**Queen: The Gems Beyond The Gilded Headgear Of The Greatest Hits
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With yet another Queen Greatest Hits flying off the shelves, the Quietus sat down to come up with a list and Spotify playlist of their lesser known brilliance

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This Tuesday marked the 18th anniversary of Freddie Mercury's death, but thankfully brought us no closer to using up the seemingly bottomless well of love for his band Queen.

In an age when people no longer buy records it was reported this week that yet another singles anthology culled from the band's back catalogue has shipped in excess of a quarter of a million copies in its first week of release.





As much as the Quietus is a fan of the 7" and the pop single in general we feel that even after you've given the nod to tracks such as 'Hammer To Fall', 'Seven Seas Of Rye', 'Now I'm Here' and 'Don't Stop Me Now', restricting yourself to a Queen hits comp doesn't even give you half the picture.

So here is the inaugural Beyond The Hits, focussing on the cream of Queen's album tracks, as chosen by our panel of experts (some hairy dudes we like drinking beer with and discussing rock music with) including John Tatlock (Quietus, NME), Manish Agarwal (Jagjaguwar, Mojo), Ben Myers (man of Letters), Jeremy Allen (Stool Pigeon, White Witches), Dino Gollnick (Quietus), Dan Ross (Quietus, DiS), Tom Davies (Secretly Canadian, Jagjaguwar), John Doran (Quietus, Metal Hammer).

Using ancient methods we have divined what the top tracks are. In no particular order:

**'Sheer Heart Attack' from *News Of The World* (1977)**

"A Roger Taylor number, with his take on the emerging punk phenomenon. Essentially 'God Save The Queen' played by an incredibly tight group, it's like riding a motorcycle into a brick wall: hard, noisy and probably ill-advised, but certainly a bracing experience.

"Not only my favourite Queen song, but probably one of the best songs ever recorded. Makes most other songs that are not either 'Ace Of Spades' or 'Angel Of Death' pale by comparison." John Doran

**'Dear Friends' from *Sheer Heart Attack***

"This 70-second sketch features a beautifully restrained vocal from Mercury, and some warm, sensitive backing vocals from Brian May. Mercury's lead tells a short tale of love lost and regaining confidence – hardly a novel one, but in these hands it's as potent as any emotional pop song four times the length. Almost pastoral in its feeling and hymnal in its homophony, it is a rare moment of peace and real sadness that, when digested amongst the pomp and vigour of its parent album, sits extremely prettily." Dan Ross

**'Good Old Fashioned Lover Boy' from *A Day at the Races***

"Without a doubt one of the campest of all Queen tracks. How many other people, at that time, we're writing lyrics like this: 'Dining at the Ritz we'll meet at nine precisely / I will pay the bill, you taste the wine / Driving back in style, in my saloon will do quite nicely / Just take me back to yours that will be fine (Come on and get it).' No one, that's who." Tom Davies

**'Death On Two Legs' from *A Night At The Opera***

"This retains much of the metal pomp of their early works, a bitchy ode apparently dedicated to their former manager Norman Sheffield, though it sounds more like bitter retribution from a spurned lover. Whoever it is written to is apparently a 'dog with disease' and 'just an old barrow boy'. Ostentatious and deliciously ludicrous, with a foreboding piano arpeggio intro that would surely make Muse blush, in burst Queen, with Brian May in particular employing the Red Special with understated yet devastatingly effective dexterity. Even he rarely made metal on wood weep so effectively." Jeremy Allen

**'Get Down, Make Love' from *News of the World* (1977)**

"Queen album sleeves throughout the 70s routinely bore the notice 'No synthesisers!' This wasn't down to some grasping for rock cred on their part, but because Brian May's multi-layered and effects-drenched guitar excursions were sometimes mistaken for electronics, and the band wanted to show off that they were making all this noise with standard rock instrumentation.

"This is a strange enough minimalist pulse of a song from the outset, but the middle section, where May pulls out every guitar processing trick the mid 70s had to offer is something else entirely; experimental, futuristic and deranged." John Tatlock

**'Brighton Rock' from Sheer Heart Attack**

This was Queen when they were dripping in post-Dolls/post-Jagger limp-wristed glitter rock decadance. The sound of a pre-stadium madness band hitting their stride. But if the Dolls and their ilk were singing about Manhattan life street fighting men, Queen were dreaming of limo's to the seaside, days at the races and nights at the opera. Krug and cucumber sandwiches *darling* - and lots of it.

All of that was still to come of course, but this was the moment that hinted that histrionic guitars, operatic vocals and a malevolent sounding rhythm section that could keep up with anything Led Zeppelin could knock out might just pay massive dividends. There's fairground sounds, there's a mid-song guitar breakdown, there's drums that gallop like wild horses and a Graham Greene inspired tale of two lovers hitting the seedy English coast ''Neath the gay illumination, all along the promenade...'" Ben Myers

**'Lazing on a Sunday Afternoon' from *A Night at the Opera***

"This gets my vote because it's the most odd song they could have chosen to follow the crazy opening of 'Death on Two Legs'." Tom Davies

