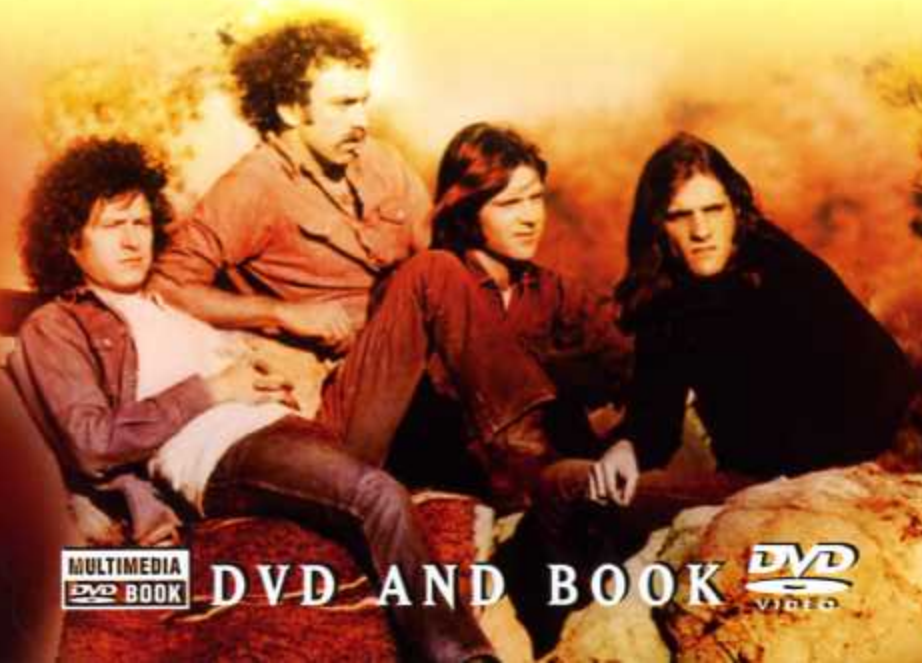


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MUSIC IN REVIEW



MULTIMEDIA
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THE EAGLES: THE RECORDINGS

The Eagles – For lovers of contemporary music the world over, it would be hard to find many people who wouldn't acknowledge the influence The Eagles have had on popular music. From the early 1970s when their debut album was released, through their troubled late 70s and beyond, to the mega stadium tours of today, they still exert a presence on popular music that is quite frankly, staggering.

The Eagles are a band that in many ways defines all that was good and bad in the American music business of the 70s. The legacies of their immense success as both a band and a business still permeate the music business today. Some of its effect has remained positive, other aspects completely disastrous for the struggling musicians of today. The Eagles and bands like them were in many ways the springboard for the almost megalomaniac aspirations of Svengalis such as David Geffen, Elliot Roberts and Irving Azoff. It was their actions that in many ways turned the 70s music business on its head. Some of it for the better, some not.

The band of course became one of the biggest selling bands on the planet and remain so today. Interesting that they only recorded six full albums of studio material between 1972 and 1979 and then, after a gap of fourteen years, less than half an album of new studio material. Rumour has it that much of an album lies in stasis after being recorded in the first years of this century, so it may not take too much longer for the band to release a new studio effort. All one can hope is that when they do, it attains the standard of albums that were issued in the 70s and not the rather mediocre efforts that appeared on When Hell Freezes Over. Sure, it was nice to have new material out after so long, but as is so often the case with bands that issue just one or a few new tracks on a 'new' release, they rarely capture a cohesive set of recorded material, and When Hell Freezes Over was no exception. Live, the band still certainly deliver the goods. It would be a crowning achievement for them to release a cracking new album that could influence yet another generation of musicians and fans alike. They are more than capable of it, if past efforts are any indication.

Their albums by and large were so good that one certainly umm's and aaarr's when listening to them. There won't be many songs you won't remember! Let's take a look.....

THE ALBUMS:

THE EAGLES

Original vinyl released 1st June 1972 Asylum LP 5054
Asylum CD 5054-2

Produced and engineered by Glyn Johns at Olympic Studios,
London, UK

Musicians:

Glenn Frey (Vocals, Guitar), Don Henley (Vocals, Drums,
Percussion), Bernie Leadon (Vocals, Guitar, Banjo), Randy Meisner (Vocals, Bass
Guitar)



The Eagles debut album has become a classic in no uncertain terms and has been cited by a plethora of bands as a primary influence and inspiration in their music. Many would also argue (quite correctly) that The Eagles had taken a lot of ideas from bands such as Poco and The Flying Burrito Brothers—to name a few. This they did, but they had such drive, determination and, at the start, direction, that it's little wonder they held the mantle of California Rock for so long.

Signed to David Geffen's Asylum Records for \$125,000 after an audacious self-introduction, the band were quickly sent out on the road in Colorado to hone their act. Returning to Los Angeles in November 1971, the band were quick to relocate themselves from their dive dwellings to more upscale accommodation—after all, they did have a sensible amount of money now. The band had set out to define their brand of rock on their own terms, and on an equal basis within the group. From the start the group was to be a democracy, with all members contributing to the writing on a roughly equal basis. By and large this worked in the beginning. Glenn Frey did, however, assume the majority of the lead vocal tasks, with Don Henley in the background. This however was soon to change.

