NME Originals

# BEATLES

THE SOLO YEARS 1970-1980

## John Lennon
From 'Imagine' to martyrdom

## Paul McCartney
Wings – band on the run

## George Harrison
All things must pass

## Ringo Starr
The boogaloo Beatle

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## The genuine article
Packed with classic interviews, reviews and photos from the archives of NME and Melody Maker

# FOREWORD

## by Billy Preston

It's hard to believe it's been over 40 years since I first met The Beatles in Hamburg in 1962. I arrived to do a two-week residency at the Star Club with Little Richard. He was a hero of theirs so they were in awe and I think they were impressed with me too because I was only 16 and holding down a job in his band. We weren't so far apart in age, particularly George, so we hit it off from the start.

What was instantly obvious to me was that they weren't like the other bands around then. Their harmonies, the way they dressed and their personalities set them apart from the others. They were also unique at the time in the way a bunch of white guys handled black music and were able to add to it.

We went our separate ways for a few of years, then I came to London with Ray Charles and George came to see the gig and spotted me in the band. They sent word for me to come by, we got to jamming and one thing led to another and I ended up recording in the studio with them. The press called me the Fifth Beatle but I was just really happy to be there.

Things were hard for them then, Brian had died and there was a lot of politics and money hassles with Apple, but we got on personality-wise and they grew to trust me – I was a kind of sounding board and another set of ears. As far as I was concerned they treated me like a member of the band. I'd stay with George at Henley, we'd eat lunch in the office, jam and record. It was a fun time for me. To get a credit on 'Get Back' was an honour and a privilege – all I remember was we had a groove going and someone said "take a solo", then when the album came out my name was there on the song. Plenty of other musicians worked with them at that time, people like Eric Clapton, but they chose to give me a credit for which I'm very grateful.

**The press called me the Fifth Beatle, but I was just really happy to be there**

I ended up signing to Apple and making a couple of albums with them and in turn had the opportunity to work on their solo albums. In the years after the split it wasn't easy for them to become anything other than The Beatles, but they were always very creative. People are forever asking me why they remain so revered after all this time and it's the big question. I guess they just wrote from the heart, they experienced a lot of things and wrote about them in a way everybody could relate to.

Let it BP: the Fifth Beatle in 1972

GETTY IMAGES/REX FEATURES

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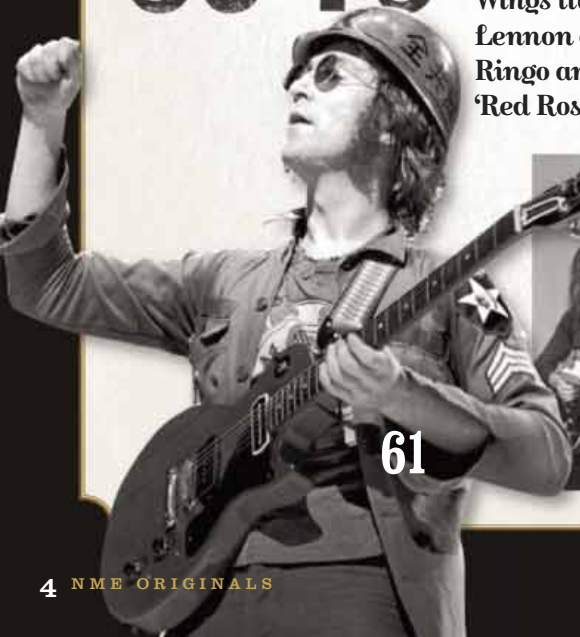
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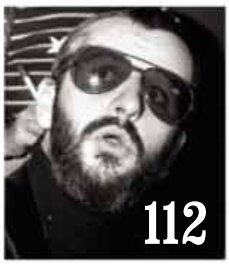
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## THE BEATLES COMPLETED 1981-2005

Mike Pattenden assesses how The Beatles confronted the last 25 years

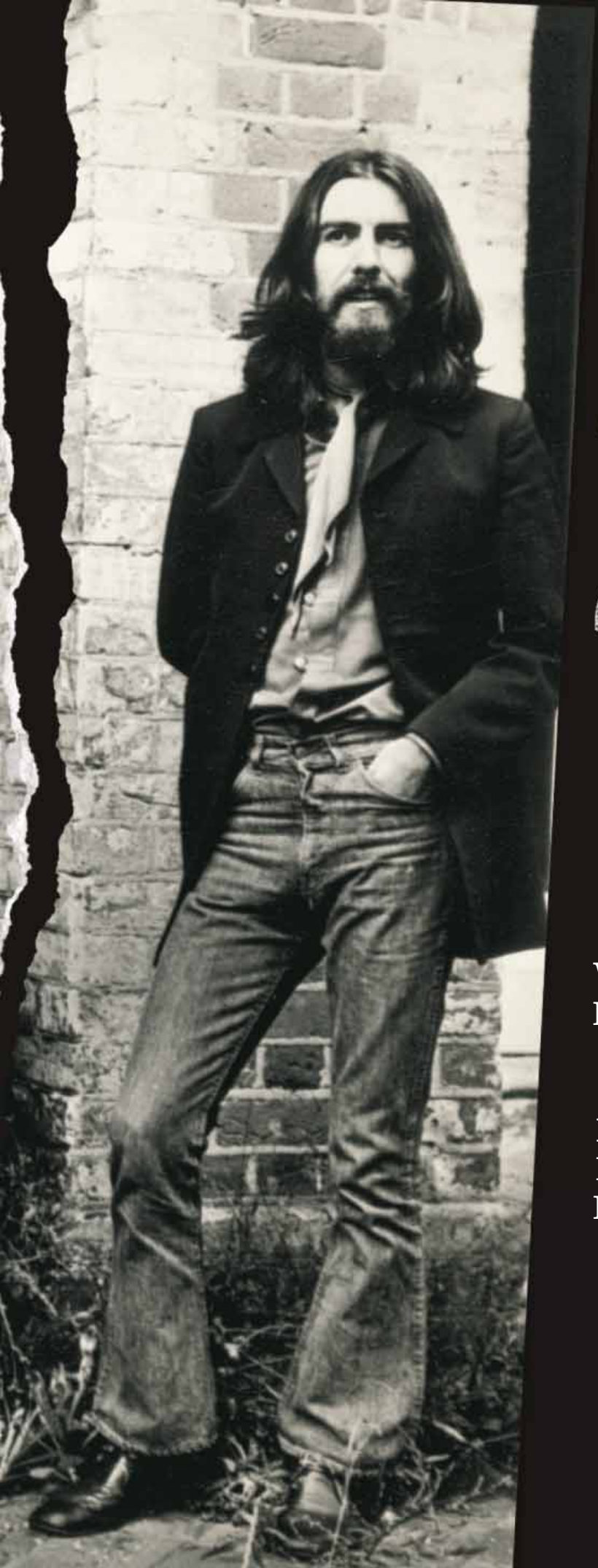

# WELCOME TO NME ORIGINALS

So much was written about John, Paul, George and Ringo in the decade after The Beatles split up, but the glories of the '60s have perpetually overshadowed the best of their '70s solo work. Against a backdrop of reunion rumours, the four individual Beatles each attempted to craft a body of solo work that could rival their collective output. Although with flashes of brilliance they occasionally succeeded, they would be forever judged by the standards of The Beatles.

By re-publishing many interviews and reviews for the first time since their initial publication in the pages of the leading British weekly rock magazine *NME* and its now defunct sister publication *Melody Maker*, this magazine provides a fascinating insight into a decade where all four tried so hard to shake off the mantle of "ex-Beatle". In doing so, we have been able to once again bring you some of the best British music journalism of the period.

To all of this we've added a selection of newly commissioned writings to place the archive material into context, and not forgetting some truly fantastic photographic images.

Chris Hunt
Editor



# INTRODUCTION

# Ten years after

When John Lennon announced he wanted a "divorce" from The Beatles it was obvious that the split would be a messy affair. But for John, Paul, George and Ringo, the shockwaves were to last a decade. By Chris Ingham

LANDMARK MEDIA

For many for whom Beatle music had formed the soundtrack of their lives, witnessing the break-up of the group was traumatic. To watch the beloved band that had represented such artistic, social and spiritual possibilities in the 1960s enter the 1970s as bitter, feuding businessmen seemed to suggest that all the good feeling and optimism of the previous decade was an illusion – like the rosy glow of childhood – to be somehow grown out of. The experience of seeing The Beatles dissolve was akin to that of children who helplessly look on as their adored parents bicker, grow apart and separate. Deep down, we may know it's nothing to do with us, yet somehow, it affects us at a fundamental level; we are little less light, a little less hopeful.

As the 1970s wore on, and the world went about its growing up, it kept an eye on the separate doings of John, Paul, George and Ringo. Not just because they continued to be fascinating people who, sporadically, did interesting work, but because, of course, they were still The Beatles. As their marvelously erudite and whimsical press officer Derek Taylor once said of them, "It was the only dream I ever had that came true." And in the 1970s, you never knew. The dream could come true again.

For the watching world, the shocking news came out of the blue on the morning of 10 April, 1970. The body of the *Daily Mirror*'s story largely quoted from Paul McCartney's self-composed question-and-answer promotional interview accompanying advance copies of his solo debut album, 'McCartney', in which he referred to "business and musical differences", having a "better time with my family", not knowing whether the "break will be temporary or permanent" and not being able to "foresee a time when the Lennon and McCartney partnership will be active again". The headline, however, made no bones: "PAUL QUITS THE BEATLES".

John Lennon was furious. This announcement was master media manipulator McCartney timing things perfectly to sell an album.

Daily Mirror
1252
PAUL QUITS THE BEATLES
Kidnappers send girl home by taxi
'Deeply cut up' after policy row

As John Lennon saw it, he had formed the band and he wanted to be seen to end it. And the truth was McCartney was actually the last Beatle to get around to leaving the band.

The end had been some time coming; the rot at the core of The Beatles had started nearly two years previously. The band had a grinding time in the summer of '68 trying to record what became the 'White Album'. Paul, George and Ringo were unnerved by the constant presence in the studio of John's new love, avant-garde artist Yoko Ono, and Lennon's preoccupation with his new artistically and emotionally stimulated state manifested itself in a truculent disregard for any music that wasn't his own. The pervading positivism, joyful invention and creative rivalry of their earlier years was being replaced by paranoia, apathy and an ill-spirited power struggle. Ringo left the group during those sessions, feeling "unloved". He was wooed back to his drum-stool after a few days, but the interminably grim sessions took their toll on the spirit of the band.

**The end had been some time coming; the rot at the core of The Beatles had started back in 1968**

It was even worse in January 1969, during the shooting for documentary film *Get Back* (which became *Let It Be*). A cold Twickenham studios crawling with cameramen was the last place John, George and Ringo wanted to be and they were simply not in the mood for McCartney's bullish encouragement. Already feeling downtrodden as a junior member of the group, undervalued

Yoko Ono offers words of wisdom to John during the filming of *Let It Be*, Twickenham Studios, 1969

RETNA-RICHARD/KEITH WOLFF/MIRROR PIX

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Apple Records

# THE BEATLES

# Let it be

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Paul smiles through as he loses control of The Beatles, April 1969

John and Yoko rehearsing for 'Let It Be', 1970

and uncultivated beneath the shadow cast by Lennon and McCartney's collective ego, George got especially rattled. It was just one humiliation too many to be told how to play his guitar in front of the cameras and he walked off the sessions. He returned when it was agreed to relocate to Apple and to stop filming rehearsals.

Later that year Paul found himself further ostracised within the group as they grappled with how The Beatles' financial affairs should be pursued. The Beatles' utopian business venture that was Apple Corps was melting down under the strain of unprofitable schemes and elephantine expense accounts and something had to be done. Paul wanted his future father-in-law, showbusiness lawyer Lee Eastman to do it, whereas John, George and Ringo wanted fast-talking, legendarily tough New York negotiator and missing royalty 'discoverer' Allen Klein. After a series of catastrophically ill-tempered meetings in which everyone lost their cool, Klein was appointed over Paul's objections and took over Apple. Paul held out, refusing to acknowledge that Klein represented him in any way, a stance that did nothing for the strained atmosphere in the band.

The group limped through the remarkably polished swansong 'Abbey Road' in summer 1969, although elsewhere that year, Lennon – in the company of Yoko – had become a media-savvy, performance art peacenik, thrilled by the opportunities for fresh expression and simply bored by the idea of being a Beatle. After straining at the leash for months, and immediately after appearing at the Toronto rock'n'roll festival with the Plastic Ono Band (Eric Clapton, Klaus Voormann et al), in September 1969 Lennon called a meeting and told a devastated McCartney that he was leaving. Klein was keen for the news to be kept quiet for business reasons as he just renegotiated a massive increase in The Beatles' EMI/Capitol royalties. In actuality, The Beatles were over in September 1969; it's just that no-one was to know.

## The Utopian business venture that was Apple Corps was melting down. Something had to be done

In the following months, Lennon was the most visible of the ex-Fabs, continuing his headline-grabbing activities with his single 'Cold Turkey' (describing his withdrawal from heroin) and the return of his MBE to the Prime Minister in protest against Biafra, Vietnam and 'Cold Turkey' "slipping down the charts". Ringo, meanwhile, began recording an album of standards while George quietly joined Delaney & Bonnie on a European tour. Paul retreated with his new family to his farm in Scotland to suffer what he would later describe as "almost a nervous breakdown".

McCartney suffered extreme anxiety symptoms as he agonised about his unemployed status and had nightmares about being trapped in a business arrangement with Klein, a man who Paul was convinced was a "baddie", and with a group that didn't exist anymore. With the help of wife Linda, he gradually restored himself and recorded the album 'McCartney', playing all the instruments himself and agreed a release date with Apple, 17 April, 1970.

Meanwhile, Klein and the remaining Beatles pursued the previously abandoned 'Get Back' project, hiring Phil Spector to polish the raw recordings into a releasable state. Though McCartney had seen the sense in making the tapes into an album (he'd even participated in the

On sale, Friday, week ending December 13, 1969 NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS 3

JOHN LENNON TALKS EXCLUSIVELY TO NME

# BEATLES ARE ON THE BRINK OF SPLITTING

## One group is just not big enough for all this talent

By ALAN SMITH

I MAY be wrong, and I hope I am, but these are dark days for the Beatles. I begin to wonder how much longer their association can stand the strain of their own individual talent.

JOHN LENNON pulls toward Peace and his Plastic Ono Band; RINGO pulls toward a bigger and better film career; GEORGE HARRISON jumps toward his own prolific songwriting; and PAUL McCARTNEY pulls himself away to Scotland, his own songs . . . and silence.

Certainly, John and Paul are on opposite sides of a heavy wall of difference and self-inflicted gloom. And the bond between them can hardly have been more weak, or their opposing interests more strong.

A few days ago John and Yoko and I talked in a one-hour fifteen minute exclusive interview for NME (partly filmed for BBC-1's look at the world of John and Yoko Lennon in "24 Hours"), and during that time he gave me frank answers to this mental rift with Paul and the present state of the Beatles.

He was pleasant, together, straightforward, mellow and resolute, and only in references to Paul did his voice drop in doubt.

He told me: "Paul and I both have differences of opinion on how things should be run. But instead of it being a private argument about how an LP should be done, or a certain track, it's now a larger argument about the organisation of Apple itself.

"Whether we both want the same thing from Apple in the end is a matter of opinion. But how to achieve it — that's where we digress.

"Mainly, we disagree on the Klein bit. But you know, I don't really want to discuss Paul without him here. It's just that as far as I can see, Paul was always waiting for This Guy to just appear and come and save us from the mess we were in.

### Pull out

"And we were in a mess, and only my saying it to the Press that time enabled Klein to hear about it and come over.

"I'm a quarter of this building, and it became a question of whether I should pull my money out if I could — which I probably can't.

"I did say I wanted out at one time. It was just that all my income was going in to Apple and being wasted by the joy-riding people who were here. In fact, that was just the minute bit of it. I just wanted it to stop.

"It's no use pretending we can be here all the time when that kind of thing is going on. We needed a business man. No Beatle can spend his days here checking the accounts.

"There was also the question of the four of us holding different opinions on different things, and the staff not knowing where they where or who to listen to.

"I knew that's what's going on all the time. People come to me and say 'Paul wants this done, what do you think?', and they know damn well what I think and they say 'alright,' and then they go to Paul and say 'John wants this done, he's off again.

### Instuctions

"The result is that we kept sending in different instructions and nothing was being done. Like people anywhere, they were getting away with what they could. We were naive and stupid.

"What I want is for the freeloading to stop, but the old Apple spirit to remain. The spirit will be there, because if Apple is not a problem to the Beatles — which it was — it just can't help but get better.

"Our job is to put the creative side into Apple. If the Beatles never recorded together again, but each put their creative efforts through Apple . . . that at least would be better than me having a company, Paul having a company, George having a company, and Ringo having a company. "Together we at least have that much more power.

"I know now that the original concept of helping everybody doesn't work in its purest form. All you get are the bums and freeloaders everybody else turns down.

"The only way we can help other artists at Apple is the same way the Beatles helped other artists . . . by breaking new barriers. That's what we didn't get before. We sat back, and we started to believe our own publicity, to tell ourselves how the Beatles helped people get long hair, and the Beatles started off this, and the other.

"The Beatles split up? It just depends how much we all want to record together. I don't know if I want to record together again. I go off and on it. I really do.

JOHN LENNON with new hair style and YOKO ONO in London recently.

"The problem is that in the old days, when we needed an album Paul and I got together and produced enough songs for it.

"Nowadays, there's three of us writing prolifically and trying to fit it all onto one album. Or we have to think of a double album every time, which takes six months.

"That's the hang-up we have. It's not a personal 'The Beatles are fighting' thing, so much as an actual, physical problem.

"What do you do? I don't want to spend six months making an album I have two tracks on! And neither do Paul or George, probably. That's the problem. If we can overcome that, maybe it'll sort itself out.

"None of us want to be background musicians most of the time. It's a waste. We didn't spend ten years making it to have the freedom of recording studios, to be able to have two tracks on an album.

"It's not like we spend our time wrestling in the studio trying to get our own songs on. We all do it the same way . . . we take it in turns to record a track. It's just that usually in the past, George lost out. Because Paul and I are tougher.

"It's nothing new, the way things are. It's human. We've always said we've had fights. It's no news that we argue. I'm more interested in my songs. Paul's more interested in his, and George is more interested in his. That's always been.

"This is why I've started with the Plastic Ono and working with Yoko . . . to have more outlet. There isn't enough outlet for me in the Beatles. The Ono Band is my escape valve. And how important that gets, as compared to the Beatles for me, I'll have to wait and see.

"You have to realise that there's a peculiar situation in that if 'Cold Turkey' had had the name 'Beatles' on it, probably it would have been a No. 1.

### "Abbey Road"

"'Cold Turkey' has got Ringo and me on, and yet on half the Beatles' tracks of 'Abbey Road,' I'm not on, or half the tracks on the double album — and even way back. Sometimes there might be only two Beatles on a track.

"It's got to the situation where if we have the name 'Beatle' on it, it sells. So you get to think: 'What are we selling? Do they buy it because it's worth it, or just because it says 'Beatles?'

"George is in the same position. I mean, he's got songs he's been trying to get on since 1920. He's got to make an album of his own. And maybe if he puts 'Beatles' on the label rather than George Harrison, it might sell more. That's the drag.

"Of course we could each make an album and call it 'The Beatles.' But that would be cheating. And that's not my scene.

"Anyway, folks, remember the Plastic Ono Band LP from Toronto released December the 12th, with a nice picture of the sky, and a fab calendar inside of a year's events with John and Yoko, with poetry and fun."

NEXT WEEK: "DO I WANT TO BE HATED"; MISCARRIAGE; THE "GET BACK" FILM; STAGE FRIGHT; AUNT MIMI; FEAR; INSECURITY; JEALOUSY; POLITICIANS — AND PEACE.

HAVE A MAX!

NO ONE'S GONNA CHANGE OUR WORLD

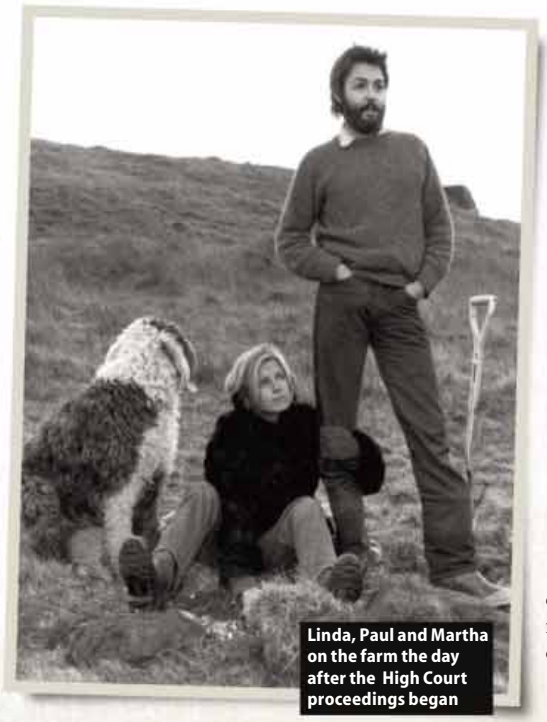
NO ONE'S GONNA CHANGE OUR WORLD

final Beatles recording session with Ringo and George on Harrison's 'I Me Mine' in January 1970), he was appalled not to have been asked about Spector's lush treatment of his songs 'Let It Be' and 'The Long And Winding Road'. He was further outraged when he was told, via a hand-delivered letter by Ringo from the other Beatles, that his 'McCartney' release date had been put back to make way for the 'Let It Be' album. In a rage, he threw Ringo out of his house and demanded his original release date be reinstated. George eventually OK'd it and 'McCartney' was back on track. "We're all talking about peace and love," McCartney told the *Evening Standard* on 2 April, 1970, "but really, we're not feeling peaceful at all."

His discontent rumbled on through 1970 as the royalties for the coolly received yet million-selling 'McCartney' dropped into the Apple pot to be shared by John, George and Ringo in a continuation of the all-for-one, one-for-all business agreement they had set up in 1967. McCartney, unsurprisingly, wanted out and asked Lennon, Starr and Harrison to release him from the partnership. Advised by the ever-watchful Klein, who suggested it would be a tax nightmare, they demurred. Legal letters, personal letters and phonecalls were all parried so McCartney was forced into extreme measures; he sued his ex-bandmates to dissolve The Beatles in the High Court on 31 December, 1970.

Still mindful of the tax issues, John, George and Ringo sent carefully worded affidavits to the February 1971 hearing which, while admitting personal and business tension, amounted to a puzzled shrug as to why Paul would want The Beatles to end. When compared to the anti-Beatle vitriol of his *Rolling Stone* interview conducted two months before (in which he eventually revealed it was himself who had pushed for "divorce" in the first place), John's statement was particularly disingenuous: "If Paul is trying to break us up because of anything that happened before the Klein/Eastman power struggle, his reasoning does not make sense to me."

**McCartney was forced into extreme measures. He sued his ex-bandmates to dissolve The Beatles**



Linda, Paul and Martha on the farm the day after the High Court proceedings began

ALPHA-CHRISTIE IMAGES/REX FEATURES/GETTY IMAGES

Paul succeeded in getting a receiver to handle Apple in March 1971, after which the defeated three Beatles reputedly drove to Paul's Cavendish Avenue house and put a brick through his window. (Business-wise, The Beatles' partnership was eventually officially dissolved in April 1975 although ironically, by 1973, John, George and Ringo had fired Allen Klein as their business manager. "Let's say possibly Paul's suspicions were right," said John at the time.)

This bizarre, tense situation couldn't help but spill into the artistic output of the four. The cover of George's 1970 album 'All Things Must Pass' featured a magnificently bearded Harrison in cosmic gardener garb, wise and imposing at

the centre of four symbolically insignificant garden gnomes. On 'God' from Lennon's 1970 'Plastic Ono Band' album, he spat that among the many things he didn't believe in was *"Beatles"*. The ever conciliatory Ringo underlined the human aspect of losing the old gang on 'Early 1970', the B-side to his 1971 single 'It Don't Come Easy', where he devoted a verse each to his old pals, declaring *"when I go to town I wanna see all three"*.

Other references were a little more barbed. George tilted at Paul on 'All Things Must Pass' with the song 'Wah-Wah' (written immediately after walking out of *Get Back*), Paul sniped at John on 'Too Many People', the opening track of his 1971 album, 'Ram', a record which also featured a picture of a beetle 'screwing' another beetle. However, in a blazing culmination to this form of dialogue, John lacerated Paul on his 1971 album 'Imagine' with the infamous 'How Do You Sleep?', a witty, deeply ungenerous attack upon McCartney's music, family and reputation. Variously justified later by Lennon as being "like a joke", "really attacking myself" and a response to jibes on 'Ram', most listeners, not least McCartney himself, were shocked.

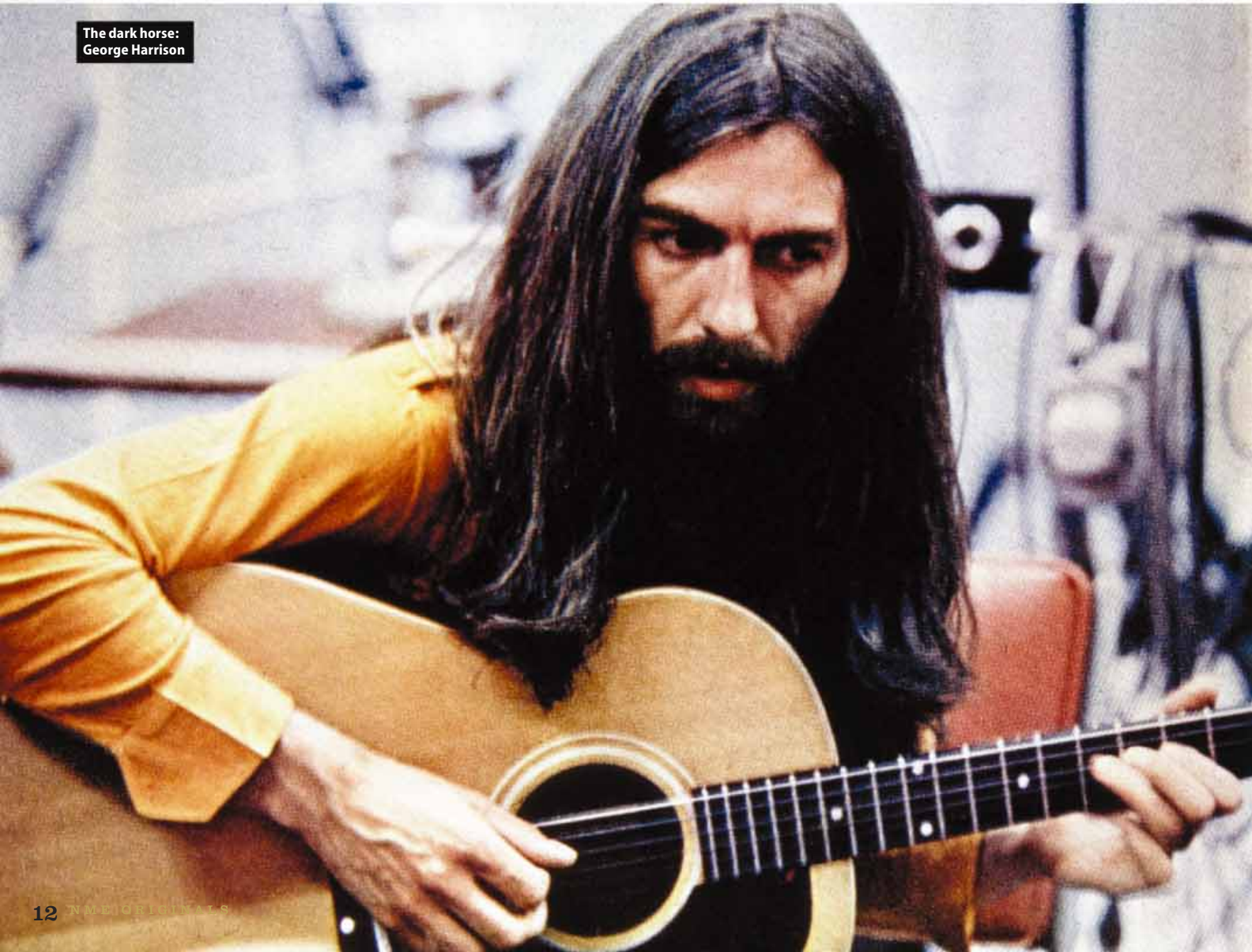
There was also the sour discourse conducted through the pages of the music press. The other Beatles' responses, when asked about Paul's solo work, ranged from the disappointed to the scathing, Lennon's shockingly militant anti-Beatle interview to *Rolling Stone* in late 1970 was widely-quoted and both Lennon and McCartney took to venting their spleen in the letters page of *Melody Maker*. Lennon fired off after an August 1971 George Martin interview – picking at the details of Martin's remembrances – and again after McCartney's November 1971 interview when Paul expressed the wish that the group could just "sign a piece of paper saying it's all over". This prompted John to pen a vicious letter that, despite being edited for potentially libellous content, was no less scurrilous than 'How Do You Sleep?'. Beatles fans read and shook their heads in disbelief.

All of this divisive exposure helped the public understand that The Beatles no longer existed as a group but only as individual lives and careers. Unpredictably, of the four careers, it was the dark horse of the band, George Harrison, who got off to a flier. His monumental triple-album 'All Things Must Pass' (1970) was greeted as nothing less than an unblocked musical fountain, while the single 'My Sweet Lord' hit Number One in both the UK and the US. His fund-raising work with the Concert For Bangla Desh in 1971, for which he cajoled the participation of Bob Dylan (but not Lennon or McCartney) established him as the hippest ex-Beatle with the biggest heart.

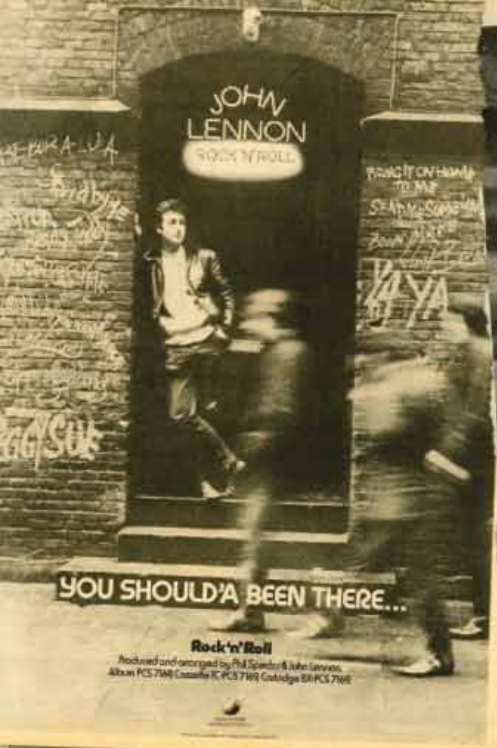
**John lacerated Paul on 'How Do You Sleep?', an attack on McCartney's music, family and reputation**

However, through the remainder of the decade, Harrison's solo work or reputation never again hit those heights. Subsequent albums – 'Living In The Material World' (1973), 'Dark Horse' (1974), 'Extra Texture' (1975), 'Thirty Three & 1/3' (1977) and 'George Harrison' (1979) – were listenable but revealed a waning inspiration, and by the end of the decade the triumph of 'All Things Must Pass' was starting to look like a one-off. His nadir was reached in 1976 as he was ordered to pay nearly $600,000 to Bright Tunes and relinquish all royalties on 'My Sweet Lord' when found guilty of "subconscious plagiarism"

REDFERNS



The dark horse: George Harrison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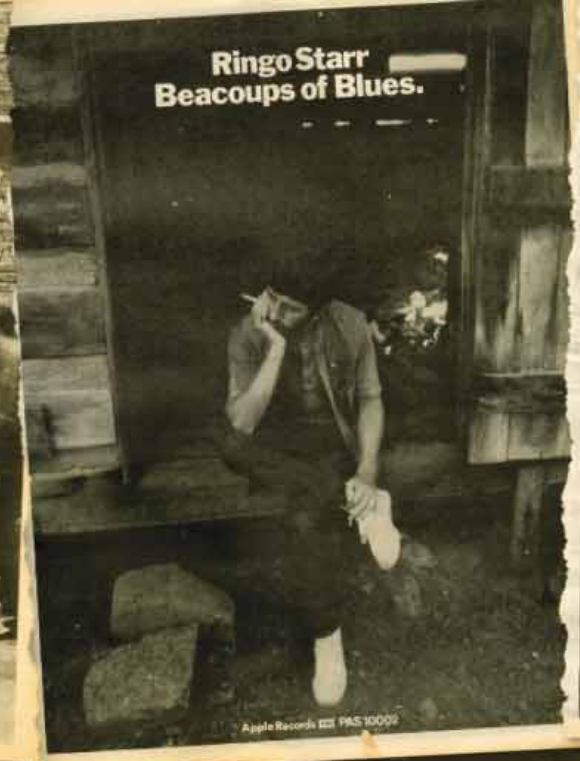
Rock 'n' Roll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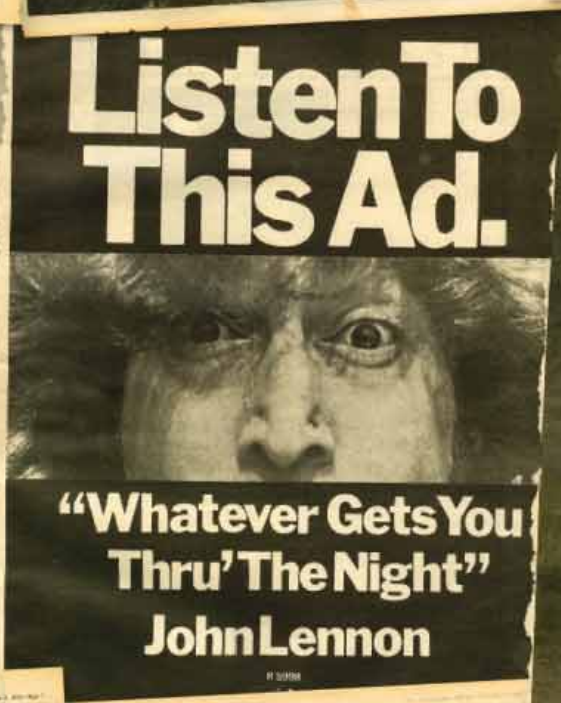
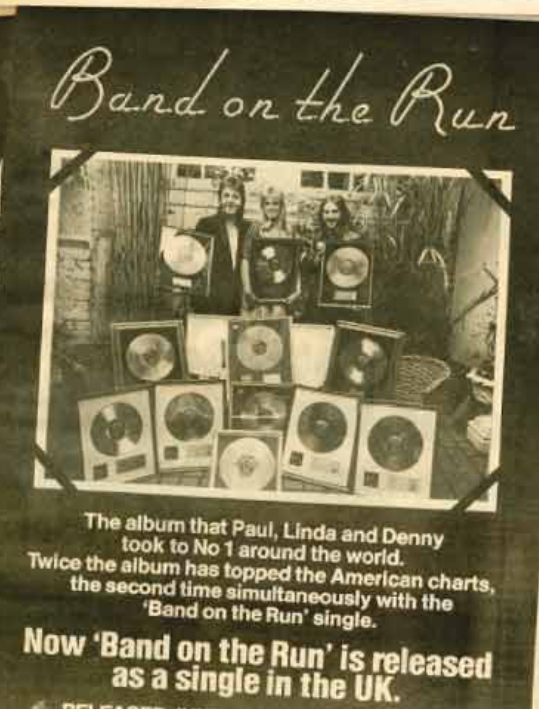
George Harrison
'THIS GUITAR (CAN'T KEEP FROM CRYING)'
FROM HIS LATEST ALBUM
EXTRA TEXTURE

THE CHRISTMAS SINGLE FROM PAUL McCARTNEY
WONDERFUL CHRISTMASTIME
PAUL McCARTNEY
B/W RUDOLPH THE RED-NOSED REGGA


Listen To This Ad.
"Whatever Gets You Thru' The Night"
John Lennon


Band on the Run
The album that Paul, Linda and Denny took to No 1 around the world.
Twice the album has topped the American charts, the second time simultaneously with the 'Band on the Run' single.
Now 'Band on the Run' is released as a single in the UK.
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LISTEN TO THIS BALLOON
HAPPY XMAS
(WAR IS OVER)
Latest Album WALLS & BRIDGES
from John Lennon

Junior's Farm
the new single from PAUL McCARTNEY & WINGS

GEORGE HARRISON
DARK HORSE

They're gonna put me in the movies: Ringo (right) with David Essex in *That'll Be The Day*

in relation to the similarity of the song to The Chiffons' 1963 hit 'He's So Fine'.

Ringo became an amiable global carouser and personality but also found a commercial niche in the early part of the decade. His initial albums 'Sentimental Journey' (standards) and 'Beaucoups Of Blues' (country) and film roles (*Blindman*) were merely tolerated, but his hit singles ('It Don't Come Easy', 'Back Off Boogaloo') were genuinely popular. He hit a peak in 1973; he got glowing reviews co-starring with David Essex in *That'll Be The Day* as randy, corrupt Butlin's teddy boy Mike, his best film appearance aside from *A Hard Day's Night*. Also that year, he persuaded Lennon, Harrison and (on a separate song) McCartney to contribute to the excellent Ringo album that produced the US Number Ones 'You're Sixteen' and 'Photograph'.

## The world still loved The Beatles and, inevitably, the reunion rumours flew in every interview

However, with later recording sessions essentially an extension of his celebrity party lifestyle and the music lacking a solid artistic core, his remaining albums of the 1970s – 'Goodnight Vienna' (1974), 'Ringo's Rotogravure' (1976), 'Ringo The 4th' (1977) and 'Bad Boy' (1978) – yielded sharply diminishing musical, critical and commercial returns. Several of his business ventures (Ring O'Records, Ringo Or Robin Ltd furniture design) stopped almost before they started. Too often Starr was drunk and plain bored; "You just try to fill the day," he once commented.

Little was expected of Ringo. For Lennon and McCartney, the venerable songwriting power behind the band, expectations were high. Yet each, in their own way, rather confounded them.

The public had come to expect the unexpected with Lennon's left-field solo output during the Beatles years, but not many bought it. The harrowing, post Primal Scream Therapy wound-licking of 'Plastic Ono Band' (1970) hardly brought them back in droves, though it did – along with his current political militancy – earn Lennon some underground cache. 'Imagine' (1971) was more approachable Lennon and sold well but the radical sloganeering of 'Some Time In New York City' (1972) was universally derided. (However, the US government thought it dangerous enough to warrant placing the by now New York-located Lennon under CIA surveillance.) 'Mind Games' (1973) came and went with barely a ripple, by which time John and Yoko – who had lived in each others' pockets for five years – took a break. Lennon embarked on a booze-fuelled 15 months in LA with some rocker chums and Yoko-endorsed girlfriend May Pang. He would refer to it later as his "lost weekend", but it was a period that spawned 'Walls And Bridges' (1974), the US Number One single 'Whatever Gets You Thru The Night' and the covers album 'Rock'N'Roll' (1975). Mid 1975 saw him back with Yoko, who became pregnant, whereupon John disappeared from the scene into house husbandry for five years.

After the split, it took Paul McCartney some while to win back the trust of the public and the critics. Believed at the time to be the Beatle who spoiled the party, his reputation wasn't helped by the Paul'n'Linda effort 'Ram' (1971) and the offerings by his new group Wings, 'Wild Life' (1971) and 'Red Rose Speedway' (1973), records that were perceived to be an infuriating mix of the slapdash and the glib. 'Band On The Run' (1973) changed all that, drawing much praise that amounted to a critical cheer of relief. Subsequent records – 'Venus And Mars' (1975), 'Wings At The Speed Of Sound' (1976), 'London Town' (1978) and 'Back To The Egg' (1979) – were patchy but hit singles and sell-out stadium tours established Wings as one of the biggest groups of the decade. Various marijuana busts through the decade, culminating in a scary few days in a Japanese jail in 1980, even lent McCartney a little pothead outlaw credibility.

But the 1970s solo activities of the ex-Beatles played out against a backdrop of continuing obsession with their old group. EMI explored a range of repackaging schemes to exploit their Beatles catalogue, including the double album collections '1962-1966' (the 'Red' album) and '1967-1970' (the 'Blue' album) of 1973 that did remarkable business. Encouraged by the albums' success, in 1976 EMI re-promoted all 22 Beatles singles in fetching green sleeves (they didn't need reissuing, they were constantly in the catalogue), plus a 'new' title for the UK, 'Yesterday', which peaked at Number Eight. The same year 'Back In The USSR' was released as a single (Number 19), off the back of the double-album collection 'Rock'N'Roll Music'. Unreleased 1964/65 live shows were prepared by George Martin and Geoff Emerick as 'The Beatles Live At The Hollywood Bowl' and released in 1977, closely followed by another compilation, 'Love Songs'.

Simply, the world still loved The Beatles and their music and, inevitably, the reunion rumours flew. Every interview any ex-Beatle did asked whether there was any chance they would get together again. Paul was mostly irritated ("I don't think it would be as good actually") but John, of all people, was the hardest to predict and his answers over the years varied hugely. In 1973 he said, "The chances are practically nil." Later the same year he said, "There's always a chance. As far as I can gather from talking to them all, nobody would mind doing some work together again." A year on he was less enthused: "No, what for? We did it all. Christ, we can't even get the four of us together for a meeting, let alone play." Later in 1974, he was less dogmatic: "You never know, you never know. I mean, it's always in the wind."

The sticking point appeared to be Harrison's continuing antipathy toward McCartney. In

Drummer for hire: Ringo in 1971

UPPA/REDFERNS

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| JULY 24 | GALWAY Roisin Dubh, IRELAND |
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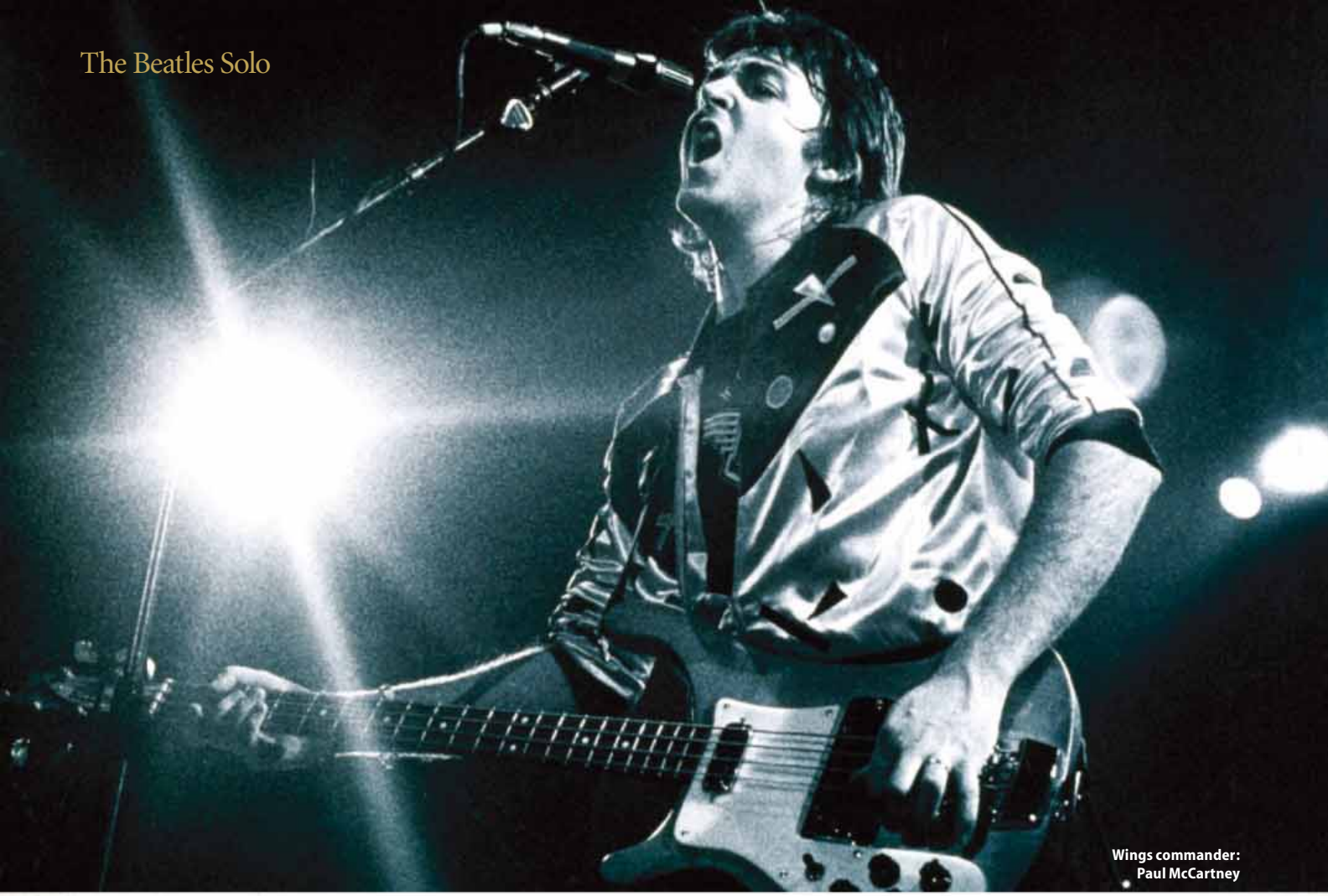

Wings commander: Paul McCartney

1974 George said, "I'd join a band with John Lennon any day, but I couldn't join a band with Paul McCartney." Ringo commented the same year, "How can we get together if George won't play with Paul?", whereas John was notably optimistic as far on as 1975: "I've lost all negativity about the past… I'd do 'Hey Jude' and the whole damn show and I think George will eventually see that."

Whenever a Beatle appeared live, from 1971's Concert For Bangla Desh to 1979's Rock For Kampuchea, the media-led rumours built expectation of a Beatles reunion. American promoters publicly invited the Beatles to reunite. In 1976 LA promoter Bill Sargent offered $50million for a one-off televised concert and when he received no response, doubled the offer to $100 million. With John reportedly keen, Paul revealed in an interview, "I spoke to the bugger *(John)* and he didn't even mention it. Where do you go from there?"

The same year Sid Bernstein, The Beatles' original US promoter, took out a full-page ad in *The New York Herald Tribune* suggesting The Beatles reunite for a charity concert. "It's trying to put the responsibility of making the world a wonderful world again onto The Beatles," said George. "I think that's unfair."

Ultimately, the only reunion The Beatles could be persuaded to have was a legal one to prevent exploitation of their name. Their failure to stop the 1977 album release of a 1962 bootleg-quality live performance from Hamburg's Star Club and their inability to influence or prevent the artistic fiasco of the *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* film in 1978 resolved them to get organised. "We've just got together a group of people to go and sue them all," announced George in an unguarded moment in 1979. The first victims were the producers of a stage presentation called *Beatlemania* that had been running since April 1977 and now had six shows all over the USA. (Subsequent victims of the increasingly litigious Apple included Apple Macintosh computers over the rights to the corporate brand name.)

Relations between the ex-Beatles ebbed and flowed. Ringo seemed to get on with everyone but John angered George in the mid '70s for failing to turn up at a pre-arranged meeting to sign a business agreement, while George angered John for barely mentioning him in the guitarist's 1979 autobiography *I Me Mine*. The feeling between John and Paul had actually improved from '72 onwards after a New York dinner where they agreed to cease "slagging each other off in the press" and in '74, they even jammed together in Los Angeles with, among others, Stevie Wonder. Amazingly, they were hanging together in John's New York apartment watching TV in 1976 when *Saturday Night Live* host Lorne Michaels made a "bona-fide offer" of $3,000 for a Beatles reunion. "We almost went down to the studio, just as a gag," John recalled later, "but we were actually too tired."

However, Lennon and McCartney's brief rekindling as chums in the mid '70s came to an abrupt end when Paul, guitar in hand, was chastised by John in 1976 for arriving unannounced at John's Dakota apartment once too often. "It's not 1956 and turning up at the door isn't the same anymore," John recalled telling him.

## The outpouring of grief at Lennon's death was testament to how much The Beatles still meant, 11 years on

Hearing John was back in the studio in mid 1980 after five years of domesticity (recording 'Double Fantasy'), Paul again tried to contact John, but Yoko as she was allegedly wont to do, blocked the connection. McCartney often talks of how pleased he is that he and John "made it up" before Lennon was killed, though Yoko has intimated that Paul promotes the friends-again scenario because "it suits him".

John Lennon's tragic death in New York at the hands of a deranged fan on 8 December, 1980 was devastating enough to his family and the remaining Beatles, but the public outpouring of grief of the entire music loving world was testament to how much The Beatles, as a group and individuals, still meant to people, 11 years after the band's demise.

The only dream we ever had that came true was really over now.

***Chris Ingham is the author of* The Rough Guide To The Beatles**

RETNA

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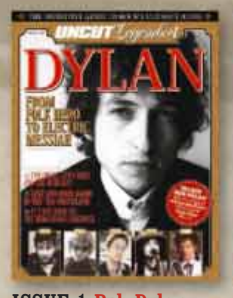

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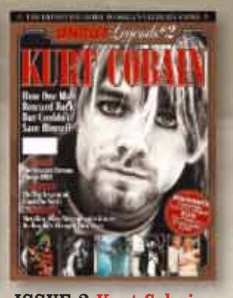

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# TEN YEARS AFTER JOHN

**In the decade following the break-up of The Beatles, John Lennon pursued a patchy solo career that was peppered with occasional flashes of his former brilliance**

Although Ringo Starr had been the first Beatle to leave temporarily in 1968, it was Lennon who split the band when he asked for a "divorce". He'd been unhappy since 1967, ironically the year The Beatles revolted into colour and hair. This was reflected in the subsequent imbalance of the workload between him and McCartney, who, from 'Sgt Pepper' onwards was driving the show, with Lennon, despite inspired interventions, a sullen passenger. Even with the group having outgrown their mop-top selves, Lennon resented the anachronism of being a Beatle. His love affair with Yoko Ono reflected a desire to work on wider canvasses of artistic freedom.

However, the albums Lennon made with Yoko Ono in the late '60s, including 'Two Virgins' and 'Life With The Lions', didn't suggest that he had anything to say in the avant-garde medium. These were the formless dabblings of two mutually obsessed lovers.

Still, fears that Lennon had wiped out on the shores of artistic oblivion, drawn by Yoko's siren lure were dispelled with his earliest singles. For amid the bed-in protests, the "bagism", Yoko's shrill ululations, Lennon's abrasive rock'n'roll instincts still thumped hard. 'Cold Turkey' is still one of the most harrowing, ear-shredding pieces of rock music ever made, its painfully serrated guitars transcribing the anguish of his heroin addiction and comedown. 'Instant Karma!', meanwhile, with its echoing Phil Spector production feels like a throwback to an earlier rock'n'roll era, despite its contemporary jargon – as if to say, get with the new programme of peace, love and Aquarian harmony, or get your fucking head kicked in, dig it?

Around this time, Lennon, the Plastic Ono Band and a group of well-wishers also recorded 'Give Peace A Chance'. Even on this apparent piece of Krishna idealism, there's a residual, rock'n'roll sense of the importance of a basic chant which has enabled the song to endure.

With his protests against the Biafran war and numerous stunts, Lennon had succeeded by 1971 in establishing himself as an ex-Beatle, through sheer notoriety, as a very public celebrity bent on using his celebrity leverage to tilt the world in the right direction. However, his first and by far greatest solo album, 'Plastic Ono Band', was gruellingly personal, rather than clappy happy political. Undertaking a course of Primal Scream Therapy advocated by Dr Arthur Janov, who believed that neuroses in adults were the result of very early experiences such as deprivation of parental love, Lennon produced a record of often bleak, soul-scouring candour, the like of which he could never have done with The Beatles. 'Mother' is an angry lament for the parents who abandoned him to the care of relatives. Elsewhere, on 'I Found Out', 'Working Class Hero' and 'God', Lennon comes across as one who has been purged of illusions, sees things clear and fresh, albeit from the bottom of a deep, dark pit.

**This violent pacifist not only escaped the shadow of The Beatles, but cast a giant shadow of his own**

Lennon did not complete Janov's therapy, and he remained prone to temporary, almost faddish compulsions, convulsive and contradictory, lurching between didactic pacifism and lapses into violent, dysfunctional behaviour. He was three parts, yin, yang and Yoko.

Just months after the dead-eyed cynicism of 'Working Class Hero', Lennon had had his head turned by activist Tariq Ali and cut 'Power To The People', like Janov never happened. There followed 'Imagine', whose title track is his most famous recording, Beatle or solo. A Yoko-prompted exercise in visualisation, it suggests, through its balmy, serene chord progression, a Zen-like bliss which consists in shedding worldly things. How much you desire such a condition or consider Lennon a paragon of it might determine how well you respond to 'Imagine' – but millions, then now and in the future, did, do and will.

'How Do You Sleep?' on the same album, an acidic sideswipe at Paul McCartney, in which he effectively gives him the stare, suggests some Liverpudlian thuggishness of old lingered in Lennon.

'Some Time In New York City' followed, with Lennon espousing in song a series of revolutionary causes ranging from the Black Panthers to the IRA. The results are as exceedingly well-meant as they are woeful, the low point reached on 'The Luck Of The Irish', when Yoko exhorts the citizens of that troubled land to *"walk over rainbows like leprechauns"*. Yet Lennon's political outspokenness was enough to make him the subject of FBI monitoring.

However, Lennon soon became disaffected by leftist politics and went on a lengthy, drunken bender which saw him thrown out by Yoko for a while. 'Mind Games', released in 1973, which Lennon himself described as "the same old jazz", may have reflected the state of ennui from which he would take a debauched holiday, engaging in rock'n'roll frolics with the likes of Keith Moon and Harry Nilsson.

This at least provided grist for 1974's 'Walls And Bridges' and a mid-life crisis-style album of rock'n'roll covers before Lennon was taken back in by Yoko. There followed years of silence on Lennon's part, ostensibly years of bread-baking and child-raising at his New York Dakota apartment, but darker times according to some. 'Double Fantasy' in 1980 felt like a prodigal return to many, though others felt its MOR-soaked balladry was evidence of a love lobotomy. Then came Chapman's bullet, a sad sign that Lennon was not cocooned in bliss but, as ever, more dangerously exposed to the public than a celebrity like him should ever have been.

As an original rock'n'roll voice, Lennon had arguably lost the plot by late 1971. However, the story as it unfolded through that decade, one of fickleness and bad behaviour but also of idealism and a willingness to put himself on the line, ensured that this violent pacifist not only escaped the shadow of The Beatles but cast a giant shadow of his own. ***David Stubbs***

HARRY GOODWIN-REDFERNS

## TEN SOLO GEMS

**1 COLD TURKEY**
**(1969 single)**
One of the most frightening singles ever made, the searing, distorted riff is contributed by Eric Clapton.

**2 INSTANT KARMA!**
**(1970 single)**
'Instant Karma!' epitomises the Lennon paradox, melding hippie idealism and rock'n'roll primal energy in an exhilarating mix.

**3 WORKING CLASS HERO**
**(from the 1970 album 'Plastic Ono Band')**
Lennon at his most sarcastically deadpan and truthful, a side of him he didn't often give vent to on record. *"You're still fucking peasants"*, he jeers, lamentingly.

**4 IT'S SO HARD**
**(from the 1971 album 'Imagine')**
Lennon in viscous, bluesy mode, featuring the work of sax player King Curtis, murdered a few weeks after this recording.

**5 HOW DO YOU SLEEP?**
**(from the 1971 album 'Imagine')**
Sheer, string-soaked vitriol directed at Paul McCartney, in response to perceived slights delivered by Macca on his solo album, 'Ram'.

**6 NEW YORK CITY**
**(from the 1972 album 'Some Time In New York City')**
This crammed paean to life in Manhattan conveys a feeling of Lennon's hectic American existence.

**7 WELL (BABY PLEASE DON'T GO) (from the 1972 bonus disc 'Live Jam')**
A cover of an Olympics B-Side recorded in 1971 at an appearance at Frank Zappa's Fillmore East show.

**8 BLESS YOU (from the 1974 album 'Walls And Bridges')**
One of Lennon's most beautiful homages to Yoko, reminiscent of early '70s Stevie Wonder.

**9 #9 DREAM (from the 1974 album 'Walls And Bridges')**
Another paean to Yoko, based on a chant he had heard in a dream.

**10 FAME**
**(1975 David Bowie single)**
Lennon took a co-credit on this funk-tipped shaft of satire.

## TEN SOLO GEMS

1 JUNK (from the 1970 album 'McCartney')
Beautiful, acoustic guitar driven song that was written for The Beatles and easily up to their daunting standards.

2 EVERY NIGHT (from the 1970 album 'McCartney')
Macca on acoustic guitar grippingly opening up about his errant behaviour as his beloved Beatles fall apart and he is left isolated.

3 MAYBE I'M AMAZED (from the 1970 album 'McCartney')
One of the great love songs. Macca utilises the best of his vocal prowess and musical genius. Magnificent.

4 UNCLE ALBERT/ ADMIRAL HALSEY (from the 1971 album 'Ram')
Fantastic melody realised through strings and great backing vocals.

5 MY LOVE (from the 1973 album 'Red Rose Speedway')
The best of McCartney's work always produces songs that on first hearing you think already exist.

6 ARROW THROUGH ME (from the 1979 album 'Back To The Egg')
More proof that R&B is the man's best way to trampoline towards greatness.

7 WARM AND BEAUTIFUL (from the 1976 album 'Wings At The Speed Of Sound')
Classic songwriting and a reminder that talent never really leaves such people, it just lies dormant.

8 SOME PEOPLE NEVER KNOW (from the 1971 album 'Wild Life')
Understated song that builds so beautifully, Macca employing a fine recurring guitar line from which all great things spring.

9 I'M CARRYING (from the 1978 album 'London Town')
Two minute sublime pop song that tantalises with its brevity yet manages to feel fully realised.

10 SINGLE PIGEON (from the 1973 album 'Red Rose Speedway')
Some of his best songs are about birds. 'Blackbird', 'Bluebird' and… pigeons in Regent's Park!

# TEN YEARS AFTER PAUL

**He was the one Beatle whose solo sales managed to exceed the best of the Fab Four, but the decade after the split saw a mixed creative response to Paul McCartney's work**

In 1970, with his band broken and his songwriting partner of 12 years turned against him, Paul McCartney gave up The Beatles and did what all men do when they experience great loss – he threw himself into his work. Over the next ten years, the man would write over 130 songs, release ten albums, over 50 singles, tour, smoke an awful amount of weed and, on his off days, raise a family.

The result is a body of music that remains unique in its unerring ability to vacillate between the sublime and the ridiculous. Marked by an increasing lack of quality control as it progresses, no-one frustrates the listener like Paul McCartney, solo artist.

In The Beatles, this dual musical nature presented no problem. "If anyone had a shit idea," George Harrison once said of the band, "there were three others to kill it." Freed of such valuable constraints, Paul McCartney's solo career is the story of a man seeking vindication of his talent in a post-Beatles world. When that mission fails, he steadily turns his talent towards establishing himself as the nation's cheeky elder brother, all smiles and thumbs up.

It began with two albums, 'McCartney' and 'Ram', that were mauled for their refusal to act Beatle-like, but continually grow in stature. Not all the songs work, not all the music is astounding – but it doesn't matter. Their greatness is in revealing a major songwriter of the 20th century freeing up, seeing where his muse will take him.

That place provides us with the beauteous melodies of 'Junk' and 'Ram On', the moving 'Every Night' and, best of all, 'Maybe I'm Amazed', whose genius is to set ballad lyrics against a raw set of musical surprises and a vocal performance that ranks among his very best.

The albums are not only playful and inspired (his 'Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey' the prime example) but occasionally visionary. The second half of 'The Back Seat Of My Car' provides the template that Queen would later steal and base their whole career on.

McCartney's decision to musically let loose was necessary. The impact of The Beatles had not just been musical, but cultural. Where they went, others followed. Spliff in 1964, LSD in 1966, meditation and avant-garde art in 1967 and 1968. Now freed from this role, McCartney's music is haphazardly wonderful and absolutely contemporary. Unfortunately, solo life was never going to assuage the man's Achilles Heel – his overriding need to gain the world's adoration.

Wings were duly formed. Now burdened with the responsibility of a band, McCartney's muse starts to change shape. The first two Wings albums 'Wild Life' and 'Red Rose Speedway' are patchy affairs as he begins the search for musical balance and direction.

From the debut Wings album, 'Love Is Strange' brings together striking elements of African and Jamaican music. 'Bip Bop', 'Tomorrow' and 'Some People Never Know' are excellent, but of most interest is 'Dear Friend', written in response to Lennon's bitter and personal diatribe about him in 'How Do You Sleep?'. Yet, tellingly, where Lennon had used overt anger, McCartney can't respond in kind. Psychologically he carried little of his partner's angst and insecurity. He was always the balanced yin to John's turbulent yang. That's why on 'Dear Friend', the song is shot through with a truly moving sense of melancholia which winningly hides some of its overwrought nature.

**He steadily turned his talent towards establishing himself as the nation's cheeky elder brother, all thumbs up**

The follow up album, 'Red Rose Speedway', brings us two major songs in 'My Love' and the catchy 'Single Pigeon', yet this period also yields the first warning signs of the man's tweeness – can you think of one other major musician who could record a musical rendition of the nursery rhyme 'Mary Had A Little Lamb'?

It would take the dynamic, 'Live And Let Die', his theme for the James Bond film of the same name and the release of 'Band On The Run' to return him to a high critical standing and bestow upon him huge commercial success. Recorded in Nigeria, 'Band On The Run' is McCartney's last fully rounded album to date.

His forté has always been melody, arrangement and choruses that ring around the head, his drive always to create songs that the nation whistles to work. 'Band On The Run' displays all these qualities.

The only problem lies with his words. 'Jet' may fly as a song but it does so carrying serious deficiencies in the lyrical department. In fact, Macca's lyrics since The Beatles are generally of a very poor nature, a tradition gloriously sustained with Wings' worst album, 'Venus And Mars', hurriedly written to sustain the band's growing success in America.

Recorded in Allen Toussaint's New Orleans studio, what remains so striking is how anyone can record in one of the greatest R&B hotspots and not have one note of his music reflect its recording location. And that's a real shame because if there is one music that brings forth Macca's best work it is R&B.

As his music dwindles in power and sustenance it is rhythm and blues that now brings forth his best work. There is 'Let 'Em In' from 1976's 'Wings At The Speed of Sound', whose R&B leanings Billy Paul would flesh out to such great effect, the Smokey Robinson-influenced 'Girlfriend' from 1977's 'London Town' and 'Arrow Through Me' from 1979's 'Back To The Egg'.

Occasionally flashes of his melodic strength will emerge. 'One Of These Days' and 'Waterfalls', two gorgeous McCartney compositions from 1980 are beautifully realised.

Those two songs were placed on 'McCartney II', a work conceived in the aftermath of punk, an emerging push towards electronic music and the development of club culture. Macca's attempt to assimilate all these developments reminds us of the avant-garde leanings that characterised part of his '60s London life. Yet they are unable to kick-start his muse in a really meaningful manner and how could they? Time robs us all.

Paul McCartney has always written with a conflicting bird on each shoulder. In The Beatles, his mate directed him to the correct voice. His solo career suggests that he began listening to the wrong one just a bit too soon. ***Paolo Hewitt***

REDFERNS

# TEN YEARS AFTER GEORGE

As the youngest Beatle, George spent much of the '60s playing second Rickenbacker to John and Paul. He had his golden moments, of course, introducing the sitar into pop for the first time on 'Norwegian Wood' and writing two of the strongest tracks on 'Abbey Road' in 'Here Comes The Sun' and the million-selling single 'Something'.

But for George – 27 when the Fab Four split in 1970 – being constantly seen as the Third Man was undoubtedly frustrating. Marginalised within the band in their early days, the so-called Quiet Beatle had developed into an innovative lead guitarist in an era before such a role conferred iconic status.

With the demise of The Beatles, however, the creative shackles were lifted and the bus driver's son from Wavertree took flight in a burst of highly-energised creativity. While John and Paul spent much the '70s taking verbal sideswipes at one another, George got on with making music.

Using material stockpiled over the years, he launched his post-Beatles solo career with 1970's spectacular triple album 'All Things Must Pass'. He also organised 1971's Concert For Bangla Desh and maintained a prolific work-rate for the rest of the decade. And while some of his later albums lacked verve, he did manage a spirited comeback shortly before his death in November 2001.

Harrison's solo career opened in 1968 with a flurry of sitars, tablas, sarods and sur-bahans on 'Wonderwall Music'. The follow-up, 'Electronic Sound', was even more left-field. Released on the short-lived Zapple label (an arty Apple offshoot), the album comprised two long pieces, 'Under The Mersey Wall' and 'No Time Or Space', which mixed electronic scales, space echoes and radio static. "It could be called avant-garde," Harrison admitted at the time. "But a more apt description would be 'avant-garde clue'."

In 1970, with the magnificent 'All Things Must Pass', he produced one of the era's defining rock albums. With Phil Spector producing – and Clapton, Starr and organist Billy Preston part of the studio band – 'All Things Must Pass' had all the whistles and bells of Spector's classic Wall Of Sound: many of its tracks featured three percussionists, two bassists and up to five acoustic guitars, while it is hard to think of another big rock album on which the tambourine is shaken quite so relentlessly.

**After The Beatles split, George delivered the universally acclaimed 'All Things Must Pass' album – but through the following decade he found it hard to again hit the same high standard**

Despite all his interest in all things Eastern, this ambitious triple album was dominated by commercial, country-tinged soft-rock rather than anything that even vaguely fitted the term 'world music'. With George having been 'knocked sideways' by Peter Green's fluent solos on Fleetwood Mac's 'Albatross', released just a year earlier, it was also notable for some scintillating passages of slide guitar.

**While John and Paul spent much of the '70s taking sideswipes at each other, George got on with making music**

As a songwriter, too, Harrison was coming into his own. 'My Sweet Lord', with its acoustic rhythm and electric melody, was a fantastic gospel-pop number. His "unintentional plagiarism" of The Chiffons' 'He's So Fine' aside, the chart-topping single was a masterpiece that combined spiritual lyrics with a glossy sound. Much the same went for 'What Is Life', another memorable pop song.

If the album had flaws, they were largely confined to the self-indulgent third disc – a glorified jam session – and a tendency to over-egg the mix on tracks such as the overwrought 'Wah Wah' and 'Awaiting On You All'.

All in all, though, George's solo career had got off to a splendid start, not hindered when he helped to organise a series of charity concerts at Madison Square Garden that would be immortalised on a 1972 live album, 'The Concert For Bangla Desh'.

But while Harrison's charity campaigning helped to make him the Bob Geldof of his era, the former Beatle's commercial and creative fortunes began to wobble slightly from 1973. 'Living In The Material World', his next album, contained a strong single in 'Give Me Love (Give Me Peace On Earth)', but it lacked drive and inspiration. In 'Sue Me, Sue You Blues' it also showed that even George hadn't escaped the bitterness surrounding the end of The Beatles.

With younger rock fans tuning into new heroes in David Bowie and Bryan Ferry, Harrison's songwriting became more introverted and prone to self-pity on 1974's 'Dark Horse' and the following year's 'Extra Texture'. 'Dark Horse' was a particularly sorry affair. Riddled with dreary melodies, it was overshadowed by the end of George's marriage to Pattie Boyd. A parody of The Everly Brothers' 'Bye Bye Love' was a direct comment on her decision to leave him for *"old Clapper"* (aka George's erstwhile buddy Eric Clapton).

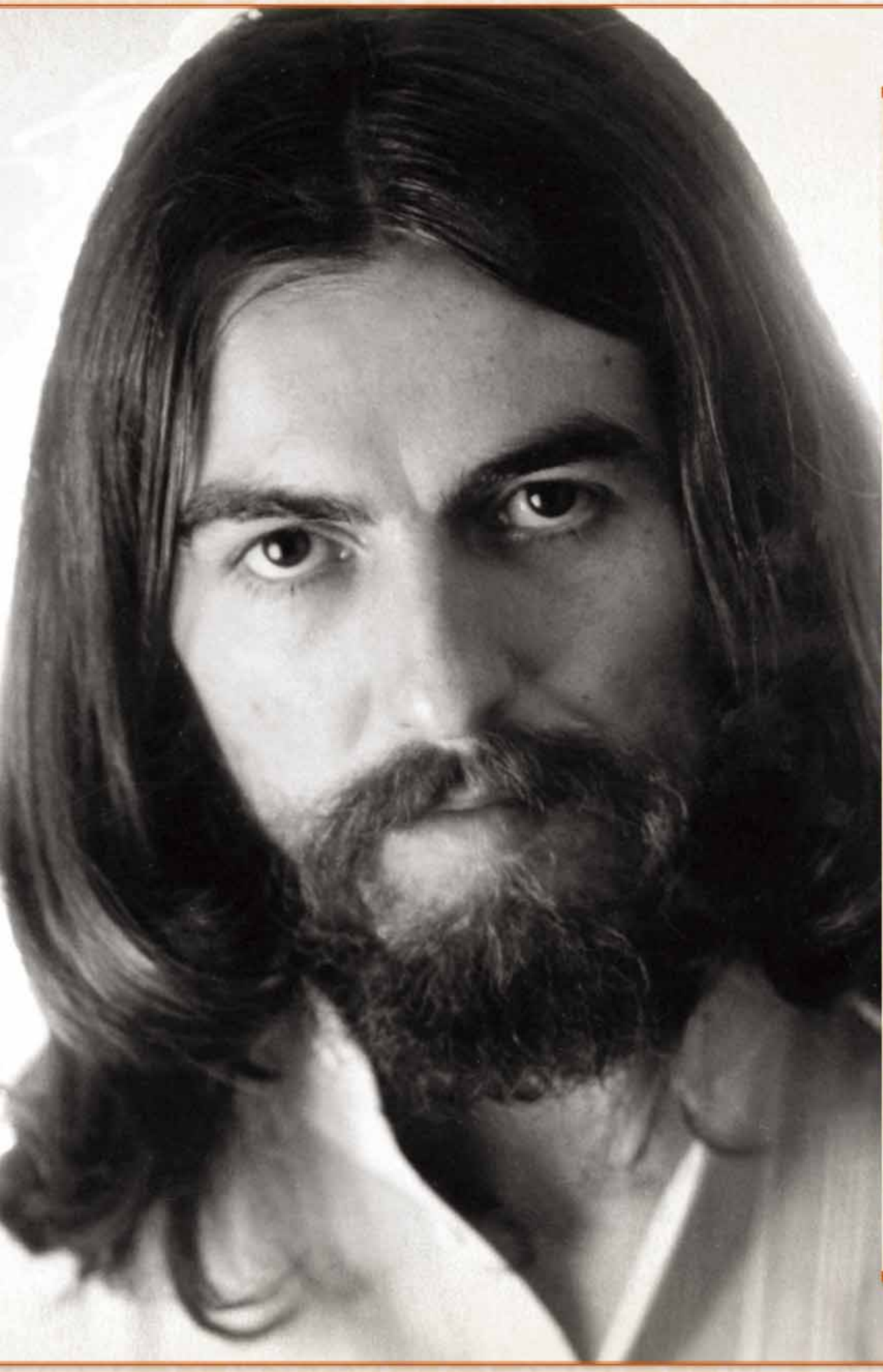
Despite poor sales, 1976's 'Thirty Three & 1/3' was an improvement. Despite being out of sync with the burgeoning punk movement, it was a more upbeat affair that seemed to restore Harrison's love for music. Among the highlights were 'Pure Smokey' (a tribute to Smokey Robinson) and 'See Yourself' (originally penned for The Beatles). He didn't trouble the Sex Pistols. But, for a while, George was back.

From this point on, sadly, Harrison's output became increasingly uneven and did himself few favours with songs that spoke about Formula One racing and beach holidays in Hawaii.

But there were still flashes of his old genius. He celebrated the memory of John Lennon on 1981's 'All Those Years Ago' and, after a five-year sabbatical, hit the commercial jackpot once more with the old Rudy Clark hit 'Got My Mind Set On You'.

He signed off with a flourish. His posthumously-released 2002 album, 'Brainwashed', took George's appreciation of traditional rock, blues and folk into a new millennium. It was an apt conclusion to a solo career in which the Quiet Beatle emerged from the shadows to make a big noise as a singer, songwriter, producer and activist. ***Adrian Thrills***

CAMERA PRESS/WOLFGANG HEILEMANN



## TEN SOLO GEMS

**1 WHAT IS LIFE**
**(from the 1970 album 'All Things Must Pass')**
One of Harrison's greatest guitar riffs – brilliant pop. An A-side in the US, but the flip-side of 'My Sweet Lord' in the UK.

**2 BANGLA DESH**
**(1971 single)**
This jazz-blues-rock shuffle set the template for Band Aid.

**3 MY SWEET LORD**
**(from the 1970 album 'All Things Must Pass')**
George manages to get *"Hallelujah"* and *"Hare Krishna"* all the way to Number One – but the lawyers soon started circling.

**4 WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS**
**(from the 1972 album 'The Concert For Bangla Desh')**
The classic 'White Album' track revisted with the aid of Eric Clapton once again.

**5 GIVE ME LOVE (GIVE ME PEACE ON EARTH)**
**(from the 1973 album 'Living In The Material World')**
A slice of spiritual pop which became George's second solo Number One hit in the States.

**6 PARTY SEACOMBE**
**(from the 1968 album 'Wonderwall Music')**
Whimsical '60s psychedelia from George's experimental dabblings.

**7 PURE SMOKEY**
**(from the 1976 album 'Thirty Three & 1/3)**
Harrison's soulful tribute to Mr Robinson, "one of the best songwriters around".

**8 IF NOT FOR YOU**
**(from the 1970 album 'All Things Must Pass')**
Dylan-penned country-rocker – also 'Livvy' Newton-John's first hit)

**9 WOMAN DON'T YOU CRY FOR ME (from the 1976 album 'Thirty Three & 1/3')**
Bottle-neck blues workout, initially intended for 'All Things Must Pass'.

**10 TRY SOME BUY SOME**
**(from the 1973 album 'Living In The Material World')**
A joint effort with Phil Spector.

## TEN SOLO GEMS

**1 BACK OFF BOOGALOO (1972 single)**
Good time rock'n'droll to match the Faces, inspired by Marc Bolan's preffered rebuke to vibe-encroaching fans.

**2 IT DON'T COME EASY (1971 single)**
Autobiographical single-smash which kick-started a run of light-hearted Top Ten hits.

**3 EARLY 1970 (1971 B-side)**
Much loverlooked flipside of 'It Don't Come Easy' which provides Ringo's thoughts on The Beatles' break-up.

**4 I'M THE GREATEST (from the 1973 album 'Ringo')**
Lennon-penned tribute to self-love. John also supplies backing vocals, while George weighs in with an electrifying lead guitar break.

**5 YOU'RE SIXTEEN (from the 1973 album 'Ringo')**
This '50s pop-crooner featuring Paul McCartney on kazoo topped the charts in the US.

**6 PHOTOGRAPH (from the 1973 album 'Ringo')**
Put it down to moving to John Lennon's Tittenhurst Park mansion, but Ringo's first US Number One came soon after with this lush, acoustic ballad.

**7 SUNSHINE LIFE FOR ME (SAIL AWAY RAYMOND) (from the 1973 album 'Ringo')**
Joyful hillbilly romp penned by George Harrison.

**8 GOODNIGHT VIENNA (from the 1974 album 'Goodnight Vienna')**
Rocking Lennon-penned track celebrating the joys of boozing, penned during his 15-month "lost weekend". What's not to like?

**9 DEVIL WOMAN (from the 1973 album 'Ringo')**
Ringo goes glam rock. Tongue-in-cheek misogynistic lyrics can be put down to, ahem, "high spirits".

**10 SNOOKEROO (from the 1974 album 'Goodnight Vienna')**
Listen from behind the sofa classic of sorts. Elton John-penned song about a working class Northerner called Snookeroo.

# TEN YEARS AFTER RINGO

## From actor and film-maker to Number One hit-maker, Ringo's solo career was erratic, but always interesting

"*Now I'm only 32/And all I wanna do is boogaloo!*" sang Ringo Starr on 'I'm The Greatest' in 1973, and it serves as the perfect epithet for the topsy-turvy pleasures of his solo career. Having assiduously avoided taking sides during a decade in the most successful group on the planet, the time had finally come for the man formerly known as Richard Starkey to, well, have some fun.

And there was only so much fun to be had acting (opposite Frank Zappa and David Essex in *200 Motels* and *That'll Be The Day*), moonlighting as a movie director (for Bolan flick *Born To Boogie*) and starting up a sideline in upmarket art deco furniture (ill-fated company Ringo Or Robin Ltd). Sooner or later he had to get back to work.

"I wasn't looking for a solo career," Ringo later recalled. "My feeling was: 'I'm a musician and I made records and now I'm going to make them on my own. And in my case I'm going to make them with a lot of other people.'"

Indeed. While John and Paul used their early records to snipe at each other from behind the studio barricades and George unleashed the musical floodgates with 'All Things Must Pass', Ringo set about forging a different kind of archetype: the rock star indulgence album. Wealthy beyond his wildest dreams and an eager participant in the transglobal high-life which saw him pinballing between parties in London, Monte Carlo and LA, the only thing left to do was fill the time before cocktail hour in the studio.

**Having avoided taking sides, the time had come for the man formerly known as Richard Starkey to have some fun**

Cue a decade of albums inspired by enough booze to float the QE2, boasting a cast of thousands ranging from Elton and Eric Clapton to Marc Bolan, Keith Moon, The Band and Dr John and beyond. Oh, and a certain John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison. With a little help from this line-up of friends he'd surely get by. And who cares if he sang out of tune?

His solo path, inevitably, began in Liverpool. 'Sentimental Journey' (1970), a collection of songs he'd learned during childhood sing-songs at home in Dingle, instantly established Ringo as the rootsiest and least affected of the Fab Four. An elaborately orchestrated collection of ballads each assigned its own arranger – Quincy Jones weighs in with 'Love Is A Many Splendoured Thing' – it served, as Ringo later noted, to "get me off my bum and back into recording". Rapidly followed by 'Beaucoups Of Blues' (a country set recorded in Nashville), both albums acted – at best – as a necessary clearing of the creative pipes.

It worked. By April '71 he'd released the splendid 'It Don't Come Easy' (co-written by George) and embarked on a string of surprise Top Ten hits. Inspired by his time directing Marc Bolan in pop-flick *Born To Boogie*, 1972's 'Back Off Boogaloo' continued the upward curve. A driving rocker with lyrics cribbed from the elfin rocker, it cemented his appeal to pop fans as the most likeable Beatle, while surfing the '50s-retro wave then engulfing the charts. With good-natured follow-up 'Photograph' (another co-write with George) cruising to Number One in the US charts thanks to a hang-dog lyric ("*All I've got is a photograph/And I realise you're not coming back any more*") anchored to Jack Nitzsche's upbeat production, Ringo took on the unlikely mantle of most successful solo Beatle just in time for 1973's tour-de-force 'Ringo' album.

Boasting a star-studded line-up, a lavish 'Sgt Pepper'-ish sleeve and accompanying lyric book, it was a triumph of reconciliation to match the achievements of the United Nations. Including the Lennon-penned 'I'm The Greatest' (complete with lacerating lead guitar from George), Paul McCartney's 'Six O'Clock' and regular interventions from trusted Beatle lieutenants Nicky Hopkins, Klaus Voormann and Billy Preston, it at least felt like a Beatles album even if the songs didn't bear close scrutiny. Free from the rage of Lennon, the self-pity of Harrison and the saccharine aspect of McCartney, its warmth was reflected in the final 'You And Me (Babe)' where Ringo provides a roll-call of thanks to all those who contributed.

Inevitably this golden period couldn't last. With his marriage to childhood sweetheart Maureen on the rocks, follow-up 'Goodnight Vienna' (boozers' slang for over-indulgence) failed to stop the rot despite the efforts of Dr John and Elton John (although the latter hardly helped matters with a song about a flat-cap wearing Northerner called 'Snookeroo'). Meanwhile the sleeve (a pastiche of *The Day The Earth Stood Still* with Ringo cast as planet saviour) suggested more time had been spent on art direction than the contents.

Seeking refuge in the party lifestyle he followed it by playing on Nilsson's 'Pussy Cats', produced by John Lennon during his infamous 15-month "lost weekend", which did a lot for his self-esteem, although less for his liver. With the overblown 'Ringo's Rotogravure' (1976) signalling a full-scale slump, his career went into a tailspin with follow up albums 'Ringo The 4th' and 'Bad Boy' (sleeve: Ringo nursing a drink) which, released in the creative maelstrom of punk, managed to sound both directionless and hopelessly outdated. "We weren't musicians dabbling in drugs and alcohol; now we were junkies dabbling in music," recalled Ringo of the period.

"I was more interested in boogieing, just going out to parties and not caring what I did. And I slid so far I ended up in rehab."

