George Harrison’s latest no-horse album

By David Shaw

George Harrison’s new album, *George Harrison*, has an interesting story behind it. In an interview with *Rolling Stone*, George explained, “I thought, ‘I haven’t written anything for a while. What happens if I just sit down and write anymore?’ So I wrote this song, and I was a bit embarrassed because it was so catchy and simple. It’s like one of those songs, you know it straight away.” catchy and simple: the best description of this album has probably George’s best effort since *All Things Must Pass.*

The opening track, “Love Comes to Everyone,” is a superb, chunky ballad, full of George’s characteristic strumming; this cut is designed to become the big single from the album. The slow, bluesy “Not Guilty” follows; a song George wrote at the time he wrote “Piggies” and “While My Guitar Gently Weeps” for the White Album in early ’76. The song deals with one of George’s favorite topics; the line “not upset the audience” relates the tune to the problems the Beatles had with their record company. The title of the next song is a surprise: “Here Comes the Sun,” (yes, that’s right, “Here Comes the Moon”). Harrison adds: “Nobody else has written ‘Here Comes the Moon’ and they’ve had ten years to think of something.” The song isn’t a retreat with the word “moon” substituted for “sun,” rather, it is a slow, pretty ballad with an effective reggae-like chorus.

Side two of the album doesn’t fare as well as the first side. The opener, “Faster,” is an attempt at writing a racing song, instead of the usual screaming guitars and intense lyrics, however, Harrison uses a heavily orchestrated background and meaningful lyrics but the tune ceases to be a racing song and begins to sound like one of his more traditional numbers, “Dark Sweet Woman” that has continued to be popular with listeners around the world for over a decade.

The next track, “My Guitar Gently Weeps,” is an adaptation of a Chuck Berry song, “Roll Over Beethoven.” Although it features a steady rhythm section and a driving bassline, the song is more restrained than the original. The guitar riff is played by Harrison on an acoustic guitar, with a slight echo effect added. The vocals are sung in a softer, more introspective style than on previous tracks, reflecting the maturity and growth in Harrison’s music.

The album concludes with “The Long and Winding Road,” a slow, emotional ballad that has become one of Harrison’s most popular songs. The song features a simple melody and steady rhythm, with Harrison’s vocals conveying a sense of longing and reflection. The lyrics are a personal reflection on the growing pains of life and the passage of time, with a sense of loss and hope mixed in.

The album also introduced the mezzo-soprano Laura Steward Otten, who has since gone on to have a successful career as a soloist and recording artist. She sings on two tracks, adding depth and richness to the overall sound of the album.

On the latter side, the other women gave a jumbled and confusing interpretation of the canon, pushed perhaps too rapidly through the piece. On “Angels of Spirit,” one of the four parts, the anticipated dynamics was ruined by a few overpowering voices in the chorus. The final song, the last in the series, the unison section, was done with the same power and the chorus and organ brought a strong ending to the whole program.

The song also introduced the mezzo-soprano Laura Steward Otten, who has since gone on to have a successful career as a soloist and recording artist. She sings on two tracks, adding depth and richness to the overall sound of the album.