**'Stone Cold Crazy' from *Sheer Heart Attack***

"Two minutes and change of locomotive fury, 'Stone Cold Crazy' finds Brian May trading his baroque axe majesty for overdriven attack, lightning strike power chordage lashed to the thunder of John Deacon and Roger Taylor's adrenalized rhythm. It's literally breathtaking - hard rock shorn of all roll - and an obvious precursor to thrash metal. Sure enough, the song was revived years later by Metallica, both live (James Hetfield famously tackled it at the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert) and on disc (it was released as the B-side to 1991's 'Enter Sandman', a version subsequently compiled on the Garage Inc. covers set). The San Francisco metallers jacked up the macho intensity; Hetfield even tweaked the lyric to reflect his aggressive intent, inserting a few profanities and changing “rubber tommy water gun” to “fully loaded tommy gun”. However, they lost the magic of the original recording, which resides in that uniquely Queenly union between genuine sonic awe and a sly good humour, encapsulated by Freddie's knowingly impassioned delivery. His vocal is a high wire performance, inhabiting the Saturday morning snoozer “dreaming I was Al Capone” while still convincing the listener he's “gotta get away from this stone cold floor”. Camp, yet fearsome." Manish Agarwal

**'Mustapha' from *Jazz* (1978)**

"Queen were getting truly demented by this point, and one can only assume that cocaine was extraordinarily pure in 1978. 'Mustapha''s impenetrable lyrics are almost entirely in Persian, apart from some words that Mercury, not a speaker of the language, just made up on the spot. Set to a galloping piano backing, there are no guitars until May's doomy, grinding riff crashes in half-way through. Probably the weirdest opening track in rock LP history." John Tatlock

**'Ogre Battle' from *Queen II***

"There's no denying that *Queen II* is an absolute scorcher of an album and 'Ogre Battle', taken fromQueen II, in my humble opinion is one of Queen's best numbers. Heavier than any other Queen track before or after, 'Ogre Battle' is their take on Manowar only it came out a cool 10 years before loin cloths and bear skin were first pronounced official Battle Metal gear. Defying pomposity and going in with an eerie sounding reversed tape loop that turns into a bone hard four-plus minutes Viking anthem about yes, ogres and what they get up to on a daily basis (i.e. have a great big fight), this song was a live favourite up until 1978 when Queen opted to replace the track with 'Fat Bottomed Girls' or something like that. The fools!" Dino Gollnick

**'She Makes Me (Stormtrooper In Stilletoes)' from *Sheer Heart Attack***

"The second side of *Sheer Heart Attack* is markedly more weary, and entertainingly so – with 'She Makes Me' as a sterling centrepiece. One of Brian May's most seemingly sighing, easy compositions, it ultimately devolves into a nightmarish soundscape, encapsulating what Queen were capable of in terms of deploying ideas against any musical backdrop. Uncharacteristically plain vocal melodies, only two or three chords and a wooziness belie the final push, and when what May described as “New York nightmare sounds” kick in, the journey is complete – total unease and atmospheric control." Dan Ross

**'Love of My Life' from *A Night at the Opera***

"Someone's got to vote for this! This is the greatest crowd singalong of all time and is way better than 'We Will Rock You'. It's majestical!" Tom Davies

**'It's Late' from *News Of The World* (1977)**

"It's odd that on what could have been classic rock's *Thriller* the best two tracks weren't selected for a proper release. Dear Fred takes a cheeky late night, last ditch seduction attempt and imbues it with an earth shattering intensity and suggestion of significance; as if he were Sir John Donne reading 'To His Coy Mistress' in red spandex trousers. The song was, of course, released as a single in America, where, shamefully, it didn't even dent the top 70." John Doran

**'Fun It' from *Jazz* (1978)**

"Taylor started experimenting with drum machines in this period, and came up with a vaguely New Wave influenced disco metal. Which on paper ought to be terrible, but there's something irresistible about the deadpan silliness of the whole venture." John Tatlock

**'Father To Son' from *Queen II***

"One of Brian May's dirtiest guitar tunes and one of the most harmonically rich, 'Father To Son' is pure, silly drama. Epic familial stories told with the unwavering conviction that rock music is somehow worthy enough to carry that weight were not commonplace amongst the camp crowd, such as it was, and works like this prove that Queen's early, murky albums were as widescreen as any of their later works. Watch out for the outright evil guitar tones at 2:39. Brutal." Daniel Ross

**'Tear it Up' from *The Works***

"I love this one. The production is really unsuited to this brutal early-doors Queen-style stomper one but it's still frickin awesome." Tom Davies

**'Cool Cat' from *Hot Space* (1982)**

"Queen completely changed gears for *Hot Space*, toning down the rock elements and taking their cue from contemporary black music. 'Cool Cat' is an entirely unexpected Prince-like slice of summery soul, with a soaring falsetto vocal from Mercury and strutting Isley Brothers guitar line. They pull it off with more élan than the makers of stodge like 'We Are The Champions' have any right to." John Tatlock

**'Was It All Worth It?' from *The Miracle***

"You've just got to read the lyrics to this one to imagine what he was going through at the time. Must have been incredibly tough to be doing that when no-one really knew exactly what was going on. awesome. I'm a big fan of the softer Queen ones as well as they all out pandemonium ones." Tom Davies

**'More of that Jazz' from *Jazz* (1978)**

"One of May's greatest riffs, an obscene snaking coil of funk metal over queasy chord changes and lurching beats. A weirdly disaffected song from the normally triumphal band: 'Only football gives us thrills / Rock & roll just pays the bills' barks a malevolent-sounding Taylor. The proto-sampling cut up sequence at the end has dated horribly, but this is otherwise simultaneously one of the darkest and most inventive songs in their canon." --- John Tatlock