

# The Beatles

## Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band Album Review



Time magazine declared it "a historic departure in the progress of music", Rolling stone says "Under the guise of alter egos, the Beatles finally allowed their real selves to emerge, and with fun-loving experimentalism".

Before Sgt. Pepper's, no one seriously thought of rock music as actual art. That all changed in 1967 though, when John, Paul, George and Ringo (with "A Little Help" from their friend, producer George Martin;) created an undeniable work of art which still today remains one of the most influential albums of all time. Its considered as one of the first art rock albums, and a masterpiece of British psychedelia.

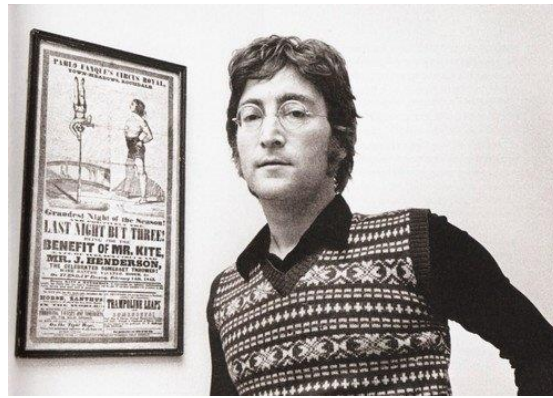
"Pepper was probably the one Beatle album I can say was my idea," McCartney admitted in an interview with Rolling stone(who still today rate the album #1 in the 500 greatest albums of all time), "It was my idea to say to the guys, 'Hey, how about disguising ourselves and getting an alter ego, because we're the Beatles and we're fed up.'" McCartney's idea was to let the band members act as if they were someone else and in a different band, and let their creative minds flow. Without having the limits that a 'teen sensation, catchy love song' band might have.

After the Beatles stopped touring in 1966, they had endless time to explore the possibilities of recording. And being removed for the first time from the nonstop commotion of Beatlemania, they also had time to question their identity as Beatles. Their experience with psychedelic drugs made this phenomenon seem increasingly surreal. Already trapped in their early twenties, the Beatles had to find a way out. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was born.



Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds is said to be one of the most visually enticing songs ever written. Which is completely reasonable, as throughout the song John instructs us to picture everything that he describes, from “tangerine trees” to “marmalade skies”. This particular Beatles song however, was also very controversial. It was banned almost instantly from radio stations all over England for its supposed drug references. Many perceived the song and its title to be a direct reference to LSD, after all, the letters spell out the acronym for it, which can also stand for Lysergic acid diethylamide, or better known as acid. However, the song was actually named after a nursery school drawing made by Lennon’s four year old son called "Lucy—in the sky with diamonds". And in 1980 he claimed the main inspiration came from Alice In Wonderland. He had read and admired the works of Lewis Carroll, and the title of Julian's drawing reminded him of the "Wool and Water" chapter of Through the Looking Glass in which Alice floats in a "boat beneath a sunny sky". Yet, any devoted John fan knows that he dropped acid many times and talked his friends into it, he also read voraciously and was always obsessed with wordplay and puns ("incredibly high," "head in the clouds"). Lennon's explanation is not entirely persuasive, and that the song was indeed probably drug-inspired, at least in part. And while he claimed that he had no intention of spelling out "LSD" with the title, it is a little hard to believe considering how smart and witty he was. The actual song gives off a trippy day dreaming feel, and is very distinctive musically. Extra instruments used were a Lowrey organ, tambura, and maracas. Impressively, it took an eight-hour night time session to rehearse the song, and the next day they recorded seven takes to complete the fastest recording made for Sgt. Pepper.





The inspiration to write *Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!* was a 19th-century circus poster that John Lennon purchased in an antique shop in 1967, while filming promotional videos for "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever". He claimed years later to still have the poster in his home. "Everything from the song is from that poster," he explained, "except the horse wasn't called Henry." Evocative word and sound pictures us a carnival-like atmosphere right out of John's mind. He told his producer that he wanted "to smell the sawdust on the floor." And in the middle eight bars, multiple recordings of fairground organs and calliope music were spliced together in an attempt to produce his request. The song has a very simple beat and structure, yet it's so and swirly and abstract, and extremely effective at giving off a circus feel.