Tellingly, by the end of the decade the ill-health which had dogged Ringo from childhood returned to haunt him. In April 1979 he collapsed in Monte Carlo and was only saved from death by emergency surgery, while he narrowly avoided injury during a fire at his home in Los Angeles later the same year which destroyed much of his Beatles memorabilia. The musical journey from Top Ten to rock bottom was complete. But it would take almost another entire decade for Ringo to wake up to the perils of the boogaloo lifestyle that was slowly killing him. ***Paul Moody***

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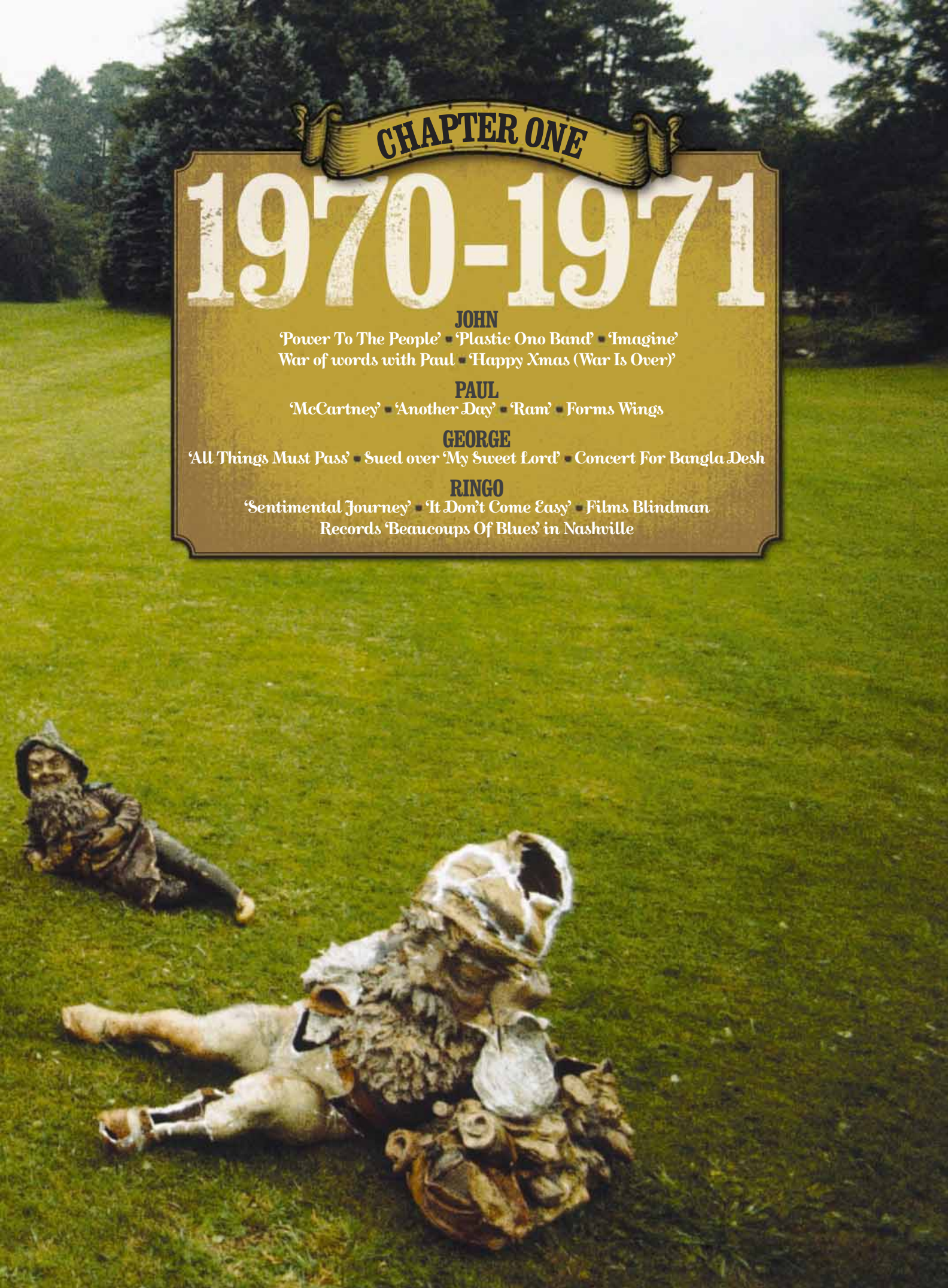


# CHAPTER ONE

# 1970-1971

## JOHN

'Power To The People' ▪ 'Plastic Ono Band' ▪ 'Imagine'
War of words with Paul ▪ 'Happy Xmas (War Is Over)'

## PAUL

'McCartney' ▪ 'Another Day' ▪ 'Ram' ▪ Forms Wings

## GEORGE

'All Things Must Pass' ▪ Sued over 'My Sweet Lord' ▪ Concert For Bangla Desh

## RINGO

'Sentimental Journey' ▪ 'It Don't Come Easy' ▪ Films Blindman
Records 'Beaucoups Of Blues' in Nashville

Thumbs up from Paul and the lovely Linda, 1970

NME, 18 April 1970, page 2

# Question time with Paul!

## Rather than do interviews to promote 'McCartney', Paul issued a Q&A press release. In doing so he revealed to the world that The Beatles were no more

**Were you influenced by John's adventures with the Plastic Ono Band , and Ringo's solo LP?**
"Sort of but not really."

**Are all the songs by Paul McCartney alone?**
"Yes, sir."

**Will they be so credited: McCartney?**
"It's a bit daft for them to be Lennon/McCartney, so 'McCartney' it is."

**Did you enjoy working as a solo?**
"Very much. I only had me to ask for a decision, and I agreed with me. Remember Linda's on it too, so it's really a double act."

**What is Linda's contribution?**
"Strictly speaking she harmonises, but of course it's more than that because she is a shoulder to lean on, a second opinion, and a photographer of renown. More than all this, she believes in me – constantly."

**The album was not known about until it was nearly completed. Was this deliberate?**
"Yes. Normally an album is old before it comes out. Witness 'Get Back'."

**Why?**
"I've always wanted to but a Beatles album like 'people' do and be as surprised as they must be. So this was the next best thing. Linda and I are the only two who will be sick of it by the release date. We love it really."

**Are you able to describe the feel or the theme of the album in a few words?**
"Home, family, love."

**How long did it take to complete from when to when?**
"From just before (I think) Xmas, until now. 'The Lovely Linda' was the first thing I recorded at home, and was originally to test the equipment."

**Assuming all the songs are new to the public, how new are they to you? Are they recent?**
"One was 1959 ('Hot As Sun'). Two from India ('Junk', 'Teddy Boy') and the rest are pretty recent. 'Valentine Day', 'Momma Miss America' and 'Oo You' were ad-libbed on the spot."

**Which instruments have you played on the album?**
"Bass, drums, acoustic guitar, lead guitar, piano and organ/Mellotron, toy xylophone, bow and arrow."

**Have you played all the instruments on earlier recordings?**
"Yes – drums being the one that I wouldn't normally do."

**Why did you do all the instruments?**
"I think I'm pretty good."

**Will Linda be heard on all future records?**
"Could be: we love singing together, and have plenty of opportunity for practice."

**Will Paul and Linda become a John and Yoko?**
"No, they will become Paul and Linda."

**Are you pleased with your work?**
"Yes."

**Will the other Beatles receive copies?**
"Wait and see."

**What has recording alone taught you?**
"That to make your own decisions about what you do is easy, and playing with yourself is difficult, but satisfying."

**Who has done the artwork?**
"Linda has taken all the photos and she and I designed the package."

**Is it true that neither Allan Klein nor ABKCO have been nor will be in any way involved with the production or promotion of this new album?**
"Not if I can help it."

**Did you miss the other Beatles and George Martin? Was there a moment, for example, when you thought: "I wish Ringo was here for this break"?**
"No."

**Assuming this is a very big hit album, will you do another?**
"Even if it isn't, I will continue to do what I want – when I want to."

**Is this album a rest away for The Beatles, or a start of a solo career?**
"Time will tell. Being a solo album means it's the 'start of a solo career'. And not being done with The Beatles means it's a rest. So it's both."

**Are you planning a new album or single with The Beatles?**
"No."

**Is your break with The Beatles, temporary or permanent, due to personal differences, or musical ones?**
"Personal differences, business differences, musical differences, but most of all because I have a better time with my family. Temporary or permanent? I don't know."

**What do you feel about John's peace effort? Plastic Ono Band? Giving back the MBE? Yoko's influence? Yoko?**
"I love John and respect what he does – it doesn't give me any pleasure."

**Do you foresee a time when Lennon/McCartney becomes an active song writing partnership again?**
"No."

**Were any of the songs on the album written for The Beatles?**
"Junk' was intended for 'Abbey Road', 'Teddy Boy' was for 'Get Back' but something happened."

**Were you pleased with 'Abbey Road'?**
"It was a good album."

**What is your relationship with Klein?**
"It isn't. I am not in contact with him. He does not represent me in *any* way."

**What is your relationship with Apple?**
"It is the office of a company which I part own with the other three Beatles. I don't go there because I don't like offices or businesses especially when I'm on holiday."

**What are your plans now? A holiday? A musical? A movie? Retirement?**
"My only plan is to grow up."

# McCARTNEY Paul McCartney

Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 18 April 1970, page 3

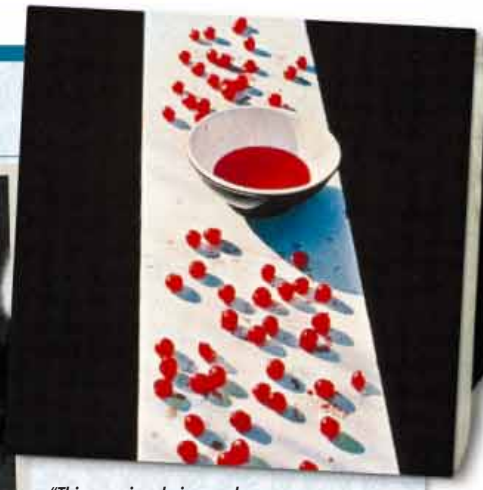
So I forget the shouting, and I sit back and listen to Paul McCartney's first solo LP, 'McCartney'. He himself describes the mood and the feel of the music as "light and loose" but the first play still comes over as perhaps too harmlessly mild.

The second time around, and ever since, 'McCartney' turns out to be an immensely warm and pleasurable album… nice to hear, satisfying to own, good to have around. Listening to it is like hearing a man's personal contentment committed to the sound of music.

Most of the sounds, effects and ideas are sheer brilliance; much of the aura is of quiet songs on a hot summer night; and virtually all of the tracks reflect a kind of intangible roundness. 'Excitement' is not a word to use for this album… 'warmth' and 'happiness' are.

Here is my assessment of the album track by track, with McCartney's comments following.

Paul McCartney: completely stylish, from the waistcoat down



## The Lovely Linda

A cheerful, light voiced lilting thing (is that squeak meant to be there?), all about the lovely Linda with the lovely flowers in her hair. But it hardly starts before it pulls up to a stop with a kind of horsy flourish.

*Paul: "When the Studer four-track was installed at home, this was the first song I recorded to test the machine."*

## That Would Be Something

This is a kind of oozy sexy ass back and forward conga, in which McCartney broods that it'd *"be somethin' to meetcha in the fallin' rain, momma… meetcha in the fallin' rain"*. All very hot, it is, with the riff rumbling around, and then the whiplash of the cymbals moving into a kind of kiss of the brass and some back-of-the-throat yelps. A good track.

*"This song was written in Scotland in 1969 and recorded at mic, as the mixer and VU meters hadn't arrived."*

> Excitement is not a word for this LP, warmth and happiness are

## Valentine Day

This is an instrumental with a slight "up" feel: unusual to describe, but again slightly tropical.

*"Recorded at home. Made up as I went along. The track is all instrumental. Mixed at EMI."*

## Every Night

A beautiful song which should become some kind of standard, flowing along like a high-class singalong, a little like an extension of 'You Never Give Me Your Money'. Nice *"oo-oo"* chorus, chiming echo, and plenty of acoustic.

*"This came from the first two lines which I've had for a few years. They were added to in 1969 in Greece on holiday."*

## Hot As Sun

A pleasant Hawaii-type instrumental; mid-temp; with a quick runaway finish.

*"A song written in about 1958 or maybe earlier, when it was one of those songs that you play now and then."*

## Glasses

No more than a few seconds of brief and eerie *Doctor Who* stuff, slightly disturbing, before a few sung words about *"nothin' doin'"*.

*"Wine glasses played at random and overdubbed on top of each other."*

## Junk

Lovely, beautiful, wistful; probably the best song on the album. Floating voice and images of nostalgia… a sentimental jamboree.

*"Originally written in India, at Maharishi's camp, and completed bit by bit in London."*

## Man We Was Lonely

Starts like a Shadows' film theme, then into a Tony Hatch-Jackie Trent type singalong with Linda. Homely fun stuff.

*"The chorus ('man we was lonely') was written in bed at home, shortly before we finished recording the album."*

## Oo You

Earthy intro, tight throat, clipped soft-sway vocal about *"talk like a baby… love like a woman"*. Good.

*"This was given lyrics one day after lunch, just before we left for Morgan studios, where it was finished that afternoon."*

## Momma Miss America

Can't figure why there's this straight voice calling *"rock'n'roll springtime take one"*, because it moves into an even more Shadows-flavoured thing. But it's another first-class track.

*"An instrumental recorded completely at home. Made up as I went along – first a sequence of chords, then a melody on top."*

## Teddy Boy

The soft, chunking, wistful singalong of a boy named Ted, whose momma went off with this bloke while his dad was away at war. Linda is in the background singing nice harmonies.

*"Another song started in India, and completed in Scotland, and London, gradually. This one was recorded for the* Get Back *film, but later not used."*

## Singalong Junk

Another version of this haunting French-style piece of romantic memory.

*"This was take one, except for the vocal version which was take two, and a shorter version."*

## Maybe I'm Amazed

Tight, light voice again, with a mid-tempo which gets wilder and softer by turns.

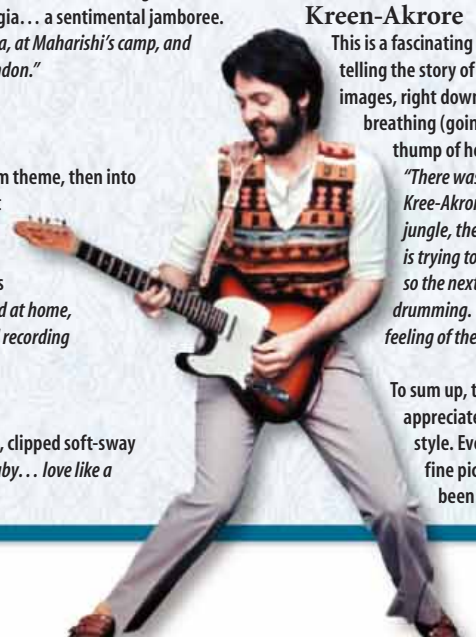
*"Written in London, at the piano, with the second verse added slightly later, as if you cared. A movie was made, using Linda's slides, and edited to this track."*

## Kreen-Akrore

This is a fascinating and imaginative instrumental telling the story of a jungle hunt in musical images, right down to the sound of heavy breathing (going faster and faster), and the thump of heartbeat drums.

*"There was a film on the TV about the Kree-Akrore Indians living in the Brazilian jungle, their lives, and how the white man is trying to change their way of life to his, so the next day, after lunch, I did some drumming. The idea behind it was to get the feeling of their hunt."*

To sum up, this is an album to be appreciated most of all for its complete style. Even the packaging – with some fine pictures by Linda – has obviously been a labour of love. ***Alan Smith***



TOPHAM PICTURPOINT/CAMERA PRESS-SUS SINGER

# SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

## Ringo Starr Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 4 April 1970, page 10

This is the album of 12 tunes which Ringo Starr remembers his mum and dad liking when he was a lad. Ringo must have liked them, too, because he has gone to quite long lengths to sing them well, and to have top-class backing behind him while he is doing it.

He has had some very famous arrangers working on a tune each and the result is quite surprising. If you asked someone to guess who was singing, I'm sure few, if any, would guess it was Ringo. I mean, he sings better than you'd expect him to, after his reluctance to sing with The Beatles. (Or was it lack of opportunity?)

On some songs he sinks a bit too low and has an effort to recover, but mostly he is on the beat and on the melody line. The songs are all surefire and I forecast healthy sales for this LP.

**'Sentimental Journey' by Bud Green, Les Brown and Ben Homer, arranged by Richard Perry,** has a relaxed, jazz-sounding backing. Ringo is a little unsure, a little tense, until joined by other singers.

**'Night And Day' by Cole Porter, arranged by Chico O'Farrill,** is higher and Ringo seems happier and consequently easier.

**'Whispering Grass' by F and D Fisher, arranged by Ron Goodwin.** Ringo gets into the spirit of this former Ink Spots hit.

**'Bye Bye Blackbird' by Mort Dixon and Ray Henderson, arranged by Maurice Gibb.** A real swinger, with Ringo double-tracking and having fun… and giving it.

**'I'm A Fool To Care' by Daffan, arranged by Klaus Voormann.** More double-tracking vocal, with good effect. The Starr Brothers! Sung nice and easy with a string and jazz backing. Great.

**'Stardust' by Hoagy Carmichael and Mitchell Parish, arranged by Paul McCartney.** Not sung too confidently, but Ringo gets the message over. Backing instrumental better than vocal here.

**'Blue Turning Grey Over You' by Razaf-Waller, arranged by Oliver Nelson.** More double-Ringo, singing a jog-trot, swinging song. Very lively accompaniment.

**'Love Is A Many Splendored Thing' by Sammy Fain and Paul Webster, arranged by Quincy Jones.** Ringo has a vocal group helping him here, and the whole is most acceptable.

**'Dream' by Johnny Mercer, arranged by George Martin.** Ringo double tracks pleasantly this 1945 million seller for the Pied Pipers.

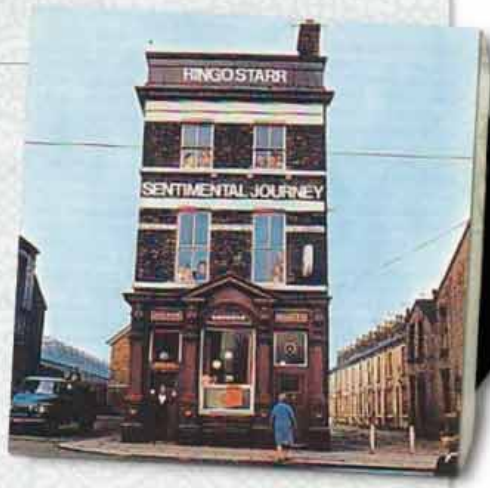
**'You Always Hurt The One You Love' by Doris Fisher and Allan Roberts, arranged by Johnny Dankworth.** Ringo takes this at a good pace, sings it well.

**'Have I Told You Lately That I Love You' by Wiseman, arranged by Elmer Bernstein.** Another higher pitched song, with Ringo singing in between big brass booms. It comes off OK.

**'Let The Rest Of The World Go By' by Brennan and Ball, arranged by Les Reed.** Another singalong with a vocal group as well as Ringo, until the very end. Good pub jukebox number.

***Andy Gray***

> If you asked anyone who was singing few would guess it was Ringo



Ringo in the 'Sentimental Journey' promo film, March 1970

Once upon a time there was a group called The Beatles. They sold a lot of records, collected millions of fans all over the world and became legendary.

Now there are four young men called John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. In theory they are still The Beatles. In practice they are not.

They have all made a lot of money and, barring a catastrophe, will live happily ever after. Their future is as vague as their success was phenomenal. Everyone knows about the past, but no-one is too sure about their future, if they have one as The Beatles.

Above the Apple offices in London's Savile Row there hangs a black flag. Their last album 'Let It Be' was packaged in a black cover. It appears to be an omen that The Beatles are over. It is extremely unlikely that there will ever be any more records by the group and it is even more remote that they ever perform again as a quartet.

> In theory these four young men are still The Beatles. In practice they are not

There are a lot of questions their millions of fans want answering. This week *Melody Maker* put some of them to their official spokesman at Apple. Here are his replies.

***Melody Maker*: How long is it since The Beatles – all four of them – actually played together?**
Apple spokesman: "The last time was during the recording of the 'Abbey Road' album which was in the late summer of 1969. Various members of the group have since recorded together on individual sessions. George has been on Ringo's sessions and vice-versa, but all four have never actually played together since summer 1969. That's about a year ago."

CAMERA PRESS/CORBIS

The Beatles in 1969: at the end of the long and winding road

NME, 15 August 1970, page 27

# Beatles: the facts

**Is there any recorded material still unreleased?**
"No. Even if there was it would never be issued. The group are always very conscious of keeping up with the current tastes."

**Are any of the individual members working on solo albums at present?**
"Ringo has completed his country album in Nashville and it will be released in September. George is nearing the completion of his new album but we don't know when it will be released. This will be very different from his other solo albums. The other two have not been in the recording studio but I would presume they have not been idle during the summer. It is not their nature to sit and do nothing."

**Why has John Lennon been in Los Angeles all year?**
"He is living quietly over there. There have been no press reports about his activities so I assume he is living quietly. He has rented a house. There's building going on at his house in Ascot. I have no idea when he will be back."

**Where are the other three Beatles at the moment?**
"Paul is at his farm in Scotland. I have no idea when he will return to London. George and Ringo are both at their homes."

**Are there any plans for a recording session?**
"There are no plans at all."

**Are there plans for any kind of performance?**
"None. There are no plans for any shows or tours."

**What plans do the individual members of the group have for the future?**
"I don't think any of them have any long-term plans. They have never made long-term plans, even in their touring days. George has developed as a composer and will probably continue this. Ringo is exploring different things. He may do more films and may do more comedy, singing and acting."

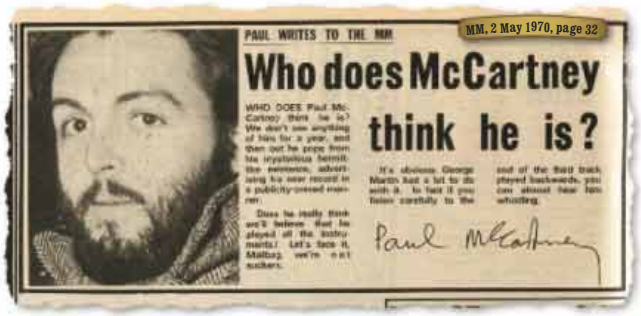
**Have The Beatles finished as a group?**
"That is a question I cannot answer. There is no harm in anyone discussing it but it is a futile discussion for people who are not involved in it. I don't think they will ever lose their Beatles tag even though they may never work together again."

**Was 'Let It Be' the last Beatles album as it appeared to be from the way it was packaged?**
"That way it was packaged did not mean it was the final album. The artwork was planned long before all the publicity about the group breaking up. It may have looked like that but it wasn't meant to."

**Does the fact that there are no plans for the future mean there is no future for The Beatles?**
"No. The fact that there are no plans doesn't mean anything. The group have never planned things. It is not essential to make plans with The Beatles."

So there is a slight chance we may hear from the world's most successful beat group again. In their latest book which traces their careers from 'Love Me Do' to the present day there are a number of blank pages at the end. At the top of each it says "to be continued".

We shall without doubt hear a lot more about The Beatles so that the blank pages can be filled. But whether we shall hear The Beatles together again now appears too remote to consider.



MM, 2 May 1970, page 32

PAUL WRITES TO THE MM

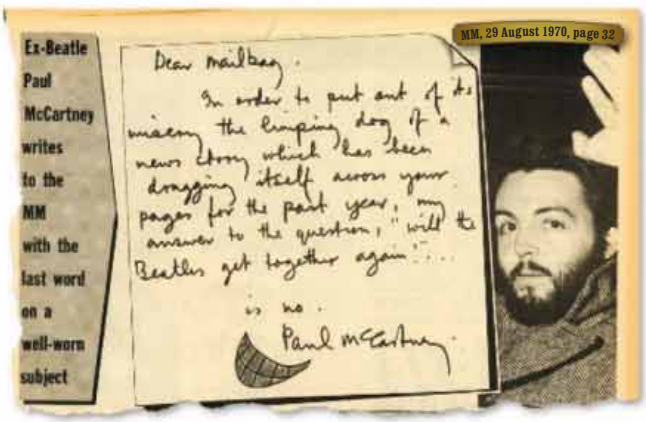
## Who does McCartney think he is?

WHO DOES Paul McCartney think he is? We don't see anything of him for a year, and then out he pops from his mysterious hermit-like existence, advertising his new record in a publicity-crazed manner.

Does he really think we'll believe that he played all the instruments? Let's face it, Mailbag, we're not suckers.

It's obvious George Martin had a lot to do with it. In fact if you listen carefully to the end of the first track, played backwards, you can almost hear him whistling.

Paul McCartney



MM, 29 August 1970, page 32

Ex-Beatle Paul McCartney writes to the MM with the last word on a well-worn subject

Dear mailbag.

In order to put out of its misery the limping dog of a news story which has been dragging itself across your pages for the past year, my answer to the question, "will the Beatles get together again?" is no.

Paul McCartney

Page 40—MELODY MAKER, August 29, 1970

## Beatles sitting on unreleased material

I WAS very pleased to read your article on the Beatles in the August 15 issue. Since Paul McCartney's remarks concerning Apple last April, I have not read or heard any interviews with any member of the Beatles, so it was about time somebody answered the important questions.

However, I was a bit puzzled about Apple's reply that the Beatles have no unissued material.

If this is true, then whatever happened to the Beatles' version of "Save The Last Dance For Me" originally scheduled for the "Let It Be" album, as well as their recordings of "Shake Rattle And Roll" and "Blue Suede Shoes?"

What has also happened to "Not Guilty," "What's New Mary Jane" and "Jubilee," all planned for their double album but not issued? The Beatles also have unissued "new" versions of "Don't Let Me Down" and "Love Me Do."—ANDRE W. WROBEL, Whaddon Avenue, Whaddon, Cheltenham, Glos.

● An Apple spokesman replies: "These are not finished tracks just bits done in the studio. They are being treated as bits which will never be used again. They are not in a sufficiently finished stage to do anything without a lot of cleaning up. They were discarded because they were not suitable for the album."

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: George Harrison | |
| SINGLE: My Sweet Lord | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: January 1971 |

I really don't know why Apple has taken so long to issue this single in Britain. Surely the company wasn't waiting to be reassured by its success in America! But, of course, this is typical of Apple's policy – there is scarcely any advance warning and new singles just appear unexpectedly from nowhere!

Mind you, I shouldn't think this latest release is in need of much promotion, because everyone will be clamouring to play it. In my estimation, this record – finally and irrevocably – establishes George as a talent equivalent to either Lennon or McCartney.

Album tracks seldom make smash hit singles in this country, but this is bound to be an exception. And with quite a lot of indifferent stuff around just now, it's a potential Number One.

***Derek Johnson*** NME, 16 January 1971, page 8

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Paul McCartney | |
| SINGLE: Another Day | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: February 1971 |

A welcome single from Paul, co-written with his wife Linda. It's not so instantly commercial as Harrison's hit, and probably won't be such a fantastic smash, but that's probably because it's a more complex song. The story of a lonely girl who waits in her room for her lover to arrive (presumably because he's a married man), it's tinged with that wistfullness which characterises so many of Paul's songs.

Paul dual tracks much of it, with a pungent acoustic guitar sound adding depth to the backing. A song that takes time to grow on you – but once its perception and beauty have registered, you're hooked on it. The flip is much harder, with Paul at his most fervent and uninhibited in 'Oh Woman Oh Why'. A surefire hit of course.

***Derek Johnson*** NME, 27 February 1971, page 8

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band | |
| SINGLE: Power To The People | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: March 1971 |

With this surprise single is Lennon deliberately putting himself into a chart battle with his one-time friend and now, it would appear, rival? Past form would suggest McCartney had the upper hand, though to a degree that has been down to commerciality rather than quality.

After the disappointingly trivial McCartney single, Lennon's stunner is more than welcome.

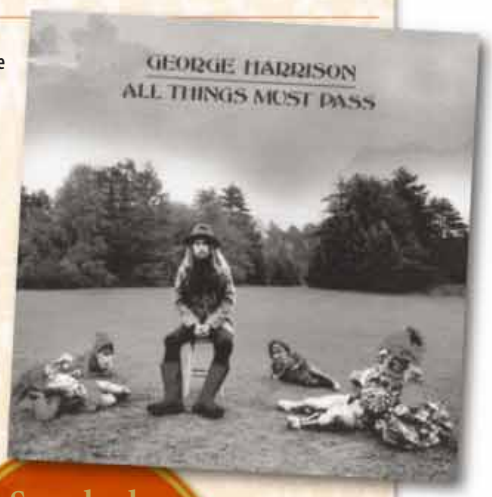
In content, it is something of a cross between 'Cold Turkey', 'Instant Karma' and 'Give Peace A Chance'. As in the latter, the lyric line is basically a handclapping incantation of the title repeated over and over by a mass of voices, in the background of which swirls a honky tonk sax lifted straight out of a '50s rock'n'roll 45. Again like 'Give Peace A Chance', it's a Lennon 'street' song and one can only hope it gets more public attention than has previously been accorded to his solo work.

***Derek Johnson*** NME, 13 March 1971, page 8

# ALL THINGS MUST PASS

## George Harrison Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 5 December 1970, page 2




George Harrison's three-album set 'All Things Must Pass' will prove that it is a long time since so much love and care have been wrapped into one package by one profile artist.

Like the McCartney album, 'All Things Must Pass' stands head and shoulders above just about any other solo album released this year – but there's still something missing!

Side one begins with a wistful and touching song co-written by Dylan, 'I'd Have You Anytime', and is followed by the current Harrison hit single in the US, 'My Sweet Lord'.

'Wah-Wah' is an inconsequential song about the benefits of wah-wah guitar: one of the weaker tracks, although it's not short on dressing. Next is 'Isn't It A Pity', another good number which this time catches the mood of aching tolerance of pain which Harrison can do so well.

Side two is opened by the up-tempo 'What Is Life' and then we're into the second Bob Dylan number, 'If Not For You'. 'Behind That Locked Door', is country-meets-Hawaii, which should be sent to Slim Whitman without further delay.

On 'Let It Down' I listened especially to the romantic delicacy and perception of Harrison's words. No matter the quality of the music, his words never let him down.

I was glad of the mental escalation of 'Run Of The Mill', a mid-tempo number: but it took Side Three and the rumbling piano of 'Beware Of Darkness' to hold me again.

'Apple Scruffs' is Harrison's name for the girls who hang around the Apple steps in Savile Row, and it's a Dylanesque, pacy piece with harmonica and a girlie chorus, followed by a song-tale called 'Ballad Of Sir Frankie Crisp (Let It Roll)', which may take a little longer for me to appreciate.

Next is 'Awaiting On You All', a rapid fire thumper with good chord progressions. The title track is another slow number, and apart from some interesting guitar fills I didn't find it particularly distinguished.

Side Four opens with 'I Dig Love' (which will also stand the passage of time); then the up-tempo 'Art Of Dying'; another arrangement of 'Isn't It A Pity' which I found moving; and then the impassioned hymn 'Hear Me Lord'. The final record of the three is a jam session for George and friends – mainly a continuing riff going on and on.

> Somebody fell in love with the idea of releasing a mammoth album

It's a beautifully musically-dressed album, but somewhere along the line somebody fell in love with the idea of releasing a mammoth album. Often its brilliance is overshadowed by its averageness. ***Alan Smith***

NME, 27 February 1971, page 10

# Harrison to be sued over 'My Sweet Lord'

George Harrison's publishing company and Apple are being sued on the allegation that Harrison's world hit 'My Sweet Lord' infringes the copyright of The Chiffons' million-seller of the '60s, 'He's So Fine'.

New York attorney Seymour Barash is publisher and was producer of the song, and his Bright Tunes Music Corporation will be versus Harrisongs Music Inc, Broadcast Music Inc and Apple Records.

Action is being taken on his behalf in this country by Keith Prowse Music – KPM – who hold virtual world rights on 'He's So Fine'.

Details published in connection with this week's court action in London, by Paul McCartney seeking to dissolve The Beatles' partnership, indicate that 'My Sweet Lord' will earn more than £1 million this year. But one effect of this new move by the 'He's So Fine' publisher is that royalties would be frozen until such time as the copyright infringement allegations are dealt with.

Even if he can't sing for peanuts...

NME, 24 April 1971, page 20

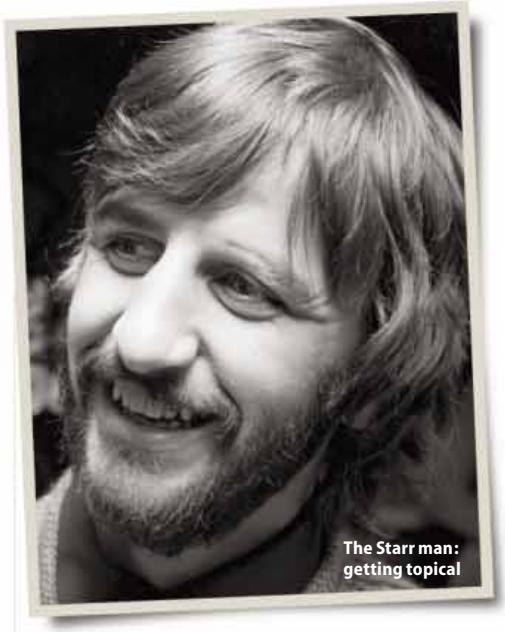
# Good to see Ringo is having a go

There is, should you buy Ringo Starr's 'It Don't Come Easy' and turn over to the B-side, 'Early 1970', an interesting story-in-song in which Mr Starr relates how he would very much like to come to town one day *"and see all three"*. Some hope, one might feel in view of the recent mud-slinging in which all four of the said moptops were involved among the pomp and circumstance of one of Her Majesty's Law Courts – but the sentiment is there.

The perceptive may also have taken note of another pointed item within the lyric, a £40,000 house he never sees, and anyone who ever simply drove and drove and drove around the eternal perimeter of John Lennon's often-empty country home (and they tell me he's built a lake) will well know to whom the reference refers.

So nice is it to hear this fascinatingly topical lyric, in fact, after the singalong schmaltz of 'Whispering Grass' and 'Sentimental Journey' and the country-lush muzak of 'Beaucoups Of Blues' that even Mr John Peel was moved to follow *Scene And Heard* and include 'It Don't Come Easy' in his show the other day.

It is, of course, undoubtedly one of the best, thumpin'est things the Starr man has ever done, and it gives me no surprise to see the song jumping like mad up to Number 12 in the *NME* Chart this week. That's a very strong hook he's got there, and George Harrison has given the record a fat, pumping backing full of guts and stuff.


The Starr man: getting topical

The one thing with Ringo is he can't sing for peanuts. He sings the way I get drunk – badly. But on the credit side we have an inventive mind and a dry wit coming more and more into play with better songs. One day he may even write a masterpiece. ***Alan Smith***

# PLASTIC ONO BAND John Lennon

Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 12 December 1970, page 7

I get the impression that John Lennon has much fear in his make-up. Also a great big chip on his shoulder about class consciousness and the unfairness of the world.

He gets to grips with social problems in his latest self-written album and most people will realise he is saying a lot of truths, especially about school days and when you're asked to choose a career.

Two songs – to begin and end the album – are about mothers, both sad and most probably about John's mum, who died so early in his life. In the first song, 'Mother', I have rarely heard so much anguish and suffering put into a track.

The Plastic Ono Band comprises Ringo Starr on drums, Klaus Voorman on bass and John Lennon on guitar and piano, with Billy Preston at the keyboard on occasion.

Here is a track by track review of the LP.

## Mother

A lament, slow and funereal, with the drums sounding like those in French Revolution films as they follow the victims to the guillotine. John sobs out that his mother didn't need him but he needed her, and beseeched her not to die.

## Hold On

Sombre. Words are smothered by instruments, but the message seems to be to hold on, because you will see the light.

## I Found Out

Big Afro beat behind the high-pitched, distorted vocal in which he chants about finding out about things, but the insistent guitar and throbbing drums makes it hard to hear the words.

## Working Class Hero

Now we can hear John's voice because he wants you to get the message. It's a tirade on how cruelly children are treated. Sung in a Dylan-ish style with the final message *"If you want to be a hero/Well, just follow me"*.

**Lennon has a great big chip on his shoulder about class**

## Isolation

Piano is used to great effect, but the words are also clear. Message is a fear of isolation and the fact that one can do so little to rectify things.

## Remember

Faster, with a monotonous plunk-plunk repetition from the guitars. A sort of speech talk song to youth.

## Love

Slow, sentimental guitars and the lyric giving a lot of definitions about what love is – touch, knowing, freedom, living, reason etc. Quiet, not much tune, but a lovely bit of piano all by itself at the end.

## Well Well Well

A long track, with a thump on bass drum sound throughout. Fuzz guitars and John's deeper voice. Words distorted, becoming screeches, with the rhythm becoming super intense. Good track.

## Look At Me

Quiet, far off, wistful. Very simple, as are all the songs on the LP.

## God

This has a jerky country piano beat. John Lennon on religion, with God as a concept to measure our pain, and a long list of things NOT to believe in. Compelling.

## My Mummy's Dead

A very short sad lyric written as a nursery rhyme. ***Andy Gray***

Lennon: has a big chip, and a Yoko Ono on his shoulder

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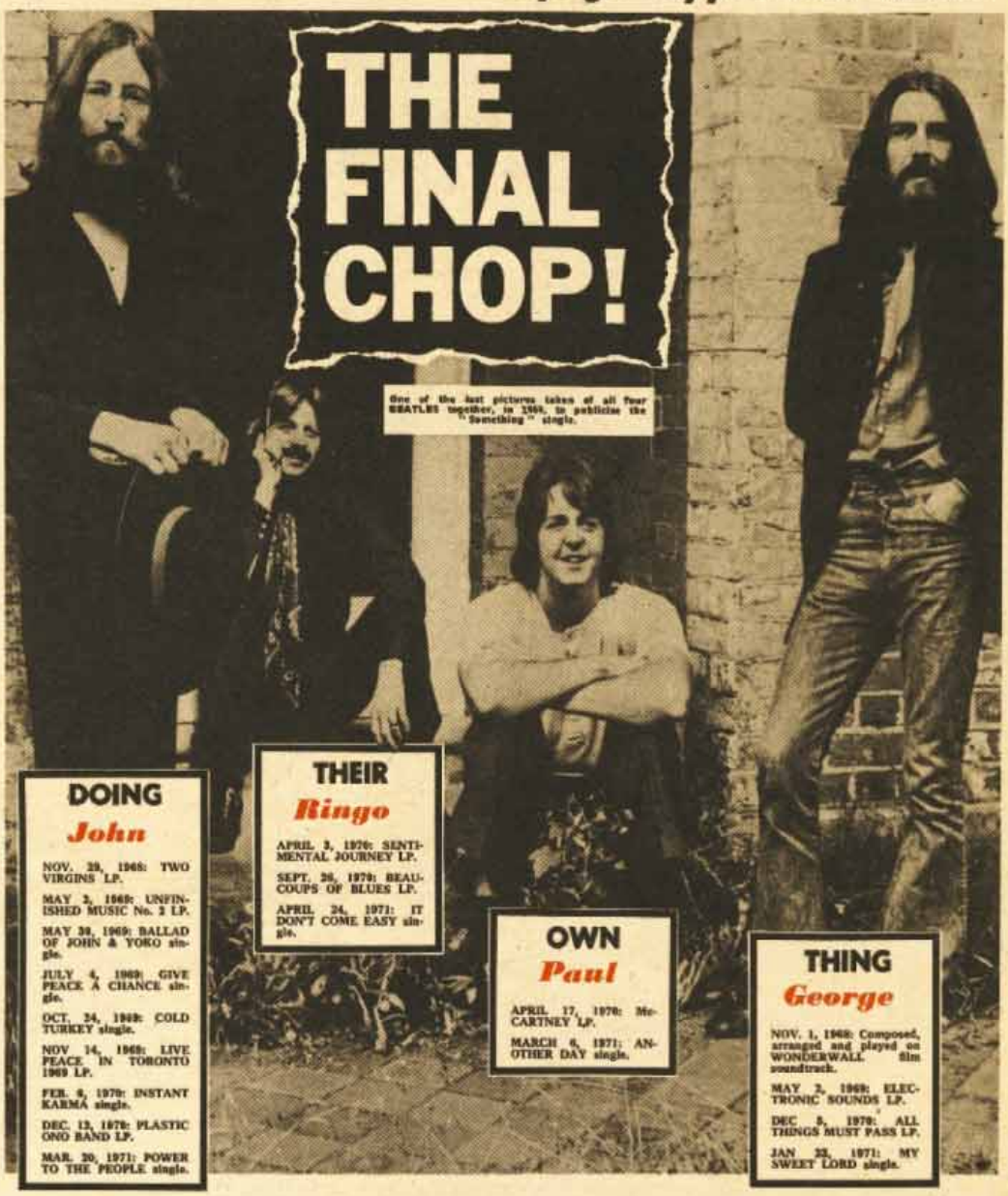
# THE FINAL CHOP!



One of the last pictures taken of all four BEATLES together, in 1969, to publicise the "Something" single.

## DOING *John*

NOV. 29, 1968: TWO VIRGINS LP.

MAY 2, 1969: UNFINISHED MUSIC No. 2 LP.

MAY 30, 1969: BALLAD OF JOHN & YOKO single.

JULY 4, 1969: GIVE PEACE A CHANCE single.

OCT. 24, 1969: COLD TURKEY single.

NOV 14, 1969: LIVE PEACE IN TORONTO 1969 LP.

FEB. 6, 1970: INSTANT KARMA single.

DEC. 12, 1970: PLASTIC ONO BAND LP.

MAR. 20, 1971: POWER TO THE PEOPLE single.

## THEIR *Ringo*

APRIL 3, 1970: SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY LP.

SEPT. 26, 1970: BEAUCOUPS OF BLUES LP.

APRIL 24, 1971: IT DON'T COME EASY single.

## OWN *Paul*

APRIL 17, 1970: McCARTNEY LP.

MARCH 6, 1971: ANOTHER DAY single.

## THING *George*

NOV. 1, 1968: Composed, arranged and played on WONDERWALL film soundtrack.

MAY 2, 1969: ELECTRONIC SOUNDS LP.

DEC 5, 1970: ALL THINGS MUST PASS LP.

JAN 22, 1971: MY SWEET LORD single.

# NO APPEAL AGAINST TRIAL TO DISSOLVE BEATLES

THE appeal against the trial to dissolve the Beatles partnership has been dropped by George, John, Ringo and the Apple Corps Ltd. This means that fifth partner, Paul, has got his way and a receiver and manager appointed by the court will look after Beatles affairs until the present partnership is ended legally.

In simple terms, Paul is one step nearer his entire independance from a partnership that started as a friendly happening and ended as a constricting monster in his eyes.

Paul has said that he first felt the limitations of being a Beatle, tied to Apple, when he brought out his album "McCartney." In advertisements he was angered by the inclusion of "An Abkco-managed company" after the words Apple Records, in connection with "McCartney."

## Resentment grew

His resentment grew, because he and wife Linda had done everything and Abkco, Allen Klein's company, had nothing to do with it. Yet here it was, to Paul's way of thinking, taking some sort of credit.

The question went through Paul's mind for a long time: "How do I get out?" He took legal advice and found that a court action was the only way. He went ahead.

During the hearings some nasty things were said against him by other Beatles. He didn't like them, because Paul has always been the Beatle who liked to be liked. Now he has cooled down and says he has nothing against John, George and Ringo. And he's sorry the ending had to come in a court of law, instead of maybe in a "Magical Mystery Tour" sort of explosion!

But more and more the famous four are leaving behind the world of fantasy they lived in as Beatles and becoming realists and individualists. It must be a great comfort to them to know that they can make it on their own. They don't seem to need the Beatles tag any more, although they will never lose it.

## Is it good thing?

It is probably a good thing for the music business that the Beatles are now no more as a group. We have four top attractions, instead of one. If financial and contractual doubts hadn't brought the legal parting, artistic ones would have. As far back as "Abbey Road" there was the feeling that the Beatles were drifting apart musically, and everyone except Ringo seems to have voiced opinions that he would quit the group.

Now the appeal against the action to break up the Beatles partnership has been dismissed. Paul is on his way to "getting out". And the others are faced with an alleged bill for some £100,000 legal fees, which the judge ordered them to pay after the first High Court hearing of 11 days.

What happens next? The court will now look into how Paul can terminate his partnership with the other partners in the Beatles. And in the meantime, Mr James Douglas Spooner, a chartered accountant and "company doctor" has been appointed by the judge, Mr Justice Stamp, to act as manager and receiver of the group's multi-million-pound business immediately. He would not permit the wish of John, George, Ringo and Apple Corp. Ltd. for American Allen Klein to continue as manager of their business affairs.

None of the Beatles was in court for the five minute hearing on Monday at which the appeal was abandoned.

In announcing the decision, Lord Justice Russell said he hoped Paul and the other Beatles would reach an amicable and sensible agreement and showed himself to be with-it by ending: "My only disappointment is that I am not unable to make a joke about preserving the Status Quo — which is the name of another pop group!"

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# PAUL McCARTNEY

## tells NME writer Allan McDougall

# MY NEW LP IS SWEATY ROCK!

REAL SWEATY ROCK 'N' ROLL. This is Paul McCartney's own description — in an exclusive NME interview with Allan McDougall in a Hollywood recording studio — of the music on his soon-to-be-released second album.

McCartney described his controversial "soft-sell" first solo LP as "a whole different trip I had to go through." And although he wasn't happy about the publication of actual song titles, he asked McDougall to listen in to some of the tracks and to give his verdict.

Writes McDougall: "The numbers struck me as a hundred times better than the McCartney LP, and I told him so. He looked serious for a minute and then he told me: 'This new one is really my music. This is where I really am'."

McDougall records how he met the future ex-Beatle in Hollywood and how they talked of old friends and familiar places. This is what happened, recorded exclusively for NME. . . .

**WORLD EXCLUSIVE**

### Allan writes . . .

To say I ran into Paul would not only be a most blatant piece of name-dropping. It would also be a lie.

Actually, Paul McCartney almost ran into me. With his big green Cadillac . . . as he nosed it into the parking space next to mine. With his arm around Linda.

All of which was really a flash, because the last time I'd seen Paul was just before "Sgt. Pepper" came out, and blew every mind blowable, and he'd invited Gary Leeds and me round to his house for a listen.

So I'm standing there wondering if he'd even recognise me after all this time.

Then he got out of the car and said in one breath: "It's Wee Allan McDougall and his beard. I saw the photo of you and your missus and Graham Nash and his beard in the NME — and hey, have you got a minute to come and hear some of me new album eh, Allan, eh, eh?"

I said I had to go and pick up my wife from her office, but maybe, and he said: "Just five minutes won't make that much difference, and you can call her from the studio." And I thought, sure — she's bound to believe me, too, when I say I'm with Paul and Linda McCartney!

So I went with them to the studio, and Paul asks how's Graham and his solo album, and Linda — with her long memory — asks how's Gary Leeds.

(Paul got to find out first-hand about Nash's album a few days later, when Graham went over to McCartney's house on the California beach for dinner. And their mutual admiration society gained strength when Paul played him his next solo album.)

Anyway, we get to the studio, where a guy who produces Neil Diamond is waiting (looking like he's been there for ages on the off-chance of meeting P. M. Paul, who will forever be the Beatle). Paul sweeps through into his studio with a quick "How d'you do, pleased to meet you, bye now," and closes the door firmly behind him.

He introduces me to the engineer as "a friend of ours from back home, who I got terribly drunk with the night his first kid was born, but that was years ago," and then he asks the engineer to play me some tracks.

### Okay to print

I tell Paul that I do a bit of writing for the British papers, you know, so is this all for publication, or for my ears only?

Linda says: "Yes, I've seen your stuff in NME" and McCartney says, "So long as you don't mention song titles. It's cool. Copyrights, you know."

The first song, "xxxxxxx xxxxx," rolls and my eyes pop and my feet itch to do something, but is it cool (cool?) to dance? So I look up and Paul is dancing all over the place, while conducting the track and singing along with it. Well, sort of screaming, really. It's that kind of song, more like "Oh Woman Oh Why?" than anything. Only louder, faster, heavier.

It finishes and I'm going "Whew!", and he asks if I have time for a couple more.

The next one "xxxxxx xxxxx" I think it was called, has a lot of weird effects going on in the sound. Not like anything we've heard from him, or them, before.

"Ridiculous, isn't it?" Paul grins as he takes one of my cigarettes and shares it with the bare-footed Linda.

### Drained dry!

And the third song just drained me dry. Back to the roots. Back to the beginning of rock and then brought up-to-date, is the only way to describe "xxx xxxx xxxxx."

"Real, sweaty rock and roll eh?" says Paul as I catch my breath. "What do you think — do you like the music?"

### Much better

It strikes me as being a hundred times better than the "McCartney" album, I tell Paul (not too sure if this is the nicest thing to say) but it's what I feel.

"Yeah," he says, face turning serious for a minute. "Well, the 'McCartney' thing was a whole different trip that I had to go through. This one, though, this is really my music, this is really where I am. You know?"

Sartorially, I note that Paul is wearing approximately the same outfit he'd worn to the Grammy Awards, when he made his surprise appearance wearing an old, battered blue/grey suit, tennis shoes and a yellow jumper.

"Oh, did you watch the Grammies on television?" he asked. "What did you think of us coming on, then?" "Really exciting, says I like a fan — but who isn't?

"Exciting? We were really leaping with nerves.

"You know, me and Linda do everything ourselves — no chauffeurs or anything — and we must have driven round the place where the awards were taking place four times. Saying all the time: 'Let's go in — no we can't — yes we must — but I don't want to — but it'll be okay' and that, and finally we went in. And got a little table at the back, with a checkered tablecloth and a bottle of Scotch and some cokes."

At which point, I make my excuse and leave Paul and Linda hopping and cuddling and kissing in the studio.

Obviously — Very Happy Together!

# RAM Paul McCartney Apple

REVIEWED: MM, 22 May 1971, page 11

When The Beatles were The Beatles Paul McCartney seemed to stand out above the crowd as a composer whose melodies – although credited to John Lennon as well – would be around for years.

Songs like 'Yesterday', 'She's Leaving Home' and 'Michelle' had the mark of quality to make them classics in their time.

For this reason I expected his solo albums to be better than those of his three former colleagues. Unfortunately this is not the case. His first solo effort with the exception of one track ('Maybe I'm Amazed') completely lacked the McCartney magic and now his second, called simply 'Ram', although much better than the first, fails, in my opinion, to match up to those of Harrison and Lennon.

Most of the songs are simple, funky, rock songs with a shuffle beat which sound more like the work of Lennon than McCartney. It seems strange that the rift between the two was caused by their different directions in music – and now both are going the same way.

There are 11 tracks plus a short reprise of the title track 'Ram On'.

### Too Many People
A bouncy catchy song for openers, and one of the best on the album. Sounds like an early Beatles song, with heavy guitar.

### Three Legs
A country sound beginning with throbbing bassline. Gets heavier as it goes along and a female chorus joins in.

### Ram On
A short track, with clapping, which catches on after a few plays.

'Ram', jam, thank you, Macca: Paul McCartney, 1971

### Dear Boy
Typical Beatles song with harmony backing and incessant shuffle beat.

### Uncle Albert/ Admiral Halsey
A novelty number with various themes all mixed together.

### Smile Away
Another catchy rocker with a shuffle beat.

### Heart Of The Country
The first recognisable McCartney song. Sweet, simple, with a country and western sound.

### Monkberry Moon Delight
An up-tempo growler with heavy backing and lots of chanting.

### Eat At Home
Another up-tempo foot-tapper, with excellent guitar breaks.

**You expect too much from a man like Paul McCartney**

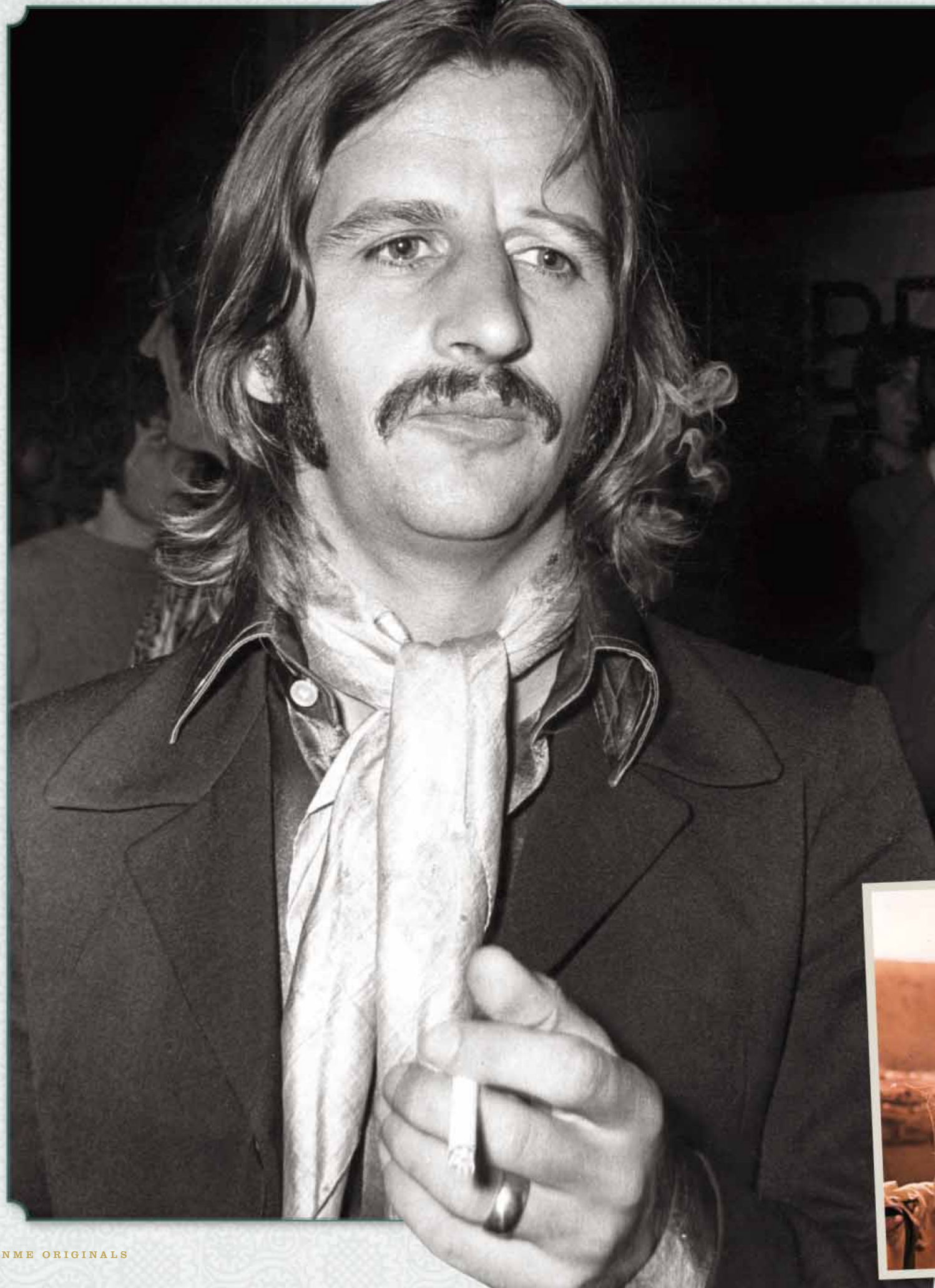
### Long Haired Lady
A slow song with Hawaiian guitar effects in the background and children (?) joining in the chorus.

### Ram On (Reprise)
Short snatch from previous track, fades in and fades away.

### Back Seat of My Car
Another instantly recognisable Paul McCartney melody.

A good album by anybody's standards. Trouble is you expect too much from a man like Paul McCartney. ***Chris Charlesworth***

CAMERA PRESS-LINDA McCARTNEY



# BIG STARR

Ringo Starr took time out from filming in southern Spain to give his first interview in over a year to Michael Watts. He talks frankly about his films, The Beatles' split and the future of Apple

MM, 24 July 1971, page 20

Down in Almeria, southern Spain, there's a blind man on almost every corner. One hand clenching white sticks, the other holding out alms tins, they can sense the tourist at 20 paces. They break into impassioned harangues; the roll-call of the saints is read out and invoked, the hands flutter beseechingly. Just now and then you begin to wonder about the eyes behind those dark glasses…

There aren't too many tourists yet in Almeria but now they've extended the airport there soon will be, thousands of them, like at Malaga or Torremolinos. You know, you'll get there to find your next door neighbour already sunning himself on the beach.

Tourists there may not yet be, but hordes of movie people there are. Oh yes. The *Dollar* movies were made here, and *The Good, The Bad And The Ugly*. Most of the spaghetti westerns in fact. Indeed, one wonders why spaghetti and not paella.

But the locale is just right. A kilometre or so from the town's outskirts and you're in movie country. Stony, scrubby hills, some cacti, occasionally a low-roofed, whitewashed dwelling lying amid the dust and heat.

Here you are not out of place with spurs, poncho and a Mex moustache. Here the number of half-chewed cheroots ground beneath cowboy boots equals only the amount of celluloid in the cameras.

Clint and Lee Van Cleef aren't here for the moment, but Ringo Starr is putting in an appearance and, Lee, you'd better watch out. This isn't dumb, cute, comic Ringo. This is ornery, rattlesnake Ringo, getting heavy and flinging himself into a rape scene with one of the señoritas.

**Ringo flings himself into a rape scene with one of the señoritas. It's a long way from A Hard Day's Night**

It's a long way from *A Hard Day's Night*. But then, it's been a long time.

Ask anyone in Almeria where Ringo is staying and they'll point to the Gran Hotel. It's near the seafront and all the movie people stop there. This interview takes place at the hotel. It's done in blazing heat by the side of the pool. Imagine Ringo sitting to the left of you at the table. Allen Klein in trunks is lounging further to your left. He's got a part in the movie too – he plays a Mexican bandido.

Oh yeah. The movie. It's called *Blindman*.

***Melody Maker*: Let's talk about your movie career. Are you moving towards cinema, away from music?**

Ringo Starr: "No, I enjoy making films. It's only through this one that I realise what it's about. The first two, the Beatles films, we were just there doing lines. We really didn't have much of a clue."

**You didn't have much say, in fact, how those movies turned out?**

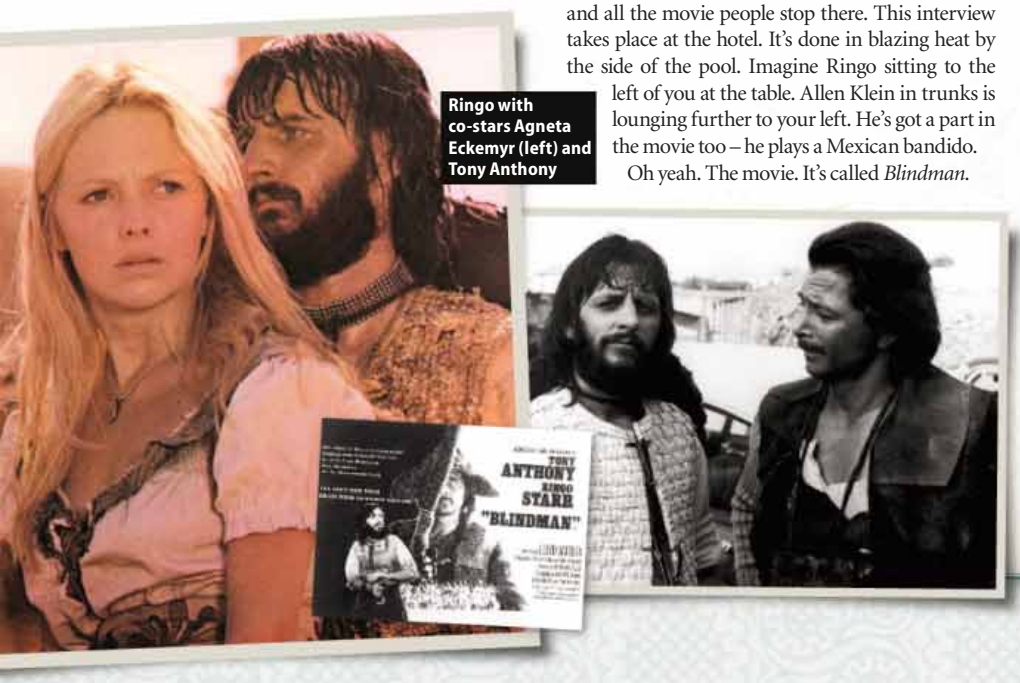
"No. Everyone thought we had ad-libbed it all, but we ad-libbed about… it was five per cent at the most because we weren't actors. At the end of the take we'd carry on. It was a problem at first because the real actors, as soon as they'd done what the take was supposed to be, would stop, and we asked whether everyone would carry on just in case we got something. That was mainly where the ad-libs were."

**That must have been when you got the first real taste for filming.**

"Yes, I did. I loved it. I like acting, it's good fun. It was the thrill of being on that screen, you know the 20-foot screen or however big they are, and doing it and pretending. But until I did this one those other films were – as far as I'm concerned – my part in them."

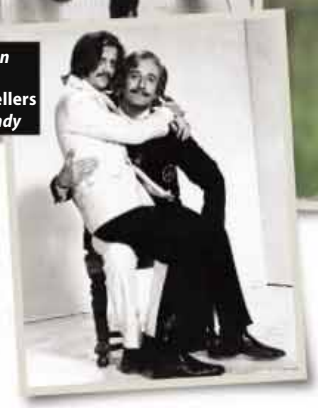
**Like *Candy*?**

"*Candy* was done because I hadn't done a film after *A Hard Day's Night (note: Ringo was forgetting he had made* Help!*)* and I liked it and thought, 'Yes, I'd like to some more,' you know so I took *Candy* because it was a small part. I think I was overwhelmed because I'd be working with Burton and Brando and all those people, who knocked me out anyway. But I got no help there, you know. I mean I only was… I don't think my particular piece was any good in it. But I'm glad I did it, and I'm glad I did *The Magic Christian*, which I still think… some critic wrote I was as heavy as a bucket of feathers, which was the nicest quote I've ever read. And it was true, you know. But because I've done those two I can see the difference now. In this I really feel confident and I have a part, and in the others I didn't have a part, really."




Ringo with co-stars Agneta Eckemyr (left) and Tony Anthony

ALEX BYRNE PHOTOGRAPHY/KOBAL COLLECTION/RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE



In *The Magic Christian* with Raquel Welch (above) and Peter Sellers and (far right) in *Candy*

**When we talk about your movie career, are we talking about you being basically a comic actor, or taking a variety of roles?**
"No, we're talking about me being an actor, not being used for the name, like I have been. It's gonna be good because everyone who thinks of me in films, thinks of *Candy* and *Christian* and this one will surprise a few people."

***A Hard Day's Night*, in fact, set people…**
"Well, *A Hard Day's Night* was the one that made me famous. Maybe that was why I suddenly thought I'd like to be a film star, because all the critics and everyone were saying that piece I did with the child… but they don't know that the piece with the child I went straight from the Ad Lib out of me brain and really feeling down because I'd been drinking all night. That was a whole dialogue scene, but I was incapable of saying a line, so Dick *(Lester, the director)* had to use me somehow and he just kept making me walk round and look at the kid and that. So that's how that scene came off, and suddenly they say, 'Oh, you're a fantastic actor.'"

**It could be that you're a natural actor; you don't have to force it.**
"Well, that's what they said. I mean, I can do the walks, the funny looks. To make you laugh is not hard for me on film. I can pull faces and limp a bit."

**Would you say you were in movies because there's no other way you can express yourself enough now, particularly in music?**
"No, not now. I was just the one who fancied movies. I mean, suddenly I was in a position where I could do things that if I'd stayed as an engineer I'd never have the chance, but suddenly you're famous and The Beatles and people'll let you do anything. That was what was nice about it, because you were aloud to do things. Because, suddenly you're in a famous group you must be able to do everything, let 'em have a try."

**You haven't felt obliged to move in this direction because you thought, well, I've got 30 or so years to go and I must do something.**
"No, that's not the reason. Music is still more important to me, playing drums. That is still the all-time fave; when you get in with a crowd of guys. The difference with movies is you're on your own and you do a performance; you have people around you, but it's still down to your performance on screen. On record it's all together, and if five, ten musicians get together and get right on together, there's no feeling like it. If you're not a musician you'll never understand that feeling when six or however many individuals from all walks of life get together and just get it right on. No-one says anything, everyone knows that it's there. It's just fantastic."

**Why haven't you played in public since The Beatles split? You could've been a member of the Plastic Ono Band, surely, instead of Alan White, when they did Toronto?**
"Well, I played on one of their singles, 'Cold Turkey'."

**But you didn't actually go out in public.**
"No. Well, after that I thought, 'I don't wanna go out.' I think it was mainly because… it wasn't just because The Beatles split, but when we stopped I'd had enough, and I thought it would be the same, 'cos it ended up not very good. None of us were playing at the end of those tours. It's one of the reasons we gave up. I mean, I couldn't play on those tours. I thought we all deteriorated as musicians. It was only when we got in to the studio and worked for six months on the albums that we learned how to play again.

**Why is it you think you deteriorated as musicians? Surely with most musicians if you're on the road all the time there's less chance of going stale?**
"Yes, but you must realise that when we were on the road to what people are calling on the road is now vastly different. We were playing… the smallest audience was 30,000 or something, and we have to come across all that noise. They weren't listening properly and I didn't want 'em to listen. But they wanna listen to Crosby, Stills & Nash, James Taylor and all those people, playing nice guitar, singing songs, and they wanna appreciate them. I never really wanted to be appreciated by a crowd. If they were having a good time that was all I wanted."

**You wanted it to be a fun band rather than come out with a lot of heavy stuff.?**
"Yeah, right, though we did come out with a lot of heavy stuff which changed all the music scene through the years."

**On that bootleg from Shea Stadium the music isn't terribly good.**
"No, but we had some good times. Some days onstage, to keep us amused, I'd play some of the songs like a rumba, you know. You had to amuse yourself in the end or you'd have gone crazy."

## "Music is still more important to me, playing drums. When musicians get together there's no feeling like it"

**Why haven't there been more Beatles bootlegs?**
"We never actually did that much product that we didn't put out."

**There's not a lot of stuff left over from the sessions?**
"No, there's the Shea one, there's a few jams, there's a few of the 'Let It Be' album, a few tracks we never put out, because we decided we didn't want that to go out to the public – it wasn't to the standard that we wanted, and as musicians and performers you must allow us to decide what we think we should put out. That's how it should work. It's maybe a bit of a drag to all those people who even if you cough all over the album they like it, you know, but it's not a representation of us as artists."

**Who's got all that stuff that wasn't released?**
"It's around. Apple's got most of it, Apple and EMI. They can't release it unless we say. They can't just shove it out. They could've done it if we were Harry & The Peglegs, but we have quite a lot of say in what goes out in our name. In fact, we have all the say."

**How much stuff would you say there was? How many tracks? Fifty, or less?**
"No, no, nowhere near that. I mean, once you've cancelled out the Shea, and there were a few other tours that were recorded – the live stuff would do about three albums, I think – the actual tracks we did in the studio, the songs and jams I'd say there'd be about 20 or 30 tracks at the most. Out of the whole career, yeah. There's not that much. We put everything out because we always worked like a dog to get everything right. I mean, there are great

BETTMANN/CORBIS/REX FEATURES/CAMERA PRESS

rumours about there's enough material for another 25 years and all that. But you mustn't believe all that rubbish. It's like when you believe that Klaus *(Voormann, Plastic Ono Band bassist)* is gonna be the fourth Beatle. The Beatles is the most impossible group to change the line-up. They're the only group in the world that're individually known. Name me one group where everyone is known individually."

**The Stones maybe?**
"Not really, once you get past Mick and Keith a lot of people know Charlie and Bill, but Mick Taylor nobody knows. They used to know Brian a bit, I think, but it's mainly Mick and Keith. I wouldn't be interested in being The Beatles with someone else; it's not The Beatles. I'll be in a group with John and George and Klaus and call it The Ladders, but I don't think it would be The Beatles."

**Is there any chance of that happening?**
"Not yet. Well, it's a joke, we keep having laughs about it. It's not true. I haven't thought of it seriously, anyway."

**What about John and George?**
"What about them?"

**Do they take it seriously?**
"I don't know. I wouldn't think so. Ask them."

**Was there ever a leader of The Beatles?**
"No, usually one guy instigated it and then the rest went on their own. We all did one bit to fill it out. It's like someone would come up with an empty bag and we'd all dive in and fill it."

**I got the impression that after Brain Epstein died Paul assumed the leadership.**
"Yes, he did. I keep saying that and he keeps denying it, but I think that. That's the way I feel about it. It was a strange sort of a time for us, you know, when it's someone you've relied on in the business where we never got involved. We were just musicians doing our thing, and Brian looked after everything."

**What would've happened if Epstein hadn't died? Would you still be together?**
"Yeah, I think so. We were going into the studios and really getting away from Brian because he couldn't organise tours and things like that. He still would've been with us, but we were then just slipping into the studios, where he couldn't really get involved, so I don't know what would've happened."

**Do you think if he hadn't died the four Beatles would have kept together or at least been prevented from splitting do quickly?**
"No, I couldn't answer that. It's impossible. It's like saying, 'What would you have done if you hadn't joined The Beatles? What would you be doing now?' I dunno. Working in a factory somewhere, or playing in some little club. I've no idea. You're just surmising."

**What did you think of John's last album?**
"Some of the tracks are just incredible. The only thing… it's very personal. That's why I didn't think it did as well as it should have done. What he was saying was very personal to himself.

**Don't you agree that it was rather masochistic?**
"Well, he was going through a scene, you know. He'd been through that primal scream thing and he was coming back and telling you what he'd been through. There's no real toetappers on it. 'Working Class Hero' is an all-time great. They get hung up on the word '*fuck*', the BBC and all those, and that's what's the drag for me. You can sit with some people and they swear and you think, 'Christ, stop it!' and you can sit with people who swear because it's a word and they just use it, and that's how it was on the album – it wasn't for effect, it was important to the concept.

**What about 'All Things Must Pass'?**
"Well, George's is sensational. There are so many great tracks on it, good tracks, and so much work. You can feel everything about the album. He paid his dues on that album."

**What about Paul's albums?**
"I feel sad with Paul's albums because I believe he's a great artist, incredibly creative, incredibly clever, and he disappoints me on his albums. I don't think there's one tune on 'Ram'."

**You get on OK now don't you?**
"It got better after the case. We phoned each other and talked a bit."

**I get the impression, though, there was maybe one time when it would've come to blows?**
"No. It would never come to blows."

**What about the story that John and George sent you round to Paul's to ask if he'd hold the release of his album so it wouldn't interfere with 'Let It Be'?**
"They didn't send me round, it's a misquote. They, as directors of that company, wrote a letter to him and I didn't think it fair that some office lad should take something like that around. But he got angry because we were asking him to hold his album back and the album was very important to him. He told me to get out of his house. He went crazy."

**So it's not true that he physically attacked you?**
"No, he shouted and pointed at me."

**Do you think it was inevitable that The Beatles split up?**
"No. It only got to break up when we all decided, 'Let's do other things than The Beatles.' But I really would've liked to do individual things and Beatles things. The Beatles, we were a great group. We were a good group, man, and there was a lot of good ideas and a lot of good music came out of them."

**"I feel sad with Paul's albums because I believe he's a great artist, but I don't think there's one tune on 'Ram'"**

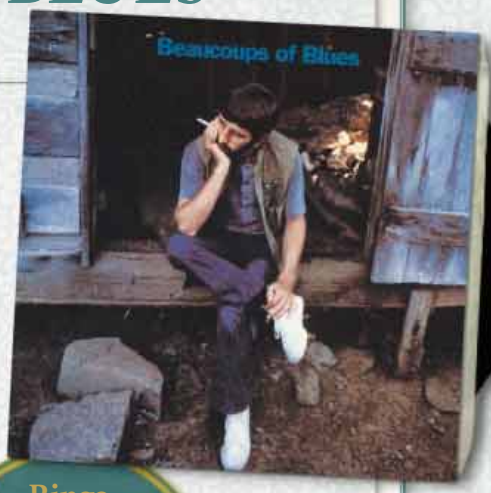
# BEAUCOUPS OF BLUES

## Ringo Starr Apple

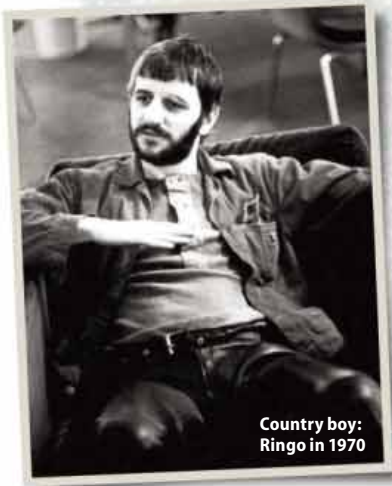
REVIEWED: MM, 3 October 1970, page 18

I can imagine this album being greeted with snorts of derision in "aware" circles, who will remember the Ringo of 'Sentimental Journey' and *"Thaar gonna put me in th' mooovies"*.

In fact, listened to honestly, 'Beaucoups Of Blues' forces one to abdicate from any hip posture and admit, just this once, to sheer uncomplicated enjoyment. Alright, Ringo isn't the world's greatest velvet-toned balladeer, but here his performances have conviction and charm which excuse the surprisingly rare flat note and the occasional amusing Scouse inflection. Much of the credit must go to Peter Drake and Chuck Howard, who together masterminded the sessions, producing some of the most enjoyable backdrops I've heard in a long while. Three tracks at least stand out: 'Without Her', which is simply an incredibly beautiful song and would make a world-wide smash single because it has the breadth to appeal to everyone; the wistful 'Woman Of The Night', which has a particularly attractive chorus; and '$15 Draw', with knockout Nashville guitar from Jerry Reed. The back-up playing is as magnificent as one would expect, and glints of Charlie McCoy's harmonica and The Jordanaires' vocals peep through frequently. One can imagine thinking that Ringo had a ball making this album. I had a ball listening to it. ***Richard Williams***




**Ringo isn't the world's greatest balladeer but he has conviction and charm**



Country boy: Ringo in 1970

All white on the night: George onstage at Madison Square Garden

# George creates greatest rock spectacle of decade

## Nancy Lewis phones in from New York after witnessing the concert for Bangla Desh at Madison Square Garden

NME, 7 August 1971, page 17

One of the most exciting events of rock history took place Sunday – George Harrison And Friends at Madison Square Garden. It really was the super show to outdo all others and George proved that he is totally together as a stage performer. It was unbelievably fantastic!

There were two concerts – one in the evening and one at night. The shows were really alike with only the running order of numbers changed. It was such a short time to get things together, I was amazed to see such an organised programme. It could not be faulted.

The show started only a couple of minutes late, and the audience of 20,000 plus burst into thunderous applause as the house lights dimmed and George Harrison walked onstage, dressed in brown denims and shirt.

George thanked everyone for coming and explained the show was divided into two sections. The first part was to feature the music of Ravi Shankar. Then Ravi came out and sat on a raised platform which was covered with an oriental rug. The sitar master was accompanied by two men and one lady in a sari.

The scent of much incense filled the air as Ravi played two numbers and the audience gave due respect to this quieter portion of the programme which ran about half an hour.

After this the house was completely darkened. While many members of the crew started reorganising the stage, a film showing the horrors endured by the Pakistan refugees was shown on two giant screens, accompanied by the Harrison single, 'Bangla Desh'.

Sitar man: Ravi Shankar

Shortly after the film ended , the stage was lit again and everyone waited with eager anticipation to see who would emerge. Then, with no further hoopla, they appeared – what must be the ultimate supergroup of all time. On drums we had Ringo Starr and Jim Keltner, Klaus Voormann was on bass, Billy Preston was at the organ, Jesse Davis, Eric Clapton and George Harrison were on lead guitars, three Badfinger members were on acoustic guitars. There was a six-piece horn section under Jim Horn, and finally there was a chorus of eight standing at the back, some of whom looked familiar as faces from the Mad Dogs & Englishmen entourage.

Harrison, by this time, had changed into a striking white suit with a rusty orange shirt looking very much in command.

The set opened instantly with a full version of 'Wah Wah'. Before the applause had a chance to die down, George picked up an acoustic guitar and the group went into 'My Sweet Lord', followed by another Harrison number, 'Hear Me Lord'. Billy Preston took over the lead singing next with a rousing version of 'That's The Way God Planned It' and for the final chorus of the song Billy left his seat at the organ and started walking across the front of the stage which really brought on the cheers.

Then the group began the opening for 'It Don't Come Easy', with Ringo handling the solo lead from his spot at the drums. Next song was 'Beware Of Darkness' with George and Leon Russell sharing lead vocals followed by 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps'. Leon Russell took the spotlight next for a wild version of 'Jumpin' Jack Flash'.

The band left the stage, leaving only George and one Badfinger member onstage, with acoustic guitars, singing 'Here Comes The Sun'. Though I thought they had left the stage, out of the dark, chanting voices joined in with George.

Though there had been plenty of rumours about it, the audience still went absolutely mad when George brought on "an old friend of ours", Bob Dylan.

It is the first time Dylan has appeared anywhere since the Isle Of Wight two years ago and the response he drew was absolutely overwhelming. When he hit the first chorus on his acoustic guitar the audience respectfully quietened down.

After 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall', he was joined by George on guitar, Leon on bass and Ringo on tambourine and another Dylan number I couldn't identify followed, and then he went into two of his classics, 'Blowin' In The Wind' and 'Mr Tambourine Man'. Dylan's closing song was 'Just Like A Woman', on which George and Leon came to the mic to join in for the chorus. Smiling and waving Dylan then left the stage to the accompaniment of a gigantic standing ovation.

The whole original entourage then returned to the stage, and George took time out to introduce them individually, after which he went into 'Something'. At the end of the song, George left the stage, followed by everyone else. After much stamping, cheering and applauding, however, the band returned. George again thanked everyone for coming and made a request that when they were ready to leave, everyone please leave quietly as there has been some trouble outside.

After this he broke into the song written specially for the tragic situation he has tried to help, 'Bangla Desh'. Then he exited again and the concert had clearly come to an end.

Not only has George succeeded in gathering together one of the most impressive supergroups for a concert but he has been solely instrumental in bringing the plight of the Pakistan refugees into the eye of the public. Proceeds from the concert, and the promised album and film of the event, should bring his final contributions into the millions of dollars.

It is unfortunate that the evening was marred by mobs outside trying to gatecrash, but the problems were only incidental compared to the good that was accomplished.

To me this concert really proved what can be attained when top musicians get together for a cause. Musically it was simply brilliant!

All of the musicians involved seemed to enjoy themselves greatly and the music they were producing that evening amplified this. The audience was very, very enthusiastic – but they actually listened to the performance and only burst out into applause between numbers.

Whoever engineered the sound should also receive high marks, as it was without a doubt the best sound I have ever heard in Madison Square Garden. I was in the third row of the orchestra and not at all deafened, and yet everyone throughout the vast theatre got the sound.

George has stepped into his role of an up-front leader with great ease and style, and it is a role I believe we may see George in more often.

In the meantime, thank you George Harrison for one of the outstanding evenings in rock history – and thank you for being a person who is really involved with contributing to a very worthy cause.

**This concert proved what can be attained when musicians get together**

## A SECOND OPINION

**George Harrison at Madison Square Garden on Sunday had put the seal on that which Muhammad Ali could not prove – that a hero of the '60s can reappear and conquer. George was a knock-out!**

**Twenty thousand people, twice over, stood cheered the greatest pop concert in two decades. Great, if one takes the meaning to be fine music.**

**It was George's day. He had arranged it – he had worried about it. He cared tremendously about the purpose – that all the money went to the aid of the children who were the victims of the Bangla Desh tragedy.**

**There was $250,000 in the box office – and nobody touched a penny. Every red cent was on a cheque from the Madison Square Garden management direct to UNICEF to use for the kids of Bangla Desh.**

**The overheads? It cost over $100,000 to put on the show in expenses. And Allen Klein, president of ABKCO Industries Inc and the business manager of Apple, picked up the tab personally on the hall.**

**Ravi Shankar, who had originally interested George in the venture, proved why he is India's greatest classical sitar player. A Bengali himself, he had persuaded George to ask friends to play the concerts as a benefit for his homeland.**

**It was George who got in touch with Dylan; it was George who invited the fabulous line-up to appear. And one has Ringo's authority for saying so because they were in constant touch by telephone arranging this while George was in Los Angeles and Ringo was filming in Spain.**

**Dylan's contribution was tremendous – the audience stood and applauded for a full three minutes without sitting down. The big band played on. And the audience stood as George concluded with 'Bangla Desh'.**

**It's a lovely number – and Madison Square Garden on Sunday was a lovely, peaceful place in spite of 2,000 people outside who tried to break down police barriers to get in.**

**The authorities inside said it was the best organised concert they had ever had. *Les Perrin***

**It was George's day. He arranged it, he cared about the purpose**

I'd play for you anytime: George and Bob Dylan

ARTIST: George Harrison
SINGLE: Bangla Desh
LABEL: Apple
RELEASED: August 1971

**George is unquestionably a very sincere and dedicated young man, and one can immediately detect the despair and pity in his voice as he sings of the appalling plight of the East Pakistanis. Whether his motive was to bring the tragedy to our attention, or merely to get it off his chest, I'm not quite sure – but his lyric is bound to cause some heart-searching.**

**As it develops, brass and woodwind make their presence felt, and the routine builds to a jazz-orientated crescendo.**

**Not so strong melodically as 'My Sweet Lord', but still nagging and insistent. The swinging scoring does tend to detract somewhat from George's message, but certainly increases its commerciality. Obviously a hit, but it seems incongruous that the troubles of Bangla Desh will keep the youngsters dancing happily in the discotheques!**

**Opens almost like a sermon, then the beat comes in and the tempo quickens, as George wails fervently to a backing of a solid rhythm section and handclaps.**

***Derek Johnson*** NME, 7 August 1971, page 8

CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES-TIME LIFE

NME, 31 July 1971, page 3

# BROUGHT TO BOOK

## As John and Yoko publicise the launch of her paperback, the former Beatle tells Alan Smith his next album is the greatest

The Lennons have been holding court this week, unashamedly plugging Yoko's new *Grapefruit* paperback from the fine but homely splendour of their white Georgian residence near Ascot. Macrobiotics out of the window, Lennon himself drinks a beverage called Dr Pepper (with sodium benzoate) and we sit and talk at the low pine table in a quarry-tiled kitchen that's all sunshine and stainless steel. Ordered chaos prevails and there's a film team ("been here a month, going back to sanity") and a photographer from a straight daily. Yoko comes into the room with black hotpants and a deep cleavage. "Now," says the photographer, "I wonder if I could have a picture of you cooking?"

Paperback writers: John and Yoko publicise *Grapefruit*, 1971

"Cooking?!" explodes Lennon, "in an outfit like that? You must be effin' crackers!"

His own recording studio is behind the kitchen ("it's better than EMI's, because I've got newer equipment") and in there I listen to his new album for autumn release. There is no doubt whatsoever, it's the best thing he's ever done. I know it – he knows it.

"Isn't it *great*? This'll show 'em, the bastards."

The thing with the new album is that he's hit a medium line between the need to bare his soul and the need to make good music. It's not only worthwhile, it's more than usually commercial. And as for side one, track one, a gently felt journey into his imagination… tremendous.

It's a nice day that day, and Lennon is in fine form; hair cropped, face fresh.

***NME*: What happens when you've finished the promotion of *Grapefruit*?**

John Lennon: "When that's over Yoko's having an off-Broadway play in New York. It's based on the book, and it's called *Of A Grapefruit In A World Apart*. She did it ten years ago at Carnegie, and now she's sort of pepping it up.

"There might be an off-Broadway play of my book, but I've got to read the script and I find it very hard to say yes or no to the people who're going to do it. I've been carrying it around for months."

**How about the Bangla Desh concert in the States?**

"That's George, but I won't be there because we have to go to the Virgin Islands to go to court about Kyoko, and then I have to go to Texas about it too – 'cos Tony's suing us from Texas or somethin'. If we got the kid back we might do it. But otherwise…

"Is that today's paper? What's in it? 'Paul And Wife… Sued'. Oh that, that's been goin' on for years.

"You see, what Paul's mistake here was, he tried to take it all for 'Another Day'. Now, I wrote 'God Save Us' with Yoko, and 'Do The Oz' and there's one track on the album she wrote. She had written other things, even 'Julia', back in the Beatles days.

"What we did was, we just called Lew Grade, and they know she writes music, and we said, 'Look, we've done it, so what do you want to do about it?' And he said, 'Well, let's split it', so we just split it. Ono Music and Northern Songs.

