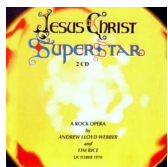


Andrew Lloyd Webber & Tim Rice - Jesus Christ Superstar (1970)

Written by bluesever

Sunday, 16 May 2010 16:17 - Last Updated Wednesday, 02 July 2014 16:06

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CD1:

01. Overture – 3:56
02. Heaven On Their Minds – 4:22
03. What's The Buzz/Strange Thing Mystifying – 4:13
04. Everything's Alright – 5:14
05. This Jesus Must Die – 3:35
06. Hosanna – 2:07
07. Simon Zealotes/Poor Jerusalem – 4:47
08. Pilate's Dream – 1:27
09. The Temple – 4:42
10. Everything's Alright (reprise) – 0:32
11. I Don't Know How To Love Him – 3:35
12. Damned For All Time/Blood Money – 5:09

CD2:

01. The Last Supper – 7:08
02. Gethsemane (I Only Want To Say) – 5:33
03. The Arrest – 3:21
04. Peter's Denial – 1:27
05. Pilate And Christ/Hosanna (reprise) – 2:44
06. King Herod's Song – 3:02
07. Judas' Death – 4:16
08. Trial Before Pilate (Including the 39 Lashes) – 5:12
09. Super Star – 4:16
10. Crucifixion – 4:03
11. John Nineteen: Forty-One – 2:06

Personnel:

- Ian Gillan - Jesus Christ
- Murray Head - Judas Iscariot
- Yvonne Elliman - Mary Magdalene
- Victor Brox - Caiaphas, High Priest
- Brian Keith - Annas
- John Gustafson - Simon Zealotes

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- Barry Dennen - Pontius Pilate
- Paul Davis - Peter
- Mike d'Abo - King Herod
- +
- Annette Brox - Maid by the Fire
- Paul Raven - Priest
- Pat Arnold, Tony Ashton, Peter Barnfeather, Madeline Bell, Brian Bennett, Lesley Duncan, Kay Garner, Barbara Kay, Neil Lancaster, Alan M. O'Duffy, Terry Saunders - background vocals
- Choir conducted by Geoffrey Mitchell
- Children's choir conducted by Alan Doggett on Overture
- The Trinidad Singers, under the leadership of Horace James, on Superstar
- +
- Neil Hubbard - electric guitar
- Henry McCulloch - electric & acoustic guitar
- Chris Mercer - tenor sax
- Peter Robinson - piano, electric piano, Organ, positive organ
- Bruce Rowland - drums, percussion
- Allan Spenner - bass
- +
- Harold Beckett, Les Condon, Ian Hamer, Kenny Wheeler - trumpet
- Anthony Brooke, Joseph Castaldini - bassoon
- James Browne, Jim Buck Sr., Jim Buck Jr., John Burdon, Andrew McGavin, Douglas Moore - horns
- Ciclone - saxophone
- Keith Christie, Frank Jones, Anthony Moore - trombone
- Ian Herbert - clarinet
- Chris Taylor, Brian Warren - flute
- Alan Doggett - principal Conductor, Moog synthesizer
- Clive Hicks, Chris Spedding, Louis Stewart, Steve Vaughan - guitar
- Jeff Clyne, Peter Morgan, Alan Weighall - bass guitar
- Bill LeSage - drums
- Norman Cave, Karl Jenkins - piano
- Mike Vickers - Moog synthesizer
- Mick Weaver - piano, organ
- Andrew Lloyd Webber - piano, organ, Moog synthesizer
- Strings of the City of London Ensemble

Jesus Christ Superstar started life as a most improbable concept album from an equally unlikely label, Decca Records, which had not, until then, been widely known for groundbreaking musical efforts. It was all devised by then 21-year-old composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and 25-year-old lyricist Tim Rice. Jesus Christ Superstar had been conceived as a stage work, but lacking the

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funds to get it produced, the two collaborators instead decided to use an album as the vehicle for introducing the piece, a fairly radical rock/theater hybrid about the final days in the life of Jesus as seen from the point of view of Judas. If its content seemed daring (and perhaps downright sacrilegious), the work, a "sung-through" musical echoing operatic and oratorio traditions, was structurally perfect for an album; just as remarkable as its subject matter was the fact that its musical language was full-blown rock music. There was at the time an American-spawned hit theater piece called *Hair* that utilized elements of rock music, but it wasn't as unified a work as Webber and Rice's creation, and it was less built on rock music than on pop music that referred to rock; Webber and Rice's work presented a far sharper, bolder musical edge and pushed it much further and harder than *Hair* ever did. Serving as their own producers, the two creators got together more than 60 top-flight singers and musicians (including Chris Spedding, John Gustafson, Mike Vickers, P.P. Arnold, and members of Joe Cocker's Grease Band, not to mention Murray Head, Ian Gillan, and Yvonne Elliman in key singing roles), and managed to pull the whole production together into a more than coherent whole that contained a pair of hit singles (the title track and "I Don't Know How to Love Him") to help drive AM radio exposure. What's more, the whole album sounded like the real article as far as its rock music credibility was concerned -- it was played good and hard for a studio creation. Released in America by Decca as a handsomely decorated double-LP set complete with illustrated libretto, *Jesus Christ Superstar* seemed to pick up where the Who's *Tommy* (also a Decca release) and *Hair* had left off, and audiences from across the age and cultural spectrum responded. Teenagers who didn't know from Jesus, opera, or oratorios liked the beat, the hard rock sounds, and the singing and bought the album, as did parents who felt that the record offered a chance to understand some aspects of this youth culture around them, and especially its music -- and so did some more forward-thinking clergy and theologians, who saw any opportunity to spread the word about Jesus where it wasn't previously going as intrinsically good.

The result was a chart-topping LP followed in short order by a Broadway production and, a little later, a multi-million-dollar movie (oddly enough, the original double LP created barely a ripple in England in 1970 and 1971, though there was eventually a British stage production that went on to become what was then the longest-running musical on London's West End). And all of this acceptance and embrace in America took place scarcely five years after an innocent observation by John Lennon concerning the relative popularity of the Beatles and Jesus, made in England but reported in the American tabloids, had led to protests and a media boycott of the band's music and their 1966 tour across the Bible Belt. *Jesus Christ Superstar*, by contrast, passed through the border and Southern states without any controversy, speaking volumes in the process about what had happened to American society in the interim. The original release was also the first "event" album of the '70s, presaging a brace of generally less successful efforts in that direction, ranging from Lou Adler and Lou Reizner's orchestrated version of *Tommy* (Pete Townshend's rock opera basically blown up to *Jesus Christ Superstar* dimensions) to the soundtrack *All This and World War II* and Leonard Bernstein's *Mass*. The original double-LP set was released on CD in the late '80s in a decent-sounding double jewel case/slipcased edition re-creating the artwork from the LP, and in 1993 it was also reissued in MCA's gold-plated audiophile Masterdisc series with altered cover art. Another re-release, using

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an upgraded analog-to-digital transfer, this time in a slim double jewel case format with the original booklet reproduced in miniature, was mastered in exceptionally vivid fidelity. Each CD edition has sounded good, however, and was an improvement on the LP edition, but the 1996 release offers beautifully crisp fidelity with a close, loud sound on all of the instruments, but especially the bass -- it still rocks, and the singing of Gillan, Head, Gustafson, and Elliman still stands out. ---Bruce Eder, Rovi

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