

= Something / Anything ? =

Something / Anything ? is a double album by Todd Rundgren , released in February 1972 . It was Rundgren 's third solo release , and was recorded in late 1971 in Los Angeles , New York City and Bearsville Studios , Woodstock . Three quarters of the album was recorded in the studio with Rundgren playing all instruments and singing all vocals , as well as being the producer . The final quarter of the album consisted of a number of tracks recorded live in the studio without any overdubs , save for a short snippet of archive recordings from the 1960s .

Rundgren had become confident enough at other instruments beyond his standard guitar and keyboards that he had tackled in earlier releases , and this , coupled with a general dissatisfaction with other studio musicians , led him to temporarily relocate to Los Angeles in an attempt to record an entire album single @-@ handedly . After he had created significantly more material than would fit on a standard LP , an earthquake struck LA . He decided to head back to New York for some live sessions , with the help of Moogy Klingman , to lighten the mood . The final sessions were in Bearsville , where the remainder of the recording and mixing took place , and this created enough material for a double album .

The album peaked at number 29 on the Billboard 200 and was certified gold three years after its release . It remains the singer @-@ songwriter 's best @-@ selling album . A single taken from the album , " Hello It 's Me " , was a top @-@ five hit in the US in late 1972 . Something / Anything ? has also continued to attract critical acclaim and has been praised for being Rundgren 's best work , particularly since Rundgren moved away from the straightforward pop ballads present on this album to more experimental territory and progressive rock in later releases , beginning with the following A Wizard , A True Star and his band Utopia . In 2003 , the album was ranked number 173 on Rolling Stone magazine 's list of the 500 greatest albums of all time .

= = Recording = =

= = = Sides 1 @-@ 3 = = =

By the time Rundgren started recording the album , he had already achieved commercial success as a solo artist , and a producer , and this increased his self @-@ confidence . He had also become dissatisfied with other musicians playing on his recordings , recalling , " I 'd never played drums or bass before , though I would hector those that did . " This led him to decide to record the entire album by himself using multi @-@ tracking .

Rundgren wrote the material for the album at a prolific rate . He attributed his productivity to Ritalin and cannabis , stating that the drugs " caused me to crank out songs at an incredible pace . ' I Saw the Light ' took me all of 20 minutes . " He found some of the other songs quick to write , too , noting " they were all basically starting out with C Major 7th , and I 'd start moving my hand around in predictable patterns until a song came out . "

The majority of backing tracks on the first three sides of the album were recorded at I.D. Sound Studios , Los Angeles , engineered by James Lowe with assistance from John Lee . The studio was one of the first independent units in LA , and Lowe believes Rundgren chose it due to the ability to work hands @-@ on without record company interference and having all the latest technology and equipment . Rundgren played every instrument in turn , starting with the drums , noting it " was the logical place to start , " with each instrument laid down on top . While recording the drums , Rundgren would try and hum the song in his head to remember where he was , but " if I would screw up , then I would change the song afterwards , to fit the mistake that I had made , because it was easier than going back and fixing it . " In retrospect , Rundgren felt he might have performed better with a click track , being a novice drummer at the time , but concluded that the end result " sound [s] like a band " . He didn 't think his lack of technical proficiency on the instrument was a particular handicap , saying that " people comprehend what you 're playing , and it has a greater impact . " Engineering the album , Lowe recalled he was " mostly working in the dark " , and that

Rundgren would leave spaces for instruments during recording , spontaneously developing a song as it was being recorded . " I was never sure exactly where the song was going until we 'd put down about four or five tracks . "

In addition to recording at I.D. Sound , Rundgren took an 8 @-@ track recorder and some studio equipment , installing it at his rented home on Astral Drive , Nichols Canyon . ' Intro ' and ' Breathless ' were recorded here , along with various guitar and keyboard overdubs . A version of ' Torch Song ' was also recorded , but was scrapped due to excessive background noise . Rundgren recalled that recording at home meant he could spend time working on pieces of technology or production , such as programming a VCS3 synthesizer , at his leisure without wasting anyone else 's time . The artwork on the original gatefold sleeve was also shot in this apartment . Despite working long hours each day in both I.D and at home , with minimum breaks for sleeping and eating , Rundgren said he enjoyed the recording experience , and " wouldn 't have had it any other way . "

= = = Side 4 = = =

Rundgren contemplated recording more tracks to make up a double album in a similar manner , but following an earthquake , he decided to relocate to New York City and hold a live recording session at the Record Plant with session players . The basic idea was to create songs with sing @-@ along choruses . Rundgren did not pre @-@ plan who would play on the sessions , but simply wanted anyone who happened to be in or near the studio to turn up and learn the material .

