collaborations of Paul McCartney and John Lennon and dissects their songs.

While discussing the songwriting that made the most successful band in the world, the film simultaneously encompasses their lives, but not enough to make it the sole topic. We see interviews with band members' friends, writers, authors, and broadcasters who are more than qualified to share their views of the musical compositions.

The panel members discuss how McCartney made songs that were more attuned to the pop genre while Lennon wrote in a different fashion, as if he had a chip on his shoulder. While McCartney wrote more happy songs, he was definitely not stuck in a niche. His loud, crazy, Charles Manson anthem, "Helter Skelter" was penned to rival the supposed loudest album at the time from The Who. By the same token, Lennon was also very capable of writing ballads, such as "Julia" and "Goodnight."

Interviews make up the majority of the documentary, but they are broken up nicely with songs, video clips, pictures, and various other images. One of those instances occurred during the playing of "Tomorrow Never Knows." An analysis of the song expounds upon its psychedelic nature. So instead of showing pictures of The Beatles, a progression of images reminiscent of the ones on Windows Media Player pops up and spins the watcher into a whirlwind of dizzying vexation.

Lennon's comment of how The Beatles at their peak were more popular than Jesus was received with mixed emotions; some burned Beatles albums, others thought of it as nothing. John's friend touches upon this topic and a clip of Lennon speaking of it is played.

Examining the elements of Beatles songwriting and their songs proves to be very entertaining. The quality of sound can be a little less than satisfying during some dialogue, but for the most part is sufficient. Some song facts are revealed that even a Beatles enthusiast might not know such as the fact that Paul dabbled in experimental music quite a bit also, it wasn't just John and Yoko Ono.

A very important aspect of this DVD is that it continues to follow the path it set out on. Throughout, it continues to cover where the Beatles songs came from, how the duo collaborated and the effects they had on each other along the way.

A friend of the band talks on how the guys had such different temperaments, it would've been 'against nature' to keep them forced together. Abbey Road was their final album, and they *knew* it would be their last together as a group.

The last image on the screen is of McCartney and Lennon who, as a panel member tells us, are the two "greatest songwriters we've ever seen" in the background as the credits roll. Melancholy music plays to coincide with how you will feel as the realization that The Beatles as a band are truly over, and so is the documentary.

But not to worry; There is another documentary in the series. *Composing The Beatles Songbook (1957-1965)*. If you enjoy this film, you may want to check it out. I know I certainly will be.

Extras: Fun, but hard to compete with the main feature, which is so very interesting as a whole.

Christen LaFond, MuzikReviews.com Staff
 January 19, 2009

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