

Course Title: The Songwriting of The Beatles: *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be*

Course Code: MUS-05, a virtual online course via Zoom videoconference. Details and technical instructions will be forthcoming from Continuing Studies.

Instructor: Dr. Joel Phillip Friedman

Course Summary:

Beatles fans think the story is clear: here comes the sunny *Abbey Road* (1969) followed by the dreary swan song *Let It Be* (1970) documenting The Beatles' painful end. Reality was vastly different: multiple, intertwined solo and group projects rode a frenzied crest of activity during that period. This course will show how complex, entangled, and productive the period was, and how these two sonically and conceptually different albums—one designed as a live performance, the other as a glittering, polished studio creation—sprang from the same Beatle source. It's a great "detective story" beginning with the band's 1968 sojourn to study Transcendental Meditation with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh, India, where dozens of songs were written. We will include recent scholarship by Beatles authority Mark Lewisohn, Peter Jackson's new documentary *The Beatles: Get Back*, and the 50th-anniversary box set including *Abbey Road*, showing that *Let It Be* was (mostly) recorded first and wasn't the total debacle many thought, that the recording sessions never stopped as one album ran into the next, that some *Abbey Road* tracks probably were contenders for *Let It Be*, and that numerous later solo tracks were initially offered as Beatle songs. It's a remarkable ride, illustrating that even more than fifty years later there is still much to learn about this band.

The course will include lectures, discussions, and the opportunity to listen closely to individual tracks, as we examine the studio process, equipment, techniques, and songwriting craft that brought these albums to life.

Grade Options and Requirements:

- No Grade Requested (NGR)
 - This is the default option. No work will be required; no credit shall be received; no proof of attendance can be provided.

***Please Note:** *If you require proof that you completed a Continuing Studies course for any reason (for example, employer reimbursement), you must choose either the Letter Grade or Credit/No Credit option. Courses taken for NGR will not appear on official transcripts or grade reports.*

Course Outline:

Saturday, February 5, 2022

LIB – Part 1 10-11:30

Let It Be (2009 Remasters/2021 Special Edition) – Part 1. We are going to mostly follow the *chronological* order of the sessions, not the release dates. *Let It Be (LIB)* came (mostly) before *Abbey Road* and is... *complicated*. It's odd to say this, but in this case there is far *too much* documentation! This is what is so fascinating about the project. In Part 1 we will focus on the genesis of the project, then known as *Get Back*, what it was intended to be – some form of a TV show, no live

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concert, wait, an album?— and the early filming/recording sessions at Twickenham Studios. The *LIB* 2009 Remaster is/was the de facto-but-disputed benchmark. Giles Martin has remixed this LP, and depending upon your interest and budget, you can now purchase/stream one of the *Let It Be: 2021 Special Editions* which contain remixes, additional session material, and Glyn John's 1st attempt at creating a record, *Get Back* (long-time producer/collaborator George Martin was essentially sidelined from the project). Currently there is no legal release of the original 1970 *LIB* film. That does not mean you cannot find it online, for rent, or even for purchase in some places. For example, the Internet Archive: (https://archive.org/details/Let_It_Be_1970_film). Do try to watch it, understanding that the release of Peter Jackson's new documentary *The Beatles: Get Back* (November 25-27, 2021 on Disney+) will create a far different narrative (and looks and sounds *far* better).

Listening: *Let It Be (2009 Remaster)* complete LP; optional one of the new *2021 Let It Be Special Editions*. Plus, the single *Don't Let Me Down** (paired with *Get Back*). **Viewing:** *Let It Be (1970)*. While there is no legal release of the original 1970 film, it is available at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/Let_It_Be_1970_film. Peter Jackson's new documentary *The Beatles: Get Back* is *highly* recommended (November 25-27, 2021 on Disney+).

* All of the singles are available on the 2-volume *Past Masters* CD collection, as well as streaming.

Saturday, February 12, 2022

LIB – Part 2 10-11:30

Finishing up the sessions. Things took – ahem - an “interesting turn” in the 2nd week as work stopped and then sessions shifted to the band's new “state-of-the-art!”™ studio in the basement of their 3 Saville Row Apple headquarters. The addition of Billy Preston, and the looming deadline, focused The Beatles on the eventual live rooftop performance. So much drama! Was the process as dark and dysfunctional as we were led to believe? And in the end they (mostly) succeeded in writing, rehearsing, and recording a new album in a month.

Listening: *Let It Be (2009 Remaster)* complete LP; optional one of the new *2021 Let It Be Special Editions*. Plus, the single *You Know My Name** (paired with *Let It Be*). **Viewing:** *Let It Be (1970)*. While there is no legal release of the original 1970 film, it is available at the Internet Archive: https://archive.org/details/Let_It_Be_1970_film. Peter Jackson's new documentary *The Beatles: Get Back* is *highly* recommended (November 25-27, 2021 on Disney+).

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NB: No Class February 19, ,2022

Saturday, February 26, 2022

Abbey Road – Part 1 10-11:30

Abbey Road (1969) was their true “swan song,” mostly rehearsed and recorded post-*LIB*. The *AR* sessions began in February, within weeks of the *LIB* rooftop concert, and some of the *LIB* sessions were spent auditioning and rehearsing *AR* songs. We will explore their recording process and the influence of new technology through outtakes made available - in pristine condition! - on the 2019 box set. **Listening:** *Abbey Road* (2009 Remaster or, optionally, the 2019 Remix) complete LP, plus the single *The Ballad of John and Yoko* and *Old Brown Shoe**. **Optional:** there are several options available for *Abbey Road 50th Anniversary box set*.

* All of the singles are available on the 2-volume *Past Masters* CD collection, as well as streaming.

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Saturday, March 5 2022

Abbey Road – Part 2 10-11:30

The AR sessions began in February 1969 and continued until August, included the last moments the band recorded together in a studio. Except that wasn't the case: *LIB* reappeared. So, the last Beatle recording sessions were in early 1970 finishing *LIB*. And remember: they rehearsing *AR* tracks during the *LIB* sessions. And that doesn't include the mixing of the LP. It *IS* complicated! If necessary, we will circle back and finish the *LIB* saga, as that LP didn't end until almost a year later (released in May 1970).

Listening: *Listening:* *Abbey Road* (2009 Remaster or, optionally, the 2019 Remix) complete LP, plus the single *The Ballad of John and Yoko* and *Old Brown Shoe**. **Optional:** there are several options available for the *Abbey Road 50th Anniversary box set*.

LEGAL the singles are available on the 2-volume *Past Masters* CD collection, as well as streaming.

It is mandatory that you access all required listening materials legally and properly – whether via physical media (CD vinyl, etc.), download, or streaming. I own all my materials. Recordings will not be shared under any circumstances.

We are able to offer this course under the umbrella of the TEACH Act, which “extends the Face-to-Face Teaching exemption to distance learning courses in a limited way. The exemption applies only to online courses restricted to registered students, and so may be applicable for Stanford courses that incorporate an online component.”

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