Rundgren contacted Moogy Klingman , who would appear on several tracks and later co @-@ found Utopia with Rundgren . Rundgren instructed Klingman to find the best session players possible for the recording . Klingman recalled getting a phone call from Rundgren late on a Friday evening asking him to find a full band by Sunday morning : " He wanted horns , singers , everything , so I made a ton of phone calls . " Klingman said that not everyone could make the entire session , so a variety of musicians , particularly guitarists and bassists , needed to be used . The performers , including Rundgren himself , only rehearsed the songs a few times before committing the performance to tape , in order to sound spontaneous , and some of the banter between takes appears on the finished album .

Three songs were recorded at the Record Plant , including one of Klingman 's own , " Dust in the Wind " . Guitarist Rick Derringer appeared on one track , and would collaborate with Rundgren in the future . Trumpeter Randy Brecker had been a founding member of Blood , Sweat & Tears and , along with his brother Michael , who also played on the Record Plant sessions , went on to find commercial success with the Brecker Brothers . Trombonist Barry Rogers , who completed the brass section on the Record Plant recordings , had also collaborated with the Brecker brothers in the band Dreams .

A further live session was held at Bearsville Studios in Woodstock , which used some of the members of the Paul Butterfield blues band , resulting in two other tracks . The final track on side four , " Slut " , was recorded earlier at a live session in I.D. Sound Studios , and featured previous collaborators Tony and Hunt Sales , and guitarist Rick Vito .

= = = Vocals and post production = = =

The majority of vocals for the existing studio tracks were also recorded at the Record Plant , with additional recording at Bearsville , where the album was mixed . As in LA , Lowe helped out with the engineering . " We 'd just put up a Neumann U67 and he 'd sing right there in the control room using the monitors for the playback . "

In addition to the live sessions , the fourth side was completed by two small extracts of archive recordings featuring Rundgren in the 1960s . The first was a performance of Barrett Strong 's " Money (That 's What I Want) " by a group of the same name ' Money ' , recorded around 1966 , while the second was a clip of " Messin ' with the Kid " performed by Woody 's Truck Stop in Philadelphia , late 1966 .

In the liner notes , the first side of the album is described as " a bouquet of ear @-@ catching

melodies " , the second as " the cerebral side " , the third as " The kid gets heavy " , and the fourth is titled " Baby Needs a New Pair of Snakeskin Boots (A Pop Operetta) " . Rundgren wrote the sleeve notes , and included a small operetta that described a narrative between live tracks . White @-@ labeled promotional DJ issues of the LP were pressed on colored vinyl ? the first record on red vinyl , the second on blue .

= = = Songs = = =

" I Saw the Light " was placed at the start of album , as it was felt to be the most likely hit . The song was influenced by Carole King .

" Hello It 's Me " had been recorded by Rundgren 's old band , Nazz . As with the rest of the live tracks on side four , little preparation was done for the track . Rundgren later claimed the entire song was rehearsed and recorded in under two hours , and the horn lines and backing vocals at the end of the track were completely improvised . It was released as a single late in 1973 , and reached # 5 on the Billboard Hot 100 the following year .

" Couldn 't I Just Tell You " has had a major influence on artists in the power pop musical genre , with music critic Stephen Thomas Erlewine of the All Music Guide calling it one of " the great songs that provided power pop with its foundation " . The song was covered , for example , by Game Theory , and included as a bonus track on the CD release of Real Nighttime (1985) . The 2010 book Music : What Happened ? called the song " likely the greatest power pop recording ever made , " with lyrics " somehow both desperate and lighthearted at the same time , " and a guitar solo having " truly amazing dexterity and inflection . "

= = Reception = =

Reviewing the original release of the album , Billboard said that Rundgren 's songs " have an aura of being irreverent , irrelevant little ditties , while in reality they are penetratingly strident observations " , and that he seemed to have had fun making the album .

Retrospective reviews of the album have been overwhelmingly positive . Allmusic especially praised the album 's endearing tone and often adventurous variety of styles , commenting that " Listening to Something / Anything ? is a mind @-@ altering trip in itself , no matter how many instantly memorable , shamelessly accessible pop songs are scattered throughout the album . " Robert Christgau also applauded the strong variety : " The many good songs span styles and subjects in a virtuoso display ... And the many ordinary ones are saved by Todd 's confidence and verve . " Rolling Stone said the album " demonstrates his command of the studio , unfurling his falsetto over a kaleidoscope of rock genres " . Axl Rose declared in a 1989 Rolling Stone interview that " Today , my favorite record is Todd Rundgren 's Something / Anything " .