"The thing with Paul is, he wants all the action. He wants it all. It's not just the money. It's the principle, I think, for instance, that Paul's cost us probably a million since he started this thing. And his tax counsel's just come up and given us exactly the tax advice we gave him two years ago, to tell him exactly not to do all what he's done. So it's cost us quite a bit… trying to see it his way."

**Does it needle you, deep down, or maybe only about so far?**

"Only so far. I tell you, it's like Monopoly, only with real money. And it's costing us a fortune, so the sooner it's over the better."

**About your comments on *Parkinson*, on the possibility of making up with Paul…**

"Yeah. We were great on that show. It's like they said, 'Isn't that old John we used to love?' I said, 'It is.' I said, 'It *is*!'"

**So how about the possibility of reconciliation with Paul?**

"I was asked the usual thing on the show about Paul, and I said that maybe about a year or two after all the money thing's settled, we might have dinner or forget about it, y'know. We might even celebrate getting it all over with. I don't know. I can't tell. And there's no possibility at all, 'til it's settled."

**I'd like to talk to Yoko about her book.**

"She'll be back in a minute and she won't let you talk about anything else."

**Is Yoko a withdrawn woman… or shy?**

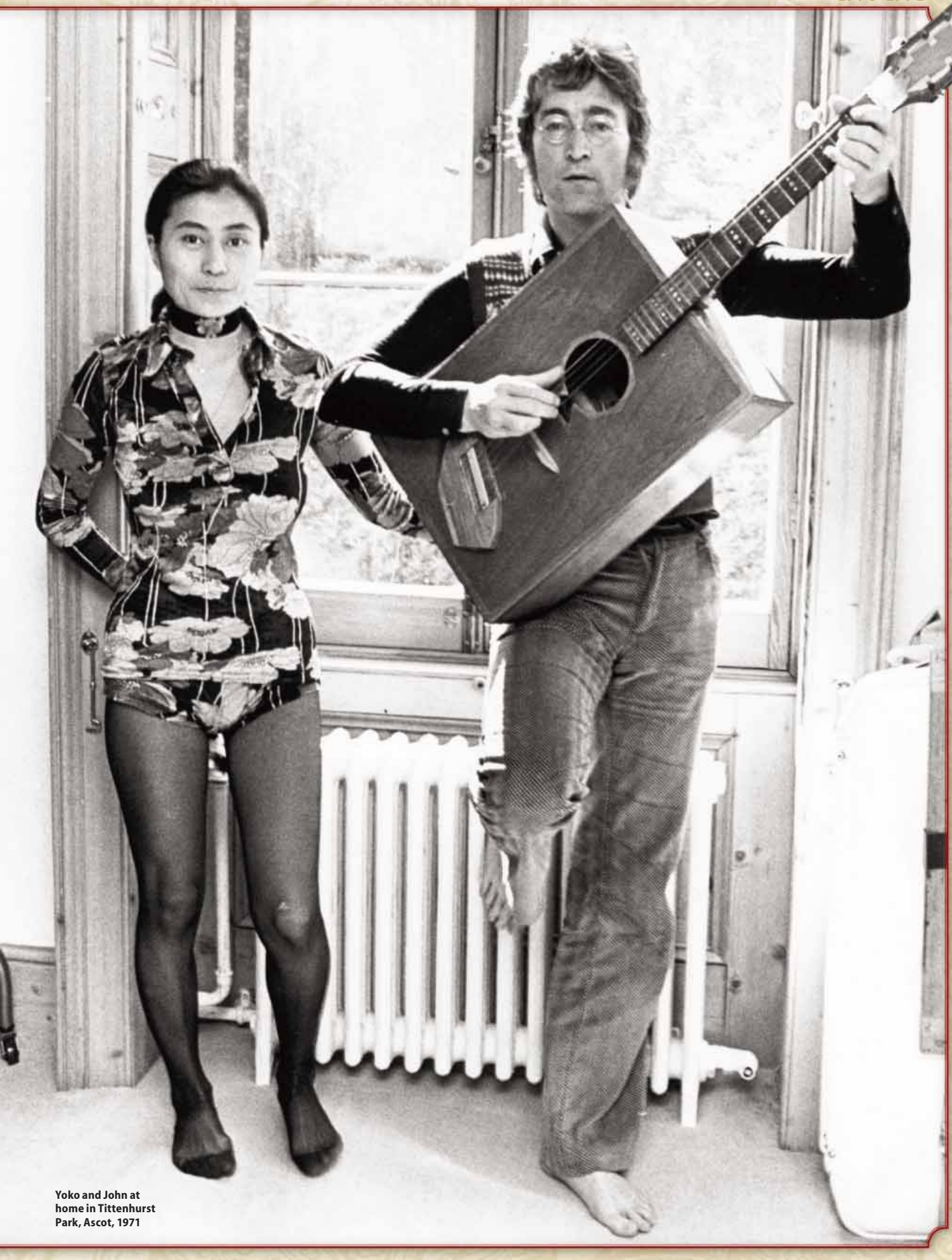
"Oh shy, sure. She won't ever say anything, unless you actually ask her. Although she might do now, because we're really on the push for *Grapefruit*. We've really been selling it. We've done appearances in Selfridges, the Claude Gill bookshop, interviews every day. We're really trying to sell it.

"Yoko's like me. All extroverts are shy. I'm shy, unless I know somebody. And then I'm a bighead."

**YOKO BURSTS IN** at this moment, happy, warm, eyes afire. "It's so beautiful, because Mimi's coming around and we're really going to be friends and I thought I'd invite her here and to stay and meet my mother and father and it'll be really great."

This understandable flood of pleasure stemmed from the possibility of a coming together between Yoko and Aunt Mimi – *the* Aunt Mimi – but

TOM HANLEY-REDFERNS/HUTTON-GETTY IMAGES



**Yoko and John at home in Tittenhurst Park, Ascot, 1971**

*"Imagine there's no stainless steel hobs…"*: the Lennons at home

Lennon was strangely ill at ease with such raw emotion.

Yoko told how Mimi had seen them both on TV, and there was now acceptance again. "John is now looking like what I used to like."

**How did the Primal Scream therapy affect your marriage?**

John: "Yes, there was a great strain on it, but it brought us closer together in the end. OK Yoko, now come and get on with yer plugging."

Yoko Ono: "If we can get Mimi and everybody here together, it will be some dream. I'm going to send her a really nice copy of my book.

**Yoko, in *Grapefruit* you give instructions to readers to burn the book once it's finished with. Is that serious?**

Yoko: "Oh, yes. If you go back on the things in it all the time, then you always have to rely on the book. But once you've read it, you know, it's here in your head. This book is really just to give a frame of mind. Anybody can get anything out of it, without special skill.

"It was like The Beatles being famous. They had a frame of mind to be famous. And they were famous."

**Yoko's art seems to me to exclude appreciation of the more established works of art, the Mona Lisa and so on.**

Yoko: "I'm not somebody who wants to burn the Mona Lisa. That's the great difference between some revolutionaries and me. I'm saying make the Mona Lisa into something like a shirt. Change the value of it."

John: "Yoko feels that any woman can create, a man destroys and an artist revalues. An artist doesn't create because everything's already here. A scientist doesn't create, he discovers."

Yoko: "It was like those four boys got together to make The Beatles, and without kidding anybody they changed the world. And that's beautiful. That's all I'm trying to do.

"The only thing with The Beatles was that they changed it, and then they stopped there. They weren't going on being revolutionaries. Tell him, John, about that Japanese temple…"

John: "Yeah, well there was this Japanese monk, and it happened in the last 20 years. He was in love with this big golden temple, y'know, he really dug it, like. And you know he was so in love with it, he burnt it down so that it would never deteriorate.

"That's what I did with The Beatles. I never wanted them to be has-beens or the Crazy Gang. It was like they were dragging them out of their deathbeds to give a laff… I wanted to kill it while it was on top.

"Remember, I did say ten years ago, 'I'm not going to be singing 'She Loves You' at 30.' Although I expressed it that way I really meant that, by 30, I would have woken up a bit, or changed my sights."

**Isn't there room today for The Beatles as a living band? You're surely now all far more aware as people. Is the difficulty that you're all too egocentric to be able to work together fully, even if you tried?**

John: "We always were egocentric. But look, George is on my new album. The only reason Ringo wasn't on it was because he was abroad, making his movie. So then the three of us would have been on, but then it wouldn't have been The Beatles… because I would have had final say. There would have been no decision making by George and Ringo, other than if I liked the idea I'd take it. Which is what happened in The Beatles – but then it was a bit more diplomatic.

## "The fact is, The Beatles have left school. We have to get a job and that's made us really work harder"

"So yes, that's quite possible about The Beatles as a working unit… because I might play on George's and Ringo's, if they wanted my style of playing!

"But imagine how we've flowered since then. George is suddenly the biggest seller of all of us. I think my music's improved a million-fold, lyric-wise and everything. And Ringo's coming out and writing 'It Don't Come Easy', and now he's gonna write the title song for this cowboy thing he's in.

"The fact is, The Beatles have left school… and we have to get a job. And that's made us really work harder. I think we're much better than we ever where when we were together.

"Look at us today. I'd sooner have 'Ram', 'Plastic Ono Band', George's album and Ringo's single and his movies than 'Let It Be' or 'Abbey Road'."

Yoko: "If the four of them had gone on, then they would have suffocated each other."

**Do you resent journalists talking about the past?**

John: "No, I don't resent it: I'm always doing it myself. Maybe I'll meet you or Ray Connolly and I'll say, 'Hey, d'you remember when we did that, or this?' It's only human.

"Something funny happened the other day. I went into Apple and they said, 'Jesus you look like a Beatle again.' And do you know something? Just for a second, I'd forgotten what a Beatle was. Really.

"It was 'cos I'd just got back from New York, and I hadn't been a Beatle at all. It'd just been me and Yoko, and we'd been doing all sorts of things."

**Do either of you now feel any pain of any kind, any problems, either mental or physical. Or are you totally cleansed of any hang-ups?**

John: "Oh no. I just know myself better, that's all, so I can handle myself better. That Janov thing, the Primal Scream and so on, it does affect you because you recognise yourself in there. The difference between us and Janov, as Yoko puts it, is that the past we remember is the past we create now, because of the necessity of the present."

**Tell me about your philosophy of life. Many of your comments have been construed as extreme left wing or Communist.**

John: "They knock me for saying 'Power To The People', and say that no one section should have power. Crap. The people aren't a section. The people means everyone.

"I think that everybody should own everything equally and that the people should own part of the factories and they should have some say in who is the boss and who does what.

"It might be like communism, but I don't really know what real communism is. There is no real communist state in the world, you must realise that. Russia isn't. It's a fascist state. The socialism I talk about is a British socialism. We'd have a nice socialism here. A British socialism."

### And John on the subject of his album

LENNON talking about his forthcoming "Imagine" LP out next month:

"It's the effin best thing I've ever done . . . fantastic. This'll show 'em. It's not a personal thing like the last album, but I've learned a lot and this is better in every way, technique and so on. It's lighter, too. I was feeling happy. There's a guy called George Harrison who's on it, and who does some mother of solos. George used to be with the Bubbles or somebody. Then there's a guy called Nicky Hopkins.

"Then there's Jim Gordon on drums, Alan White on drums, Jim Keltner on drums, and they're fantastic. Yoko's on whip, and that's very good. Whip and mirror, actually. Then we had John Barnham on a few things, King Curtis is on sax, the Flux Fiddlers are on violins. Eighty per cent was recorded here in seven days. I took them, re-mixed them, and took it to America like they used to do it in the old days.

"It took me nine days to make this album and ten to make the last one. So I'm gettin' faster."

**Shouldn't "the people" own part of Apple then? Shouldn't the employees have a slice of the profits?**
John: "They would. In socialist Britain, I'm not sure how something like a record company would be run, but they would certainly have a piece. The thing at the moment is, it's not mine. What do you think this whole thing is that's goin' on? If I had my way, it would be different altogether. If the workers ever took it over, they could have it. I said that years ago."

**Don't you both spend a great deal of time filming yourselves and having yourselves filmed?**
John: "Why not? It's home movies. And the ultimate movie is a home movie. Jean-Luc Godard is making 8mm films. Home movies is where it's at. Poetry's done at home. Why shouldn't movies be the same way?"

Yoko: "If we were putting ourselves in films all the time, so what? We do not pretend."

**Are you now even remotely interested in singles or chart success?**
John: "Yeah! Sure! I get all the musical papers and the daily papers. I get my world chart thing and *Billboard* and the other one, *Cashbox*, and I mark off all the Apple records including Paul, all around the world.

"I tell you, The Beatles are blasting the world up. We've got records everywhere… and two or three in every chart. It's fantastic. George, Ringo, Paul and me are in every chart in the world. It's great.

"I get a kick out of it both because I'm getting through to all those people, and because I'm doing it on my own or with Yoko. It's all that. And I like singles and not LPs, really, because I like the idea of saying everything in three minutes."

**Did you listen to 'Ram'?**
John: "Yes, of course I did. A couple of times. The first time I heard it I thought, 'Fucking hell, it's awful.' And then, ahem, the second time I fixed the record player a bit, and it sounded better.

"I enjoyed a couple, like a little bit of 'My Dog It's Got Three Legs' or something, and the intro to 'Ram On' and the intro to 'Uncle Albert'. I can't stand the second track from the… I mean, well, that doesn't matter anyway.

"You know, I think the other album he did was better in a way. At least there were some songs on it.

"I don't like this dribblin' pop opera jazz, y'know. I like pop *records* that are *pop records*. I know you yourself didn't like it. I was surprised when I saw that bit…"

**I didn't like the last Beatles album either. I thought the whole thing came over as some kind of cardboard epitaph… lots of cardboard, not much music.**
Yoko: "I think you were right, probably."

John: "Except for 'Across The Universe'!"

**And the bootleg tape…**
John: "Ah, you've got that. So you see what Spector did don'tcha? I'm glad the bootleg is going about, because it shows that Paul was wrong when he was putting down Spector."

**Is there a song on your new album which refers to Paul… lines about a *"pretty face"* and the sound of *"muzak"*?**
John: "*(Smiling)* Er, there's a song that could well be a statement about Paul. It could be interpreted that way. But then it could be about an old chick I'd known… or somethin'!"

TOM HANLEY-REDFERNS

# IMAGINE
## John Lennon

Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 11 September 1971, page 10

Copies of the upcoming Lennon album 'Imagine' are in circulation, but rarely can the GPO have delivered such a fine gift this side of Christmas. I had first heard the tracks courtesy of the Lennons during a visit to discuss *Grapefruit*, but it was no more than one hearing and I took it upon myself to leave the tape recorder on the kitchen table for fear of being considered the next bootleg king. Like, I don't do no rip-offs, man.

The album is superb. Beautiful. One step away from the chill of his recent total self-revelation, and yet a giant leap towards commerciality without compromise. The songs have structure, direction and melody; guts, sensitivity and class.

Let me put it this way: listening to this LP is like hearing McCartney ballads, and McCartney rockers, the way McCartney should be doing them. It's like Lennon showing McCartney how to tighten up the flab in his music, and its worth, without the necessity for a Primal Scream. And Lennon, who can occasionally be aggressively misguided, to put it at its mildest, is absolutely right when he calls it "the best thing I've ever done".

Really I believe that 'Imagine' could become a kind of musical meeting point between the whistling butcher's boy vs the musically aware… and never more than in the title track.

This is a slow, delicate and searching piece in which Lennon, underscored by a quietly rumbling piano and drifting strings, asks us all to picture a world without war and misery and hunger. *"You may say that I'm a dreamer"*, he sings, *"but I'm not the only one"*.

The second track on side one is 'Crippled Inside', a singalong hunky chunky uptempo honky-tonk piece with Lennon in raucous voice and generally spirited style.

Number three, 'Jealous Guy', runs for four minutes eight seconds, and it's another quiet floater in which Lennon sings a solitary and undisputedly moving apology of love. It's got whistling strings and understated bass and drums, and there's a beautiful frailty from start to finish.

'It's So Hard' is a blues cut with a Sun feel until we get to a fascinating background with strings reminiscent of some old Hollywood movie set in the Orient.

Last track on this first side is no less than six minutes six seconds long, and it's 'I Don't Wanna Be A Soldier Mama'. I was reminded of an evil swamp sound recorded in a church hall, but figure that one out when you hear it.

Side two opens with a *2001* touch in 'Gimme Some Truth', but then evolving into a long Lennon statement of the things and the values he's come to reject – a device you may recall from the last album. In this he talks of earning money for rope, money for dope, and say's he's sick and tired of *"neurotic… psychotic"*.

'Oh My Love' is the next song and, following the careful programme evident on the rest of the album, it's a low-key piece with the odd tap of a triangle, nocturnal piano, and Lennon singing that *"for the first time in my life, I can see"*. Like so much else on this album the melody is superbly memorable.

The longest track on side two is 'How Do You Sleep?' and it is unquestionably an open letter to McCartney. Musically it's tremendous but this is a song which will be remembered more for its lyrics for a long time to come.

*"So 'Sgt Pepper' took you by surprise"*, calls Lennon, *"those freaks was right when they said you were dead"*, then continues, *"the one mistake you made was in your head"*.

Or then how about *"You live with straights who'll tell you you were a king… The only thing you done was yesterday/Since you're gone you're just another day"*?

In the following lines he makes the point that *"A pretty face may last a year or two/But pretty soon they'll see what you can do"*. Then it comes: *"The sound you make is muzak to my ears/You must have learned something in all those years"*.

There are two other strong songs: the emotive and tender 'How?' and the closer 'Oh Yoko!', which is a strident belter with harmonica and Lennon fooling from one speaker to the other before it fades away.

There are no duds on this 'Imagine' album. Lennon rides high! ***Alan Smith***

**There are no duds on this 'Imagine' album. Lennon rides high!**

John at the controls in his home studio, Ascot, 1971

# George Harrison describes his struggle to help the refugees in Asia – and toasts his new studio

NME, 16 October 1971, page 6

Up to the latter quarter of 1970, George Harrison was the mystery man of The Beatles. The lead guitarist who didn't write… except for the occasional album track. The Beatle who'd probed more deeply into Indian mysticism and culture than the other three, the one who introduced the others to the teachings of the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the man who popularised the sitar as a rock instrument when his beautiful 'Within You, Without You' appeared on 'Sgt Pepper'.

During the slow, almost agonising period of accusation and denial which heralded the parting of The Beatles, George produced two solo albums, 'Wonderwall Music' and 'Electronic Sound', both of which passed off without too much notice being taken of them by a press that was far too concerned with the daily "happenings" of John, Yoko, McCartney and Klein.

Beatles song publisher Dick James didn't even bother to sign George up to a songwriting contract when he sealed the fate of the Lennon/McCartney duo.

But the strong influences that had been brought to bear on George during his quiet "background" period with the other three had started to gel into what was to prove to be a phenomenal songwriting talent and, during the latter half of 1970, he was found to be working away on his first real solo album.

When this was eventually released, George Harrison finally received the acclaim from the media that he'd deserved for so long. He also received his fair share of trouble… first from the composers of the Eurovision Song Contest winner 'Congratulations', who claimed against a spoof version of the song that appears on 'All Things Must Pass', and then, more seriously, a court action was started by the composers of the old Chiffons hit 'He's So Fine', who claimed that George's worldwide hit from the album, 'My Sweet Lord', bore more than just a slight resemblance to their song. That court action is still pending.

George's follow-up to 'My Sweet Lord' was 'Bangla Desh' and it was principally about this subject that we talked when we met at the party held in London's Savile Row to celebrate the opening of Apple's plush new basement studios.

George was the only ex-Beatle present and, as such, was quickly surrounded by journalists, all forgetting the purpose of their visit.

George is dressed casually, his beard hanging in straggly streaks across his shirt and his amazingly penetrating eyes taking in everything that surrounds him.

The 'Bangla Desh' album tape is playing very loudly over the studio speakers and George is explaining his current campaign to try and get the forthcoming three-album set released at the minimum price.

"There was a little trouble with Bob's *(Dylan)* contribution because at first, it looked as if his record company wouldn't allow us *(Apple)* to release his part on the record but that, along with all the other contributions, has been resolved now, everybody's given up their royalties – I've even persuaded EMI to manufacture the album for cost.

"It'll be a three-album set edited from the best parts of the concert and, if everybody contributes what they've said, it means that we'll be able to sell the album for a lot less than we normally would and, hopefully, sell a lot more albums.

"I don't want to ask people to pay over £6 for the set and I don't want to make any money for myself out of it. At that price we'd probably sell 100,000 albums but, if the price were reduced, we'd probably sell more like half a million and, as the profit remains constant, that's a lot more money for the relief and refugees.

"It's with this in mind that I went to see Patrick Jenkin. He's the Chief Financial Under-Secretary to the Chancellor Of The Exchequer and I asked if it would be possible to reduce, or even scrub completely, the purchase tax on the record.

"Unfortunately, he seemed to think that it was more important for this country to get the tax than for extra money to go to the starving kids in Bangla Desh and, I'm afraid, he refused.

George with Pete Ham of Badfinger, Apple Studios, 1971

## "I even threatened to leave the country… The Beatles earned a lot for the government"

"I even threatened to leave the country and go and live abroad… you know, The Beatles used to earn a lot of revenue for the government but now, as individuals, the amount that we get them in taxes and foreign earnings must be considerably more."

George also said that he's agreed not to make public the facts of that meeting but that he'd decided to tell everybody because he was really disappointed. "They seemed to think that I was asking too much, but I don't think that anything is too much when you're trying to help millions of starving people."

A large sum of money was raised at the concert and a good deal more will be raised in record royalities (an estimated $18,000,000 if the album sells a million throughout the world) and George has other fingers in the pie to raise yet more money.

"I'm asking EMI to reduce the price of the album even more and, at the moment, I'm editing the film of the concert with Bob and that will be sold to television companies throughout the world. Whichever one in any particular country that makes the highest bid."

With $250,000 from the Madison Square Garden concert and a potential of £18,000,000 from the record and more from the film, the fund is swelling to enormous proportions. How did George think the money would be used?

"What we'll probably do is to set up a fund which will then distribute the money for the best purposes."

With Bangla Desh involving him so heavily I wondered whether George was conscious of the need to make money for himself. "I certainly need to," was the reply. "Everybody has to work for a living.

"There's a possibility that I'll do other concerts and I'll continue to record but, at the moment, I'm fully occupied with working out the details of the Bangla Desh thing which are all in my head."

We returned to the subject for which we'd all gathered, the half-million pound studio that Apple have been building for two years. As I walked in, an Apple executive remarked, with a note of sadness in his voice, that the studio was constructed because "The Beatles said we want the finest studio in the world for us to record in. It's only a shame that they're not together now to use it".

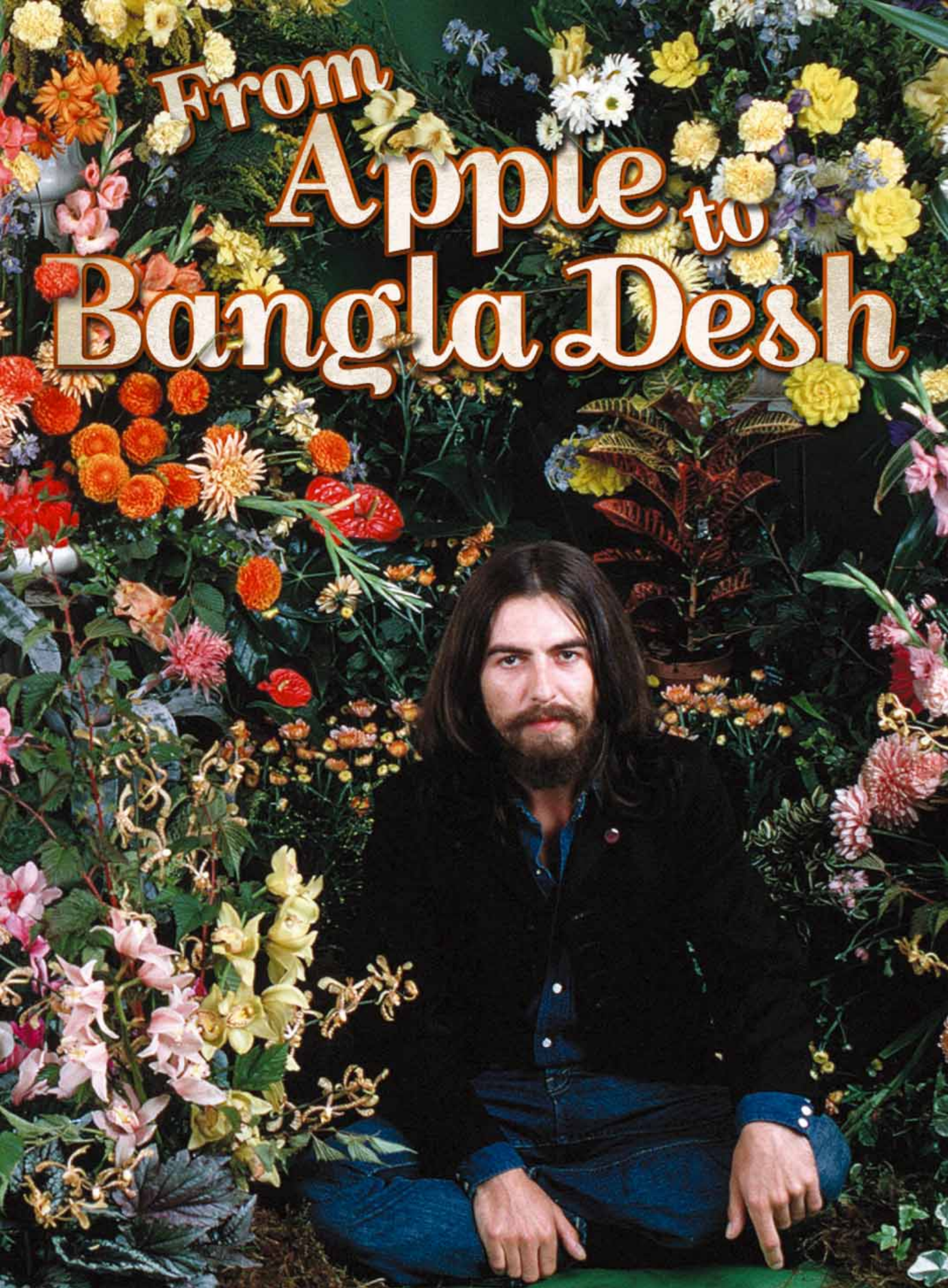
I asked George if he'd still be using it. "It is a bit sad that we're not together to use it but I'll still be using it and, don't forget, the Apple label still has other artists who'll definitely use it and it'll be available for outside people to use, like the Stones."

The Beatles may not be around any more but the "Apple scruffs" whom George immortalised on 'All Things Must Pass' are still around in force.

I had to push my way through a crowd of them as I left the studio and, as I wandered along Savile Row, I wondered whether the refugees of Bangla Desh would ever realise that the new future that they're facing is a result of what was happening in a Liverpool cellar almost nine years ago. ***John Halsall***

CAMERA PRESS-WOLFGANG HEILEMANN/RETNA

# From Apple to Bangla Desh



# Melody Maker

DECEMBER 18, 1971 7p weekly USA 30 cents


**64-PAGE CHRISTMAS ISSUE!**

## New budget LP selling at full pric

# ELP HIT OUT

A MAJOR row broken out betw Emerson, Lake Palmer's manager and record stores complaints by fans shops are charging high a price for group's latest alb "Pictures At An Exh tion."

Certain record sh ELP's management have covered, are charging m than £2 for the album inst of the special low price £1.49 that the gr requested.

In its fold-out slee the record appears to be normal priced album, a not a budget release. Co sequently fans have be paying full price for it — a complaints flooded in aft Emerson's earlier statemen that the group wanted t put it out cheaper than normal album.

"Certain shops are sel ing 'Pictures At An Exhib tion' at the 'normal' reta price of £2.15," ELP's man ager Mark Fenwick told the MM this week. "We plan ned this album to be sold a £1.49 and those shops which are selling at a higher price are making an excessive profit."

The album is at number 6 in the MM LP chart and was priced lower than usual as a Christmas gesture by the group.

The Melody Maker this week carried out an investigation of large record stores. At a Birmingham record shop we were told that originally they planned to sell it for £2.29, but were later informed of the correct price. Other shops in the provinces were apparently not told of the low price offer at first, but shops in Liverpool, Leeds and Manchester told us that they were currently selling the album at £1.49.

■ Continued on p.16

THE CHRISTMAS picture that John Lennon wanted you to see — John and Yoko, joined by the kids of the Harlem Community Choir for the recording of their new single, "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)"—which will be released everywhere EXCEPT Britain. This picture forms part of the record's special sleeve.

"It's a f——ing shame," John told the MM. Song-publishing disagreements between the Lennons and Northern Songs are the cause.

Last Thursday, they flew to Ann Arbor, Detroit, to appear at a special concert where they sang their new song about John Sinclair, founder of the White Panthers, who is currently serving a long prison sentence for drug offences.

The picture, by Iain Macmillan, shows the Lennons and the choir, during the sessions at New York's Record Plant studio.

**OPPORTUNITY ROCKS!**

**Christmas fun in the MM —get cracking on page 29**

MM, 6 November 1971, page 26

# IN THE STUDIO WITH LENNON & SPECTOR

Richard Williams reports from New York on the birth of the new Plastic Ono Band, and its first recording: a special Christmas single with Phil Spector at the controls

Up on the 17th floor of the St Regis Hotel in New York City, John Lennon is learning to type.

PIMP, he types. I AM A PIMP. "It's great," he says, "Yoko's teaching me."

John is in his bedroom, surrounded by the detritus of creation: guitars, books, notepads, nylon-tipped pens and a box full of Elvis singles.

"I asked someone to get all his old singles for me," he says, down on his hands and knees, opening the box and spilling the bright red RCA labels over the floor.

The next ten minutes are spent sorting them out. 'My Baby Left Me', 'Hound Dog', 'One Night' and the Sun classics are in one pile, while crap like 'Bossa Nova Baby' and 'Are You Lonesome Tonight?' go on another.

"I'm gonna have a jukebox with just Elvis records on it. Isn't it great?"

In the next room, the living room, is still more tribute to the life and works of a total media freak. There are piles of Yoko's book, *Grapefruit*, stacks of big film cans and a hi-fi.

His travelling record collection includes albums by Bo Diddley (three), Chuck Berry (two), Lenny Bruce (six), the Mothers (everything), Paul McCartney ('Ram' – and it's been played at least once) and Link Wray (with cover inscribed "To John and Yoko – thanks for remembering – Peace, Link Wray").

The story behind the Wray inscription is that John and Yoko were getting out of a lift at 1700 Broadway, which houses Allen Klein's office, when they were confronted by Wray, who was going up to Polydor's offices in the same building.

Wray apparently said, "Hey – John and Yoko." John didn't say anything to him, but turned to Yoko and breathed, "Yoko, that's Link Wray. Without him…" Whether it's true or merely apocryphal, it illustrates one of John's most endearing characteristics: he remembers.

Back in the bedroom, John's talking about the Plastic Ono Band, and his plans for going on the road early in 1972. "I've got lots to learn," he sighs. "Its been seven years, you know… but it's important to get the band on the road, to get tight. It's been fun just turning up at odd gigs like Toronto and the Lyceum and the Fillmore, but I'm sick of having to sing 'Blue Suede Shoes' because we haven't rehearsed anything."

**Suddenly there's a flurry at the studio entrance. Spector's arrived, wearing a button saying 'Back To Mono'**

To that end, the band will have a nucleus of John (guitar and vocals), Yoko (vocals), Nicky Hopkins (piano), Klaus Voormann (bass) and Jim Keltner (drums). With luck, there'll also be Phil Spector on guitar and vocals, onstage for the first time since the Teddy Bears, and a lead guitarist. John wrote to Eric Clapton offering him the gig, but Eric isn't too well and didn't reply.

"We'll probably get some kid who just walks in and knocks us out. D'you know anything about a guy called Roy Buchanan? He's supposed to be the greatest, but I've never heard of him, I'll have to find out. I don't want to play lead – I'm just an amateur."

But the flexibility will still be there, and other musicians will be able to come and go as they wish. The nucleus will ensure that they don't have to jam all night on old 12-bars.

John wants to make the whole thing into a travelling circus, sending Yippie leader Jerry Rubin ahead of the troupe to round up local bands and street theatre groups in whatever cities they're playing. As an illustration of the kind of people they want. John mentioned David Peel & The Lower East Side in New York and the Pink Fairies in London.

He gets to talking about his songs, and how he pinches bits from his favourite rock'n'roll numbers. There's a new one about Chuck Berry and Bo Diddley, which he sings sitting on his bed, and he shows you how the middle-eight is pinched from Gary US Bonds' 'Quarter To Three', which he heard on the radio the other day.

Then there's the song he and the Plastic Ono Band will be recording that very night for their Christmas single. "It's called 'Happy Xmas (War Is Over)', and he says that when he first played it to Spector, the producer said that the first line is a direct crib from The Paris Sisters' 'I Love How You Love Me', which Phil produced way back in the pre-Crystals days.

"I like quoting from old songs," John says, "but you get into such trouble with copyrights. It's a drag."

He jams on what looks like a set of earphones, with an antenna protruding from each side. It turns out to be an FM stereo radio and, within seconds, he offers it to Yoko.

"Hey, listen Yoko, that's 'Get A Job', one of the old ones." She listens and he turns. "I'm having to educate her about rock'n'roll, you see."

BOB GRUEN-STARFILE/REX FEATURES

**THAT SAME EVENING**, John is sitting on the fringed carpet of the Record Plant, a studio on West 44th Street. He's surrounded by five young acoustic guitarists, to whom he's teaching the chords of 'Happy Xmas (War Is Over)'.

Why all those rhythm guitars? Listen – just remember who's producing this session, brother.

One of the guitarists is Hugh McCracken, the brilliant session musician who played on 'Ram' but John doesn't know that yet.

He asks them for their names. "Chris." "Teddy." "Stu." "Hugh." John turns to Yoko. "Hey, that Hugh looks like Ivan, doesn't he? Hugh, Hugh, you look just like an old school mate of mine."

There's a little break and everybody gets up and walks around. Someone tells John about Hugh.

"Oh, and so you were just auditioning on 'Ram' were you?" John asks. "Yeah, 'e said you were alright." Everyone grins.

They're back to learning the tune. "Just pretend it's Christmas," John tells them. "I'm Jewish," says one. "Well pretend it's your birthday, then."

Suddenly there's a little flurry at the entrance. Phil Spector's arrived, in big shades, wearing a red and white button saying 'Back To Mono', which breaks everyone up. But he's serious, you know.

Immediately, the session is working. Within seconds of getting behind the huge board, Spector is thinking in terms not just of sound, but of arrangement, drama, production. It takes him about ten seconds to get a sound which transforms the guitars from a happy rabble into a brilliant cutting wash of colour.

"Play that back to 'em," Phil tells the engineer. "Get 'em relaxed." It does just that, and during the playback Phil goes into the studio and dances around with John.

They run through the changes again, with Nicky Hopkins on piano this time. Immediately Phil tells him: "Nicky, I'd like to hear more of that in octaves in the right hand… makes it more dramatic." John leans down to the guitar mic and shouts. "Don't dictate to them yet, Phil, let them get comfortable first."

Already, you see, Spector is into the groove, moulding and blending and transforming in the tradition of 'Be My Baby', 'Then He Kissed Me', and 'River Deep, Mountain High'. Right now, well ahead of anyone (even Lennon), he's hearing what it's going to sound like when it's coming out of a million transistors.

At this point, they add bass and drums. Jim Keltner settles behind his kit, and one of the rhythm-guitarists is moved over to the bass because Klaus' flight from Germany has been delayed and he's going to miss the session. They can't wait.

They run it down a few times, and Keltner's expression while playing is like that of a man whose toes are slowly being eaten away by a shoal of piranhas. It's sounding very good, the tape is spinning all the time, and after each run they come back and listen.

John: "I like ones that sound like records…"

"…before you've made 'em." Phil finishes the sentence for him.

Without even seeming to notice, they're doing takes. During the second or third, it really begins to lift off. Phil is sitting at the board, staring through the sound-proofed window into the studio, spitting out comments at the engineer: "More echo on the piano, Roy… more echo… more… more echo, c'mon! More! That's it!"

**"How can you make a song called 'Happy Xmas' without bells? I know about Christmas records" Phil Spector**

He stands up during the second chorus, arms wind-milling, looking at Keltner, signalling and willing him to lay into his tom-toms, urging him to explode like Hal Blaine did almost ten years ago. Keltner strains to oblige, and the take ends in a blaze of glory with Phil shouting, "Fucking great! Great!"

Now, as the overdubs start, the Spector magic is again overwhelmingly apparent. At John's suggestion, the acoustic guitars play a mandolin-like riff, strongly reminiscent of Ronnie Spector's 'Try Some, Buy Some', and all sorts of percussive effects are tried.

Nicky plays chimes and glockenspiel, which have been hastily hired, and Keltner adds a jangling four-to-the-bar on a handy pair of sleigh bells.

"How can you make a song called 'Happy Xmas' without bells?" Phil had asked, rhetorically, earlier. Now he's smiling and mutters from the corner of his mouth: "I know something about Christmas records, you know."

Instantly, minds flash back to Philles LP4005, 'A Christmas Gift To You'. Several months in the making back there in the '60s and now a rare classic to those who know it. After that, Phil probably knew more about making Christmas records than anyone in the world.

The instrumental dubs over, time comes for the vocal track to be cut. The song itself is really in three parts: the verse, sung by John; the chorus, sung by Yoko; and a secondary chorus, sung under the lead vocal, for which they'll be getting in a bunch of kids the next day.

John says that he wrote it "because I was sick of 'White Christmas'," and it could well take over as the annual Yuletide anthem. It's terrifically singable, in the tradition of 'All You Need Is Love' or 'Give Peace A Chance' and it's very pretty too.

John and Yoko enter the studio, clap on the cans, and start singing over the track. John sounds wheezy, unable to hit the high notes, and Phil shouts through the talkback: "Yoko's out-singing you, John." He tells everyone in the booth: "He's smoking his ass off while he's singing," and shakes his head in disapproval.

John finally gets Yoko to come in at all the right places, with the aid of tactful prods in the back, and when Phil's got the right echo on the voices they finally lay it down right, and come back to listen to the rough mix.

It's right, and they start talking about what they're going to do with the strings, which they'll overdub in a couple of days. Phil has the idea of getting them to play 'Silent Night' over the fade and after falling about they all agree that it's exactly right.

Nicky is worrying about the piano part, which he's already overdubbed, and wants to do it again. They listen back once more, tell him it's perfectly all right as it is, and John adds: "Did you know that George wanted to re-do his guitar solos on 'Gimme Some Truth' and 'How Do You Sleep'? That's the best he's ever played in his life, and he'd never get that feeling again, but he'd go on forever if you let him."

Once again they remix what they have. By this time it's four o'clock, and after a few more listens everyone goes home. Three hours later, I wake up singing *"War is over… if you want it… war is over now"*.

Klaus Voormann: ace of bass

Nicky Hopkins: the key man

John and Yoko make their point in Times Square

**IT'S THE FOLLOWING** night, and the band is running through the song which is going to be the single's B-side, Yoko's 'Snow Is Falling', the first of her songs that she ever showed John.

But there's an argument. John and Yoko can't agree about the tempo. "I'm not gonna play on this," says John, who was picking out lines on heavy-reverb guitar. "I asked you to play the organ," says Yoko. "I've been asking you to do that all along."

John decides to go back into the booth, where Phil greets him with, "I thought this was supposed to be a light thing." It was, John agrees, but "she says, 'Faster' and they all get rocking like fuck."

Yoko is telling Nicky to play lighter on the intro. "Pretend that it's snowing… that snow is melting on your fingertips. Not that banging."

Nicky gets it right, while Klaus and Hugh McCracken (who's been invited back after his performance the previous night) work out little runs and licks which turn out like early Curtis Mayfield.

They all try it and Yoko and Klaus get into a shouting match about where the chords go at the end of the song. Klaus gets up, unstraps his bass and appears ready to walk about. But John placates both him and Yoko and they try it again.

John: "Fantastic…"

Phil: "Great, great tape echo…"

Yoko: "How was my voice?"

Phil: "Great… lots of tape echo…"

It sounds simple and pretty, but within five minutes they're talking about adding organ, chimes, more guitar and even sound effects.

What they want is the sound of a celeste, but there isn't one available, so the engineers get to work to make the electric piano sound like one.

While they discuss it, Phil pronounces the name "cheleste". Everybody else starts by calling it "seleste". Within minutes, it's "cheleste" all round. If that's how he says it, that's how it is.

As the engineers work, Nicky and Hugh and Jim start to play the blues.

"Uh-oh," says Phil. "They've started jamming, and we'll never get anything done. Let's put a stop to that." He moves to the connecting door.

**"Going back to England is like going to Denmark – and I don't want to live in Denmark" John Lennon**

"STOP JAMMING" screams Yoko, nearly bursting the talkback speakers. They stop as one man, in mid-semiquaver, leaving John to add, almost apologetically: "Well, you've got to do something while they're trying to make the piano sound like a celeste." His pronunciation has slipped back to the "s".

Yoko is obviously tense, and confides that she believes the musicians don't take her songs as seriously as they might, but this is a very good song, no doubt about it; very attractive and extremely commercial, and by the time the overdubs have been done it sounds like a potential A-side, much stronger than her current single, 'Mrs Lennon'.

Only one thing remains and that's to put on the sound effects. Someone digs out the effects album that all studios keep for such occasions and they decide to open and close the track with the sound of 'Feet In The Snow', superimposed on 'Strong Wind'.

The engineers begin splicing the tapes and Phil asks John: "Have you heard Paul's new album?"

"No."

"It's really bad… just four musicians, and it's awful."

"Don't talk about it. It depresses me."

"Don't worry, John. 'Imagine' is Number One, and this will be Number One too. That's all that matters."

"No, it's not that. It's just that whenever anybody mentions his name, I don't think about the music – I think about all the business crap. Don't talk about him."

Splicing over, the lights are turned off for the final playback, and it's magical.

Leaving the studio, it's a shock to realise that those soft, white flakes aren't drifting down through cold night air. Actually, it's quite warm out.

**JOHN AND YOKO** are being talked about as the new Burton and Taylor, but really they're closer to Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford, in the way that they're at the centre of an artistic maelstrom.

They've been in New York since the middle of August and they're likely to stay there a long time. John's recent statement in the *MM*, that they're not appreciated in Britain, is understandable when one sees them in New York.

There, they're in a creative milieu which understands and embraces them, and what's more, moves at their phenomenal pace. Everybody travelled to Syracuse, in upstate New York, for Yoko's recent exhibition, whereas if they'd held something similar in, say, Coventry, it would have been virtually ignored.

It's a never-ending furore and, to zone in on it even harder, they've moved out of the St Regis Hotel and into the Village, where they've bought one loft and are renting another.

"It's the best place in the world," John states flatly. "Every time the car leaves the Village, I feel sick. Going back to England is like going to Denmark – and I don't want to live in Denmark."

**SUNDAY AFTERNOON AT** the Record Plant, and they're starting early because the choir is there, and the choir has to be in bed soon.

The choir is 30 black kids, aged from about four to 12, with a quartet of nubile young teens whom John instantly dubs "The Supremes".

John and Yoko teach the kids the song and the words to 'Happy Xmas' from a blackboard, and after only a few tries they've got it.

"Fucking great!" shouts Phil afterwards, leaping around, and the engineer quickly checks that the talk-back is off.

It's all finished now, apart from the strings, so the Lennons, the band, the kids, the engineers, the secretaries, Phil and Phil's brother-in-law Joe gather round to pose for a picture for the cover of the single.

The photographer is being a little slow, having trouble getting everyone into the frame, so Phil takes over: "When I shout 'ONE TWO THREE', everybody shout 'HAPPY CHRISTMAS' and you take the picture. One two three… OK, you got it."

I'll bet he even produces his breakfasts.

REDFERNS/CHUCK PULIN-STARFILE/GETTY IMAGES

MM, 20 November 1971, page 32

# WINGS FLY

## Paul McCartney talks to Chris Charlesworth about his new band, but reveals how the legacy of his old one is still holding him back

"I just want the four of us to get together somewhere and sign a piece of paper saying it's all over, and we want to divide the money four ways.

"No-one else would be there, not even Linda or Yoko, or Allen Klein. We'd just sign the paper and hand it to the business people and let them sort it all out. That's all I want now. But John won't do it. Everybody thinks I am the aggressor but I'm not you know. I just want out."

Paul McCartney is at home in the control room of studio two at EMI's Abbey Road studios. He sits in the switchboard and looks around at the familiar studio walls. Classic Beatles songs were constructed in this very spot in London's St John's Wood.

He's in the mood for talking. The gathering was set up to listen to the new album from Wings, but conversation shifts inevitably to other things. There are so many things Paul can talk about.

Denny Seiwell, Wings' drummer, and guitarist Denny Laine obviously aren't too happy about Paul's constant references to the past. Neither is Linda, whose hand is in constant contact with Paul. Neither too is Shelley Turner, Paul's general secretary.

"He's talking about money now. That's one of his pet points. He'll never stop. Denny and Denny are protesting, but there's nothing I can do," she says before I face the action. "Please get him on to talking about Wings. That's why we are here after all. The others can't join in talking about The Beatles. I wish he wouldn't go on like he does. There's really no stopping him."

**THE ACTION IS** fairly fast when I reach the control studio. It's as if Paul wants to get all he has to say out of his system. The Beatles, Wings, money, Apple, Dick James, John and Yoko, George's Bangla Desh concert, Allen Klein, the Scottish farm and the press are all brought up.

Paul is being very honest and straightforward – probably too honest. "Don't print this but…" is the preamble to many of his remarks.

The names have been changed to protect the innocent. Paul's bitterness towards Allen Klein is obvious, but his attitude towards the other three Beatles seems more of concern than of dislike. He worries about their affairs but is tired of warning them. They are tired of his warnings, so Paul just wants to get out.

There is no bitterness when he talks of John. "John and Yoko are not cool in what they're doing. I saw them on television the other night and thought that what they were saying about what they wanted to do together was basically the same as what Linda and I want to do.

"John's whole image now is very honest and open. He's alright is John. I like his 'Imagine' album, but I didn't like the others. 'Imagine' is what John is really like, but there was too much political stuff on the other albums. You know, I only really listen to them to see if there is something I can pinch," he laughs.

And how *do* you sleep? "I think it's silly. So what if I live with straights? I like straights. I have straight babies. It doesn't affect him. He says the only thing I did was 'Yesterday' and he knows that's wrong."

Paul motions to the studio below. "I used to sit down there and play and John would watch me from up here and he'd really dig some of the stuff I played to him. He can't say all I did was 'Yesterday' because he knows and I know it's not true."

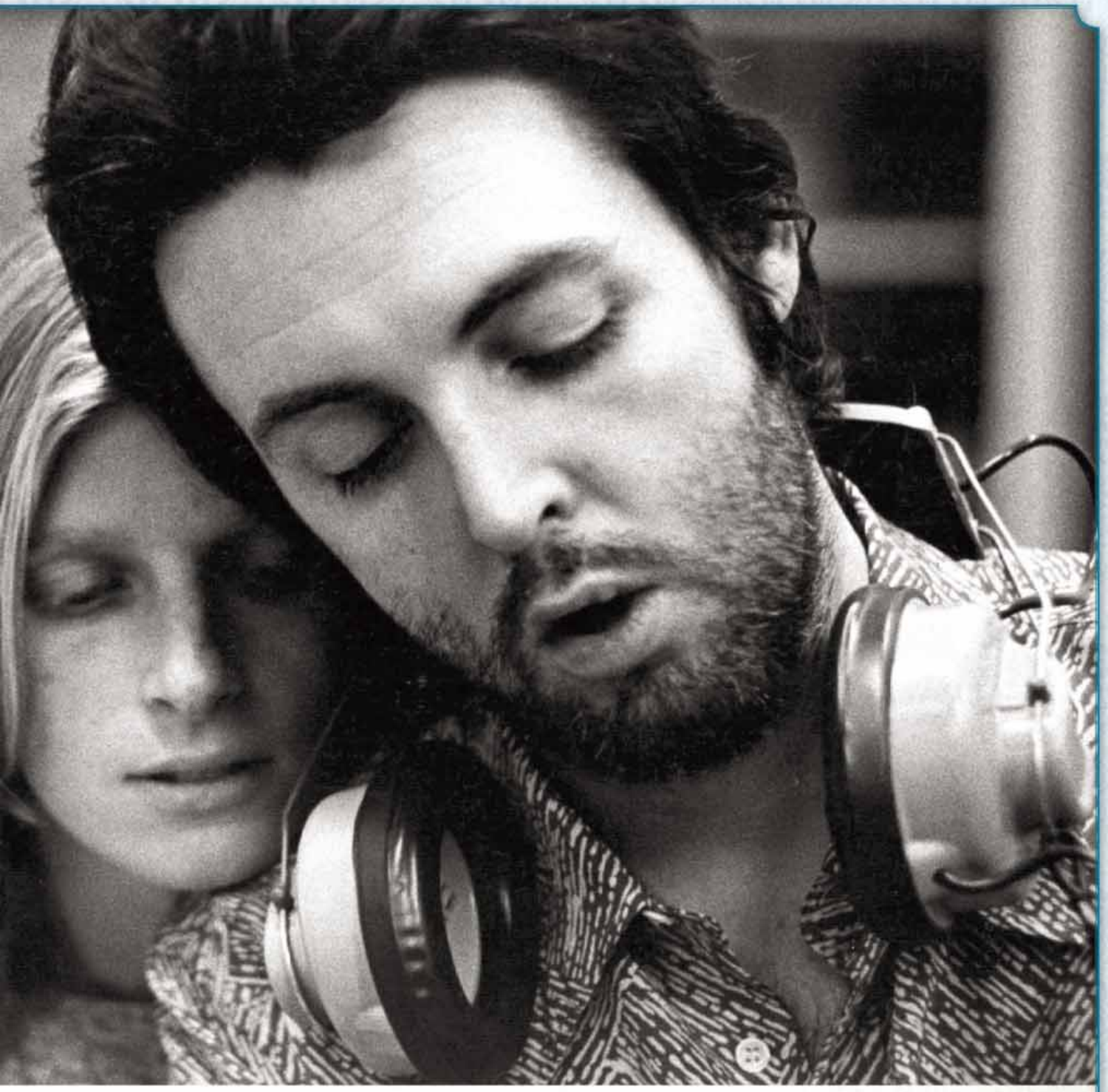
Melody Maker
Zeppelin fever
WINGS FLY!
NEW ON STAGE! Blues and jazz kings on the way
THE SELLING OF ROD STEWART: TURN TO PAGE 13

Linda and Paul spread their Wings in the recording studio in 1971

'Yesterday', it seems, is a bone of contention with Paul; in fact all the Beatles classics that he is associated with. He doesn't own them, but feels he ought to. "I don't own anything I write because of the old contracts. We get royalties from them, but now when I write with Linda they sue me because they claim she can't write. Well, I know she can.

"The song publishers claim that they made the songs as popular as they were but they didn't. It was us because we bloody well wrote them. I'll never own 'Yesterday' – not in 50 years, not even when I die. I'm prepared to forget that. I just want to own the things I do now, but I can't because of The Beatles' contract."

The contract, Paul says, has another seven years to run. Until then, by law, he'll be a Beatle. In the eyes of the world he'll always be a Beatle. "The Beatles



GETTY IMAGES

never actually copped for all this money," he says. "Everyone else did. I wouldn't care but you'd think we could have a new deal now. You'd think they'd release us. They've made a lot of money and we could shake hands and part company but now we can't. I'm being sued for a million pounds in New York by Northern Songs. It's so complicated."

Paul shrugs his shoulders, seemingly indicating that he doesn't want to talk about money any more, but during the conversation the subject crops up again. So does Lennon, so does Klein and so do The Beatles. He could go on forever…

"You know I was asked to play George's concert in New York for Bangla Desh and I didn't? Well, listen. Klein called a press conference and told everyone I had refused to do it – it wasn't so.

"I said to George the reason I couldn't do it was because it would mean that all the world's press would scream that The Beatles had got back together again and I know that would have made Klein very happy. It would have been an historical event and Klein would have taken the credit.

**"What John and Yoko want to do together is basically the same as what Linda and I want to do"**

"I didn't really fancy playing anyway. If it wasn't for Klein I might have had second thoughts about it but I don't know, really. Allen's a good talker. The others really dig him, but I've made the mistake of trying to advise them against him and that pissed them off. I think they might secretly feel that I am right though.

"You know when 'Let It Be' came out there was a little bit of hype on the sleeve for the first time ever on a Beatles album. At the time we were strained with each other and it wasn't a happy time. It said it was a new phase Beatles album and there was nothing further from the truth.

"That was the last Beatles album and everybody knew it. There was no new phase about it at

all. Klein had it re-produced because he said it didn't sound commercial enough."

Talk turned to Beatles live shows – or lack of them. "John wanted to do a big thing in Toronto but I didn't dig that at all. I hear that before he went onstage for that thing he was sick, and that's just what I didn't want. Like anybody else I'd have been nervous because of the Beatle thing.

"I wanted to get into a van and do an unadvertised concert at a Saturday night hop at Slough Town Hall or somewhere like that. We'd call ourselves Rikki & Red Streaks or something and just get up and play. There'd be no press and we'd tell nobody about it. John thought it was a daft idea.

"Before John said he was leaving The Beatles I was lying in bed at home one night and I thought I would like to get a band together like his Plastic Ono Band. I felt the urge because we had never played live for four years. We all wanted to appear on a stage but not with The Beatles. We couldn't do it as The Beatles because it would be so big. We'd have to find a million seater hall or something.

"My best playing days were at the Cavern lunchtime sessions. We'd go onstage with a cheese roll and a cigarette and we felt we had really something going. The amps used to fuse and we'd stop and sing a Sunblest bread commercial while they were repaired.

"I'd walk off down the street playing my guitar and annoying the neighbours. I couldn't do that now, but it's what I want to with this new group."

Great Scot: Linda and Paul at the Wings launch party, 8 November 1971

**WINGS, IT SEEMED**, had at last been drawn into the conversation. A look of relief passed among the audience when I asked about how Paul formed the group and what plans he had for it.

"We met Denny *(Seiwell)* in New York when we were looking for a drummer for the 'Ram' album.

"We worked on 'Ram' together and finally got to know each other, so he was the obvious choice of a drummer when it came to forming the group.

"Then I was thinking of getting another guitarist and I knew Denny *(Laine)* and thought he was a good singer and he wasn't really doing anything."

Denny: "I was, actually, but…"

Paul: "I thought 'Go Now' was fabulous. He came round to see me and brought a guitar and we played some things together and it was great. We just rehearsed a couple of numbers together."

It seems that, within reason, just about everybody plays everything on the album. The drums, naturally enough, are Denny's main concern, although additional percussion is contributed by all. Paul plays most of the lead guitar – "I'd always fancied myself as a lead guitar" – while Denny plays harmony lead, chords and some bass. Paul too plays bass and mainly the basslines on the album have been overdubbed. Linda plays most of the piano and organ lines.

"Linda isn't very experienced so the keyboard parts tend to be very simple and that is, I think, very valuable. It has an innocence rather like a child's painting," said Paul.

Linda: "We've put the rock songs on one side and the slow songs on the other. That's so you can play it at parties. When you want to dance you play side one, when you want to croon you play side two."

The conversation turned, this time to Paul's other two solo albums, both of which were heavily criticised on release. "Well, the first one was just like testing out a studio. I played all the instruments and did everything myself. It was simple, and I was just having a play.

"'Ram' was more of an album concept. With this album I tried very hard and I really hoped people would like it. I liked it myself and I still do.

"It was probably a little too important to me to feel that people ought to like my music. I really wanted them to like 'Ram'. I thought I had done a great album. I don't see how someone can play it and take in all that stuff and turn round and say, 'I don't like it' just like that. You may well feel differently after some weeks."

It seems that Wings could make a live appearance tomorrow, next week, next year or never. The whole band is very, very loose but it seems there are no

## WILD LIFE Wings Apple

REVIEWED: MM, 11 December 1971, page 14

Paul has made a discotheque album. This is a real shady club goodie – but you'll have to wear a tie. 'Mumbo' sounds like Edmundo Ros freaked out, complete with guitarists who appear to have fingers in splints.

But we had a samba, and wobbled closely together on the floor. The music shifted well in places, with vamped guitar and beast-like Mac vocals. 'Bip Bop' we found nice for bum wiggling.

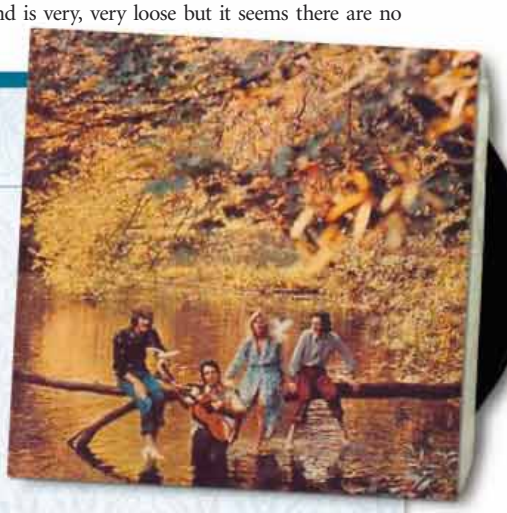
It sounds like the sort of thing four peroxide English blondes and a greasy guy might sing on *The Val Doonican Show*, but it's a disco bopper, and you can do a super things to it. Musically, 'Love Is Strange' is pointless. But, with that flair which I thought sacred to The Dragonaires, it comes out with not beefy feeling, but a porky shift. This is a real voom-voom (KLM and BOAC jet-setters only) club goodie. It will be a favourite.

We did a sexy smooch-cum-waltz to 'Wild Life', its soulful kick pressed us together. If it were five years ago you'd have suspender-belt buttons pushing into your thighs with this one.

Side two hissed in with 'Some People Never Know'. We caught a couple of chilled Americanoes, and did a slick, slow bossa to the music at the Villa Gay, Lloret-de-Mar. Then, as the music got steamy, we did the lope, kissed and went to bed, with another four minutes of the track to run. To 'I Am Your Singer' we limboed under the crossbrs at Ninian Park, with campfires blazing on the touchlines, and penalty spots.

'Tomorrow' came on next, and we sat it out, and talked loudly over it while the elders smooched. Its curling rhythms crawled up my trousers. I left. We cried together over 'Dear Friend', standing together on the floor, hardly employing a muscle. Its lonely, desolate swaying and heartbroken baying smeared us together. Mac's voice tore painfully out of the speakers. Then, almost as an afterthought, a belter screamed from the album. It was the outro – jerky, heavy, funky blues trash. We wanted to get our rocks off, but it finished after a minute or so. A dream album for airline hostesses, but musically, and on the originality stakes, there's too many maracas around, and not enough balls. But he'll do something good, mark my words. ***Roy Hollingsworth***

> The music shifted well in places, with vamped guitar and beast-like Mac vocals



immediate plans for a live show. But that doesn't rule out the possibility of Paul turning up and making an unscheduled appearance.

"We just don't know how we are going to do. I don't want to start with a Wings concert at the Albert Hall with all the world watching and analysing. I just want to play a small dance and rock a bit," said Paul.

"We will start by just turning up at a place we fancy visiting and just playing a straightforward gig. We might use another name to keep it quiet. We have rehearsed and we can play live together. In fact it sounds quite good. It doesn't really matter that much.

"I don't want Wings to become a media group, with our signatures on knickers which are sold for promotion. I don't like that now. I was happy with that situation in The Beatles, but it died in the end. We are starting off as a new band, but if we ever get to be huge like The Beatles it will be very difficult."

Why did Paul choose to come to England to record Wings? "I decided it was a better studio here in England. It's all big business in New York. It's a nicer atmosphere here. We all like England better."

Britain turned to Scotland and Paul seemed happy to talk about life on his Scottish farm, bought purely for privacy. "We have a great time in Scotland but don't appreciate people coming to see us up there. We've 60 acres of very rough land and it's the kind of farm that everyone else has given up bothering with. We've over 100 sheep and five horses and we sell the wool. I shear the sheep myself.

It's back to nature for me up there. The air is so clean and grass is so green. Last time we were in New York I went for a walk in Central Park and there was a layer of dirt on the grass everywhere.

**"Wings are starting off as a new band. If we get huge like The Beatles it will be difficult"**

"It's very out of the way. You need a Land Rover to get to it. It was only this summer that I had hot water put in. There's no luxury up there for is."

Paul doesn't want to talk too much about the farm because it's very personal to him. A place where he can, for once, be an ordinary human being. I ask whether there are any current rock artists he admires.

"I like T.Rex. They seem to be getting to be the new generation Beatles, with the girls tearing their trousers off. It's great at first but they'll soon tire of it all.

"I like what Graham Nash is doing. We met him for dinner in LA, but the atmosphere was strained and we didn't really get to know each other. Have you got the new Beach Boys album, 'Surf's Up'? That's good, too."

Lastly I enquired whether Paul still wished to be associated with Apple. "Well there's a delay with the record because we didn't want a picture of an apple on the label but it looks as though we will have to. We didn't want to be on Apple but we can't get out of it.

"The sleeve won't even mention my name on it. Everyone knows who Wings is, and there's no need to tell them who I am is there?"

It was time to go for the group intended to use the studio to cut a single.

"Well it's been good to see you," said Paul as I made my way out. "Hope to see you again sometime. I'm only human, you know."

JR GLANVILL/CAMERA PRESS-ALEX AGOR

# John's letter to Paul

MM, 4 DECEMBER 1971, PAGE 9

**Two weeks ago, Paul McCartney talked to the *Melody Maker* about his new band and his relationship with Apple and the other three ex-Beatles. On Monday, the *MM* received a letter to Paul from John Lennon in New York, with the request that we publish it on the grounds of giving "equal time" to his side of the story. John answers several points made by Paul in the interview. First, he refers to Paul's expressed desire to leave Apple, and to the problems of taxation which that involves. Second, he refers to Paul's "warning" about Allen Klein. Third, to Paul's reference to the "bit of hype" on the 'Let It Be' album cover, which Paul said was the first of its kind ever on a Beatles album. Fourth, to his current domicile in New York, and to Paul's comments about The Beatles playing live gigs, separately and together. Fifth, to Paul's remarks on John's latest album, 'Imagine'. Sixth, to the McCartney comment that Klein had called a press conference to announce that Paul wouldn't play at the Bangla Desh concert – "Klein, would have taken the credit" – and seventh, to Paul's intention to put his picture on the label of his Wings. Nine lines of the letter have been omitted by the *MM*, in deference to the laws of libel.**

Dear Paul,
Linda et all the
wee McCartneys,

Thanks for your letter…

1. We give you money for your bits of Apple.

2. We give you more money in the form of royalties, which legally belong to Apple. (I know we're Apple), but on the other hand, we're not.

Maybe there's an answer there somewhere… but for the millionth time in these past few years I repeat, What about the TAX? It's all very well playing 'simple honest ole human Paul' in the *Melody Maker*, but you know damn well we can't just sign a bit of paper.

You say "John won't do it". I will if you'll indemnify us against the taxman! Anyway, you know that after we had our meeting, the fucking lawyers will have to implement whatever we agree on – right?

If they had some form of agreement between them before we met, it might make it even easier. It's up to you; as we've said many times – we'll meet you whenever you like. Just make up your mind! Eg, two weeks ago I asked you on the phone, "Please let's meet without advisors, etc and decide what we want," and I especially emphasised "Maclen" which is mainly our concern, but you refused – right?

You said under no condition would you sell to us, and if we didn't do what you wanted, you'd sue us again, and that Ringo and George are going to break you John, etc etc.

Now I was quite straight with you that day, and you tried to shoot me down with your emotional "logic". If you're not the aggressor, (as you claim), who the hell took us to court and shat all over us in public?

As I've said before – have you ever thought that you might possibly be wrong about something? Your conceit about us and Klein is incredible – you say you "made the mistake of trying to advise them against him *(Klein)*, and that pissed them off" and we secretly feel that you're right! Good God! You must know we're right about Eastman…

One other little lie in your "It's Only Paulie" *MM* bit: 'Let It Be' was not the "first bit of hype" on a Beatles album. Remember Tony Barrow? And his wonderful writing on 'Please Please Me' etc etc, the early Beatles Xmas records!

And you gotta admit it was a "new phase Beatle album" incidentally written in the style of the great Barrow himself! By the way, what happened to my idea of putting the parody of our first album cover on the 'Let It Be' cover?

Also, we were intending to parody Barrow originally, so it was hype. But what was your *Life* article? Tony Barrow couldn't have done it better. (And your writing inside the Wings album isn't exactly the realist *(sic)* is it?) Anyway, enough of this petty bourgeois fun.

You were right about New York! I do love it; it's the ONLY PLACE TO BE. (Apart from anything else, they leave you alone too!) I see you prefer Scotland! (*MM*) – I'll bet you your piece of Apple you'll be living in New York by 1974 (two years is the usual time it takes you – right?)

Another thing, whaddya mean "big thing in Toronto"? It was completely spontaneous, they rang on the Friday – we flew there and played on the Saturday; I was sick 'cause I was stone pissed. Listen to the album, with no rehearsal too! Come on Macka! Own up! (We'd never played together before!) Half a dozen live shows – with no big fuss – in fact we've been doing what you've been three years! (I said it was daft for The Beatles to do it, I still think it's daft) So go on and do it! Do it! Do it! Eg Cambridge (1969 completely unadvertised! A very small hall), Lyceum Ballroom (1969 no fuss, great show – 30 piece rock band! 'Live Jam' out soon!) Fillmore East (1971, unannounced. Another good time had by all – out soon!!!) with the great David Peel!!! We were moved on by the cops, even!!! It's best just to DO IT, I know you'll dig it, and they don't expect The Beatles now anyway!

So you think 'Imagine' ain't political. It's 'Working Class Hero' with sugar on it for conservatives like yourself!! You obviously didn't dig the words. Imagine! You took 'How Do You Sleep' so literally (read my own review of the album in *Crawdaddy*). Your politics are very similar to Mary Whitehouse's – "saying nothing is as loud as saying something!"

Listen my obsessive old pal, it was George's press conference – not "dat ole debbil Klein". He said what you said – "I'd love to come but..." Anyway, we did it for basically the same reasons – the Beatle bit – they still called it a Beatle show – with just two of them!

Join the Rock Liberation Front before it gets you.

Wanna put your photo on the label like uncool John and Yoko, do ya? (Ain't ya got no shame!) If we're not cool, WHAT DOES THAT MAKE YOU?

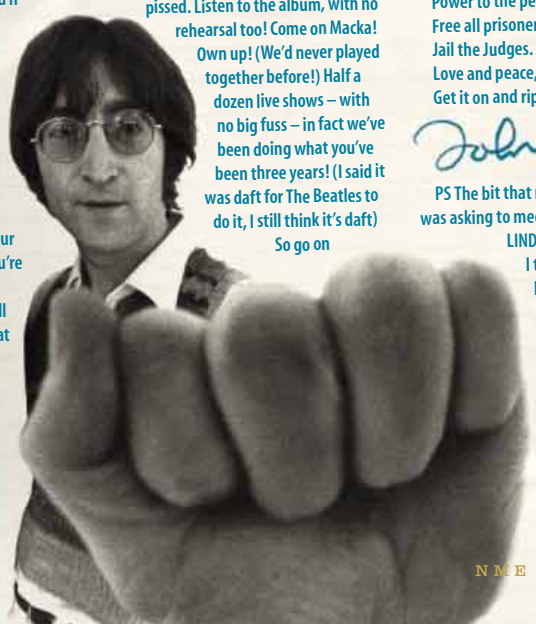
No hard feelings to you either. I know basically we want the same, and as I said on the phone and in this letter, whenever you want to meet, all you have to do is call.

All you need is Love,
Power to the people,
Free all prisoners,
Jail the Judges.
Love and peace,
Get it on and rip 'em off.

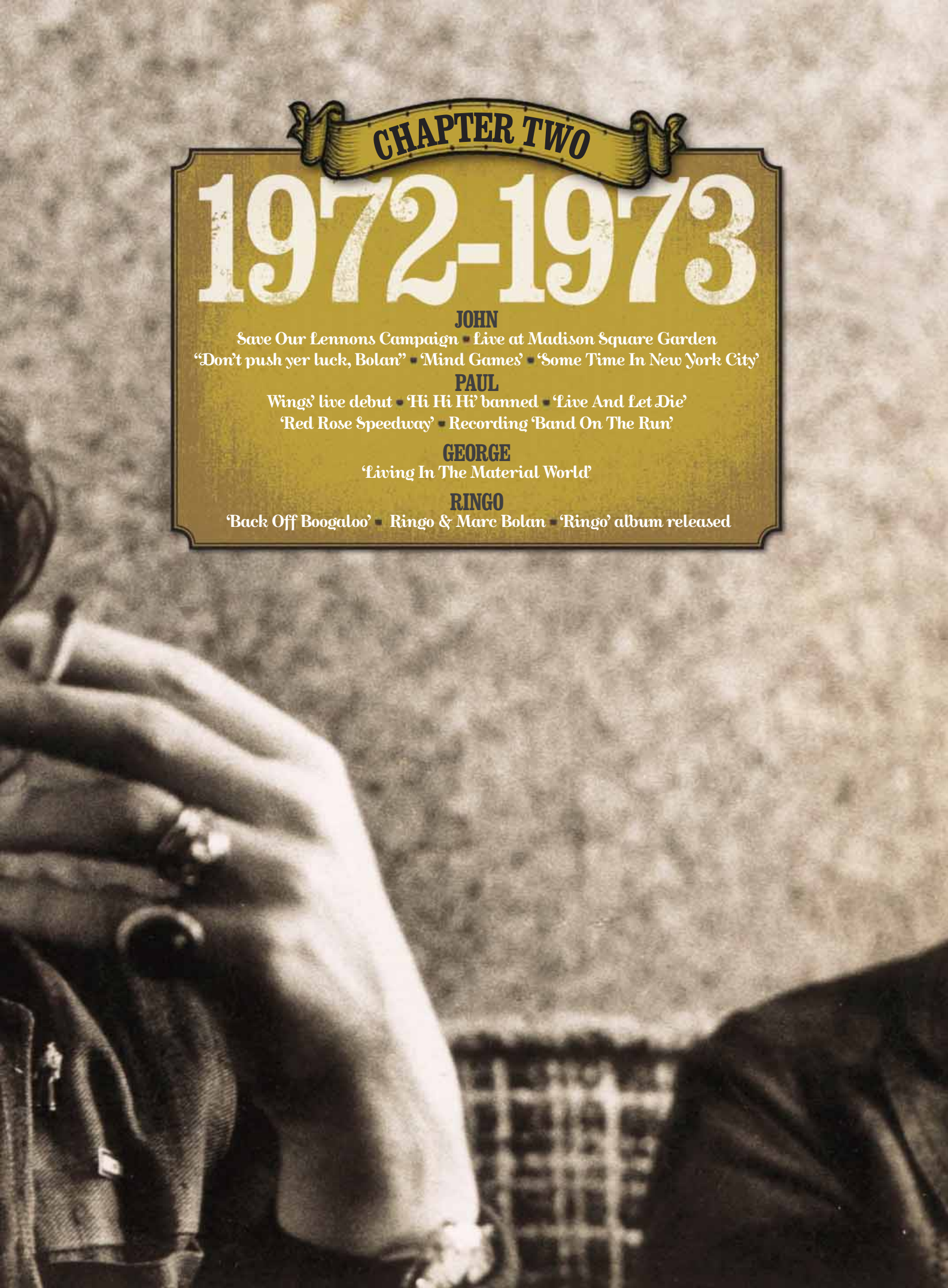
John Lennon

PS The bit that really puzzled us was asking to meet WITHOUT LINDA AND YOKO. I thought you'd have understood BY NOW, that I'm JOHNANDYOKO.

PPS Even your own lawyers know you can't "just sign a bit of paper" (or don't they tell you?!)



MICHAEL PUTLAND-RETNA



# CHAPTER TWO

# 1972-1973

## JOHN

Save Our Lennons Campaign ▪ Live at Madison Square Garden
"Don't push yer luck, Bolan" ▪ 'Mind Games' ▪ 'Some Time In New York City'

## PAUL

Wings' live debut ▪ 'Hi Hi Hi' banned ▪ 'Live And Let Die'
'Red Rose Speedway' ▪ Recording 'Band On The Run'

## GEORGE

'Living In The Material World'

## RINGO

'Back Off Boogaloo' ▪ Ringo & Marc Bolan ▪ 'Ringo' album released

NME, 19 February 1972, page 16

# McCartney on the road

He's back after a five year absence, with a surprise live gig in Nottingham. Exclusive report by Geoff Liptrot and friends of Gongster, the Nottingham University newspaper

In circumstances bordering on the unreal, Paul McCartney chose Nottingham University to break his five-year absence from live gigs. At less than a day's notice he gave a spontaneous lunchtime concert with his new group Wings to about 700 dazed and disbelieving students.

It all started the day before when the McCartneys and the rest of the band left London and headed up the M1 in their hired red van.

As Paul told us: "We took off from London with the idea of going on tour, but instead of fixing up days and gigs ahead of ourselves we wanted to keep very loose. So we just took off in the van yesterday."

They left the motorway at Hatherton, just after Leicester, for no other reason than Paul liked the name. This was the peculiar sort of logic that led him out of self-imposed exile to play at Nottingham University – a place not normally noted as venue for superstars.

Unable to find a hotel at Hatherton, they headed for Nottingham, 12 miles away. Then Henry McCullough, Wings' lead guitarist, remembered he had played at Nottingham last year with The Grease Band and had liked the place.

So, at 5pm on Tuesday, Paul and his entourage casually walked into the Union building, grabbed the nearest executive, and suggested Wings play their debut concert there the next day.

After a few minutes with the dumbfounded Union Social Committee the performance was fixed up and the news began to filter through to a sceptical student population. It was only as the sound of Wings warming up echoed through the building that everyone realised that this was indeed for real.

For those who grew up in the shadow of The Beatles it was hard to put into words the feeling of sheer excitement generated by seeing the man who represented the very heart of what they stood for standing there onstage singing 'Lucille'.

McCartney has not performed onstage for five years, and it was plain to see he felt good to be back.

His new band seems to summarise his new attitude to music. The complexities of previous works such as 'Sgt Pepper' and 'Let It Be' are relaxed now by simple, happy music.

As the hall filled with surprised, delighted students the band moved straight into 'Mess I'm In' – a bitch of a number, its popularity proved by McCartney's decision to repeat it during the second set.

This must not be made too much of, however. The entire concert was more or less a public rehearsal, albeit by some of the most respected figures on the rock scene.

As the band warmed up, gaining more confidence with every number (partly due to the rapturous applause from the bedazzled audience which greeted them), the music began to move nicely.

McCullough swapped guitar-licks gracefully and easily with Denny Laine and played a nice laid back solo on 'Blue Moon Of Kentucky'.

'Say Darlin'' followed. A slow '50s number to smooch to, during which McCartney showed his command of the audience – he had only to ask and everyone was clapping along.

> "Instead of touring, we wanted to keep it very loose. So we just took off in the van"

During the rock'n'roll encore which ended the concert (a repeat of 'Lucille' and 'Long Tall Sally') he exhorted us to dance. And we did. The floor jam-packed with a crowd far exceeding the fire limit (ever tried keeping a believer from seeing his Messiah?).

The first set ended with 'Wild Life', the title track from his last album which was panned by almost every music reviewer in the country.

Lack of critical acclaim did not seem to matter to the audience however, and why should it? McCartney has severed all links with The Beatles, so why judge him by standards which he himself disowns?

Here was a damn fine little band who, even by other standards, would be very highly rated. They left the stage for a break and we settled in, still rather incredulous, for the second set.

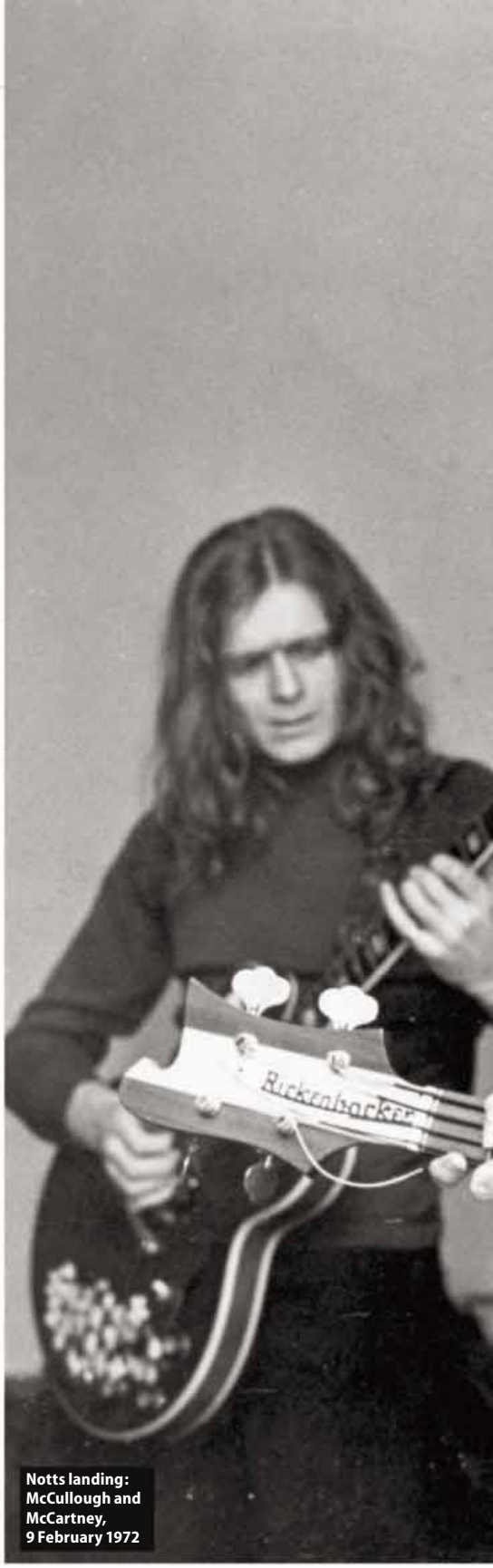
It was, if anything, an improvement on the first – with the exception of the opener, 'Bip Bop'. It was just a little too trite, a little too middle of the road.

'Give Ireland Back To The Irish', Wings' new single, also grated a little with its harsh, sing-song chorus immediately conjuring up visions of a drunk rolling along a street bellowing at the top of his voice.

But the rest of the set more than compensated. McCullough and Laine both played superb solos on a shuffle blues, and 'Mess I'm In' kept things moving nicely, showing that Paul is at home on hard rock as on slower things like 'My Love' which followed.

At once, this number aroused reminiscences of his more well known material ('Let It Be' spring to mind). Seated at the piano, he was back in the days of 'Hey Jude'; a little boy lost, singing about his love simply and without thrills.

If there were any faults in the performance they were quickly forgotten when finally he put on his blue suede shoes to lead the rousing rock'n'roll closer.




**Notts landing: McCullough and McCartney, 9 February 1972**

One got the impression it must have brought back memories for McCartney of The Beatles' lunchtime sessions years ago at the Cavern; every person in the place dancing, stomping and clapping. And then, with a brief " see you next time", they were gone. We were left dazed, realising the music-history-making occasion we had just witnessed.

In places the band was, however, less than musically brilliant. Paul's bass-playing was sometimes mundane and his good lady wife consistently hit some pretty duff notes. But who could complain about seeing one of the most important influences ever on rock music, backed – as he was for the most part – by a tremendously tight, exciting band and really enjoying every minute?

As the audience left people were already dissecting the performance, analysing it unnecessarily. But the fact is: Paul McCartney is back. Disregard the critics.

On Wednesday afternoon last he showed his paces to an audience packed like sardines for about two hours in a cramped ballroom.

It was a concert none of us here will ever forget.

ARTIST: Wings
SINGLE: Mary Had A Little Lamb
LABEL: Apple
RELEASED: May 1972

After the highly controversial 'Give Ireland Back To The Irish', the McCartneys return with a highly commercial song which incorporates the traditional nursery rhyme as lyrics. Whereas 'Ireland' heavily featured Henry McCullough's aggressive lead guitar and hardly featured the likes of Linda, 'Mary' has the latter's piano up-front as the main rhythm instrument, while Henry tastefully accents the production on mandolin. The single comes complete with a coloured label. Wings will have no trouble finding radio play with this one.

***Danny Holloway*** NME, 6 May 1972, page 15

On sale Friday, week ending January 1, 1972

# LETTER FROM LENNON

Dear N.M.E. ,

If Chris Van Ness is referring to John and Yoko's "Live Jam" album, it was never intended to go out until January. This kind of dirt doesn't do any of us any good, least of all Paul and I.

I suppose the story is based on the Happy New (Year to Come) single, which nearly didn't come out in the U.S.A. too. (Did you know Northern Songs prevented its release in Britain).

If your pseudo from L.A. thinks I'm trying to steal a march on Paul with a live album recorded in Lyceum Ballroom 1969 and Fillmore East with Frank Zappa 1971, and possibly part of John Sinclair benefit Concert (10th Dec '71) he must be daft we thought - anyway, this is a John and Yoko album to boot! As for the Dylan and God and Buddha rumours, we'll see about that one...

?

Puzzled,

John and Yoko

P.S. By the way, E.M.I./ Capitol are trying to prevent anything recorded by John and Yoko coming out unless we admit it's a double record - ie. low royalty. (They only decided this after "Imagine.")!!

## WHAT CHRIS VAN NESS SAID (FROM NME, DEC 11)

FROM the John-and-Paul-are-at-it-again department: With Paul and Linda McCartney's "Wings" album due to be released here sometime in the next two weeks, John Lennon is doing some screaming at Apple/EMI to the effect that that company had better get his new album out before the end of the year or else.

John's new album is finished; but the record company refuses to release it because a release at this time would effectively destroy the actives sales on Lennon's "Imagine" album. But John doesn't want Paul to steal a march on him.

● REGARDING John's postscript, NME understands that it is not much EMI's refusal to issue his recordings as the company's inability to do so. This is because of a copyright dispute between Northern Songs and One Music, whereby the former is refusing to allow songs jointly composed by John and Yoko to be published or released here. John's royalties (along with those of the other Beatles) have to be paid into a pool at Northern Songs, and that company refuses to acknowledge that Yoko is entitled to a share of the kitty. Commented Lennon's business manager Allen Klein: "John and Yoko were quite prepared to allow their Christmas single to be issued in Britain, and for the royalties to go into court, leaving the eventual distribution to the judge. But this compromise was not acceptable."

# Lennon to Bolan: "Don't push yer luck"

MM, 1 April 1972, page 8

That most voracious of media freaks, John Winston Lennon, has been scouring the *MM* again.

This time BP Fallon, T.Rex's "radio with the news", as he styles himself, comes under the lash. In the March 18 *MM*, Beep commented that he thought Bolan was now as important as Lennon or Dylan, and that people like Lennon and Jagger were now checking Marc out.

