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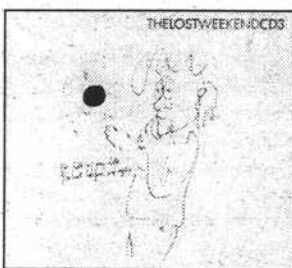
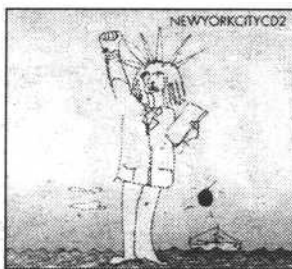
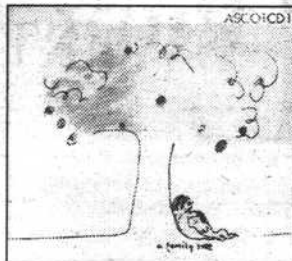
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John Lennon
"The John Lennon Anthology"
Capitol
Grade: A-

Whether John Lennon would have wanted it heard or not doesn't matter anymore.

But what does matter is that the music on the four discs in the boxed John Lennon Anthology is presented in the most stylish, classy manner imaginable — Yoko Ono, the executive producer of the collection, made sure of that.

The collection is divided chronologically and roughly begins at the start of his relationship with Ono. The discs are titled "Ascot," "New York City," "The Lost Weekend" and "Dakota."

In the accompanying book, Ono discusses all the discs in-depth, compiling her memories of Lennon along with some history of what was going on in their lives at the time the music was recorded.

Although the discs could stand alone in the set with the strong musical value, the book adds even more intrigue with the somewhat unrelated, true life stories of Ono and Lennon's life together.

Both an early out-take and a live version of "Imagine" are standouts, and the mix of both famous and not-so-famous songs lends to a set that can be listened to without too much skipping around.

Recognizable songs such as "Happy X-mas," "Come Together," and "Watching the Wheels" make the disc interesting for those who may not know a lot about Lennon, and the addition of the lesser-known tracks makes the set a must have for any hard-core fans of the artist.

The third disc, "The Lost Weekend," is

the one that gives the most insight, probably because all the music on the disc was composed while Ono and Lennon were separated. Ono even included songs Lennon wrote to his lover during the separation, and the personal liner notes that discuss the disc add even more emotion to the music.

Short moments of speaking break up the music and lend insight into the complex relationship of Ono and Lennon.

As a whole, the set mirrors the popular Beatles Anthology trilogy of double discs and has the same goal: to give listeners a chance to hear something that will never be heard again.

But as compilations usually go, not all of it sounds good. Songs such as "Do the Oz," along with some songs on all four of the discs, become more annoying than anything else, and a number of biting parody songs that approach subjects such as the British monarchy and the demise of the Beatles give the listener a chance to see the not-so-nice side of Lennon.

It's impossible to single out one disc as the best, since all include standout songs and interesting speaking or satirical bits. Ono's writings in the included booklet focus more on abstract stories than the actual music, but still makes for an interesting read, especially because one is able to see the progression of Lennon from a somewhat angry, bitter man to a content and nurturing father to his son, Sean.

Overall, the set gives a look into the private lives of Ono and Lennon — and the music that was created between them.

— Sarah Baker

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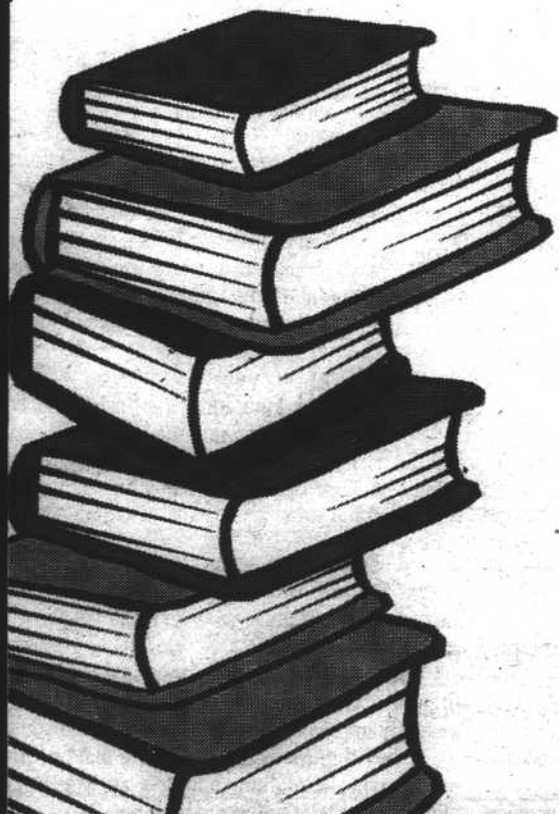
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