



Neil Young's Harvest (Thirty Three and a Third series)

By Sam Inglis

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Neil Young's Harvest is one of those strange albums that has achieved lasting success without ever winning the full approval of rock critics or hardcore fans. Even Young himself has been equivocal, describing it in one breath as his "finest" album, dismissing it in the next as an MOR aberration. Here, Sam Inglis explores the circumstances of the album's creation and asks who got it right: the critics, or the millions who have bought Harvest in the 30 years since its release?

Excerpt

The White Falcon's split pickup might have been just a gimmick from the early days of stereo, but the way Neil Young uses it on 'Alabama' is remarkable. His muted picking brings stabbing notes first from one speaker, then the other, as though we were hearing not one but two guitarists, playing with an unnatural empathy. The electric guitar has seldom sounded so menacing, and Young's growling rhythm and piercing lead notes are tracked perfectly by Kenny Buttrey's bare-bones drumming. The build to the chorus is beautifully judged, and when Young and his celebrity backing singers let rip, there's an almost physical sense of release.

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Editorial Review

Review

"A fascinating book about a fascinating album...the insights into Young's life, methodology, and fans' and critics' reactions are compelling." – Leaf Salon, New Zealand

"...[Inglis's] lack of flash and authority has its upside; his ego stays far enough out of the way that emphasison the nuts 'n' bolts of the recording history of "Harvest" actually helps you hear what's going on...B" —Austin American-Statesman, 10/17/04

From the Publisher

"Thirty Three and a Third" is a new series of short books about critically acclaimed and much-loved albums of the last 40 years. The authors provide fresh, original perspectives – often through their access to and relationships with the key figures involved in the recording of these albums. By turns obsessive, passionate, creative, and informed, the books in this series demonstrate many different ways of writing about music. What binds the series together, and what brings it to life, is that all of the authors – musicians, broadcasters, scholars, and writers – are huge fans of the album they have chosen.

From the Inside Flap

"The White Falcon's split pickup might have been just a gimmick from the early days of stereo, but the way Neil Young uses it on 'Alabama' is remarkable. His muted picking brings stabbing notes first from one speaker, then the other, as though we were hearing not one but two guitarists, playing with an unnatural empathy. The electric guitar has seldom sounded so menacing, and Young's growling rhythm and piercing lead notes are tracked perfectly by Kenny Buttrey's bare-bones drumming. The build to the chorus is beautifully judged, and when Young and his celebrity backing singers let rip, there's an almost physical sense of release."

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ella Butler:

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