

The Who – Who's Next (1971)

Written by bluesever

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1. *Baba O'Riley* – 5:08
2. *Bargain* – 5:33
3. *Love Ain't For Keeping* – 2:10
4. *My Wife (Entwistle)* – 3:40
5. *The Song Is Over* – 6:13
6. *Getting In Tune* – 4:49
7. *Going Mobile* – 3:41
8. *Behind Blue Eyes* – 3:41
9. *Won't Get Fooled Again* – 8:33

Personnel:

- Roger Daltrey - vocals, harmonica
- Pete Townshend - guitar, piano, organ, ARP synthesizer, background vocals
- John Entwistle - brass, piano, bass instrument, background vocals
- Keith Moon - drums, percussion

The Who's fifth album is one of those carved-in-stone landmarks that the rock canon doesn't allow you to bad-mouth. It was pretty rad for its day. Here's the twist: it still sounds ablaze. As C.S.I. fans will vouch, there's not much that isn't thrilling about *Won't Get Fooled Again* and *Baba O'Riley*, which howl and kick like they were born yesterday.

Like many near-masterpieces, it wasn't meant to turn out like it did. Pete Townshend had one of his 'futuristic rock opera' ideas, and recordings began on a work called *Lifehouse*. It wouldn't gel, so The Who made the most of the random songs that did. Upon release in 1971 it blew away critics and fans alike, bar a few Who diehards who thought larking around with things called synthesizers and modified keyboards was, like, selling out. Glyn Johns had replaced Kit

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Lambert as producer. Still, the sleeve wasn't exactly bland, picturing the foursome pissing on a slagheap. (Other contenders for the cover had included a group of obese naked women and a shot of Keith Moon in black lingerie. Be grateful for small mercies.)

Baba O'Riley makes a spectacular opener, its hypnotic drone disrupted by power chords that are parachuted in off the backs of meteorites. Dave Arbus' subtle then frantic viola solo raises it another gear. There has rarely been a more durably evocative refrain than "teenage wasteland". As ever, Daltrey's ragged voice brings humanity to Townshend's over-thinking. Moon is typically hyperactive: any drummer playing like this today would be ordered to rein it in. Bargain floats on the tension between acoustic guitar and the brave new synth. Like most of the album, it's melodramatic without – as with later Who – fattening into pomposity. The Song is Over oozes poignancy and Getting in Tune and Going Mobile are simply great songs. Behind Blue Eyes is a soul-searching ballad which bursts into belligerence, reflective then urgent.

The climactic (and how) Won't Get Fooled Again stretches itself and chews its restraints until it becomes much more than a riff and a scream. It's on fire. In "meet the new boss, same as the old boss" it nailed the bleeding heart of protest-pop. Who's Next is The Who's best. --- Chris Roberts, BBC Review

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