"In New York Marc and Lennon sang rock'n'roll songs to each other," Beep told us. "Lennon's written a new song called 'Mystery Train Again', or something like that. He played the beginning and Marc said, 'But that's 'Jeepster'!' And he said, 'Oh, I never listen to records.' Lennon was, in fact, sitting in front of a pile of records about six-foot high."

A storm is unleashed. "I ain't," writes John to the *MM*, "written no 'Mystery Train Again' – it was 'Mind Train' on Yoko's 'Fly' album. I also ain't never heard 'Jeepster', tho' I heard and liked 'Get It On' and his first hit. Anyway, we all know where all these 'new licks' come from – right, Marc?" The knife twists.

John comments that the "six-foot high pile of records" were, in fact, acetates of the new Lennon/Yoko album, 'Some Time In New York City'.

So there.

"I really don't have time to listen to other people's records. You can't be both fan and musician. By the way, Marc's checking us out, not vice versa! He called us, babe! Anyway, he's OK – but don't push yer luck. Love, Lennon, Ono."

# SAVE OUR LENNONS CAMPAIGN

MM, 17 June 1972, page 6

Yoko and John still had time to go to the supermarket

Apple's offices in New York hover on the 40th floor of a huge block on Broadway. Like most companies there's a continual hubbub of activity. People seem to be busy doing nothing, except in one corner where lies the newly founded National Committee For John And Yoko Lennon, one of the most unusual organisations ever founded.

The Committee's aims are to keep John and Yoko in America. At the moment the couple wait in limbo… waiting, unable to do anything until the US immigration authorities decide whether to chuck the pair out of New York, or to let them to stay on.

But what the immigration people thought was a simple deportation order has grown into a monster. Millions of Americans see the threat of deportation as a "grave injustice", and even more than that, they regard it as a sharp, bitter kick at freedom.

Just in case you're foggy about why the US authorities are after Lennon's blood, it's simply a case of casting your mind back to 1968 when John was found guilty of possessing cannabis resin in London.

That is why he has been refused a further visa to stay in America, and that is why they are out to deport him.

"In the light of the their unique past and present contribution in the fields of music and the arts, and considering their talent to be so outstanding as to be ranked among the greatest of our time in these fields, a grave injustice is being perpetuated by the continuance of the deportation proceedings," says New York's Mayor John Lindsay.

Richard Myers and John Hendricks are two co-ordinators of the National Committee, which is led by a charming middle-aged lady called Helen Seaman. All work at Apple.

Says Hendricks: "There is no real leader of the Committee, it's just that a bunch of people got together as friends of John and Yoko. They decided to form some sort of organisation that would reach the grass roots of the issue. We would try and get to the people."

And get to the people they did. Petitions were printed, and soon filled; thousands of letters began to arrive at the office, letters from 16-year-old kids in Texas; letters from adults, letters from leaders of unions, vicars, truck drivers, poets, artists and just about every section of the community.

An instant jamming band called The Justice Department got people off the streets to make a single called 'Let John And Yoko Stay In The USA'.

"When the Government see what they've stirred up they'll be really surprised. They thought they could just go ahead and get John out," said Hendricks. ***Roy Hollingworth***

> Americans see the threat of deportation as a "grave injustice"

# John Comes Together – And How!

MM, 16 September 1972, page 28

## Roy Hollingworth on how Lennon saved the One To One charity concert from tedium

New York: Johnnie stopped the set a while and, jawing on gum, said he was going to go back "just wunce".

With that he counted in, "Wun, two, three, four" and with his body fused to the mic stand, his chin up, his legs slightly apart, he slugged out the opening jangle into something everybody knew. Then he spat out 'Come Together'.

I know my heart was kicking double time and there was a bellyful of butterflies about. You could feel a hot flush rush right round New York's Madison Square Garden. Lennon stood there in US battle dress spitting and snarling 'Come Together'.

He didn't move much, he just sang and played in this pushy attacking manner…

*"Hold you in his arms yeh you can feel his disease"*, and it was almost vomit as it left his mouth. Mine weren't the only fists clenched.

Throwing up a gurgle and chunk, and wall of rock'n'roll behind him was the wonderful Elephant's Memory. Stan Bronstein on sax blowing rude notes, the whole band pumping behind Johnnie, who was in such brilliant form, such a happy state this evening at the Madison Square.

He saved the whole One To One charity concert, held in aid of New York City's mentally retarded, from being one helluva yawn.

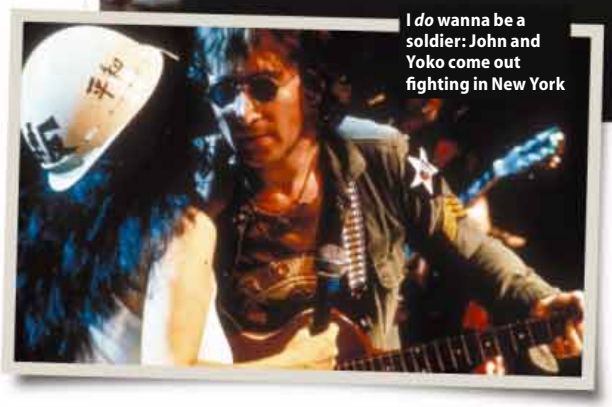
We'd sat for five hours watching cameo performances from Stevie Wonder and, the dirge of all time, Roberta Flack. They'd only played for about two hours between them – the rest of the time being taken up with re-setting the stage. You couldn't even get a beer and death due to boredom looked like setting in.

But as the massive clock behind stage ticked one minute past midnight, the vibes began to operate. Thousands of tambourines had been handed out, and they were being beaten in the gloom. Then 'Power To The People' rang through the PA, the spotlights were turned on and there stood Lennon, and to his left in all white, Yoko. A near full Madison Square Garden got up and clapped and sang.

The power gained, Johnnie counted the band in, and they ripped into 'New York City' – hell what rock'n'roll it was and the sight of John up there swinging a leg, and ducking his guitar about was just too bloody much. Yoko sat pounding an electric piano, a pair of big black shades making her look like a fly. The sound was magnificent with its intensity and John's voice was immediately rough as a week without a shave.

He looked a master of confidence, a leader in a battle, chewing on his gum, his clothes ill-fitting, glasses perched on his nose. Did he look cool.

Now it might be said that Yoko can't sing, but she delivers with such honesty, such force, and such emotion, that you think she's going to end it all right there onstage. Once it used to be John who leaned heavily towards her musically – but now it appears that Yoko is leaning heavily towards John.



I *do* wanna be a soldier: John and Yoko come out fighting in New York

**He looked a master of confidence, a leader in battle**

She is at last making contact with the people who didn't know what the hell she was going on about – and that's such a vital thing for John also.

He gritted out a numbing 'Woman Is The Nigger Of The World' with no lesser degree of power, of feeling than he did with you know who onstage all those years back. Johnnie hasn't really changed at all.

"I'm only just realising what this song's all about," said John, and then he led the band into 'Instant Karma'. There was this lovely party atmosphere about the Garden. You couldn't really sit down to it all. It was all such a gas.

John and the Elephants gave such wild punk for 'Cold Turkey', his voice now breaking from it's roots. On 'Mother' he was just frightening.

He sat down and, guitar hanging from his back, played short bunches of chords on the electric piano. If any of you thought that John's ending on 'Mother' was something dandied up in a studio, forget it. His voice became unnatural with torment, it was like he was being sick. It creased your ears.

It all trembled down for 'Imagine', another faultless piece. That song's going to be sung for all time. Every phrase was perfect.

And so to 'Come Together', which surprised everyone. So he went back for a while – and he needn't have worried one bit about that, he was into it like fury. And it was valid.

When Lennon commenced 'Give Peace A Chance' suddenly the stage began to crowd with people, all wearing tin helmets and chanting. There was Phil Spector, Melanie and Allen Ginsberg. Then somebody led Stevie Wonder on, plus more and more people. There must have been a couple of hundred onstage at the end, Lennon right in the middle.

The Garden was up and singing for a 15 minutes. It was ultra-emotion.

REX FEATURES/STARFILE-BOB GRUEN

# NEW YORK NEW LENNON

**It's 1.30am and John Lennon talks to Roy Carr in the sanctuary of a New York hotel room. The subject: music and insecurity**

NME, 30 September 1972, page 16

"That Madison Square Garden gig," says John Lennon, nostalgia in his eyes, his hand stretched forward holding a welcome beer, "was the best music I enjoyed playing since the Cavern or even Hamburg."

It's 1.30am as we slip into the vacant bedroom to talk and escape the congestion of the entire population of Greenwich Village noisily setting up its rock hardware in the living room next door.

The scene is the Lennons' spiffy midtown hotel suite 30 floors up from the hot sweat of New York's 7th Avenue and only a mugging distance from Times Square. Down on the street the shrill scream of a speeding police car punctures the conversation.

I have been trying to see him for more than a week and he knows it, apologising as he digs deep into a crumpled packet of cigarettes as he sits on the single bed with Yoko at his side.

"Man," says Lennon, continuing the theme, "I really enjoyed that Madison gig." He peers at me like a contented owl from behind the familiar tinted National Health shades perched atop the bridge of his nose. "I mean, you were there. You could see I was on the trip alright. It was just the same kinda feeling when The Beatles used to really get into it.

"Funnily enough I tend to remember the times before The Beatles happened most of all. Like in Hamburg we used to do this… at the Cavern we used to do that… in the ballrooms the other.

"We weren't just doing an entertaining thing, or whatever the hell it was we were supposed to be. That was when we played music. That's what I enjoy and remember best about those days.

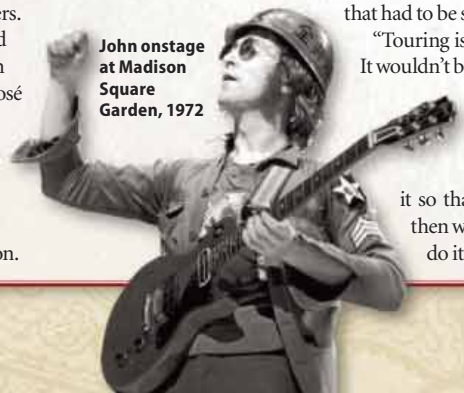
"That's the same feeling we got at Madison Square Garden with Elephant's Memory. Stan Bronstein, their tenor sax player, is a real rare one. Perhaps the best since King Curtis, that's what I say."

Having been at the concert I more than go along with him in regarding it as an event never to be forgotten. As the minutes ticked into the first hour of a new day I had seen Lennon push a thick wad of gum hard into his cheek and grind out a boogie rhythm on his Les Paul Gibson as he screamed: *"New York City… New York City… Que Pasa, New York? Que Pasa, New York"*, before a demonstrative crowd of well over 20,000 Manhattanites plus a few mad dogs and visiting Englishmen. It was magnetic.

Here, for the first time since the fragmentation of The Beatles, John Lennon finally got back to where he once belonged: rockin' and rollin', pushing his powerful lungs to their limits and then beyond, accompanied by one of the raunchiest street bands I had ever heard.

When he sat at the piano to sing 'Imagine' it was to perfection, and the silence had a magic of its own as the slow chugging intro of 'Come Together' slid out of a giant bank of speakers.

The motivation behind this official reunion with the public was a TV exposé by newscaster Geraldo Rivera, on the squalid conditions suffered by the mentally retarded children of the upstate Willowbrook institution.



**John onstage at Madison Square Garden, 1972**

In the wake of a violent public outcry John and Yoko, in collaboration with New York's mayor John Lindsay had proclaimed August 30 a fundraising day and they were personally responsible for raising $350,000 to help alleviate the children's plight.

Lennon opens a new pack of cigarettes and explains: "There were all sorts of plans to do a world tour and then the US immigration thing started so that had to be shelved.

"Touring is going to be a big problem. It wouldn't be so bad if we could not take home a packet of money which only becomes a tax problem. The perfect solution would be to do it so that we only cover costs. But then what do you do, when do you do it, and who do you do it for?

"We just wanna play but at the moment it's just a hassle. Paul's trying it one way, and it might be working for him. He's got his band together and he's just hitting the road and appearing wherever he can.

"The way Yoko and I were doing it was at the Lyceum, in Toronto and with Frank Zappa at the Fillmore – until we got together with Elephant's Memory. All we're trying to do is just play without it developing into some weird scene. But it's almost impossible, if you do it a lot."

He pauses, looks at Yoko, smiles and ponders on his last words. "I don't know," he says again, "if we're prepared to do it a lot." He continues, directing the statement at Yoko. She stays silent.

"It's not because we're bothered about losing the buzz, but you know you get involved with such hassles as who's making T-shirts and it soon becomes bigger than both of us.

MICHAEL PUTLAND-RETNA/GETTY IMAGES

**"THE BEATLES HAD** a standard to live up to," admits John Lennon, lighting up yet another four-inch link in an endless chain of battered cigarettes.

"And for that reason," he says, "when The Beatles went into the studio they had to stay in for at least six months. Today I just couldn't stand to be locked up in a studio for that length of time."

Lennon's reason is as simple as it is short: "I don't want a standard to live up to."

This is easier said than done, because the fact remains: once a Beatle always a Beatle. Despite an enormous output of solo material from the four individuals – most from the prolific Lennons – the majority still refuse to accept that The Beatles no longer exist.

No-one is more aware of the situation than Lennon. Even so the ex-Beatle isn't filled with bitter resentment. Quite the contrary.

"You know," he tells me that muggy night in New York, "when the Beatles cartoons come on the TV every Sunday, I still get a kick outta watching them… it's fine. It's just like leaving home – after that you automatically get on with your parents."

I bring us back to the present and I ask how much has Yoko influenced John, and how much has John influenced Yoko?

Lennon displays obvious pleasure at the subject. "She," he begins with an affectionate smile at Yoko, "changed my life completely. Not just physically…" he pauses momentarily, trying to find the right words, "the only way that I can describe it is that Yoko was like an acid trip or the first time you got drunk. It was that big a change, and that's just about it. I can't really describe it to this day."

I put it to them that an example would be appreciated and they both choose their new album 'Some Time In New York City' as an illustration.

Again, John leads off: "If you really wanna know, Yoko writes all her own chords and music completely. If I can get in a riff or something, then I'm lucky.

"It's always hard to hit upon specific details, but, for instance, the idea for a song like 'Imagine' came out of Yoko's influence regardless of what the format of that song was. Half the way I'm thinking, musically, philosophically and every other way is her influence both as a woman and as an artist.

"Her influence is so overwhelming that it was big enough not only for me to change my life with The Beatles but also my private life, which has nothing to do with how sexually attractive we are to each other."

For Lennon it's time for another cigarette, for Yoko a chance to offer her observations.

"Naturally, my life also changed. Mainly what we give each other is energy, because we're both energetic people and when we're in the company of other people who we might feel are less energetic, then we have to give more.

"For instance, if we're onstage and John is reading a song really good, and I have to come after him, then that means that I've really got to do my very best. That's what was happening during our concert at Madison Square Garden. Many of our close friends noticed we were really sparking off each other."

John interjects with his own interpretation: "I mean, I got up from the piano in one number, and *Jee*-zuss, it was like following an act or something. Phew, it was the same as competing in the Olympics when you've really got to box your best."

"At one time Yoko and I thought about going over to Ireland to do something, but until we've cleared up this immigration thing we can't leave America. We're kind of trapped.

"On the 'Some Time In New York City' album the royalties of 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' and 'The Luck Of The Irish' are supposed to go to the civil rights movement in both Ireland and New York.

"Whether we can get it out of the 'system' or not is another thing, but we're gonna try. In the end it gets down to what somebody in our position can do to help others.

"It's the people who stay around the fringe of the artist who create a situation where the artist is always in fear of being hit, like Mickey Rooney, by the taxman.

"So there you are, living in a limbo where you're constantly worried that you might end up owing – or that someone will take away whatever you have left.

"The people who get into that position are insecure anyway, like me. They get you up there. You collect it, 'cause you're insecure enough to want to do it. You do it. Then you become surrounded, and scared of it being taken away from you.

"So what do you do? You find you're going round in circles for the rest of your life."

**"Yoko and I thought about going over to Ireland, but until we've cleared up this immigration thing we're kind of trapped"**

Yoko and John hold a press conference after New York's mayor intervened in their immigration fight and (inset) Yoko and Elephant's Memory

Yoko: "Actually, I think the most obvious change has been on my side, which is that my musical style changed. Whereas John is virtually sticking to what he's always done. But I adopted rock."

She pauses and Lennon takes over the conversation: "It just came to me – for the two of us it was a question of mutual adjustment, with all the joys and pleasures of marriage on an artistic and musical level. However, it's not just the music, or our lifestyle, or where we're living. The whole change is happening in the space between us.

"Now, when someone comes along and says 'no', it can be whatever you want it to be. That's a very big change to go through. But after you experience it then you loosen. You feel free to do whatever you want."

**THE FACTS BEHIND** Lennon's candour reveal that, at the dizziest heights of Beatlemania, he often lost contact with reality.

"That happened many times, but then a lot of people go the same way. Just being, quote, 'A Star', or whatever it was that happened, made it a little more unreal. So perhaps the periods lasted just a little bit longer.

"Look, a working guy will get lost for a weekend, get pissed, and forget who he is or dream that he's so-and-so in his car. Well, it was just the same with us.

"But, instead of getting blotto for a weekend, we got blotto for two whole months, trying to forget whatever it was that everybody tried to forget all the time. Instead of worrying about who is gonna pay the milkman we worried about who was gonna pay whatever it was we'd gone out and spent.

"I think that around the time of *Help!* I began to wonder what the hell was happening, because things were definitely starting to get very weird by then.

"But I can only judge it by *A Hard Day's Night*. At that time we still had one foot in the backyard."

With Marc Bolan today attempting to Xerox the same kind of hysteria among Britannia's children that John, Paul, George and Ringo patented a generation earlier, I further enquire if Lennon bleeds in sympathy for today's teenyboppers.

"I dunno," he says, "if I feel sorry for these people or not. But I do think about it. The first thing that strikes me is the things these stars say in the musical papers changes so often. Yer know what I mean, like when they keep on saying, 'We're the greatest.' When I read about Dave Bowie bitchin' with Marc Bolan who is bitchin' with Fred Astaire… actually, it's a bit of a laugh when you're not doing it yourself.

"I imagine it's all down to the fact of the bigger you become, the more insecure you feel. I'd like to think that people could learn from the mistakes others have made. But they don't. It's like you can't tell anybody nothing, ever.

"I can't learn myself from other people's mistakes. There's nobody I can think of where he did that, and that's where he goofed. You can sing about it, because that's you own experience, but you can't expect anyone to think along the lines… 'Oh, so they did that and that happened, so we won't do that'.

"You can't do it. It never works."

**SELF-INDULGENT IS** a put-down constantly aimed at John Lennon, and his reply to such criticism is explicit.

"When people say that I'm self-indulgent, it's only because I'm not doing what they want me to do. Simply because they're still hung up on my past.

"If you've noticed, when they say such things they don't usually refer to the music. Actually, I got it down the other day. People talk about not what you do, but how you do it, which is like discussing how you dress or if your hair is long or short.

"They can say what they want, but the artist knows best, anyway. And when you work at such an energy level, like Yoko and me, then you're doomed to be heavily criticised."

**"I COULD NOT,"** says John Lennon, a half-smoked cigarette hanging from his lips, "put on the flashy white suit, the lipstick, shout 'C'mon everybody' and play at being Elvis or Mick Jagger."

And the man who once successfully played at being a Beatle reasons: "Because I honestly don't think I could pull it off, even if I tried.

"Music for me," he stresses, "is the only thing worth communicating. Who you are, what you wear, and how the lighting is placed – only tend to interfere.

"If the music's OK, what the hell does it matter what else is going on? It's all secondary. It gets in the way."

He goes on: "The whole glamour, scream thing – it'll always be with us. People jumped on The Beatles and screamed in the same way they're now jumping over T.Rex. It's what's supposed to happen.

"At the beginning it's very encouraging. And being the non-cynical old cynic I was in those days, I could enjoy having one foot in the King's Court.

"The trouble is, some people feel the screaming has to go on happening all the time. Get to that stage and it quickly becomes uninteresting."

**"When people say I'm self-indulgent, it's because I'm not doing what they want me to do. Because they're hung up on the past"**

Lennon now realises it's impossible to please all of the people all of the time. "Recently I tried to make my songs uncomplicated so that people could understand them. Now they're openly attacking me for writing simplistic lyrics.

"'I Want To Hold Your Hand' – that was simplistic. If I want more praise I can write things like 'I Am The Walrus' and songs full of surrealism.

"Y'know, there was one criticism of 'Some Time In New York City' that appeared in an American magazine which said something to the effect: 'Please write us some images, not the way you're saying it now. Make us some images.' Well, all I've got to say to people like that is this: 'Get drunk or whatever it is you do. Lay on a bed. Make up your own damn images.'"

**"LIFE'S TOO SHORT,"** he says, the urgency in his voice almost giving his words a musical scan, "and suddenly you're 30, and there's all these things going on in the world, and there's so much to do that you never got around to doing because you were doing whatever it was people expected of you.

"The point, now, is that I want to say whatever it is I've got to say, as simple as the music I like. And that's rock'n'roll – and to match the lyrics to the music. So now it's… *'A-WOP BOP-A-LOO-BOP/Get outta Ireland'*."

Just how effective is this brand of politico-rock?

"I honestly don't know," is his immediate reply. "I suppose it looks more preachy than it really is. I call it artistic. But it's no more or less than any other artist who may be expressing himself, whether it's with paints or with music.

"Most other people express themselves by shouting or playing football at the weekend. But me, here am I in New York and I hear about the 13 people shot dead in Ireland and I react immediately. And being what I am, I react in four-to-the-bar with a guitar break in the middle."

CORBIS

Now Lennon's voice is filled with excitement. Yoko smiles as he ups the volume of his conversation, grits his teeth. "I don't say, *'My God what's happening? We should do something'*.

"I go, *'It was Sunday Bloody Sunday and they shot the people down'*. It's not like the Bible. It's all over now. It's gone. It's finished. There is no more. My songs are not there to be digested and pulled apart like the Mona Lisa.

"If the people on the street think about it, that's all there is to it really – except to say to those people who might be thinking along the same lines as me and Yoko, you're not alone. That's like what I was trying to say in 'Imagine'.

"'Imagine' was a sincere statement. It was 'Working Class Hero' with chocolate on. I was trying to think of it in terms of children."

**WE RETURN TO** the topic of 'Some Time In New York City' and Lennon reveals: "When we made that album, we weren't setting out to make the Brandenburg Concerto or the masterpiece everyone always tried to write, paint, draw or film.

"There was no intention of that. It was just a question of getting it done, putting it out and the next one's coming up soon.

"We needn't have done it. We could have sat on 'Imagine' for a year and a half. But the things on '…New York City' were coming outta our minds, and we just wanted to share our thoughts with anybody who wanted to listen."

As a composer Lennon is of the opinion that he's over-prolific – so much so that he doesn't even bother to write half of his material down. He says he owes this characteristic to Yoko, who taught him to relax and unwind.

"I'd always heard about writers drying up at a certain age," he confesses. "I told myself that it's not true. But now I see how it happens.

"You get in a bag… and you don't realise you're in it. Then you find you've limited yourself, and there's just nowhere to go. Then you're stranded. You carry on repeating yourself. Or you just fade away.

**IT'S COMMON KNOWLEDGE** that John, Paul, George and Ringo have patched up any personal differences of opinion that may have attributed, as Lennon once put it, "to the dream being over".

So what were the chances, I asked, of all four gentlemen suddenly meeting up with each other – instruments in hand – in the confines of a recording studio? I tactfully put it to Lennon.

"None of us would ever think about playing together until somebody asked us," was his reply.

"Well," I parried, "I've asked you."

Said Lennon: "If George was recording now I'd say, 'Scuse me Roy, we're going over to the session.' You see, if any of my friends are recording and I'm the mood for it – I'd be over there.

"In the same way, if either George, Paul or Ringo called me over I'd go. But it'd never be the same – because I'd be on George's session. Although I suppose it was always each others' sessions in the old days.

"No matter whose session it was, though, I'd do exactly what he told me. And I'd enjoy it.

"Me," he chortles, "I'm a bit more selfish. I'm either doing it myself or I'm not. But I wouldn't turn down such an offer, because both George and Ringo gigged for me on my first two solo albums.

"They did it by choice. Because I asked."

*John Lennon and Yoko gigging with Chuck Berry on the Mike Douglas U.S. TV show*

## An open letter to JOHN LENNON from NME's Tony Tyler

# Lennon, you're a pathetic, ageing revolutionary

**JOHN AND YOKO/ Plastic One Band: "Some Time In New York City" (Apple).**

Dear John,

The reason my review of your new double album is dressed up as a letter is because I pinched the idea from you in the first place. For some time you've been laying your bad trips on us in the form of open letters (some disguised as albums) and I feel justified in adopting the same device. Also, I want to make sure that the musicians involved with you in this latest chunk of self-indulgence don't feel personally attacked by my opinions: it's YOU I'm after.

For the music is excellent — although perhaps not quite up to the breathtaking standards of "Imagine".

I don't like the all-American production too much — reverb is OK on your voice but I think when applied to instruments it lays the whole thing too far back into the speakers — but the confidence that's present in your phrasing is remarkable and a lesson.

"Attica State" shows real control, likewise "New York City". Oddly enough, Yoko sings in her own way almost as effectively as you do, and, although somewhat out of tune, captures the feel of the album — musically. The instrumentation is powerful and blitzy — though I wish you'd lessened down on the wild simultaneous blowing.

But your new outfit is composed of fine musicians, notably Jim Keltner and Stan Bronstein, and your own singing is almost as pungent and abrasive as ever though not as witty. And I've no complaints with the jam section, because it's included in the price and, as jams go, is pretty good.

The quarrel is with the general tastelessness of the presentation. Perhaps you'd counted on more sycophanic approval of the ideas and dogmas (yes, dogmas) expressed in the form of lyrics. Look elsewhere, Johnandyoko. Sycophancy and yesman approval of every little thing you do is the last thing you need on your self-appointed pinnacle.

For example, because I may (and do) sympathise with your legitimate fight to remain in the US doesn't mean I feel anything but embarrassment when you include a pre-paid fill-out petition of support in the album (perhaps I'm being harsh: my copy is an import and there's a chance that British issues won't contain this self-pitying little document).

Let's start with the sleeve. It resembles a newspaper (where have we seen THAT idea before? Do Tull me) and the lyrics are presented as stories. Not bad, but unoriginal and spoiled by a sadistic little Japanese woodcut showing a lady having her stomach slit by a Samurai chauvinist pig. Unnecessary.

Now the lyrics themselves. I was groping for a single word to sum up their initial impression on me and I arrived at Insulting. Arrogant, Rigid, Dogmatic . . . in short, the effect achieved was the opposite of the effect desired (I hope). I finally settled on Pathetic.

Pathetic. The only word to describe an ageing revolutionary. But it's tough how you've been caught out by history overtaking you. That's what happens when you cling to dogmas, Johnandyoko, but it's made you seem a little sillier than you probably intended. "Angela" and "John Sinclair" have both been freed since you wrote these songs and, although the basic sentiments are justified I'd have a little more respect for you if you'd used your power to highlight a less-fashionable couple of injustices. After all, there's plenty to pick from.

Other occasions find ignorance catching you out — like in "Sunday Bloody Sunday", "Anglo pigs and Scotties/sent to colonise the North" looks stupid if you examine history further back than the Boyne. Fax and info, Johnandyoko: the Scots were originally (around 400 a.d.) an IRISH tribe. They descended on Western Caledonia with rapine and pillage and gave their name to Scotland. So the "Scotties" were only coming home. Anglo pigs? Well, we're all pigs of one sort — even you — and please note that Mayor Daley is Irish.

You seem to assume that nobody cares — or that nobody grieves — but you, and I find this insulting. Perhaps you are the real cynic — otherwise you wouldn't try to make capital out of terrible and tragic situations.

But the lyrics aren't all as bad. Yoko's "We're All Water" has more wit than anything you've done on this record, and her "Sisters Oh Sisters" has a spirit and sense of hope that is totally absent from your self-righteous ragings. But her "Woman Is The Nigger Of The World" falls into the same trap. Sad.

It'll be easy to write off a review like this as the rantings of a male chauvinist fascist pig. I may be, Johnandyoko, but I utterly deny your right to fasten the label.

You've still got important things to say. So SAY them. Don't rely on cant and rigidity. Don't alienate. Stimulate.

You know, like you used to.

Love,
TONY TYLER

*David Peel and The Lower East Side, with the Lennons*

Wings '72: (l-r) Denny Seiwell, Linda, Paul, Denny Laine and Henry McCulloch

# Hi times

NME, 16 November 1972, page 16

## Paul McCartney talks to Alan Smith about Lennon, Linda and courting controversy

In this interview, much-maligned ex-Beatle Paul McCartney opens up on the topics that have aroused intense curiosity: his relationship with Lennon, the part played by wide Linda in his career, and his earlier policy of withdrawal from the public eye.

***NME*: Were you surprised by the BBC's ban on 'Hi Hi Hi'?**
Paul McCartney: "Not being quite that thick, we all thought, you know, it might be possible. The story is actually only about sex, not drugs. It's something to sing. I don't care about the lyrics. Not really."

**In *NME* recently John is talking about…**
"John who?"

**John Lennon. He's talking about quite liking the idea of playing with you these days – if you're interested. How do you feel about it?**
"The story, in a nutshell, is that The Beatles broke up, but didn't break up any contracts or anything. So all the Beatle monies still stayed where they all were.

"All the Beatle rights were still controlled by *(Allen)* Klein. So that was the reason I had to kind of stand fast and say, 'Well, I don't want him.' The only alternative for me was to have Klein, and keep on with the whole thing.

"So what happened is, we fought the Klein thing, and now I think we stand a chance of him giving all of us – all of us – some kind of release. This means we will all get our own royalties coming to us separately.

"That was all I wanted. And now, since that's beginning to look a bit better, our relations between ourselves are quite cool now. They're quite good. Once it's sorted out, I don't see any reason why we maybe wouldn't want to play with each other."

**Maybe it's impractical to think of The Beatles as a working unit. But could you see yourselves musically coming together once in a while?**
"That kind of thing might happen. But really, all it's down to is the fact that if you are in a job, and you're treated wrong by the management or by the government, you can either just go with it and think, 'Well, this is life,' or you've got to, like, dig your heels in and say, 'Well, I'm not gonna go.' This is the case with the Beatles thing. Really, that's all it's been down to for us. Once that's sorted, well, then everything's cool. There's no telling what might happen then."

**On the solo albums I felt there was a kind of raggedness and that everything was being tried. You were losing good, solid melodic direction.**
"That's true, yes. At the end of The Beatles everything was a bit kind of ragged for me, a bit disheartening. Since that, I think I'm getting more back to what I'm about – melodies, tunes…"

**Some people thought you'd become ashamed of your ability to write good melodies.**
"No matter what you say and cover up and hide and stuff, if you're with a band – even a remotely successful band for ten years – when you split up there was inevitably a lot of kind of, 'He's like bloody Engelbert Humperdinck' from the other people in the band. I got little remarks like that.

"Well, you do think, 'I'll bloody show you I'm not, mate – I can rock with the best of them, I'm as complex as any of them.' And I started, for a period, going away from my normal things. Just simple things… the funny thing is, it's all coming back to that. Right now."

**Would you regard yourself as an establishment-related artist – as having "sold out your generation to the straights"?**
"No, that's rubbish."

**How do you feel about the hostility towards Linda from those who resent her presence in the band?**
"When The Beatles broke up I just buzzed off with Linda, and we just did what we felt like. We didn't feel like doing any press, so we didn't do any. Then people started coming out with all these, you know, 'he's a hermit' kind of things.

"Naturally, I could read the papers and I could sit there and think, 'Well, I'm not a hermit. They're

wrong, obviously. I can tell what I am. I'm not living in London any more – but that doesn't make me a hermit.' So I just didn't feel that I had to answer it.

"But I'll tell you – the people who don't accept Linda are nearly always the people who've never seen the band."

**I once heard you described as the Nina & Frederick of rock…**

"It's not that kind of thing. It's only a small role she plays, you know. It's not as if she's playing, like, any huge kind of role.

"I mean, the main role Linda is playing is that she happens to be 'my wife'. I mean, that's the main kind of role thrust on her. I look on Linda, with regard to the band, just as a piano player. She also takes little bits – a harmony singer. There's no kind of big deal."

**Does it hurt, these snides against Linda – or don't you dive a damn anyway?**

"The answer to this question is that it has hurt her in the past – weep, weep. There are things that hurt when someone says them – for instance, when John married Yoko everybody said, 'Bloody Jap' and if you think that didn't hurt them, then you're daft.

"The main thing that's happened with Linda and me is that, since The Beatles have split, we didn't explain an awful lot of what we were doing. If we'd been very careful, like about 'Ram' or something, and set up some kind of publicity machine before it all and tuned all your minds into it – maybe it would have been different.

"But we just bunged it on your desk and said, 'Look – love us or hate us' and a lot of people said, 'Well, we hate you then.'"

**Do you now regard Wings as fully "run-in" – and if so, aren't they long-overdue for British dates?**

"Well, there's the British tour in April, and we had our little period of getting it together because you've got to have that.

"You need to work yourself in. I mean The Beatles had three, four or five years before we made a record… we were together as a band."

**I take it that audiences don't scream at you any more. Any feelings on this?**

"I like an audience that raves. We had some goods signs off that European tour.

"Listening to tapes, it's obvious we're still pretty new as a band. I'm not going to deny that, either, because it's stupid. There's nothing wrong with it, nothing to be ashamed of. We are very new.

NME, 2 December 1972, page 3

# Wings single hit by BBC's airplay veto

## CONTROVERSY No. 2

*ONE OF THE TITLES on the new double A-side single by Paul McCartney's Wings, "Hi Hi Hi", has been banned by BBC Radio. The official reason given is that "it is not considered suitable for airplay". This is the second Wings single to be banned by the BBC, the first being the controversial "Give Ireland Back To The Irish".*

*A BBC spokesman told the NME: "It slipped through the net and was played once on Tony Blackburn's show, but you can take it that from now it will not be played on Radio 1 or 2."*

*National Press reports had suggested that the ban was imposed because the lyric had drugs associations. But McCartney said at the weekend: "It's nothing to do with drugs — the implications are more of a sexual nature." And on Monday, the BBC admitted that sex was the reason for the clampdown.*

*The offending passage, according to Radio 1 and 2 press officer Rodney Collins, is the part of the lyric that refers to lying on a bed and getting out a "body gun". Added Collins: "It was considered just too blatant for us."*

*● On BBC-1's "Nationwide" last week, a contributor described Chuck Berry's "My Ding-A-Ling" as "possibly the bluest record ever to have reached No. 1."*

"Actually, I feel that in a way that we've got it over people like the Stones… although I don't think we're quite as good as them, yet."

**I once read you were very much the kind of person who liked to direct operations.**

"With Wings I can do anything I like really. They're good – they would just do anything I wanted. But in fact, we don't do it like that. We turn up at a session and we all throw ideas in."

**Are you aware you're the only ex-member of The Beatles still producing his own albums?**

"I sometimes feel the need for other producers, and sometimes I do use other producers. We used Glyn Johns on a couple of tracks. But we were a bit restricted there."

**Do you think the George Martin days…**

"We've just done something with George – just the other week. We recorded a track for the next James Bond film called 'Live And Let Die', which unfortunately will not be released for a long time. It's a good track."

> **"'Hi Hi Hi' is actually only about sex, not drugs. I don't care about the lyrics"**

**What about the album situation?**

"This next album will be very good, I think. I hate to go talking about this, in case there's 50 incredible ones out at the same time and ours turns out not so hot.

"There's a lot of good stuff on it, some great tunes. It's a bit more melodic, but it bops."

**Have you used much added instrumentation?**

"We have used some added instrumentation, but the best way is obviously for you to hear it. I think it'll be out in February and I think it'll be a double.

"The idea is just to get working, working, working. So it's all down to a whole load of work, because I felt like that – doing TV shows, doing work.

"I read people knocking *Top Of The Pops* but I'm telling you, I watch *Top Of The Pops* just because it's pop. I'd rather watch that than the news any day."

**Is there a restriction on composing within the band?**

"Oh no – Denny's got a great one on the next album. It's really just that if anyone turns up with a good song, OK. If it's a lousy song, then we wouldn't use it. And we've got Denny singing one of our songs on the next album. We're trying to put it around a bit, so it's a nice kind of unit.

"The thing about our band is, everyone likes to be in a band. There's really not much more to it than that. We're all from varying parts of globe, and we're all from varying upbringings. We couldn't be more different people unless we had a few Chinamen in there.

"We're all pretty different. But whatever we're doing we're doing it together now. The thing that's eventually going to tell, obviously, is the music."

**Do you still travel about a great deal?**

"Oh yeah, not half. Wouldn't anyone? We go to the Caribbean whenever we can, because that's incredible. That is like, you know, paradise. Jamaica, that's very nice. I like peasants. We're peasants, too, from all corners of the globe, a gang of peasants who want to be in musical entertainment.

"This is the whole idea. It's like in medieval days. A few people just got together and made some music to make themselves happy, and then to make people happy off it. And that's really all it is for me.

"I occasionally want to make some little political statement, occasionally want to do a kid's song. The main thing is the music. That comes off. If you like 'Hi Hi Hi', then you like Wings."

*"We're all going on a… European tour"*: Wings on the road in 1972

WIRE IMAGE: CHRIS WALTER/POPPERFOTO

# Bolan boogaloo

## Ringo Starr talks to Tony Norman about filming with Marc Bolan, playing for Bangla Desh and making amends with the other three Beatles

NME, 23 December 1972, page 17

Ringo Starr's reason for pulling out of the *Tommy* extravaganza was quite simple. He had to be elsewhere… filming, a decision that highlights the switch of emphasis that has governed his career since the disintegration of The Beatles.

Now he is Richard Starkey: actor, director and producer. Yup, Ringo's in the movies.

Naturally he still loves music – only a fool would deny that. But he's got his priorities straight and right now, cameras are more important than drumkits.

I went to a screening of his T.Rex film *Born To Boogie* last week, and cornered him on his arrival just as the after-film party was breaking up.

How did the Bolan tie-up come about?

"I phoned him up one day and said, 'Come and see me. I've got this idea. See what you think, yes or no.' And on that particular thing it was a no.

"But, through that meeting, we got to know each other and became friendly. Then I heard he was going to be filmed at his Wembley show. Apple has a film company so I said, 'Why don't you let me do it? I'm yer pal.' And he said, 'OK, we'll do it together.'

"After the show, we looked at the footage we'd got and decided to add to it. You see, my theory about filming concerts is that you can't create the atmosphere that's in the hall.

"So I wanted to do some more. We got him to write a few things and set up a couple more days shooting."

Was the general approach pretty loose?

"Yes. It was just like getting the lads up there and trying to do things. It was a really free shoot. We'd get to a place and say, 'OK, we'll do something here'. Then we'd grab a few props and just do what came around."

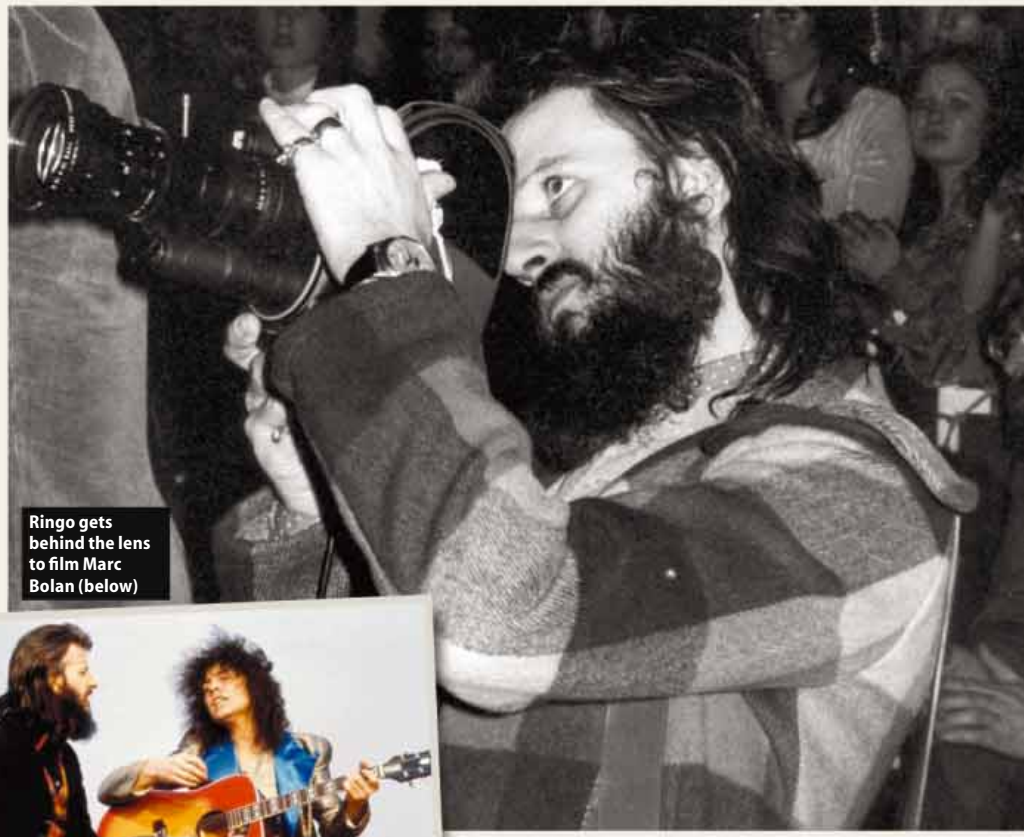
Getting back to the concert, what came across to me was the friendship and sex in the Bolan/audience relationship. Was that how he saw it?

"Well, I'm sure you're right. Those things were there, but it doesn't really matter what comes across as long as something does. It's so boring when nothing comes across.

"But everyone in that audience was getting something different. That's why we used all those close-ups, you know. When he's up there, for everyone in the audience it's a different scene. We tried to show a few of them. Different things for different people."

Ringo Starr, as you may know, is no stranger to screaming crowds himself. Was the Wembley show in any way a nostalgic experience for him?

"Very much so," he nodded. "They were screaming and shouting and I love that. I think that if you go on and that's what they do, it's all right. I can't take it when you go on and they just sit there and listen to you."



Ringo gets behind the lens to film Marc Bolan (below)

What's wrong with that?

"I think it gives you that terrible 'I'm here to be appreciated' attitude. If they want to hear the music they can buy the records and listen to them."

So he enjoyed the screams then?

"Oh yeah. If they'd been quiet when I played, I wouldn't have known what to do."

**Now he is Richard Starkey: actor, director and producer. Yup, Ringo's in the movies**

Although Ringo rarely gets up onstage these days, the buzz is still there. The Concert For Bangla Desh gave him the chance to flex his drumsticks again.

"I enjoyed playing immensely. It was a bit weird because it was the first time I'd been onstage for about three years. I was crazy with nerves beforehand. But if you've done your job it's OK. You soon relax.

"It was nice, anyway, because we had a lot of good pals around."

Ever since Lennon's *Rolling Stone* interview, the press has been full of articles relating how The Beatles went through hell, torture etc. Did Ringo ever reflect happily on those historic years?

"Oh sure, there were a lot of good times. If you take John's interview as that's where it's at, then there were no good times. But if you take them all, you can see where the good times were.

"And also John is now saying that there were a lot of good times as well.

"We were all just a bit crazy at the time… no, not crazy… but you just get into things and John was into that…"

He paused and smiled. "I don't know if that answers anything. I just found myself rambling for a moment."

What's really important is the future.

"We've all knocked off again. The relationship between the four of us is a lot better now. At one time it was really a bit weird because we didn't know how to handle that scene. For so long it'd been all four of us together and suddenly it was like… you're over there and I'm over here.

"But it's cool now. We're together again. Not as a band. We're not going to be a band again. But we're together as people, and that's more important really."

REDFERNS/REX FEATURES

The prospect of a Beatles reunion – the subject of widespread speculation during the past month – increased this week with the news that Allen Klein is no longer managing Apple Corps. The split opens the way for Paul McCartney to resume activities with the other three ex-Beatles – and he is evidently keen to do so, because he told the *NME* last week: "When Klein is out of the way, there is no real reason why we shouldn't get together again."

The agreement between Apple Corps and Klein's ABKCO Industries expired on March 31. It is not being renewed, and an Apple Corps statement issued this week says that – for the present – they will act as their own managers. Yoko Ono's management agreement with Klein has also expired.

Paul: raising the prospect of a Beatles reunion after Klein's exit

## Paul McCartney tells NME.....

NME, 7 April 1973, page 3

# Way is open for Beatles reunion

In a statement issued on his behalf in New York, Klein says: "It is not now felt in the best interests of ABKCO to put forward a proposal for its continued management of Apple Corps and Messrs Harrison, Lennon and Starr. Under these circumstances, ABKCO has terminated its efforts with respect to its possible acquisition of Apple Corps. We wish Harrison, Lennon and Starr continued success."

McCartney's disapproval of Klein's involvement in Apple was the main factor in The Beatles' split. But any ill will is now rapidly dissolving, and a new rapport has developed between McCartney and Lennon who have talked together on the telephone several times during the last two months.

Speaking at Elstree on the set of his ATV spectacular, McCartney commented: "Yes, I've been talking to John. I'm not sure what's going to happen to Apple, as everyone keeps changing his mind. But the only thing that has prevented us from getting together again has been Allen Klein's contractual hold over The Beatles' name. When he is out of the way, there is no real reason why we shouldn't get together."

> "I've been talking to John. I'm not sure what will happen"

McCartney has already made a move towards a reunion by writing material for Ringo Starr's forthcoming solo album, for which all four ex-Beatles will have written songs.

If a Beatles concert were mooted, the only drawback would seem to be its location. America would seem to be out of the running, as McCartney is at present unable to gain admittance to that country because of his drugs conviction. And Lennon would presumably be loath to leave the States, as he is currently fighting a deportation order, and he would be unable to get back into America were he to leave – though it is of course possible that, if the reunion were to develop, Lennon would accept his deportation.

The possibility of McCartney resuming his songwriting partnership with John Lennon is also on the cards. He has signed a new composing deal with ATV. And he told the *NME* that ATV are at present "negotiating with the other three Beatles".

Paul on the set of ATV's *James Paul McCartney* special, 1973

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Ringo Starr | |
| SINGLE: Back Off Boogaloo | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: March 1972 |

Hello – what's old Ringo up to? A Number One hit could easily be in store for the maestro of rock drums. There's a touch of the Marc Bolans in this highly playable rhythmic excursion. The vocal chorus chant the hookline, piano rumbles beerily and Ringo stomps over his snare drum with laconic power. It's hypnotic and effective, ideal for jukeboxes and liable to send us all mad by the end of the week.

***Chris Welch*** Melody Maker, 18 March 1972, page 19

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Paul McCartney & Wings | |
| SINGLE: My Love | |
| LABEL: EMI | RELEASED: April 1973 |

A grand ballad from Paul, rather in the tradition of songs that turned on the troops in the days of the Cyprus Crisis and other manifestations of the '50s. In a way its appeal is timeless, and it certainly rates among his seemingly unstoppable flow of classics. The construction of the song is strengthened by a splendid gutty guitar solo from Henry McCulloch, which also maintains the mood of gentle nostalgia. Much fluttering of wings and handkerchiefs as this sails up the charts.

***Chris Welch*** Melody Maker, 7 April 1973, page 21

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Wings | |
| SINGLE: Live And Let Die | |
| LABEL: EMI | RELEASED: June 1973 |

McCartney's fairly reasonable solution to the given problem "Write, in less than 25 bars, a theme-tune for the new James Bond movie" is to 'Let It Be' for the first half, wailing absently and with a curious notion of grammar, about this *"ever changing world in which we live in"*, before sitting back to let a 3,000-piece orchestra do a man-in-the-street's impression of John Barry. It's not intrinsically very interesting, but the film will help to sell it and vice versa. The B-side, 'I Lie Around', is a cute seasonal offering with the sounds of picnicking families and dads diving into rivers shouting "It's lovely, it's lovely!" S'arright.

***Ian MacDonald*** NME, 9 June 1973, page 13

# RED ROSE SPEEDWAY
## Paul McCartney & Wings Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 28 April 1973, page 16

When Paul McCartney split, back in the long ago when The Beatles were swatting each other and not a few hard shells were cracking under the blows, there were those who doubted whether he would ever make a good record again without the edgy brilliance of John Lennon to offset his more melodic – face it, more overtly middle class – tunesmith aspirations.

The fact that ducks on the wall can sometimes be appealing quite escaped McCartney's many critics (who, if the truth be known, were more incensed at Paul's legal actions of the time than at his music; they fastened their prejudices accordingly).

So, with John Lennon cast in the role of Working Class Hero (when he's even more lower-middle than Paul) and with the anti-bourgeois chic that then prevailed, poor McCartney lost out all down the line.

Well folks, this time Paul has really done it; he's really made a nice record. Certainly 'Red Rose Speedway' is lightweight, sure it has no intellectual posture. But, with all the current heaviness and after-me-the-apocalypse brainstuds around, I for one am bloody pleased to discover a lightweight record that not only fails to alienate, but actually succeeds in impressing via good melodic structure, excellent playing and fine production. It altogether makes my day.

First track, 'Big Barn Red', displays all of Paul's natural feel for swing that used to counterpoint Lennon's deeper susceptibilities in the, er, other band.

This moves into 'My Love', which is one of three tracks that typify McCartney at his best. It's a big, luscious ballad in the style of 'The Long And Winding Road' or 'She's Leaving Home'.

'Get On The Right Thing' is the weakest track, I feel, because it can't quite make up its mind as to what kind of song it really wants to be. This is followed by a homey little song, 'One More Kiss'.

Then comes the Track Of The Album, 'Little Lamb Dragonfly', which simply soars. Based on a series of 12-string figures from Denny Laine and Henry, the richness of the production totally compensates for the Beatrix Potter lyrics and, in fact, makes them work even better.

Turn over and a quickie, 'Single Pigeon', to kick off with. This is followed by the most Beatle-ish track which is 'When The Night'; and then, in turn, by the album's curio, 'Loup', an electronic excursion into Floydland with McCartney on Moog while Mrs McCartney, Henry, Denny and Denny Seiwell chant. Behind this, Henry and Denny Laine swap biting guitar phrases. It's something of a filter. I pass.

The final track is a medley of four tunes: 'Hold Me Tight', 'Lazy Dynamite', 'Hands Of Love' and 'Power Cut'.

My main criticism of the album is its lack of a real rocker. The McCartney who sang 'Get Back' and 'Long Tall Sally' seems, sadly, to have vanished and I would have liked a somewhat harder core to set my teeth into.

'Red Rose Speedway' is certainly the best thing McCartney's done since the Great Demise, and I also think it's the best thing he's likely to do with this band. Not, I hasten to add, because of any lack of talent, but simply because Wings' original briefing went no further than this.

Paul makes his stand here and, as far as I'm concerned, he's proved his point. And I also think that in the future he's going to be able to look back on the last three years without cringing – which is more than Lennon will be able to do. ***Tony Tyler***

It's the best thing McCartney's done since the Great Demise

Melody Maker

Slade alive in June

McCARTNEY MAYNIA

Jethro cancel gigs

Osmonds strike again!

Aretha in the studio

# LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD
## George Harrison Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 9 June 1973, page 33

There was a time when I considered George Harrison the finest packaged object since frozen pizza. I marvelled at the economy of his guitar breaks, I gasped at the way his phrases underscored a subtle vocal point that either Jowl or Porn had just made. His tonalities shrivelled me; the very quiver of his Chet Atkins pick set me aflame with admiration. I walked tall with my idol.

All this has changed. All things must pass.

I'm not sure when I first began (mentally) to assign George the title of World's Most Boring Man. The suspicion may have crept in with the dire, ennui-making 'All Things Must Pass'. But the unworthiness of my heretical thoughts smote home around the time of the Bangla Desh concerts – which we all applauded like billy-o, made peace signs to each other about, and then completely forgot. I mean, how can you slag off a guy who can get together a thing like that?

Just watch me.

First, we all suffer from a collective blind spot when it comes to criticising ex-Beatles' work. Because many of us found, in The Beatles, a complete raison d'être for getting into music in the first place, we tend to venerate them beyond comfortable limits (except Paul McCartney who, for some obscure reason, has been required by a heartless public to make it all over again). Result? John Lennon and George Harrison have suffered from an almost total absence of reasoned criticisms concerning their post-Beatles product. This has affected their music.

'Living In The Material World' is George's second solo album. It's an improvement on 'All Things Must Pass' – pleasant, competent, vaguely dull and inoffensive. It's also breathtakingly unoriginal and – lyrically at least – turgid, repetitive and so damn holy I could scream. The inside sleeve photo presumably makes a point about material goods, as there's a pic of George, surrounded by all his property, (house, grounds, valet, chauffeur, maid, nanny, Rolls, sports car and friends).

I don't believe George is being hypocritical when, with one breath, he lays the entire Krishna-the-Goat trip on us and, with the other displays the wealth that a load of people all over the world subscribed to. But it doesn't help his image as a person of wit and intuition.

Neither does the music, which limps along from the dreadful opening track 'Give Me Love' to the final 'That Is All'. There are some heavy names on this album (N Hopkins, R Starr, K Voormann) but the sound they produce is strangely flaccid.

I doubt if 'Material World' would ever do well if it weren't for George's antecedants. So it is – and I have no doubt whatever it'll sell like hot tracts and that George'll donate all the profits to starving Bengalis and make me feel like the cynical heel I undoubtedly am. ***Tony Tyler***

There are some heavy names on this album but the sound is flaccid

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## MM exclusive! Inside the mind of an ex-Beatle, ten years after

# LENNON TODAY

**Interview by CHRIS CHARLESWORTH in Los Angeles**

WHERE Doheney cuts Sunset at the edge of the Beverley Hills estate, there's a tobacconist shop that carries all makes and brands. It's called Sunset Smokes and it actually sells English cigarettes.

When my duty-free allocation burned up, I went there to re-stock, deciding ultimately on a carton of Rothmans to satisfy my nicotine habit.

"You English?" inquired the shop assistant, who was probably in her late forties. I replied in the affirmative.

"We got Piccadilly now," she informed me. "I'll tell you something," she continued. "When the Beatles were the Beatles and they were staying in Los Angeles, they were in here every day asking for Piccadilly.

"We couldn't get them then, but we've got them now. If you see one of them, tell them."

Three days later I saw one. He smoked only Gauloises. "I've been smoking those for years," said Lennon, in the bustle of the Rainbow Club, situated on the Strip not a stone's throw away from Sunset Smokes.

John was sat in the quietest corner of the noisiest club, curled up on a seat among a constant stream of well-wishers and others seeking an audience.

In the company was Lou Adler, self-made millionaire, part-owner of the Roxy Club next door, mentor to Carole King and owner of the Bel Air mansion where Lennon is staying on this rare excursion out of New York and rare separation from Yoko.

About a week later, after a series of 'phone calls and messages, I spent an afternoon at the same Bel Air mansion in the company of Lennon.

I took along three recent copies of the MM, a token gift which he eagerly accepted.

### Thinner

John Lennon now seems smaller and thinner than he's ever been. His hair is cropped short and he wears tiny round glasses similar to the type that are provided with sun-ray lamps to protect the eyes from the blinding glare. He sips beer on the terrace and talks willingly about any subject I bring up.

He's very friendly and very open.

The reason for his visit to Los Angeles is to put the finishing touches to his next album "Mind Games" which is due out in November. But as often as not he's out on the town. Nightly it seems, he's seen socialising at the Rainbow, catching an act at the Roxy and even spending a weekend in Vegas where he stopped off to see Fats Domino.

But, he explains, the problems of being John Lennon are always there. Whenever he's spotted, a crowd gathers just to gawk at this little man who, probably more than anyone else, gave popular music the biggest kick in the ass it's ever had. Once a Beatle, always a Beatle.

We talked for over an hour — about his new record . . . his love of the States . . . his dodgy visa situation . . . his thoughts on the recent Beatle re-release double albums . . . his lack of live appearances . . . his views on the current music scene . . . and, of course, his relationship with the other ex-Beatles.

"Tell me about the new album," I asked him first.

"Well," said John in his thick Liverpool accent, "it's finished. I'm out here in LA to sit on Capitol, to do the artwork and see to things like radio promotion. The album's called 'Mind Games', and it's, well . . . just an album.

"It's rock at different speeds. It's not a political album, or an introspective album. Someone told me it was like 'Imagine' with balls, which I liked a lot. I've used New York musicians, apart from Jim Keltner on drums.

### Message

"There's no deep message about it. I very rarely consciously sit down and write a song with a deep message. Usually, whatever lyrics I write are about what I've been thinking over the past few months. I tend not to want to change an idea once it's in my mind, even if I feel differently about it later.

"If I stated in a song that water was the philosophy to life, then people would assume that was my philosophy for ever — but it's not, it's forever changing."

Yoko is not involved in the new album, although John played some guitar on her last record. The two of them, says John, have decided to keep their careers separate for a while. "Now that she knows how to produce records and everything about it, I think the best thing I can do is keep out of her hair.

"We get a little tense in the studio together, but that's not to say we won't ever do another album. If we do an album, or a film, or a bed-in or whatever, that's just the way we feel at that moment.

### Bath

"We're just playing life by ear, and that includes our careers. We occasionally take a bath together and occasionally separately, just however we feel at the time. Yoko has just started a five-day engagement in a club in New York, and I ain't about to do five days in a New York club.

"She's over there rehearsing and I'm letting her get on with it her own way."

The current temporary separation between them, says John, is the longest there has ever been — but he's quick to deny the inevitable rumours that they have parted.

"We have been apart more than people think, for odd periods over the years, and now I know people are calling from England suggesting we've split up. It's not so. The last time that happened was when we spent one night apart at Ascot and somebody started off rumours.

"All that scares us about being apart is whether something happens to us. Our minds are tied in together and there's always the telephone, but one of us could have a plane crash or something. We've been together five years or more now, but we've really been together for more than ten years in most people's terms.

"Her output and energy is so much greater than mine that I just let her get on with things."

### Change

John considers "Mind Games" to be better than "Imagine," although he says he's never completely satisfied with his records. "For the last ten years I've said that if I didn't like something I wouldn't put it out, but whenever I played the record back I'm thinking of ways to change it and make it better still. It's good, but you can always do better and that's why I go on making records.

"I was disappointed at the reaction to the last album. Over here they banned it and made such a fuss about the songs, and it was never played because they said it insulted blacks which it didn't at all. I know a lot of black people, and they know what's going on.

"I knew it was political with a capital "P", but that was what I had in my bag at the time and I wasn't just going to throw them away because they were political. 'Imagine' did pretty well, so after that I wanted to just do one that I felt like.

"I still like the song 'Woman Is The Nigger Of The World'. I like the sound of it and it gets me off, but it just happened that it didn't please people."

At present, John has no immediate plans to tour or appear live anywhere. He had plans until the much-publicised visa situation reared up, and now he's content to wait until these problems are sorted out before going on the road.

"At the time they were trying to throw me out, I really felt like going on the road, but having to go to court and go to Washington put me off the idea.

"I had no time to think about work, which was maybe what they were trying to do to me — wear me down.

### Money

"I wouldn't mind doing it, but the organisation frightens me. I could probably earn a lot of money, which wouldn't be a bad thing because all my money is tied up in England and they won't let me have it. I get lots of people wanting me to do things for charity, but usually when I show, it turns out the whole thing is a fiasco and I end up running the whole show.

"Not many people know how to put a show on properly: most of them think that if they get a famous name, he'll call everybody he knows and they won't have to worry about anything else.

"The Bangla Desh show started this big charity thing. Now people ring me and they think that if I say 'yes' then Dylan, George and God will appear too. If Yoko appears anywhere, they automatically expect me to appear, so I now say screw it for the time being.

"I'm in no particular hurry, I don't miss not being on stage and one way or the other I always seem to be performing somehow, no matter where I am.

### Feeling

"When I did the Madison Square Gardens show, I had a sort of deja-vu feeling that I'd done it all before and this was no better or no worse than it had ever been before. It felt strange and I felt like a robot doing the same thing over and over again.

"I'll probably go out on the road again before too long, but it's just the itty-bitty things about it that I can't stand. If something comes up that interests me, then I may do it.

"I think I'd sooner play the Roxy here than a ballpark, but the complications of someone like me doing a show anywhere are endless.

"I couldn't do what Paul did with Wings and just turn up at Bradford University and play. It'd have to be something more organised than that."

Right now, John is waiting for the appeal hearing for his application to remain in the USA. While the appeal is pending, he's just behaving naturally, and relying on a team of lawyers to keep him informed of how the case is proceeding.

To this end, he's kept out of the papers recently, living quietly in an apartment in Central Manhattan, New York, anxious not to offend those who want to see him leave America. His only publicised public appearance recently was when he went to watch the Watergate hearings in Washington.

### Papers

"I only went once to see Watergate, but it made the papers because I was recognised straight away. I thought it was better on TV anyway because I could see more. When it first came on I watched it live all day, so I just had the urge to actually go. I had other business in Washington, anyway.

"The public was there and most Senators have children, so every time there was a break in the proceedings I had to sign autographs. I was looking like a Buddhist monk at the time with all my hair chopped off, and I thought nobody would spot me. They spotted Yoko before me, and assumed — rightly — that I must be with her. It was quite a trip."

John took part in some of the sessions for Ringo's forthcoming album which brought three ex-Beatles together — and almost all four — for the first time since the split. "Yes, the three of us were there and Paul would most probably have joined in if he was around but he wasn't," said John.

"I just got a call from Ringo, asking me to write a track so I did. It seemed the natural thing to do. George has written a track and Paul has written one, but most of them are Ringo's. I like his songs. For the track that I wrote, I was on piano, Billy Preston was on organ, Ringo was on drums, George was on guitar and Klaus Voormann was on bass."

### Bedroom

John says he talks to at least one of the other three ex-Beatles every two weeks. "I've talked to Ringo a lot recently because he's just moved into my house at Ascot, which is nice because I've always got a bedroom there. I haven't talked to Paul since before he did the last tour with Wings, but I heard 'Red Rose Speedway' and it was all right.

"I liked parts of his TV special, especially the intro. The bit filmed in Liverpool made me squirm a bit, but Paul's a pro. He always has been.

"I hear two people have left Wings now. The only news I hear is what I get from the English trade papers. Nobody tells me things unless I ask and, really, it's nothing to do with me anyway what Wings are doing."

While emphasising that he doesn't mean to be insulting to England, he says he never misses home. "I don't miss England like I didn't miss Liverpool when the Beatles moved to London.

"England will always be there if I choose to go back, and when I came here originally I didn't have a plan to stay. It just happened that way.

### Hottest

"I love New York. It's the hottest city on earth. I haven't been everywhere in the world but it's the fastest city on earth. The difference between New York and London is the difference between London and Liverpool.

"For me New York has everything. And if I wanted to get away from

**'People say the Stones are getting too old to appear...**

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# 'I think the Beatles are closer now than for a long time'

# His new album—no message and no real surprises

it there's always New England to visit. If I feel homesick for England, I feel homesick for Cornwall, or Ireland or Scotland where I went on holidays. When I think of England now, I think of my childhood or discotheques in London and in New England it's very similar with the rock and the sea and that.

"I've got a little pad there where I can go to get away from the rush of New York, and I've got an apartment in the Dakota Building in New York which is the place they made the film Rosemary's Baby.

## Movies

"I also love the millions of radio stations and television channels and the piped TV movies I can get and things like that which you can't get in England."

John regrets that he doesn't get out to see many artists performing, a situation that stems from his being John Lennon. "I get nervous at shows. Either I have to sit in the audience and I get hassled by the crowd, or I go backstage and have to mix with the groupies and all that trip.

"Rod Stewart's here at the moment and I wouldn't mind seeing him. I like him. I want to see Jerry Lee Lewis, too, while he's on here. I saw Fats Domino in Las Vegas — I seem to be catching up on the ones I never saw when I was a teenager.

"I had a ticket for the Rolling Stones on the East Coast but at the time I was in Los Angeles, so I never got to see them. I haven't seen the Stones since the Rock and Roll Circus which was the film that never came out.

"I still prefer records. They're the thing of the moment that matters. I like to see the artist occasionally, but some people have made one great record and I go for that record and don't care whatever else they've done.

"People are saying the Stones are getting too old to appear now but that's bullshit, Mick'll never be past it. I saw the TV show they did over here and it was fantastic. It was a master's performance and that's what Mick is, a master performer.

"The English always tear into their own artists more than others, and worship Americans. Here it's the other way around. I like a lot of the new British bands though."

I told John that Slade and been called the new Beatles. "Hell, who wants to be the new Beatles!" he replied. "I like some of their records. They get it off. I saw them on TV here and it was all right.

"It must be so hard for them when they come here and they're used to being treated like God in England, but I think they'll survive. They're a good band. They're a singles band and I'm a singles man.

"The only reason I make albums is because you're supposed to. I haven't really got into somebody's album since I was into Elvis Presley and Carl Perkins, and even then singles were always the best.

## Enough

"I'd like to see the Who when they come over here, they're like clockwork. I went to see Cheech and Chong the other night, but once is enough for them.

"That's another thing that puts me off playing live — the fact that you've got to do the same thing over and over again every night, and the audience wants to hear the songs you're associated with. I remember I sang 'Imagine' twice in one day when I was rehearsing it, and that bored me.

"I've nothing against the song, in fact I'm quite proud of it, but I just can't go on every night singing it. I'd try and vary it, but then I don't like to see that myself. If I go to watch an artist I'd expect to hear the things I know.

"I understand it from both points of view. Actually I have trouble remembering lyrics. I sang 'Come Together' at Madison Square Gardens for a TV show too and really I sang 'She Got Hairy Arseholes' instead of what it should have been, and it was never noticed.

John admits he's dropped-out a little recently, and has deliberately stopped making explosive statements that would make newspaper headlines. He says this may have something to do with his visa situation, but it's hard to tell.

## Regret

There has, he says, not been much to talk about. "I think I'll always be the same whenever there's an issue. In the olden days, the MM would carry headlines like 'Lennon Blasts Hollies' and, not that I'd regret saying what I'd said, it would reverberate back to me for months afterwards.

"So then I'd drop back a little. I'm going through one of those phases now. Either Lennon is all over the place or he's invisible. Like other things, I don't plan it. It just happens naturally."

The next project coming up for John, though, is an album of oldies he's making with Phil Spector. "Phil and I have been threatening to do this for years.

"I want to go in and sing some 'Goo ooh baby'-type songs that are meaningless for a change. Whenever I'm in the studio, between takes, I mess around with oldies. I even used to do it in the studio in the Beatle days, so now I'm finally getting round to doing a John Lennon sings the oldies album.

## Next

"This will be my next album. I hope people won't think I've run out of songs, but sod it, I just want to do it.

"I'm not going to tell you what members I'll be doing: I don't even know for sure myself. Phil and I are sorting through loads of songs right now.

"I enjoy working with him, but I equally enjoyed doing the latest album on my own. There was nobody to lean on, and this was a good exercise for me. I always control everything anyway, but this time I thought I'd do it all on my own. ."

Conversation turned to the recent double Beatles compilation albums that have been so successful, a fact which pleases Lennon almost as much as when 'Imagine' occasionally creeps back into the charts. He get's a bigger kick, however, out of his own albums doing well rather than Beatle material.

"George controlled the choice of the material on those albums more than any of us. They sent me lists and asked for my opinion, but I was busy at the time. I think it was the pressure of the bootlegs that finally made us put them out after all this time.

"Did you know that there's a bootleg out now of the Decca audition which the Beatles did? I have a copy of it, but I'm trying to find the tape. It's beautiful. There's us singing 'To Know Her Is To Love Her', and a whole pile of tracks, mostly other people's but some of our own. It's pretty good, better than that Tony Sheridan thing on Polydor.

## Tapes

"Every time I go on TV here somebody tapes it and within a week it's in all the shops. In a way I dig it because it's good for your ego, but I know I'm not supposed to because it's against the business. I got copies made from this Decca audition and sent it to them all. I wouldn't mind actually releasing it."

I told John I had a copy of the Beatles "Live At Shea Stadium'. "Yes, I've got that," he said. "I think I've got them all. There's one of a Beatles show at the Hollywood Bowl which was an abortion, and there's others from everywhere we played, obscure places here in the States. It seemed someone was taping it everywhere.

"I think the official reissue albums came out around the right time. Maybe we'd have sold more if we'd got them out before the bootleggers, but they didn't do too badly at all. They got gold records each. They brought back the sixties."

John says he never really had a favourite Beatles number. He usually preferred whatever was current at the time. "I have a favourite of Paul's, and a favourite of George's and a favourite of my own.

"Of mine I like 'Strawberry Fields' and 'Walrus', of Paul's I like 'Here, There and Everywhere', of Ringo's I like 'Honey Don't' and of George's I like 'Within You, Without You'.

"Of course I still like 'Eleanor Rigby', and another I liked was 'For No One'.

## Nervous

"I have favourites from different periods. When I first received a copy of the compilation albums, I was too nervous to play them in case they were mixed badly. I thought the sound was a bit rough.

"I heard they've tried to stereotse the old albums. I wish they hadn't. I also think they could have put some of the tracks out that were "B" sides and aren't available any more. Maybe they still will. I hope so."

My last question was inevitable . . . any chance of us seeing the four Beatles on a stage or record together again?

"There's always a chance," grinned John. "As far as I can gather from talking to them all, nobody would mind doing some work together again.

"There's no law that says we're not going to do something together, and no law that says we are.

"If we did do something I'm sure it wouldn't be permanent. We'd do it just for that moment.

"I think we're closer now than we have been for a long time. I call the split the divorce period and none of us ever thought there'd be a divorce like that.

"That's just the way things turned out. We know each other well enough to talk about it."

"MIND Games" the new album from John Lennon, will be with us in November. It's a collection of 11 new songs by John, produced by himself, with little outside help, and slots into the "Imagine" rather than the "Sometime in New York City" category.

There's no message in it, no statements that can be seriously attributed to the Beatles and no real surprises.

It's a whole lot better than "Sometime In New York City", but I didn't enjoy it as much as "Imagine", an album which has become an all-time favourite with me. Perhaps it'll grow, though: "Imagine" did.

There's a mixture of styles, from rock and roll hoarsely delivered in the gruff Lennon voice to the sweeter material he's become increasingly better at producing. Here's a run down on the tracks. . . .

SIDE ONE: Mind Games: The title track and the single. A medium-paced rock with a repetitive commercial chorus line of "Love Is the answer." Very full backing, with swelling organ and heavy bass drum work. Dramatic but not over-powering.

Tight A$$ (sic): A fast-paced funky little rock and roller, with a new guitar break on a descending riff cropping up over and over again. There's a Presley '50's era guitar solo, and a general Nashville rock feel. Could be a Carl Perkins boogie number.

Aisumanaem: A slow, bluesy song with honky piano and slide guitar that almost reaches waltz time. It's John at his most melancolic on a love song with typical Lennonish lyrics — "When I'm down . . . all I have to do is call your name."

One Day At A Time: The most unusual track on the album, opening with John singing falsetto over a chorus that sounds like a dozen schoolgirls from a church choir. Very mellow, almost Hawaiian sounding slide guitar break, and a light reed solo in the middle. Very twee, more in McCartney's vein than Lennon's.

(Bring On The Lucie) Freda People: The only "message song" on the album, Freda People being sung as Free The People in a repetitive chorus. The track opens with Lennon saying "All right boys . . . over the top" and moves into a sing-along song not unlike "Give Peace A Chance" in style. There's some George Harrison style flowing guitar. Medium paced, catchy rock song.

SIDE TWO: Intuition: A song that harks back to the Beatle harmonies. Catchy, pretty mid-pace chunk of what John used to be like.

Out of the Blue: A slow starter that builds into a heavy number, which grows on the listener after a couple of plays. Good piano solo and another catchy chorus.

Only People: Funky, quick little rocker with a steady, knocking rhythm. Not unlike "Come Together", but faster and, again, more commercial on instant hearing.

You Are Here: Another twee little song, with John in his introspective mood again. More girlish chorus, and more Hawaiian sounding guitar. A smoocher.

I Know, I Know: A medium paced rocker with an intricate, lingering guitar riff along the lines of "I Feel Fine", but more sophisticated, slower and sweeter. A Beatlish chorus chanting the word "crying" extended to "cry . . . ay . . . ay . . . ing".

Meat City: A beefy rocker to finish the album. Screamer with fuzz guitar riff, ideal for dancing and building to a crashing climax as the song progresses. Updated Chuck Berry.

**...I saw the TV show they did and it was fantastic. Mick'll never be past it'**

Mr. and Mrs. Hawco. Pics by Robert Ellis.

# Wings in the Air

## In the studios with the McCartneys. Why two Wingmen split. How Africa got unhealthy. By Julie Webb

AIR STUDIOS four stories above Oxford Street, is one of those opulent places that is unnerving to visit. For a start, there's an officious little man in uniform who takes you up in the lift — then there's the maze of corridors to walk through, and finally an imposing reception area surrounded by deep pile carpets.

Roxy Music are mooning down the corridor — but in Studio One, time has been booked by Wings. There may only be three of them now, but they are still Wings — McCartney, his missus and Denny Laine, recording a Linda composition which, strangely, is not for inclusion on the new album. According to one of their entourage it may be released under the name of Suzi and The Red Stripes.

The atmosphere is relaxed. Engineer Geoff Emerick, a straight-looking, plump man who helped engineer the Beatles at one time, sits behind the controls. Ian, Wings' sound engineer, wanders round. Peter Swettenham, ex-Grapefruit, now with Air, watches intently.

Behind the glass they sit, or stand, or whatever. Can't for the life of me see them. But a slow steady drumbeat is evidence that someone is kicking in the other room. Momentarily there's words from Paul and laughs from Linda — and in the control room, tea is being given round to pass the time. Five minutes and they finish and come through to the control room, McCartney looking somewhat dishevelled, Linda, surprisingly, all dressed up to the nines in low-cut black dress, freshly washed hair and some amazing baggy red moon boots.

She's friendly and polite and has the nicest way of saying "Can you wait?" — adding "We'll do the interview soon!"

Back again into the studios where the backing track is beginning to make more sense. Basic and simple, it sounds reminiscent of the "Brother Louie" track. A few more minutes and they come through again and pore over pictures of their children, courtesy Robert Ellis.

I begin to wonder if the interview will take place at all. But it's Paul who wants to go on working. "Just to get her to work, y'know," he says as once more they re-enter the control room.

IT'S ALMOST a national pastime, criticising Linda McCartney. And for those who never forgave her actually marrying Paul there are even more who reckon she has no place out on that stage with Wings. But what do people really know about her? Very little. She's blonde, got big bazookas, bangs a tambourine and plays keyboards on stage. Has a penchant for hanging on to Paul's arm. Is American. So how does she feel when people say she's only in Wings because she's his missus?

"It's probably true. Well not now. But to begin with Paul said "look — I want to go back on the road. I want you in the band. I know you can do it! And I thought 'Yeah, I can do it', so that's why I'm doing it.

The departure of two of the Wings personnel has undoubtedly altered their overall sound but, says Linda, "I must own up: I think it's better. I know we had far more fun recording this album than any previous one."

So why did McCullough and Seiwell quit?

"There was no row when Henry left" she says adamantly. "Somebody picked that up — but it's not true. It was all over a silly little musical thing on Denny's song. Denny had a song and Henry was asked to play this little bit and he didn't. Then he just rang up and said 'I'm quitting'. Haven't seen him since."

She is pleased however that McCullough is working with Cocker again, commenting: "I think that's what he was always happier with. You see, we threw a band together to get back on stage. We didn't really know Henry and he didn't know us. We had Seiwell, Laine, Paul and myself and thought we'd like a lead guitar player to take some of the weight off.

"Somebody mentioned Henry; he came to one rehearsal and we said 'Okay, we'll have you'. It worked out great on the road, though."

While McCullough's departure was foreseen by a lot of people, it was a surprise to many — not the least Wings — when drummer Seiwell quit.

"When Henry left we thought, right, fair enough — but Denny Seiwell rang up five minutes before we were leaving to record in Lagos and just said, 'Hey, man. I can't make the trip'. I don't think he wanted to go to Africa.

"I thought it was a bit much but, there again, I think everyody should do what they want. That's what we said Wings would be — if anybody fancies leaving, great. But we knew Denny (Laine) would come to Lagos. I think Denny has always been very happy in Wings, I don't think he's considered doing anything else. He was, after all, part of the nucleus."

While Linda affirmed that the depletion in the ranks of Wings hasn't affected the recording of the new album, she will admit they'll have to get some new members in for live work. "We'll definitely get a new act together. Use our imagination a bit as well. We can either get a new guitar player and drums or a congas section, something like that. I think we'll sort it out once we get the album done — hopefully at the end of the month. We'll start really thinking about what kind of live act we do want — because we want to play the stuff on this album. I don't know how soon it will be. Remember, we spent two years getting Wings together. That's the only drag for me about Wings, all that work in getting it together and then you get personality problems."

Seven of the ten tracks from the new album were cut in Lagos and before you jump to conclusions about it being an Afro-rock set, Linda insists that they chose Lagos for many reasons but mainly because it was sunny.

"We just got the list of studios off EMI and there were about three sunny places — Lagos, Rio and Mexico City, so we thought, Africa has great music, so let's get vibed up."

Is there an African flavour to the music? "No, we wrote everything before we went but some of the songs now have that African feel to them. That's all."

African jazz musician Fela Ransome-Kuti allegedly went on Lagos radio claiming Paul was ripping off African music. Linda smiles when I bring up the subject.

"It was a lot of misunderstanding. We met Fela through Ginger (Baker) who has a studio over there, and one night we went down to "The Shrine", a club that Kela has. Anyway he used to come by the studios and it was all very friendly — and then one day he came by with a lot of heavies and sort of sat Paul down and said 'You're stealing our music'. And Paul said 'I'm not. Come and listen to the tracks. I haven't used any of your musicians'. The trouble was, Hugh Mesekela went there and used an African band and they did the same thing to him, you know. 'You're not going to take our music back and exploit it?' and Hugh said No and he did."

So with no session musicians, just the three remaining members of Wings are playing on the album.

"On the album I play piano and moog and Paul plays the drums — he's quite fantastic. Through the whole Beatles thing he was very involved with drums. He played on 'McCartney' but didn't get into it — that was like a knock-off. But with this one we thought, right, Denny has written one song on the album which is just lovely. Paul wrote little bits with him. No, none of my songs are on it."

NEXT to Yoko Ono, Linda is considered by many to be the main instigator of the Beatles' split. And as a direct result, both of them have taken a bashing from the public.

"I think every event split up the Beatles. I don't think it was just us — although we probably had something to do with it. I think everybody who entered into the picture at the time did. But there was so much bad feeling at the time. I think the most frustrating bit was I thought 'they don't really understand, they don't really know'. I read these things that were so away from what was really happening in everyday life but you go crazy trying to set everybody straight.

"Like, John quit and went round putting it all down which he didn't need to do. I think it just got to be a lot of gossip. And what happened after was people would do to John and say 'D'ya hear Paul's new record? It's lousy!' We know that happened because John told us that they were always trying to get him to say bad things. But at the time of the split I was so naive about it all.

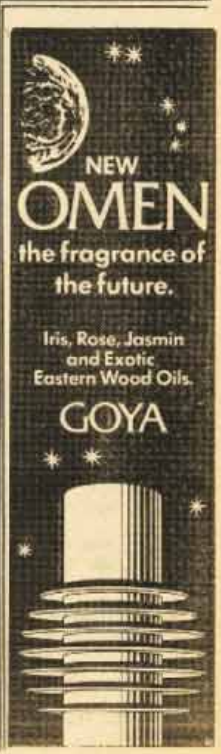
"I didn't feel very good when they split because to me it is all music. But it's great that they are all putting music out now. If they'd stopped playing and singing . . ."

She pauses to consider the fact before adding "I've heard bits of Ringo's new album and it's great — and John and George have done amazing things too."

Back to the old question of what right has Linda got out on that stage with Paul. What kind of musical education has she got? "I didn't really have any musical training. Just musical appreciation. Paul had taught me a lot — and Denny, too. I had piano lessons as a kid but I never practised. I'd wait till my parents went out and whey they came back I'd say 'I practised while you were out'. Only I didn't.

The first time she got her true break — taking photographs on a professional level — was shooting The Rolling Stones when they visited America in the mid sixties. "I was the only one who got pictures so they got in every magazine and after that I quit my job and people started giving me freelance work. Groups would call and say 'Can you take our pictures'? or Elektra would call and say 'Would you take Tim Buckley?' I took pictures of Jimi Hendrix the first time he came in. I was supposed to take the Electric Ladyland cover as well".

Finally, some words on that image of hers. "Yeah, well, I've learned a lot. When I came over to England I sort of came to visit Paul and we had a good time together. We got married and I hadn't really thought what it would be like. Like I never thought, will people resent me? And all that. I've since learned instead of resenting things just look at them. And they're never that bad."



# RINGO Ringo Starr Apple

REVIEWED: DISC, 24 November 1973, page 25

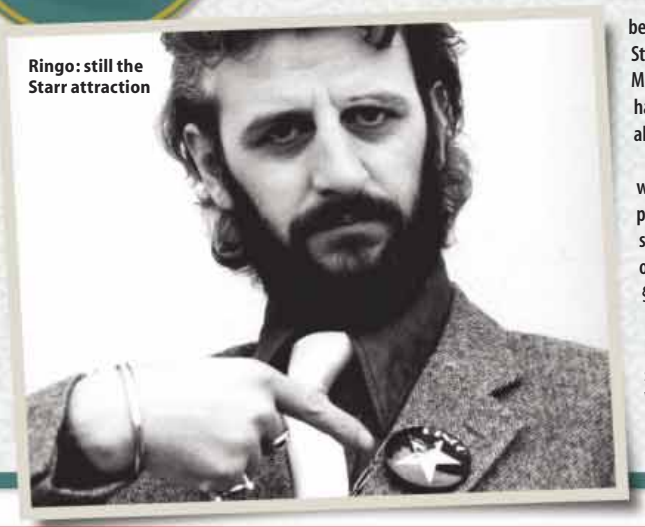
The first thing that strikes you about this exceedingly fine album is the wealth of talent used in its compilation. Harrison, McCartney and Lennon have contributed as well as other star names like Marc Bolan, Klaus Voormann, Bobby Keyes, Nicky Hopkins, Jim Keltner, Billy Preston, Nilsson – even Mrs McCartney.

With such a fine array of artists to assist Ringo, one would question just how much he had to do towards the record, but from accounts he appears to have contributed a great deal. The album opens with Lennon's 'I'm The Greatest'. It lacks the majesty of John's voice and the backing, although much more lush, sounds much thinner. 'Have You Seen My Baby' is a good boogie number – understandably Bolan plays guitar on this track, and it shows. Ringo's current hit 'Photograph' follows and there's a somewhat subdued patch filled by George Harrison's 'Sunshine Life For Me (Sail Away Raymond)'. The side closes with a souped-up cover of Johnny Burnette's 'You're Sixteen' from the early '60s. Ringo would do well to release this one as a single – it's about time we had some high-school pop in the charts.

