Daily
Life

RINGO RETURNS WITH STRONG COUNTRY ALBUM

by Thaddeus Sawyer
STAFF WRITER
HE/HIM/HIS
thaddeus.sawyer@uconn.edu

Always the most country out of the four Beatles, Ringo Starr returned with an astonishing 22nd studio album on Friday, April 24. Despite being more notable for features on other artists' songs than his own releases over the last four decades, "Long Long Road" is a surprisingly strong solo affair for Starr and producer T Bone Burnett.

The opening track "Returning Without Tears," is a strong thesis for the album, quickly defining it as a country record with fiddles and a double bass. The lyrics are some of the best on the album and create strong imagery while the instrumental is strikingly modern.

"Baby Don't Go," opens with a bit of a Southern swamp rock feel, and the double bass is prominent throughout. The horn stings in the chorus are also a nice touch.

"I Don't See Me In Your Eyes Anymore," is a jangly piano track with doo-wop backing vocals. Despite the upbeat instrumental, Starr's vocals tell the story of losing the ability to woo someone who once adored you.

"It's Been Too Long" starts to venture into the realm of straight rock 'n' roll with a quintessential 1960s tambourine to open the track. The vocals feature less production, which doesn't help with the generic lyrics, making this track less interesting than the preceding three.

"Why" has a Zac Brown Band feel to it in the fiddles and drums, and Starr's delivery of the title harkens back to "Tell Me Why" by The Beatles.

"You and I (Wave of Love)" is an outlier on the album, starting as something closer to a pop ballad before the rhythm section enters. As a duet with bluegrass singer Molly Tuttle, the slide guitar solo prior to the second verse contrasts perfectly with sparkling acoustic guitars. Tuttle, who also sang on the opening track, shines through in this one.

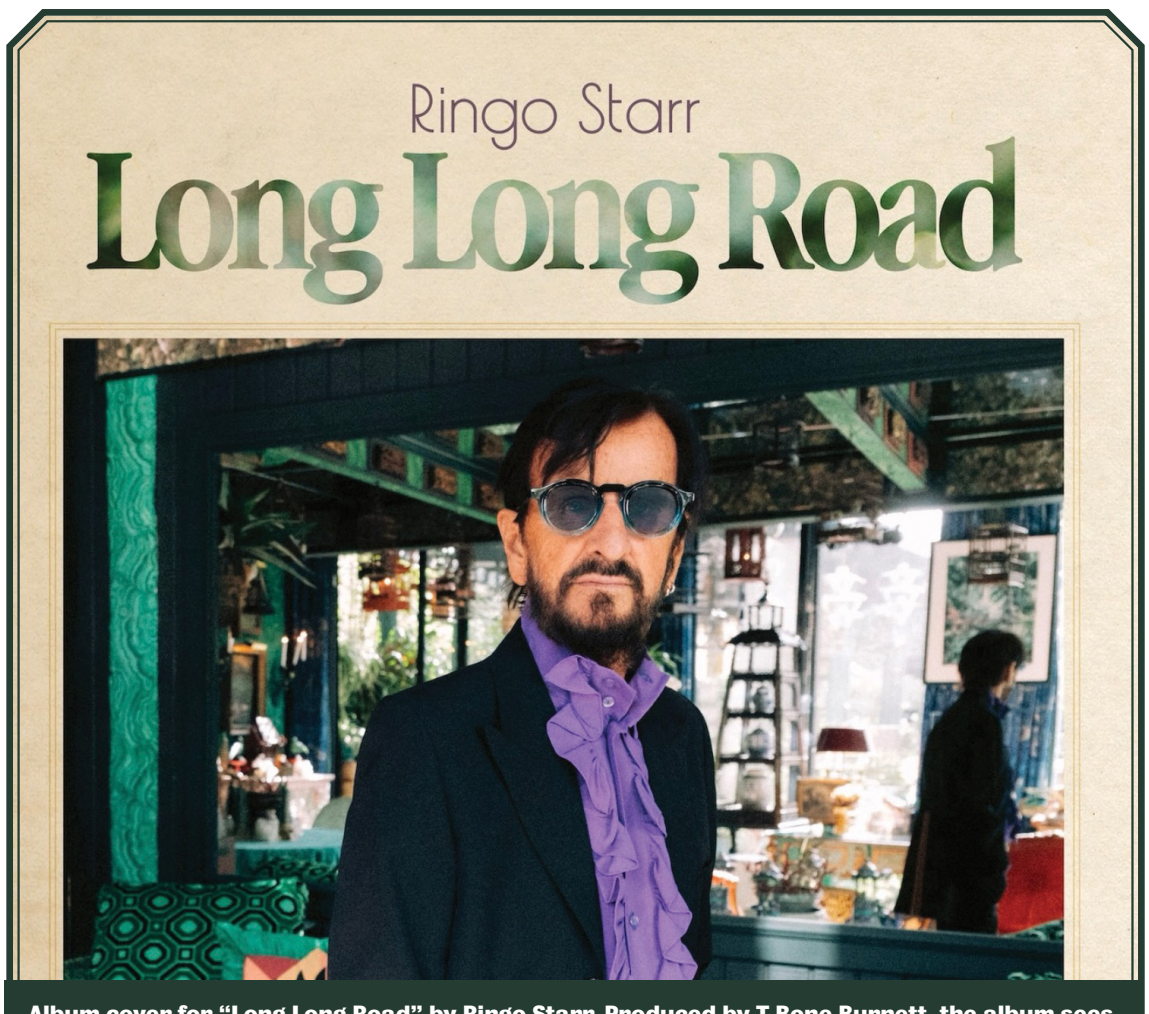
"My Baby Don't Want Nothing," has a marching feel, something Starr is no stranger to with "Back Off Boogaloo" in his catalog. The song features multiple interesting chord changes.

