

autonomy and recognition. However, it has to be suspected, though he would never once have said as much in an interview, that there was a tiny part of Lennon that hated Yoko as much as his detractors did. The macho, chauvinist part of Lennon who once erupted at Yoko in the studio, "Remember the River Kwai, you fuck!" The part that laughed at what he'd turned into, fawning over Yoko like some soft get. The part that had prevented the release of "Oh, Yoko!" as a single because he didn't feel comfortable with what he saw as its soupiness and sentimentality, the part that resented the stern Motherliness which was an essential component of their relationship.

Certainly, as Lennon decamped to LA for what would turn out to be 18 months of debauchery, jamming and bust-ups, many of his mates were glad to have him back- Ringo Starr for one, who had always missed the 'old' John.

However, Lennon off the leash, while adding grist to his legend, cut a piteous figure. The fact was, he couldn't take his alcohol. Lennon was surrounded by seasoned drinkers-not only Ringo but Harry Nilsson, Keith Moon and Phil Spector among others. Though a prodigious boozier in his youth, now all it took was a couple of brandies and Lennon started sprouting hairs on his hands. He was not a pleasant drunk. The Lennon uncaged by booze was the vicious, hungry, combative little Scouse fuck which it had taken the massive sedative of late-1960s idealism to keep in check. A heckling, waitress-slapping, Jew-baiting destructive little fuck at that. When the paparazzi caught up with him, as they did a couple of times, images show a snarling, trouser-stained, overgrown inebriate, freshly ejected from some nightclub, casting a baleful eye about in search of anyone who wanted to take him on. The worst stories of Lennon in this era involve his turning up to an Ann Peebles show at LA's Troubadour wearing a sanitary towel on his head, and on another occasion having to be tied to a brass bedstead after 'unning amok in producer Lou Adler's house, smashing his gold discs and shouting anti-Semitic abuse at the hapless host. On the East Coast, Lennon was timid and home-loving. On the West Coast during these 18 deranged months, he was a monster.

SOMEHOW IN THE MIDDLE of his boozing and general mania, a coherent and- as it turned out - expedient artistic notion did form in his befuddled brain. Lennon decided to record an album of rock'n'roll tributes called, suitably enough, *Rock'n'Roll*. While symptomatic of a mid-life crisis, it coincided with rock's own mid-life crisis. From »

"Being a Beatle nearly cost me my life and certainly cost me a great deal of my health. I will not make the same mistake twice in one lifetime"



Lennon's final stage appearance - with Elton John at Madison Square Garden, November 28, 1974



'KARMA' CHAMELEON

JOHN LENNON SOLO: 1970-80



JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND (1970)*****

Lennon's "Primal Scream" LP is regarded by most as his finest. With a cover -featuring John as a small boy, it's a soul exorcism unmatched in the annals of rock. Its bile, tenderness and acerbic commentary (especially "Working Class Hero") are matched by the sparseness and restraint of the musical arrangements, with producer Phil Spector resisting his usual lavish overdubs.



IMAGINE (1971)****

With a cast of musicians including George Harrison, Imagine was a much more accessible album than Plastic Ono Band, despite its caustic anti-McCartney songs. As well as the immortal title track, it featured "Jealous Guy", the most eloquent of his Yoko-aimed songs of contrition.



SOMETIME IN NEW YORK CITY (1972)***

Lennon's political album was given critical short shrift-even the FBI noted that it was not up to his usual standards. Despite its naive and overtones, it remains a monument to a lost era of countercultural activism, while the frantic "New York City" captures the energy of Lennon's Big Apple adventures.



MIND GAMES (1973) **

One of Lennon's least energised outings, though it comes to life with the boogielicious "Meat City". The cover depicts Lennon on a landscape dwarfed by an image of Yoko's face it represented John walking away from Yoko. By the time the album was released, the couple were living apart.



WALLS AND BRIDGES (1974) ****

The album after the night before, Walls And Bridges was Lennon's last great LP. As well as "Whatever Gets You Though The Night"

and the free-flying, wistful "No 9 Dream", the album contains "Steel And Glass", Lennon's 'fuck you' to Allen Klein, and 'Bless You', his sweetest and most underrated ballad.



ROCK'N'ROLL (1975) **

Lennon's covers album, retrieved from the wreckage of the Lost Weekend. In 1974, it had seemed a great idea; now it was a chore for Lennon, under contractual obligation Maurice Levy to record a number of Chuck Berry songs to avoid a lawsuit for filching Berry's "You Can't Catch Me" on "Come Together". Still, particularly on "Stand By Me", he couldn't help but invest the project with his typical, raw exuberance.



SHAVED FISH (1975)*****

A compilation of singles, many of which were now available on album for the first time, including "Give Peace A Chance", "Cold Turkey" "Instant Karma!" Indispensable.



DOUBLE FANTASY (1980) **

Lennon's comeback contained a number of songs by Yoko and was too soft and smoochy for some, though "Woman" has aged well and "Tm Losing You" is an unusually addition to Lennon's vast canon of Yoko songs.