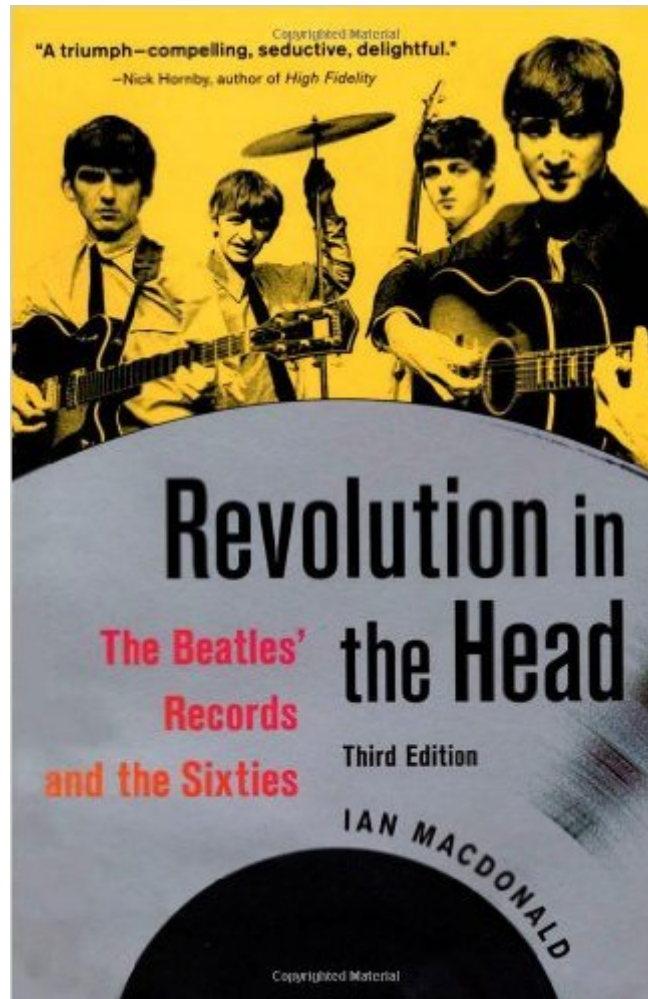


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Revolution In The Head: The Beatles' Records And The Sixties



Synopsis

This 'Bible of the Beatles' captures the iconic band's magical and mysterious journey from adorable teenagers to revered cultural emissaries. In this fully updated version, each of their 241 tracks is assessed chronologically from their first amateur recordings in 1957 to their final reunion recording in 1995. It also incorporates new information from the Anthology series and recent interviews with Paul McCartney. This comprehensive guide offers fascinating details about the Beatles' lives, music, and era, never losing sight of what made the band so important, unique, and enjoyable.

Book Information

Paperback: 544 pages

Publisher: Chicago Review Press; 3rd edition (September 1, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1556527330

ISBN-13: 978-1556527333

Product Dimensions: 5 x 1.1 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (95 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #41,141 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in [Books > Humor &](#)

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Customer Reviews

The late Ian MacDonald really nailed it with this book. I try to read any comprehensive analysis of the Beatles recorded catalog that I can - and none even come close to this. Simply put, this book changed the way I listened to the Beatles music. It made me a more attentive, discerning listener. It broadened the scope of my knowledge of '60s music by pointing the way towards other music of the era that I hadn't yet heard. I find it hard to overstate the influence this book has had on me personally - I have read it cover to cover numerous times and still find myself going back to it. This isn't a history of the Beatles - it is a song-by-song analysis, in the order the songs were recorded, of everything officially released by the group. And make no mistake, it is not an objective collection of facts - there ARE mostly reliable recording dates, release dates, and song credits for every entry, so it can be used as a quick reference. But this is a highly opinionated piece of writing - Mr. MacDonald was not afraid to ruffle feathers by offering critical evaluations of some of the Beatles most popular

songs (he is quite harsh, for instance, towards classics like "Across the Universe" and "While My Guitar Gently Weeps"). Mr. MacDonald does a great job of placing this body of work within the context of the time it was released - but he also manages to assess each song purely on its own terms, as well. While quite obviously a true-blue Beatles fan, MacDonald maintained a certain level of objectivity throughout - never getting caught up in fanboy idolization. He's tough on this music - when he feels a song isn't up to the band's established standards, he makes it very clear what he doesn't like.

There's a real joy in reading Ian Macdonald's "Revolution in the Head," because even if you disagree with his assessments, you know you're in the presence of an introspective but tough critic. He reads the Beatles against the cultural politics of the 1960s in order to assess the extent to which their music shaped and reflected the changing values of those times. His introductory essay, in fact, is one of the finest and nuanced summaries that I've read on the Sixties Revolution - neither congratulatory nor scornful but rather fair-minded. The individual song assessments presume some familiarity with music terminology (a glossary in the back helps) and non-specialists like me will tend to gloss over descriptions like "...endlessly uncoiling B flat Mixolydian melody around a standard three-cord progression." ("She Said, She Said") While many people here think that MacDonald is harsh in his assessments of McCartney, on the whole I find his take on both Lennon and McCartney to be fairly accurate. It is true that he takes Lennon's songs more seriously and almost all of his extended analyses - in which he shows how a particular Beatles composition embodied the spirit of its moment - are from Lennon's catalogue: "Tomorrow Never Knows," "Strawberry Fields," and "Revolution 1." yet, he does show a deep appreciation for McCartney's musicianship, his innovative and complex melodic arrangements, and the deep empathy that characterizes his best work. He is hardest, though, on Harrison. His low opinion of Harrison's early songs carries over into a serious under-estimation of his later work, especially "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" and "Here Comes The Sun.

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