

JOHN LENNON BOOK REVIEW EXTRAVAGANZA

# The continuing force of one man's ingenuity

In His Own Write and A Spaniard in the Works

John Lennon  
Pimlico

John Lennon was a man whose celebrity never eclipsed the admiration others had for his talent as an artist. His two forays into the literary arena, *In His Own Write* and *A Spaniard in the Works*, display his deft word craft outside of lyrics and balladeering.

Both books are compilations of hotel-room and recording-booth scrawlings during the hey-day of Beatlemania (1963 and 1965 respectively). Often insightful to human nature, but more often bizarre and side-splittingly funny, Lennon's character-sketches and parables illustrate the mind-set of someone being in the vice of the public spotlight.

Despite fame and wealth beyond any of our capacities to comprehend, Lennon remained true to his working-class background. None of the characters in either compilation are wealthy; instead, they are sullen, angry, 'salt-of-the-earth' caricatures. Lennon knew this mentality best, and stuck with it.

Lennon attacked many themes in this book but those of racism, religion and immortality always lurked beneath the words. His dry humour accented these themes and the book reads much like a "what's wrong with the world in 1965" diary. However, Lennon does not preach. He distances himself enough from the narratives so that the writing does not become didactic.

The most noticeable quirk Lennon

had as a writer was his use of the language. The book is filled with strange spellings and made-up words. It makes for a slower read, yet his sharp word-play and cunning double entendres are a sight to behold. Coupled with his twisted yet hilarious sketches, these books show the genius behind the Beatles. It was the perfect balance for an artist who was singing songs about holding people's hands and 'diamonds and rings'.

The books also show Lennon's capacity for doing more serious work (*Abbey Road*, "I am the Walrus" and the White Album). I always thought the final chapters of the Beatles' discography had been fuelled by hallucinogens and freaky girlfriends, but these books show how Lennon was riding the strange bus since the inception of the band:

**Last Will and Testicle**

*'I, Barrold Reginald Bunker-Harquart being of sound mind you, limp and bodie, do on this day the 18 of September 1924th,*

## We all shine on

We All Shine On

Paul Du Noyer

Raincoast Books

*leave all my belodgings estate and brown suits to my nice neice Elsie. The above afformentioned hereafter to be kept in a large box untit she is 21 of age, then to be released amongst a birthdave party given in her honour. She will then be wheeled gladly into the Great Hall or kitchen, and all my worldly good heaped upon her in abundance. Thus accordian to my word will this be carried out as I lie in the ground getting eaten.'*

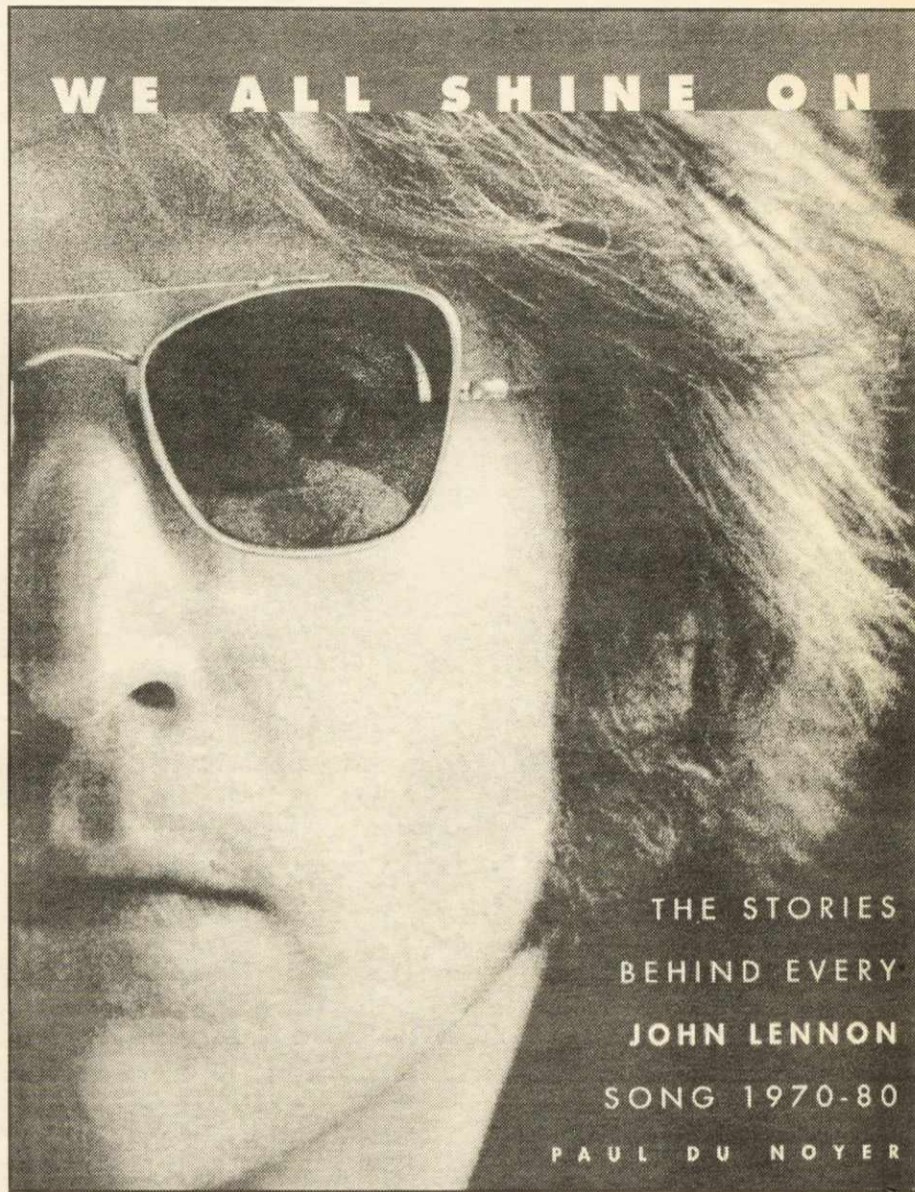
Definitely a book worth reading if you have ever wondered why the Beatles were such a creative force in music.

