



BEATLES GET BACK TO MONO VINYL by Alan L. Chrisman

In honor of the recent re-release of the original Beatles on Mono LP'S set, I thought I'd write some reflections of all the changes that have happened, in how we listen to music.

It's kind of ironic, because, there has been a real return to vinyl, even among whole new generations, let alone people like the baby Boomers who grew up with it. Many people now get their music directly through downloading (and don't even think of paying for it and helping support the artists who make it), so it's actually become harder than ever for musicians to make a living.

"Has the McDonaldization of music , with its constant accessibility, taken something away from the music itself"

I wrote the above words back in 1989, for an Ottawa, Canada's Carleton University newspaper, when CD's were supposed to be the new format, which would sound better and last forever. And just today, I heard that Ottawa's CD Warehouse (nominated once as the best music store in Canada) is closing their doors after 24 years. Of course, as with the DVD video format, people have changed the way they consume music and film. And "consume" is perhaps the fitting word. Like fast food restaurants we, a lot of us anyway, want to just gobble it down 24/7.

But some of us still remember, how we would, after saving up our money as kids, finally be able to afford the latest LP. I remember the Beatles' especially, seem to have a new album out about every 6 months or so (groups today are lucky to get one out every few years). Every Beatles' record was a quantum leap from the previous one- from *Rubber Soul* to *Revolver* to *Sgt. Peppers'* to *The White Album* to *Abbey Road*. And the other leaders in rock at the time, like Dylan and the Stones, did the same thing, and we as fans had to make the jumps too.

But it was then a whole ritual we went through. You couldn't wait to rush home, after waiting so long to finally have a copy and tear off the plastic wrapping, like it was Xmas, and gaze at the a cover. For there was a real art to designing covers then, especially after Sgt. Peppers' psychedelic one, and as with the music inside, musicians were constantly trying to outdo each other artistically, but in a friendly rivals way, which made us all grow, artists and audience alike. Then we would pop it on the turntable and play it for the first time. But at the same time, we'd read over the back cover and the often printed lyrics and liner notes, noting who's singing what song and who's playing what instrument and which musicians are guesting on it, etc.

I know it probably sounds strange to some people who didn't grow up with it this way , like some fancy chef going on and on about the proper way to savor a fine wine or meal. But that is what it was like for so many of us back then. It was a ritual and rituals are important. There is something to be said, even for having to wait for things in life, in the same way, which children still appreciate, after anticipating a present, getting up early Xmas morning, and finally getting it. There's just something about having to work for things in life, and receiving finally its reward. Getting a new album, felt like that to us.

I wrote those above words about the taking for granting our music, 25 years ago now. And perhaps, we did lose something in the process, in this fast paced world of the internet and social media, where everything, for good and bad, is available to us all, anytime.

Times change, and that's just life too. But as Marshall McLuhan told us, each media also changes the message. There were first, Thomas Edison's wax cylinders, 78 rpm's, 33's, 45 singles, LP's, 8- tracks , cassettes, CD's and now MP3's, downloading, streaming-each for its time.

People laughed at me when I wrote those words and when I even predicted a comeback for vinyl one day. At the time, I was running a vinyl store called *Get Back! Records* (a take-off on both The Beatles and my hope that vinyl would come back one day). I ran vinyl stores for 30 years, opening perhaps the first used one in Ottawa, Canada in 1972. The owner of the Ottawa CD store that just announced its closing, said that vinyl sales have actually been increasing by two or three times every year, these past few years. It's still admittedly, a relatively small minority market , but many bands, both new and old (including McCartney's latest), are now

also available on vinyl. The Beatles box set of 14 Lp's is \$375 (and doesn't contain *Abbey Road*, *Let It Be* or *Yellow Submarine*, because they were recorded in stereo) and is mainly for collectors, but at least it's finally available. After all these years, we can again hear the way these great songs were originally intended to be heard (some fans have long said the stereo versions never sounded quite accurate).

All I can say is, I can still remember first hearing, The Beatles' *Yesterday and Today* album, which Capitol Records compiled from the British LP's and called it (and later withdrew the legendary, rare "Butcher Cover"), growing up in the States in 1966. And it was the original mono version (which I still have, amazingly) with "Day Tripper" coming out of my speakers in Mono and feeling like The Beatles were right there in my university room. There's something to be said, as I say, for these often tribal youth rituals which human beings still seem to need, and the somewhat surprising return to vinyl by many young people too, these past several years. They remind us, that despite all the changes, some things are timeless. Get Back to MONO! Read Alan Chrisman's other recent blog on his meeting several people from the *Beatles Beginnings: People from the Mono Days* www.beatlely.wordpress.com



OTTAWA CITIZEN ARTICLE on ALAN CHRISMAN'S "GET BACK! RECORDS" VINYL STORE, 1999

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