'Devil Woman' introduces the B-side in fine, lively style. It features some excellent brass, which adds a lot of dimension to the track. A more subdued 'You And Me (Babe)', trad jazz orientated, cruises along at medium pace. It even has a touch of Glenn Miller's famous stabbing riff incorporated and you can't beat that.

> Rock on, Ringo, this album proves you've made it on your own

'Oh My My' is another pretty song, penned partly by Ringo. It's a mixture of sugar sweet lyrics and gentle music. A tasty rocker followed with driving drums and wailing guitars that really make the track motor. Would you believe the dancing feet of Richard Starkey, MBE, are also included? A Mr and Mrs McCartney composition, 'Six O'Clock', which also has dynamic duo playing on the track, closes the album in gentler style.


Ringo: still the Starr attraction

When The Beatles split, many thought Ringo would be the one to suffer most, but this album proves him to be a fine solo talent, worthy of the success he's been achieving just recently. Rock on, Ringo, this album rightly proves you've made it on your own.

The album is beautifully presented with a booklet featuring not only the lyrics of each song, but superb charcoal drawings by Klaus Voormann to illustrate the words of each song. You really couldn't wish for a more complete album. ***Michael Benton***

# MIND GAMES John Lennon Apple

REVIEWED: MM, 8 December 1973, page 7

Sporadic admiration for John Lennon has never really made sense: you really have to go along with his whole trip to get the best out of his work, or even to get near to knowing what goes on in his tortured mind.

To me, this man has always been the complete pop star – wracked by domestic strife, impractical in his application of ideas into his music business, persistently experimental and clutching at every piece of modern gimmicky or musical technology that pops up.

It's in this context that one must judge every new work by John Lennon: since he's forever veering off main roads into country lanes, it's little use looking in the driving mirror to see how far behind he is – and comparisons with his previous records are not valid. Thus, this is markedly different from 'Imagine', and so it should be, for to paraphrase Harold Wilson, 12 months is a long time in pop music. The raw nerves of a Lennon battered by America's curious logic and sheer hard-heartedness seem to have spurred him to write incisively, and the track 'Mind Games' is one that grows into a gem the more it is played. The swirling, insistent backing to John's nagging vocal makes it a classic. A similar theme is contained on other tracks on this record, with John acting out his well-known role as catalyst for subjective songwriting. Cynics like me will scoff at the statement on the sleeve and the track celebrating the announcement by John and Yoko of a nation called Nutopia, freeing the world's barriers in a beautifully simple way. And yet the sweet naivety of it all is somehow charming. Musically or melodically this may not be a stand-out album, but if you warm to the rasping voice of Lennon and, like me, regard him as the true fulcrum of much of what came from his old group, then like any new Lennon album, it will be enjoyable and even important. Count me in. I'm a believer. ***Ray Coleman***

> Cynics will scoff but the sweet naivety is somehow charming

John and Yoko, aka King and Queen of Nutopia

STARFILE

MM, 1 December 1973, page 48

# ONWARDS AND UPWARDS

**The quaint early '60s custom of 'going the rounds' was revived last week – by none other than Paul McCartney. With wife Linda and baby Stella, he popped up to Melody Maker and spoke to Chris Welch about the upheavals in Wings, the band's new album and Eric Clapton…**

When the Prime Minister, royalty or a Rear Admiral makes a tour of inspection of a naval establishment, there is a flurry of activity. Flags and bunting are flown, everything is given a fresh coat of paint, and the men line-up to salute.

When Paul McCartney, Linda and their baby Stella visited the *MM* offices this week, half the staff had disappeared, smitten by food poisoning and a plate of assorted crisps and meat sandwiches were offered for the visitors' delectation. "We were expecting lunch," said Paul hopefully. But he accepted this Fleet Street-style kwik-snak in good humour.

In order to chat, of Wings and records and Africa and things, the family outing adjourned to the imperial *Melody Maker* boardroom, where great decisions affecting all our lives are made. Paul in his bright red drape jacket looked like a cheerful teddy boy and Linda carefully divided her time between backing up Paul and preventing their child from scribbling on the wallpaper.

"We couldn't think of anywhere else to do the interview," says Paul. "We thought we might as well come to you. It takes me back ten years at least, when we used to come touting ourselves round, although this time we're not touting ourselves."

The last time we had heard from Wings, they have been riven by splits, when drummer Denny Seiwell quit along with guitarist Henry McCullough, just prior to the group's trip to Lagos to record. What caused all that, and how were the McCartneys received in Nigeria?

"We enjoyed it eventually. We're all a bit British, y'know. You've the different food and climate and stuff, so you've got a lot of adjusting to do. It was at the end of the rainy season when we went. We thought it was going to be tropical, warm and fantastic. It turned out to be a torrential monsoon.

"And we got robbed while we were down there. Some guys robbed us – with a knife. We got held up walking out at night – you're not supposed to do that. They took our tape recorder and cameras and gear. So that didn't help.

"And then Fela Ransome Kuti accused us of trying to steal black African music. So I had to say, 'Do us a favour, Fela. We do all right as it is, actually. We sell a couple of records here and there'. He's welcome to their music. It's very nice. I love it and I wish I could do it, but he's welcome to it.

"But he does have a fantastic band out there, one of the best live bands I've ever heard. It's funky and not very sophisticated. You saw it in Ginger Baker's film, but it didn't come off at all well in the film.

"There was one and a half weeks of pretty bad vibes. It felt a bit dangerous and raw and you're not sure how you're going to figure.

"The press were fine, very charming. But it's funny what they pick up. They picked up that I was 'the one who introduced drugs to The Beatles'."

What lured them to Africa?

"Sunshine," said Linda.

BARRY PLUMBER

"We got a list off EMI of all the studios around the world. It's a big company. We checked on the availability of Lagos and it turned out to be free for the three weeks we wanted to record. So we thought, 'Great – lying on the beach all day, doing nothing. Breeze in the studios and record.' It didn't turn out quite like that. But that was why we went – it was for an adventure. We did seven tracks there and came back and did a couple of tracks and mixed here."

How did they get on with, er, the insects?

"Oh, not too bad. It does bother some people. We're not creepy-crawly freaks. Linda and lizards – great. She doesn't mind. But somebody else, for instance the engineer *(Geoff Emerick)* we took out, who did 'Sgt Pepper' and 'Abbey Road', he couldn't stand them. So a couple of the lads put a spider in his bed. It was all a bit like scout camp.

"The worst a lizard can do is bite you, so we're not freaked out by that, not like Ringo's wife who can't stand a fly in the room. She has all their positions charted, and if one comes near her, she freaks."

**HAVING JUST HEARD** a portion of the album, it didn't sound at all African influenced. "It isn't," agreed Paul. "Well, it is, but you wouldn't be able to hear it. I know it was influenced by Africa, just because of the atmosphere rather than the music. In Africa I felt like you had to come-on.

"In England you can lay it back, and be timid and you get away with it, because nobody minds. Out there, you've got to be very forward. And there's no way you can lay on the modern Western liberal crap. So in a way we were influenced by the challenge of the people and country.

"Linda thought I had died one night. I was recording and suddenly felt like a lung had collapsed. I went outside to get some air and there wasn't any. It was a humid, hot tropical night. So I fainted."

Said Linda: "I laid him on the ground and his eyes were closed and I thought he was dead!"

Paul went to the doctor who advised he had been smoking too much. When the McCartneys got over their initial worries, they found Nigeria was an exciting friendly country. But only three of Wings made the trip, What happened to the others?

"Only Denny *(Laine)* was with us. You know two of them left? Denny *(Seiwell)* and Henry quit – Denny rang up an hour before we left from Gatwick, to say he couldn't make the album, so that was panic time.

"Henry left over what we call 'musical differences'. And it was actually that. We were rehearsing and I asked him to play a certain bit, he was loath to play it and kinda made an excuse about it couldn't be played. I, being a bit of a guitarist myself, knew it could be played and, rather than let it pass, I decided to confront him with it and we had a confrontation. He left rehearsals a bit choked, then rang up to say he was leaving."

How did they make up the numbers?

"There was just the three of us, on the album, except for the orchestral overdubs, which we didn't play. We got Tony Visconti to help with the arrangements.

"One guy, Remi Kebaka, who is from Lagos, ironically, turned up in London for a loon and we got him on one track playing percussion. He's the only other person on the entire album, except for the orchestra. I played all the drums and bass. Denny sometimes doubles on bass."

Paul entertained the *MM* office with his bad impression of Showaddywaddy

When did Paul first get into playing drums?

"For years I, like, suggested to Ringo a lot of what he might play. I first got into it listening to 'Sweet Little Sixteen', where there was a drumbreak around the kit. I would ask Ringo to play some variation on that. And at sessions I would climb on the drumkit and start having a go.

"In Hamburg one week Tony Sheridan's drummer got sick and I drummed for him for the extra cash for a week. So I've done a bit of drumming, including a couple of Beatles tracks, but nothing much that I can remember. We always used Ringo because he's a real drummer. There's nothing flash to the drumming on the Wings album, nothing difficult.

"But I can hold quite a good beat. Liking drums anyway, it gave me a chance to fulfil an ambition."

**"We'll turn up at Butlin's, anywhere people want to listen to some music. We're not directed at any audience"**

**MOST OF THE** songs on the album, called 'Band On The Run', incidentally, were written in Scotland, at the McCartney retreat. "It's a collection of songs, and I'll leave it to you to say if they are good or not. The basic idea about the band on the run is a kind of prison escape. At the beginning of the album the guy is stuck inside four walls and eventually breaks out. There is a thread, but it's not a concept album."

Does it apply to Wings escaping from The Beatles?

"Sort of, yeah. I think most bands on tour are on the run."

How much satisfaction has Wings given the couple since its inception?

"Got us on the road," said Linda. "Which is what it's all about."

"I wanted some way I could feel easy about appearing live again," explained Paul. "It was very difficult after The Beatles, because at the time, they weren't interested in going live except on really big gigs. I was more interested in playing smallish things and getting near audiences again. Like the pub rock bit.

"It was selfish reasons really, I just wanted to play live! But we got a good British tour out of it and the second half of the European tour was good. And we loved the University tour because that was really down home."

What kind of market is Wings aimed at?

"General market really. We'll turn up at Butlin's, anywhere people want to listen to some music. We're not directed at any one audience.

"But we're just quietly looking around for a really nice guitarist and drummer. I still don't know in my mind yet exactly what I want.

"We just took Jimmy McCulloch from Blue, who's rehearsing with Chris Stainton, and we did a couple of tracks with Jimmy in Paris. We're just playing with people to get the feel of what we want, and what they like.

"We had one track of Linda's which we tried to include in our albums but it never seemed to fit. So, what we're going to do is a bit like Derek And The Dominos. We're doing a thing with Linda, not like, 'I am Linda McCartney, come and listen to me, I'm going to be a big star,' and all this big hype. That she doesn't want and I don't fancy either because it's too pompous. She's not ready for it, she's still an apprentice, which is cool because she doesn't mind. So we're doing this thing called Suzie And The Red Stripes. And she is Suzie!

"We're not trying to hide the fact that it's her, but it'll be like Derek And The Dominos, a slight anonymity."

**PAUL BEGAN TO** recall the great days of the discotheques, when raving was the nightly routine and stars flocked together. Did he miss those days?

BARRY PLUMBER/ROBERT ELLIS-REP PHOTO

"I feel a lot of the community spirit in rock has gone, but it's changed. You meet people for dinner a bit more. We went out for dinner with Elton John the other night and I see people around studios and they ring up. You don't seem to meet anyone down at clubs, although if you happen to be at Tramps you might see Gary Glitter, Rod Stewart, Keith Richard and myself looning around. Or Mick'n'Bianca.

"Rod Stewart asked me to do a song on what's supposed to be his last solo album… wink. I don't think it will be. So I did a song for him and apparently it's really great, although I haven't heard the track yet. It's called 'Mine For Me'. It's a custom-made song for him. Those are the kind of ways you meet people now.

"He's cheeky but a nice lad. And being a hack, I'll write a song for anyone. I always have seen myself as a hack. That's why I did the Bond theme, it only has to appeal for me and I'll do it. I don't like to be 'a major influence on the music scene', I don't believe that and it would be unsafe if I ever did. But I must say, I still love the scene. We were even thinking of opening a club. We stayed up one night in Scotland, and designed it and everything.

"It would have been a fantastic place. And I must say, hearing the discussion on the *Old Grey Whistle Test* the other night about pub rock, I thought everyone was wet, except the one with the fly-away collar from *Melody Maker*. He seemed to actually know what was going on.

"Kilburn & The Highroads were on and I got the feeling the cameras were putting them off and they hadn't been filmed a lot. The singer was trying to get it on despite the BBC film team and big lights. I imagine a lot of gutsy, raw music will come out of that scene. I'd like to have the freedom to play in a pub. I'd still like to play to, say, 56,000 people and then the next night go play a pub.

"I don't care if it's Jagger, Rod or Bowie. They've all got a pub rock band inside them. And why else would Led Zeppelin wanna go and do the Marquee that time? Or David? Gigging is the whole trip."

But when an artist achieves fame and success, isn't there always the danger of a reaction against the scene – of not wanting to do anything or speak to anybody? Didn't this happen to Paul?

"Well, immediately after the break-up of The Beatles and not because of any of the other reasons, but just because a good band had broken up, I felt, 'What am I going to do?' I needed at least a month to think a bit. I went into a period of what everyone called being a recluse, a hermit in isolation. All sorts of little snide articles appeared saying, 'He's sitting up in Scotland, looking into his mirror, admiring his image.'

"It was not at all true, I was just planting trees. I was just getting normal again and giving myself time to think."

Did you feel… abnormal?

"Yeah. I'm sure about the time Eric was being called God, I'm sure it got to him. You can't help it, you do have a reaction, like George Best, against the pressures, y'know?

"I never used to understand when they used to say, 'What are you going to do when the bubble bursts?' A joke question and we always used to say, 'Ha, ha, we'll burst with it.' I never once took that question in. What did they mean 'bubble burst'? And the pressures – what about the pressures?

"While I could see there were pressures, I couldn't feel them. I was just a rocker, doing my business. But if something dramatic like The Beatles breaking up happens, that's when you can begin to feel pressures.

"I don't know if that's the problem with Eric, but he should just play and not give a damn. It doesn't matter anyway. Then you can start to come out with music and enjoy things. That's the way I feel now, so that's why I'm not sweating about turning Wings into an almighty supergroup.

**"We were always in control as The Beatles. People used to say we were manipulated. We never were"**

"One chapter is finished now, we just want to take it easy, still do music, still play live."

Hasn't Paul now created his own environment, which he can control more than the old Beatles-Apple set-up?

"No, that's just journalese. We were always pretty in control as The Beatles. People used to say that we were manipulated. We were never manipulated.

"Maybe subtly and in the business sense because we didn't know anything about business. Brian Epstein came to us once and said, 'I'm going to sell you to Bernard Delfont,' although he put it nicer than that.

"We said, 'Right man, if you do that, we'll never play another note. We'll just play 'God Save The Queen' on every record and see how you like that.' That was an instance of attempted manipulation That was a long time ago, about halfway through The Beatles. We were big and it was getting a bit too much for Brian, so he thought, 'I'll sell out,' and put us with a good pro agency, which they still are. But we just didn't like the idea of being sold.

"Eventually we got Apple and gave it all away, as Roger Daltrey says."

Did Paul read Richard DiLello's *The Longest Cocktail Party*, about Apple?

"Yeah, but he didn't know. It's entertaining and good and it's about what went on in the press office. In fact the book's almost about Derek Taylor really, because it's Derek's whole personality that Apple office. 'Oh Paul can't make it. Tell 'em we'll give 'em Ringo.' Actually it was only half of the truth. In the other room, there was all other stuff going on.

"It's a long weird, and involved story, and if anyone ever gets it down, it will be very interesting."

Is Paul completely in control of his own affairs now?

"Not completely, but beginning to be, and I advise anyone who's going to sign up with any agency to take a look if there's a possibility they can own it. Because there always is and no-one ever knows it. Particularly with songs. If you write a good song, I maintain, you should own it totally. But no publisher will let you own the copyright.

"I'm always harping on about 'Yesterday' because it is a big song of mine and probably the only big song I did on my own. Well, I don't own the copyright of that, that's been sold and lost in the mists of time. Lew Grade owns it. No fault of his, he's a good businessman and heard it was up for sale. But that's why I say to anyone new coming into the business, check it out with an accountant or lawyer.

"I'd always trust rockers with my money, rather than sharks. George, for instance, just gives a lot of it away because he actually has got morals. Whereas certain people tried to put the Bangla Desh concert money straight into their pocket.

"During two years, none of The Beatles took anything out of Apple except expenses. All the money had to go into the company. At least some of the newer ones are hip to all this. I think Paul Simon owns 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' and that's fair enough.

"The old trick is to say, 'We'll set up your own company,' and they set one up that gives you small rights and, not knowing anything about companies, you think you have your own company and they let you name it after yourself and you think, 'I've got my own little office, my own little secretary,' but if you ever check into it the actual money isn't coming your way, and you'll be getting like five per cent."

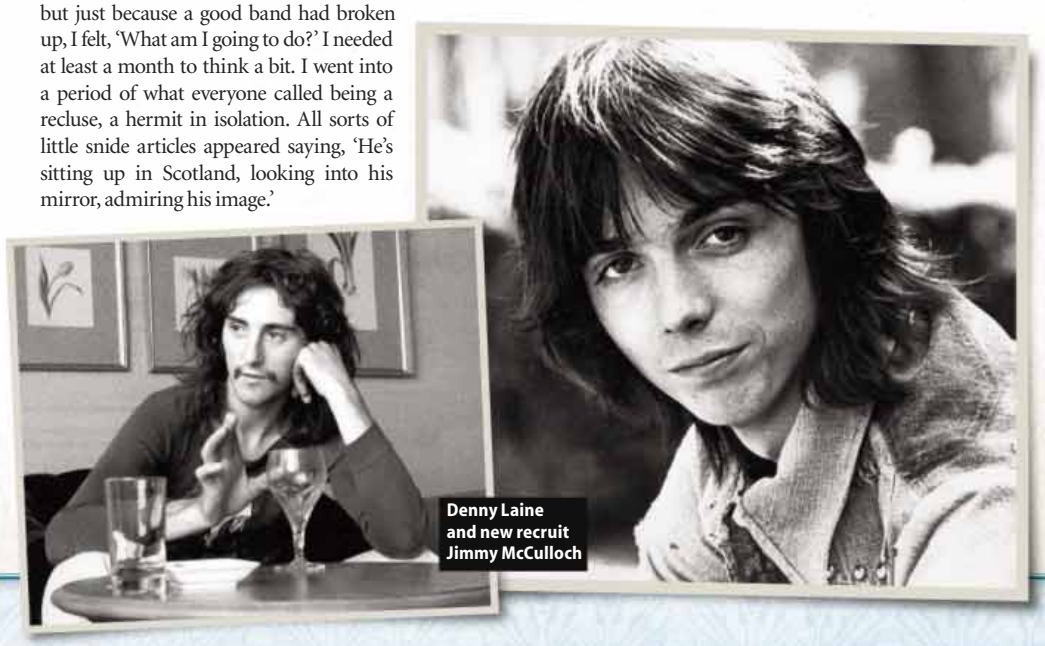
Meanwhile Stella was growing impatient and bored the with *MM* conference room. She let out a petulant yell.

"Stop that!" warned Dad. "Do you want to go to bed? That's the ultimate deterrent y'know."

Paul, Linda and Stella decided it was time to end what had been a fascinating and surprising interview. But not before a tea lady had burst in, ostensibly looking for cups, but actually taking the opportunity to embrace the couple.

"Thanks for all the pleasure you've given us," she said.

"Well," smiled Paul through his last egg sandwich, "we must come and do this again."



Denny Laine and new recruit Jimmy McCulloch

BOB GRUEN-STARFILE

# CHAPTER THREE

# 1974-1975

**JOHN**

Letter to Todd Rundgren • The "lost weekend" • Onstage with Elton John
'Walls And Bridges' • 'Rock'n'Roll' • 'Stand By Me'

**PAUL**

'Jet' • 'Junior's Farm' • Wings' UK tour • 'Listen To What The Man Said'

**GEORGE**

North American Tour • 'Dark Horse' • 'Extra Texture'

**RINGO**

'Goodnight Vienna' • 'Only You'

January 19, 1974 NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS Page 9

# Please, your Majesty, can our John have a Free Pardon?

**Heavy breathing over the phone as ANDREW TYLER gets the lowdown from LENNON in L.A. Genius is police harassment, says the Walrus**

**DEAR QUEEN:**

**I don't know if you ever read the New Improved NME — if not, maybe some hepcat of the Royal Household will pass on the word.**

**Now that you've seen young Anne married off to her heartthrob cavalier, and what with Charles playing googlies with Lady Jane all around, maybe you'll have time to reflect on the dilemma of one John Lennon, a Liverpool slum-kid genius who used to play in The Beatles and who, at the peak of his career, committed a kind of revolutionary hara-kiri when he returned your MBE medal.**

It was a far out medal, your majesty, ace organic and nice on the chest, but it wasn't actually you as a mum and companion of the horses he was getting at. It was all that Services To Exports/Build A Better Britain/Screw the Man On The Factory Floor bit that brought a lump to his shaving bowl.

Anyway, after the medal-dumping ceremony he kept getting visited at queer hours by squadrons of policemen and, before you could say cold turkey John was being court martialled for possession of marijuana — a substance he swears was absent from his life around this time.

He now lives in New York City but because of his record the authorities over there won't give him a Green residents' card, which means if he leaves the country he'll never be allowed back in.

So now, our Queen, it's all down to you. All you have to do is say "OK, you nuts, enough's enough, I pardon thee John Lennon, on your feet and have a nice new year", and everything's back to normal.

John's not one to beg and grovel at your Royal appendages, but on the phone recently he did say it would be a great way out. So what do you think? There's a whole bunch of us who'd love to see John over here again for the odd visit.

And you know something, it's the only thing preventing John, Paul, George and Ringo working together again. Paul, you see, also got busted for substances and he's not allowed into the States any more. Ironic, isn't it?

Love, etc.

"I WOULD HAVE thought I've done more good for Britain than harm, wouldn't you?" John enquired over a faint line from Los Angeles.

Yes. I would have thought so.

"Did I tell you about the commerical we've done for the new album? Hah. It's great. We have the Queen plugging the record for us. It starts inside the house with a gate swinging open, over a red carpet and then inside. It's all done in very good taste, Your Majesty. It's a friend of mine in drag, as it were.

"There's Land Of Hope And Glory and someone says" (in a plummy warbling voice) "'I've been asked to do this commerical. It relates to a gramophone record . . .' and it goes on like that. I'm hoping her Majesty will be able to laugh at it."

He won't say who the friend is but here's a clue. He works for Apple and he's a real queen. The correct answer is not Allen Klein.

"A few vodkas and it was all over," John reports. "His identity will be revealed by himself. I'm not sure how much he wants people to know about it."

Did he see the bonding of Mark and Anne and was he profoundly moved?

"Who?"

Young Mark and Anne.

"Oh yes."

What was your reaction to that?

"I didn't really have one."

Did they show it over there?

"Yeah. They had it on from two o'clock till dawn, or something. So we had the single. We didn't get to see the album though. I thought they looked all right. But I didn't really feel that much about it. I thought Anne's figure looked nice. They should have held it in Belfast, though.

"I was thinking of writing to the Queen, you know. I hope she reads NME. Yeah, I was after a pardon for being planted by the cops and being hassled for three years and everything that happened. That's one way to solve the problem.

"That so-called bust I was involved in has left me with a criminal record. That's the legal reason they're trying to throw me out. If that was taken away there'd be nothing they could do."

Now here's a weird twist to the murky affair. The cop who starred in the Lennon bust has, himself, been incarcerated for four years for perjury relating to a drug bust case.

Detective Sergeant Norman Pilcher has has just been put down for four years. At the trial all sorts of stuff came up. Conspiracy and the like.

But Lennon suspects the case of the malfunctioning blue meanie is unlikely to directly affect his own case . . .

"The thing is, that in those days were were clean. We didn't have any stuff. But they kept on hassling and hassling and bothering Yoko and the deal was that if they left Yoko alone — and she was pregnant at the time — I'd cop a plea.

"And now the real answer is for me to get a pardon . . . but because I'm a naughty boy I don't suppose they want to give me one."

What he's still trying to figure out all these years later is what those gloating reporters and photographers were doing outside his place when he and Yoko were being escorted to their cells. Jack Warner and Edgar Lustgarten had always intimated that an arrest was a reasonably private business . . . restricted to the "guilty parties" and the officers concerned. Why the jamboree?

Lennon has an explanation. "A friend of mine from Fleet Street gave me a call after he'd overheard a cop in a pub saying how he was going to get The Beatles. Yeah, was was gonna get The Beatles. Which meant me. I mean, he's not about to bust Ringo or Paul. I was really up for grabs what with 'Two Virgins' and living in sin with a foreigner and all."

Is our Queen about to be sympathetic to Lennon's plight? Can she relate to her stone-turning expatriot? They'd hardly make suitable tango partners but they do have at least one common point of interest: The Goons.

Yessir. Like Prince Charles, Sister Margie and Tony Legastrong-Jones, the Queen is alleged to have chuckled along with the Goons after her Sunday joint . . . not unlike Lennon who recently reviewed "The Goon Show Scripts" for the New York Times.

"It was a bit like doing a school essay," he says. "But like all my generation I was really drawn to The Goons. In many ways they influenced The Beatles as much as rock 'n' roll — Elvis and Little Richard. They were, to my generation, what we were to the next.

"I admire them all — but I've always reckoned Spike was the real lunatic."

WHAT ABOUT the trench-coat warfare. Is he still being visited and molested by the American geodaricorse?

"A year or so back they were following me around everywhere I went. But I suppose they must have got bored going to the studio and hanging around for hours at a time. And they were tapping my phone. I think they wanted me to know they were doing it too because I kept hearing heavy breathing. It scared me at first but now it's a bot of a joke.

"No, I wasn't on Nixon's list of unfriendlies but I was on *somebody's* list, that's for sure."

There's a pattern to it all, he suggests. Not necessarily a co-ordinated conspiracy but a series of connected happenings that have numbered all the leading 60's cult figures.

Lennon's marooned in America, McCartney outside of it. The Stones are having to tread very lightly indeed, and Hendrix, Morrison and Joplin are dead.

"If they can separate all the big names in pop they effectively cut off the quotes revolution at its source. No more Woodstocks. No more mass gatherings. The real changes aren't gonna come from politicians. It's going to come from the artists and musicians.

"Even Bowie is a threat in a way."

Explain yourself, sir.

"Well, if you get Bowie on TV and somebody switches on in Ohio or Bradford and they see this person looking out at them, it's going to affect their whole way of like. He doesn't have to say Power To The People Right On. He is the message in himself. It's like holding a mirror up to society. It makes people react in a specific way that's better than having them half dead listening to Sandy McPherson.

"I just think it's all great. I'm not saying I'd do it but people like Bowie are an extension of rock 'n' roll. He still rocks like that and keeps on going until the next phenomenon, he hopes, which is going to be this year, isn't it?"

Maybe the very next sensation will be curvaceous Ringo whose single is hot stuff in the States and whose album leapt into the Billboard charts at 4 — two better than John's "Mind Games."

"I sent him a telegram last week saying: 'Congratulations. How dare you. Write me a hit song.'

"It's the first real pop album he's made and it's a good album. He deserves it. He's going to need all the royalties he can get to paper Ascot." (The horse he just bought from Lennon). "He's going to need that hit just to keep up the garden."

JOHN'S OWN ALBUM didn't receive quite the same dazzling response, although it's nowhere near the bunch of horseclicks Tony Tyler suggested in his review a few weeks back. Tracks like "Out The Blue", "I Know (I Know)" and "Bring On The Lucie" are sumptuous grooveers that fairly parallel his work on "Imagine." Honest.

Was he after the grumbling T. Tyler's needles?

"I'm going to send 'im a dead ass and a book of instructions on How to Write. Obviously I'd prefer it if he, or whoever it is, liked it — but I'm not about to cut my throat, if that's what you mean.

"A lot of times you get critics reviewing themselves, so if they do slag you off it doesn't mean anything or, if they overdo the praise bit, that means nothing either.

"Praise is never satisfactory unless you can be sure the person has actually listened to your work and knows it inside out. I'm not saying people should spend their lives making in-depth appraisals of one albums — but praise, or the odd at thing, doesn't count for much unless they've take the time to understand what you're doing."

Right On.

Actually John was due for a critical trampling. After the suffocating Best Album In The Universe stuff tipped over "Imagine" and "The Plastic Ono Band" LP, coupled with the feelings Paul has had to deflect since The Split, Lennon only had to put one foot wrong — as he did with "Sometime In New York City" — for the blades to be turned on him.

Critics were feeling remorse at the way they growled at McCartney and Lennon was the obvious target upon which to assuage their embarrassment.

"I would say 'New York City' stands as a piece of work. It sold 200,000 instead of half a million. The whole thing's relative. If I'd been a smaller artist I'd have been pleased to get that amount of sales. I have no regrets . . . only that it didn't get a lot of airplay on the so-called FM stations of the Left.

"The only one that really got into it was 'Pacifica' which has heavy programmes on politics, lesbians and things like that — anything people want to do. It's a pretty good station. Nationwide. They've even got tapes of Yoko and me from the Sixties singing Japanese folk songs."

Talking of oldies, he is now well into his Oldies Moodlies album, currently being waxed at A & M in Los Angeles with a spellbinding cast of several millions. On the guest list so far are, among others: Steve Cropper, Jim Keltner, Hal Blaine, Jose Feliciano, Leon Russell, Jeff Barry, Barry Mann, and Jesse Ed Davies.

We called George the other day and said he was having a great time and wish you were here. George said he was on his way and hasn't been heard of since. Paul, of course, won't be able to make it.

"Yeah, I miss Paul a lot. It's been a year since I've seen him. He came over with Linda to my place in New York. Course I'd like to see him again. He's an old friend, isn't he?"

He says he can move around a bit more freely now . . . for meals and odd visit to the movies.

"I still get recognised though. I think it's my nose. But I can generally go to the movies. The last film I saw was 'Behind The Green Door'. (An extremely naughty nude film.)

How was it?

"The first 45 minutes were interesting, then it got a bit boring. When you've seen one cock you've seen them all."

# BAND ON THE RUN
## Paul McCartney & Wings Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 19 January 1974, page 12

The ex-Beatle least likely to re-establish his credibility and lead the field has pulled it off with a positive masterstroke of an album entitled 'Band On The Run'.

From the cover, depicting Paul, Linda, Denny Laine, James Coburn, Christopher Lee, Michael Parkinson, Kenny Lynch and John Conte in convict costume up against a wall, right through to the closing reprise of the title track, 'Band On The Run' comes on as one of the best albums of '73, and, with the possible exception of Lennon's 'Plastic Ono Band' album, the best solo performance of anybody who used to be in The Beatles.

The album was cut in Nigeria with a basic personnel of three: the McCartneys and Mr Laine all overdubbing their asses off. Howie Casey assists here and there on Professor Sax's invention every so often. The range of mood is startling: the cool spaciousness and straight-ahead drive of 'Jet' contrasts beautifully with the nightclub folkiness of 'Bluebird' and the 'Road To…' feel of 'Mrs Vandebilt'. But the track that's gonna be the conversation-piece at every café society wine and cheese party this season is 'Let Me Roll It'.

It sounds exactly like Plastic Ono-period Lennon, and some uncharitable souls might suspect it to be payment in kind for 'How Do You Sleep?', although the parody element is extremely good-natured, right down to the Primal Whimper at the end. McCartney denies any conscious parody in this tune, but I has me suspicions about that.

On the second side, there's 'Mamunia' which is a pleasant but insignificant piece with one of those 'White Album'-ish descending sequences.

'Picasso's Last Words (Drink To Me)', however, is the track which recalls The Beatles most exactly; more because of its production than its content. The way the spoken voices are used behind that lazy synthesized clarinet… oh, it takes me back.

From there on, we're simply left with 'Nineteen Hundred And Eighty Five', which has Paul dusting off his 'Lady Madonna' voice and which rocks like a muthuh, intercut with reprises of 'Jet', 'Mrs Vandebilt' and 'Band…' itself.

As you may have noticed from the almost unprecedented brevity of the above comments, 'Band On The Run' is considerably easier to listen to than to write about. So… hey, I nearly forgot. For a real revelation, listen to Macca's synthesizer work. He uses it like an instrument, and not like an electric whoopee cushion.

'Band On The Run' is a great album. If anybody ever puts down McCartney in your presence, bust him in the snoot and play him this. He will thank you for it afterwards. ***Charles Shaar Murray***

> 'Band On The Run' comes on as one of the best albums of '73

NME, 23 February 1974, page 20

# Mersey Beat – has the bubble burst?

REPORTS front-paged elsewhere last week, suggesting that a Beatles reunion is imminent, were dismissed as "codswallop" by Apple on Monday.

Tony King told Thrills that the situation remains precisely as previously reported by NME — that the four ex-Beatles could well appear on one another's solo albums from time to time, but there is no question of them getting together again as The Beatles.

Said King: "It was suggested that all four had been in America recently for legal talks. In fact, Lennon lives there, Paul went over at Christmas to see his in-laws, and Ringo hadn't been near the States for months when the rumour was published — he was sitting right here in the Apple offices reading about it, and we had a laugh together about the whole trumped-up thing.

"These reports have been gaining ground since Allen Klein ceased to be involved with John, George and Ringo. But it's simply that, whereas John and Paul were previously making aggressive noises at each other, they are now making sympathetic noises."

Thrills understands it is equally untrue that Lennon and McCartney's songwriting royalties are still frozen after four years, and that this problem has been resolved with the ending of the legal dispute.

The final word from Tony King: "It could conceivably happen that one day all four of the Beatles are in the same studio, working on someone's solo album. But that is pure speculation. And as far as a Beatles reunion is concerned, the word is — rubbish."

# Will they won't they?

NME, 23 March 1974, page 13

There's no smoke without fire. That's what many people are saying about the crop of "Beatles reunion" rumours currently circulating throughout the music business. Well, maybe so – but where do you draw the line between rumour, theory and just plain fiction?

Speculation has been rife ever since the foursome's personal vendettas were healed by the departure from the scene of Allen Klein; John and Paul individually made off-the-cuff remarks expressing their relief at the time.

So far, not one word of official confirmation has been forthcoming. Yet the Beatles rumours have been flowing at an average rate of one per week since the beginning of this year.

Due to this spate of wishful thinking concerning The Beatles' future plans, some bookmakers are quoting odds on possible future developments. This is how the betting stands at the moment:

20-1 Beatles to re-form (as The Beatles) on a permanent or semi-permanent basis; 15-1 Beatles to record together (as The Beatles) on a permanent or semi-permanent basis.

10-1 George Harrison and Ringo Starr to tour America this autumn, with Eric Clapton and 20 other musicians.

> Speculation has been rife ever since the departure of Allen Klein

8-1 Beatles to get together for a major one-off appearance this year, and occasional concerts thereafter.

2-1 Beatles to record at least one new album together. Odds here have narrowed appreciably after the firm offer of a $30million advance to The Beatles for just one album, coming from leading US impresario David Geffen. With much of their income tied up with legal disputes in recent years, this vast sum could prove a very real attraction. If it happens, then betting on Beatles live dates would shorten considerably, because Geffen could be the one man to talk them into it.

4-6 Beatles to appear regularly as guests on each other's solo albums. The odds-on favourite, simply because it is the only prospect to have been officially admitted by Apple and The Beatles themselves.

That, then, is the list of runners in The Beatles Stakes at present. There could be one or two late additions to the field. But in any event, it's not easy to pick a winner. From all accounts, even The Beatles aren't sure what will happen.

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Ringo Starr | |
| SINGLE: You're Sixteen | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: February 1974 |

The *MM* Glee Club, consisting of the massed singers of the sub-editing department and combined ace reporters down ballpoints to join in the chorus with Ringo on the old Johnny Burnette hit. Kazoos help out on Richard Perry's simple but effective production, and it should hit the chart 'ere dawn.

***Chris Welch*** MM, 9 February 1974, page 16

# Should The Beatles

Beatles or Beatles? To be or not to be, that is the question. Two years after John Lennon was singing *"I don't believe in Beatles"* something totally unexpected has happened. Even six months ago to have suggested that the fab four would have come together in any form constituted an invitation to the funny farm. But then everyone was taken by surprise when Dylan announced his mammoth American tour with The Band. After that, one realised, anything was possible.

And so perhaps it wasn't totally unexpected when Paul McCartney said just before Christmas, that he wouldn't mind working with Lennon again in some capacity on a casual basis. From thereon the rumour began to grow, and reports were soon emanating out of New York that all four ex-Beatles had been there for legal talks. The feeling was that now Allen Klein no longer looked after the interests of Lennon, Starr and Harrison, the way was open for a re-formation.

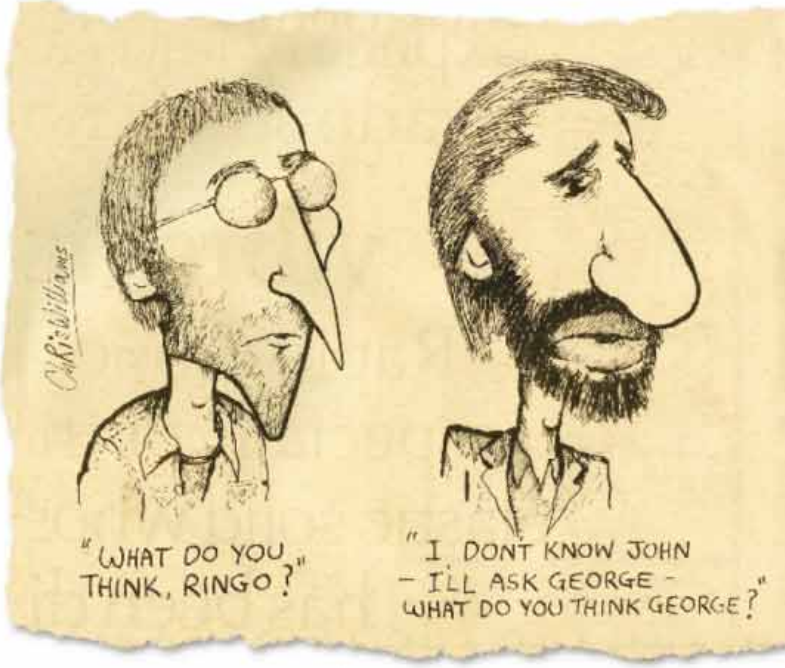
In March the complicated financial situation was improved by a court settlement of monies, and any day now lawyers representing the four men in New York are expected to announce the dissolution of The Beatles' legal partnership. This would clear the way for them to re-assemble in some form, though whether it would merely be a one-off gig, a tour or an album is anybody's guess.

Finally in the past two weeks news arrived from Los Angeles that Lennon and Starr had rented a house in Santa Monica and had began recording together. They are working on an album for Nilsson.

However the big event had already occurred. A month ago Lennon and McCartney had met in LA when Paul was there for the Academy Awards presentation. The story was given substance by the fact that no official denial was released by any of the four ex-Beatles.

The latest news, in fact, is that all four of them are in Los Angeles and holed up at the Beverly Wilshire hotel, while ensconced at the Beverly Hills are John Eastman, who handles financial affairs for McCartney, and Bill Graham, who would be the natural person to organise any such Beatles reunion.

*MM* decided to take the story to the music industry and to ask them what they thought of the possible Beatles re-formation. Opinions were mixed. Still, heartening to find that no-one said, "Beatles-who?"



**NODDY HOLDER & DAVE HILL, SLADE:** "We wouldn't jump in the air if The Beatles got back together but perhaps it could be nice. Really, it doesn't bother us and we're not that concerned about the idea. It could be a bit disappointing."

**JERRY SHIRLEY, HUMBLE PIE:** "Yes, I'd love to see them back together. The only reservation I'd have is whether they'd make it together on a personal level again. I think if they did get back together then they ought to tour as well. They'd find conditions have changed a lot. On their tours, even the last one, things were so archaic, but now the whole aspect of touring has advanced amazingly.

"It'll be good for the whole business if they get back together. They've always been a sort of yardstick by which other groups measured themselves."

**BRIAN CONNOLLY, SWEET:** "I'd like to see The Beatles together. I don't know if they're getting musically sterile or not individually, but it would do them good to be writing together again.

"They've churned out some brilliant stuff before, so why can't they do it again? I really don't think it would be an anti-climax at all. I think it would be amusing to see how the younger people reacted to them. I can't imagine The Beatles producing teenybop stuff, but you never know!"

## "It would do them good to write together again" Brian Connolly

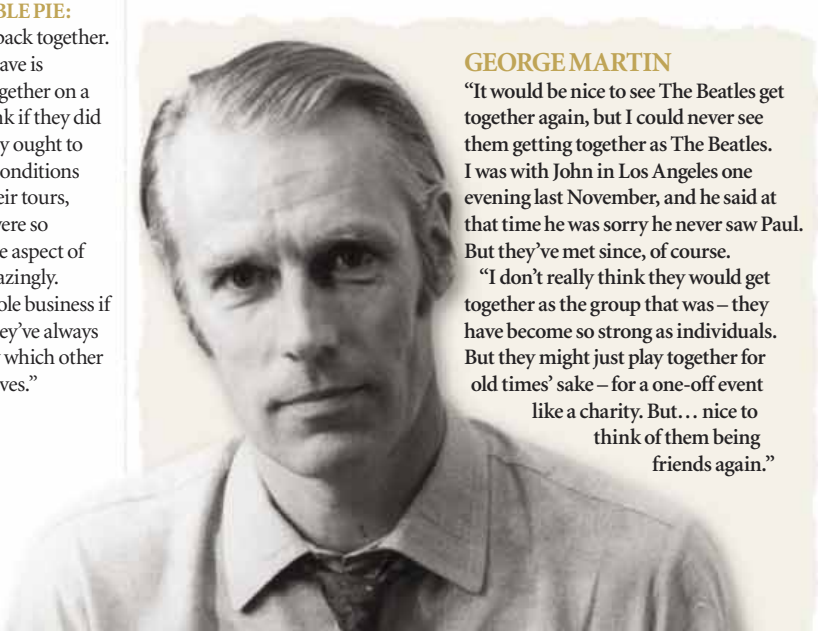
**TONY BARROW, FORMER BEATLES' PUBLICIST:** "No, their individual talents are still there, so what's to be gained by putting them back together again?

"During the latter period of The Beatles, it's no secret that they often went into the studio separately to record. What they've done since is only a progression from that. It's no use trying to recapture an era that's gone, the mid-'60s can never return. So why bother?"

**DEREK TAYLOR, FORMER APPLE PRESS MAN:** "I never think about it, really. Probably, if I saw them onstage it would be fantastic, but they wouldn't do it that way. There's no enmity between them, but there are other things, although I have no doubt that one day, and in a way we presently can't envisage, the four of them will appear onstage together. And I'll pay £100 a seat to see them."

**BERT KAEMPFERT, KNEW THE BEATLES IN HAMBURG:** "It would be a very good idea for The Beatles to get together again. I can't understand why they ever separated. Maybe it was because of a woman!

"But seriously, I think they still have a lot to offer people. They would probably want to try something new, but I think people would like them to do some of their great songs again – like 'Yesterday.' They wrote some very attractive songs."



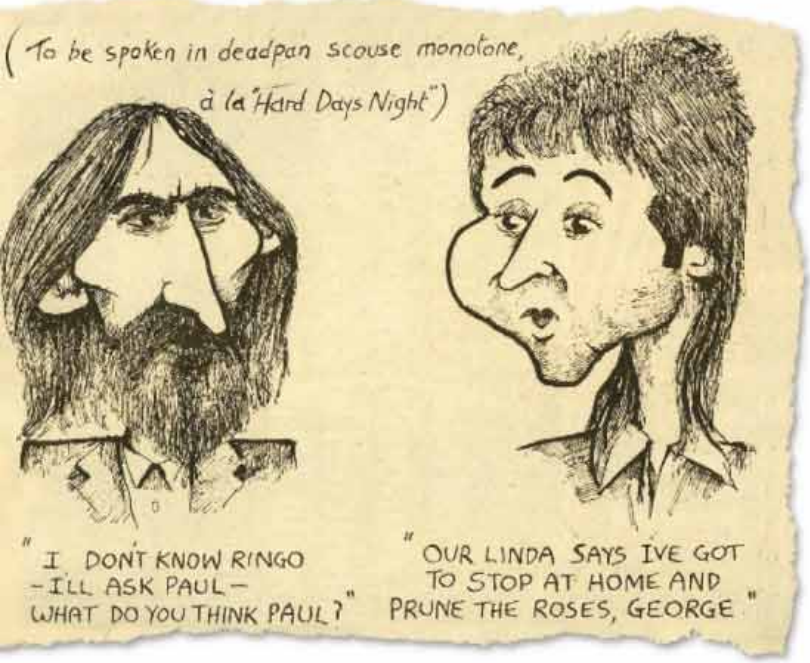
**GEORGE MARTIN**

"It would be nice to see The Beatles get together again, but I could never see them getting together as The Beatles. I was with John in Los Angeles one evening last November, and he said at that time he was sorry he never saw Paul. But they've met since, of course.

"I don't really think they would get together as the group that was – they have become so strong as individuals. But they might just play together for old times' sake – for a one-off event like a charity. But… nice to think of them being friends again."

# come together?

MM, 27 April 1974, page 38




**GEORGE MELLY:** "It will be a good thing if it produces good music and a bad thing if bad music results. They have all produced interesting records on their own, after all. But if they get together and the results aren't very good, I suppose it will be an indication that the nostalgia gap is about to vanish up the hole in the middle of an LP and that soon we'll be expected to feel nostalgic about next year.

**CILLA BLACK:** "Each of The Beatles has moved on to new things. We still have the group on records, just as they were, but I'm sure they prefer to work separately now."

**DAVE COUSINS, THE STRAWBS:** "While I'd be interested in having another Beatles LP, it would be better to leave the legend alone. It could be like when The Byrds re-formed – the resulting album was disappointing,"

**ROY WOOD**
**"I'd be rather knocked out! When they broke up they were really getting into some amazing music, like 'Strawberry Fields Forever'. If they do get back they should go on from where they left off."**

**PHIL LYNOTT, THIN LIZZY:** "It'd be good. I'd be interested to see if they could still play together. The rock scene today misses the excitement of The Beatles."

**JON LORD, DEEP PURPLE:** "I'm on the horns of a dilemma. It'd be great to see them back together again, but at the same time I would hate to be disappointed. It would be nice to have Lennon and McCartney together again in some way. Lennon seems to have lost his direction, while McCartney has found himself. It'd be interesting to see what they'd do now."

**GERRY MARSDEN:** " I don't know if it's true, but if they do it would be sad. They could never have the same impact as they did at the start – it might spoil a beautiful myth.

"The Beatles were so big – much bigger than anyone else, including us. It wasn't so difficult for me – it was always Gerry & The Pacemakers, and it was fairly simple for me to acquire a new group which is much different to my old Pacemakers.

"Not so with The Beatles. They were an entity. What they did was something they could not be expected to repeat. Particularly as, since the break-up, each has gone his own way.

"When they happened, the whole concept was new and refreshing. If they could repeat that it would be incredible."

## "They could never have the same impact" Gerry Marsden

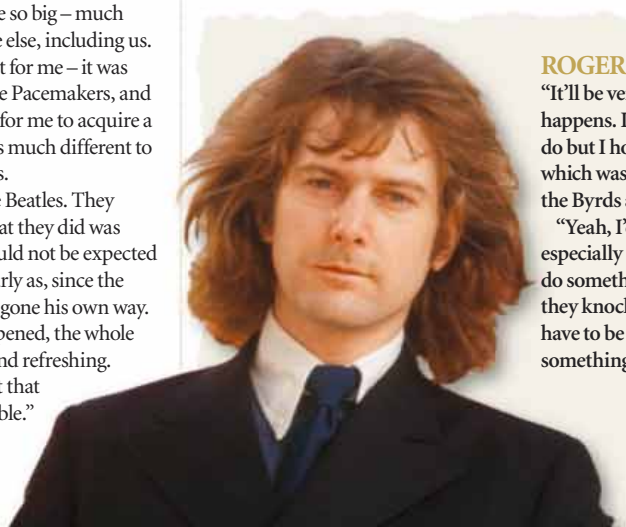
**ALICE COOPER:** "I think it'd be a good idea – at least it would keep Ringo employed. I've heard he's been trying to get a job as the janitor at the Hollywood High School."

**ALAN WILLIAMS, MANAGED THE BEATLES PRIOR TO BRIAN EPSTEIN:** "I don't think there's even a chance of The Beatles re-forming. But if they did I'd immediately offer my services as manager.

"If they did come back it could only be good for the music world, just so long as they confined themselves to the recording studio."

**ANDREW MACKAY, ROXY MUSIC:** "Presumably, if The Beatles re-formed, it would only be for an album, and not with a view to life as a working band. Also, if they re-form, it's highly unlikely that any resultant album would feature just the four of them: they'd almost certainly incorporate other musicians. And to that extent, it'd be a somewhat spurious re-formation of The Beatles.

"Most of their individual solo work has been quite good, but clearly if they come back they'll have to better recent efforts to make it worthwhile. The idea of them re-forming is quite interesting, but not extraordinary. Certainly not as interesting as Roxy Music re-forming."



REX FEATURES

**ROGER McGUINN**
**"It'll be very interesting whatever happens. I'd like to see what they'd do but I hope it's not an anti-climax, which was what people thought about the Byrds album we put out last year.**

**"Yeah, I'd like to see them do it, especially as I stuck my neck out to do something similar. It'd be great if they knocked everybody out. They'd have to be starving again, though, for something other than money."**

**ALVIN STARDUST:** "It would knock me out if they got together again. I don't know whether they'd have the same impact now but individually they're turning out pretty fantastic things.

"They've come through the whole scene so perhaps they'd like to get back to the basics again."

**BIG JIM SULLIVAN:** "I'd like to see it, but I don't feel they could contribute as they did before. I'd like to see Cassius Clay get the world heavyweight title back, but I doubt that'll happen, either."

**COLIN BLUNSTONE:** "Yes, if they want to, not if they don't. I'm not being funny; that's just how I feel."

**BOB HARRIS:** "One of the things about them that was good was the chemistry. That was absolutely right, and once that side began to go wrong the music just started to fall apart. So the relations between Lennon and McCartney are an important factor in them coming together again.

"If it's just being done for financial reasons, I don't think I'd condone that at all. If they came together because they really wanted to then I'd say I'd love to see it. It would appear it will be just one-off for a lot of money."

Page 14—MELODY MAKER, September 14, 1974

# LENNON ~ a

IN the Record Plant studios in New York, John Lennon is putting the finishing touches to his next album. Reaching a track called "Scared," he suddenly decides there's something missing. "Sound effects! Let's get a creaking door! Or a dog barking. No — wolves howling. It'd sound great if we could kick it off with a lonely sort of cry from a wolf . . ."

A messenger leaves and within 15 minutes is back with two albums. From "The Chilling, Thrilling Sounds of the Haunted House," John listens to the eerie creaking door, and decides that both this and the sound of thunder and lightning or crashes are overstated. He moves on impatiently to the second album, "The Music and Language of the Wolves."

"Great, that's it. Put that at the start of 'Scared,' then," he tells an engineer.

Three hours later, and we are listening to the playback of the track with the howling wolf thrown in at the start of "Scared." It's the first time John had heard the new album played right through. He's apprehensive, but the wolf gimmick has clearly knocked him out, and placed as it is at the start of the track, it's a winning move.

He smiles, for he seems to realise that here is an album that will please even the cynics who bashed "Mind Games."

It's a beautiful production, completed in six weeks' studio work — "That's fast. I've been working at the speed of light" — and it's due out in America and Britain on September 16.

The album is called "Walls And Bridges." Why? "Walls you walk into and bridges you cross over. Deep stuff, huh?"

**Ten years after the Beatles invaded America, John Lennon is fighting to live in New York. It's a city that perfectly suits his prickly temperament: loud and bustling, live-for-today, bursting with artistic fervour. The Lennon of today is vastly changed from the Beatle. He's more human, though the old rasping edge often bites through. The MM found him in great shape, completing an album and later spending the night watching telly...**

**by RAY COLEMAN**

Three years after his self-imposed exile in the USA, John Lennon is as unblemished a character as you'd expect to find in a man who has been through more personal changes than a mad chameleon.

He's been through a severe de-Beatling process to the point where now he can reflect on the past, and he enjoys talking about the old days.

Yet for all the mellowing of this erratic genius, there are still the flashes of wry or scathing wit that will forever make him unmistakable. Lennon has never been known to provide questioners with a stock response.

He's 34 next month and rather aware of his age. Older, wiser, but with no real change of stance. His ideals are the same as they were but he has learned more tolerance of people, if not of the system.

And as it has been evident through the years, whatever it is that's needed to be a fully qualified rock'n'roller, then John Lennon has it. A tortured life and a brain like a waterfall, two rocky marriages, grit, a loud mouth, remorse after his drunken behaviour — it's surely all the very stuff rock stars are made of.

This had been a hard day for John. "Notice I've got me suit on? I've been to court this morning for another round in the ritual" (his long fight to get a green card which will allow him free access to the States, for residence or visits). "It's crazy, y'know. If they weren't making it so hard for me to stay here, I'd be off. They're just MAKING me dig in and win.

"That's what I'm like, a young kid. If someone says you can't do something, I just want to do it. Probably as soon as they say I can stay, I'll go."

Lennon is being refused a green card by the U.S. government because he was convicted of possessing drugs in Britain. But the great groundswell of American opinion is in favour of granting him permission to stay.

The turbulence of a life like this, living in a country which officially says: "Get out," has naturally worked well on Lennon's artistic senses. We walked outside Studio C while the engineers sorted out his tapes, and John sat down to contemplate the day's courtroom show, and the press and TV cameras that met him on his exit from the court.

"Funny thing, I almost enjoyed it. Just like the old days, cameras and questions and things. It's quite good for me — the more unsettled I am, the better I like it. When I feel settled down, there's nothing to say, can't write a word. I need to be on edge to work."

He's impressed with how well he's put his new album together. "I got the musicians down here two days before we started recording for some run-throughs, and it made a colossal difference.

"Who's on it? Well, Elton John came in and sang on one and played piano on another. There's Jim Keltner, Klaus Voorman, Nicky Hopkins, Ken Asher who produced Paul Williams, and Jesse Ed Davis, on guitar. The percussion guy is Arthur Jenkins, and there's the horn section: Bobby Keyes, Steve Madio, Howard Johnson and Frankie and Ronnie and the string section, and Harry Nilsson. He sings with me on 'Old Dirt Road.'

"Elton was great. I like him and what he does. He came in here on his way to Caribou and said he was going to do 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' for his next single.

"Christ, he pours the stuff out. He's working now on his album that's coming out next May!

"I went down to L.A. and then to Caribou and sang on his song called 'One Day At A Time.' It turned out so good that he said he might put that and 'Lucy' out as a double A, but I can't see our track beating 'Lucy.'"

John is wearing a neat brown suit and his lapel bears a badge given to him by ace shopper Elton. It's a motif of an open sandwich with half an apple between bread slices, and Lennon is amused at the people who keep asking him for the hidden meaning.

"It's just Elton who found it and gave it to me. It's just nothing but you know what they're like — people keep saying daft things like they always did, like 'Do you own half of Apple, then?'"

We talked of the imminent Beatles fans' convention in New York, for which hundreds of people are going from all over the world to a two-day festival of talks and films and selling of Beatle bits and pieces at the Commodore Hotel.

Do you regret being a Beatle and having to live with it for ever, John?

"No, no, no," he answered and he meant it. "I'm going to be an ex-Beatle for the rest of my life, so I might as well enjoy it, and I'm just getting round to being able to stand back and see what happened.

"A couple of years ago I might have given everybody the impression I hated it all, but that was then. I was talking when I was straight out of therapy and I'd been mentally stripped bare and I just wanted to shoot my mouth off to clear it all away. Now it's different.

"When I slagged off the Beatle thing in the papers, it was like divorce pangs, and me being me it was blast this and f—— that, and it was just like the old days in the MM, you know, Lennon Blasts Hollies on the back page.

"You know, I've always had a bit of a mouth and I've got to live with it. Daily Mirror: 'Lennon beats up local DJ at Paul's 21st birthday party.' Then we had that fight that Paul and me had through the MM, but it was all a period I had to go through.

"Now, we've all got it out and it's cool. I can see the Beatles from a new point of view. Can't remember much of what happened, little bits here and there, but I've started taking an interest in what went on while I was in that fish tank. It must have been incredible!

"I'm into collecting memorabilia as well. Elton came in with these gifts, like stills from the Yellow Submarine drawings, and they're great. He gave me these four dolls. I thought 'Christ, what's this, an ex-Beatle collecting Beatle dolls?' But why not? It's history, man, history!

"I went through a phase of hating all those years and having to smile when I didn't want to smile, but that was the life I chose and now I'm out of it it's great to look back on it, man. Great! I was thinking only recently — why haven't I ever considered the good times, instead of moaning about what we had to go through.

"And Paul was here and we spent two or three nights together talking about the old days and it was cool, seeing what each other remembered from Hamburg and Liverpool.

"So y'see, all that happened when I blew my mouth off was that it was an abcess bursting, except that mine as usual burst in public.

"When we did a tour as the Beatles, we hated it and loved it. There were great nights and lousy nights. One of the things about therapy I went through a few years ago is that it cleans you by forcing you to get rid of the negatives in your head.

"It wasn't all just pie and cookies being a Beatle, there were highs and lows but the trouble is people just wanted big mouth Lennon to shout about the lows.

"So I made a quick trip to uncover the hidden stones of my mind, and a lot of the bats flew and some of them are going to have to stay. I've got perspective now, that's a fact."

TO some of us who have enjoyed the irrational madness of a less balanced Lennon, the new one might come as an unnerving experience. But our re-entry to Studio C proved that, above all, his music is intact and ever richer from the years of turmoil.

"This is an unconcept album. I'll never make a concept album, I just like records," said John, and the engineer played back a raunchy instrumental track called "Beefy Jerky," which John named as a spoof on Booker T's "Green Onions." Half an hour passes and at last the record is ready for a complete playthrough, ready for John to decide on the order of tracks.

"This is always one of the hardest parts of it for me," John says. "Getting them in sequence for correct contrast is vital.

"Like with you and the MM — if you don't put this article on the right page, like the front page, then it's all lost. Well, with these songs, they've got to be in the right order."

The album has on it Number Nine Dream/Beef Jerky/Scared — with a great tune and the sounds of crying wolves before these immortal words:

*You don't have to worry*
*In heaven or hell*
*Just dance to the music*
*You do it so well*

Bless You/Surprise Surprise (Sweet Bird Of Paradox) with Elton on vocal/Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out (no relation to the Bessie Smith classic but equally spine chilling, a majestic track)/Going Down On Love/Whatever Gets You Through The Night (with Elton on piano)/Steel And Glass/ What You Got/Old Dirt Road (with Harry Nilsson on vocal and as co-writer).

Topping it off is a short burst of "Ya Ya," featuring John's 11-year-old son Julian on drums. Julian was visiting his father in New York and dropped by to lend a hand, and they chose this old Lee Dorsey track.

There's a beautiful, singing guitar break by Jesse Ed Davis on "Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out," and as the stand-out track it will close the album. Lennon listened intently to all the songs and we totalled the playing time to 42 minutes, 33 seconds. "Great — I've only got just over two minutes to cut. No trouble.

"I was really worried that it would be too long, and I like just albums, not triples or double albums. One album's long enough for me to do what I can." The engineers said the record was a beauty, John collected the tapes to go home and place them in order, and we were out into the hot New York night air at 8.30.

TAXI! We're off to John's flat, and it strikes me as a bizarre contrast with the police-protected limousine rides we shared ten years ago in various parts of the world, when Beatlemania ruled.

Do you get cabs often in New York, John?

"Yeah, all the time. I used to get paranoid about going out, but then I found out all the paranoia was in my own head — nobody cares much. There's no hassles here in New York, I get 'em all the time.

"Not in California so much — they're still looking for stars there." One cabbie said to John: "Hey, aren't you John Lennon?" and Lennon replied: "I wish I 'ad his money."

He looks around at the flickering city lights as our cab drives off, and tells what it is about aggressive New York that he finds so compelling. "It's all here. It's just alive. There's a buzz here, and I like the way you can do anything or get anything you want at any time.

"It's ALIVE, y'know. It's where the world's at just now and I want to be here. I mean years ago, it was Rome and if I'd been around then I'd have wanted to be there when it was falling.

"New York may well be falling right now, it sometimes feels like it, but I know it's the right place at this time. I think if I couldn't live here I'd have to make it Paris. I love the French, they're so bloody rude.

"But New York's right — we'll get home now and have the TV on and cable TV films for hours and hours. Better than the BBC Light Orchestra, eh?

"Oh and Christ, then there was Watergate! Any country that produces that has got to be number one. I sat watching every bit of it on TV and couldn't believe it. When they kept asking questions and the guy kept replying: 'That is inoperative.' Everything they were asked that was meant to make 'em tell the truth, they said: 'That is inoperative.' I'm gonna try it when they start asking me hard questions. 'Sorry, but that's inoperative'."

John cherished the fact that he had remembered this crucial line. "Yeah," he whispered, "I've gotta remember that. Inoperative!"

Just before we arrived at John's flat, he told of his split with Yoko. "Yoko and I, we had this little . . . thing. She's still living in our house but I've moved into this flat. I still love her, but we're two artists and we found it hard living together. We'll see what happens. I still speak to her on the phone most days. She phoned me from London the other day and said: 'Hey, it's nice here. Remember the autumn with all the leaves? It's nice.' I said: 'What are you trying to say, Yoko? I know it's nice, but are you trying to unsettle me in New York? It's nice here — remember the noise?'"

Arrival at John's penthouse flat, to be greeted by white and black kittens, named Major and Minor. John's friend May Pang is there, and in yet another time-warp, the record is playing the Beatles singing "How Do You Do It?"

They made it before "Love Me Do," John explains, but decided on "Love Me Do" as their first EMI single and gave "How Do You Do" as a song to Gerry and the Pacemakers. Sounds oddly primitive.

On the way up in the elevator, Lennon had warned me that he had a strange experience to relate. Being of sound mind and judgement, he had, the other day, seen a flying saucer while standing naked on his roof.

"Yes, I know what you're thinking. I'm as crazy as my publicity always said I was? But no. Listen. This is true.

He then described how he was standing, starkers, by the window leading on to the roof when an oval-shaped object started flying from left to right. He had called May, who confirmed that he was not seeing things, and they saw a red light on top of the flying saucer. They rushed inside, phoned the cops, and police said others had reported a sighting, too.

John and May got their telescope out, took pictures, and after about 30 minutes the object disappeared over the East River and behind the United Nations building, over which it might be supposed the "visitors" were carrying out some sort of research.

I didn't say much and Lennon threw up his hands in despair. "They all think I'm potty. It was there. I didn't believe it, either. It was THERE." May nodded.

"And you'd not been smoking or drinking?" I asked.

"No, God's honest truth. I only do that at weekends or when I see Harry Nilsson."

JOHN was tired and hungry after a non-eating day in which he had been in court, held a press conference, and then completed his album. But he was still visibly "up" in mood and wanted to do things, talk, play records, watch TV, eat. He changed out of his "court suit" into casuals and lay on the bed of the spartan, one-roomed flat.

Well, here comes the million dollar question the world keeps asking. Are the Beatles ever going to re-form, John?

"No," he said quickly. "What for? We did it all. Christ, we can't even get the four of us together for a meeting, let alone play! The other month Paul and Ringo and me met in LA and we wanted George there but they wouldn't let him in at that time. He still had some trouble getting in and out of the States because of his bust years ago.

"So there were three of us and everybody says 'Beatles getting back' hey hey! We can't even MEET, man!"

Why had they wanted to meet? "To settle all the money thing. We all agreed how to do it, now it's up to the lawyers to sort out and tell us whether what

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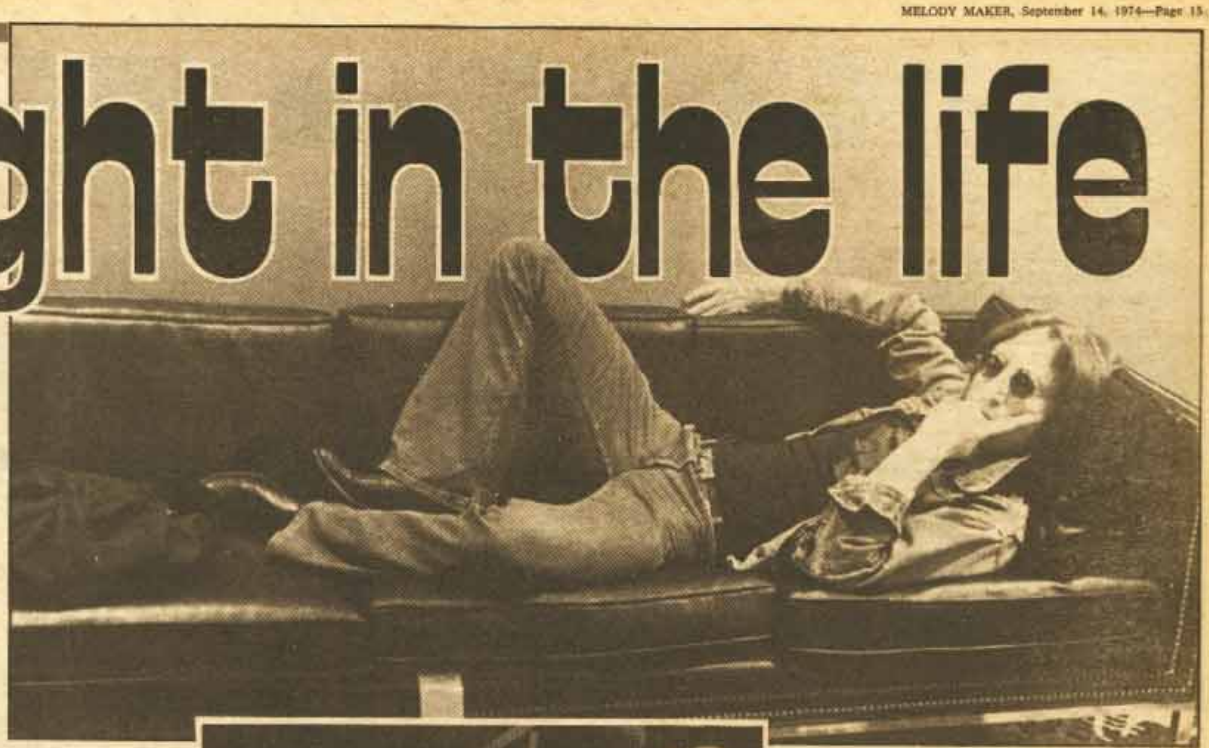
# night in the life



we agreed is practical. That's all. We just want to make sure we all get paid. What a f—— mess."

All four ex-Beatles, he said, were destined for a life of ups and downs in battles with authority. "We're in, then we're out. It's my turn while I fight New York to be out. George will be OK soon — he's doing a tour of America (the one with Ravi Shankar in the autumn) and he'll be OK for a while. You know, people'll want his autograph and they'll smile at him and so he's OK. It goes like that for all of us. In waves.

"Y'know, when some critics panned 'Mind Games,' they were really knocking 'Sometime In New York City,' reviewing me and Yoko, who they've always hated. Well, 'Blind Games' wasn't the best album in the world, but it went gold! And it wasn't all that bad. Hey, I'm hungry, let's get some food in."

Photographer Bob Gruen has arrived now, and a Chinese dinner is agreed on. Bob phones a restaurant called Jade East, and within about half an hour the splendid meal has arrived. Lennon, a true media freak, has applied himself to watching TV, and whizzes through the channels quickly all the time with the hand-controls while he's lying on the bed and eating.

IT'S easy to see what it is about New York TV that John loves. It's all there: umpteen channels all pouring out good material, musically and otherwise. During the night, we flicked from channel to channel and saw act after act, including the Blues Corporation, the Temptations, O'Jays, Flash Cadillac, whose old-fashioned rock theatrics made John laugh out loud (rare), and the act John kept wanting to see, Chris Jagger.

"It must be awful," said John when Jagger junior eventually hit the screen. "Living with being a Jagger for the rest of your life and trying to make it as an act. He's OK though." Chris's band and his playing were indeed good, though the mouth shape and postures demanded comparison with Mick. "Must be awful," John kept repeating.

"But he has the choice of changing his name if he didn't want to cash in on who he is," I said. "Like Mike McGear did."

"Ah," John countered, "but if he did that he probably wouldn't get a booking in the first place."

Lennon is very anxious to see his TV appearance outside the court room, filmed earlier that day. Watching Lennon watch himself on TV was weird.

As he lay on the bed munching Chinese beef and mixed veg, watching himself on TV coming out of court, he said: "Now that seems a sane young man to me. Should definitely be allowed in to stay in New York."

His TV news clip was really quite amusing and his performance rated five stars. Journalists asked him lots of questions:

"What do you think the odds are of your winning the fight to stay in New York, John?"

"Ninety nine to one in favour."

"Why?"

"Because I'm over-confident, as usual."

"Why do you want to stay in New York?"

"Because it's NICE here, I LIKE it here. Don't you?"

"What's wrong with Britain, then?" asked a British reporter.

"Nothing's wrong with Britain — typically British question! If they give me a green card, I can go and see it again, visit my family." (Earlier in the evening, there were signs that John had become an enthusiastic father, showing me with affection a picture of his son Julian and recounting how he had taken him round New York, showing him the billboards.)

When the TV clip is over, John amplifies on his need to get that green card from the US government.

"It's not the tax — you pay only a little less here than you do in Britain. If it was the money, I'd move to Switzerland. I want to be able to move around. LA, Paris, London, New York — I like change. I'd like to go to South America, that's somewhere I've never been to. New York is now, because it's in the air.

"I've got nothing against England — no, make that Britain. I've heard it's in a bit of a mess now, but it was still pretty healthy when I left it so don't let them come all that 'leaving the sinking ship' stuff. It was afloat when I left! Anyway, there's still great music coming out of Britain."

The TV newscast ended with John giving the two-fingered peace sign and saying: "Amnesty. Amnesty?" He came over well, and he seemed quite happy about his performance. "First time I've seen meself on TV for three years." His lawyer, incidentally, believes that Lennon can stay in New York for two years fighting the deportation order.

WE talk of the Beatles fans' festival planned for New York, and the possibility of his attendance, or about sending a lifesize dummy of himself. He intends to send a few things along as mementoes, and he wants May to go and buy him a few things, too, as his collection of Beatle paraphernalia isn't as strong as he would like.

Bootlegs, for example. Lennon has a few Beatle bootlegs, and though he sees them as a rough deal for the record business, he loves them as a fan. "Keeps the industry on its toes, I think. The one of the Beatles in Sweden, I think it was — it's better than some of the Beatles albums, in parts."

The two-day Beatle fans' convention, held to mark the tenth anniversary of their invasion of America, really fascinates John. Apple is sending two films never seen before in America, "Magical Mystery Tour" and "Beatles at Shea Stadium," the Beatles made for TV.

But as for all four Beatles going to the Beatle-fest — no. "Sometimes," said John, "I think it would be nice for us to do something like that, but when you can't even get all four of us together, for a meeting, what chance is there? It's like a hangover from the sixties: the Blue Meanies are still trying to beat up Sergeant Pepper. They don't seem to want us to be happy or together.

"The other dreary thing is that as soon as one or two of us meets, people say it's a Beatles reunion and they're all broke or something and they need the money and they say we hate each other!"

Lennon has been living in New York for three years, occasionally driving to Los Angeles and seeing, as he puts it, a hundred different countries en route. "America is so different from state to state, I can't get bored," he continued. "I'd like to see China — all over the world, in fact, but all that's out and I can't leave here until I win the court case.

"So much to DO here. I still haven't seen Elvis. I had tickets once, but I was on the wrong coast. Crazy. I'd like to see the Stones, Bowie and Elton — but I get nervous of going to these shows when I think of standing around backstages sprinkled with groupies and all the terrible hangers-on.

"The only time I'd willingly do a backstage number is if somebody I liked said he wanted me to be seen there to help him. I'd go through it for a friend."

THAT admission seemed to typify the newfound softness of Lennon. During his wilder years, he'd hardly admit to having a friend, still less owe up to caring for one. John has more heart now.

On to his flickering TV then came one David Peel, with whose group, the Lower East Side, Lennon had been linked on record and in persona three years ago.

Peel is an old-fashioned champion of the underground, and he was in blistering articulate mood as he spouted to a TV interviewer about how the underground should carry on in its campaign to overthrow the rock establishment and the music industry.

"The Beatles were and are pigs," Peel snorted. "They took our money . . ." John muttered: "Well gimme mine." Peel's speech, full of hyperbole and sweeping, wild generalisations about the baddies of music's big business, was entertaining to Lennon, who said he'd heard it all before and wasn't it a shame that the personalities of the underground had always been their own biggest enemies?

On TV next came a group called Television, and Lennon sat fairly transfixed.

Television are so bad they're good. They can barely play their instruments and they are very short of money; they're young and dressed in rags. But they have a spirit that's irresistible, and John immediately identified them as a parallel with the Beatles in their Hamburg days. "Yeah, I can relate to them, they're exactly as we were. Skint and loving every minute. They sound terrible but they're OK!"

And then, observing their tatty dress: "They, they've out-done Bowie! Bowie went crazy and they've gone the other way."

Er — no, John, it's just that they haven't any loot and they can't afford anything better! "Oh." He liked their name, too.

Photographer Bob Gruen, who takes the MM's New York pictures, and seems an ardent Lennonologist, shows John some colour snaps for John to choose for his new album sleeve. Lennon, whom we should recall as an art college enthusiast, is obsessive about pictures and TV and drawings, and he inspected the dozens of colour shots of his face very carefully. "Christ, is that what I look like? No wonder America's trying to get rid of me!"

May gets ginger beer from the kitchen, and it transpires that they had found a store which sold it, but only after a very long search. "It's not so good as English but it'll do," says John.

And after years of having British friends flying into New York with a few black puddings, John has now found that these rare delicacies, too, can be bought in New York. "Any country outside England — sorry, Britain — that lets you buy black puddings has got to be a winner, right?"

"You shouldn't eat them," said May. "They make you fat."

"Hey, yeah, I've gotta watch that," said John.

"Yes," I said.

"Do you mind? That's all we need — a headline like 'Former Beatle Growing Fat'."

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● Above: Lennon at home in New York. Below: with Elton making John's album. Pictures by BOB GRUEN.

● Lennon with Klaus Voorman and Jim Keltner

● I'm going to be an ex-Beatle for the rest of my life so I might as well enjoy it. I'm just getting round to being able to see what happened in that fish tank ●

John Lennon with Harry Nilsson: everybody was talking about them

NME, 23 March 1974, page 13

# Lennon's night club tantrum

## Deportation as "undesirable alien"? From Chris Van Ness in LA

The occasion was a special opening night at the Troubadour to celebrate the Smothers Brothers' 15th anniversary in showbusiness. And the audiences for each of the night's two shows were studded with celebrities – like Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Linda Lovelace and Helen Reddy.

The evening marked the first time Tom and Dick Smothers had worked together in several years and a lot of "friends" turned out to lend support

The first show went well, and more than the usual share of photographers were on hand to snap sellable pix of the celebrities.

I was sitting in the front bar between shows talking with some friends when John Lennon, Harry Nilsson and their party came in for the second show. Lennon was with his new Oriental girlfriend (or, as a colleague remarked cruelly, "the 1974 Yoko"), and we spoke briefly before he went into the showroom. He was cordial and seemed in reasonably good spirits – hardly like the man who would be carried out kicking and swinging less than half-an-hour later.

I was not in the showroom when the commotion began, so I must piece together the first part of the story from eyewitnesses' accounts.

It seems that Lennon began drinking rather heavily, singing before the Smothers' show began and generally insulting the waitresses with obscene remarks. After the show started, he refused to quiet down and began throwing insults at the performers.

At one point, actor Peter Lawford, seated near Lennon, complained to the management about the former Beatle's conduct. So John was politely asked to quiet down.

Instead of complying – eyewitnesses claim – Lennon persisted with his heckling.

His conduct apparently became so obnoxious that Tommy Smothers stopped the show and commented: "There's a narrow line between bad taste and vulgarity, and you've managed to cross it." And that was when the real trouble began.

The Smothers' manager, Ken Fritz, allegedly rushed over to Lennon's table, grabbed him by the lapels of his Scotch plaid jacket and told him rather succinctly that he'd better be quiet. In rapid response, it's claimed, Lennon hauled off and punched Fritz in the face.

Fritz returned the blow while Peter Lawford tried to pull a waitress out of the way, but not before she took Lennon's second punch in her ribs. Then Lawford entered the scuffle momentarily, retiring after five Troubadour employees charged in to carry Lennon out of the club – but not before his glass smashed against the wall, cutting several people.

The show had come to a complete standstill, with all eyes focused on the former Beatle.

As ten or so people came charging out of the showroom doors, I noticed Lennon in the middle of the commotion and followed the melée out on to the sidewalk.

May Pang, aka "the 1974 Yoko"

John Lennon was by this time raving like a maniac.

Safely having removed him from their club, the Troubadour employees simply left Lennon on the sidewalk with Harry Nilsson and his friends, where the former Beatle then got involved with three photographers, one of whom claims Lennon poked her in the eye.

His friends managed to shepherd him to the parking lot, where he clashed with the parking attendant several times before being driven away from the scene.

Back at the club, an obviously shaken pair of Smothers Brothers were finishing their show before a stunned audience. Doorman Kenny St John was saying, "Oh, so that's who it was I threw out." The female photographer was looking for a phone to call her lawyer. And the parking lot attendant, who was totally innocent, was just beginning to realise what had happened.

Shortly after the fracas, I spoke with Troubadour club owner Doug Weston, who told me he was seriously considering taking out a legal injunction to prevent Lennon from ever entering the club again.

But perhaps the most telling quote of the evening came from the waitress who took Lennon's second punch. Still visibly shaken an hour after the commotion, she told me: "It's not the pain that hurts; it's finding out that one of your idols is a real asshole."

John Lennon's Troubadour "performance" was not the first alleged incident of violence involving

the former superstar. There have been several reports of fistfights at recording sessions and confrontations of a lesser nature in other clubs.

Several weeks ago he was asked to leave the Troubadour when he showed up wearing a female's sanitary napkin taped to his head and proceeded to cause a commotion. At that time, Lennon left the club without argument or violence.

In short, there has been much talk here in Los Angeles (where Lennon is reportedly planning to settle on a more-or-less permanent basis) that "something is wrong with John".

Many have speculated that his break-up with Yoko is the cause of his violent behaviour (coincidentally, John and Yoko's fifth wedding anniversary is 20 March), but it seems to me that it must be something more pronounced than that.

Lennon's behaviour – as I witnessed it last night – was that of a spoiled child throwing a temper tantrum in order to be acknowledged. It's no secret that his career has sagged since 'Imagine', and even Yoko has received more press recognition than he has in recent months.

I also have to remember an interview published by *Rolling Stone* magazine a couple of years ago, in which John recounted stories about Paul McCartney and himself crawling out of German brothels because they were too drunk to walk during the days before The Beatles had achieved any real prominence.

## I followed the melée onto the sidewalk. Lennon was raving like a maniac

Some *NME* readers may remember a brief feud I had with Lennon (in the form of published letters) in *NME* about 16 months ago. When I finally met John and Yoko about a year ago, we both laughed off the feud and the three of us sat up in his hotel room 'til four in the morning talking.

I mention this only because I had not expected to like Yoko, but left thoroughly entranced with both of them. To me it was quite clear that Yoko was the stronger of the two and I remember thinking – much against preconceived ideas – that this really was a good marriage.

But now John's ego-anchors are gone, his marriage appears to be on the rocks, and his career appears at its lowest ebb for ten years. Perhaps there lies the understanding for his actions of late.

More objectively, when legal charges are brought against Lennon (as they almost certainly will be) for his actions last night, he will probably be asked to leave this country. Lennon is living here on probation (with an expired visa) based on an appeal of his immigration status.

The United States government was not too anxious (because of his British dope busts) to have him here before now; and after charges are brought against him, he will most certainly be branded an "undesirable alien" and deported.

There is no doubt that John Lennon is a very talented man. He is also apparently a very troubled man – and the resulting waste of that talent, coupled with his self-destructive attitude, truly bothers me.

REX FEATURES/CORBIS

# Lennon bites back at Todd Rundgren

JOHN LENNON ain't no revolutionary. He's a f— idiot, man. Shouting about revolution and acting like an a——. It just makes people feel uncomfortable.

"All he really wants to do is get attention for himself, and if revolution gets him that attention, he'll get attention through revolution. Hitting a waitress in the Troubadour. What kind of revolution is that?

"He's an important figure, sure. But so was Richard Nixon. Nixon was just like another generation's John Lennon. Someone who represented all sorts of ideals, but was out for himself underneath it all.

"Like the Beatles had no style other than being the Beatles. So the Nazz used to do, like, heavy rock, and also these light, pretty ballads with complex ballads.

"And at the time that was something that people just didn't do. You were supposed to have an really identifiable style

● TODD RUNDGREN, singer and songwriter,, rasped some belligerent thoughts about John Lennon when interviewed by the MM for the September 14 issue . . . the same issue in which Lennon bared his soul in a two-page article.

● This week Lennon rasped back with the letter reprinted below.

● LEFT: an extract from Rundgren's attack — and below, Lennon's typewritten reply from New York.

AN OPEN LETTER TO JOHN RUNDGREN. (from Mr. Winston O'Boogie)

Couldn't resist adding a few "islands of truth" of my own, in answer to Todd Rundgren's load of late (pain.)

Dear Todd,

I like you, and some of your work, (including "I Saw the Light", which is not unlike "There's a Place" (Beatles), melody wise.)

1) I never claimed to be a revolutionary. But I am allowed to sing about anything I want! Right?

2) I never hit a waitress in the Troubador. I did act like an ass, I was too drunk. So shoot me!

3) I guess we're all looking for attention Todd, do you really think I don't know how to get it, without "revolution"? I could dye my hair green and pink for a start!

4) I don't represent anyone but my SELF. It sounds like I represented something to you, or you wouldn't be so violent towards me. (Your dad perhaps?)

5) Yes Todd, violence comes in mysterious ways. It's wonderful to perform, (including verbs). But you'd know that kind of mind game, wouldn't you? Of course you would.

6) So the Nazz used to do "like heavy rock" then SUDDENLY a "light pretty ballad". How original!

7) Which gets me to the Beatles, "who had no other style than being the Beatles"!! That covers a lot of style man, including your own, TO DATE.....

