

One Beatle, Alone and Together

BY COLIN TURNER

DEAR BEATLE PEOPLE:

AS you probably know, Apple Records has just released a soundtrack album called *Wonderwall Music By George Harrison* (ST 3350). To my mind it bares the essence of George's music and exposes the culminating tendencies of his whole song book.

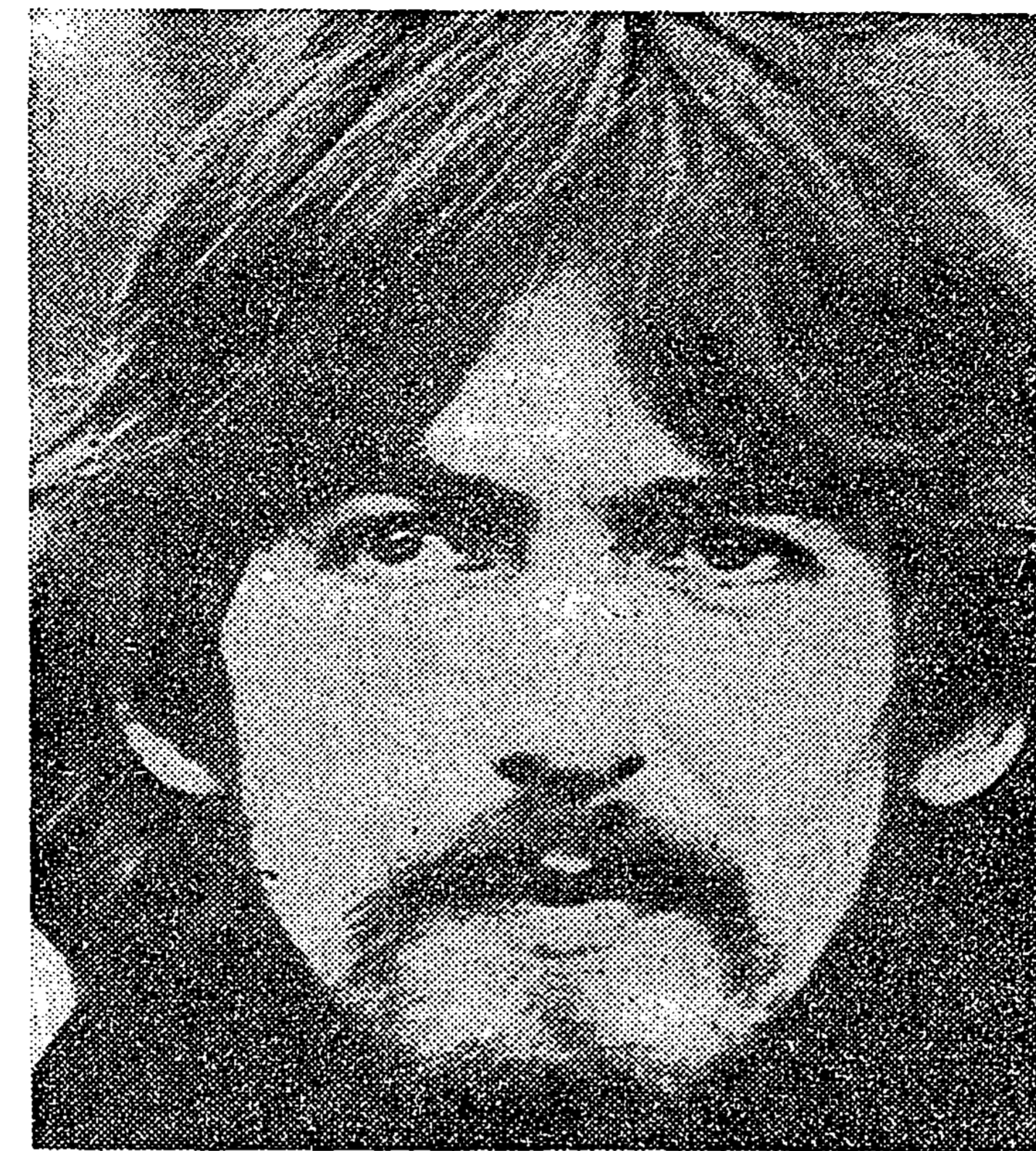
But before we can take a look at it, I think the time has come to admit to ourselves that if we are true Beatle critics and devotees, we may have to run a similar risk of self-exposure.

It's time, I think, to strip off all our pretty Beatle costumes, their bright and borrowed colors, and like Lennon's *Sexy Sadie*, lay it down for all to see. In other words, Beatle People, it's time to go naked. Here's why:

For those of us who for the past few years have submerged ourselves so deeply in the tape and costumed world of John, Paul, George, and Ringo, the recent Beatles album, "*The Beatles*," was something of a sudden surfacing. Tossed up too rapidly from their "sea of green," we found ourselves denuded by a bad case of what I can only call the Identity Bends.

Our Fashion Heroes had emerged not in one simple costume, like a Sgt. Pepper uniform or a Walrus suit, but in over a dozen guises—all equally honest—in the space of 30 songs. As a community of cultural chameleons, we went about as white as the album cover itself. The bubbles of these multiple identities mixed and boiled in our blood, and we found ourselves doubled over in a burlesque attempt to strike the right pose, to come up hip in the appropriate colors.

For my part in listening to the album, I found myself stripping and dressing and stripping so kaleidoscopically from song to song that by the end of "*Revolution 9*" I was as naked as John and Yoko in their "notorious" photo. All my disguises lay colorless at my feet, and I was ready to sing "Good night, good



George Harrison

"Wow, like he's at the center of everything"

night," and simply go to bed.