"Choose Love," is about as on the nose as a Beatles tribute could've gotten for Starr, actually name-dropping Fab Four tracks like "The Long and Winding Road," "Tomorrow Never Knows" and "What Goes On." The guitar solo references "A Hard Day's Night," and the keyboards throughout are strongly reminiscent of "Baby You're a Rich Man." There's even a sitar. Known Beatles fan St. Vincent provides backing vocals.

"She's Gone" has a notable drop in mood from the previous track. Especially compared to the joyous emotion of "Choose Love," the song feels slow and a bit too sappy to keep the energy of the album moving in the right direction.

The title track, "Long Long Road," ends the album and opens with an acapella vocal harmony section reminiscent of the harmonies from the final verse of "Don't Worry Baby" by the Beach Boys. It's largely unrelated to the rest of the song but did prompt me to give it a second listen.

The rest of the track, which features Sheryl Crow and Daniel Tashian on vocals, is a lonesome-sounding jaunt that strangely reminded me of Elvis Presley's version of "Blue



Album cover for "Long Long Road" by Ringo Starr. Produced by T Bone Burnett, the album sees Starr delve into his country side.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @RINGOSTARRMUSIC ON INSTAGRAM

just be due to the tempo. The spoken word interlude in the middle caught me off guard, but it also woke me up at a point where the song had just started to become stale. Overall, the track is disjointed, but it's my favorite cut off the record due to the fact that the individual sections stand out.

The album as a whole isn't as a strong collection of country songs centered on romance and the act of searching for meaning in relationships. It's an overall strong outing for the legendary drummer, whose drumming and vocal range has always fit well within the country genre.

Rating: 3.8/5

NOAH KAHAN IS BACK AND SADDER THAN EVER

by Sarah Barker
CAMPUS CORRESPONDENT
SHE/HER/HERS
sarah.barker@uconn.edu



Album cover for Noah Kahan's fourth studio album "The Great Divide." The album released on Thursday, April 24.