Yes Todd, the one thing those Beatles did was to affect PEOPLE'S MINDS.

Everybody played me your rock and roll funny song, but I never rolled anything. I think that the most [illegible] on me is because I didn't know who you were at the Beatles (L.A.) Remember that time you came to visit Brother Jack? When I found out later, I was cursing, cause I wanted to tell you how good you were. (I'd heard you on the radio.)

Anyway,
However much you hurt me darling
I'll always love you,

J. L. John Lennon

10th Sept. 1974

## Rundgren – stop talking nonsense

MM, 28 SEPTEMBER 1974, PAGE 80

At first I thought it was Allan Jones talking about John Lennon, so I was on the point of communicating my disgust when I realised it was that has-been Todd Rundgren. It's a measure of Mr Rundgren's IQ that he finds it impossible to express himself without using expletives.

Proof, if that was needed, of his banality is his comparison of Lennon with ex-president Mr Nixon. Both, he says, represent certain ideals, but at the same time are really only interested in feathering their own nests.

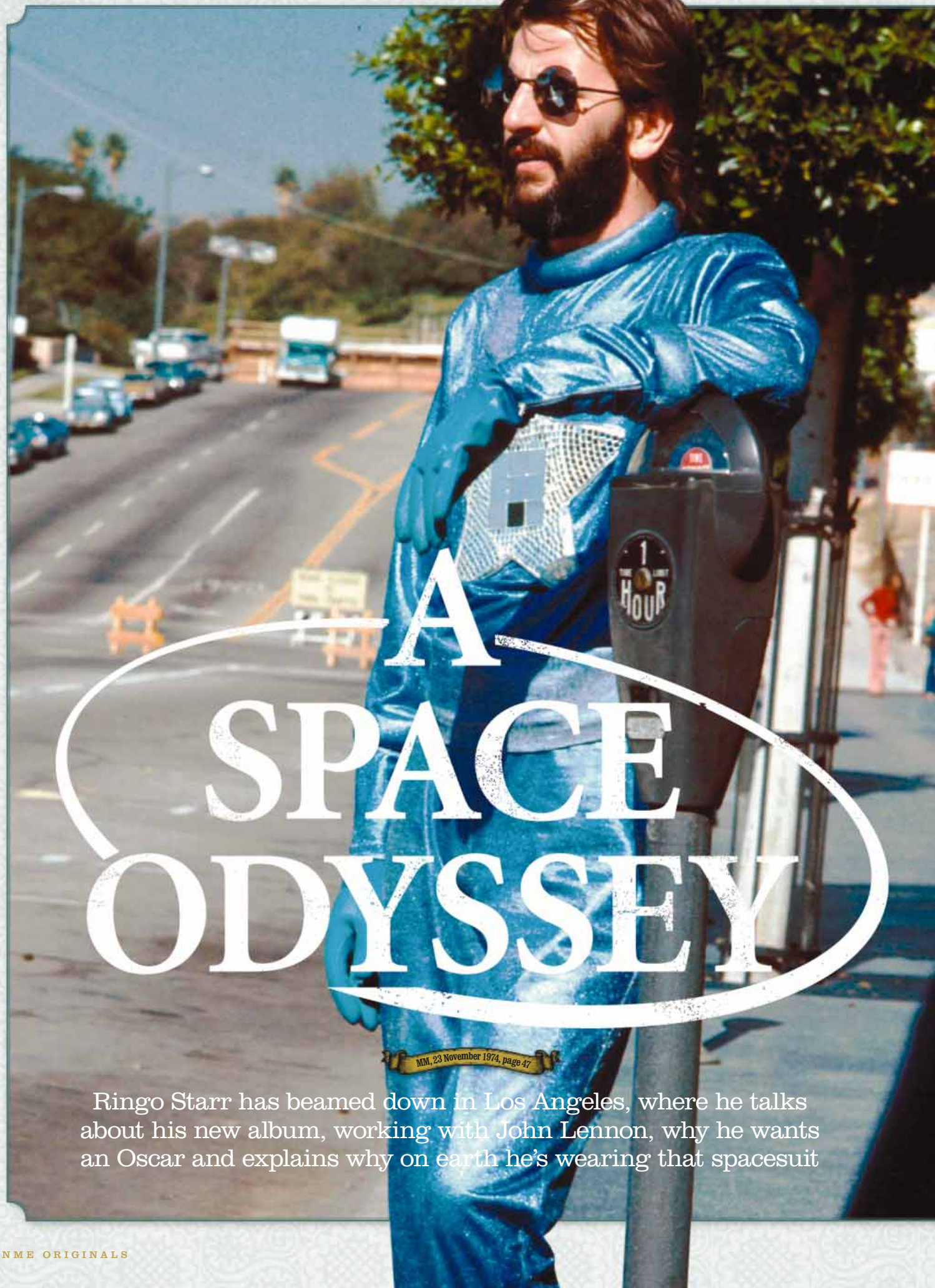
Oh come on, Todd baby, there's a good boy – don't talk such clap-trap. It's a bit like saying you can't be a socialist without being poor. Sure, Lennon's rich, because we made him so.

At the same time, why shouldn't he spout about anything he likes? After all free speech isn't the prerogative of just the under-privileged.

Rundgren thinks that Lennon is "a fucking idiot, man". Well, if every idiot could write albums like 'Imagine' and 'Mind Games' you could charge money to get into asylums and make a fortune. ***R Fairbrass, Abbotswood, Furzfield Road, East Grinstead, Sussex***

*Yes, OK Mr Rundgren, I agree that John Lennon is no revolutionary. Lennon is no more revolutionary than a schoolboy who gives teacher a V-sign on his last day at school.*

*But I can't agree that only non-violent people have left their effect on the mind, and are household words. American generals aren't the only example going; try being a little more international. Hitler, Stalin, Lenin and Genghis Khan for instance. NB How about General Custer?* ***Tish, Bolton Road, Denby Dale, Yorkshire***




# A SPACE ODYSSEY

MM, 23 November 1974, page 47

Ringo Starr has beamed down in Los Angeles, where he talks about his new album, working with John Lennon, why he wants an Oscar and explains why on earth he's wearing that spacesuit

**Could you tell me about the promotional film you are doing which is coinciding with the new album, 'Goodnight Vienna'?**
"The spacesuit I'm wearing on all the posters and pictures around here is from the movie, *The Day The Earth Stood Still*. I'm a science fiction freak and I thought it would be a nice cover for the album with my head in place of Michael Rennie. The hardest thing to do is to find a cover and a title for an album."

**Are any of the ex-Beatles on the LP?**
"John is. He wrote a song and played on three. He wrote the title tune. It's a Northern expression and an old song, which means 'I'm getting out of here'."

**Would you like to be nominated for an Oscar for *That'll Be The Day*?**
"You bet your life I do. You're supposed to get better jobs if you win one of them."

**How are you feeling now the album's completed?**
"Now, very good. At the end of the album – as any artist who is honest will tell you – at the end of an album, you begin to hate it. You're with it for so long, you don't know what's happening. You should put it away for a while like I did last week. I'm listening to it again now and it's really good. I think it's better than the last one. It's more like my album. We had a lot of stars on the other one. Then we got involved with 'are we getting together again?' which we're not, just because the other three were on it. Overall, the album is more like my album."

**Marriage and divorce for Ringo Starr. George had some interesting comments on the institution?**
"If you get married you end up getting divorced… ha ha. No, I'm not getting divorced. Who can tell. There's no guarantee once you get married. My wife is in England with our three children. Someone has to look after them."

**How about the tax situation in England and you?**
"I like to be poor. It's bad, but still for me it's the only place. I'm not one of those people that any place you hang your hat will be home. It's where my shoes are."

**A lot of people like Keith Moon, Deep Purple, and ELP are moving to America. Would anything finally drive you across the Atlantic?**
"I don't know, it's tough. It's like right now, I don't think I could be happy on an island, or someplace else. If you come to America you're only going to make 20 per cent more than you make in England. The taxes are just that much lower. I couldn't stand living on some island for the rest of my life, I'd get sick of the sand. I just enjoy it here, I've been here five months."

**You've been asked this 100 times, but is there any chance of you getting back together as The Beatles?**
"No. How can we get together if George won't play with Paul? We're not. We are having a good time on our own and say hello to each other. We all work together, but not as The Beatles. There's no chance of us getting back together. Paul McCartney, he's got a heavy album out, 'Band On The Run' did very well for him. We're all into striking out for ourselves."

## GOODNIGHT VIENNA
## Ringo Starr Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 23 November 1974, page 18

One good album deserves another, they say, but that's as maybe. What we have here is John Lennon's maxim of "never change a winning formula" put into practice.

'Goodnight Vienna' is constructed along the lines of its platinum predecessor, 'Ringo', and he's retained the same cast for his second series – Klaus Voormann, Billy Preston, Jim Keltner, Harry Nilsson et al in regular attendance. One crucial difference, though, is that he has lost the services of both Paul and George, and so the album loses the invaluable aura of being an ersatz Beatles album.

Probably because the style of the album was predetermined by the success of 'Ringo' the achievements this time around are rather slender. For a start, Ringo's own compositions are noticeably inferior. There's nothing comparable to 'Oh My My' or 'Devil Woman'.

John's new song, the title-track, is very good indeed and considerably better than the stuff he's been writing for himself of late.

'Snookeroo' and 'Occapella' are both fine. The first, by Elton John, is full of pace and vitality and even includes two worthwhile lines from Bernie Taupin – *"Oh pigs will fly and the earth will fry/When they get me doing honest hours"*.

The other is an Allen Toussaint composition with a jerky, relaxed melody that fits Ringo like a glove. On side two, Hoyt Axton's 'The No-No Song', where Ringo and Nilsson ham it up splendidly, is first-class.

So, if you deal in percentages, it's an acceptable album; as follow-ups go, standard fare. The cover's pretty good – I guess it all depends on whether or not you're allergic to Ringo's voice.

This sort of 50/50 album will only reinforce the prejudices of those who believe that Ringo is not worthy of serious consideration. With two successful albums, 'Beaucoups Of Blues' and 'Ringo', behind him. Pity he missed the hat-trick. ***Bob Woffinden***

**It all depends on whether or not you're allergic to Ringo's voice**

**How about your own solo identity? You recently said that it took you the longest to get things together, getting out of the slump.**
"Because I don't write that much and John, Paul and George did most of the producing, I was just a player. I didn't know what to do. I waited, then Paul made an album by himself. Everyone was wondering and I was the one who wondered longest."

**What have been the highlights of your career?**
"It's very hard, there have been a lot of them. While you're doing it you think, 'This is gonna be it, like, the Palladium,' we thought, 'God, we can't top this.' Then you do *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and you think, 'God, this is amazing'. Then you do Shea Stadium and you think, 'What's happening?' Then you stop touring and make a lot of good records. Sullivan saw us in Sweden before anyone here. We had a lucky break. He just booked us, we had no records. We were going to be first on the bill, then when we arrived it just fell into place. No-one could plan that."

**"I'm a science fiction freak and I thought the spacesuit would be a nice cover for the album"**

**Did you ever realise how important The Beatles were on popular culture?**
"I think that's why we did it. If we were involved with ourselves in something, like, 'We can take over the country,' then we would have been too busy just to be able to make records and influence people in the way we did."

**Did The Beatles change grooming standards?**
"If you look at early pictures of ourselves with long hair we had nothing, less than you. There were people around who had long hair before we did. I had my hair longer before I joined the group. It was combed back, then suddenly it fell forward, and everyone, especially in America – where it was crew-cut city – they all said, 'These long haired creeps.' Look at everyone now. If you're going to judge someone by the length of their hair, you might as well forget it."

**Of the four ex-Beatles, who are you closest with?**
"Right now, I'd say John."

**John Lennon is having a lot of problems over here.**
"I think he should be allowed to stay. Give the guy a break. What's he done to anybody? Have you heard his new album, 'Walls And Bridges'? It's the best album in the last five years."

**Do you have a band put together?**
"A semi-set band with Jim Keltner, Klaus. They are like the two on everything. Jesse Ed Davis. Touring right now is not my cup of tea. I won't say I'm never going to tour. For the next 18 months, I have no plans to tour. I'm doing another record, when I get into it. I never like to plan too far ahead."

REDFERNS

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: John Lennon | |
| SINGLE: Whatever Gets You Thru The Night | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: October 1974 |

Lennon's decided to put out a 'no-nonsense rock single'. Everything's played and recorded with real class – including Junior Walker imitations and the less predictable rhythm banjo. The words are pretty permissive for Lennon (ie no finger-wagging) and could well have been written by one of the more affluent folk artists. As many people seem to feel that the world needs more no-nonsense rock singles, I expect this'll be very… popular.

***Robert Wyatt*** NME, 5 October 1974, page 19

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Paul McCartney & Wings | |
| SINGLE: Junior's Farm | |
| LABEL: EMI | RELEASED: November 1974 |

This has been described by Linda as a "real rocker". Seems a fairly accurate assessment to me.

'Junior's Farm' may lack the same kind of ruthless determination of, say, 'Jet', which in some ways it recalls, but it drives along with a reasonable amount of power. It is, of course, the first Wings release to feature new members Geoff Britton and Jimmy McCulloch. The latter, especially, is outstanding, pulling off a couple of neat solos. 'Sally G', on the B-side, is an unmemorable piece of hokum, inspired by a night out in Nashville.

***Allan Jones*** MM, 2 November 1974, page 17

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: George Harrison | |
| SINGLE: Ding Dong, Ding Dong | |
| LABEL: Apple | RELEASED: December 1974 |

Oh yeah, the lyrics are so heavy: *"Ring out the old, ring in the new"* (repeat roughly 20 times), *"Ding dong ding dong"* (repeat until hoarse) and that's about it. We've come to expect something with more substance than this glorified nursery rhyme from one of the most important musicians of the decade. True, it's catchy with a full chunky sound to bounce it along, but with an undeniable infectiousness of the sort normally associated with chicken pox or measles. George doesn't have to shatter the world with significance every time he sits down to write a song, but surely he can welcome the New Year with something a little less twee than this. Curiously, records of such banality have a habit of selling in their zillions and this is bound to be a biggie. Hit.

***Colin Irwin*** MM, 14 December 1974, page 14

Lennon onstage with the bling pianist Elton John, 28 November 1974

BOB GRUEN-STARFILE

MM, 7 December 1974, page 54

# Elton – oh what

## John Lennon returns to the stage for a memorable show with Elton John at Madison Square Garden

Dear all,

I wish you could have been there the night John Lennon played Madison Square Garden.

The moment he walked onstage, in a black suit and those round shades, he had the audience by its great roaring throat, a noise like Liverpool supporters at a cup final as the team emerges from the tunnel. Even he was overwhelmed.

You could see it. He tried to continue chewing his gum in regular jaw patterns, and he pulled funny faces, even lounged against the piano in an attitude of mock relaxation – but that deafening cry had him swallowing hard. You could watch him thinking, "Christ, it's weird being out in front of this many people again, and me a little rusty, while ol' Elton over there at the piano runs through his three-hour set like he does it every day. Which, now I think of it, he does, of course."

Elton John had announced him, in fact, by saying "as it's Thanksgiving" – last Thursday to you, dear English readers – "we thought we'd give you a special present, so here's something to give thanks for." And John had trooped on, big waves and nice, even teeth. Half the audience had wind of it already. They probably read it in *Melody Maker* (on sale around Times Square if you ever want to get a copy abroad) what with this *Sgt Pepper* opening on Broadway and Harrison out on tour, it's as if Epstein is pulling a few strings up there.

**The moment he walked onstage he had the audience by the throat**

Elton and John sing together on Lennon's latest hit 'Whatever Gets You Thru The Night'. Not a great song, but it'll do.

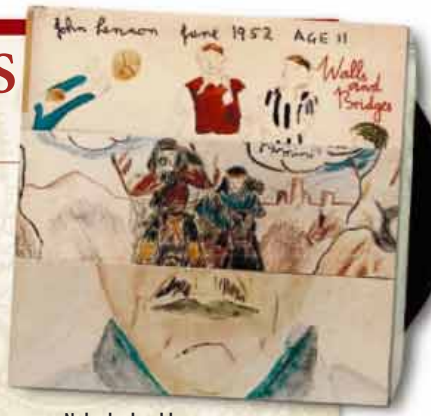
And then the spotlight switches to Elton – it's his show after all – for his newest hit, which I don't have to tell you is 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds', that old Beatles thing. But he did it bloody great and he was really steaming with Lennon coming in on the chorus, and the crowd swelling in a great night-time choir, as Kenneth Wolstenholme might've said. Bloody great. You'd have loved it.

And then it's over to John at the mic, those inimitable, nasal tones. "We were trying to think of a number to get me offstage so I can be sick," he says, "and we came up with this one written by me fiancé, Paul." So what do they do then but… 'I Saw Her Standing There'! Yeah, incredible, the

# WALLS AND BRIDGES

## John Lennon Apple

REVIEWED: MM 19 October 1974, page 37




Since The Beatles split, the personalities of the four have manifested themselves quite strongly. George the strident mystic, Ringo the cutie, Paul the brazenly commercial and John the monster with a heart of gold.

It's this characteristic that will forever place Lennon for me, as the one who is the more interesting ex-Beatle; he doesn't even know which way he's going with each album, so it's small wonder that every one unfolds with surprise, and that, surely, is the hallmark of the evolving artist.

Lennon is essentially a wanderer, and though his last album was as much a 'concept' album as he's likely to make (the contrived title 'Mind Games' was enough to put us off), this one is simply a collection of fine songs. Really, you have to be as hooked as I am on Lennon's stance and his singing voice to want to own this album. He's very much a tortured personality, in just as strong a sense as, say, Leonard Cohen: trying too hard to say things and often coming across rambling inarticulately, but all the same, he's real.

Every single song on this album is compulsive, melodic, lyrically strong and executed with Lennon's very special voice which has that most human of mixtures, sneer and emotion. The musicians involved have strong credentials: Jim Keltner (drums), Nicky Hopkins (piano), Klaus Voormann (bass), Jesse Ed Davis (guitar) and keyboard and vocal assistance from Elton John on 'Whatever Gets You Thru The Night' and 'Surprise Surprise', which I take to be a song about John's ladyfriend May Pang, as compared with 'Bless You' being about Yoko.

In many ways, in fact, this is a biographical album without bringing the listener too far into Lennon's personal blemishes so that the songs could easily identify with anyone who chooses the words as being relevant.

'Nobody Loves You (When You're Down And Out)' is simple but lyrically powerful, and possibly the most telling track, but for sheer weight 'What You Got' and 'Going Down On Love' take the awards.

**Every song is compulsive, melodic and lyrically strong**

Nobody should ever go for a Lennon album these days expecting recreations of 'Norwegian Wood' or 'Strawberry Fields Forever.' The man is ten years older, not much wiser, but still an emerging artist who has been forced to come face to face with reality. But the bite is untarnished and the verse is still exceptional.

Lennon remains for me, a quirky genius – and for such qualities, one has to put up with a lot. This is a truly superb album by any standards, words and music a joy to hear by a musician who has a rare talent for selling love without making you cringe. And his most important work is still yet to come.

***Ray Coleman***

# a night

audience goes barmy. To paraphrase Ginsberg, I saw the best minds of my generation become hysterical. It's dubious if McCartney himself could have improved upon it.

Oh, excuse me while I wipe something out of my eye. On that note John left the stage amid manifold cheering, but not the building, because he came back right at the very end while Elton was singing his fourth encore to do a little clowning and dancing with Bernie Taupin. Elton says "this has been a very emotional night for me". Lennon embraces Elton. And they they all split, but not before John has tossed his tambourine to the piranha hands in the first row. Socko.

Now that little interlude was obviously the highlight of the evening, but it was a capper – it didn't overshadow Elton's own performance.

It was four years since I'd last seen him – at the Country Club, Stu Lyon's old dump, where Elton played one Friday night before he went to the States for that big breaker gig at the Troubadour in LA.

But at the Garden he seemed monstrously good. A lot of razzle-dazzle, of course, with his name in big, blue neon lights and the huge glasses framing baby-fat face – but the guy's got it all down.

He's Big Fun.

He'll never speak for his generation; he's not that deep, but by inviting us not to take him too seriously he broadens his appeal, and ergo, his bank balance. If genius is pain, he leaves no marks.

At the same time he's a craftsman, a pro, and he can rock'n'roll sufficiently good-naturedly to win over those of my generation who go bananas over Lennon.

And one more thing, anyone who brings along Alan Freeman as his compere must have a twinkle in his eye. His fault was that he played for too long, and his songs are so melodically similar that without the Lennon appearance his show would have perceptibly sagged earlier than it did. But no quibbles; I'm convinced.

**Yours sincerely,**
***Michael Watts,***
**New York**

Melody Maker
DECEMBER 7, 1974 12p weekly (25¢ US weekly)

BOMBS ROCK MUSIC SCENE

Hot air . . .

LENNON JAMS WITH ELTON!

NME, 14 December 1974 page 10

"I HAD A great time," said **Lennon**, "but I wouldn't want to do it for a living." He laughed: "Actually it was fantastic . . . so emotional. Everyone was crying and everything."

John was talking from his table in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Pierre, where a midnight supper dance was being held to celebrate **Elton John's** gig at Madison Square Gardens earlier that evening . . . the gig, of course, where Svelte Elt was joined onstage by one J. Lennon.

Lennon's unscheduled appearance had, it should be said, sent the audience completely berserk.

Together, they went through "Whatever Gets You Through The Night", "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds", and *then* (and no one was ready for this) "I Saw Her Standing There".

"That was really amazing," said Lennon. "I've never sung it before . . . Paul always did it." John continued to talk enthusiastically about the show, what an amazing performer Elton is, how he was carried back onstage for the encore by a huge black bodyguard . . . "*So* Las Vegas," we agreed.

John and Elton had planned the gig a few days before, and even had time for one rehearsal. As for the motive, Lennon's constant companion **May Pang** confided: "John told him he'd go onstage with him if the song became No. 1." (Both "Whatever" and "Lucy" reached the top in the US). He never really thought it would happen. But when it did, he had to live up to his promise."

**Melody Maker correspondents report from George Harrison's press conference in Beverly Hills, California, last week**

GEORGE HARRISON meets the press in Beverly Hills last week

# "It's all a fantasy, putting the Beatles back together"

GEORGE HARRISON bounded into the ornate conference room of the Beverly Wilshire Hotel and was immediately surrounded by three dozen photographers madly clamouring for pictures.

For almost ten minutes, the scene looked like some parody of a bad Hollywood movie. Finally, amid jeers and calls from the "working press" the photographers retreated to the back of the room and the formal questioning began.

Looking relaxed and displaying a fine sense of humour, Harrison acted every inch the ten year veteran of superstardom that he is. The accent is toned down, the barbs are not quite so sharp, but the droll wit that delighted back in 1964 still managed to find its way into the proceedings.

His public relations people had announced that this would be George's ONLY contact with the press during his upcoming tour — and consequently everyone was out in force from television commentators to women's page columnists.

One young rock and roll writer commented that if a bomb dropped on the building, the entire LA press corps would be wiped out.

On November 2 the George Harrison tour will begin in Vancouver and will include approximately 50 concerts in 27 cities over a period of seven weeks.

This marks his first US tour since the halcyon days of the Beatles — The concert for Bangla Desh notwithstanding. Permits, visas and drugs charges had kept Harrison away, he explained.

Joining Harrison on the tour will be Ravi Shankar accompanied by some 18 Indian musicians complete with three drummers and "back-up" singers.

Playing with Harrison will be Tom Scott (saxes and woodwinds), Chuck Findley (trumpet and trombone), Robben Ford (guitar), Andy Newmark (drums), Emil Richards (percussion), Willie Weeks (bass), and Billy Preston (keyboards).

No press conference would be complete without inside jokes and one or two buffoons. The inside joke was provided when one LA rock and roll writer asked "how did you find America . . ."

There was just a beat and then everyone laughed and steadily filled in "turn left at Greenland."

The remark came from a woman who insisted on asking questions for her "women" readers, as if women were creatures from outer space who could not be interested in factual information like everyone else. It was she who asked about Harrison's favourite food and whether his wife could cook.

The conference started 45 minutes late and lasted just over an hour, at which point Harrison departed for a recording session, driving a Mercedes.

**How do you feel about going through the interview process again, since it's been a long time since you spoke to the press?**

It's like the old days. All the people are here ten years later, and as mad as ever. I'd like to take a picture of you. Are you with the press or something? You're lucky to have me. I was up till five or six in the morning.

**After all these years, why have you decided to return to America in the role of a performer?**

I've been back here many times over the last few years. This is the first time I've been back to work. It's the first time I've had a H-1 visa since 1971. The tour is the big plan of the moment. I don't have time to think what I'm going to do after the tour (once the tour's over I'll probably collapse or have a rest.

**What was the reason you didn't have the H-1**

I had the same problem as John Lennon. I was busted for Marijuana in 1967.

**What is the possibility of you and the rest of the Beatles getting back together?**

It's a very slim possibility at the moment. Everybody enjoying being individuals. We were boxed up together for ten years. Personally I enjoy playing with this band, the band I have on tour.

**You said in your bio, that meeting the Beatles was one of your biggest influences in your musical life.**

Biggest break in my career was getting into the Beatles in 1963. In retrospect, biggest break since then was getting out of them.

**What are your feelings and anticipation for the upcoming tour?**

Well, if I had more time I'd be panic stricken, but I don't have the time to worry about it.

**Do you have an album ready to coincide with the tour?**

It's almost in the can. I have a few things I want to do before Saturday night. Some of the basic tracks I did last November have Keltner, Ringo, Gary Wright, Klaus Voorman, and some of the tracks I did this year have Willy Weeks, Andy Newmark, Tom Scott, the people in the band. The album is titled "Dark Horse."

**Is there any reason why, Keltner, Klaus Voorman, or Eric Clapton aren't touring with you?**

Eric's out on his own. Klaus has been living in America so I haven't seen him all year. During that time I've met Andy Newmark and Willie Weekes. It's just a time for a change. They performed on the album 'cause they were there at the time. Andy Newmark and Willie Weeks, bass and drums, I didn't meet till July this year.

**Are you getting divorced?**

No, that's as silly as marriage.

**What kind of material will you be doing on the tour?**

A couple of old tunes and a lot of new tunes. The old tunes seem to have a slightly different arrangement. I'm going to do "My Sweet Lord," and "Give Me Love," in slightly different variations. It should be much more loose.

**I'd like to talk about the Indian Music Festival that you were involved with.**

Yeh, there was two separate parts there. The music festival in India was something I was planning for years, since about 1967, although it's hard to get together 15 or 20 musicians and put them in a position where they perform together.

All, I ended up with was forming a foundation that would sponsor a few other things.

Ravi has just completed a European tour there, which we recorded and filmed in Albert Hall. Now he's joining in the tour.

He'll be playing some of the pieces from the tour that are somewhat lighter than heavy raga. It's not a few ragas for an hour and a half, but smaller pieces, with musicians. Which should be sensational.

There should be a point in the show where we all play together — guitars, saxophones, drums, bass, and all the Indian musicians.

**How has religion helped you create better music?**

It helps me to be a bit better. Consequently any thing is a bit better. I will be after this tour sharper playing the guitar. Another reason for doing the tour is that I was turning into a lawyer or an accountant. I wanted to try being a musician.

**Allen Klein is suing the Beatles for 30 million dollars? How is that affecting you?**

That's all right. To tell you the truth there's a whole lot of money is receivership, since Paul McCartney sued us and actually it's fortunate he did sue us, since nobody could spend it.

**What do you see the role of the entertainer is working with causes and charities?**

I don't think it's particularly an entertainer's job. He does what he can. And I do it through music. It's not isolated to musicians.

**Will the concert be formulated like Bangla Desh?**

No, it has to have some sort of format 'cause there is a certain amount of time that you have to play, the unions, and you have to kick the people out for the second show. You can't run over in time so we must have a format.

**Will Ravi open the show?**

No, I will be opening the show. It's definitely not Bangla Desh take two. If that's what people are thinking. Nothing like that.

**What are your hopes for Dark Horse Records?**

I don't want it to turn into Kinney. Small.

**Any new acts you're going to get on the label.**

I've been here a week and if I sign all the people who've given me tapes, I'd be bigger than RCA and Kinney put together. Unfortunately I don't have time to listen to them.

**How did you come to work with Splinter (new Dark Horse artists)?**

The Splinter thing happened when I was making a movie, I was raising the money for a movie to be made called Little Malcolm. And His Struggle Against the Eunuchs, and there's a scene where they needed a couple of singers in a night club. A friend of mine, Mal Evans brought these guys down. I liked their material and we did an album.

**You were married — does your wife cook, or did she when you were?**

First of all, I don't have a wife anymore. Anyway, she used to cook for me sometimes, and I learned how to cook myself. I cook vegetarian Indian food. Although I like other food as well. I'm a vegetarian, don't eat fish, chicken or meat. That's why I'm so pale and thin.

**George, what charities are you working with on this tour?**

One concert in San Francisco is for the Haight Ashbury Medical clinic. There's a brochure which will be like a programme that gives all the information. Institutes of Religion and Health, ones for a hospital in the Mississippi Delta.

I'm giving a concert in Los Angeles for the Self Realisation Fellowship. It was founded by Paramana Yoga Anda. He happened to be a big influence in my life. I'd like to repay his in a small way.

**Are sales down for the concerts?**

No.

**Whats your relationship with John and Paul now?**

It's very good. I haven't seen John since he's been in the States. I spoke to him a lot on the telephone. He's in great shape. It's like we've gone around in a cycle and at the beginning again.

I met Paul recently and everybody is very friendly. It doesn't mean everybody is going to form a band.

**Do you think the publicity from this tour will lead to the re-release of the Raga movie?**

I am not sure it actually ever got released completely. In a few places. It depends on people's interest. The film industry is like the record industry ten years ago. Very difficult to get a look in.

My personal opinion is it needs a kick in the arse. It's controlled by those who won the theatres and distribution network. If you don't work on Maggie's Farm then you don't get your movie on.

**Have you ever thought of touring Mexico?**

I wouldn't mind. I just believe there are a bunch of toonies there. I'll go anywhere. This is really a test. I either finish the tour ecstatically happy, "I want to go on tour," or I'll end up going back to my cave for another five years.

**In retrospect, looking at all your accomplishments that you and the Beatles have done, which do you personally consider as your crowns and glory?**

As a musician I don't think I've got that yet. As an individual just being able to sit here today and be relatively sane is probably the biggest accomplishment.

**Will you tour England and Europe?**

I'd like to. I tried to squeeze it a concert before Christmas although all the places were booked out. The feeling in the band was that we should do a gig in London, 13 of them. Let's tour England, let's tour Japan. I want to go everywhere. This year there's too much to do and not enough time.

**Can you see a time when you give up music?**

I can see a time when I give up this sort of madness, but everything is based on music. It is difficult. It's also good practise as they say to be in the world but not of the world. It's like you can go to the Himalayas and miss it completely or be stuck in New York and be very spiritual.

**Why did you decide to tour Canada at the same time?**

A lot depends on Bill Graham. He's got to try and work out a way to get around the country where the halls are available. I decided originally that I was going to do eight or ten places, going on a train. Now it's escalated to 50 concerts. It takes so long to build into the motion, that I might as well cover as many things in one shot.

**Can you tell me what direction your music is going thats?**

I haven't got a clue. It's gettin' a bit funkier since Willy Weeks and all of them joined.

**Did you play a big part in the new Ringo album like the last one?**

No. I haven't heard a thing on Ringo's new album. He's been over here. The last time he came over just to do a few dates, and we all ended up here fighting Allen Klein.

**How did you select the charities for which you will be doing the shows?**

I have a few people who run all over the place checking and after that they bring me back a list of people and give me a list of permutations and possibilities. "Yes — do it for them. . ."

**Are there any plans for a live recording of the show?**

I hope so, yeah, we're going to record it.

**What have you been doing the last year, since "Living In The Material World" came out?**

Been doing some tracks on my own. The Splinter album, Ravi's Ballet album, to India for two months and organized the Music Festival for India which was just completed. A million things.

**Are you ever amazed about how much the Beatles still mean to people?**

Not really, I mean it's nice. I realise the Beatles did fill a space in the sixties. All the people the Beatles aware something to have grown up. It's like anything you grow up with you get attached to things.

I understand the Beatles in many ways did nice things and it's appreciated the people still like them. They want to hold on to something People are afraid of change. You can't live in the past.

**Have you see the Beatles play in London?**

Do you mean, John, Paul, George, Harry, Ringo and Stigwood? No I haven't had a chance to see it. Conflicting reports. I'd like to see it when I get a day off. Some people say Brian Epstein comes off terrible and some say like an angel.

**What are the concepts and goals of Dark Horse Records?**

There isn't really a concept or goal. The goal in life is to manifest our Divinity. Because each one of us is potentially divine. All we can do is try and do that, and hope that influences our work.

**Who are the contemporary artists you admire?**

In music, there are so many. Smokey Robinson from the old Miracles. I'm madly in love with Smokey Robinson. When the Beatles first came to America every one was amazed that we liked Tamla-Motown.

I like a lot of guitar players. I like Dickie Betts. I like Ry Cooder, and I hope Warner Brothers sell a few more of his albums. The Stones, I like the Stones. Variety is the spice of life.

**Are you involved with any serious negotiations to get the Beatles back together for one night?**

It's all a fantasy, putting the Beatles back together again. If we were to do that it's because everyone is broke, than doing it 'cause I'd rather have Willy Weeks on bass rather than Paul McCartney.

With all respect to Paul, since the Beatles I've been in a box, taking me years to be able to play with other musicians.

Since I made "All Things Must Pass," it was nice for me to be able to play with other musicians. Having played with other musicians, I don't think the Beatles were that good.

Ringo has the best backbeat I've ever heard. Him and Levon Helm of the Band are the best drummers I've ever heard. They don't play technically, no drum solos, just play.

Ringo will play a great backbeat 24 hours a day. Paul is a fine bass player, he's a bit overpowering at times. John has gone through his scene, to tell you the truth, I'd join a band with John Lennon any day, but I couldn't join a band with Paul McCartney. That's not personal, but from a musical point of view. John's new record is lovely.

**Did you make a musical rebuttal to Layla on the new album?**

That's a bit nasty. I'd like to sort that one out. Eric Clapton has been a close friend for years. I'm very happy about it. Because he's great. I'd rather she be with him than some dope.

**On the tour, will you welcome any superstars jamming with you?**

It depends. I hardly know the tunes myself. People who turn up jammed are the ones you don't want to.

**What about the Maharishi?**

I have a lot of respect for him. He gave me help and plugged me in to a method of being able to contact that reservoir of energy which is within us all. Pure consciousness. I experienced it. He showed me how to reach that. Everything else is just words, beyond the intellect is an experience you have to have in order to know.

Beatle incomplete: George Harrison onstage in 1974

MM, 9 November 1974, page 3

# Ex-Beatle limps back

## Vancouver, Canada, Saturday

Three weeks before the opening show, stern declarations announced a limit of four tickets per person. There weren't many takers at ten bucks a head. One week before the concert you could, if you wished, buy up to 20 tickets each. Last Saturday night the scalpers couldn't even get three dollars for spares.

The return of Mystic George, ex-Beatle, the Dark Horse himself, didn't arouse much enthusiasm among the Vancouver populace, most of whom were still reeling from the magnificent, two-hour sell-out performance of Elton John to be bothered by what they considered was nothing more than a refugee from the '60s and his Indian pals.

Still, the show eventually sold out, thanks mainly to the efforts if the local musical "cognoscenti" who twittered constantly that their "impeccable sources" guaranteed the appearance of Dylan, Clapton, Lennon, Ringo, Russell and any one of a thousand stars who were going to play with George on the first night of his seven-week tour.

Inside the 17,500 capacity Pacific Coliseum, shadowy figures were skulking about onstage. Someone declared in a distinctly Liverpudlian monotone, "Sorry we're late," and they were there. A slide guitar ripped the air, three horns blasted, Willie Weeks thumped his bass, Andy Newmark crashed his drums and Billy Preston called out, "Get it on!"

George himself peered out, resembling an excited and nervous schoolboy delighted and agog at some prank he's pulled off against all odds.

It's George Harrison's first tour since 1966 and he intends to enjoy it.

'For You Blue', the first Beatles song of the evening, receives a patter of recognition. "Here's a song you hear in every elevator in the world," and the familiar threads of 'Something' slide from Harrison's hand with fluency.

Ravi Shankar then plays an Indian folk music piece, boring the majority of the restless audience, and when he leaves the stage there's polite applause and an audible sigh of relief.

George is back, only now the energy is drained. They kick into an uninspiring instrumental. Some of the greatest musicians in America he's assembled and the sound is just limp.

"This song is for memory lane, for you, John, and I luv yer." 'In My Life' drifts from the speakers, and the faithful stamp, whistle and cheer, but George's voice is shot.

Things are starting to look bad. The musicians seem unable to recapture the earlier enthusiasm. "Who's glad George is back?" Preston pleads, and they play 'Outta Space', whipping the crowd into its first real excitement of the night and upstaging George.

It may be great for the musicians, but what about the people who paid ten dollars (about four pounds): we are still living in the material world.

The encore is slow in gathering momentum but it finally becomes loud enough to warrant a return. George is grinning again as they play 'My Sweet Lord'. Then Hari, Tom, Ravi and Billy are gone, and as far as Vancouver is concerned, for good. ***Rob Geldof***

## DARK HORSE George Harrison Apple

REVIEWED: MM, 21 December 1974, page 36

George Harrison, the Sacred Cowboy, goes a long way to disprove on this album the old Rudyard Kipling adage about "east is east" etc.

With such funky stalwarts as Willy Weeks and Andy Newmark sharing the credits with Tom Scott's LA Express and old Hari himself filling everything with eastern promise, our boy has established a new category in music – Country and Eastern. And, with a few reservations, I would consider 'Dark Horse' to be a pretty good album.

Harrison himself plays some nifty slide guitar and coaxes a tremendous amount from his normally unimpressive voice. He sings particularly well on the album's title track, and also on 'It Is He (Jai Sri Krishna)' and 'Bye Bye Love'.

The latter will give the gossip columnists a few moments of fun with Harrison's parody of the original lyrics going something like *"There goes our lady/With a 'you know who'/I hope she's happy/And 'old Clapper' too"*. It's all good fun, lad, particularly since Patti and Clapton are both credited as performing on that particular track.

'Dark Horse', second track second side, is easily the strongest on the album with Newmark and Billy Preston playing up a storm. My reservations are that Harrison occasionally is unaware you can have just too much of a good thing. 'Far East Man', which was featured on Ron Wood's solo album and was co-written by him and Harrison, really drags on, as does 'Simply Shady'. And then there's 'Ding Dong, Ding Dong' which is Harrison's new single, and a bit of a bore.

Overall, Harrison displays a relaxed manner – one hesitates to say laid-back – which does a lot to make the wariest of listeners interested.

> This album should do a lot to salvage George's battered reputation

It's a relief more than anything else that this album is good and it should certainly do a tremendous amount to salvage George's battered reputation after his allegedly disastrous tour of the States. I approached 'Dark Horse' with some trepidation, fearing a lot of whining sitar, thudding tablas and groaning, out-of-tune voices.

But there ain't none of that. Yep, the Sacred Cowboy has produced a good one. ***Brian Harrigan***

RETNA

NME, 8 March 1975, page 24

# LENNON vs

## John Lennon tells Lisa Robinson about his legal struggles with the US government, Allen Klein and everyone else he bumps into and why he just wants to 'Rock'N'Roll'

Three years ago, John Ono Lennon, US resident and then-political animal, discovered that, so far as the US government was concerned, he was persona most definitely non grata. Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell is said to have ordered a campaign of harassment backed up with legal proceedings designed to convince Lennon (and any others who cared to be watching) that the Land Of The Free was a land limited to those who approved of Nixon's policies – so far as foreigners went.

The official reason? That Lennon's British drug conviction disbarred him from US residency. The actual reason? That Lennon's political activities made him a pain in the Nixon ass.

George Harrison (also with a British drug conviction), has visited the US freely and even went to dinner at the White House a month ago, but Lennon's deportation order still stands. Last week, Mitchell was sentenced to two-and-a-half years' porridge for criminal activities committed while a member of the Nixon administration. Last year, one of the police officers on whose evidence Lennon was originally convicted was himself sentenced for perjury (in a different drugs case). And we all know what happened to Nixon.

Lennon's conviction still stands.

John and Yoko after their court appearance in October 1968

**"We knew we were being wiretapped. But how do you prove that? There were a lot of guys fixing the phones"**

***NME*: What's the situation at present with your deportation case?**

John Lennon: "Well, it's hellish really, I don't know where to start. It's going on the same as before. They always say 30 days, but that passed months ago. They say that once a year. It's so complicated; it started out because I had a British conviction for possessing marijuana, which was planted by a police sergeant, which everybody in Britain knows now because the guy's in jail – not for my case, though, for somebody else's case.

"I won't even go into the whole story – we were busted by about 20 people, there were dogs… it's a whole film. They busted us in the morning and they wouldn't let us get dressed. There was a question in Parliament as to why so many people were needed to arrest two people. Actually in the end there was no case against Yoko."

**No-one ever advised you to fight the thing?**

"No, I was just panic stricken… I was a wreck. Aaahh! Cops! In jolly England. You know I still half believed about the good old bobby helping you down the street. And I was really nervous about Yoko, 'cause we'd just got living together and it was all in public. I thought they'd deport her. So I copped a plea, thinking it was just a misdemeanour. I figured, 'What the hell, it's just £100… it's just crazy,' and it's been going on since 1971. The first conviction came down in 1973 when they said I had to leave the US. I couldn't be a permanent resident of the United States with a British conviction.

"Now all the people are gone: the prosecution counsel and head of immigration. And we've just received permission to interview them, to question them about papers. I've found out that Senator Strom Thurmond sent a letter to John Mitchell when he was Attorney General; Thurmond was the head of a Congressional Committee. Whether we'll get our hands on that letter I don't know, but it said, 'This guy's looking to stay here and we suggest no.'

"Our lawyers always said that the instructions for my case were coming from Washington, and the New York people kept insisting it was a local case. But we knew it wasn't just a local case and this letter from Thurmond could prove it.

"Just like we knew we were being wiretapped. But how do you prove that? We knew we were being wiretapped on Bank Street. There were a helluva lot of guys coming in to fix the phones… and there were two guys outside who kept following me around in a car. It really was like a mini-Watergate."

**How frustrating is all of this to you?**

"At one time it was getting to be a bug because I had to keep going to court, and court cases got to be a way of life. That was when I was hanging out with Elephant's Memory and I wanted to rock, to go out on the road. But I couldn't do that because I always had to be in New York for something."

**How much of your time is spent on this?**

"It's on my list of lawsuits. There seem to be an awful lot of lawsuits involved with rock'n'roll."

**There's Allen Klein, right?**

"Yes, that's about 20. He's suing me and Yoko and all the ex-Beatles and everybody that ever knew them.

CORBIS/BOB GRUEN-STARFILE

# THE USA

John and Yoko explain their plight on *The Dick Cavett Show*, 1972

One, I'd go on with him – little thinking that it would."

**What did you think of George's live shows?**
"Well, I saw the one without Ravi – he'd had a heart attack. But I don't know… that night the band really cooked, the show I saw was a good show. My personal opinion was that even though I know what George was trying to do, I don't think it worked with Ravi. "

**Is he so deeply involved with the Eastern thing that he can't really do the rock'n'roll thing any more?**
"Well, he's just cut off, really. It's easy to get cut off. If you're surrounded by people who aren't rocking, then you just forget what it is. You know, if you don't listen to the radio, know who the new artists are, the latest records… if you switch off from that you don't know what people listen to.

And he's suing me individually, me collectively, any version of me you can get hold of is being sued. But immigration is the important one. The others are all money. I mean, if they can take Helen Reddy they can take me."

## "Klein is suing all the ex-Beatles and everybody who knew them. He's suing me individually, collectively. Any version of me is being sued"

**To turn to your music for a moment, what happened at Madison Square Garden when you were to have performed with George? Is it true that Klein had the place staked out with subpoenas?**
"Well, Klein was chasing George all over New York. George was running down back elevators. I mean, Ringo won't even come to New York. I live here so I get all the papers and I'm always doing depositions.

"See, at the time George was doing his concerts, we were also finalising the Apple papers. And what actually happened was at the last minute I wouldn't sign it. Actually, my astrologer said it wasn't the right time to sign it. George got a little angry with me for not signing it and he decided to finish the tour as he'd started it. That was cool by me, because I'd just done Elton, but I did not want to do George… because it was expected. But he probably made the right decision… I saw him afterwards, at the party."

**Was it true that you, or the McCartneys, were denied a backstage pass?**
"Well, there was some funny business but you know, I like him, I love him, we're all right… I don't really want to make a big deal about it. The thing is just that the business was always interfering with the pleasure. It was hard to deal with each other anyway.

"I'd seen a lot of Paul and Ringo in the last two or three years – Paul always comes to New York, or I see Ringo in LA – but I hadn't seen George. So we were trying to talk to each other after not having seen each other in three years. During that time we'd only been vaguely communicating through lawyers. We tried to communicate in the hotel and I hung around the hotel for a few days, but it was hard.

"And then I didn't turn up on the day that I was supposed to sign this agreement.

But I finally did sign it, in Disneyland. I wanted to go over it one more time. And I had already seen the concert in Nassau, so I wasn't really planning to go to Madison Square Garden anyway. I don't really enjoy sitting in shows, no matter whose they are, because you either have to go backstage with all that hassle or sit in front where you get all the people looking at you. I know Mick *(Jagger)* and everybody are always doing it, but it wears the shred out of me. Anyway, there aren't very many people who I'd want to see in concert. I'd only go because they're friends, you know. I prefer records, I always did. It's like watching a painter paint – just give me the painting."

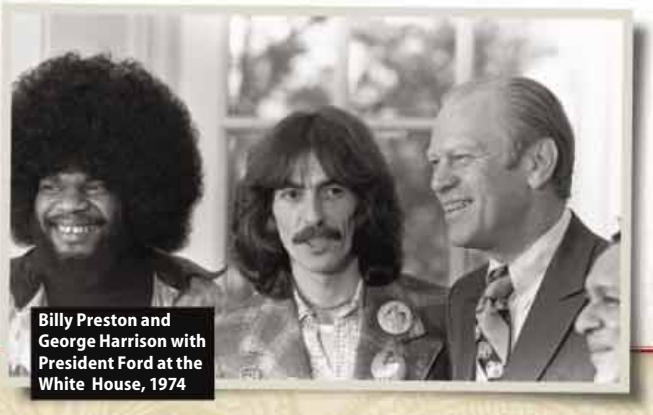
**Do you have any plans to perform in concerts on your own?**
"Well, performing's not my greatest kick. I had fun with Elton, but that was just because it was Elton. He was really more nervous than I was, because he was nervous for me. I think he felt, 'Poor old bugger, maybe he'll collapse.' I don't know. It was just a weird feeling being up there alone, but I knew Elton and I knew the band and it was just a one-off thing. Don't expect to see me all over the place. I promised him if 'Whatever Gets You Thru The Night' got to Number

"That happened to me in England. 'Whatever Gets You Thru The Night' didn't even crawl around in England, so I said, 'Send me a tape of the Top Ten' and it's nowhere like America. I was just, 'My god, three years…' I had no idea of what was going on there. Now I get them to send it over every few months… it all seems to go boom-da-da, boom-da-da, boom-da-da…

"The album did alright, it could have done better. It would help if I was more visible there, but I can't be. And in Britain the TV is sewn up. You've got to be in the charts to get on TV and you can't get on the TV unless you're in the charts. The BBC came over here and filmed me. I guess they figured that the single would jump into the Top 20. But it didn't. It fell over, so they didn't use the film.

"Now '#9 Dream' is doing a bit better, I hear, so that gives you a clue. I think they're going to like the rock'n'roll oldies album better than anything, because that's what they seem to be playing over there. But they're doing it a bit tongue in cheek, I think. I did it for real."

**Why are there so many lawsuits?**
"Ask any rock star about lawsuits and the more money there is, the more lawsuits there are, the bigger the artist, the more lawsuits. I mean, people sue me for anything; that bloody fan with the Instamatic who sued me for hitting her. I never touched her, never went near the girl – in the Troubadour, the famous Troubadour incident. She sued me and I had to pay her off to shut her up. That happens all the time, she just wanted money. People sue you if you bump into them on the street. I do admit to chasing some weird people around, but she was not in the scene…"



Billy Preston and George Harrison with President Ford at the White House, 1974

# ROCK'N'ROLL John Lennon Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 22 March 1975, page 21

"Re-lived by JL" it says on the sleeve – and that's where 'Rock'N'Roll' scores over last year's spate of retrospective enterprises.

Possessing no equivalent of Lennon's crazily alienated youth to obsess them, Bowie, The Band, Ferry et al could only look back in warm nostalgia and attempt, with artistry, to re-create.

By comparison, Lennon is fixated. His focus on his early teen years has the brilliant gleam of genuine obsession.

He re-lives – and that's what prevents 'Rock'N'Roll' from being charged with the archness, the indulgence, the ambiguity, and the decadence that surrounded the attempts of Ferry and Bowie. Lennon isn't into perspectives; 'Rock'N'Roll' is what it claims to be and no more.

And no more? Let's get this thing the right way up: this album is the best sustained effort on John Beatle's part since 'Plastic Ono Band', although the parallel ends abruptly there.

The quickest way to become convinced is to hammer into your local disc vendor and demand to hear Chuck Berry's 'You Can't Catch Me' followed by Larry Williams' 'Bony Moronie'.

Both have gigantic sounds – lots of snare, riffing saxes, chunking 12-bar guitars and echo unlimited – care of Phil Spector (who produced and co-arranged four of the best tracks in late '73 before having his car accident).

'You Can't Catch Me' is an epic, a powerhouse rock-out that'd make a great single with its 'Come Together' references and all; 'Bony Moronie' is tackled at a markedly slow pace which allows the breaks to become yawning gaps in a mountain range of sound – with Lennon left suddenly alone in them, savouring lines like *"Rock'n'roll by the light of the silvery moon"* and *"Making love underneath the apple tree"*.

Lennon simply accentuates the beauties that were always there. Anyone else would have felt obliged to comment.

**This is the best sustained effort on John's part since 'Plastic Ono Band'**

The overall mood concerns Lennon's attitude to his own enthusiasm. (A song in his heart, a smile on his face.)

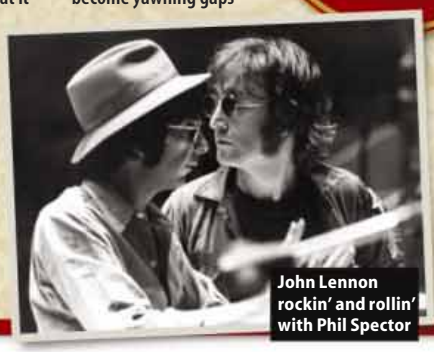
Witness the introduction of Lloyd Price's 'Just Because' with John reminiscing over a swarm of mandolins: *"Ah, remember this? I must've been 13 when this came out. Or was it 14? Or was it 22?"*

I'm utterly disarmed and expect you'll be also.

Personally, I'd have preferred a punchier version of 'Sweet Little Sixteen' and don't really care either way about 'Bring It On Home To Me', 'Be-Bop-A-Lula,' and 'Ya Ya', but 'Rip It Up', 'Ready Teddy', 'Slippin' And Slidin'' and 'Aint That A Shame' are, in the words of the ad man, sheer enjoyment.

One comes away from this album with the hope that these old forms are still viable; their simple strengths are very much what's needed today. If Lou Reed's oldies album hits it off (and he must have a hell of a story to tell), we might witness a complete change of direction in the next year or so.

Meanwhile, we leave Mr Lennon wishing his listeners well from the final grooves of his latest album: *"Everybody here says, 'Hi.' Goodbye"*. ***Ian MacDonald***



John Lennon rockin' and rollin' with Phil Spector

**Weird people?**
"Well, I was not in the best frame of mind and I was wildly drunk. But I was nowhere near this chick, she's got no photographs of me near her. It was my first night on Brandy Alexanders and they tasted like milkshakes. The first thing I knew I was out of me gourd."

**Doesn't all this wear you down?**
"Well, I've come out of it. Last year, with my personal life and the Apple business, the Klein business and the immigration business… I mean you don't want to admit it while it's happening that that's what's making you go barmy.

"You're still living every day and you think you're just going to a party, then you end up throwing up in the toilet. Everything was excessive and you're not quite in control; you can't lie back with the hangover and say, 'Now, why did that happen to me?'"

**You seem ecstatic to be back here with Yoko.**
"Well, I am. This is no disrespect to anybody else I was having relationships with, but I feel like I was running around with me head off and now I got me head back on. Yoko and I were always in touch… It's like I went out to get a coffee or a newspaper somewhere and it took a year… like Sinbad I went around the world and had a mad trip which I'm glad is over.

"Yoko and I have known each other for nine years, which is a long friendship on any level. It was a long year, but it's been a nine-year relationship, a seven-year marriage – maybe it was the seven-year itch. And apart from the pain we caused each other, it probably helped us. We knew we were getting back together, it was just a matter of when. We knew everybody else might not have, but we did."

**Actually, there wasn't that much press attention to the separation as one might have expected.**
"Well, I read more about myself than you probably do, and I'll tell you there was. I mean, they would catalogue everyone you went around with, things like 'Lennon in Florida Trip'. Things like Rona Barrett… I think she wrote that Yoko was living with my ex-wife in a 'strange relationship'. She was putting that around… that was dead wrong, because Yoko was definitely not living with my ex-wife in a 'very feminist relationship'. I see them all and you can bet your life somebody's going to send you the clippings."

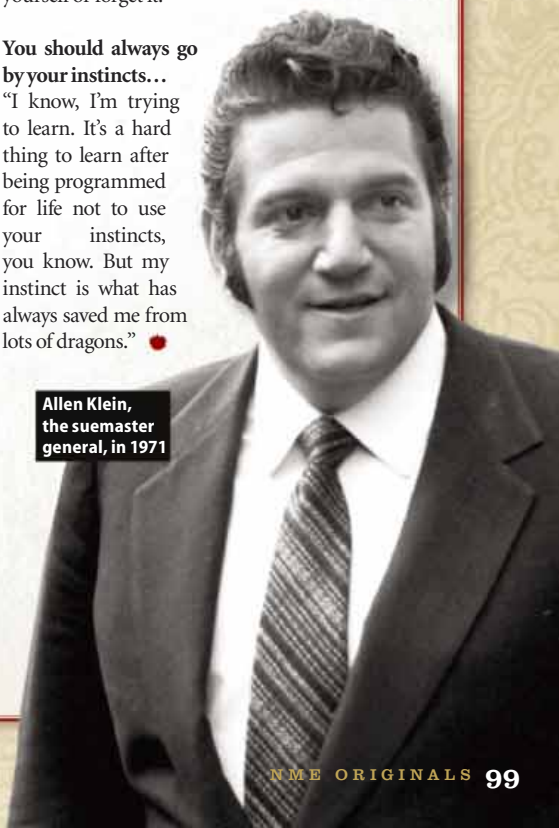
**Yeah, your friends…**
"Yes, all your best friends let you know what's going on. I was trying to put it round that I was gay. I thought that would throw them off… dancing at gay clubs, flirting with boys… but it never got off the ground."

**I think I've only heard that lately about Paul.**
"Oh, I've had him, he's no good *(laughs)*."

**Did you go to Allen Klein because of the Stones?**
"Well, I reckoned Klein was alright because of the Stones. I thought Mick was together. Everyone always thinks everyone else is together. You're together yourself or forget it."

**You should always go by your instincts…**
"I know, I'm trying to learn. It's a hard thing to learn after being programmed for life not to use your instincts, you know. But my instinct is what has always saved me from lots of dragons."

**"The famous Troubadour incident. It was my first night on Brandy Alexanders and they tasted like milkshakes. I was out of me gourd"**



Allen Klein, the suemaster general, in 1971

STASRFILE/GETTYIMAGES

MM, 6 September 1975, page 28

# Dark Horse

## George Harrison breaks his silence to talk to Ray Coleman about past mistakes and future plans

George Harrison went to see the celebrated play *John, Paul, George, Ringo… & Bert* in London last week. He left at the interval. He could not stand the pain of seeing himself and The Beatles years being re-enacted so uncannily, and he questioned the fundamental need for the show.

The first ex-Beatle to view the play, he had been persuaded by close friend Derek Taylor. "George found it hard work to watch, and I found it hard work sitting with him," Taylor said. "It was a genuine form of suffering for him." It was hardly surprising that George didn't enjoy it – after all, he was hardly in love with The Beatles story while it was happening.

George was never an enthusiastic Beatle. He rated himself as a musician first and pop star last. He disliked the screaming of fans and resented their intrusion into his privacy (he was the first to get electrically-operated gates to keep them out); he was always more concerned with stepping ahead in style and quality on the next album than he was with reaching Number One with a new single.

Through his openly expressed disenchantment with autograph signing and all that was entailed by being a quarter of the biggest attraction in the world, he was regularly rumoured to be on the verge of quitting The Beatles. Partly because of these rumours, partly because of the natural tensions of such a massive act, but mainly because he trusts few people anyway, George became a recluse when The Beatles dissolved into separate compartments. John, Paul and Ringo made their exorcising speeches, but George went into hibernation. His only contact with the world outside his Henley-on-Thames mansion was among musicians.

He's been a mightily long time coming out of the shell, but now at last George is ready to become more outward. Today, about five years on, and George is stepping out again. A new album, a nervous readiness to plan a tour, a general interest in things wider than his traditional favourite of Indian music and culture. Above all, a willingness to contemplate the past with The Beatles and since, and to place it in context, George Harrison is back, intact.

This summer afternoon, he's sitting in the Chelsea room of his record company HQ, Dark Horse, mild mannered and drinking one glass of beer.

"How's he looking now?" people have asked me since the interview, as if I'd been to view something they'd ceased to believe existed. They're either expecting him to have faded away – in itself a commentary on his seclusion from any media during the past few years – or to have become so obsessed abut things Indian that Westerners no longer have any point of contact. Well, George Harrison, mid '75 version, is slimmer than I've ever seen him, but then I've never seen a stout vegetarian. ("I won't allow meat in my house," he says). His complexion is sallow, he wears small earrings à la early Keith Richards. He appears laconic, relaxed, and even poses for pictures – something I have never seen him do in 12 years of Beatling.

**Finally there's a willingness to contemplate the past with The Beatles and place it in context**

He'd not long returned from LA where he'd seen Bob Marley & The Wailers three times at the Roxy – "best thing I've seen in ten years. Marley reminds me so much of Dylan in the early days, playing guitar as if he's new to it. And his rhythm, you know, it's so simple, yet so beautiful. I could watch The Wailers all night." In Los Angeles, George had also seen the Stones and Carlos Santana and been to shows with Ringo; earlier this year he'd seen plenty of John in the same city; he had also attended Paul McCartney's star-packed party aboard the Queen Mary – so relations between the four of them were fine, he avowed.

"After all, we went through it together and we were all very young when The Beatles happened, but we've still got plenty in common even though we're different people – naturally, we're ten years older!"

**THE NEW ALBUM**, 'Extra Texture' is out next week. "One incidental and perhaps sentimental point for us is that it looks like it could be the last Apple record for ever, unless somebody else forms a company called Apple," he said. "Paul's already done a deal for his future which puts him on Capitol for the world, good luck Paul; it doesn't look like Ringo or John will be doing another album this year. So I look like being the last one on Apple. Funny, the first Apple record was the music from *Wonderwall*, which I wrote – quite a coincidence."

Regrets, he'd had a few: "Yeah, I feel a bit of sentiment about it because Apple did a few good things. We were always bugged by business, though, and business as opposed to the artistic side is always a problem for everyone.

"Me, I was never really interested in Apple shops or anything else. During the whole Apple period, I was always mainly interested in working in the studio, recording. John, Paul and Ringo would have some great ideas but at that time. I couldn't be bothered to follow through. I suppose my attitude didn't help.

"The business became an incredible headache. Everything that could go wrong for us with Apple went wrong. And yet it was a great boon for some people – the Badfingers and the Billy Prestons of the world. It went crazy in the end, Apple, but it did give some good people an outlet. That's why I'm here now with Dark Horse Records – Apple didn't shake my faith that much. Good musicians are worth encouraging."

ROBERT ELLIS-REP FOTO

George, for all his denials of interest, has a fairly shrewd business brain and was by far the most money-conscious Beatle, often quizzing Brian Epstein about where the cash was going. Will Dark Horse, then, learn from Apple's disaster areas and become a thriving, longlife company?

"Oh yeah, definitely. There's still areas of business I can't be bothered with, and there's no way I could get bothered with some aspects of running the company without losing sight of what I was supposed to be – a musician. All four Beatles were diverted from being musicians through all the business problems of Apple, but now what all four of us are doing independently has gained from those experiences.

"We all make mistakes. Apple was a very big one, perhaps, but that's what life is all about. You learn from your experience."

So what's the fundamental aim of Dark Horse – to champion new talent as well as to make money?

"Yes", he said quickly. "That's what all record companies are about. New talent is the strength of any label." But he was quick to add that John and Paul's New York press conference in 1967, launching Apple and saying the door was open for all new worthwhile talent had catastrophic results. He wanted to stress that while Dark Horse was looking for talent, its attitude wasn't so philanthropic as Apple had been.

"Remember, the basic thought behind Apple in those days was that we resented marvelous musicians or singers having to go to the very big, established record companies and go down on their knees. That's what we, The Beatles, had had to do with EMI, and so we said the first thing we'd do when we got a bit of money would be to try to beat this part of the system at least. So many really good musicians had told us they couldn't get a break, make any records, and it got us furious. But our 'open door' policy proved impossible to run. We were flooded with every person imaginable who could play an instrument or sing a note! We had to clamp down on that because Apple just became a lunatic asylum."

Harrison is unlikely to veer towards today's fashions in music when seeking to add names to his roster. Unlike his contemporaries who felt they had to "make the scene" with statements about the state of pop in the embryonic '60s, George was merely a staunch Tamla Motown supporter who later went Indian and that was just about that. "I'm still basically in favour of the things I liked in the old days – Smokey Robinson, Stevie Wonder, those sort of things. No, I've never been interested in Black Sabbath. Heavy metal? Is that what they call it? Oh no.

"In some ways I feel I'm out of touch, particularly in England. In America, there's still more chance of picking up on something fresh, interesting. Maybe because it's a much bigger industry, there's not so much tendency for them to get into little cliques. England does tend to get very cliquey, as far as I can see… to tell you the truth I've never heard the Bay City Rollers."

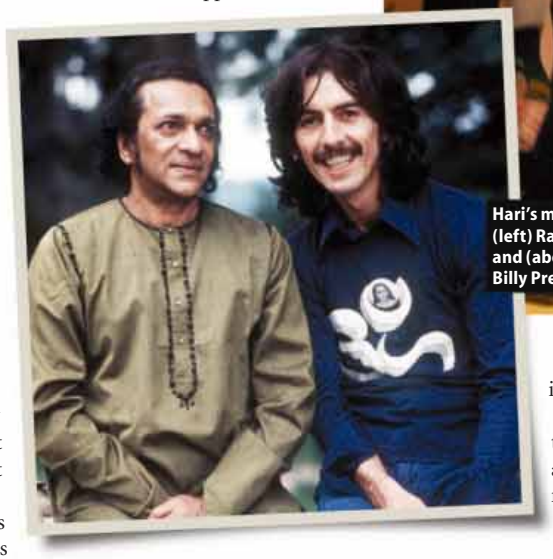
Do you ever play Beatles albums?

"I haven't played one for years.

How do you remember them, when you look back?

"Beatles? Oh, I think The Beatles were, or are *(long pause)* very good. One of the points everybody would remember about The Beatles, is that we did work hard and we made a point of trying to broaden our own experiences on our own, to overcome as many limitations as we could. And there were quite a few restrictions in those days, like four-track recording. And we used to play in those huge places with 30-watt amplifiers! I think The Beatles generally were very, very good on reflection. The music was good and we kept improving. But then, you know, those days were different. Musicians today have so much more to listen to, they're bound to end up sounding different because they're exposed to so much. Not so much innocence around now, perhaps, for a group trying to come through and make its mark."

Individually, though, how do John and Paul and George and Ringo stand up to comparison with The Beatles? His answer was slow and deliberate: "I suppose to look at each one of us individually now, even if we're rated as big solo artists, each one of us may not be as heavy as The Beatles were collectively – but at the same time no less heavy than any heavies who are around. We probably didn't even realise ourselves how heavy we were. I mean, it's only now when you sit and watch documentaries about The Beatles that you realise how big it all was. At the time, we were going through it and we were cut off from so much."



Hari's mates: (left) Ravi Shankar and (above) Billy Preston

**"We all make mistakes and Apple was a big one. That's what life's all about. You learn from experience"**

But he stressed that he liked what The Beatles stood for, even if at the time he had reservations about the life they led, being buffeted from hotel room to concert hall to aeroplane. "The Beatles did put out good, innovative stuff all the way. We knew our next album would sell a lot just because it said Beatles on the front, but it didn't stop us trying. The albums went up in levels of improvement. Musically, even though I haven't much desire to re-live it, it stands up well."

Did he feel competitive towards the other three in that each was trying to prove a solo point?

"No, I don't think so. I'm always pleased when the other three do something good. We were always a little bit attached to each other. We all naturally watch what the others are up to – not very easy, you know, now John's got himself locked in the States."

Did the label "ex-Beatle" hanging round his neck for the rest of his life worry him, as he was the least enthusiastic Beatle and had always sought stature apart from that fame?

"I didn't like it, no. That was the point when we all split up, when we grew older and realised the restrictions from every point of view – as people and as musicians. The only thing I have against being an ex-anything is that it doesn't give much thought to the present. That's all. I mean, I'd rather be an ex-Beatle than an ex-Nazi! But more than anything, I'd rather just be here now. Not so much of the ex."

**IT CAME AS** some surprise, then, when George last year went on the road in America. His tour brought him very mixed receptions and it was as different from Beatlemania as he could have wanted. Not every show was a sell-out; he lost his voice; George being George concentrated on songs from his new album rather than the Beatles songs the crowds demanded; there were reports of sloppy stagecraft – and the buck stopped firmly with Harrison.

"In the old days when I used to tour with The Beatles, I never used to sing that much. The whole show we did went for 30 minutes – and if we were pushed we could get that down to 18 minutes by going fast, so not one of us sang solidly at all. No chance of voices cracking up on a Beatles tour.

"But, you know, on this tour I did two shows a night for three hours a time, doing lead vocals for most of the time apart from Billy Preston's few tunes and the Tom Scott tunes and the Indian section. Then all the talking. I'll know better next time to be fit."

With the new label Dark Horse named after his song, one wonders whether George is making an autobiographical statement: *"I'm a dark horse/Running on a dark race course"*.

"Yeah, well, the song came to me just early one morning when I was sitting by the fire in Henley. I just thought of dark horse in relation to Liverpool which was running through my mind at that moment. When I was a kid there, I always remember them saying: 'You'll never believe that Mrs Jones, she's running around with Mr Badger, you know she's a dark horse.'

"Next day, I woke up and wrote all the lyrics having breakfast at tea-time which is always a good situation for writing a song, I find. Went straight from writing it to the studio and recorded it straight away. The best line in the song, which is the most important, is 'running on a dark race course'.

"So, while the first line is very English, and might be taken as an admission to something, the second line means the whole situation is pretty shady.

"Then when I started to reassemble my business life, a business manager of mine asked me for a name for my publishing company and I said, 'I can't think of anything, you do it,' and he said, 'How about one of your songs?' So I said, 'OK, Dark Horse.' So then I got carried along with the whole thing, started looking everywhere for horses for the logo. I found the logo on a tin of paint in India. Problem: it was going the wrong way and it was white, but basically the horse itself was good. Brought the tin back, cleaned it up, got an artist to re-design it so it would run around the record this way. I made it dark." His belt buckle bears the Dark Horse insignia.

**IT WAS GEORGE** who fed the other three Beatles the propaganda about the famous Maharishi and transcendental meditation, a phase most trendy rock musicians went through in 1967. Yes, Harrison still meditated occasionally: "In retrospect, that was probably one of the greatest experiences I've ever had. There was a programme on TV the other night about meditation, and it's funny for me, having meditated a lot and now seeing the meditators trying to prove scientifically that meditation is a value. They get involved in doing all these experiments and testing people, but I can tell you and them all, that that's a waste of time because it's only through experiencing it can you realise what it does and it is such value.

"On the other hand, Maharishi was always put down for propagating what was basically a spiritual thing but there's so much being propagated that's damaging to life that I'm glad there are good people around like him."

George said he prayed, but didn't consider himself heavily religious. "Maybe compared to the average pop star, but compared to what I should be, I'm a heathen."

Then again, he's not an average pop star. "I just want to keep improving as a musician, run a good little record label and Bob's yer uncle. Beatles were an important point in all our lives, but it was yesterday…"

# EXTRA TEXTURE
## George Harrison Apple

REVIEWED: NME, 20 September 1975, page 23

Can you imagine George Harrison making a worse album than 'Dark Horse'? Well, he hasn't.

Though 'Extra Texture' isn't the Harrison revival that many might have hopes for, it's still several leagues superior to Hari's more recent efforts; and just as 'All Things Must Pass' would have made a great single album, so 'Extra Texture' would make a more than commendable single side.

It's also my not unpleasant duty to inform you that on 'Extra Texture' there's not a single overt reference to Krishna, The Lord, Our Divine Purpose, or what a drag it is hanging about on this lump of rock whizzing round the sun living in the rotten ol' material world even if you have got a bloody great mansion down in Surrey.

> There's not a single overt reference to Hare Krishna or The Lord

I haven't yet seen the album's sleeve, but on all the ads Hari's got quite a chirpy smirk plastered across his dial, which is a bit misleading since all but a brace of the nine tracks on 'Extra Texture' are the customary mournful and doom-laden Harrison we've come to know and fear, only this time the rigours of love take precedence over matters spiritual.

George's songs have never been that lyrically potent, and he's usually fallen prey to the self-conscious worthiness of the "message song".

And he's hitherto relied on "musicianship" (no bad thing but it isn't always enough) to get him through, and on 'Extra Texture' has has assembled the usual West Coast session posse of Jim Horn, Jim Keltner, Jesse Ed Davis, Carl Radle, Klaus Voormann etc to help out.

None of which, unfortunately manages to inject much life into the likes of 'The Answer's At The End'. Nor does it make 'Extra Texture' add up to more than the sum of its parts – which, as all good rock fans know, is what really sorts out the great albums from the OK ones.

The opening cut (and single) 'You' seems at least to proclaim a return to energy.

It has the kind of semi-Spector production that was spread all over 'All Things Must Pass'. It bounds along OK, Harrison's double-tracked vocals gasp convincingly, and it deserves to be the hit that it will be.

But after this, hopes of Hari's revival are comprehensively dashed by five-and-a-half minutes of the inordinately dreary 'The Answer's At The End', which is one of Hari's Homespun Homilies full crusty chunks of potted wisdom like *"Life is one long mystery, my friend"* that have been passing as song lyrics since 1967 persuaded people that songs should have a "message".

'This Guitar Can't Keep From Crying' is, naturally enough, a continuation of 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' off the 'White Album', of which it is not unreminiscent despite a slower pace.

'Ooh Baby (You Know That I Love You' is dedicated to Smokey Robinson, and the vocals try unsuccessfully to capture some kind of intimacy of soft soul. All form, no content, and you can't whistle it.

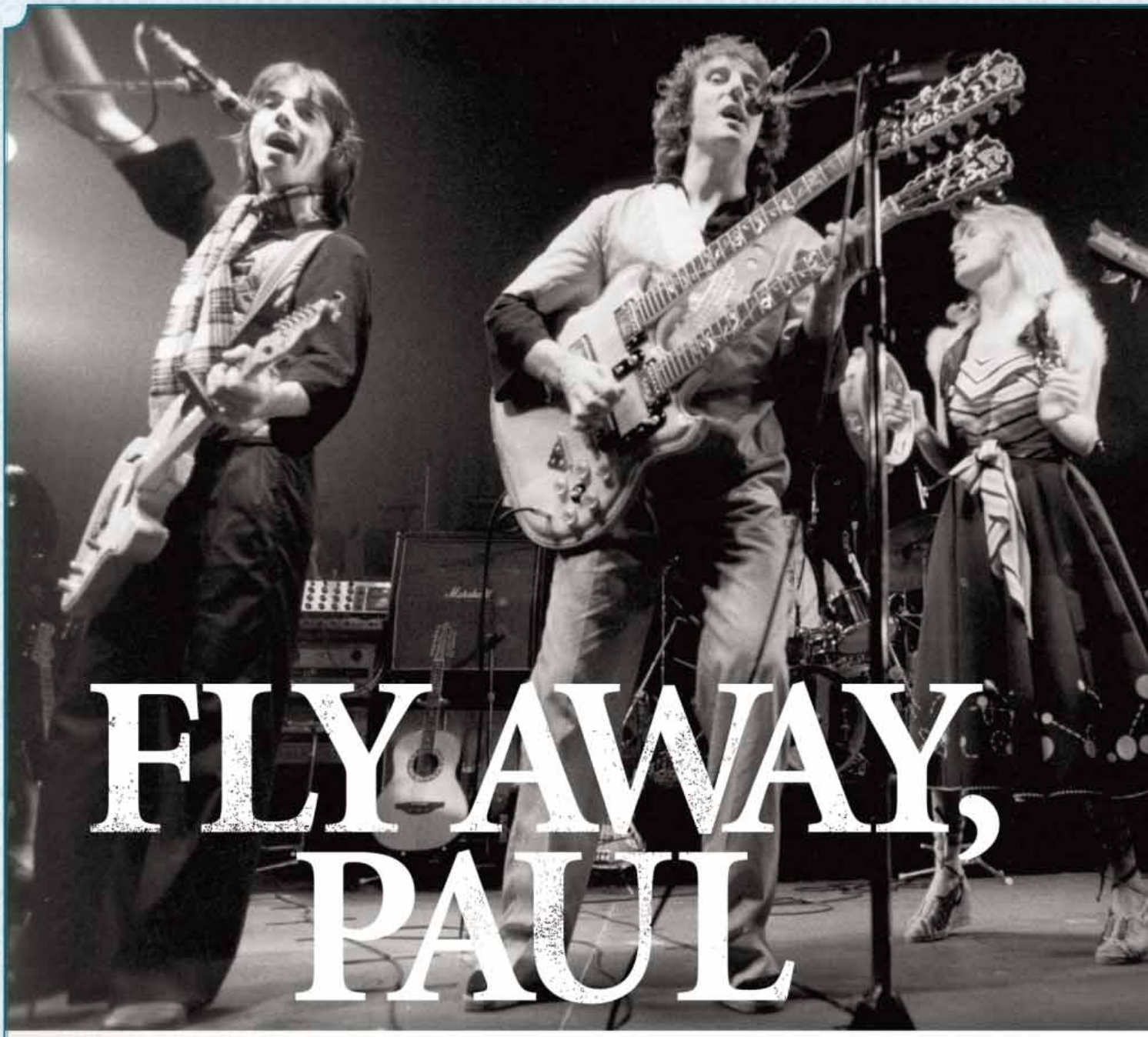
On side two things, thankfully, improve. 'Tired Of Midnight Blue' makes more constructive use of Hari finding his heart in his boots. There's a tune, some moderately tricksy chord changes and a refreshing simplicity in sight. The relative sparcity gives Leon Russell the chance to play some charming tumbledown piano, George meshes some crisp rhythm guitar against his own lead; and it works.

'His Names Is Legs (Ladies and Gentlemen)' is the odd track out because it's (ulp) not serious. It seems like an attempt to recapture some of the innocent light-heartedness of Beatle days.

Verdict: I've played it, I don't mind it, I won't buy it – but then I don't have to, Hari fans can anticipate purchase with glee. Others approach with cautious optimism. ***Neil Spencer***

George shows off his all new "lighthearted" face, 1975

ROBERT ELLIS-REP FOTO/CAMERA PRESS/STARFILE



# FLY AWAY, PAUL

## As Wings take to the road on one of the hottest tours of the year, Chris Welch – the journalist among the entourage – reports from behind the scenes of a band on the run

MM, 20 September 1975, page 8

Manchester appeared through the coach window – bits of flyover marching through a jumble of crumbling old buildings, half-completed landscaping, a huge abandoned railway terminus, boarded up shops, and rain swept concrete blocks, once a 1950s dream of the future – now an aimless, broken mess. "God, the property developers have been at work," I observed.

"And what are you going to do about it?" demanded Paul McCartney, squarely. I thought for a second. "I'll write a few scathing attacks."

"And I'll write a protest song," smiled Paul, as the coach drew up outside an elderly hotel that maintained past splendours in defiance of the surrounding shambles. The band on the run had come to rest in another town, for another concert. And the stars would be right for another night – Venus and Mars – Linda and Paul, working their way around Britain on a tour unique in recent rock history.

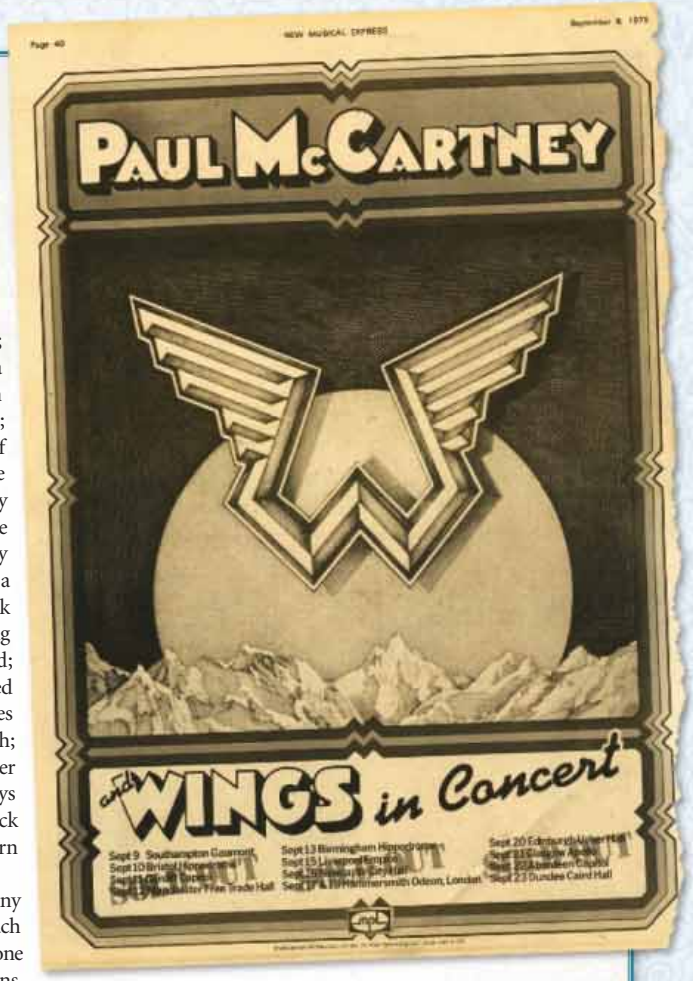
"Why are you doing it?" demanded a puzzled press, as Wings dropped in on town after town. The answer was plain to see, in the ecstatic reaction the band received from audiences who cared not one jot that Paul had a previous existence. Only the press seemed to have difficulty in acknowledging the fact that Wings have their fans, just as The Beatles had theirs.

At press conferences and TV recording sessions the same old questions were asked, understandably, as they are geared for mass consumption, but as Linda said after one session: "They'll be asking if The Beatles will reform when we're old and grey."

Of all the aspects to emerge during a three-day stay with Wings on the road, my greatest impression was of McCartney's sheer musicianship and instinctive professionalism. Despite his repeated protestations that both he and Linda were "very ordinary people", McCartney's all-round ability puts him into a special category reserved for very few.

Watching a succession of shows by one group is sometimes a chore, but in this case it's a privilege. A Wings concert is everything that a true pop concert should be. And yet, when Paul read his daily reviews in the national press, he found himself receiving such

MICHAEL PUTLAND-RETNA




glib dismissals as : "McCartney is a throwback" and "Paul should go solo".

"What do they mean?" he demanded, his face contorted by a mixture of pain, bewilderment and resignation. "Don't they think I'm the centre of the show already? But I think I can see what this guy means when he says I'm a throwback. I suppose I am from another age…" He tried to look convinced. It is not difficult to understand why, when Paul refers to the press he makes a screwing motion, as if operating some medieval instrument of torture.

By the time I caught up with the tour in Bristol on Wednesday last week, the band had already played its opening date in Southampton the previous night, and had been greatly pleased by the response. Each night saw progressive improvement, while the party surrounding Paul and Linda grew by the hour, as they commuted between hotels and concert halls.

The basic Wings line-up includes Linda on keyboards, Denny Laine on guitars and Joe English on drums. They are augmented by a four-piece brass section: Tony Dorsey on trombone, Thadeus Richard (sax/clarinet), Howie Case (sax), and Steve Howard Jr (trumpet), all from the States, with the exception of Howie, an old Liverpool friend from the Hamburg Star Club days.

Add to this entourage erratic, likeable publicist Tony Brainsby; Wings' manager Brian Brolly, a sophisticated urbane gentleman of slow and thoughtful speech; an ever changing polyglot of EMI representatives; Rose, the McCartney children's nanny (honoured on the 'Red Rose Speedway' album); the McCartney children, the band's children, a young tutor to keep up their book learning; a gentle, immensely strong looking West Country bodyguard; chauffeurs in peaked caps charged with care of the two Rolls-Royces that accompanied the coach; representatives of tour promoter Mel Bush and of course the boys from Showco, the American rock tour experts, and you have a modern equivalent of a touring circus.

Quite a team, that spent many minutes of each day phoning each other, waiting to assemble. It was one of those 'hurry up and wait' situations, where "five minutes" means an hour. Added to this pool of people waiting to see who would move first and where, were the folk who drifted on and off the tour, TV crews and interviewers, more reporters and photographers, including *MM*'s own Bob Ellis, who is also official Wings' photographer, and Kate Simon, a charming American who was crushed, bruised and lost her film to the fans, while attempting to take pictures at Cardiff.

The Post House Hotel, 11 miles from Bristol was made base-camp for two days and was booked to capacity. As a result I had to stay in a nearby hotel which locked me out the first night, as I stayed up to 2am watching Woody Allen's *Play It Again, Sam* at the nightly Wings film show.

**BRISTOL HIPPODROME, WEDNESDAY, 8PM.**

Fans are jammed in the tightly-packed seats of the grand circle and stalls as the show starts promptly. It runs for two hours, without supports or any other deviation from Wings' appointed course.

**A great amount of rehearsal has gone into this. As a result, Wings sound like an orchestra**

Like the feeling generated within the band there is a strong family atmosphere, a sense of reunion, that affects the youngest Wings fans who know best the music of 'Band On The Run' and 'Venus And Mars' and can sing along softly to the words of every ballad; and the mix of young marrieds and adults come to hear their favourite songwriter of the decade.