JOHN CULLEN

The cover of this book says "the stories behind every John Lennon song 1970-80", and that's exactly what it is. Song after song from each of Lennon's solo albums are described and given a brief background.

As an introduction to each specific album, Author Paul Du Noyer tells parts of Lennon's life story during the years of the songwriting for the album. Du Noyer hopes that, by telling the stories behind the lyrics, the reader will gain knowledge of Lennon's personality and life experiences.

The book doesn't follow any central theme or story, so it becomes uninteresting rather quickly. You would think that by writing this book, Du Noyer would have something novel to say about the meaning of the lyrics. However, most of what is said states the obvious, and can be deciphered by closely analyzing the songs. Also, if you



are enough of a fan to be reading this book, you will probably already know quite a bit of what is written.

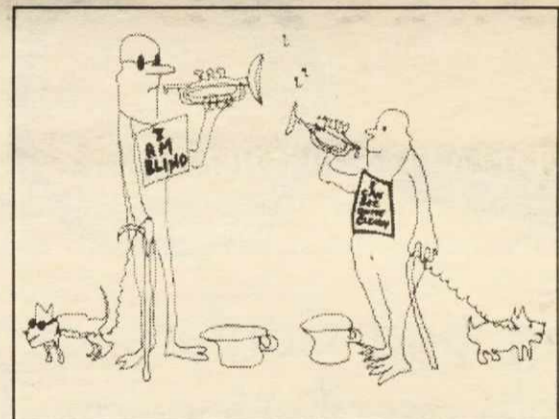
Du Noyer doesn't even

completely avoiding what the lyrics are about.

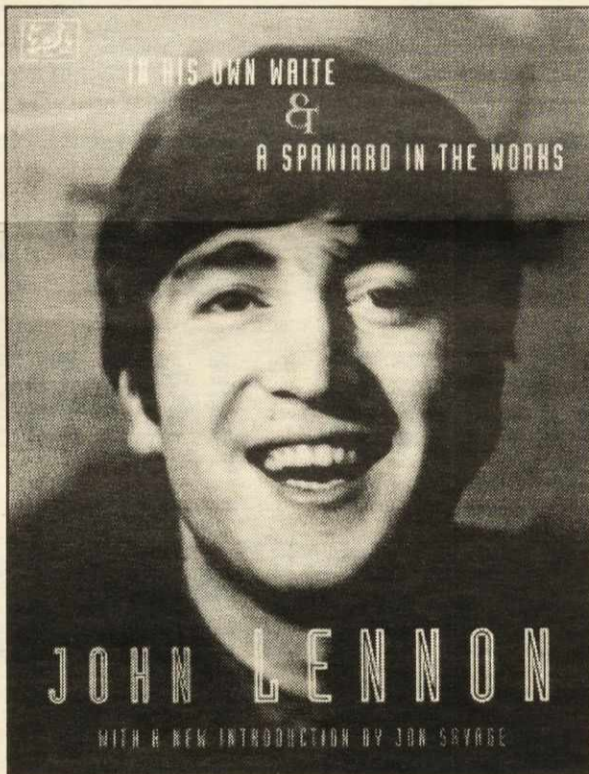
The overall tone of *We All Shine On* is depressing. It seems Lennon wasn't a very happy man after the Beatles split up. The book hardly reflects on Lennon's life before the break-up of the Beatles.

This book may be good for a very dedicated John Lennon fan, but in my opinion, as someone who enjoys both the Beatles and John Lennon's solo work (but doesn't know much about his life), it was just plain uninteresting.

ANGELA BELTAOS



succeed in telling the stories of the lyrics to all of the songs. Sometimes all he does is describe John Lennon's life at the time of the song's creation, in many cases



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