Shortly after returning to the City of Angels the band were flown to London in February 1972 to record what would become the classic debut album.

Completed and set in a lovely gatefold sleeve depicting a desert scene from Joshua Tree National Park, the album was unleashed upon an unsuspecting public on June the 1st 1972. The album was a hit and it spawned three great (and lasting) singles.

The album itself peaked at number 22 in October 1972, and Rolling Stone magazine even hailed it as 'Album of the Year'.

The album was consistently available until the age of the CD. Recently, the re-mastered CD version has been released in a mini-album version. Nice touch, but it

would be even better to see all of the studio albums released as expanded editions, with B-sides, out-takes and the odd early live version on a second disk.

THE SONGS:

1. TAKE IT EASY (3.29) *(Jackson Browne / Glenn Frey)*

What a great opening track this one still is! The recording really encapsulates the essence of the early Eagles sound in one wonderful swoop. Recorded in London (as were all the debut album sessions) with Glen Johns in the producer's seat. The Eagles of course were relative novices to the professional recording world. Manager David Geffen thought it better to send them off to a location where the band's usual vices and friends were well out of the way. Not a bad idea, to create a cohesive recording environment, and all things considered, the band delivered the goods in reasonably short order and with the minimum of fuss—despite there being a personality clash of sorts between producer and band.

'Take It Easy' was really a Jackson Browne song that Frey helped polish up in the latter stages, once the song was added to the first album's recording plans. As the opener of the debut album, this is classic Eagles sound, comprising its rather cool vocal and clever country feel, and it was certainly a good indicator of things to come.

The track was also the first single to be released from the album. Released to the public on the 24th June 1972, it was backed with 'Get You in the Mood'. It reached number 12 and spent eight weeks in the top forty of the Billboard 100.

2. WITCHY WOMAN (4.10) *(Don Henley / Bernie Leadon)*

Probably the best track on the album, and certainly suggestive of the future Eagles' classic sound, 'Witchy Woman' was the only song that Don Henley (co)-penned on this debut release, and it was also the debut of his highly distinctive vocal. The track has become a classic Eagles number and today still sounds as fresh as ever.

The composition of this song was a classic case of spontaneous and cohesive writing between Henley and Leadon. Don Henley allegedly penned the lyrics while running a fever. Stuff of legend for sure, it was the start of his highly successful career as a writer.

This was the second single to be issued from the debut album, and it was released on the 30th of September 1972. Backed with the album track 'Earlybird', it spent ten weeks in the charts and reached a peak of number 9.

3. CHUG ALL NIGHT (3.13) *(Glenn Frey)*

Penned by Frey, this is one allegedly written from personal experience. Drinking and playing around with the girls, today it could easily be renamed 'Shag All Night' and get away with it! This is what the early Eagles were good at when they decided to rock it out a little. A nice little number, although it has to be said that compared to other tracks on the album and future offerings, it comes off as mediocre. It does have a nice southern flavour at times though and is a nice album track.

4. MOST OF US ARE SAD (3.33) *(Glenn Frey)*

The second of two tracks penned solely by Glen Frey, this is a vast improvement on his previous offering. When the band delivered sentimental music (which they became absolute experts at), this was almost certainly the benchmark track. Listen to later offerings like 'Hole in the World' and it's easy to see how much this tune set up a direction that not only was to bring the band millions of fans but also the dollars that went with those sales!

5. NIGHTINGALE (4.05) *(Jackson Browne)*

Of the two tracks that Jackson Browne penned for the album, this is certainly the weaker of the two. In saying that, it's still better than many a track most other artists were delivering at the time. The Eagles gave it a nice feel, but really this one was never going to be more than just a good album track. With a typical early (high) Eagles vocal sound, this one kicks off quite nicely, however. Lead vocal was sung by Glenn Frey, with high harmonies added by Randy Meisner. The bass, guitars and drums intro shows a style The Eagles were to use to good effect over the years.

6. TRAIN LEAVES HERE THIS MORNING (4.07) *(Gene Clark / Bernie Leadon)*

Lovely harmonies on this one, even if the track is a little weak. The ingredients are there, that's for certain, and there are many songs that The Eagles recorded for later albums that probably borrowed more than a little influence from this one. The track had actually been penned years earlier when Bernie Leadon had been with Dillard and Clark. Now Eagle-ised, it was given a new lease of life. Leadon added the vocal. This track, however, just didn't really have what it needed to make it a classic number. Nice album filler, though.

7. TAKE THE DEVIL (4.00) *(Randy Meisner)*

Penned by bassist Randy Meisner, this simply executed number comes across really well. Although obviously not really material for a single, it was a brilliant album track and certainly one of the better offerings on the album. This song was a great way for the ex-Poco bassist to show how much he contributed to The Eagles' sound.

