

Stereo Review

January 1971

BADFINGER; ‘Straight Up’

Noel Coppage.

With the Bee Gees seemingly unable to put it together again and God knows what having befallen the Hollies, Badfinger may be the best group-that-sounds-like-the-early-Beatles we have left. With this album, Badfinger grows. The vocals haven’t changed much (and why should they?) remaining more coarse-grained but almost identical in harmonic texture to those of the early Beatles, but the instrumentals have grown from middle-ground rock to sophisticated rock, and they’ve done it with a lightness of heart that keeps us reminded that rock is still for the lively in spirit. Much thanks, no doubt is due George Harrison, who produced four bands, and Todd Rundgren, who produced the others. The striking thing about the instrumentals is their economy, the same quality, you’ll recall, that always marked George’s guitar playing. It’s especially gratifying to hear the piano strike only one note when one note will do – usually you get five in that situation.

Pete Ham, who wrote five of the twelve songs, is the group’s best scribe. I think, his *Baby Blue*, *Take It All*, and *Day After Day* being very fine rockers. But Tom Evans’ “*It’s Over* has something microscopically weird about it that gives it staying power – in my house, to. “Straight Up” isn’t a classic like the Bee Gees ‘Horizontal’ or the Hollies “Evolution,” but it is an enjoyable celebration of one of the healthiest kinds of rock.