

ing why in his just-so clothes "the other tickets look much better/Without a penny to spend they dress to the letter." Meeting an old idol on the beach, now reduced to subserving as a local hotel bellboy, he is moved to remember: "Ain't you the guy who used to set the paces/Riding up in front of a hundred faces?"

An effective moment, yet when-judged against the broader scope of *Quadrophenia* it seems as if all Townshend has constructed is a series of such effective moments. Pete, for better or worse, is possessed of a logic riveting in its linearity, and if in effect we are being placed in the mind of an emotionally distressed adolescent, neither the texture of the music nor the album's outlook is able to rise to this challenge of portraiture. Despite the varied themes, Jimmy is only seen through Townshend's eyes, geared through Townshend's perceptions, and the aftermath as carried through four sides becomes a crisis of concept, the album straining to break out of its enclosed boundaries and faltering badly.

This is reflected in the songs themselves, vastly similar in mode and construction, running together with little differential to separate them. Only a few stand on their own as among the best the Who have done ("The Real Me," "Is It in My Head?," "5:15," the Townshend theme of "Love Reign O'er Me"), and of those it's interesting to note that several are holdovers from the lost Who album Glyn Johns and the band worked on before the onset of *Quadrophenia*. Also, given the inordinately complex personalities that make up the group, little is sensed of any Moon, Entwistle or Daltrey contributions to the whole. Their roles are subdued, backing tracks when they should rise to shoulder the lead, pressed on all fronts by the sweep of Townshend's imagination.

On other Who albums this might be acceptable, even welcome; surely Pete has been the Who's guiding force, their hindsight and hellbound inspiration. It is his mastermind that has created the tour-de-force recording breakthroughs of the album, the realistic and panoramic landscape of pre-Carnaby Street England, arranged the setting so that each member of the band could give full vent to his vaunted and highly unique instrumental prowess. Indeed, it might easily be said that the Who as a whole have never sounded better, both ensemble and solo, proving unalterable worth and relevance in an age that has long passed others of their band's generation into fragments of history.

But on its own terms, *Quadrophenia* falls short of the mark. Jimmy Livingston Seagull, adrift on a stormless sea, with only his shattered wings and shared memories to keep him company—so close, and yet so far.



Ringo's Third LP Invokes Beatles' Aura

Ringo Starr
Apple SWAL 3413

By BEN GERSON

Four and a half years after *Let It Be*, a Ringo Starr album is the first to actually invoke the Beatles' aura. He has enlisted the help (the "band-aid," as one song calls it) of John, Paul and George as well as Beatles lieutenants Nicky Hopkins, Klaus Voormann and Billy Preston. One song, "Devil Woman," mentions Sexy Sadies, while "I'm The Greatest" is a career retrospective in which we are reminded of Ringo's place in "the greatest show on earth" and his incarnation as Billy Shears. In Beatles fashion, *Ringo* has the closure of a stage show or a movie, and over the long dissolve Ringo recites the credits, mentioning John and George and Paul consecutively. It is as a reunion that Ringo is most conscious and proudest of this work.

Ringo was always the figure of conciliation within the Beatles, undoubtedly the most genial, conceivably the most sensible, and the one with the smallest musical axe to grind. His very lapses bespoke the esteem in which the others held him; had they not liked him so much, those perfectionists would never have allowed him to sing. Perhaps because as the drummer he stood outside the process of creation, he had the best perspective from which to see the Beatles

as a unity.

Ringo has never had any pretense of self-sufficiency. Once he had gotten his special projects out of the way (projects for which John, Paul and George's talents would have been unsuited anyway) Ringo was ready to call upon the three most obvious people to assist him with writing, singing and playing. As Starr's first "pop album," *Ringo* signifies a homecoming, not just of family, but in musical style as well.

Lennon's lyrics to "I'm The Greatest" express why Ringo is the rallying point and keeper of the flame. Although Ringo sings it in a boastful first person, what is really being conveyed is John's comprehension, admiration, even envy of Ringo. Because Ringo seems so content he hasn't required John's compensatory claims of genius. Sings Ringo: "All I want to do is boogaloo."