The band lined-up with the brass section, somewhat distant at the right of the stage, raised-up but discreetly at the back, with Linda's array of keyboards parked sideways, at the right. Jimmy and Denny spread out in front of Joe English's diminutive drum kit, while Paul essays between the grand piano virtually hidden behind Linda, and a place at the microphone in line with the boys. A clever layout – nobody disappears to dominate anyone else.

The measured, plaintive tones of the 'Venus And Mars' theme introduce our hosts and then it's into 'Rock Show' and 'Jet', stalwart rousing statements, custom-built for a touring band, which seem to epitomise the rock ethos. Like Elton John, Paul has a sense of history.

As the gig picks up momentum it becomes increasingly apparent that all past hints of amateurism and stories of incompetence have ever been expunged. A great amount of rehearsal had gone into ensuring that arrangements are delivered with accuracy, that solos slot into each appropriate moments, and above all to ensure that the confidence of each performer is unimpaired. As a result, Wings frequently sound like an orchestra.

It's a strange band in many respects. Denny Laine, the Midlander who has experienced success and disappointment in his long career with The Moody Blues, his own String Band and later Ginger Baker's Airforce, is flanked by the diminutive figure of Jimmy McCulloch, a chirpy, sometimes aggressive Glaswegian, who has been a respected lead player since he was a mere lad, working in such bizarre settings as Thunderclap Newman's band, or with John Mayall and, most recently, Stone The Crows.

Both are prone to outbursts of wild behaviour offstage and display symptoms of inner frustration that can grip many a professional musician. Joe English however, has the business-like approach of the American engaged in advancing his career, his drumming funky and direct, its roots in the South. Whatever their differences in age, personality and background, somehow the group works, displaying a discipline that would be hard to find in many a band that has grown up together.

"See if you remember this one," says Paul, and 'Lady Madonna' has the audience clapping to the barrel-house beat. The band swap around instruments a lot. Denny plays bass, or double-neck guitar as the occasion demands and Jimmy helps on bass too.

Meanwhile we're into the measured grandeur of 'The Long And Winding Road', with its emotive brass arrangement from Tony Dorsey, emphasised by Joe's sonorous tom-tom accents. A tremendous outburst of cheering greets his performance, but there is a pause onstage as Wings sort out who is going to announce the next tune, the only hint of disorganisation.

There is barely any stage gimmickry throughout the concert. No dry ice, laser beams or pantomime horses, just an occasional slide projection. And yet it holds the attention and provides more continuous enjoyment than any concert I can recall this year. Barely any of the songs extend beyond four minutes and there is none of the mind-wandering boredom that can be induced by bands who say virtually nothing in 30 whole minutes of blathering.

"All right – a bit of rock'n'roll!" yells Denny as at length the band return and launch into 'Hi Hi Hi' and eventually double the tempo to a shattering finale. The group return after more thunder to take a bow, but there are no more encores. Wings have literally exhausted themselves and have no arrangements left to play.

Paul works on the new Wings logo while on tour

A babble of voices beak out as the crowds struggle to quit the building. You can judge a show's appeal by the terse comments passed in the gents' loo. "Didjer enjoy it?" "Yeah – really good." Oddly enough, no one suggested "the throwback" should "go solo".

**THURSDAY: POST HOUSE HOTEL, OUTSIDE BRISTOL.** Despite claims by some of the band to be hardcore ravers, there were no overnight excesses, such as might be endured on a tour with Zeppelin or The Who. Thus, Wings nose relatively early the morning after the Bristol triumph. The film shows seemed to provide a good substitute for aimless boozing and the talk was of treats to come, like *Blazing Saddles*, and *French Connection II*. Rumours of *Deep Throat* proved unfounded.

Even so, Wings were somewhat bleary-eyed when it was time to face the cameras for two lunchtime interviews set up in the hotel for BBC TV and Harlech TV. There was some delay while the band were being aroused and assembled and the crews jested, somewhat nervously, that it was: "Like waiting for an audience with the Pope – or General Amin."

Eventually PR Tony Brainsby arrived, beaming through his glasses and singing: *"We won't be long!"* to an old Beatles tune. "Right – yer on," he added. "No screaming." Paul and Linda led the way, Linda muttering an aside to the *MM*: "Am I ready for this?" The rest of the band followed, including Denny Laine's baby, known to all as "Lainey", who seems to have struck up an interesting line in dialogue with Paul, consisting entirely of them blowing raspberries at each other.

"OK, quiet please," said the master TV technician above a burst of raspberries. The interviewers have assured they will discuss Wings and incorporate all of the Wings personnel. In the event the camera stays mainly on Paul who is asked why, as one of the most famous men in the world, and a rich ex-Beatle he carries on touring. Just what kept him going? "Drugs," replied Paul earnestly. "I must have them. No… I just like music."

Had he seen The Beatles lately? "We run into each other and stuff – we're just good friends." Was Wings really a logical development from the Beatles? "Well, I've always written songs, but with The Beatles we only ever rehearsed for three days – at the most. With this band we rehearse a lot."

Was he looking forward to playing in Cardiff? "Of course," begins Paul, but there is a rumble from Denny Laine, who says to nobody in particular: "When are they going to start speaking English there?" End of first interview.

Second interview. Why did Paul decide to go back on the road? "Well, either we sit at home and do it, or we play in front of people. Now it's a pleasure to do it and we want to keep on working." Would Wings ever become as big as The Beatles? "I think it could be, funnily enough. The whole thing is bigger now. We're having a great time – we like to play music and people like to come and hear it."

How different was Wings from The Beatles? "They scream at our concerts, but they don't scream as much. People used to come and scream and didn't hear any of the music. Now they can." Did Paul want to bring back The Beatles?

"It wasn't within my power to bring back The Beatles. It was a four-way split and we all wanted to do different things. We're all very good friends. John is keeping very quiet at the moment while, fortunately, I'm out working… I like it."

**"I think Wings could become as big as The Beatles, funnily enough. The whole thing is bigger now. We're having a great time"**

Paul tries to find new words to fit an old theme. What can you achieve now? "I don't know – that's a bit heavy that question. What do you want to do? I want to make really great records. Maybe your ambition is to do a really great interview and, when you do, well, you won't want to give up, will you? You don't ever give up. Everyone goes on."

It was time to make a move and as the TV men packed up, Paul and Linda dived into a black Rolls-Royce, heading for Cardiff and the afternoon soundcheck. As we drove along the motorway, the TV crew zoomed alongside, filming through the window.

They weren't angry, but the McCartneys seemed genuinely perplexed at the interest in things past when they had Wings fresh and new, waiting to be discussed. "I think they'll go on asking those questions for ever," sighed Linda. "The guy asked me what was there left to achieve, as if I'd done it all," said Paul. He kept repeating to himself, "What is there left to achieve?"

It seemed to me that Wings had achieved a lot as a band that made its first tentative appearance on a secret tour of colleges a few years back. They seemed remarkably rehearsed and professional. "That's the difference," said Paul. "As I said, in the old days we might rehearse for three days. But we've spent months rehearsing with Wings."

Said Linda: "If you're going out into the world, it's got to be good."

ARTIST: Wings
SINGLE: Listen To What The Man Said
LABEL: EMI
RELEASED: May 1975

**Ooh that Paulie (swoon swoon) he's a sly one. You play this single and in no time at all you're wondering how someone so talented can produce something so inept and you're thinking it's safe to dismiss this as a loser. And then, involuntarily, the foot begins to tap, the head starts to nod and, by four or five spins, you're hooked. The same creeping, tuneful process as used on 'Band On The Run' in fact and, although the song itself is a little more than just OK, it's given such a glossy and exactingly professional polish that it can't fail. Paul sings in his creamy 'Yesterday' voice and there's a delightful arrangement that brings a distinctive clavinet to the fore. You can bop to it, you can sing along with it, or you can just listen to it and it's equally successful on all levels. Hit.**

***Colin Irwin*** MM, 24 May 1975, page 16

Paul always had a sit-down acoustic section up his rather sizeable sleeve

"It's better than I thought it would be," said Paul: "We had worried that it'll be over-rehearsed. We haven't played to anybody for years and we were a bit nervous. I didn't mind the silences during the songs at all and nobody seemed to mind the tuning-up when Jimmy broke a string last night. We saw Dave Mason's concert in London, and he tuned up between every number and I used to think that was death.

"We rehearsed the band down in Rye in Sussex in an old cinema last summer, learning all the numbers. We could have rehearsed the chat between numbers too, but we thought that might make it seem to formal. Originally we weren't going to allow that – chatting ad-lib. But audiences don't seem to mind and, in any case, they seem to be Wings fans, calling out requests for old Wings B-sides.

"After The Beatles – well, I didn't think anyone could be a Wings fan. The TV man kept asking me why I kept going and I wish I'd told him about Wings fans. That's what's left for me to do! I can see their point when they say, 'You're a family man now,' but Charlie Chaplin didn't stop after making one film.

"They say 'Sgt Pepper' was the best period for me and it was the best music at the time, but some of the stuff that happens now is better than The Beatles."

Said Linda: "You could go on talking about The Beatles forever and all of them get so bored with it."

"Why can't they let us get on with something new?" demanded Paul.

"They're still talking about… 'George is the religious one,' and 'John is the nasty one,' and 'Ringo is making movies,'" Linda laughed. "They don't seem interested in the fact that this is a working band. The people are up-to-date. It's the press who don't know what's going on."

**"I'd never been onstage on my own, I was nervous. Then I remembered I'd sung on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in front of 40million"**

"Do you still see John?" said Paul rhetorically peering out of the window at the TV crew still coasting alongside at 50mph. "I always feel a bit weedy when I answer those kind of questions, as I should have done more. Maybe I should have gone to see John more often. Maybe I should send him a telegram."

"Maybe, if we do so many interviews, the press will get bored with us," suggested Linda brightly. "I can't think of anything that the word 'press' means that is nice," said Paul with unexpected bitterness. But he cheered somewhat as the conversation turned to the choice of music for Wings concerts.

"Well, we wanted to choose stuff from 'Band On The Run' and 'Venus And Mars,' and we thought people would like to hear 'The Long And Winding Road.' The records are the arrangements. We could either play the songs like the records or stretch them out. We thought people would like to hear them just like the records. Tony Dorsey has done the brass arrangements and he used to work with Joe Tex.

"We've worked with the brass players individually before and Howie Casey is an old mate from Liverpool. The only problems we have had have been in rehearsals, where they were ironed out. Denny Laine turned up one day with a cut finger and couldn't play for a couple of weeks. At last night's show, I thought 'Junior's Farm' was jinxed and Jimmy was breaking strings, so there was lots of bass and drums cover up. Before this tour started, I thought we should learn all the songs, and get them right.

"But we all have different musical tastes, and there is a lot of room for development. For instance, Joe doesn't do a drum solo and we could bring that in later on."

Did Paul enjoy the acoustic guitar section?

"I'd never been onstage on my own before and I was a little bit nervous. Then I remembered I'd sung 'Yesterday' on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in front of 40 million people. I love doing it."

I expressed surprise at Paul's skill as a pianist and guitarist.

"I started out as a guitarist. My first guitar was a Rosetti Lucky 7 – which was a plank of wood with strings. Then one night in Hamburg at the Star Club, I went on piano while Stu Sutcliffe was on bass. I used to play piano on a lot of Ray Charles numbers like 'Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying'. So really I've been playing the piano long enough, so I should be able to play it!"

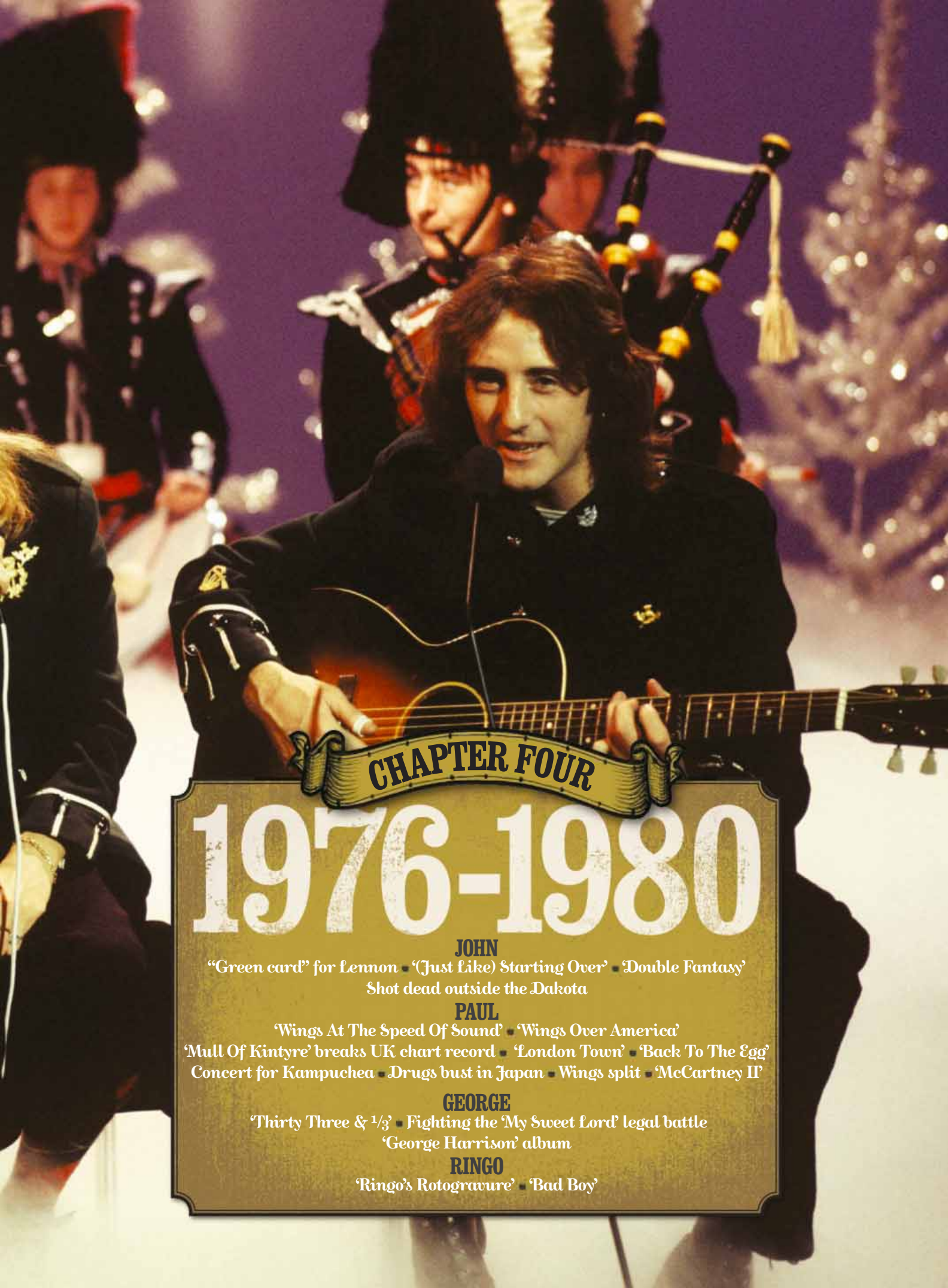
Paul hinted that he actually played a lot of lead guitar solos on old Beatles records, but said he didn't like to put about his various skills as an instrumentalist. "I like to surprise people," he said gently. Did Paul feel the Wings tour was a drain on his and Linda's energy?

"Thirteen dates is not a heavy tour. And we've got two weeks complete holiday before we do a bit of recording. In November we go to Australia and all this is practice for that." As the Rolls drew up behind the stage door, Paul remarked: "What makes me want to go out on tour again – is a decent audience."

He disappeared into the thick of a crowd of fans, who magically materialised seeking autographs, while all around the office windows were filled with faces gazing down on the star in their midst.

ANDRE CSILLAG/ROBERT ELLIS-REP PHOTO

DAVID REDFERNS-REDFERNS



# CHAPTER FOUR

# 1976-1980

## JOHN

"Green card" for Lennon ▪ '(Just Like) Starting Over' ▪ 'Double Fantasy'
Shot dead outside the Dakota

## PAUL

'Wings At The Speed Of Sound' ▪ 'Wings Over America'
'Mull Of Kintyre' breaks UK chart record ▪ 'London Town' ▪ 'Back To The Egg'
Concert for Kampuchea ▪ Drugs bust in Japan ▪ Wings split ▪ 'McCartney II'

## GEORGE

'Thirty Three & 1/3' ▪ Fighting the 'My Sweet Lord' legal battle
'George Harrison' album

## RINGO

'Ringo's Rotogravure' ▪ 'Bad Boy'

The newly legal Lennon shows off his "green card"

MM, 7 August 1976, page 8

# Lennon gets his ticket to ride

## New York: John Lennon has won his five-year battle against the immigration authorities in the United States

At the end of a 90-minute hearing in New York's immigration bureau last Tuesday, John Lennon was granted his "green card". Effectively, this means that Lennon can remain in the US indefinitely without fear of deportation and, more significantly, he is free to travel outside the US and re-enter without any problems.

The final chapter in the saga of seemingly endless litigation proceedings, although something of a formality in view of all of the evidence supporting Lennon, was nevertheless an emotional scene. As judge Ira Fieldsteel announced his verdict, Lennon embraced his wife Yoko Ono and the packed courtroom burst into spontaneous cheering. A beaming Lennon looked glassy-eyed as he was immediately surrounded by TV reporters and cameramen.

Among the witnesses who had given evidence in support of Lennon's claim to live in the US were actress Gloria Swanson, author Norman Mailer, noted sculptor Noguchi and TV personality Geraldo Rivera. Also in the courtroom were composer John Cage and actor Peter Boyle – both close friends of the Lennons.

The hearing began with the judge giving a brief resumé of the history of the case, which began when Lennon last entered the US on 13 August 1971. He has remained in America ever since, refusing to risk travelling abroad lest he was not permitted to return.

Next, Lennon himself was called to give evidence. He answered the following questions put to him by the attorney, Mr Leon Wildes:

Have you ever been convicted of any crime anywhere in the US?

Lennon: "No."

Have you ever been a member of the communist party or any organisation which may seek to overthrow the US government by force?

Lennon: "No."

Do you intend to make the US your home?

Lennon: "I do."

Will you continue to work here?

Lennon: "Yes. I wish to continue to live here with my family and continue making music."

Mr Wildes then called on various witnesses to speak on behalf of Lennon.

First witness was Mr Sam Trust, president of ATV Music Corporation which owns the rights of Lennon's compositions. "There are two very positive reasons why Mr Lennon should be allowed to remain in the US," stated Mr Trust. "The music scene in the US is in the doldrums right now, and the current resurgence of The Beatles and their material proves that they are the most powerful source of music in the last 30 years. I believe we can look forward to many new innovations in music if Lennon is allowed to remain in this country."

Mr Trust's second point was that Lennon is a tremendous "revenue generator. The US will be the scene for the reception of that revenue if he is allowed to remain," he added.

Norman Mailer was next to take the stand. He stated: "I think John Lennon is a great performer who has made an enormous contribution to popular culture. He is one of the great artists of the western world. We lost TS Eliot to England and only got Auden back."

Mr Wildes read a letter from the Bishop of New York, the Rt Rev Paul Moore, which emphasised Lennon's contribution to culture and praised him as being a "gentleman of integrity".

The final witness was Gloria Swanson who, despite her advancing years, seemed a picture of physical and mental health. "For many years I have been actively interested in the physical fitness of the youth of New York," she said. "My husband met John Lennon in a health food store in this city and we found we had feelings in common on this subject. We must educate the country and the Lennons will help."

> "It's great to be legal again. It's been a long and slow road, but I'm not bitter"

Following the hearing, Lennon was officially handed his "green card" by an immigration official and photographed accepting it. What seemed to puzzle a number of observers was that the "green card" was, in fact, blue.

Answering questions put to him by a crowd of reporters, Lennon said that his immediate plans were still to be settled. "It's great to be legal again," he said. "The immigration service have finally seen the light of day. It's been a long and slow road, but I am not bitter. On the contrary, now I can go and see my relations in Japan and elsewhere.

"The main thing is that I can travel now. Until today my attorney wouldn't even let me go to Hawaii for a vacation in case I couldn't get back. Whenever I flew to Los Angeles I was paranoid in case the plane was diverted to Toronto on the way."

Asked why he chose to live in the US, Lennon replied: "If I had lived 2,000 years ago I would have wanted to live in Rome. New York's the Rome of today. Now I'm going home to crack open a teabag and start looking at some travel catalogues." ***Chris Charlesworth***

BOB GRUEN-STARRILE

# WINGS AT THE SPEED OF SOUND Wings Apple

REVIEWED: MM, 27 March 1976, page 28

Paul McCartney has a knack of taking an ordinary statement and imbuing it with intrigue. *"Somebody's knocking at the door/ Somebody's ringing at the bell/Open the door and let 'em in"*. It's the kind of thing you or I must say, ooh, at least once a day, assuming one owns a) a door and b) a bell.

My door frequently vibrates with the thus and clamour of callers, but as the din often warns of approaching insurance salesmen, this household usually responds with the words *"Turn out the lights/Pretend we're out"*. Paul and Linda and the rest of the Wings are much more accommodating. They welcome us into the front sitting-room to hear a new phrase of their musical career.

The main title might lead you to conclude that this is a space-trucking high-speed rap. But there is no sense of urgency about this collection of songs. It represents the avowed intention of giving more space to all the members of the band and clearing out the image of it being a one-man show.

**This album clears out the image of Wings being a one-man show**

There is no doubt that the most successful songs here are those written by Paul but, nevertheless, both Jimmy McCulloch and Denny Laine deliver the goods with a pair of their own, while Linda has the chance to whip up some high school rock'n'roll of the kind she used to sing as a kid back home in the USA.

The door chimes lend 'Let 'Em In' a domestic flavour that re-appears in 'Cook Of The House', Linda's romp where she lets her hair down in the kitchen, accompanied by the sizzle of frying eggs and bacon.

Jimmy gets his rocks off on 'Wino Junko', which reflects the guitarist's hell-raising image, and is co-written by McCulloch and his old sidekick Collin Allen from Stone The Crows. Denny Laine heaps in with his 'Time To Hide', but even with the spreading around of opportunities there is a strong unity about the performances.

The Wings format of good songs, professionally performed, may not always fit into the pattern of current rock thinking. There is no great emphasis on instrumental virtuosity, and yet it is there, in McCullochs guitar work, Joe English's drumming – or, indeed, Paul's drumming, for he sneakily swaps from bass to drums to back Joe's remarkable vocals on the soulful 'Must Do Something About it'.

This is not an album that hits you with the sustained power of 'Band On The Run' or 'Venus And Mars'. But, as Linda says: "It grows on yer!" And indeed it does. After five or six hearings, many of the subtleties of the arrangements, the choice of instruments for a particular passage (like an unexpected burst of trombone during 'Let 'Em In'), the feeling Paul puts into a phrase, or simply the effectiveness of a melody, begin to swim into focus.

There are songs which are immediately recognisable as potential hit singles, the most obvious being the attractive 'Silly Love Songs' which opens side two. But listen to the sombre and mysterious 'The Note You Never Wrote', which is more likely to become a McCartney evergreen.

'San Ferry Anne' is not as impressive as the finale, Paul's brilliant 'Warm And Beautiful', which has a gentle, almost hymnal quality where two tubas give a kind of Sunday school atmosphere that is quite touching (if you aren't an incurable cynic). Much good music then on an album that will engender fierce comparisons with the past two albums, but will increase the growing worldwide appeal of Wings.

***Chris Welch***

# THIRTY THREE & 1/3 George Harrison Dark Horse

REVIEWED: NME, 27 November 1976, page 36

When I tell you that the first line of the song with the most memorable hook is *"I was so young when I was born"*, you might gather that the album in question is no masterpiece.

To say that if it wasn't for the fact that Harrison is an ex-Beatle 'Thirty Three & 1/3' wouldn't merit serious attention would be grossly unfair; with a sense of fair play, then, we shall say that if 'Thirty Three & 1/3' wasn't by the artist who six years ago released 'All Things Must Pass', then it wouldn't merit serious attention.

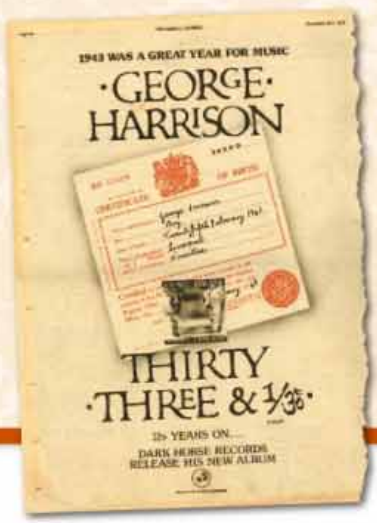
The fact that Harrison's star shined so brightly at the beginning of his solo career, only to be rapidly extinguished, seems to confirm suspicions that his triple album flourish exhausted his fund of ideas.

Certainly he's had problems since then, most notably his penury in lyrical inspiration, his thin vocals, his difficulty in holding a tune, his inability to write convincing melodies – these and more have hardly made life easy. And all these traits are just as evident as they were on 'Living In The Material World', 'Dark Horse' and 'Extra Texture'.

If anything, it's his lyrical weaknesses that are most glaring here since the album is interspersed with passages of pleasing guitar work.

The lyric however are never effective in carrying a song. Harrison has absolutely no sense of narrative flow, he can't begin to sustain interest and has no facility at conjuring evocative or striking images.

'Pure Smokey' is a hymn to Smokey Robinson – and this after a track from 'Extra Texture' was dedicated to the man.




The riff-of-the-album referred to earlier can be located on 'Crackerbox Palace', which would have been the best choice for a single; other recorded highlights can be discovered on 'Dear One' and 'Beautiful Girl' contains the sort of guitar chords that Harrison plied on 'Badge' and some Beatles work of that period.

Plus there's one non-original – a version of Cole Porter's *High Society* classic 'True Love'; George plays Ringo.

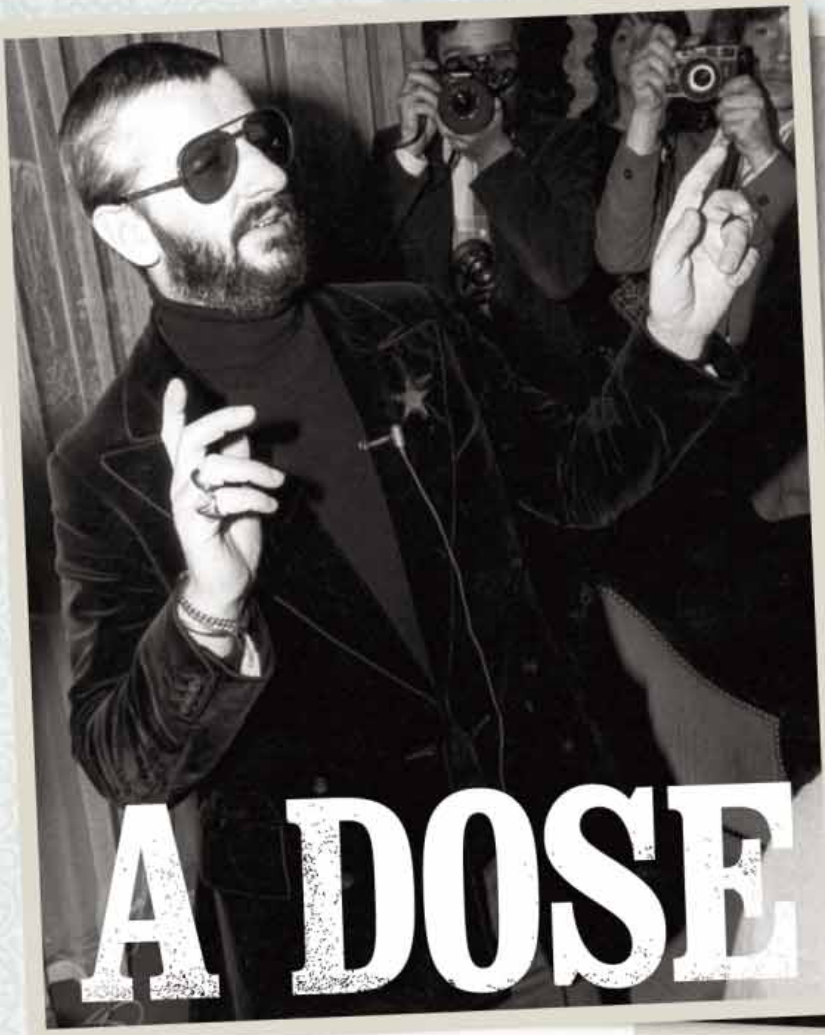
On 'This Song' George bitterly reflects on his litigation and declares *"This song came to me/Quite unknowingly/Don't infringe on anyone's copyright"*

While his humourless approach and conceit in the matter is hardly endearing, it's not difficult to sympathise with him. At a time when Showaddywaddy are racing up the charts with a song we've all known from our cradles and when rock has become completely eclectic so that the origins of any one song can hardly ever be clearly traced, then the 'He's So Fine'/'My Sweet Lord' judgement seems harsh.

**Harrison seems to have overthrown the self-righteousness**

But 'This Song' apart, Harrison's general demeanour is more encouraging, as he seems to have overthrown over some of the self-righteousness that made him such an unsympathetic figure.

While it is an album of no particular merit in itself, it is one which leads me to believe that his best work may not necessarily be behind him. ***Bob Woffinden***



NME, 16 October 1976, page 15

# A DOSE OF ROCK'N'ROLL

## Lisa Robinson visits Ringo Starr at home in Los Angeles, where he talks about his new album and reveals that he wants to join a circus

The living room of Ringo Starr's home in the Hollywood Hills is filled with records, Gene Autrey collectibles, and Beatles relics, including a large black and white photo of the graffiti-laden door at the now-defunct Apple Records' Savile Row offices, on public display on the back cover of Ringo's new album 'Rotogravure'.

The playroom where we go to talk contains a large set of drums. Ringo is dressed in a bathing suit, looks healthy and sports a gold and diamond earring. He is going to answer my questions. Here goes.

***NME*: Tell me a little about how you got together with Arif Mardin and the way "Rotogravure" came about.**

Ringo Starr: "Well, it started last year; I was going to record with Richard *(Perry)* and then that went out of the window… and I was getting into new contracts after leaving Capitol. When we eventually signed with Atlantic for the US and Canada – and Polydor for the rest of the world – we thought since we were trying another label, we'd try another producer.

"Richard was busy, so I decided to look for someone else. And since I was on Atlantic it was suggested I work with Arif, because he's like the house producer. And since he'd just won a Grammy, I figured great.

"He flew into London for a day to say hello, just to see if we could do that together. He said he'd like to do it. And at the end I said, 'Well, I'd still like to do it too.' Then I said, 'I want to do it in LA,' and he said, 'Oh, dear' – because he likes New York or Miami.

"But I knew everybody here *(in LA)*, the players.For the next one, I'll go anywhere he wants. I feel totally secure with him; I'd go to Nebraska if necessary.

"We had Jesse Ed Davis, Danny Kootch… we even had Dr John on guitar on one track which was great because he doesn't play guitar that often. He also played piano and so did Van Dyke Parks, Melissa Manchester and John Jarvis.

"John *(Lennon)* played on his track and Eric Clapton came down to play on his track. Then the other night, who should come to town but Paul and Linda? Just as we were finishing. We went to dinner… and I got them on the track. It's nice to have the people who wrote the song do it with you.

**How did you happen to get the songs from John, Paul and George?**

"Well, Paul asked to write a song. I asked John and he worked on it and worked on it and came up with 'Cookin' (In The Kitchen Of Love)'. You know he's really into that now – cooking.

"I also asked George to write one, but there was an old one of his that was never released by anybody that I always loved – I was on the session when it was recorded – so in the end I asked him if instead of writing one could I have that old one. He said fine, it saved him a job. It's called 'I'll Still Love You'."

**Did you write anything?**

"Yes, I wrote a country number with Vinnie Poncia. Nancy *(Andrews)* and I wrote one in Mexico, and I put a mariachi band on it. Just a mariachi band – from a restaurant – and me. I played maracas."

**How'd you find a mariachi band?**

"We looked around all these Mexican restaurants and found this band who were sensational. They don't actually dance while they play, but they're great

PHOTO FEATURES

# RINGO'S ROTOGRAVURE

## Ringo Starr Polydor

REVIEWED: MM, 23 October 1976, page 27

The other night a friend came home to dinner and I said, "I've got the new Ringo album. Let's play it." We talked right through it.

Next morning in the *MM* office, a writer who believes that all the old rock establishment should be overthrown to make way for new blood, heard about two notes and said: "That's Ringo. You can always tell him, can't you?"

On such polarised views are great careers built. Ringo does not stand for art, but for entertainment with a capital E. His is the voice of easy-listening rock, for there's nothing on the album that can delight or – more depressingly – evoke a powerful reaction.

The eyes are fully entitled, though, to pop out at the sight of the credits on the album sleeve: a powerful assembly of guests have given the music a real strength. The titles are strong because of their simplicity; naturally there's the flashback ('Hey! Baby', oldie) and the country-flavour 'Cryin'' and 'A Dose Of Rock'N'Roll' which is being released as a single, and which packs a pretty hot punch. There's a McCartney song ('Pure Gold') which, like so much of Paul's work, sounds inane at first and then builds itself into your subconscious so that there's the rather late realisation that it's a lyrical masterpiece; there's a cosy little song that The Beatles used to call a beat-ballad ('You Don't Know Me At All'). There's 'Cookin' (In The Kitchen Of Love)' by John Lennon, which sounds like it was written during his 'Walls And Bridges' period, quite happy and destined for the discos; there's a song written by George Harrison, 'I'll Still Love You', which is simplicity itself, but then so was 'Something'. A pleasing album of uncomplicated pop music. Faultless musicianship, simple production by Arif Mardin. Ringo, the bathroom warbler who made it, never pretends to be anything else. ***Ray Coleman***

> Ringo does not stand for art, but for entertainment with a big E

players. I don't think they'd ever been to a recording session in their lives.

"So, I walk in with my mirror shades on – really paranoiac shades. And they're all tuning up. No-one says hello or anything. Then I take my glasses off, and all of a sudden – 'Hey!! One of the Bottles! Hey!! De Bettles!! Binga-loo!! Pappa-lay!! One-a-da-Bodles!!' I just fell to the floor."

**I've never heard anyone badmouth you. You have a lot of friends who are musicians and they all play on your albums…**

"Well, that's because I'm too nice. Or they only see me on a nice day. I'm like anybody else. I'm real pissed off on Tuesday morning sometimes and give everyone a hard time."

**But you've managed to sort of keep a certain musical community together…**

"Yeah, I know. I always feel lucky and I don't know why it happens to me half the time. There isn't a player I know or I've heard who I don't feel I could call and they'd come and play for me."

**How does this album differ from your other albums?**

"The tracks are different. It's still basic rock'n'roll pop. It's either slow or it's fast, apart from the one with the mariachi band. And I always do a country number, because I love that."

**I notice all the Gene Autrey stuff in the house.**

"Well, he's my hero. He was my first musical experience as a kid. I remember getting shivers up me back when he sang 'South Of The Border'."

**Where did you hear him?**

"In the cinema in Liverpool. He had three Mexican guys behind him singing and he had his guitar. It was Elvis – I mean, when I was eight, he was as big as Elvis. It knocked me out. I bought all his albums."

**What about your country album?**

"That came about after I'd met Peter Drake in the studio with George *(Harrison)*. Drake noticed that I had a lot of country tapes in my car. I told him I liked country, and he said, 'Well, why don't you do a country album?' I said, 'Oh no, I'm not going to sit around Nashville for six months' – because that's how long it used to take us to do an album. He says, 'It doesn't take that long… I did 'Nashville Skyline' in two days.'"

> "Once my voice comes over on the radio or on record, you know it's me. Unless I'm singing surprisingly well"

**Were you ever unsure of yourself – carrying a whole album?**

"No, not really. See, I don't think I really have a monstro voice, it's a personality voice. There are a lot of singers out there who can really sing me off the edge of the world but I'm sorry – they don't do anything to me. But once my voice comes over on the radio or record, you know it's me. Unless I'm singing surprisingly well, everyone can tell it's me straightaway."

**What about performing?**

"Well, up until this year I was absolutely adamant I would not perform. Never, never, never. I just didn't want to get a band together and front 'em and give you an hour and a half of me.

"I loved the Bangla Desh thing because it was one-off and I did Houston with Dylan, which was great because there was a lot of us and it wasn't just you out there. So now I've been thinking I'd like to go out with a circus. Not elephants, but a circus. Dylan's was that way and Bangla Desh was that way, and mine would be my way…"

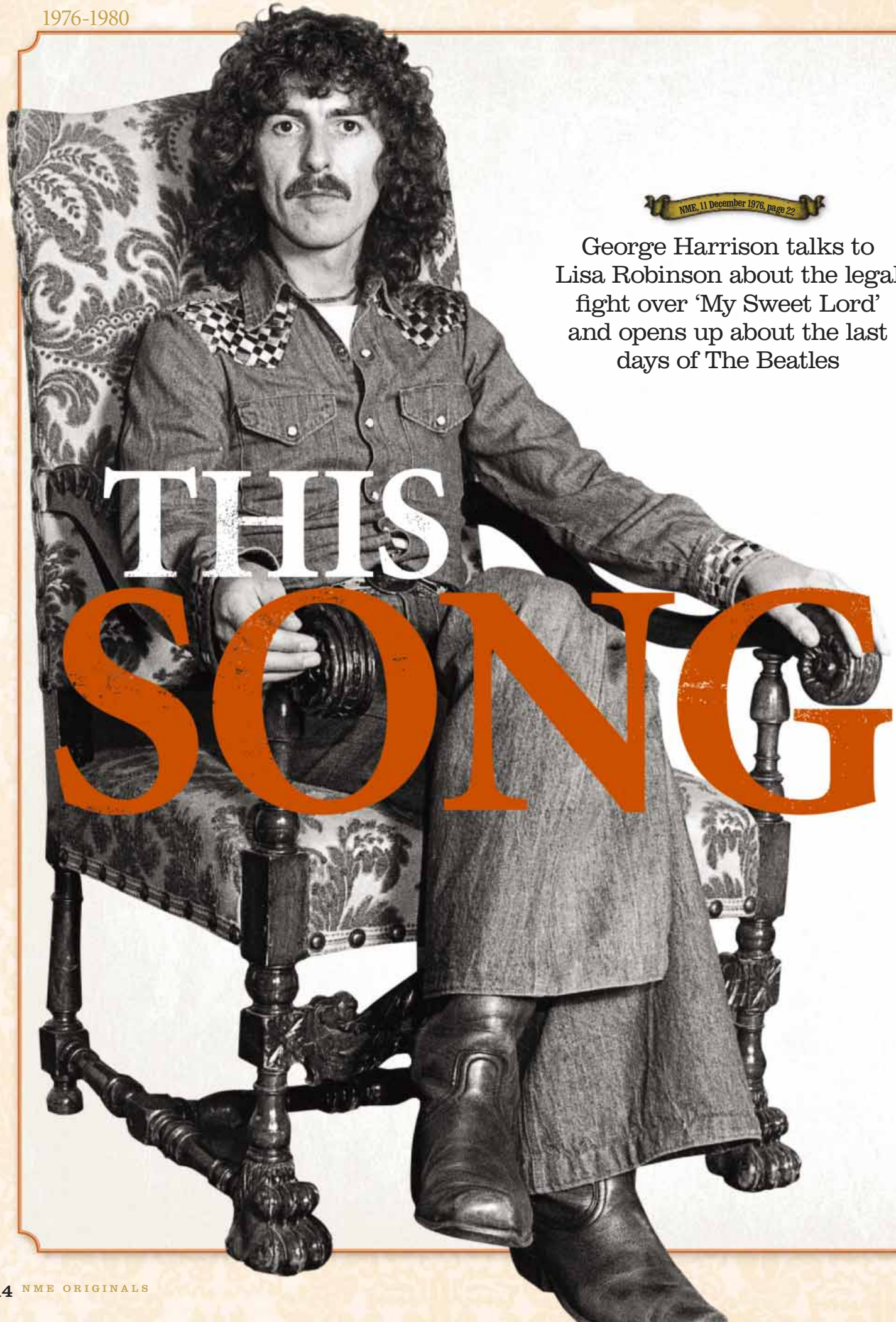
**What would yours be like?**

"I'm not telling you because it might not come off."

**Well, is there a reason why you – or any of the other Beatles – might not be able to do anything until 1977? I know John said he didn't want to do anything 'til then…**

"Well, the reason John said that is because he just feels like having a year off, with no contractual obligations to anybody, no record company or anything. He's his own man for 12 months and he's never been that. I'm not, because I signed up right away. The reason I haven't been performing, though, isn't due to any contractual problems – it's just because I've only just got round to thinking that I want to do it.

"At the end of the year I'll start getting what we didn't tell you on the tape we're getting together… so you'll never know."



NME, 11 December 1976, page 22

George Harrison talks to Lisa Robinson about the legal fight over 'My Sweet Lord' and opens up about the last days of The Beatles

# THIS SONG

Sitting in his Los Angeles home at the top of Beverly Glen Canyon, wearing a denim jacket trimmed with satin and a Dark Horse T-shirt and smoking Gitanes, George Harrison seemed younger, smaller and far more good-humoured than the image he's acquired over recent years.

He did not seem to me like a desperate man.

"This is an important time for me," he opened. "I think I need to come around again like another lap. You know, 'Remember me folks?' I think it's time I talked to people. I haven't really said much in the last couple of years."

For the next four days following this interview, Harrison would, indeed, "talk to people" at some length. Accompanied by the president of Warner Brothers, he flew the company jet to Chicago, Boston, Washington DC and New York. In each city he met radio and press people at lunches and/or dinners in his honour, previewed his 'Thirty Three & 1/3' LP with *Python*-esque movies he'd made, smiled, posed for photos… the whole trip.

The afternoon that we talked was before the LA reception in the posh Chasen's restaurant and George seemed to be looking forward to his schedule.

Certainly, Harrison has not had an easy time of it these past years. He admits to being unhappy with recent "negative" albums and his 1974 US tour met with a largely negative response. In addition, he has been recovering from a bout of hepatitis this past summer and was finishing up his album at the time he was successfully sued over 'My Sweet Lord'.

When he returned to LA with the new album under his arm, George was informed that A&M Records (which housed both George and his Dark Horse label) had brought a suit against him for "non-delivery" of the LP.

That legal hassle was settled out of court and George quickly switched to Warner Brothers, for both himself and Dark Horse.

George admits that he is getting used to lawsuits. "We started out as musicians," he said with a wry smile, "and we've got sucked into it as if we were lawyers and accountants.

"A lot of people sue people like us because it's aggravation for us; they think we'll settle. The guy who wrote 'He's So Fine' actually died in 1967 or 1968 – he never even heard 'My Sweet Lord'. And I'm sure if he was a musician he wouldn't have flinched. But the guy who was his accountant… he saw this as money pouring out of the sky.

"There are different mentalities. People who go out of their way to do something like that, to copy something, and then there are musicians who realise that all music is in some way related to something else."

When you first wrote 'My Sweet Lord' or played it back did you think the two songs sounded alike?

"No. I went through all this in court. See, in 1968 the big song was 'Oh Happy Day'. I thought it was great to be able to do something both spiritual and commercial. What's the point of doing something no-one's going to hear? I wanted to come up with something like that. Incidentally, the chord changes on 'My Sweet Lord' and 'Oh Happy Day' are the same.

"The entire lawsuit was hinging on the first three notes of the song, as well as the four notes of the chorus, but the sheet music for that song was just what happened to come out on that recording date. For all I know some of those notes could have been arranged differently on another take.

"I guess I finally realised that the songs sounded similar when the song came out on the radio in 1970 and a few disc jockeys got off on the idea. But you can listen to a number of records and hear other songs in them. I don't consider it a lift because in my mind I was trying to do 'Oh Happy Day'.

As for the effect of the lawsuit: "It was a heavy emotional thing to go to court and play the guitar.

"All the secretaries from the other court came along. It was like, 'Oh, let's go see George Harrison doin' a concert in court.'

"Personally, I don't feel it damaged me. If it was the only song I'd ever written I'd feel bad, you know? But I just feel annoyed, because of the motives behind."

**HARRISON HAS ATTEMPTED** to retain his sense of humour about the 'My Sweet Lord' situation; his new single, 'This Song', has lyrics that refer to the court case: *"This song doesn't infringe on anyone's copyright/This tune there's nothing 'Bright' about it"* (The case was called Bright Tunes vs Harrisongs).

"It has put me through a real bad period of paranoia though," he said. "Every time I pick up the guitar to play something I think, 'Uh-oh, this sounds like…' I can't help it, I do it all the time now."

To change the subject a bit, is it difficult being an ex-Beatle?

**"Musically, with Ringo and John I had no problem. With Paul it reached a point where he wouldn't let me play"**

"Yes," George smiled. "As Derek Taylor would say, being born in Liverpool carries with it certain responsibilities."

As for the inevitable Beatles reunion question: "Well, that man who offered us five million dollars was supposed to promote a match between a man and a shark. So my suggestion was that he fight the shark and the winner could promote the Beatles concert."

George had said, before his 1974 tour, that he would never play with Paul McCartney again.

"I can't see it," he says now. "Obviously, if we did we'd compromise."

"But you know, I went to school with Paul. He was a year older than me. I met him when I was 13 and we were together for 17 years until we split. People in America think that we got together around 1964 and split up in 1968. But from 1956 I was hanging around with Paul and, a little bit after, John.

"When you're so close, you tend to lock each other up in pigeonholes. Musically, with Ringo and John I had no problem. But with Paul, well, it reached a point when he wouldn't let me play on sessions.

"It was a part of our splitting up. But at the same time I have a tendency to defend Paul – John and Ringo too – if anyone else said anything without qualification about them. After going through all that together, there must be something good about it.

"It's just that around 1968 everyone's egos started going crazy. Maybe it was just a lack of tact or discretion. Probably the biggest problem of them all was that there was no way Yoko Ono or Linda McCartney was going to be in The Beatles. That really helped put the nail in the coffin.

"That's said without any bitterness against Yoko and Linda, because I can really enjoy them as people, but, let's face it, The Beatles were not with Yoko or Linda. I suppose it was a result of Yoko being an outsider, coming in… and John was pushing her… and she had such a strong ego anyway. Then Paul got Linda to get his own back.

"I haven't seen Paul since his party on the Queen Elizabeth a few years back. That's the only time you can see him anyway, when he's having a party.

"Who wants to be invited to a party of Paul's and find yourself another statistic in a pop paper? They have all these camera people to show who came to his party… I don't want to meet an old friend like that.

"The only thing that would get us together again is if we really wanted to be in each other's company so badly and to make music together."

Wouldn't the problems be the same?

"They probably would. Like in the film *Let It Be*, that part that was so awful for me to see. Where I say, 'Look, I'll play whatever you want – I'll play if you want me to play, but just shut up with all this.' That's no fun.

"That was the day I left. For me that was when I made my decision, it was the final straw.

"We'd gone through the 'White Album' which was misery. That was when all the women were coming in. That album went on a long time, but we just made it through. Then I went to LA to do an album with Jackie Lomax for Apple. I'd been hanging out with all these musicians in Woodstock, went back to England for Christmas and on 1 January we four got together for what was to become 'Let It Be'.

"The very first day, as soon as we got back together playing, Paul went into this 'You do this, you do that, don't do that, don't do this' and I thought, 'Christ, I thought he'd have woken up by now.'

"He seemed so understanding when he'd sing songs like 'Let It Be.' He comes over as sort of hip to that, but when it comes to practising it was just misery."

You didn't go home and sit in your garden and cry?

"No, I went home and wrote 'Wah Wah'. But then we got together to finish 'Let It Be', which was a film and an album of us rehearsing. Then somehow we did 'Abbey Road' later, although it came out first. At least it was a nice album to exit on."

George's guests dressed down for the 'Thirty Three & 1/3' launch party

REDFERNS/CAMERA PRESS-ROGER DI VITO

# Goodbye to Yesterday

MM, 19 November 1977, page 8

## From the Virgin Islands to 'Mull Of Kintyre', Paul McCartney talks to Chris Welch about pipe bands and punk rock and explains why he will never play his most famous song ever again

Paul McCartney swears he will never play 'Yesterday' again. Not since a review in which, he claims, I said that I thought he would play it forever.

"Surely not," quoth I. "Oh yes, you did. Prat," says Paul. "Pranny." And a lot worse besides. But I didn't remember saying anything worse than the last Wings concert in London had lacked the spontaneity of their earlier round-Britain concerts.

Surely I didn't slag off 'Yesterday', one of the great popular songs of our time? Why, it always brings a lump to my throat or a tear to the eye. "Oh yes you did," insisted Paul. "I remember everything. All that stuff about 'Yesterday' – it's engraved on me forehead. I'll never play it again."

But somehow I don't think Paul would take such advice or a less than enthusiastic review too seriously. For someone who has been at the centre of the rock whirlpool for 15 years (count 'em) he is a bit too long in the tooth and experience to start getting belligerent or suicidal.

He reserved himself a go back, which was delivered in forthright, but unmalicious tones.

"I thought your review was shit," he greeted me pleasantly, in the bowels of number two studio at Abbey Road last week. It was here that Paul and the rest of The Beatles recorded so many classics – 'Yesterday' included.

Now it was decorated like a Parisian pavement café with tables and umbrellas and plants.

"Just to give it a little atmosphere," he explained. While Wings seem to have been quiet since those last concerts (still referred to by radio DJs as among the greatest they have ever seen), in fact, they have been busier than ever. Paul and Linda have added another child, baby James, to the family, but Paul kept on recording, first on a floating studio near the Virgin Islands, then up in Scotland. The results are a new album due out in February, and a new single, 'Mull Of Kintyre', out now.

Wings have also suffered the loss of two of their number in recent months. But as Paul explained, he wasn't too worried. He would be quite happy to play at Joe's Caff with Denny Laine, his old mate, on guitar. And they may even do that next year.

But first Paul gave me an ear-bashing for smiting his work. What could I say? If more artists spoke up for themselves instead of brooding or plotting violence, a good deal of the unpleasant tension that afflicts rock today would be dissipated. Paul explained how even his daughter, as a member of the public, had fallen foul of duff reviews.

"My daughter went to see The Stranglers. She's into punk… well, she's the right age. She came back a changed person, over the moon, just loved it.

"And the next week, a review appeared in one of the papers… and it was a terrible review. 'The bass player was inefficient', same old technical crap, y'know. Reviews are always wrong. But come on, let's get off critics."

Paul had been strangely inactive for a year.

"No," he said firmly. "Not inactive. Very active. But in the studio and on boats. We went to the Virgin Islands.

"We hired a charter boat that people use for holidays. The captain went spare when he saw all the instruments. We remodelled his boat for him, which he wasn't too keen on.

"We converted his lounge into a studio and we turned another deck into a sound control room, and it was fantastic.

"We had a recording boat and two others we stayed on. We didn't have any problems with salt water in the machines or sharks attacking us. At night there was much merriment, leaping from top decks into uncharted waters and stuff. I had a couple too many one night and nearly broke something jumping from one boat to another. But then you always break yourself up on holiday.

"The studio worked out incredibly well and the very first day we got a track down. There was a nice free feeling. We'd swim in the day and record at night.

"We had written most of the songs beforehand. Denny and I wrote a lot of stuff last summer. We stayed a month on the boat and by the time we recorded it the songs just seemed to work.

"You'll have to tell me when you've heard the record if there is any boat feeling in the music. I think there is.

"We've come back to Abbey Road here to finish it all off. We're overdubbing and putting main vocals on. We did nine tracks on the boat.

"I'd like to play you some of the stuff but I can't really, because it's gonna be so far in advance of release it would be silly to play you anything now.

"You'll hear a track and say it's very nice and then we'll change it all around. But there is an up feel to the music from being on a boat. We got moved on a lot for being naughty rock'n'roll people infesting the waters.

"We moored at the island called St Johns and it's a national park. You must not play amplified music. I think they mean trannies.

What a waistcoat: Macca talks to *MM*'s Chris Welch

BARRY PLUMMER

"But we had a whole thing going. You could hear it for miles. We got fined $15.

"I've been working out of London for a long time and when it's raining and it's boring and there are power strikes, you do start to think, 'It would be great to get away.'"

Did many great new songs come out of this aquatic experience?

"Well, I never really like talking about it. I like it. People who've heard it like it. It's nothing like the live album of course. It's just a new studio album with a lot of songs on it and no big concept idea.

"But you can never tell, you know. 'Sgt Pepper' wasn't supposed to be a concept. That was just a collection of songs."

But not a bad collection.

"You can't tell, they may all suddenly run together and mean something. It won't be out 'til February, so I don't want to start dropping titles yet. It's cooler to wait until the time comes.

"There's no title for the album. I didn't get where I am today by giving titles ahead of time.

"Jimmy McCulloch and Joe English *(guitar and drums)*, who are not longer with us, did all their stuff before they split.

"They were on the boat, and now Denny and I are just finishing it off. Wings is a trio at the moment.

"A couple of years ago I used to worry if anyone left; 'Oh God, I can't keep a group together.'

"But I don't worry now – there's no need to keep it altogether all the time. I'm more interested in the music and, if we can do that, I don't mind how it has to be done.

"Next year we won't do anything live until the album is out, because we wanna go out with some new stuff.

"I mean, you didn't like us playing all the old stuff. Yes, I could quote your bloody reviews to you, Welch. We'll get some new stuff together and think about going out again.

"We're not worried at the moment. Joe needed to go back to America because he is extremely American and isn't struck on Britain.

"It's not everyone you can persuade Britain is an OK place to live, you know. He's used to things like late-night telly and hamburgers. Linda is not really American, in inverted commas. She doesn't miss any of that at all, so she tells me anyway.

"Jimmy's thing was… another type of thing. He wanted to make a move. I don't know how long he was with us. I don't keep track of time. Since before 'Venus And Mars', whenever that was."

Jimmy was quite an extrovert I believe?

Filming the 'Mull Of Kintyre' video with the Campbeltown Pipe Band, November 1977

"Well, yeah. He's a good lad, Jimmy, a good guitar player, but sometimes he's a bit hard to live with. It's pretty well known in the biz and we just decided it would be better if we didn't bother any more.

"It got a bit fraught up in Scotland. He's with the Small Faces now, but he's done a lot of nice guitar on the new album and on the boat he was incredibly together. He's really into playing heavy rock."

Was Paul looking for a replacement guitarist?

"No, not really. I'm getting letters from guitar players. But me and Denny both play guitar, and if it's not live we can work out the guitar things. And if we need to overdub, I can play drums too.

"I did the drumming on 'Band On The Run' and, er, that did all right. I can't drum technically very well but I can hold the beat and to me that's what you should be able to do if you're a drummer.

"It's nice to be a bit fresh but I like a drummer who just holds the beat. So here we are – back to being a trio! No sweat. We'll just continue like this.

"It's easier now there are less people to deal with. We can make decisions quicker among ourselves."

But what will Paul do if concerts are planned? They can't play live as three-piece surely?

"Well, gigs have started to come up. But with having the baby this year… that sounds a bit un-rock'n'roll, doesn't it? But these are the realities you've got to

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Wings | |
| SINGLE: Mull Of Kintyre | |
| LABEL: Capitol | RELEASE: November 1977 |

Nice cover pic of the isle of Davaar off the West Coast of Scotland. This is a tribute-in-song to the area in Argylshire where Friendly Macca has his twee little hideaway. The Campbeltown Pipe Band, with whom Wings posed for the cover of *The Campbeltown Courier* all sound good, especially Johnny Sinclair, but the song sucks on ice.

**Charles Shaar Murray** NME, 19 November 1977, page 35

# McCartney's 'Mull' – it's a record!

"MULL OF KINTYRE," Wings' first number one, is all set to be the first single ever to top two million sales in Britain, making it the country's best-selling and fastest-selling, single ever.

The previous record holder was the Beatles' "She Loves You," released in 1963. That sold about 1.6 million. Last week "Mull Of Kintyre" had already sold more than 1,667,000 and was only just beginning to slow down from its original sales of 250,000 a week. It is still number one in this week's MM chart.

The record entered the chart at number 18 in the week of November 28 and went to number one the next week. It is Paul McCartney's first release to reach the top since the Beatles' last number one in Britain, "The Ballad Of John And Yoko," released in 1969, and is only the 17th single to sell more than a million.

The first seven-inch, 45 r.p.m. record to sell a million was Acker Bilk's "Stranger On The Shore" in 1961, although this only just made the million mark. From 1968 to 1974 there were no British million sellers at all, Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" reversing the trend in 1975 and staying at the top for a record eight weeks.

The ten best-selling singles are, in order of sales: "Mull Of Kintyre" by Wings; "She Loves You" (Beatles); "I Want To Hold Your Hand" (Beatles); "Tears" (Ken Dodd); "Can't Buy Me Love" (Beatles); "Save Your Kisses For Me" (Brotherhood Of Man); "I Feel Fine" (Beatles); "We Can Work It Out" (Beatles); "Release Me" (Engelbert Humperdinck); "Bohemian Rhapsody" (Queen).

Records released before 1959 are not included in the best-selling singles chart because reliable figures are not available. But no record approaches the 30 million world sales of Bing Crosby's "White Christmas."

GETTY IMAGES

face, and I just didn't fancy Linda being onstage at the Peterborough Empire and having to rush off to hospital. It's a big number, having a baby.

"So, we decided to get ourselves a drummer or guitarist. Or we may have another think. We might change the whole line-up and go out with something different.

"But seeing as we're not accepting any dates at the moment, we're not bothering. It's no big sweat. We could always go on as me and Denny with a couple of acoustics. We'd have a laff anyway!

"Denny and I have written together on previous albums but never more than one tune. Then, in summer '76, we sat down and wrote a bunch together. It's good to have someone to bounce off.

"To tell you the truth, we haven't got really into songwriting together yet, but we did write a few where we'd patch each other's songs up.

"The next stuff we write will be more half and half. We haven't actually tried sitting down and writing from square one. We've been helping arrange each others' songs."

At this point we are joined by Denny Laine and Paul introduced us thus: "This is that cunt who gave us that bad review. Fuckin' 'it 'im."

"No hard feelings," said Denny with surprising warmth. I began to feel like a traitor to the cause. All we needed now was Miles Davis and Ian Anderson to walk in, waving back issues of the *MM*.

Denny joined us at the table and began strumming his guitar. Paul pointed out the various features in the famed studio. "'Love Me Do' was done about where Denny is playing right now.

"The studio hasn't changed since then because they don't want to change the sound."

Meanwhile, here was Paul, 15 years later, talking about yet another single, in the room where so much history was launched. This time it's 'Mull Of Kintyre' and, says Paul, "It's Scottish. It's different from the songs we did on the boat, we thought it should be a single, and it sounds very Christmassy and New Yeary.

"It's kind of a glass of ale in your hand leaning up against the bar tune. We had the local pipe band join in and we took a mobile studio up to Scotland and put the equipment in an old barn.

**"'Mull Of Kintyre' is Scottish. We thought it should be a single. It sounds very Christmassy"**

"We had the Campbeltown Pipe Band and they were just great – just pipes and drums. It was interesting writing for them. You can't just write any old tune because they can't play every note in a normal scale.

"They've got the drone going all the time so you have to be careful what chord you change over the drone, so it's a very simple song.

"I had to conduct them very heavily. It's a waltz and an attempt at writing a *new* Scottish tune because all the other Scottish tunes are old, traditional stuff. And I like bagpipes anyway.

"But it's a double A-side. The other one, 'Girls' School', I wrote after reading the back pages of those American entertainment guides. These days there are whole pages of 'X'-rated films, you know the porn page?

"It's all titles like *School Mistress* and *The Woman Trainer*. I just put them all together in the lyrics and called it 'Girls' School'. It's about a pornographic St Trinians.

"We made it a double because the B-sides always get swallowed. You never hear them. At least 'Girls' School' will get played a bit.

"'Mull Of Kintyre' is different from anything we've done before… but sure, it's Wings. It's definitely not punk. No, I've not seen any punk bands. Yeah, it's a good thing innit? Like everyone says?

"In interviews, everyone says, 'It's very good for der business… it's for young people… it's good to see it.' Waaal, you've gotta have something of your own, haven't you?"

Had Paul lost his audience in the meantime?

"What, to punk? Nah, it's a different audience altogether. To me, punk is more important than glitter, and a lot of the stuff that's been going down in the past few years, just because it's got a bit more balls to it.

"It's a fashion, so it would be silly for us to attempt to go along with it. It's not what we're about.

"We never even used to do that when The Who was doing it. Know what I mean? I can hear a lot of Who in it, Bryan Ferry and Dylan too, and Lou Reed.

"It's Velvet Underground, New York stuff type stuff, but the British kids do it best at the moment. But I'm not into it, I wouldn't pretend to be. It's just a different kind of music.

"Instead of sitting down, they're jumping up and down. Great, nice one."

I thought I detected just the faintest hint of sarcasm in Paul's otherwise encouraging noises.

A film is being prepared of Wings on the road in America. How was that progressing?

"It's being mixed and the sound is being put on by Chris Thomas out at Wembley and they're thinking of putting the concert stuff together with some documentary stuff and making a TV show.

"It's working out great, but I don't know when it will be released. You can't worry, because other people have tried the same thing and it hasn't worked.

"If you've got a film, you've just got to finish it and see if it works. That's the stage we're at.

"We've got all the stuff shot. It was going to be a concert movie but we decided, as we don't go to concert movies ourselves, and we'd rather see *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, we'd make it a TV special, so at least you don't have to go out of your nice warm house to see it.

"It sounds a bit boring, but it's better than it sounds! I didn't even see *Gimme Shelter*. I just don't think they work somehow. I've seen so many psychedelic rock dreams – climbing mountains and stuff."

In the New Year, would Linda want to go on the road again?

"Yeah, I think so. It's just different for us. A couple of years ago, I used to read the papers and think, 'You've got to be like everyone else. If everyone else is putting make-up on, well you've gotta do it.'

"But now I've grown out of that, realised whatever I do is my thing.

"There was one point where we felt we had to be onstage every night if we were going to be any good.

"But when it comes around to the right time, we'll do it – go out and play.

"We actually fancy playing in some small, steamy clubs and get back to the people right there and playing to them for a laugh.

"So we'll probably do that next year. We keep wanting to do a residency. We'd like to get a little club somewhere and build an audience. We'd like to get a great little scene going for a couple of weeks.

"We did it on our old university tour, which was the first thing we did. And cheap tickets. I love all that – if we could charge 50 pence or something. People expect bootleg prices all the time.

"There's a scene in the film we're doing where a fellow is offering a girl £3 tickets for £20. We'd like to get away from that situation of 'You are now coming to see this extremely expensive group!'

"I'd much rather have people come in at lunchtime, or after work, have a little dance and a cheese roll. We might have a couple of lunchtime sessions next year.

"I fancy getting into all that, where it's not as precious. That's what 'appens when you get… big. I suppose that's what the punks are up against.

"You can get trapped in all that tinsel and glitter, like Rod Stewart. I'm sure he doesn't really want to be like that. The first thing you want to do when you see someone on a pedestal is knock 'em down isn't it?

"But what we want to do is find a gig in the centre of London, so all the kids who are working in the offices can come and hear us.

"It's based on the old Cavern idea. You tumble out of bed, play a couple of sets, have a couple of pints, and tumble back to bed. No, not at the posey places, somewhere like Joe's Caff, in the basement.

"We'll see. We'll probably end up doing 50,000 dates in America! The real truth is, we'll do what we fancy at the time."

Was Paul happy to be in Wings as a working environment.

"Oh sure. We've actually done quite well, despite all the slagging off and the bad reviews. The main thing is the music, it's not the bread, it's not the fame, it's not the acclaim, it's not even the reviews, it's down to whether you like the music or not. And this stuff we're doing now… we like," said Paul emphatically.

Picture caption

# LONDON TOWN

## Wings

Capitol

REVIEWED: MM, 1 April 1978, page 19

It was once remarked, quite wisely, I think, that while John Lennon was capable of occasional brilliance, his intervening periods were often spent languishing in mediocrity. Paul McCartney, on the other hand, was gifted with being, at worst, annoyingly average, frequently good and spasmodically brilliant.

Applying that logic here, we can reasonably assume that a bit of inspired music is due from Macca. The four years since the classic 'Band On The Run' have been marked by some of the most ordinary material the Great One has ever penned.

'Venus And Mars' and 'At The Speed Of Sound' were, in retrospect, rather mundane by his standards and the triple-album 'Wings Over America', was wearisome.

'London Town', then, is a positive reaction to McCartney's limp phase (a severe description?) and although it is not a set that bears comparison to 'Band On The Run', it is nonetheless a fine album, with McCartney producing odd flashes of his undoubted genius.

Lyrically, the songs are as anonymous as McCartney has ever been since The Beatles split. For some reason, he has always felt impelled to keep himself to himself and there's no change here, although 'London Town', the title track, does give a glimpse of why he values his Marks & Spencer image so much. 'Don't Let It Bring You Down', too speaks for itself. Otherwise it's the usual gloss and fiction fodder.

It's funny but even before hearing this album, I had expected a good one from McCartney. My absurd reasoning was that the bland 'Mary Had A Little Lamb' preceded 'Band On The Run' and, with 'Mull Of Kintyre', I just felt that McCartney was preparing the same sort of opening salvo.

> 'London Town' is a positive reaction to McCartney's limp phase

Though I was initially disappointed with 'London Town', concentrated playing has uncovered many of its delights. It could possibly have been a better album had Paul allowed somebody to exercise more control. That is the area in which he misses his fellow Beatles, and particularly John Lennon.

One thing's for sure: Denny Laine isn't the man to do it. Thus Paul is allowed to run free and record duff stuff like 'Backwards Traveller', a weak rocker that melts into an instrumental that never resolves itself, 'Famous Groupies' the predictable whimsical shot that falls flat and the usual glut of silly love songs, 'I'm Carrying' and 'With A Little Luck', a particularly incongrous piece of writing.

The album, clocking in at nearly 52 minutes, could have existed comfortably without the dross.

Being especially fond of McCartney when he's let loose on a good rocker, I find myself really liking 'I've Had Enough', 'Name And Address' and 'Morse Moose And The Grey Goose' (eh?).

'I've Had Enough' is a fiercely threatening mover, primed by a pumping guitar riff, headed off by a great, thudding rhythm section and capped so harshly by Paul's strutting rock'n'roll vocal. It's a type of song at which he excels. 'Name And Address' is taken at a slightly more controlled pace, cajoling rather than demanding, and is very reminiscent of early Beatles compositions.

I'd be interested to hear just how old the number is. I'm still trying to figure out what 'Morse Moose And The Grey Goose' is all about.

It's divided into three powerful sections, starting off with with a powerful instrumental, dropping into a vocal melody that I swear is the Irish traditional tune 'Follow Me Down To Carlow', and then into a weird ending that has flutes and other woodwinds blurping from the speakers. Very strange but very hypnotic. Denny Laine co-wrote it.

Laine also helped to write 'Don't Let It Bring You Down', 'Children Children' and 'Deliver Your Children' and it seems that he has exerted an unusual folk influence on all three. The characteristic is the chopping acoustic guitars in the background. 'Don't Let It Bring You Down', with a sweet, whistling chorus, particularly seems to have traditional origins.

'Girlfriends' is also acoustically based and this one, I think, features Linda singing more effectively than I've heard her before. The voice is tight and high-pitched on a bopping pop song that is very deceptive.

That leaves two numbers. The openers, 'London Town' and 'Safe On The Left Bank', the finest tracks on the album. 'London Town' is constructed beautifully and moves sweetly along, broken skilfully by a striking slide-guitar break, while 'Safe On The Left Bank' is pure 'BOTR' feel, taunting and raunchy. The two songs provide a perfect introduction to the album.

'London Town' takes a bit of getting into. It's not McCartney at his best. It's McCartney approaching his best and I'm grateful for that alone. He proves here that he's still the man when it comes to writing either a tear-jerker or a mean rocker. I love him. ***Harry Doherty***

Have they had their chips? The new, three-piece Wings in 1978

BARRY PLUMMER

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| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: George Harrison | |
| SINGLE: Blow Away | |
| LABEL: Dark Horse | RELEASED: February 1979 |

George has removed himself from the material world so successfully that his records reach us from a strange time-warp – as if nothing had happened since 1967. This is instantly recognisable and instantly icky. Sample Lyric (from the B-side): *"You're a soft touch baby, just like a snowflake falling"*.

***Simon Frith*** MM, 24 February 1979, page 24

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Wings | |
| SINGLE: Goodnight Tonight | |
| LABEL: EMI | RELEASED: April 1979 |

I really don't want to slag off yet another Wings offering, but they haven't given me any option. A year ago, everyone did their token reggae cut. Nowadays it's switched to the token disco track, so that's what Wings have done. It's crammed with flaky icing which leaves the stomach emptier than when you first set out. Paul may never have claimed to provoke, but even if you only want to entertain, it's got to be more substantial than this.

***Ian Birch*** MM, 7 April 1979, page 31

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Wings | |
| SINGLE: Old Siam, Sir | |
| LABEL: EMI | RELEASED: June 1979 |

What a big, ringing sound. Congrats, Chris Thomas… the song's so stripped down to the hook that you can't miss it. Enter the headbanger – I don't begrudge this one its obvious success.

***Vivien Goldman***

MM, 9 June 1979, page 32

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Paul McCartney | |
| SINGLE: Wonderful Christmastime | |
| LABEL: Parlophone | RELEASED: December 1979 |

No point in mincing pies about this one. Paul McCartney dons Santa Claus drag, pulls out his pocket calculator and knocks off a grotesquely twee piece of festive nose-scrapings utilising a tune of his own creation so twee and so banal that it makes 'Mull Of Kintyre' sound like John Coltrane's 'Naima' by comaprison. God knows McCartney has hit some musical troughs in his time but this hideous offering shuts down even 'Mary Had A Little Lamb' as Our Macca's worst recording to date.

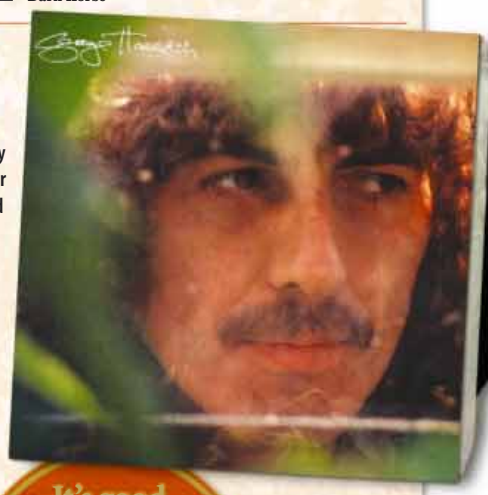
The B-side, by the way, is 'Rudolph The Red Nosed Reggae'.

***Nick Kent*** NME, 24 November 1979, page 37

# GEORGE HARRISON

## George Harrison Dark Horse

REVIEWED: MM, 24 February 1979, page 29



As I lay me down in the green pastures of Meymott Street, I muse that but for an accident of geography I could be moving the tanks on the battlefront in Vietnam. Instead I'm sitting here with a pack of cigarettes, a cup of coffee and George Harrison's latest album. So one counts one's blessings and taps a reflective toe.

George has never been a dynamic rock'n'roller, certainly not since the days of Ye Olde Beatles. More for him the laid back beat and the wry lyric reflecting his bewilderment at the aggro that goes on around him.

It's good to note that George seems a lot happier and more at one with the world these days. He took Eric Idle's joshing in The Rutles in good heart and lightheartedness seems to infiltrate the music on this latest album, almost to the point of lightheartedness. Eric Clapton first played me this a while back and chuckled gently over the curious wobbling speeds employed in the final chorus of 'Soft-Hearted Hana'. If you're not ready for it, you could fear your turntable has developed Parkinson's disease.

The musicians include Eric (who plays the intro to the first cut 'Love Comes To Everyone'), Andy Newmark (drums), Willie Weeks (bass), Neil Larsen (keyboards), Ray Cooper (percussion), and Steve Winwood (Polymoog) with George on guitar and vocals.

It's an album that grows in its effect after a few plays. I began especially to like 'Love Comes To Everyone', 'Not Guilty' and 'Blow Away'. The chords roll and tumble, the melodies are good to chant and the lyrics are simple to tell their story. On 'Not Guilty' Harrison is fairly specific as he says *"No use handing me a writ while I'm trying to do my bit/I don't expect to take your heart/ I only want what I can get"*. Amen to that.

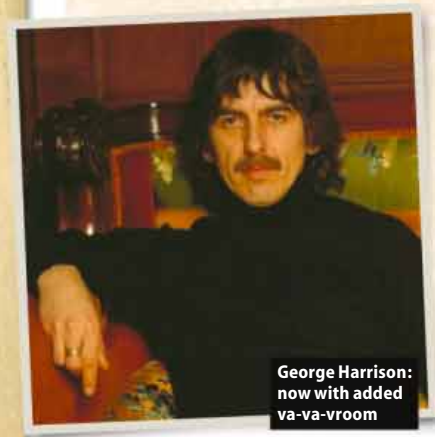
The sound of Formula One racing cars are heard revving up at the beginning of 'Faster', a song inspired by Jackie Stewart and Niki Lauda which reflects George's dedication to the heroes of Brands Hatch.

**It's good to note that George seems a lot happier and at one with the world**

'Dark Sweet Lady' has the chiming guitar chords which are a Harrison trademark, and George sings with ringing sincerity.

George has an answer to all the world's problems (or some of them) with 'If You Believe', on which he says, *"Everything you thought is possible if you believe…"* Actually, I'd subscribe to that theory.

So, rock on George. With producer Russ Titelman, you've brought both sun and moonshine into our lives. My mum says she's never heard of him, but then life's like that. ***EJ Thribb***



George Harrison: now with added va-va-vroom

MM, 7 October 1978, page 1

## McCartney's all-time supersession

PAUL McCARTNEY played host this week to what may go down as one of the great supersessions of rock history.

At noon on Tuesday, just as the MM went to press, musicians began congregating at No. 2 studio in EMI's Abbey Road complex under conditions of strict security.

Guards from Artists' Services were at the door to check the credentials of some of the rock world's most expensive names: all four members of Led Zeppelin, the Who's Pete Townshend, Pink Floyd's Dave Gilmour, and Eric Clapton among them.

The MM understands that McCartney, currently in the process of recording his new album with producer Chris Thomas, invited them to participate in the recording of one particular song.

Apparently his original idea was to use an orchestra on the song — but he subsequently decided that it would sound better performed by a large-scale rock band.

Having made that judgment, he chose to issue special personal invitations to some of his most illustrious contemporaries.

Several other famous musicians were forced to decline, for one reason or another: Jeff Beck (who, with Clapton and Jimmy Page would have completed a full house of ex-Yardbirds lead guitarists) sent his last-minute regrets, and was replaced by a major figure from an earlier generation, the Shadows' Hank B. Marvin.

Elton John, too, had planned to attend and play piano, but was sidelined by the necessity of rehearsing for a forthcoming appearance on Bruce Forsyth's new TV show.

We believe that the full line-up for Tuesday's session consisted of Clapton, Townshend, Page, Gilmour and Marvin (guitars), John Paul Jones, Procol Harum's Gary Brooker, and Tony Ashton (keyboards), ex-Face Ronnie Lane, the Attractions' Bruce Thomas, and McCartney himself (bass guitars), Small Face Kenny Jones, John Bonham, and Wings' Steve Holly (drums), Brand X's Morris Pert, Ray Cooper, Tony Carr, and the Blue Flames' Speedy Acquaye (percussion), and a four-man horn section including Liverpool tenorist Howie Casey. Robert Plant was also due to participate.

It's not known whether the subsequent recording will be released as a single, or whether it will be simply a track on Wings' next album — but McCartney did take the precaution of hiring a film crew with 35 m.m. cameras to record the event.

So who said the Sixties are dead?

BRAIN ARS

# BAD BOY
## Ringo Starr Polydor

REVIEWED: NME, 8 July 1978, Page 26

Ringo is Ringo. Unlike Bowie, Dylan and their ilk who try on and discard personae as often as they change their socks, Ringo's personality has stayed pretty much the same for the last 16 years and his music tends to reaffirm this consistency. Wether he was singing country or cabaret, it was the music which was altered by the encounter, not Ringo.

'Bad Boy' is mainstream pop and he does it well. Amiable performances of pleasant songs, carried along by a backbone of solid skin-bashing that is Ringo's hallmark (this is the man who put the Beat into The Beatles).

He compiles the album with care. Standard pop by such as Gallagher & Lyle, Peter Skellern and Ian McLagan mixed with slightly more unusual fare like a Lil Armstrong tune and a reworking of The Supremes' 'Where Did Our Love Go'.

But Ringo's great strength is his unpretentiousness. It means he can do a smarmy song like 'Heart On My Sleeve' and, by singing it absolutely straight, he cuts out all the insinuating smugness of the original.

> McCartney is now a mere dilettante, but Ringo has character

Other highlights are 'Tonight', a fine love song, and the self-penned 'Old Time Relovin'', though most of the album maintains a high level of enjoyment.

I have a good deal of affection for 'Bad Boy'. Compare this to The Rutles or 'London Town' and Ringo knocks them both for six.

Innes and McCartney are now mere dilettantes, but Ringo has character. Middle-age pop it may be, but he makes up for it with humour and modesty.

Something of The Beatles' spirit lives on in the darker recesses of these songs. A splendid time is guaranteed for most. ***Graham Lock***

# BACK TO THE EGG
## Wings EMI

REVIEWED: MM, 9 June 1979, page 36

The voice of Paul McCartney has always been something special. From rockers to ballads, he stamps a song with a uniquely warm timbre and tone as distinctive as it is powerful.

His compositions are often brilliantly conceived too, and by now it's reasonable to accept that a complete generation of record buyers who aren't slavishly following an ex-Beatle are finding something about Paul's work that outshines most other bands in the pop-rock field. This album will probably sell a million, receive staggering airplay and have a few smash singles pulled from it, mainly because the music fulfils the demand of today's format for rock muzak.

And yet… while he continues to be most commercially successful of all ex-Beatles, Paul seems to be on a treadmill of banality.

Of course there's some decent music on 'Back To The Egg'. Serious musicians like McCartney, Denny Laine and jam session guests Pete Townshend, John Paul Jones, Dave Gilmour, Gary Brooker and others don't readily churn out rubbish and 'Rockestra Theme' and 'So Glad To See You Here' are creditable, rolling, raunchy and at least efficient, with Paul's voice at its rocking best on the last named track.

> While he is successful, Paul seems to be on a treadmill of banality

'Getting Closer' is a natural single in the 'Jet' league, Paul employing his favourite tactic of beginning the song with his voice rather than an instrument.

On the whole, an album surely destined to join the production line of rock, making no mark on the fabric of contemporary music.

This album get Wings nowhere and, as one who played it with an open mind – knowing of his aspirations – I find it sad. 'Back To The Egg' indeed. Would that he went. Solo. ***Ray Coleman***

# Letter from Lennon

MM, 9 JUNE 1979, PAGE 9

The exact number will not be known, but bagels by their thousands stuck in New Yorkers' throats on Sunday morning. The cause was a full, back page ad in *The New York Times*, taken out by John Lennon and Yoko Ono.

It has headed, "A love letter from John and Yoko to the people who ask us what, when and why." It's appearance in New York was followed by a broadcast of the text by Capital Radio.

This is what John and Yoko have to say – hang on to your haloes:

*The past ten years we noticed everything we wished came true in its own time, good or bad, one way or the other. We kept telling each other that one of these days we would have to get organised and wish for only good things. Then our baby arrived. We were overjoyed and at the same time felt very responsible. Now our wishes also affect him. We felt it was time for us to stop discussing and do something about the wishing process. The spring cleaning of our minds.*

*We kept finding things in those old closets in our minds that we hadn't realised were still there, things we wished we had never found. As we did our cleaning, we also started to notice many wrong things in our house. We started to love the plants which one of us originally thought were robbing air from us. We began to enjoy the drum beat of the city which used to annoy us.*

*We made a lot of mistakes and still do. In the past we spent a lot of energy in trying to get something we wanted, wondered why we didn't get it, only to find out that one or both of us didn't really want it. One day we received a sudden rain of chocolates from people around the world.*

*"Hey what's this, we're not eating sugar stuff are we?" "Who's wishing it?" We both laughed. We discovered that when two of us wished in unison it happened faster. As the Good Book says, "Where two are gathered together…" It's true. Two is plenty. A Newclear Seed.*

*More and more we are starting to wish and pray. The things we have started to achieve in the past by flashing a V-sign, we now try through wishing. We are not doing this because it is simpler. Wishing is more effective than waving flags. It works. It's like magic. Magic is real. The secret of it is to know that it is simple and not to kill it with an elaborate ritual which is a sign of insecurity. When somebody is angry with us, we draw a halo around his or her head in our minds. Does the person stop being angry then? Well, we don't know. We know, though, that when we draw a halo around a person, suddenly the person reminds us that everyone has good inside and that all people who come to us are angels in disguise carrying messages and gifts to us from the Universe. Magic is logical. Try it.*

*We have still got a long way to go. It seems the more we get into cleaning the faster the wishing and receiving process gets. The house is getting very comfortable now. Sean is beautiful. The plants are growing. The cats are purring… and there is love between us, our city, the country, the Earth. If two people like us can do what we are doing with our lives, any miracle is possible. It's true, we can do with a few big miracles right now. The thing is to recognise them when they come to you and to be thankful. First they come down in a small way, then they come in rivers and oceans. The future of Earth is up to us.*

*Many people are sending us vibes every day in letters, telegrams, taps on the gate or just flowers and nice thoughts. We thank them all and appreciate them for respecting our quiet space, which we need. We thank you all for the love you send us. We feel it every day. We know you are concerned about us. That is why everybody is asking us what, when and why. We understand. Well, this is what we've been doing. We hope you have the same space in your mind to make your own wishes come true.*

*If you think of us next time, remember, our silence is a silence of love and not of indifference. Remember, we are writing on sky instead of on paper – that's our song.*

*Lift up your eyes again and look around you, and you will see that you are walking in the sky, which extends to the ground. We are all part of the sky, more so than of the ground. Remember, we love you."*

***John Lennon and Yoko Ono***

*PS We noticed three angels over our shoulders when we wrote this!*

Paul McCartney conducts the Rockestra onstage, December 1979

# Wings over Kampuchea

MM, 5 January 1980, page 21

## Paul McCartney was joined by a galaxy of stars, but one was missing

At 6.30pm it was said by "reliable sources", that a certain Mr Lennon had checked into the Dorchester.

The forecourt of Hammersmith Odeon on this dry, crisply cold Saturday evening was throbbing in expectation. The billboard said Wings, Elvis Costello And The Attractions, Rockpile and Billy Connolly, but each of us stored the hope that the eveing would have its little surprises.

We got in – eventually – and sat in buzzing anticipation. By this time, music business people were popping up and swapping Christmas tales of gluttony. The subject of a – shhh – Beatles reunion was talked about with knowing secrecy.