8. EARLYBIRD (3.00) *(Bernie Leadon / Randy Meisner)*

A nice album track that—although it had the signature Eagles sound—weirdly, it didn't really sound like a typical Eagles number. More like Nitty Gritty Dirt Band with a grungy guitar player! Great little guitar breaks on this one, and overall a nice if not outstanding number. Also released as the B-side to the 'Witchy Woman' single.

9. PEACEFUL EASY FEELING (4.26) *(Jack Tempchin)*

An early example of the type of tune that would make The Eagles multi-million sellers, and in fact this was a tune that has done exactly that! The song was not penned by an Eagle but by Jack Tempchin. Listen to later Eagles numbers and it's obvious the band members took a lot of leaves from Jack's book! This was also the last single to be lifted

from the album. Released on the third of February 1973, it was backed with 'Tryin' and reached a peak position of 22, staying in the charts for six weeks.

10. TRYIN' (2:50) (Randy Meisner)

A nice rocky little number to end the album on and the third of three penned by bassist Randy Meisner. It was a nice little album filler and, again, certainly better than many a song their contemporaries were offering. Also released as the B-side to the 'Peaceful Easy Feeling' single.

DESPERADO

Original vinyl released 17th April 1973 - Asylum LP 5068

Asylum CD 5068-2

Produced by Glyn Johns and recorded at Island Studios, London, UK

Musicians:

Glenn Frey (Vocals, Guitar), Don Henley (Vocals, Drums, Percussion), Bernie Leadon (Vocals, Guitar, Banjo), Randy Meisner (Vocals, Bass Guitar)



With the debut album flying high and selling quite frankly by the truckload, David Geffen was very keen to get moving with album number two. With the sales of the singles alone, the band had already more than paid back their substantial advance!

The band were returned to London and once again, despite the previous friction between some band members and producer Glyn Johns, they entered Island Studios with him to commence the sessions for what would become *Desperado*.

Although the band had several singles and a successful album under their collective belts, they did not want to sit around and let this achievement slip through their fingers. They knew the music business was highly competitive and cut-throat, and they wanted to deliver a tight, cohesive album that built on the success they had already garnered. Changes were slowly happening to the band. Frey was slipping (happily) into the lead singer role, and collaboration between him and Don Henley with regards to writing and organisation seemed to happen naturally. This was not to remain so.

One thing they were all united on was 'building a concept' for a better album. The original basis for the concept came in the form of songs, initially based around rebels. Some of the Wild West, some not. Henley and Frey delivered the basis for three compositions quite quickly. Initially, it was 'Desperado'; then 'Tequila Sunrise' started to take shape. Along with 'Doolin-Dalton', the band had a good start to album number two.

The band consisted of four highly focused individuals, and they were going to let nothing get in their way. Quite a number of songs were put forward, and these were brutally whittled down until a classy, cohesive set of songs remained—all of course within that rebel concept. *Desperado*, the album, was soon to become an eleven-track cracker.

In the studio, the band expanded somewhat as well. For the debut release, they were highly conscious of only recording what they could reproduce with the four of them live. This all went out the window with the *Desperado* sessions and actually to very good effect, it has to be said.

While living in London, the band also played a number of live dates and tried several of the forthcoming songs in a live environment. The concept for the cover had also been discussed and whilst in merry Old England, they rented a cowboy backstage film set at Shepperton Film Studios. Along with Jackson Browne and John David Souther, they literally set the stage. The photos of the band (in western attire and looking suitably gritty) that grace their sophomore effort were all taken there. The concept was falling into place. The album did not fare as well as the band's debut initially, and overall sales were slow. It did, of course, eventually go platinum...and counting! Today it remains one of the more cohesive pieces of work recorded by The Eagles. Not hot on the singles, but a wonderful album to listen to in one hit.

THE SONGS:

1. DOOLIN-DALTON (3:26) (Glenn Frey / John David Souther / Don Henley / Jackson Browne)

This has become a classic Eagles track and another one that clearly has the Jackson Browne influence. Bruce Springsteen almost certainly borrowed a few ideas from this one when he recorded his best selling *The River* album. A popular live track in the 70s, it seems to have been dropped in favour of more commercially viable tracks in more recent years. Shame, this is a good one!

2. TWENTY-ONE (2:11) (Bernie Leadon)

A track that has a distinctly country feel to it. With wonderful guitar playing by Bernie Leadon, this is one that any self-respecting hillbilly (especially one from Beverly Hills!) would be proud of. Wonderful playing, and this was as near to real country as The Eagles ever got. It was released as the B-side to the 'Tequila Sunrise' single.

3. OUT OF CONTROL (3:04) (Don Henley / Glenn Frey / Tom Nixon)

Segued from the previous track, this one is the first real rocker on the album. However, it does seem a little out of place. The guitar sound is more than a little reminiscent of Elton John's 'Saturday Night's Alright for Fightin'. Good basic rock and roller but not an outstanding track.

4. TEQUILA SUNRISE (2:52) (Don Henley / Glenn Frey)

A song that was a slow burner for the band and although it took far longer than