Now this is neither revelation nor revolution. I'm only repeating what Lennon says so plainly in "*Glass Onion*," that the Walrus really was just Paul all along. For an addicted Beatle Person, this should be a hard idea to handle. Try it. Because in spite of what we so much wanted to believe during those Magical Mystery Months last spring, that witty Walrus never was me, never was you, never was all of us together. "If you become naked ..." whispers Yoko at the end of "*Revolution 9*," it's not everybody else you discover through your exposure, it's yourself. Ask the Living Theatre.

This is all by way of leading up to a simple critical statement about you, me, and the Fab Four, namely, that we're finally ready to stop wearing Beatle costumes and start weaving our own.

Therefore, since this is ostensibly a review of "*Wonderwall Music*," I've got an idea about how to get our weaving process underway in an appropriate critical format. It's a bit of a game, and it's called Getting George Together.

Getting George Together (GGT) is not a passive game, however. Like most of the good games that fill the front pages of our newspapers these days, it's an active one demanding vigorous participation from all sides. George has already made his move, of course, so now it's up to us, like Prudence, to come out and play.

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GGT, then, consists of hauling out all your Beatle albums and putting on tape every one of Harrison's songs from "*Don't Bother Me*" to "*Savoy Truffle*."

Once you've gotten these down—not forgetting to take into account the two songs he did for his Jackie Lomax single, the clandestine "*Lord Sitar*" album and his two numbers from "*Yellow Submarine*"—your last task will be to watch these pages for a sale at Goody's or Korvette's, at which time you must rush out and buy the "*Wonderwall*" soundtrack album.

If at that point, lack of time, facilities, or a mounting disinterest has not turned you into a GGT Dropout, you will then have in your possession

The Collected George Harrison Critical Reviewer's Kit. Thus prepared, you can begin Phase II of the game.

Phase II naturally involves the experience of repeatedly listening to your Reviewer's Kit. For maximum participation, this must be done in the following way.

First: You get hold of as many felt tip pens as you can lay your hands on. It would be nice if they were each of a different color.

Second: You take off all your clothes and sit down in front of your speakers in any position that's most comfortable for you.

Third: You listen intently and incessantly to your Collected George Harrison Critical Reviewer's Kit.

Fourth: You jot down your notes and insights on any smooth and available surface, such as your own body.

Fifth (And this is Phase III of the game): You transpose and collate your notes, working them up and sending them off to an appropriate publication or a sympathetic friend.

Note: If you wish, the frivolities of step five may be omitted, because there is now a place in the Village, I'm told, that publishes people themselves—complete and unexpurgated. You can become your own first edition.

And that's the whole point of Getting George Together, really—to get yourself together—to come out at least once in your own colors, to weave with words your own design upon yourself. *You are what you are*: What a unique costume for a post-literature culture!

So the rest, you see, is up to you. For, by its own implicit principles, this piece should go no farther. But in case you're dubious about the results and would like a bit of proof or encouragement before going ahead, I'll conclude with a couple of sample epidermic critiques.

To begin, then, here's one of my own about the "*Wonderwall*" album. They were jotted down in red on the left kneecap, then revised assiduously in blue on the center of the forehead. In spite of, or perhaps because of this lo-

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cation, their style seems all too predictable:

"George Harrison has written, arranged, and produced an album whose music is at once unpretentious, consistently involving, and on occasion a truly excellent exploration of Eastern and Western forms — mixed in a tasteful electronic setting. Listening to it, one is initially frustrated by the modest brevity of its attempts, yet ultimately charmed by the very candor of its simplicities (not its simplifications).

"Although the Indian compositions are themselves but finger exercises, the lesson learned is how to weave a melody through a thick Eastern fabric with a Western rhythmic needle. Roy Dyke's (Ringo's) thumping percussion and Eddie Clayton's (Eric Clapton's) heavy guitar are inevitably penetrated by a lightly winding flute, flugelhorn, piano or sitar. Mellifluous density is the essence of 'Wonderwall,' a synthesis which has increasingly found its way into Harrison's vocal arrangements, succeeding best in the tumultuous 'It's All Too Much' from 'Yellow Submarine.'"

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In contrast to these furrowed phrases, a somewhat circuitous statement was recorded by a friend who seemed very intent on explaining the particular line of growth that George has been developing in his lyrics. The statement began at her navel and circled round and round across her abdomen:

"Wow, like he's at the center of everything, and he always has been—even before he got onto the transcendental rap. I mean, just listen to the early songs. He's not moving; everything comes to him. Buddha George under the Tree of Life. He's unhappy at first, of course. It's just simple teenie stuff, and he doesn't know yet that he's already in the Right Place. So he keeps pushing people away, like in 'Don't Bother Me' or 'Think For Yourself.' But something finally begins to get to him—grass or Ravi or Pattie or something, and pretty soon he's preaching like a madman: 'Let me tell you how it will be. . .' 'I want to tell you, My head is filled with things to say. . .' But he never seems to have enough words. Then the Eastern Love Thing comes in and pulls it all together for him: 'Make love all day long, Make love singing songs. . .' That's my favorite line out of all his stuff.

"From then on he begins to calm down, to let people into where he's at—to let them know he's just sitting There and waiting for them in Blue Jay Way. Calmer and stiller:

'Without going out of your door/ You can know all the things on earth.' Wow that's it, 'To ride without traveling.' That's George, right. at the Still Center with his guitar gently weeping for the whole spinning world. *Axis Mundi!* I wish I was there. . ."

But she can't be, of course. And Beatle People, neither can we. That was last year's place, last year's costume. And never really ours to begin with. As George puts it to us now in "Savoy Truffle": "We all know Oba-Di-Bla-Da/ But can you show me where you care?"

Can you, Prudence? And you, Jude? And me?
