

Reviewed by: Aidan Lu

# Rubber Soul: (The Beatles) The Album To End All Albums



## The Beatles: A Brief History

When it comes to the most influential bands of their time, nobody tops The Beatles in terms of popularity, musicality and impact on the music industry as a whole. The day was July 6th, 1957, a day that would arguably change the course of history forever. A sixteen year old John Lennon is performing with his group The Quarry Men at a local garden fete in Liverpool, England. It is there he meets fifteen year old Paul McCartney who impresses John with his guitar skills and is invited to join the band. Paul suggests that John also recruit his good friend George Harrison, who was 14 at the time. John was reluctant at first because of his age, but agreed once he heard his incredible playing. The group had huge success in both Liverpool and Germany, usually playing in small clubs and bars. Eventually, the bass player for the group (Stuart Sutcliffe) made the decision to leave the band and was replaced by Paul on bass. At this time, the group had also gotten themselves a manager named Brian Epstein. Brian was not too fond of their current drummer (Pete Best). The group agreed and quickly fired and replaced him with Richard Starkey, or more commonly known as Ringo Starr. The group changed their names to the Beatles and went on to start the biggest craze in music history entitled "Beatlemania". The group acquired worldwide fame with their tours of the U.K and the U.S and their songs and albums topped the charts almost everywhere. The Beatles were at the top, but it was only getting started.



(From Left to Right)

- Paul McCartney- Bass
- Ringo Starr- Drums
- John Lennon- Rhythm Guitar
- George Harison- Lead Guitar

# The Making Of Rubber Soul

The Beatles had just come off of their second North American tour and were working hard to put together an album in time for Christmas. The Beatles were getting tired of the incessant screaming from their fans as they thought the fans weren't enjoying the music. They also wanted to depart from the simple, poppy, love songs they had been making and wanted to make something worth listening to.



**(The Beatles at Shea Stadium, 1965)**

Recording for Rubber Soul began on October, 12th, 1965 at EMI studios in London. They were on a tight schedule to make sure the album was released before Christmas and they spent hours upon hours in the recording studio. Rubber Soul was also their second album to contain purely original material, the first being **A Hard Day's Night**, released the year before. This proved to be a challenge for Lennon and McCartney because they were having trouble coming up with new material. In fact, two of the songs included on the album were withheld from their last album **Help!**. The Beatles recorded "**Day Tripper**" and "**We Can Work It Out**" to release as a double A-side single alongside the album. The single stayed on top of the charts for five weeks straight with it also being the group's fastest-selling single since 1964. Recording for Rubber Soul ended on November, 11th, 1965 and released on the 3rd of December, 1965.

# Track List

## Side One:

**“Drive My Car”- 2:28**

**“Norwegian Wood(This Bird Has Flown)”- 2:03**

“You Won’t See Me”- 3:19

“Nowhere Man”- 2:43

“Think for Yourself”- 2:18

“The Word”- 2:43

**“Michelle”- 2:42**

## Side Two

“What Goes On”- 2:48

“Girl”- 2:31

“I’m Looking Through You”- 2:26

**“In My Life”- 2:26**

“Wait”- 2:14

“If I Needed Someone”- 2:22

“Run For Your Life”- 2:21



# Song Review

## Song 1: [Drive My Car](#)

When it comes to albums, most people judge the album by its opening track. If the opening track sucks, then it's not looking too good for the rest of the album, especially if it's the first time someone is being exposed to said band. Fortunately, Drive My Car is an amazing opening track and sets the tone for the whole album. The song starts with a killer dual guitar-bass riff played by George and Paul and the distinct vocal harmonies between John and Paul really adds to the song. The track is very reminiscent of their earlier pieces because it's more of a pop rock sort of sound with clean guitar, bass and drum sounds. The term 'Drive My Car' is an old euphemism for sex and the song tells the story of a young woman who is aspiring to become a movie star and tells the male narrator that he can be her chauffeur and 'Drive My Car'. Overall, this is a great song and a great opening for an amazing album.

## Song 2: [Norwegian Wood\(This Bird Has Flown\)](#)

We're only on the second song of the album and they're already experimenting with new instrument and recording techniques. This was the first rock song ever to include the sitar, an Indian instrument similar to a guitar. This instrument would be used frequently in subsequent rock songs, most notably used in psychedelic rock. The instrument adds a weird, almost drone-like sound to the song and it's overall a great song. The term 'Norwegian Wood' comes from a cheap wall paneling that was a big craze in London at the time. The inspiration for the song however.... that's an interesting story. The inspiration behind the song comes from an affair John was having, as stated by the opening lyrics "I once had a girl, or should I say, she once had me". The song explains how the narrator wants to sleep with this one woman, but she tells him she has work in the morning and tells him to sleep in the bathtub. In retribution, he lights a fire in her house, burning her "Norwegian Wood". Pretty intense and really straying from their usual love songs.



## Song 7: [Michelle](#)

This one caught me off guard the first time I heard it because half the lines are sung in French. The backstory is that Paul went to the wife of his old friend Ivan Vaughn, who was a French teacher, and asked her to think of a French name and a phrase that rhymes with it. She then created the phrase “Michelle, ma belle” which translates to “My Beautiful Michelle”. So, to my disappointment, Michelle isn’t a real person. But the song is still great. The song features Paul on lead vocals and, as I mentioned before, the song switches between English and French. It adds quite a romantic element to the song and it’s complimented by the mellow bass and guitar. The drums add to this by hitting the rim of the snare as opposed to the drumhead itself. This adds almost a jazzy or bluesy feel to the song. The main guitar solo was created by George Martin and played by George Harrison. This is a great song that contrasts the faster rock songs that come before it and is a great way to end side one of the album.

## Song 11: [In My Life](#)

The final song I’ll be looking at is In My Life. My favourite song off the album and quite possibly my favourite Beatles song. The song has such a joyful and nostalgic feel as the speaker looks back on their life and all the people around them. John himself regards this as his “first real piece of work” because it includes lyrics about his own personal life. The inspiration for the song came from one interviewer asking John why his songs lacked lyrics about his childhood. John retaliated by writing this piece, reflecting his life and childhood before gaining international fame. The song opens with a beautiful guitar riff written by John and the riff returns later in the song. The drums, bass and guitar are quite calm in the background to ensure the listener really focuses on the lyrics. But in my opinion, the best part of this song is the piano solo played by George Martin. Truth be told, George couldn’t play the song to the speed he wanted. So, they recorded it half speed and then sped it up in the recording. This gives it an almost harpsichord sound to it that really adds to the nostalgic feel of the song. It is a beautiful solo to go with a beautiful song.



## Final Verdict

This album is amazing. It is truly a work of art. There wasn't a song on the album that I didn't enjoy. This was the Beatles first attempt to experiment with music and they really hit the mark. From the use of new instruments to new recording techniques, this album had it all. Many of the things the Beatles introduced in this album would become rock standards for years to come and it really cemented them as the kings of rock. It was great just to put everything down for 40 minutes and just enjoy good music. I would not only consider this the best Beatles album, but one of the best albums of all time. I urge you to just sit back and listen to the album in its entirety. You won't be disappointed.