*When I'm Sixty Four* dates back to The Beatles' earliest days. It had actually been written and even performed by the Beatles back in the early '60s, before they began their recording career. Paul McCartney had composed it on his family piano in Liverpool when he was about 15. "Back then I wasn't necessarily looking to be a rock 'n' roller. When I wrote *When I'm Sixty-Four* I thought I was writing a song for (Frank) Sinatra. There were records other than rock 'n' roll that were important to me." Paul once told interviewers. The music is suitably old-fashioned, with a music hall melody, and a clarinet arrangement, because Paul loved the sound of clarinets. With a sort of fruity-tooty style, the happy sing-along melody is suitable for drives to the seaside one might say. McCartney added layers of irony and cleverness to the lyrics which were not found in many genuine music hall songs, as well as a very catchy tune, though perhaps not done in an arrangement that pleased many rock fanatics. John may have called it a granny song later, but man... how beautifully the guitar is played on this.



Ringo Starr did not sing very often on Beatles records, however, he took center stage on "With a Little Help From My Friends". Definitely being one of The Beatles more optimistic feel-good songs, it gives off quite a friendly message that friends are there for you. It has a sort of sweet intro, where Ringo asks his audience if they would walk out on him if he sang out of tune. The song's effectiveness is increased by the use of question and answer structure between Ringo and John & Paul harmonizing. The Beatles recorded ten takes of this song in one day, with Paul on piano, John beating a cowbell, George playing lead guitar and Ringo on drums. Lastly Ringo overdubbed his lead vocals. Then the following day; on the morning they posed for the Sgt Pepper cover shoot, they added guitar, tambourine, bass and harmony vocals.



For the song "Good Morning, Good morning," John was inspired by an unlikely candidate. He was sitting at the piano and brainstorming song ideas, and in the background he noticed a Kellogg's Cornflakes commercial with a catchy refrain on his television. He then set about writing a song about life's colorless routine, referencing death, work, boredom, and even a popular soap opera from the time. Singing in a flat, almost sarcastic tone, John narrates the day of an average man in an ironic frustrating way, a circus-like atmosphere minus excitement and joy. Paul contributed an outstanding guitar solo, and Ringo's complicated and skillful drumming is jaw dropping.



With the lyrical inspiration coming from something as simple as the newspaper, “A day in the Life” is the ultimate, and most chaotic “orgasm” of sound in the history of The Beatles. It is one of the most applauded and influential songs of this era, complete with a forty piece orchestra, including strings, brass, woodwinds, and percussion. Definitely a milestone for the time, it sounds like the whole world falling apart. John sings beautifully about death and dread in a haunting voice which can put you in a trance and send shivers down your spine. The song even has a supposed drug reference, the line “I’d love to turn you on,” referred to a phrase popularized by Timothy Leary (Turn On, Tune In, Drop Out), as the album was released only weeks before the summer of love. In the studio, the band wanted to ensure that everyone was in an excited mood. The recording room was full of balloons; the formally attired orchestra members were given party hats, rubber clown noses and even gorilla paws to wear. They then had them play the lowest note on their instruments to the highest. An unseeingly difficult task for such professional musicians, as they were used to playing notes straight off their music sheets. The song ends with a powerful piano crash, that included every spare piano they had in the studio at the time. The song is so intense that it could be considered far too intense musically and emotionally for regular radio play. “A Day in the Life” is recognized as a major piece of musical art. And in so many ways, a Beatles masterwork.



Sgt Pepper was the reason the Beatles got to explore and invent their other identity and allowed them to create so many wicked pieces of art. I believe it was an outlet for their creativity and a masterpiece at that. I could continue, but I think I’ve made a point in why the Beatles *Sgt Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, is one of the finest rock albums ever created, and probably will remain so for many years to come.