PHOTO COURTESY OF @NOAHKAHANMUSIC ON INSTAGRAM

At this point, I think we all know who Noah Kahan is. If you haven't heard "Stick Season" you might actually be living under a rock, and after what's felt like forever, Kahan graced us with new music through the release of his new album "The Great Divide." There is also an extended version titled "The Great Divide: The Last of the Bugs."

This album is everything I could've dreamed of: 21 long songs, phenomenal lyricism, recorded at Long Pond Studios and work from Aaron Dessner.

The album opens with "End of August," which has a piano opening that lets you know you're in for prime emotional damage for the next hour and a half. The song uses the end of the summer as a metaphor for moments in life that come to a close, as memories are starting to slip away from you and reminds us that everything is temporary. Some of my favorite lyrics from the album come from this song's second verse, like "Oh, and the feelin' of being alive / For the first time in a long time".

"Doors" is when Kahan starts to amp things up. It's more upbeat while talking about tendencies to hurt people he loves, which is such a relatable feeling. From what I've seen, this is a fan favorite and for good reason. In this track, Kahan's vocals are rich and intense.

"American Cars" dabbles into folk-pop as Kahan tells a story of calling a sibling who left home to fix something or someone.

A personal favorite is "Downfall." It's lyrically dense but speaks on the complex feelings of loving someone who leaves while secretly rooting that they'll fail and come back, which is such a classic situation for Kahan to write about. In a TikTok interview with Billboard, Kahan said it would be fun to have Phoebe Bridgers featured on this song, and I need that immediately.

"Lighthouse" is haunting and sounds like it came right off a Bon Iver album, which is funny because Justin Vernon, Bon Iver's frontman, is credited on this track. It's about remembering someone who has left the town you're from.

"Paid Time Off" goes full folk and plays with the metaphor of PTO, where instead of taking time off from work, Kahan is hinting the deeper need to step away from things, whether that be fame or relationships or even expectations, and the guilt that can come from that.

After debuting "Staying Still" last November, fans have been hoping it'd be featured on the new record, and it wasn't at first but was added to the extended version. The song mixes Kahan's hatred for Boston's Logan Airport with his desire to make the distance in a relationship go away.

"The Great Divide" opened Kahan's new era with a bang. The song has rock influences and even though the concept is depressing as hell, it's also really catchy. It has underlying religious trauma themes but overall, it talks about the divide that can occur within human relationships.

"Haircut" talks about coming home after changing and the tension that comes with it. It focuses on the people who stayed behind and the feelings they have toward feeling used for growth in someone else's story.

"Willing and Able" is insane. It's another one of my favorites from the album, but it's also so depressing. It talks about sibling relationships and the strain that comes from trying to love a difficult person. It's got a simple acoustic melody that helps the lyrics and Kahan's melancholy voice really punch you in the gut.

"Dashboard" was teased a couple weeks before the album's release, and fans immediately fell in love. It plays with a rock sound and is about someone trying to change themselves and run from their past, but the people who know them see right through it.

It's hard to pick favorites when the album is so good, but I think "23" might be the winner. The song is basically saying: I want you back in my life but not this version of you. I love the chorus, specifically the lines " 'Cause if I never see you again / You could be anything I want."

"We Go Way Back" is where Kahan mellows out and goes down the ballad route. The song is beautiful and pretty quiet with no crazy production, allowing the lyrics to really take over. The song is about how while Kahan has seen the world and felt the love of millions, the only opinions that matter to him are from the people he's known forever.

"All Them Horses" is an emotional tribute to Vermont after a flood devastated the area in 2023, but it's also about the complicated relationship Kahan has with his hometown, especially with the fame he's found. It's another one of my absolute favorites from the album, and I've already sobbed to it.

For the closing track "Dan", Kahan goes down the nostalgic route with this ode to his best friend. The song is a love letter to friendship and those people that you want to be with you forever.

Kahan did not come to play with "The Great Divide," and it's the kind of album that I know is only going to get better with time.

Rating: 5/5