

Solid State: The Story of "Abbey Road" and the End of the Beatles

Kenneth Womack

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While the album itself is a definite masterpiece, the Beatles's *Abbey Road* also served as a coda for the world's most influential band, the last set of studio sessions before the four musical geniuses went their separate ways. In the enjoyable deep dive *Solid State*, Kenneth Womack tells a detailed story of how the album came to be.

One of the standout aspects of the book is the level of information about the music itself. With mastermind producer George Martin back in the fold and a new "solid state" recording station, the band was able to make different use of multitrack recording and generate a "warmer" sound. *Solid State* explains how these processes were applied to individual songs, including tracking how the individual parts of the album-ending medley ("Carry That Weight," "Golden Slumbers," et cetera) came to life and ultimately came together.

Of course, *Abbey Road*'s fame comes nearly as much from the band's dynamic as from the music, and *Solid State* tracks those stories well. There's ample discussion of the band fighting over a possible new manager, John Lennon and Yoko Ono recovering from both heroin addiction and a car accident in the studio, George Harrison gaining confidence in the caliber of his songwriting, and Lennon and Paul McCartney struggling to buy the publishing rights to their songs. Those tensions are all explored in detail, and the band's musical success against that backdrop comes through.

Because of its laser focus on the period surrounding the *Abbey Road* sessions, *Solid State* does a great job of describing the final weeks of the Beatles as a going concern: the personal disagreements, the breakup, and most importantly, their ability to put that all aside long enough to write and record a set of songs that stands the test of time.

JEFF FLEISCHER (September / October 2019)

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