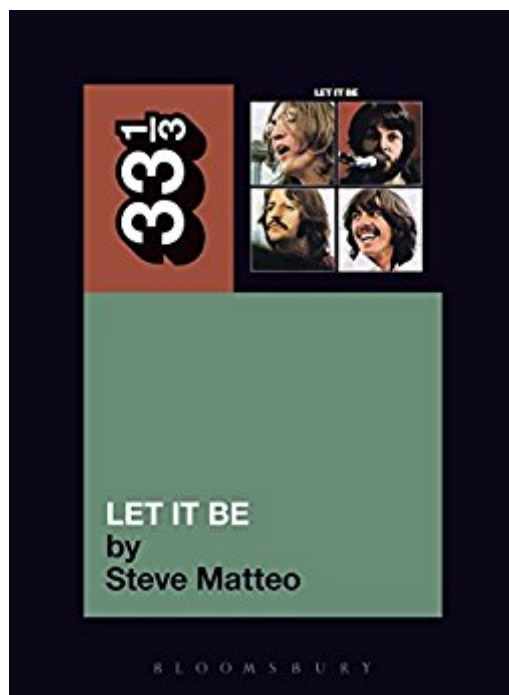


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The Beatles' Let It Be (33 1/3)



Synopsis

The recording sessions for Let It Be actually began as rehearsals for a proposed return to live stage work for the Beatles, to be inaugurated in a concert at a Roman amphitheatre in Tunisia. In this thoroughly researched book, Steve Matteo delves deep into the complex history of these sessions. He talks to a number of people who were in the studio with the Beatles, recording the sights and sounds of the band at work bringing to life a period in the Beatles' career that was creative and chaotic in equal measure.

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Customer Reviews

This book differs from nearly all of the other first eleven in this series in that instead of involving a detailed look at the songs and the music involved, given the artistes involved here are the Beatles, the author wisely focuses on the history around the recordings instead. In so doing, Matteo has produced a little gem. Working chronologically he covers how and why the recordings occurred starting with the sessions at the Twickenham sound stage and the possible idea of a live concert at a site in North Africa to follow, progressing to the subsequent recordings made at the new Apple

Studios aimed at avoiding the controls of Abbey Road, and the final Saville Row rooftop concert. The book closes with the consequences of how under different producers the incomplete recordings fell into limbo to be "rescued" by Phil Spector and the subsequent history of numerous bootleg tapes from the sessions, culminating in the release of "Let it be...Naked", a missed opportunity in the author's eyes. What Matteo does in this story telling is include a lot of factual evidence from the thorough research he has done through interviews for the book (but it seems with none of the Beatles) and technical data garnered from many other books. But more importantly he also demyths a lot of prior held mis-perceptions along the way. His covering of the growing disillusionment of Harrison and Martin as the sessions devolve into chaos offsets the more well known stories of Ono and McCartney outbursts. From all the evidence presented, the different sessions were not the gloom and doom often conveyed subsequently especially through the released film and individual Beatles retrospective comments.

Let It Be was initially conceived as a warm-up for the Beatles to return to live stage gigs with the first to be a lavish show in a ruined Roman Amphitheatre in Tunisia and in actuality became just one show - the legendary rooftop concert, the Beatles's last live gig together. Originally titled Get Back to highlight the band returning to its roots, the rehearsals were filmed for an accompanying documentary and showed a band on the verge of breakup, and it was retitled Let It Be, as a fitting epitaph to the fractured group. Though the album would be the last released under the Beatles name, it was recorded before their actual last album, Abbey Road. Steve Matteo writes wonderfully about the creation of the troubled recordings, interviewing the many engineers, documentary crew, and Apple staff who witnessed the work, and using quotes from the Beatles themselves, giving us an insight into the process and the band's personalities rather than in-depth interpretations on the songs themselves, like other books in the 33 1/3 series sometimes do. Despite John's increasingly troubling drug problems (he and Yoko were snorting a lot of heroin at the time) and George's discomfort at Paul's overbearing attitude, the recordings over several weeks were very fruitful with the band enjoying playing music together and in addition to the songs that appeared on Let It Be, half of the songs to appear on Abbey Road would be written during this period and others would appear on John, Paul and George's solo records.

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