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## [Harry Nilsson – The Point: Definitive Collector's Edition \(1971; 2012 reissue\)](#)

by [Nick DeRiso](#)

Is the Harry Nilsson soundtrack to this children's film, absent the script and Ringo Starr's memorable narration, strong enough to stand on its own? Probably not. But as a gift of seldom-heard songs from a lost musical genius, it certainly delights.

After all, Nilsson's been gone for so long now that this expanded MVD Visual reissue of *The Point* includes, among its 25 minutes of bonus features, a segment titled "Who is Harry Nilsson?" For me, though, the animated project's seven-song cycle itself ultimately says more about this often-overlooked legend than any words could.

There's "Me and My Arrow," a classic burst of Nilssonian pop — as wholesome as it is lonesome, until this weirdly transfixing bridge: It's as if the merry-go-round has come to a quick stop, but your head is still spinning. And then there's Harry, ready to start you going again. And when he does, after insisting (however briefly, and however unconvincingly) that he'll get past this latest setback, that sense of blissful sadness swoops right back in.

**[SOMETHING ELSE! REWIND: [Working with Dave Stewart, Ringo Starr paid tribute to Nilsson in 2008 with the aptly named "Harry's Song," brilliantly recalling his old friend's musical alchemy.](#)]**

He had this canny ability to turn the woebegone singer-songwriter motif of the early 1970s completely on its ear, imbuing his songs with an off-kilter complexity (think Tin Pan Alley plus 1970s' Hollywood hedonism), and no small amount of humor. Take "Life Line," which sounds, on its surface, like a typical cry for help — another heartbroken sap,

another cliché. But Nilsson simply approaches the lyric from too many directions for “Life Line” to become rote. He makes his own echo with the vocal, something so homemade and real. Then, just as he’s drawn you in, Nilsson makes a goofy noise — like a cartoon figure drowning — only to rejoin the lyric with a striking fragility.

Nilsson understood the line he was walking, both what could be made fun of and also what was ultimately at stake.

Elsewhere, from the fizzy, Beach Boys-esque “Poli High,” to the tumbling pop confection “Are You Sleeping,” to the mellow ruminations on the cycle of life found in “Think About Your Troubles,” *The Point* continues to touch every corner of what made Nilsson such a fascinating figure in pop music.

Of course, that very range is probably why he wasn’t more famous in his time, or in this one. Never easy to peg, he could be even harder to get, if you weren’t willing to listen closely.

*The Point*, in between the larger story about a place where everything has a point (except for our round-headed hero Oblio), gives us all another belated chance. And, as always, Harry Nilsson makes it worth the effort.

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