Meanwhile, the lights went down and Billy Connolly, our host for the evening fell onto the stage. Even Billy had been reading the papers but had evidently not been talking to right people backstage. "Ah dinnae wanna build yer hopes up," he drawled surreptitiously, "but ah've just seen three a'the Applejacks backstage."

During the interval gossip is rife. *He* hasn't arrived yet… but Pete Townshend has and John Bonham and John Paul Jones and Kenney Jones. I remembered reading something about the Rockestra, the "galaxy of stars" who played on tracks on Wings' 'Back To The Egg' making an appearance, but that story had been shelved in favour of "Beatles to reform" revelations.

By now "people in the know" were convinced that Lennon wasn't there – but said so with a slight wink that kept them safe just in case.

What were we to think when McCartney's four-man brass section pumped out the opening bars to 'Got To Get You Into My Life'? Why else would he open with an old Beatles song? No particular reason as it turned out.

A little later into the set I spotted a banner from the balcony "Hello From New York", it said. Lennon had obviously decided to send a message in lieu of personal appearance. Maybe that explains why Wings' set suddenly went flat. Pop without the fizz. We had just seen two four-pieces provide excellent sets. Wings, with a personnel of nine, including brass section, failed dismally to match the pace set by Rockpile and almost sustained by Costello.

There were rare highlights – 'Maybe I'm Amazed', 'I've Had Enough', 'Spin On It' and an off the cuff tribute to Eddie Cochran with '20 Flight Rock' – but the norm was sedate, harmless and invariably tedious.

Paul himself sussed that this audience was anticipating "something else", and bitterly informed us that three of his former colleagues were nowhere near Hammersmith; then acknowledging the drowsiness of the occasion, "I don't know about you but I'm nodding off."

**Why'd he open with a Beatles song? No reason as it turned out**

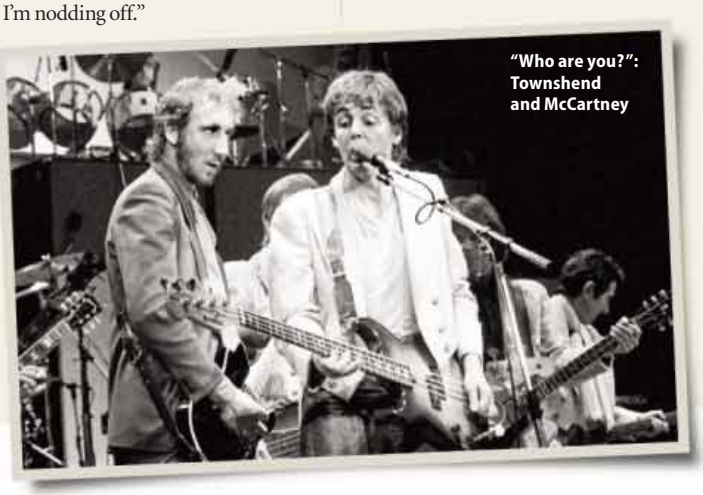
With Wings' unspectacular set over, it was fun-time and the curtain was upped to reveal the Rockestra. Some Whos (Townshend and Jones), a Pretender (Bruce Thomas), lots of Wings, three Zeppelins (Plant, Bonham and Jones), and two Rockpiles launched into 'The Rockestra Theme'.

While McCartney appeared intent in exercising discipline, Pete was having none of it. Only Townshend could windmill his guitar during 'Let It Be'.

One last look, just to make sure. No sign of a balding , pointy-nosed thin-lipped farmer with Jap boiler in tow.

Oh well, if John had been there he might have said "On behalf the group and myself, I'd like to say thankyou and I hope we pass the audition."

This time though, they would have failed. ***Harry Doherty***



"Who are you?": Townshend and McCartney

NME, 26 January 1980, page 11

# McCartney bust!

## Ex-Beatle held by customs in Japan after being caught with the demon weed

A handcuffed Macca is led away by Japanese customs officials

As TV crews and hundreds of fans converged on Tokyo's Narita Airport last Tuesday to welcome pop star Paul McCartney, 37, OBE, the ex-Beatle was detained by customs officials for possession of 220 grams of top-grade weed.

Airport officials were alerted by McCartney's "listless" behaviour. On searching his suitcase, they found the relaxant concealed in a toilet bag and the other in a suit pocket.

Macca was immediately transferred to the Drug Supervision Centre in a nearby Tokyo suburb where he can be held for a maximum of 15 days pending trial. Under the traditionally strict Japanese law, he's liable for either a jail sentence of up to 14 years, banishment from the country or a substantial fine or various combinations of the above.

He's been refused bail, but generously granted "some preferential treatment" during his mail-bag stitching time – coffee and bread in place of the standard rice and green tea. Wings have had to cancel their 11-day sell-out tour and a total of £184,000 is to be refunded to the 100,000 ticket holders.

A Tokyo music commentator told the press: "For a man like McCartney to violate the law means that he has no respect for Japanese law." Discounting the crowds of Wings fans who've been warbling 'Yesterday' outside his prison cell, it's hard to gauge whether or not the majority sympathise with this attitude.

**He's liable for a jail sentence of up to 14 years and a big fine**

For McCartney to get busted it's certainly open to a fair amount of conjecture. Seeing as he's reported to gross upwards of £20 million a year, he could well afford the standard megastar practice of paying a carrier to run his drugs through customs.

There's always the possibility that the dope was planted but that seems unlikely in the light of both Macca and Linda's previous convictions – Sweden, '72: for possession (after which he announced publicly: "We smoke grass, and we like it. I'll go on smoking it as soon as I can get some more."); Mull of Kintyre, '72: for growing marijuana; Los Angeles ,' 75: when Linda was obliged to attend a rehabilitation centre after being found in possession of enough weed for four joints.

Possible explanations for what seems to be either an exceptionally foolish move on Paulie's part are that he assumed that his status in Japan would grant him preferential treatment or that – slim chance, this – he was attempting some valiant and martyrish stand on behalf of the world-wide Legalise Cannabis Campaign, he leant meagre support in '67, but whose approaches he has since ignored.

Linda McCartney was less reserved. She told the press: "I'll never come back to Japan again. It's my first trip and my last." ***Mark Ellen***

## Macca: Repentant Prodigal Returns

ON FRIDAY Fleet Street welcomed the deportation of marijuana-carrying Paul McCartney with banner headlines calling him 'Beatle Paul'.

The Prosecutor's Office dropped all charges against the fab one last Friday after accepting that the 7.7 ounces of the popular but illegal combustible were intended for McCartney's sole use. As Paul was only staying in the land of the falling yen for a few days, and didn't plan to sell any of his substantial stash, and because he had shown signs of repentance, he was finally allowed to go free.

Whether a non-VIP would also be treated with such apparent sweetness and reason with a similar or even smaller amount of the dread weed is open to conjecture. *Thrills* does not advise that its readers emulate McCartney's deed, no matter how sorry they are if they get caught.

The McCartneys were whisked to Nairita airport en route to Amsterdam where a private jet was waiting to take them to Lydd airport in Kent. From there a Mercedes drove the family to their Sussex farm.

McCartney is alleged to have told reporters in Anchorage, Alaska, where his plane stopped for refuelling, that he was giving up smoking dope for good, but this story had changed by the time he touched down in England. As for pot, said the ex-mop top, "I can take it or leave it. Sometimes I prefer a drink." In its defence he elaborated that "I think we could decriminalise marijuana, and I would like to see a really unbiased medical report on it.

"We're all on drugs — cigarettes, whisky and wild, wild women," the former Beatles bassist decided brightly, almost breaking into song. "The older generation make marijuana out to be some kind of terrible thing. I have been in jail for ten days but I didn't go crazy because I wasn't able to have marijuana."

As expected they were lighting the fires back in Liverpool when news of Paulie's release came through. His brother, someone rejoicing under the unlikely handle of Mike McGear, commented that, "Paul is a very resilient person and I would imagine that he stood up to the ordeal pretty well".

Meanwhile, a representative of the older generation, Tory MP Sir Bernard Braine called himself away from the bar long enough to give his two pence worth. "I'm surprised to hear McCartney saying this now. I would have thought he had learned his lesson."

McCartney professed a desire to return to Japan some time but this is probably not on. Other drug smugglers who are not former members of the Beatles are serving hefty sentences in Tokyo after being caught with amounts of hashish considerably less then eight ounces.

MAX BELL

THRILLS

NME, 2 February 1980, page 11

JUSTIN THOMAS/EMPICS

Artist: Paul McCartney
Single: Coming Up
Label: Parlophone
Release: April 1980

Having just avoided going down in Japan we might've expected something more jubilant than 'Coming Up', but alas not to be.

Taken from his forthcoming solo album – released ten years after his first – it sees McCartney sinking further into the realms of mantelpiece kitsch and front-room cosiness. And, like movies and TV programmes designed specifically as family entertainment, it inevitably pleases no-one except pre-teen and senile members. They deserve far better treatment than this, which labours on a messy, synthetic-sounding horn arrangement, while McCartney pitches almost unrecognisably high. It's too cute to be quirky and the song's not up to much, even given the more confident discoid beat of Wings' improved live version on the flip. The side also contains a bonus 'Lunchbox/Odd Sox' – instrumental doodlings to a Lieutenant Pigeon reggae rhythm and about as good. One to match the ducks on the wall.

***Chris Bohn*** MM, 12 April 1980, page 9

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: Paul McCartney | |
| SINGLE: Waterfalls | |
| LABEL: Parlophone | RELEASED: June 1980 |

Being a naturally suspicious person , I'm wary of Paulie's supposed rejuvenation. After all, if Derek Jewell likes him that much there's got to be a catch. Still, 'Coming Up' is undoubtably alright, upfront triteness with little penetration. McCartney's still troubled by a tendency to disrupt a harmonious motif with a sudden splattering of disconnected romanticism. On 'Waterfalls', a bizarre execution, he falls into just that trap – witty little verses are compromised by chorus clichés.

'Check My Machine', the flip, is more peculiar; a deranged mixture of the developed madness which hasn't been in vogue since 'You Know My Name, Look Up My Number'. Ingredients that spring to my mind (purely opinion) are dub, beaver, and Krause, The Goons. Paul was evidently smoking the carpet prior to letting it all hang out, tape-wise, so the cognoscenti may not approve. I don't know.

***Max Bell*** NME, 21 June 1980, page 19

| | |
|---|---|
| ARTIST: John Lennon | |
| SINGLE: (Just Like) Starting Over | |
| LABEL: Geffen | RELEASED: October 1980 |

*"Let's take a trip and fly away, together alone"* – to the funny farm for a nice rest, presumably. So much for McCartney writing the slop and Lennon writing the shocking rockers! An early '70s *Opportunity Knocks* protégé, one Gerry Munroe, used to do songs very similar to this; pubs, Gracie Fields, maudlin singsongs. John Lennon either needs to be put away (if this record is meant to be good) or wants to be written off (if the direness of this dirge is intentional). My guess is that he's happy in his house-husband niche and did this merely to dissuade people who ask him when he's going to get back in the "studio" to "lay down" some new "tracks".

***Julie Burchill*** NME, 25 October 1980, page 22

# Beatles: it's all over – official

## A nation yawns, but housewife John Lennon, 39, says it in Newsweek, so it must be true

MM, 27 September 1980, page 9

How does a legend who feels he's made his contribution to society spend his five-year self-imposed exile? Some of the answers come in an interview John Lennon granted to Barbara Graustark of *Newsweek*.

Lennon and Yoko, as you might have heard, are presently recording an album in New York. Titled 'Double Fantasy' it's split straight down the middle, with John and Yoko getting seven tracks each. But apart from that, the Lennon's have become shrewd property speculators and farmers.

They currently own five apartments in exclusive New York blocks – each apparently worth $250,000. Then, for variety, there are homes in Palm beach, Florida, a mountain retreat in upstate New York and four dairy farms. But as Yoko said, "You have to invest in things you love, like cows. Buying houses was a practical decision, John was starting to feel stuck in the Dakota (their New York apartment complex) and we get bothered in hotels."

But how has Lennon actually spent his time since his last album? Apparently by swapping roles with Yoko, baking bread and hardly picking up a guitar. The mind-broadening side of his activities came from reading books on history, archaeology and anthropology and listening to classical music and muzak.

Lennon, who was well on his way to becoming rock's Greta Garbo, spoke candidly of his missing years: "Musically, my mind was just a clutter. It was apparent on 'Walls And Bridges', which was the work of a semi-sick craftsman. There was no inspiration and it gave an aura of misery… I became an artist because I cherished freedom – I couldn't fit into a classroom or office. I wasn't free at all."

> **"The four guys who used to be that group can never be that group again"**

Of his former song writing partner in the popular Liverpool beat combo with whom Lennon's name had been associated, Lennon himself was expansive: "It's ten years since I really communicated with Paul. I know as much about him as he knows about me, which is zilch!

"About two years ago he turned up at the door. I said, 'Look, do you mind ringing first? I've just had a hard day with the baby, I'm worn out and you're walking in with a damn guitar.'

"When I first got out of The Beatles I thought, 'Oh great, I don't have to listen to Paul, Ringo and George'. But it's boring yodelling by yourself in the studio. I was always waiting to get out of The Beatles from the day I filmed *How I Won The War*. I just didn't have the guts to do it.

"The seed was planted when The Beatles stopped touring and I couldn't deal with not going onstage. But I was too frightened to step out of the palace. That's what killed Presley. Whatever made The Beatles, The Beatles also made the '60s the '60s.

"Anybody who thinks that if John and Paul got together with George and Ringo, The Beatles would exist is out of their skulls. The Beatles gave everything they had to give and more. The four guys who used to be that group can never be that group again, even if they wanted to be.

"What if Paul and I got together? It would be boring. Whether George and Ringo joined in would be irrelevant, because Paul and I created the music, OK? But going back to The Beatles would be like going back to school… I was never one for reunions. It's all over!"

Well that, from the most influential quarter of the Fab Four, seems to rule out the possibility of an imminent Beatles reunion. McCartney is ensconced in Wings; Harrison is producing and writing the music for Terry Gilliam's film *Time Bandits* and Ringo is getting married again.

And Lennon: "On 9 October I'll be 40 and Sean *(John and Yoko's son)* will be five, and I can afford to say, 'Daddy does something else as well'!"

Lets hope that he does, and as soon as possible.

GETTY IMAGES

# McCARTNEY II Paul McCartney

Parlophone

REVIEWED: NME, 21 June 1980, page 35

This is a low, low trip. You'd think Paul McCartney had far more than enough money to resort to cheap (sic) cons like this.

'McCartney II' is Paul's home-brew bitter kit that he literally knocked together at home with the minimum of technology and thought. It sounds like the most desperate of artists' memorial rip-offs, one of those that a company slings out after all the compilations but just before the dialogue album.

Only the single 'Coming Up' resembles anything like effort, but even that suffers because of the skinflint production job. Elsewhere, it's hard to know where to begin. There are soapy-dope ramblings like 'Waterfalls' and 'Summer's Day Song' which take an age to finish and comes across like 'Fool On The Hill' with a dozen anchors around its neck. Then there are a couple of instrumentals that only the most shameless of creeps would make public, all childlike and gooey simple.

Which brings us to the true horror show, 'Bogey Music'. It's based on the fairytale book (for the under sixes) *Fungus The Bogey Man* and comes with a little explanation for all us sitting-comfortable adults. He makes the words and the tune up as he goes along. Sample: *"If you little bogeys all want to sing along/ Clean your little bogey act up and learn the bogey song"*.

But towards the end, McCartney cannot hold back his attempt any longer and out slips the keyword for this LP – *"without Bogey music, life is incomplete, you know it is SUCKERS"*.

'McCartney II' isn't worth the plastic it's printed on. Neither is Paul, but he'll go on doodling and fooling his public because they're too frightened to ditch him and his past and he's too rich to be stopped.

But, at 40, look at the face!

A picture of Dorian Gray. ***Danny Baker***

> 'McCartney II' isn't worth the plastic it's printed on. Neither is Paul

# DOUBLE FANTASY John Lennon & Yoko Ono

Geffen

REVIEWED: MM, 22 November 1980, page 26

Five years is a dangerously long time to avoid any kind of musical activity. Especially when you're an artist prone to bouts of creative atrophy.

A self-confessed dreamer, he has always produced his best work in the midst of some kind of catalytic event. In his early days with The Beatles this frisson came through his part supportive, part competitive writing relationship with Paul McCartney: then came another period of inspiration during the final crumbling of his first marriage, followed by perhaps his most consistently fruitful era under primal therapy from which was born his most significant solo album.

As suggested by his uninspired comeback single '(Just Like) Starting Over' which opens this album, the time spent in seclusion and semi-retirement appears to have dulled the man's sensibilities.

The inauspicious cover, depicting the happy couple locked in a kiss, reflects the music… which is a continuation of their public declaration on the unending beauty of their relationship.

In other words, it's more songs about Yoko, John and Sean. And yes, it's a godawful yawn.

Domestic democracy has ensure that Lennon gets seven tracks and Yoko the same. Her 'Kiss Kiss Kiss', the other half of the single, is the album's second track. It's typical of much of her music on the record, featuring her improved vocals, slight melody lines, and obscure lyrics.

'Cleanup time', the next Lennon composition, gives the backup musicians – including Earl Slick and Hugh McCracken on guitars, Tony Levin on bass, George Small on keyboards and Andy Newmark on drums – room to stretch out.

It's set at mid-pace, as are most of the other Lennon tracks, leaving it to Yoko to try her best at generating some kind of energy which she attempts with the mercifully short 'Give Me Something'.

Lennon's 'I'm Losing You' is next up. One of the album's strongest tracks echoing the 'White Album' and at least proving the man is still capable of summoning a tortured, aching vocal.

Yoko answers John's requiem to lost love with her own version on the same theme, 'I'm Moving On'.

Lennon's 'Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)' ends the first side in the same mushy vein it began. Basically a lullaby to his son, it boast a haunting melody and a simplistic lyric, but ultimately reinforces the album's incestuous feel, ending with daddy Lennon saying goodnight to his baby boy.

You don't have to be a Lennonologist to realise that 'Watching The Wheels', which opens the second side, is the key track. Taking its momentum from a similar piano motif to that on 'Imagine', it's Lennon's answer to his critics, and after this debacle there'll be plenty of them.

> It's more songs about Yoko, John and Sean. It's a godawful yawn

'Yes, I'm Your Angel' is Yoko's worst track on the album. Half waltz, half music hall ballad, she croons along to the kind of whimsical pap McCartney used to slip onto Beatles albums.

A ringing Argent-style guitar riff opens John's 'Woman', which is the nearest sound to the Fab Four on the album. The melody is passable but by now tributes to Yoko are wearing more than a little thin.

As an old companion of John Lennon once said: *"Some people wanna fill the world with silly love songs"*. The trouble is they just don't know when to stop.

***Ian Pye***

# SOME TIME IN NEW YORK CITY

Photographer Allan Tannenbaum had the opportunity of working with John and Yoko in the days before John Lennon's death

Allan Tannenbaum first met John Lennon in April 1975 while working for New York free paper, the *SoHo Weekly News*. The former Beatle was performing at a tribute to British TV mogul Sir Lew Grade. "I met John hanging out backstage," recalls Allan.

Working for the *SoHo Weekly News* until its closure in 1982, Allan's only subsequent sightings of Lennon were at press events – he snapped him arriving at the reopening of the Copacabana in 1976 and at the inaugural gala for President Jimmy Carter in 1977. However, in late 1980, Allan had an idea that enabled him to gain precious time photographing Lennon in the days before his death. "After five years of seclusion word was getting out that they were coming back with an album. I said, 'Why don't we try and do something with John and Yoko for the *SoHo Weekly News*?'"

Managing to set up an interview with just Yoko, the small magazine dispatched Allan to the Dakota building for a photo shoot, where the photographer once again bumped into the former Beatle. Lennon remembered their previous meeting in 1975 and unexpectedly agreed to some pictures with Yoko in Central Park and outside the Dakota. Allan also managed to elicit an invite to shoot stills a few days later on the set of a promo video for '(Just Like) Starting Over'.

"It was a beautiful fall day and they were shooting in Central Park," he recalls. "After a while Yoko suggested we get a coffee and we sat around drinking espresso and talking. She said, 'John feels comfortable with you, why don't you come with us to the studio?' So I got in the car with them and we went to a gallery in SoHo which had been converted to a film set for the day – a recreation of their white bedroom. They did two scenes, getting undressed totally nude and having to make love for the cameras. I'm taking pictures and I'm thinking, 'Wow, this is unbelievable – these are great pictures.'

**"I was in the darkroom making prints to bring them to the Dakota when I got the word that John had been shot"**

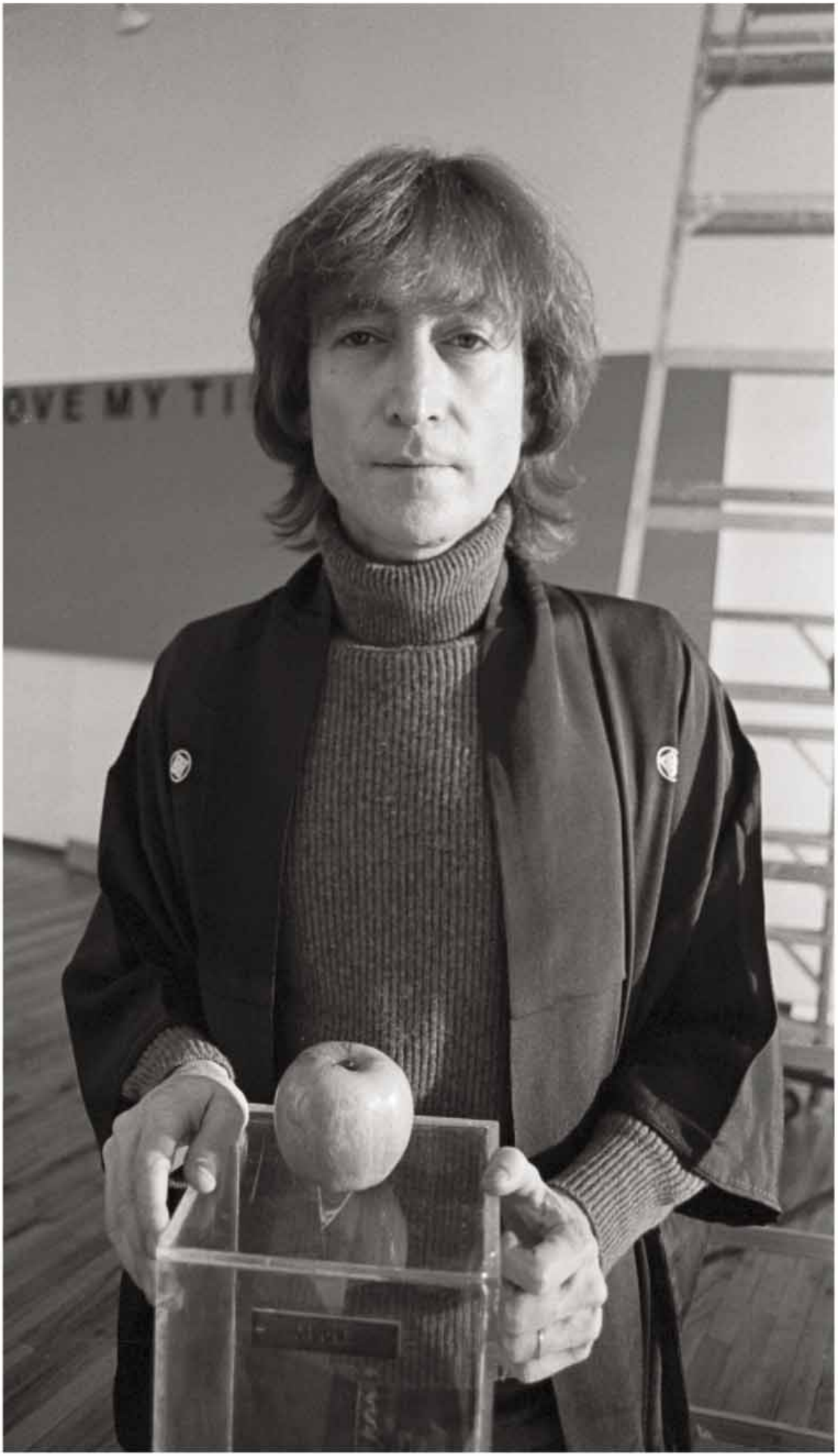
"A few days later I went up to the Dakota to show them the contact sheets. John really liked a portrait of them with their heads close together and said, 'The thing I like about your photographs is that you make Yoko look so beautiful.' He looked at me when he said that and it still cuts my heart to the quick when I think about it. A day or so after that I was in the darkroom at the *SoHo Weekly News* making prints to bring them to the Dakota when I got the word that he had been shot."

Having been around at the time of Lennon's death has meant that Yoko has never forgotten him. "We're not close friends or anything like that, but she's been really good to me. I've had three exhibitions and she has sent a giant bouquet of flowers each time. She supports my work and I think she appreciates that I've been very respectful of John's image and his memory with my photos. I think it's important for her to keep the memory of John alive – and I'm a part of that." ***Chris Hunt***

**21 NOVEMBER 1980**
**Outside the Dakota building**

**"It's one of my favourite pictures. It's great to see the building where they live and the floor that they live on – that's where he felt safe, that was his castle. The doorway where he was shot is at the bottom left of the picture.**

**"It's just a classic portrait of them together – most of the pictures that I have are of them together because they were together all of the time – they were a complete unit and a great couple."**




**26 NOVEMBER 1980**

**Art gallery in SoHo, New York. Video shoot for '(Just Like) Starting Over'**

"This was taken while they were setting up the shot for the video of '(Just Like) Starting Over'. The significance of this is that it was the same piece of art that Yoko was exhibiting when they first met in London – although they changed the apple.

"John looks very composed and very much at ease. He was having a good time. His face was really interesting and he had a lot of different looks – this one really looks like Beatle John."

## 26 NOVEMBER 1980

### SoHo, New York. Video shoot for '(Just Like) Starting Over'

"I really can't say how excited they are – Yoko looks quite passionate. There's another picture where they were laughing afterwards because they were doing this for a very long time. He just cracked up and said, 'What is this, *Ben* fucking *Hur*?'."

## 18 APRIL 1975

### Hilton Hotel, New York. Final television performance

"These were taken on the day I first met John Lennon – he was taping a TV Special called *A Salute To Sir Lew Grade*. I thought the backing band was Elephant's Memory, but I had a show of my John Lennon pictures and a couple of ex-members of the band saw it and said, 'No, we weren't Elephant's Memory, we were BOMF, you can see it on the drum kit.'

"Although it's not clear in that photo, everyone in the band was wearing a mask on the back of their head made from their own face and everyone's head was covered as well so their hair wasn't showing – that was John's idea because he thought Lew Grade was bald and two faced!

"By the way, do you know what BOMF stands for? It was John's name and it was short for Band Of Mother Fuckers. I just found that out recently from the band!"

## 26 NOVEMBER 1980

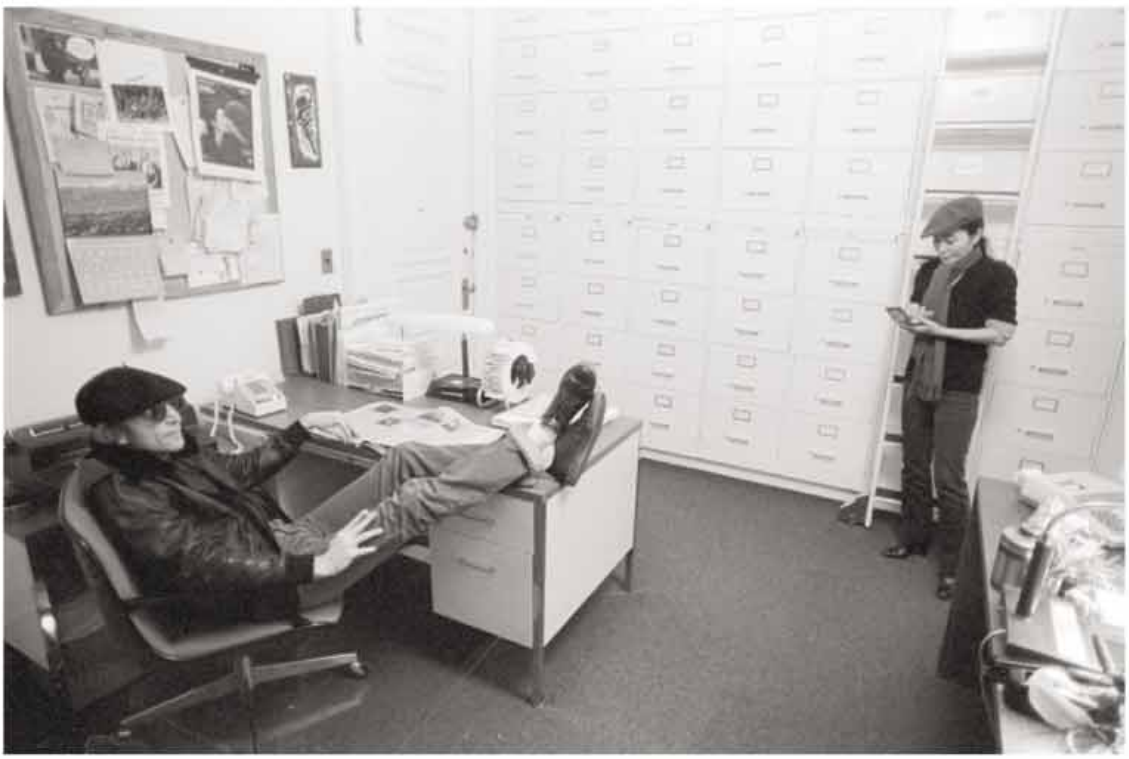
### Art gallery in SoHo, New York. Video shoot for '(Just Like) Starting Over'

"A lot of people thought it was a beautiful day outside, but it was night-time already and they had these big floodlights outside shining through the blinds so it looked like daylight. I think the set itself was so elegant and those kimonos were quite beautiful. With that light coming in it just lent itself to classic poses and classic compositions. I still am amazed when I see those photos. To me they have a special poignancy, because they look almost otherworldly, they look really serene – and a few days later he was gone."

## 26 NOVEMBER 1980

### Central Park, New York. Video shoot for '(Just Like) Starting Over'

"This is from the video shoot for 'Just Like Starting Over'. John was just full of energy and optimism and excitement as he could sense the possibilities. I could sense them as well because we were getting along and I was just talking to John as if he was my oldest friend – I knew they were going to go on tour and I imagined that maybe I could go on tour with them or something like that. There were all these possibilities."



## 21 NOVEMBER 1980

### Dakota building, Yoko's office

"I was with Yoko in her office and John came downstairs from their apartment, which was on the seventh floor – the office was called Studio One because it was on the ground floor. This picture was taken just after the shot outside the Dakota. He and Yoko had signed a couple of copies of the LP and I still have one of them on my wall."

## 8 DECEMBER 1980

### Police station, Mark Chapman under arrest

"The shock of John being shot was very strong. I went up to the hospital and I was praying that he was just wounded and that he would live, but when I got to the hospital there were a lot of people standing there just dumbfounded. I went into news photographer mode and went to the police station and waited along with everybody else for the 'perp walk'. When they walked Mark David Chapman down I got a couple of shots. Then I went down to the Dakota and I spent the entire night outside the Dakota."

## 14 DECEMBER 1980

### Central Park, New York. Vigil for John Lennon

"A week later there was a memorial vigil for John in Central Park. A lot of people came from all over the city – mostly solemn and it was very emotional for everybody. I think this picture mostly sums up what everybody was feeling. The irony was that the story we did for *SoHo Weekly News* was the interview with Yoko and the coverline was 'Yoko Only'. That was the issue that was on the stands when John was shot."

## 22 FEBRUARY 1981

### Central Park, New York. 'Walking On Thin Ice' video shoot

"After her shock and disbelief, Yoko plunged back into work, doing things to get her mind off it I guess. She started making a video for one of her songs, 'Walking On Thin Ice', and this picture was from the video shoot. A few days afterwards she called me to the Dakota to meet an art director who was coming from LA because they were going to release the single. She believed in astrology and it had to be done at a certain time. She wanted me to go out and take an aerial photo of a frozen lake, which I did. It was supposed to be for the single jacket but it actually wound up in the video instead.

"I was waiting in her bedroom for this art director to show up and it was really, really awkward and uncomfortable because she was in a really bad shape. There was nothing you could talk about and that was really difficult. But after that, little by little, things got back to normal."

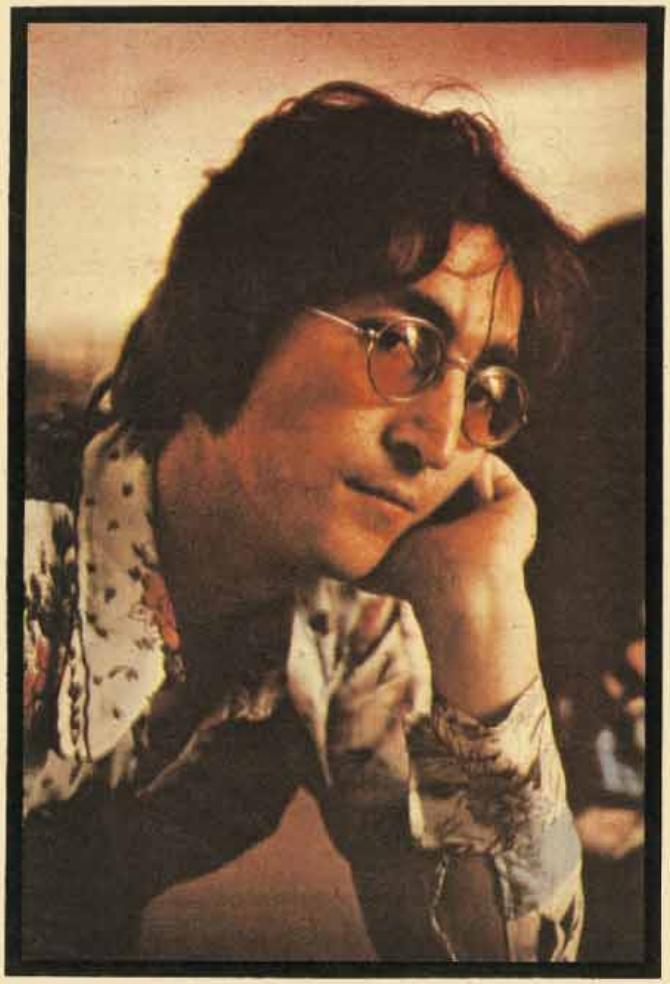
13 December 1980 US $1.75 (by air) 25p ISSN 0028 6362

# NME

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

Mourning thousands besiege downtown New York after the horrific murder of John Lennon

Inside: Full story & tributes



## JOHN ONO LENNON

9 October 1940 - 8 December 1980

## "WAR IS OVER IF YOU WANT IT."

NME, 13 December 1980, page 3

# John Lennon murdered

Crowds gathered outside the Lennons' home in the Dakota

A tearful Yoko, an angry crowd and a cold-hearted killer (below)

## New York report by Joe Stevens

John Lennon gave his last autograph in New York on Monday night.

In exchange, Mark David Chapman, 25, white and Hawaiian, thanked him with five .38 calibre bullets to the upper torso, inflicting seven wounds and severing a major artery.

The suspect, who had been in New York for two weeks, had been stalking Lennon for days outside the Dakota apartments on 72nd Street, Central Park West.

Lennon had spent the evening with Yoko and producer Jack Douglas at the Record Plant studio and departed at 10.30pm with the intention of getting something to eat before going back to the Dakota.

When John and Yoko returned home in a limousine, they got out and walked through the courtyard of the building, where the assailant stopped the couple for an autograph. Lennon signed a piece of paper and Chapman fired. Lennon staggered up some steps and fell into the doorman's kiosk.

The doorman, in disbelief, asked Chapman: "Do you know what you've done?" Chapman's reply was: "I shot John Lennon."

The attack took place at 10.50pm New York time. Chapman made no attempt to escape. He threw his gun down and was grabbed by the doorman and a passer-by, while Yoko, understandably distraught, clutched Lennon's body, screaming: "He's been shot! Someone help! Someone help!"

One of the Lennons' neighbours called the police and a passing patrol car arrived to find Lennon lying face down in the apartment-block office. As they took Lennon to hospital, Yoko cradled him in the back seat, imploring the police to hurry and repeating, "Tell me it's not true. Tell me he's going be alright."

**At the Dakota thousands gathered, some in tears, many wearing Beatles memorabilia**

On arrival at Roosevelt Hospital, 16 streets from the scene of the crime, frantic attempts were made to save Lennon by the emergency surgeons, with massive blood transfusions and resuscitation attempts to the heart, but all to no avail. Lennon was dead on arrival.

The first bullet had torn major arteries, causing him to bleed to death. When told by the doctors he was dead, Yoko left the hospital for an unknown destination.

Back at the Dakota, thousands of tourists gathered, some in tears, many wearing Beatles memorabilia and a few with angry words for Lennon's assailant. Barricades were erected and police with loud-hailers appealed to the crowd to use the sidewalks to relieve the traffic jam.

News arrived at the area in minutes, and TV lights lit the exterior of the apartments, casting eerie shadows across the nine-story brick structure which was used as a location for the film *Rosemary's Baby*. The growing crowd milled about in silent communion, casting glances to the windows hoping for a glimpse of the bereaved Lennons.

Meanwhile, Dr Lynn at Roosevelt Hospital held a press conference, claiming: "Lennon never had a chance after the first shot. He suffered wounds in the arms, chest and legs – seven in all, inflicted by five bullets."

According to police, Chapman had caused a disturbance outside the Dakota earlier this week. They described him as "a local screwball… a wacko who's been grinning throughout the interrogation as though he's enjoying the whole deal". Not a native of New York, Chapman had been living at the YMCA and then moved to the Sheraton Centre Hotel, where rooms go for $75 a night.

There is some uncertainty as to whether Chapman asked for the autograph and then shot Lennon or came back later, possibly after an argument. Certainly Chapman, a former security guard, had received an autograph from Lennon earlier in the day, but was refused a request to sign an album cover. Lennon's autograph was found on Chapman when police searched his pockets.

GETTY IMAGES/CORBIS

# Hello Goodbye

## A personal reaction by Charles Shaar Murray

Somewhere in the night the phone goes off, terminating an uneasy slumber during a marathon writing session on the Dury feature. It's Guy Stevens on the wire. He's just been talking to Jerry Lee Lewis and, during the conversation, Jerry Lee had broken off to listen to something coming over his radio. They've just carried the flash that someone had blown John Lennon away. "I don't fucking believe it," Jerry Lee told Guy. "JOHN LENNON HAS BEEN SHOT. JOHN LENNON IS DEAD, JOHN LENNON IS DEAD."

In the night it only registers on the surface. It's registering now. Eight hours later, Tuesday lunchtime.

Thoughts out of sequence: I'm glad that John Lennon took that five-year lay-off because it means that young Sean will remember his father, that they spent time together, that Lennon's last five years were happy. Ironies: that he made an album about ignoring the outside world and then some fucking psycho after 15 minutes of a mediabuzz turned rock'n'roll assassin and blew away an innocent man.

A stupid death, a pointless death, a useless death, tragic in the real sense. The most a human can wish for concerning his or her last exit is that the death should have some relevance to the life, that the death should grow out the life, part of the cycle of existence and all that shit. John Lennon deserved that at the very least and he didn't get it. If he had to die prematurely and violently, he should have had a death that had something to do with him and his life, and not some arsehole allowed to run about America with a gun.

None of it makes sense.

Next week we can talk about Lennon's life, his music, his contribution to the medium in which he worked. We can hear all the tributes, read the obits, consign him to history and all the rest of it. Today we just deal with the sorrow and the anger and the rage at futility.

I met John Lennon once and checked for him not just as a great talent, but as a good presence, a good human.

Whether John Lennon was making records or not whether I was personally delighted by those records or not, I was still glad that he was around.

The rest can wait. That last moment before the guy pulled the trigger, I hope you were thinking about something or someone that you made you happy. I hope you where happy. I hope that somehow you still are.

Hello… goodbye.

The late John Lennon: "a good presence and a good human"

**PAUL McCARTNEY**
"John was a great guy and he's going to be missed by the whole world."

**MICK JAGGER**
"I liked and knew John Lennon for over 18 years but I don't want to make a casual remark right now at such an awful moment for his family and millions of friends."

**GEORGE MARTIN**
"John's been the most retiring one and he had a lot to put up with. He bore the brunt of the Allen Klein affair and the traumatic experience of being likely to be expelled from America.

"It all came to a peaceful conclusion when he got his right to live in America and all the court cases were cleared up and recording contracts ended. He actually said to me, 'I'm free for the first time in my life. I don't have to do anything for anyone.'"

**JOE STRUMMER**
"I'm shattered. He was the hard man of The Beatles. If you were a kid in the '60s, you couldn't get away from him."

**ELTON JOHN**
"I'm so shocked. I don't want to say anything at all. I'm hoping to talk to Yoko tomorrow before I talk to anyone else."

**JOHN'S AUNT MIMI**
"He was as happy as the day was long. He was coming over after the record was released."

**ROGER DALTREY**
"It's terrible. My heart goes out to his wife and family and his sons."

**BOB GELDOF**
"Imagine no John Lennon – its very hard to do. That guy with the gun stole away our childhood when he shot Lennon. His music was the background to our growing up. I feel his death more keenly than, say, Presley or Hendrix – he wasn't a hero, he transcended that. His music was omnipotent. He was playing your thoughts back to you. He was so close to me and the people of my generation that it feels like someone has just raped your mind to have this happen. Violence like this you can almost imagine happening to some rock people, but not Lennon. I think the greatest tribute to pay him would be for the American gun laws to be amended immediately to try and stop something like this happening again."

**JEFF LYNNE**
"Lennon was the greatest influence on my life and probably on everyone else's as well. He was my idol. He was the one person I wanted to meet. I saw him once but I never met him. What can you say? It's terrible. Absolutely terrible."

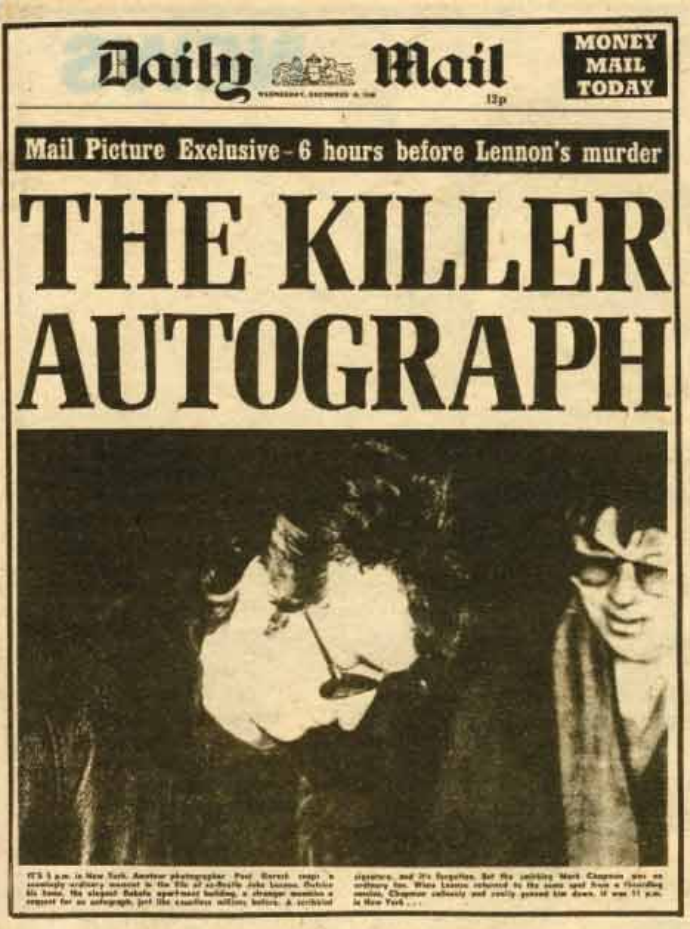
**PETE TOWNSHEND**
"I'm too upset to talk about it – I can't find words to express how I feel."

**JOHN PEEL**
"I was very distressed when I found out. I'd probably still be a computer programmer if it hadn't been for The Beatles. In America in 1964, being British – especially if you could claim to come from Greater Merseyside, which I do – was enough to get you on the radio. I had to cultivate something in order to convince them. I wouldn't have done it but for The Beatles."

CAMERA PRESS/REX FEATURES/LFI/GETTY IMAGES/UPPA

NME, 20 December 1980, page 7

20th



Daily Mail

MONEY MAIL TODAY

12p

Mail Picture Exclusive - 6 hours before Lennon's murder

THE KILLER AUTOGRAPH

# The man who scooped the world

***Scoop of the week was the picture of John Lennon signing the "Killer Autograph", which appeared on the front of Wednesday's Daily Mail and newspapers around the world. The shot was taken by amateur photographer Paul Goresh, who lived near the Dakota apartments and happened to be waiting for an autograph himself last Monday. As he killed time, he struck up an acquaintance with his fellow autograph hunter, Mark Chapman, a man with more than killing time on his mind . . .***

THIS TALL husky guy with a Southern accent asked me outside the Dakotas if I was waiting for John Lennon. "Yeah," I said. "How about you?".

"Yeah", he said. "I'm gonna try and get my album signed."

At that moment Lennon appeared from the Dakotas and asked the doorman where his limousine was. He came out with the people from the RKO radio network (they'd just conducted the last interview with Lennon) and they offered to give him a lift to the studio.

The husky guy timidly approached Lennon with the album. Lennon signed it 'John Lennon 1980' and took off.

*Goresh hit the shutter on his instamatic.*

Afterwards Mark David Chapman said to me: "John Lennon signed my autograph! No one in Hawaii's gonna believe me."

We stayed two more hours. Chapman kept to himself. I said I was leaving. He said, "Why don't you wait till they come home? They should be back soon and you can get *your* album signed." I explained I can come back another day.

He said: "I'd wait. You never know if you're gonna see him again."

I said: "What do you mean? I see him a lot."

Chapman said: "It's possible he could go to Spain or somewhere tonight and you'll never get your album signed."

I left shortly after that and Mark stayed.

New York interviews by JOE STEVENS

# "Man Shot One West 72nd..."

## Jim Moran was in the 4th Precinct squad car that arrived at the Dakotas shortly after Lennon's shooting

**JIM MORAN was on the night shift when they got the call off the squad car radio.**

**When Moran became a cop in '64 he'd been assigned to guard the hotel where The Beatles stayed in NYC. The whole deal was great, those screaming broads storming the barricades were reminiscent of stories his dad told him about Frank Sinatra when he played the Paramount. Moran got to see a couple of the mop-tops and was actually asked for an autograph by two girls from Poughkeepsie.**

**He became a fan after that and bought several Beatles albums and he kept track of their exploits. He used to tell his kids how he'd worked for The Beatles, which immediately made him more than just a cop to people on his block.**

**Now after slogging it out on the Fourth Precinct for all of his adult life those stories were a distant but fond memory, as the car with him and his partner made a left at 72nd off Central Park West. At the Dakotas a cop-car had already arrived, and a guy was getting handcuffed at the building's entrance.**

**Two cops were running from the gate carrying a guy wearing a red shirt and jeans. The guy had blood pouring from his chest.**

**The cops dumped the guy into the back seat of Jim Moran's vehicle with instructions to get him to hospital right away. Someone yelled: "Take the woman!" A shaking woman got in with the guy and cradled his head in her lap. She said nothing.**

**A kid shouted: "That's John Lennon in there." Moran turned to look and asked, "Are you John Lennon?" The guy nodded and groaned. Lennon it was — and in rough shape. Moran floored the accelerator and cut through the thirteen blocks to Roosevelt Hospital within minutes.**

**Tears streaming down his 45-year-old Irish face, Moran muttered to no one special, "Jeezus, I've got fucking John Lennon in the car and he's not gonna make it. Those fucking animals have done it again."**

**Sirens blaring, he pulled the car into the Emergency Wing Tunnel where para-medics awaited with the cart. "John Lennon?" one asked. Moran shouted, "Yeah! Move it!"**

**Lennon was wheeled through the entrance. Nurses cut the shirt off, swabbed the gaping wounds, all the time running with the cart." Too fucking late," Bill Gamble, Moran's partner, said.**

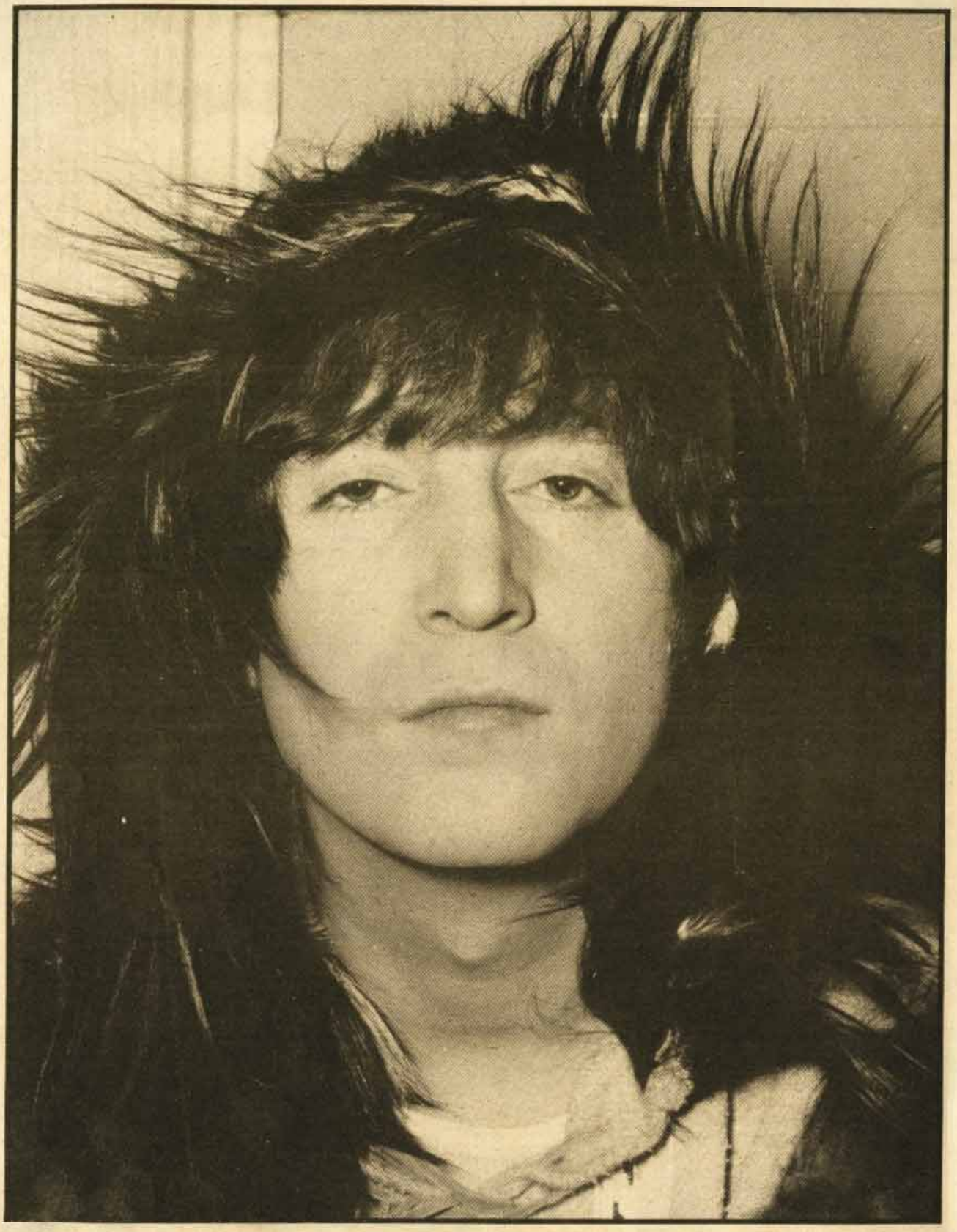
**"Yeah, and some sonafabitch will get a book deal out of it."**

**It occurred to him that the woman in the car was Lennon's wife. She appeared to be in shock.**

**Lennon was put on a table and his chest opened, his heart was massaged and he was given a blood transfusion. All to no avail. Moran tried what he could to comfort Yoko but what do you say to a guy's wife after he's been blown away?**

**Lennon had become New York City's 701st victim of armed assault this year and to Moran the situation had become just a part of the job after 16 years on the force. Only this time, he wasn't looking forward to telling his kids about it.**

JOHN ONO LENNON



9 October 1940 — 8 December 1980

# LENNON

# Elegy for Winston O' Boogie

**"The world revolves, not around the creators of new noises, but the creators of new values." — *Frederic Nietzsche***
**"And so, dear friends, you'll just have to carry on" — *John Lennon***

PEACE AND LOVE. If we are to take anything from the tragic death of John Lennon — and God knows the senselessness of his murder defies meaning — then it must, paradoxically, be these values we take away from the slaughter on New York's 72nd street last week.

It would be comforting to say that John Lennon died for peace and love, but his death was not that of the martyr, even though this was a role he seemed to relish at some points of his life.

No, he died without reason at the hands of a madman in a city and country where psychosis, violence, and assassination are virtually a way of life. Another celebrity in his position would have had a bodyguard, but that was not John Lennon's way. His trust, his willingness to stand naked before the world — sometimes literally — probably cost him his life.

But if John Lennon did not die for peace and love, then those were certainly the value for which he lived, which underpinned his work and which, by the close of his forty years, he seemed to have finally realised in his personal life. He did not die a vexed and tortured genius, as the myth of the modern artist often seems to demand — it was a myth to which Lennon himself was totally opposed. "I worship the survivors," he said — but as a fulfilled and humble family man approaching middle age.

Many rock stars have striven to grow old gracefully, but John Lennon managed it better than any, and in the last in-depth interview he granted before his death — to *Playboy* magazine — he spoke with contempt of those of his peers like The Rolling Stones, who were still "surrounded by a gang . . . that means you're still 16 in your head."

Never mind that his last record, 'Double Fantasy', lacked the creative urgency and inspiration that characterised his best work — though it shared its scrupulous and sometimes embarrassing honesty — his life was in better shape than ever, and the impression given by the man's last flurry of public statements and appearances was that of a mind not out of touch, feeding on former glories and addled by bad living, but alert, hungry, ready to confront and embrace the world from which he had, for several years, consciously retreated in order to be with his son Sean and develop what he saw as the weaker side of his character. He was cut down in his prime.

IN TODAY'S growing climate of pessimism, disillusion, and a newly exalted brutalism — be it economic, physical or emotional and spiritual brutality — it is difficult to understand, or even to recall accurately, the optimism of the '60s and its massed calls for peace and love. Most of it was, in any case, wilful escapism or what now seems an almost pitiful naivety.

None of that negates the time's underlying idealism, the belief in a saner, more just, dignified and rewarding order of things — and the struggle for the realisation of these values was something Lennon maintained until the end of his life.

Over the last five years he had come to see the struggle in a more domestic setting, in the need to create a more equable and balanced relationship between the sexes, a relationship more suitable to the modern age. Ono and Lennon felt they were still, albeit in a more subtle and understated way, trailblazing a new set of values. Lennon became a 'househusband' while Yoko assumed the traditional male role of dealing with and manipulating the world of commerce and money.

It was this very fusion of the personal and the political, the religious and the artistic, that gave Lennon's work much of its resonance, and that set him aside from the many fellow travellers who turned out to be merely gifted artisans or self-destructive visionary obsessives. It was not merely that his songs provided the soundtrack for our lives that made Lennon the 'voice of his generation' of current media cliche, but that they so often seemed to crystalise the mood of the times, and to do so with an honesty that was apparent in the way the man lived out his life.

That is one reason why his loss has hit the world so hard. Like most of us he was often selfish and unpleasant, but he was never miserly with himself or his soul, at least not in the latter part of his life. He gave. He shared. And now he's gone we too seem diminished. The part of us that responded to the man's essential goodness, his dignity, his openness, and his optimism will be that much more difficult to locate without him around.

To say he is destined to be judged as one of the great men of his age is not mere emotionalism or fan adulation. Greater tributes have and will be heaped on the heads of 'great statesmen' who in reality are bitter and unrequited humans believing in little beyond their own powerlust and the expediency of single or mass murder. But John Lennon was more loved than any politician and was feared only by the hypocrites and false demagogues who frequently tried to belittle his life, his beliefs and his work and to whom he remained utterly opposed from first until last. There was never any real reconciliation between him and the establishment, no matter how rich or famous he may have become.

For though it would be unwise to be too cynical about the multitude of tributes that are now being tossed after him, few of John Lennon's fans will not taste the smack of hypocrisy in the media's gushing reaction to his passing.

Alive, he was all too often mercilessly ridiculed, sneered at, and, worst of all, smugly patronised. The world liked him most when he was buttoned up in the comparative safety of a Beatle suit, where his non-conformism, vitriol and disdain for straight society could be conveniently overlooked or passed off as a contemporary twist on the hallowed traditions of showbusiness. Once the initial outrage at the four rather effeminate, long-haired young men with raucous music, provincial accents and a disrespectful scouse wit had passed, it was welcome to the fab world of our loveable moptops, and no cause for concern. At least until acid.

But John Lennon often hated his Beatle suit, though he doubtless relished the fame and fortune that it brought him. Later he would say that he never wanted the group to wear suits, to be groomed; "It was all Paul and Brian's (Epstein's) idea." In any case, the image of The Beatles that was projected was largely phoney; "they never talked about the orgies," he told Jann Wenner, editor of *Rolling Stone* magazine in 1970. "The Beatles tours were like Fellini's *Satyricon*."

The conflict between Lennon and society that had been a major feature of his life up until Beatlemania was, however, temporarily muted, channeled into oblique lyrical statements in his songs, or, more obviously, given free reign in the collections of satirical cartoons, stories, and sick jokes that he released as two books, *In His Own Write* and *Spaniard In The Works*. Elsewhere his acid tongue and irreverent wit still made his elders and supposed wisers uneasy and occasionally landed him in trouble, as with his infamous claim that the group were "bigger than Jesus Christ." But basically, he was tamed.

"All that business was fucking awful," he said later. "It was fuckin' humiliation. One has to completely humiliate oneself to be what The Beatles were and that's what I resent; I didn't know, I didn't foresee. It happened bit by bit, gradually, until you're doing exactly what you don't want to do with the sort of people you can't stand — the sort of people you hate when you're ten."

BEFORE LENNON had donned Beatle garb he had been Lennon the art school tearaway, Lennon the gang leader, Lennon the rock and roll lout, Lennon the man who pissed on nuns from the balcony of his Hamburg digs. He was variously admired, feared, loved, loathed and tolerated. He never bothered about acceptance beyond his peer group and his standing as a musician.

He met Yoko during his acid-gobbling period, in 1966, and two years later the couple finally came together. His decision to abandon his marriage to his first wife Cynthia for Yoko seemed to signal the resumption of hostilities with society — or rather society's hostilities with Lennon. Yoko was certainly attacked and lampooned both among Lennon's inner circle and among fans and followers of the band. She was, after all, a 'foreigner', an avant-garde artist of the sort Britain has always been unable to accept, and what was more, she was a fiercely independent woman. Later she would be tarred as the "woman who broke up The Beatles" — this was probably true, but then, so what? Can the institution of a rock group really be so sacrosanct that it becomes more important than the welfare of its individuals?

When Lennon began to take the offensive, returning his MBE "in protest against Britain's involvement in the Nigeria Biafra war, against our support of America in Vietnam, and against 'Cold Turkey' slipping down the charts" and generally speaking out against the moral corruption and hypocrisy that surrounded him, the full force of British moral indignation was turned against the pair.

They were busted for cannabis, ("I said to Yoko, 'Quick call the police, someone's trying to get in'. Then I realised it was the police.") The full frontal shot of the pair on the cover of their 'Two Virgins' cover was held up for scorn and forced into brown paper bags for marketing. As for crawling around together in bags onstage, staging 'events', spending their honeymoon in bed to launch a campaign for world peace . . . it was worse even than The Beatles' dalliance with psychedelics, and the woolly eastern mysticism of The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (alias 'Sexy Sadie').

Lennon seemed able to soak up the pressure being brought on him from inside and outside The Beatles without trouble — he was, though extremely sensitive, also an extremely tough nut. "You have to be a bastard to make it," he said in 1970. "And The Beatles were the biggest bastards of all."

In fact, the drugs, the constant insatiable expectations of the fans, the need to preserve a unified Beatles front when the quartet were privately bickering, the demands of the newly emerged hippie movement for an impossible Peace and Love Apocalypse Now — perfectly expressed in the immature demands of Jim Morrison's 'The End' — the grisly spectacle of the Vietnam war and the collapse of a projected Peace Festival in Toronto, the whole psychic confusion of the times as our optimism foundered on the inhospitable reefs of reality; these amounted to a load that not even John and Yoko with their newly discovered love shield of invincibility could carry.

The result was a withdrawal from drugs and a course in Dr Arthur Janov's Primal Therapy that regrounded the duo in the here and now and possible. On 'Plastic Ono Band' Lennon owned up; he confronted and exorcised his personal past, quit kidding himself and others about the possibilities of the public present for the 'Alternative' / 'Underground' / 'Hippie' movement. The album — possibly the finest, most harrowing, most compulsive work of his career — ended with a mantra of defiance to the world: *"Don't believe in Krishna, don't believe in Jesus, don't believe in Beatles, I just believe in me. Yoko and me. That's reality. The dream is over."*

It was not a popular record — most people didn't want to wake up. But it was the watershed of John Lennon's career, as an artist, just as meeting Yoko had been the watershed of his life. In either case nothing would be the same again.

The hostility was not ill-judged. Lennon had an acute understanding of British society and its processes, and in particular the class system. He'd seen it from top to bottom. Though not particularly working class himself, unlike Ringo Starkey and George Harrison, he had always assumed the mantle of the underdog and the outsider. He came from a broken home, he had never known his father and had been handed by his mother Julia to an aunt for his upbringing, and had lost his mother while still a teenager. No wonder that, even at age forty, he would still say "there's part of me that thinks I'm a loser."

But there was another, equally strong and perhaps more indelible mark on the young Lennon than familial status, the mark of the artist, and if he didn't match that other great English visionary, William Blake, in seeing visions of Angels in trees, as a child, then by his own admission "There was something wrong with me, I thought, because I saw things other people didn't see. I would find myself seeing hallucinatory images of my face" or "It caused me to always be a rebel, but on the other hand I wanted to be loved and accepted."

If the dislocation of sensibility in the young John Lennon became one of the driving forces in his rebellion and search for identity, then childhood itself always occupied a special place for him. His work is full of references to childhood, its magic and innocence. *"When I was younger so much younger than today/I never needed anybody's help in any way,"* he sang in *Help* and the sentiment was to re-occur in many different forms.

"When I was a boy, everything was right." He wrote songs to his own children, even getting the eleven year old Julian to play drums with him on a version of Lee Dorsey's 'Ya Ya', and always seemed to have a natural correspondence with children — one of the most memorable photographs of him was, for me, with a kid on his knee in the *Magical Mystery Tour* film. Two innocents abroad.

Lennon never lost that innocence, never lost the vision of the child who saw right through the Emperor's new clothes, even if at times he seemed to be the emperor himself, leading his troops into cul-de-sacs, or merely marching up the hill and back down again.

At the height of his bed and peace antics he was dubbed a "Fool" and he seized upon the term with a fierce glee. *"Everybody had a good year, everybody put the fool down,"* he sang on 'Let It Be' with tongue firmly in cheek, and again, more pertinently, on 'Instant Karma': *"How on earth you gonna see? Laughing at fools like me? Who on earth do you think you are? A superstar? Well alright, you are."*

His fondness for looking back, for remembering, for re-evaluating the past, in his songs, his interviews, was part of his constant search for self-discovery, self-awareness, self control. He came to understand his own complex nature intimately, to recognise the fiercely competitive sides of his nature. "It is the most violent people who go for love and peace," he said in his *Playboy* interview. "I sincerely believe in love and peace. I am a violent man who has learned not to be violent and who regrets his violence."

The conflict between Lennon the fighter and Lennon the peacemaker was always apparent. Even his peace campaign gave way to a period of agitprop militancy when the Lennons appeared in Japanese riot gear to promote 'Power To The People' and walked the streets of New York with loud hailer and *Red Mole* posters on a demonstration in opposition to British policy in Northern Ireland. He engaged in a lengthy dialogue with Tariq Ali's left wing magazine *Black Dwarf* about the words to his song 'Revolution'. "The lyrics stand today," he said before his death. "Don't expect me to be on the barricades unless it is with flowers."

HE'S GONE now, anyway, that John Lennon. Gone, gone, gone. People will say his spirit and works live on, as indeed they do; somebody will start a 'Lennon Lives' campaign, but the brutal truth is that he's gone. Nothing could have emphasised it more than the sudden cremation of his body without ceremony or the grand slam funeral usually reserved for mortals as popular as he was.

In the last interview he gave before his death — to RKO Radio in New York City — Lennon confronted those who were angry at his having spent the last five years in seclusion:

"Why were people angry at me? For not working? You know, if I were dead they wouldn't be angry at me. If I'd conveniently died after 'Walls And Bridges' they'd be writing this worshipful stuff about what a great guy I was and all. But I didn't die and it just infuriated people that I would live and just do what I wanted to do."

So let's not allow our grief to turn into a misplaced despair. That was not what John Lennon's life was for; just the opposite. He said that if The Beatles had any message it was to learn to swim ... "Don't expect John Lennon or Yoko Ono or Bob Dylan or Jesus Christ to come and do it for you. You have to do it yourself."

If you really loved and believed in John Lennon, that's exactly what you'll do. He made something good and valuable and enduring from his life. We should all try and do the same. Goodbye Hello.

**By Neil Spencer**

RETNA

# The Beatles completed

After the death of John Lennon ended all speculation about a Beatles reunion, the remaining Fabs were free to assert their independence – but their biggest successes were still as a group. By Mike Pattenden

For all the goodwill and personal success The Beatles enjoyed as individual artists in the wake of their 1970 split, they were accompanied by constant speculation over how long it would be before they reformed. No song they could ever write, nor any live performance could ever compare with the impact they made as a foursome.

This intransigence dogged the four members at every creative juncture and, eventually, it took four bullets to bring it to an end.

When Mark David Chapman stepped out of the shadows of the Dakota building at 11pm on Monday 8 December 1980 and gunned down John Lennon he severed the band from its past and left a question mark over their future.

The immediate effect was a huge outpouring of grief. Large crowds gathered at the corner of Central Park to mourn, while global television crews broadcast the images around the world. Radio stations around the world put Lennon's songs on constant rotation.

Within days the murdered Beatle had been elevated to martyrdom with lasting consequences for the three remaining members.

Lennon the rebel had become Lennon the saint, a man of peace who died violently like his heroes Ghandi and Martin Luther King.

*Rolling Stone* featured a naked Lennon on the cover, like a child of nature wrenched from the world. The Jesus image had finally reached its apotheosis – he had been crucified.

The primary effect was that no celebrity would ever feel at ease again. Manson and his disciples had already twisted The Beatles' lyrics into a message for mayhem, now the deluded loner stalked the object of his obsessions.

For the surviving Beatles, security could never be taken lightly again as George Harrison would discover nearly 20 years on. However, the fall-out from Lennon's death changed their world irrevocably in many other ways.

It had the sharpest impact on Paul McCartney who was further overshadowed in everything by his former partner. John's deification led to an equal diminishing in Paul's status as a writer and performer. He became the sentimental conformist, John the iconoclastic radical. No matter that the 'Double Fantasy' album released less than a month before John's death was full of the sort of soppy domestic ballads McCartney was pilloried for.

Lennon's name remains untarnished to this day. Mourners reassemble in Central Park annually to hold vigils at the spot now officially recognised as the Strawberry Fields memorial. Two years ago Liverpool airport was renamed Liverpool John Lennon Airport.

No other popular music figure could prompt 1,000 radio stations to play a single song at the same time as they did with 'Imagine' on the 50th anniversary of his birthday in October 1990.

His utopian hippy ballad, a posthumous Number One, is regularly numbered among the greatest songs of all time and was voted the nation's favourite song lyric on National Poetry Day 1999. Solo McCartney offerings tend to be conspicuous by their absence from such events.

Flying high: Yoko renames Liverpool airport after the local hero, 2002

## The fall-out from John Lennon's death changed the surviving Beatles' worlds irrevocably in many ways

Lennon's legacy has enjoyed a parallel existence to The Beatles, carefully nurtured by Yoko Ono. She exploits his commercial potential as efficiently as Colonel Tom Parker did Elvis. Archives from his life are drip-fed to fans, old material carefully repackaged. Advertising deals have been done – 'Instant Karma!' being handed to Nike, of all people.

Its current manifestation is *Lennon*, the musical based on his life and songs which opens on Broadway in July (not the first theatrical tribute, incidentally: *Lennon – In Music And Words* and *Looking Through A Glass Onion* came before).

For the survivors his elevation became an irritation they were forced to bear – sometimes through gritted teeth. Even George Harrison, forever overshadowed by the songwriting partnership of Lennon and McCartney, was regularly at pains to point out The Beatles were a democratic band. He wrote 'All Those Years Ago' about his deceased bandmate but left all mention of him out of his biography *I Me Mine*.

The constant harping ate away at McCartney. In 1998 he released a biography *Many Years From Now* with Barry Miles which asserted his avant-garde credentials and solo canon.

"I didn't want the reputation as a soppy arse because I'm not that," he announced, to universal disinterest.

Relations with Yoko Ono, hardly ever cordial, deteriorated as she blocked various band plans in order to promote her deceased husband as a separate entity.

The growing inferiority complex became manifest in the bitching over credits which

Yoko at the Strawberry Fields memorial in Central Park, New York

Macca rocks Glastonbury, June 2004…

escalated to risible heights. Irked by having his name left off 'Give Peace A Chance' on the 'Lennon Legend' compilation in 1997, McCartney retaliated by flipping the traditional writing credit on 19 Beatles songs on his 'Back In The US' live album.

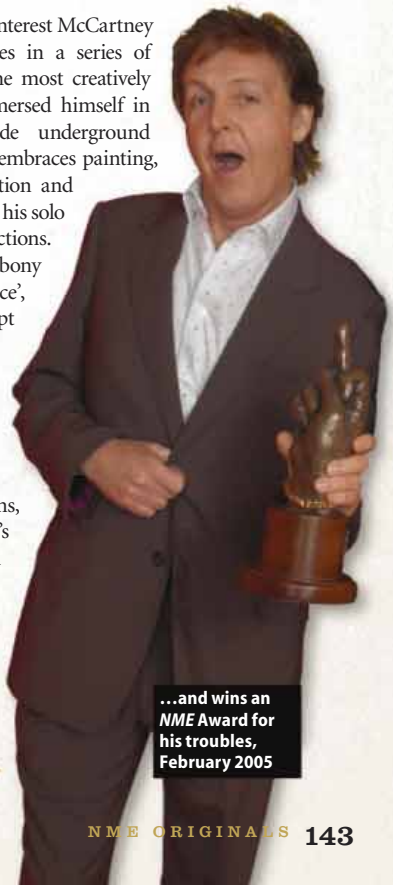
Of course McCartney's issues must be placed alongside his huge wealth. With a valuation of £550 million he is still the richest musician in the country, British pop's regal figurehead.

Down the years his steady solo output of music has see-sawed from the forgettable ('Press To Play'), to the disposable (the covers album 'Run Devil Run') and the underrated ('Flowers In The Dirt' and 'Driving Rain'). Diminishing sales for the latter on its 2001 release demonstrate how little interest exists for new material. Conversely his popularity as a live performer has revived massively in recent years. His Back In The US and Back In The World tours were must-see attractions, while his headline slot at Glastonbury in 2004 drew rave notices and even an *NME* Award for Best Event. That he is happy to rattle through his Beatles back catalogue may play some small role in the matter. Yet even without the live following his status would still be immense. The success of daughter Stella as a fashion designer, the death of wife Linda and his remarriage to Heather Mills has made the McCartneys part of the new cult of celebrity that so infatuates the country.

## Irked by having his name left off 'Lennon Legend', McCartney flipped credits on his live album

In the face of mainstream disinterest McCartney has indulged his polyglot tastes in a series of side projects. He was always the most creatively open Beatle, the one who immersed himself in Swinging London's avant-garde underground and since these days his career embraces painting, film, theatre, classical composition and experimental work. After Wings his solo work took him in diverse directions. He topped the UK charts with 'Ebony And Ivory' and 'Pipes Of Peace', and in 1984 he wrote the script and soundtrack to the maligned *Give My Regards To Broad Street* which yielded his last bona fide solo hit, 'No More Lonely Nights'.

Undeterred, he continued to expand his creative horizons, tackling classical works in 1991's 'Liverpool Oratorio' which was commissioned by the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra to mark its 150th anniversary and 'Standing Stone', 1997's symphonic poem. He also released two techno albums as The Fireman with producer Youth: 1994's



…and wins an *NME* Award for his troubles, February 2005

REX FEATURES/CORBIS/DEAN CHALKLEY

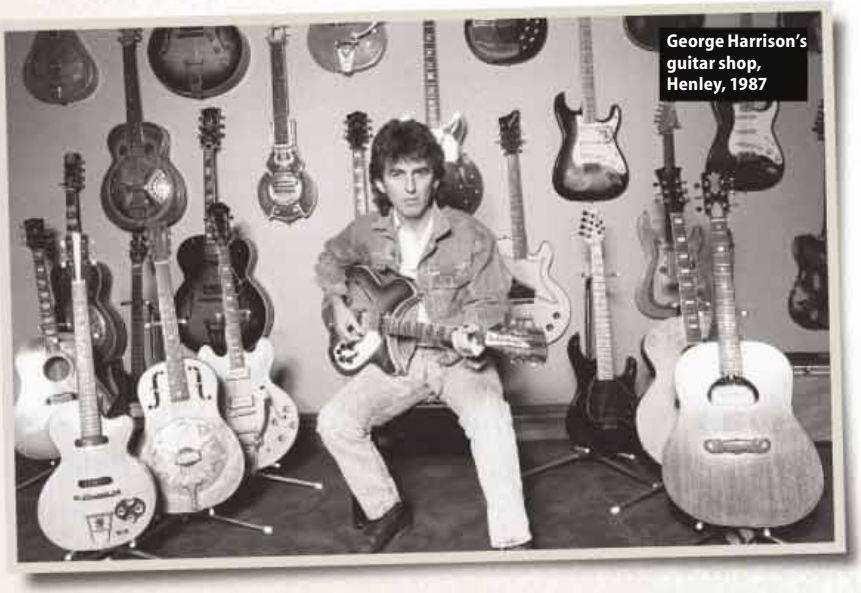
George Harrison and Bob Dylan onstage with The Traveling Wilburys, 1988

'Strawberries Oceans Ships Forest' and 1998's 'Rushes'. Turning his attention from music to art, he has exhibited a selection of his 500 paintings and published books of his art and poetry.

Never, for a single moment, did he step outside of his identity as 'former Beatle Paul'.

George Harrison was perhaps the one member who could have flowered outside the confines of The Beatles. Despite being restricted to the odd song per album he had nevertheless demonstrated his songwriting ability on songs such as 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' and 'Something'. Yet he never wrote a solo song to outstrip them. 'My Sweet Lord' invited a writ for its resemblance to 'He's So Fine', 'Got My Mind Set On You', a Number Two hit, was pure froth, and 'When We Was Fab' a nostalgic glance back at his glory years.

## When George Harrison died on 29 November 2001, his loss curtailed the possibility of new Beatles recordings



George Harrison's guitar shop, Henley, 1987

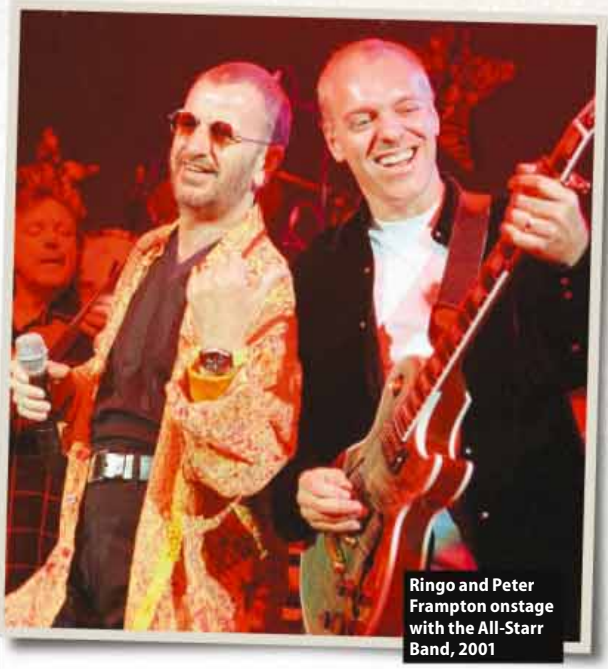
Riding a wave of goodwill post-split albums like 'All Things Must Pass' and 'Living In The Material World' sold well but his creative output tailed off, reviving briefly with 'Cloud Nine' in 1987. After the Concert For Bangla Desh he rarely ventured onto the live circuit – one maligned North American tour in 1974 and then he did not take to the road again for 17 years, retreating into a curmudgeonly middle-age leavened by his genuine interest in spiritualism and passion for fast cars. In the '80s he formed The Traveling Wilburys, a roots supergroup with Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, Roy Orbison and Beatles superfan Jeff Lynne, releasing two albums and a hit single 'Handle With Care'.

Perhaps his greatest contribution was to the ailing British cinema industry. He played a key role in setting up HandMade Films, beginning a sequence of movies with the Monty Python team and enjoying considerable success with cult classics *The Long Good Friday* and *Withnail And I*.

Of all the Beatles, Harrison remained closest to Eastern religion, investing time and money in the Natural Law Party. He stayed close friends with Ravi Shankar and could take as much credit in popularising the sitar in the West.

When he died on 29 November 2001 his loss curtailed any further possibility of 'new' retouched Beatles recordings

The Bearded Controller: Ringo Starr with Thomas The Tank Engine



Ringo and Peter Frampton onstage with the All-Starr Band, 2001

Perhaps Ringo suffered most of all without The Beatles. He never had the creative faculties to fall back on. Like the others he enjoyed enough goodwill early on, but the well ran dry while he soaked himself in booze. The 1983 album 'Old Wave' did not see the light of day, and nor did an abandoned album, recorded with producer Chips Moman in 1987. 'Vertical Man', featuring an all-star cast including Brian Wilson and Alanis Morissette plus separate performances by George and Paul peaked at Number 85 leading to the inescapable conclusion that no-one is interested in him as a recording artist any more.

Like many drummers, Ringo is happiest performing and his All-Starr Band proved a popular draw in the '90s. If Ringo is remembered for anything as a solo artist it is as the narrator of *Thomas The Tank Engine*, otherwise he would gladly settle for being just an ex-Beatle.

And The Beatles? Well they never went away, enjoying a parallel existence to the individuals, fuelled by nostalgia, careful marketing and, of course, the enduring appeal of the songs. Each generation is introduced to the band via a newly packaged set of releases, while old fans find a way of rediscovering them.

The modern trend for listing and reappraising the past only adds to their lustre. 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' topped a joint survey between HMV and Channel 4 in 1998 for the best album ever made, while *Rolling Stone* named it Number One in its 500 Greatest Albums Of All Time in 2003. In times of trouble people turn to The Beatles for comfort – after the Twin Towers fell in 2001, 'Let It Be' was one of the most requested songs on New York radio stations.

Subsequent eras continue to find something fresh in The Beatles as Apple and EMI have combined to recycle the band's many aspects: 'Love Songs', 'Rock'n'Roll Music', 'Past Masters', digitally remastered CD reissues of the Red and Blue albums, 'Live At The BBC', '1', 'Let It Be… Naked', the list grows with every anniversary. Yet the never-ending stream of material has only served to strengthen rather than dilute their name.

RETNA/REX FEATURES

Each time there's a titbit to tempt the completists, often the promise of unreleased material. 'Live At The BBC' included the previously unreleased Lennon/McCartney song 'I'll Be on My Way', formerly a Billy J Kramer and the Dakotas B-side.

As ever the holy grail remained 'new' old songs or, better still, the prospect of the three working together again and that finally occurred with the *Anthology* series. Handed a mucky old cassette found in a cupboard by Yoko, The Threatles reassembled in 1994 to tackle a trio of Lennon demos, 'Free As A Bird', 'Real Love' and 'Grow Old With Me'. News of the reunion made headlines the world over as they laboured to make something out of a handful of takes and a lot of tape hiss.

On completion 'Free As A Bird' duly reached Number Two in December 1995. Ironically it was kept from the top by Michael Jackson, current owner of Northern Songs, The Beatles' publishing rights – a source of consistent irritation to McCartney since 1985. Reports of Jackson's financial problems surround his court case but should he ever sell, Sony as joint owners have first dibs. The songs may never return to The Beatles.

No matter, having created the blueprint for guitar, bass and drums they continue to inspire bands to form. They have variously been influences on power pop, baggy, even acid house and grunge with Kurt Cobain acknowledging their influence.

Their most recent spiritual heirs came along with Britpop. Fellow Scousers The La's revived their shiny pop in the late '80s, but it was

**If Ringo is remembered for anything as a solo artist it is as the narrator of Thomas The Tank Engine**

Oasis who championed their influence obsessively. Guitarist and songwriter Noel Gallagher admitted to measuring every song against theirs, while reviving their sound comprehensively. The obsession reached its zenith when they hired Ringo's son Zak Starkey as drummer last year.

In August 1999 the Recording Industry Association of America revealed The Beatles to be the highest certified act of all-time with more than 113 million albums sold. If you added their individual solo sales together the total would fall well short.

The figures add up. As Philip Larkin noted in 1983: "Never has a whole been greater than its parts… when you get to the top, there is nowhere to go but down but The Beatles could not get down. There they remain, unreachable, frozen, fabulous."

And there they will stay.

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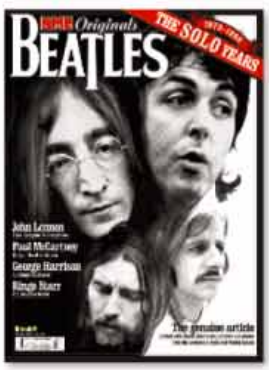


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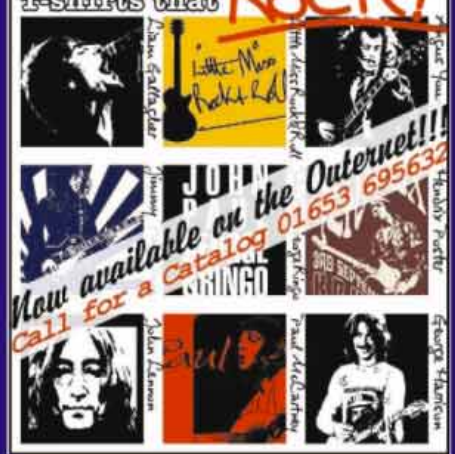

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