It is not surprising, then, that in atmosphere *Ringo* is the most successful record by an ex-Beatle. It is not polemical and abrasive like Lennon's, harsh and self-pitying like Harrison's, or precious and flimsy like McCartney's, but balanced, airy and amiable. In other respects, it is not the best post-Beatles record. I would place *McCartney*, *Ram*, *Plastic Ono Band* and *All Things Must Pass* ahead of it. Ringo's lack of a strong musical direction (strictly as a personality, he is stronger than Harrison), the very thing which permitted the participation of the other three Beatles and so many others, makes this album rambling and inconsistent.

Does the presence of the

other three Beatles make the difference all of the hoopla surrounding this record would seem to demand? Producer Richard Perry's pre-release remarks said that it did, and I would have to agree. *Ringo's* three most wonderful songs are "I'm The Greatest," on which John harmonizes and George plays lead; "Photograph" (co-written by G. Harrison and R. Starkey), on which George sings harmony and plays 12-string, and "You and Me (Babe)," authored by George and Beatle road manager Mal Evans on which George again plays lead.

On "I'm The Greatest" the only cut on which any three of the four appear, a stunning alchemy occurs. The small matter of John's pungent, sardonic backup vocal, and a Harrison guitar part which burns like gonorrhoea, energize this song beyond all explanation.

"Photograph" has the kind of intro which is important not so much for its resemblance to the song about to follow as its pull on the listener. Ringo mourns, "But all I've got is a photograph/And I realize you're not coming back anymore," but the effect is warming. A big production—a bed of acoustic guitars plus orchestra and chorus arranged by Jack Nitzche—is bent to homely ends.

"Hold On" is one of Randy Newman's thumbsucking sulks; his baby's taking advantage of him, but he's too much the type that's always being taken advantage of to do anything about it. Dorsey Burnette's "You're Sixteen," with Harry Nilsson on backup vocal, is digestible trivia and continues the note of whimsy. Nicky

Hopkins' off-the-beat piano at the end is fun. "Sunshine Life for Me (Sail Away Raymond)" is a modal banjo tune by George on which is found the Band less Richard Manuel. It never manages to transcend its idiom, much less to fulfill it.

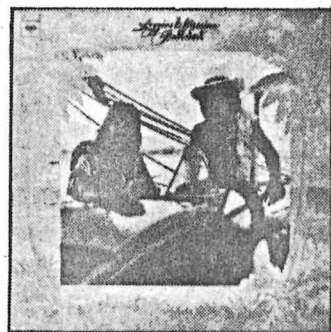
"Oh, My My" pumps away with great boisterousness. It prescribes rock & roll as a medical panacea; we finally discover what the rockin' pneumonia and the boogie-woogie flu really are. "Step Lightly" is about as plodding as Johnny Cash ever gets, and "Devil Woman," with lines like, "You look so good and you look so fine,/ And one of these days I'm gonna make you mine," is more silly than predatory. Klaus Voormann's depiction of this devil woman (his lithographs accompany the lyrics to each of the songs) is a lot more jarring than Ringo's.

Amid the diversity of these selections, a portrait of Ringo's musical tastes does emerge. Free of the other Beatles' influence, he drifts along in his own way, displaying a penchant for novelty songs and ethnic music. If his taste is pop, it is pop as it was defined 15 years ago.

"Six O'Clock" is Ringo's appearance with the McCartneys. While the song has a certain slight charm, it doesn't smack of "I'm The Greatest" or "Photograph" or "You and Me (Babe)"'s collaborative feeling. Ringo is merely grafted onto a typical McCartney confection.

It is the infectious "You and Me (Babe)," *Ringo's* final song, into which all the bittersweet reunion sentiments pour. George on this cut plays better than he has in years; his uncanny knack for peeling away the harmonies and re-aligning them is fully with him here. He keeps cooking well into the fade-out.

The "babe" of the title is actually the audience to whom he is bidding adieu, but the good-bye is as much dedicated to the people who helped make this album, and he thanks them by name. The album is the document of the good time had in its making.



Full Sail
The Loggins and Messina Band
Columbia KC 32540

By JACK BRESCHARD

It has taken Jim Messina three albums to slip out of his sideman sweatshirt and don the trappings of a star, but in *Full Sail*, the Loggins and Messina Band's third release, he does just that. With his confidence bolstered by gold albums, undisputed box-office success and numerous cover