Rundgren himself has been more ambivalent about the album 's success and critical acclaim . He has stated several times that since he had already become successful as a producer , he was not as interested in straight commercial pop success as other artists . In particular , he rejected a tag of being " a male Carole King " . " With all due respect , " he later stated , " I took no comfort in merely being labeled a ' singer / songwriter ' . " Subsequent albums , beginning with the follow @-@ up A Wizard , A True Star and the spin @-@ off group Utopia , would see a radical shift away from straightforward three @-@ minute pop .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written by Todd Rundgren except as indicated .

= = = Side one : A Bouquet of Ear @-@ catching Melodies = = =

" I Saw the Light " ? 2 : 56

" It Wouldn 't Have Made Any Difference " ? 3 : 50

" Wolfman Jack " ? 2 : 54
" Cold Morning Light " ? 3 : 55
" It Takes Two to Tango (This Is for the Girls) " ? 2 : 41
" Sweeter Memories " ? 3 : 36
Total Length : 20 : 52

= = = Side two : The Cerebral Side = = =

" Intro " ? 1 : 11
" Breathless " ? 3 : 15
" The Night the Carousel Burnt Down " ? 4 : 29
" Saving Grace " ? 4 : 12
" Marlene " ? 3 : 54
" Song of the Viking " ? 2 : 35
" I Went to the Mirror " ? 4 : 05
Total Length : 23 : 41

= = = Side three : The Kid Gets Heavy = = =

" Black Maria " ? 5 : 20
" One More Day (No Word) " ? 3 : 43
" Couldn 't I Just Tell You " ? 3 : 34
" Torch Song " ? 2 : 52
" Little Red Lights " ? 4 : 53
Total Length : 20 : 22

= = = Side four : Baby Needs a New Pair of Snakeskin Boots (A Pop Operetta) = = =

" Overture ? My Roots : Money (That 's What I Want) / Messin ' with the Kid " (Janie Bradford ,
Berry Gordy , Jr . , Mel London) ? 2 : 29
" Dust in the Wind " (Mark Klingman) ? 3 : 49
" Piss Aaron " ? 3 : 26
" Hello It 's Me " ? 4 : 42
" Some Folks Is Even Whiter Than Me " ? 3 : 56
" You Left Me Sore " ? 3 : 13
" Slut " ? 4 : 03
Total Length : 25 : 38

= = Personnel = =

= = = Sides 1 - 3 = = =

Todd Rundgren ? all instruments and vocals

= = = Side 4 = = =

" Money (That 's What I Want) ?
Todd Rundgren ? lead guitar
Rick Valente ? lead vocals
Randy Read ? rhythm guitar
Collie Read ? bass
Stockman ? drums

" Messin ' with the Kid ?

No personnel credited

" Dust in the Wind " (Recorded at the Record Plant , New York)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , piano

Mark Klingman ? organ

Rick Derringer ? guitar

John Siegler ? bass

John Siomos ? drums

Randy Brecker ? trumpet

Mike Brecker ? tenor sax

Barry Rogers ? trombone

Hope Ruff , Richard Corey , Vicki Robinson , Dennis Cooley , Cecilia Norfleet ? backing vocals

" Piss Aaron ? (Recorded at Bearsville Studios , Woodstock)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , electric piano

Amos Garrett ? guitar

Ben Keith ? pedal steel

Jim Colgrove ? bass

Billy Mundi ? drums

" Hello It 's Me ? (Recorded at the Record Plant , New York)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , piano

Mark Klingman ? organ

Robbie Kogale ? guitar

Stu Woods ? bass

John Siomos ? drums

Randy Brecker ? trumpet

Mike Brecker ? tenor sax

Barry Rogers ? trombone

Hope Ruff , Richard Corey , Vicki Robinson , Dennis Cooley , Cecilia Norfleet ? backing vocals

" Some Folks Is Even Whiter Than Me ? (Recorded at Bearsville Studios , Woodstock)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , guitar

Mark Klingman ? piano

Ralph Walsh ? guitar

Bugsy Maugh ? bass

Billy Mundi ? drums

Serge Katzen ? conga

Gene Dinwiddle ? tenor sax

" You Left Me Sore ? (Recorded at the Record Plant , New York)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , piano

Mark Klingman ? organ

Robbie Kogale ? guitar

Stu Woods ? bass

John Siomos ? drums

Hope Ruff , Richard Corey ? backing vocals

" Slut ? (Recorded at I.D. Sound Studios , Los Angeles)

Todd Rundgren ? lead vocals , guitar

Rick Vito ? guitar

Charlie Schoning ? piano

Tony Sales ? bass

Hunt Sales ? drums

Jim Horn ? tenor sax

John Kelson ? tenor sax

Brook Baxes , Anthony Carrubba , Henry Fanton , Edward Olmos ? backing vocals

= = Charts = =

Album

Single

= = Certifications = =