

# Rock 'n' Roll



## and The Beatles

By JOEY KILFOIL

We've all heard the story of the girl who walked into Brian Epstein's record store in Liverpool and asked for a disc by a local group called the Beaties, and how Epstein met and subsequently managed the young group. Books have been written about the formation, breakups, re-formations, fights, parties, arrests, drug busts, and earth-shaking final breakup of George Harrison, John Lennon, Ringo Starr, and Paul McCartney. This article will attempt to discuss them in terms of Rock 'n Roll (God bless it) and their contributions to it.

The early sixties' pop music, basically, could be broken down into four categories: Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry, The Beach Boys, and those trying to sound like the above. A song consisted of a cute intro, a three-chord verse, chorus, verse, chorus, saxophone solo (Chuck Berry had invented lead guitar years earlier and used it on many "Johnny B. Goode" clones, but guitarists Buddy Holly excepted were slow to catch on), verse, fade out.

The Beatles didn't change too much right away. Their first release in 1962, "Love Me Do", was so crude (by comparison to some of their later masterpieces) that one wonders how it got into the 20's in the pop charts.

The reason is simple. It was appealing, innocent, and cute. Their second single, "Please Please Me", went straight to number one, owing largely to The Beatles' prowess with a musical instrument that could not be purchased: vocal harmonies.

From this time until late 1965 the Beatles churned out dozens of these "cute" songs and managed to create an historical period: Beatlemania.

Notables from this period include "Twist and Shout", "She Loves You", "I Want to Hold Your Hand", a performance for the queen, for Ed Sullivan (where America discovered them two years later), "Can't Buy Me Love", "A Hard Day's Night" (song-album-movie), "Help" (ditto), "A Ticket to Ride", the Shea Stadium appearances, etcetera.

Despite the relatively unadventurous music, they did manage to introduce a couple of new musical devices: guitar feedback, and the volume/tone pedal, both standard rock devices today.

With England turning up new talent like Eric Clapton and Pete Townshend, the Beatles could no longer rely on "cute". They skillfully rose to a slightly more sophisticated level with the album "Rubber Soul", and later the stunning "Revolver", considered their best by some critics who feel obliged to slot everything in its appropriate pigeonhole.

But it was shortly before "Revolver" that Paul McCartney wrote, played, and sang "Yesterday" that people started regarding the Beatles as serious songwriters and drawing not altogether facetious comparisons to Schubert.

A brief aside: It is no secret that the majority of Lennon/McCartney compositions were actually one or the other, but rarely both. The double credit was a legality.

Then came 1967 and the album "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band". Beatlemania was out; the hippie period was in: Transcendental Meditation, drugs, peace, love (it's all you really need!) were the order of the day. The album cover, the gatefold design, the McCartney death clues, and above all, the songs themselves, earned it a place in history. Quite an act to follow, Ah, but there was always 1968.

Nineteen-sixty-eight. "Hey Jude" was a tremendous step out of the mainstream even for the Beatles. A song over four minutes duration was still considered lengthy, but this was over seven minutes long, a good part of which consisted of the legendary fade-out.

But 1968 was not over. To do, the 'White Album' and a whole new selection of fantastic songs: "Back in the U.S.S.R." (Paul does his Beach Boys impersonation on this), "Birthday", "While my Guitar Gently Weeps", "Piggies", and a beautiful acoustic guitar piece, "Blackbird".

The next year brought "Abbey Road", an album which takes its place as one of the top three Beatles albums of all time. Though the majority of the album is Paul McCartney's ego trip, it also contains George's two most original and commercially successful songs, "Here Comes the Sun", and "Something".

"Let it Be" (again song-album-movie) is an interesting case. The public was so shocked over the breakup, who to blame, and who was suing who that they overlooked what was in fact a great album. Cuts included "Let it Be", "Get Back", "For You Blue", and "The Long and Winding Road".

Looking back, it is easy to see and hear that their choice of musical instruments was a major detriment, especially Ringo's drums (soup cans are more like it) and Paul's bass (the "thud machine"). In both cases, they

serve to hide genuine talent. O.K., perhaps a little more in Paul's case.

Throughout their entire career, the Beatles were not often noted for great instrumentalists, except for Paul who was considered a top bassist.

But it was always George who appeared to be the dedicated musician. He was playing acoustic lead guitar at age 12. He was the innovator in guitar sound. He was the one who used the Gretsch and the Gibson guitars. He was the one who practiced before a show while the others drank or fooled around. He was the one who organized the famous concert for Bangladesh. And next to Paul, he has been the most commercially successful.

John Lennon made a fair contribution to music after the break up: "Imagine", "Number 9 Dream", "Power to the People". He hasn't been heard from since 1974 and the "shaved fish" greatest hits LP.

Ringo had his moments: "It don't come easy", "Nona Song", "Photograph", "Your 16". His recent albums have proved unsuccessful, not all together surprisingly.

George, as stated earlier, met with better luck: the "All Things Must Pass", "What is Life", "This Song", "Crackerbox Palace", from his latest release in 1976, "Thirty-three and One-third".

McCartney has climbed steadily up from his first solo album on which he played all the instruments, to the near perfect "Band on the Run" LP, "Venus and Mars", and the spectacular "Wings Over America" live album.

A brief lull for McCartney raised a question in some minds: Had this amazingly talented person run out of ideas? Certainly not. In 1977 Paul released the single "Girls School/Mull of Kintyre" which became a double-sided hit. This later broke the record for best selling single of all time in England. Ironically, the previous titleholder was the Beatles' "She Loves You". His 1978 album, "London Town" is rather weak and contains a lot of "fruity music" (his own words) which characterizes the Paul-Linda-Denny Laine denomination called Wings. This group has had many changes in membership since Paul started it in the early seventies, and hence many changes in musical style. Their raunchiest sound was supplied by Jimmy McCulloch, who left shortly after they began recording "London Town".

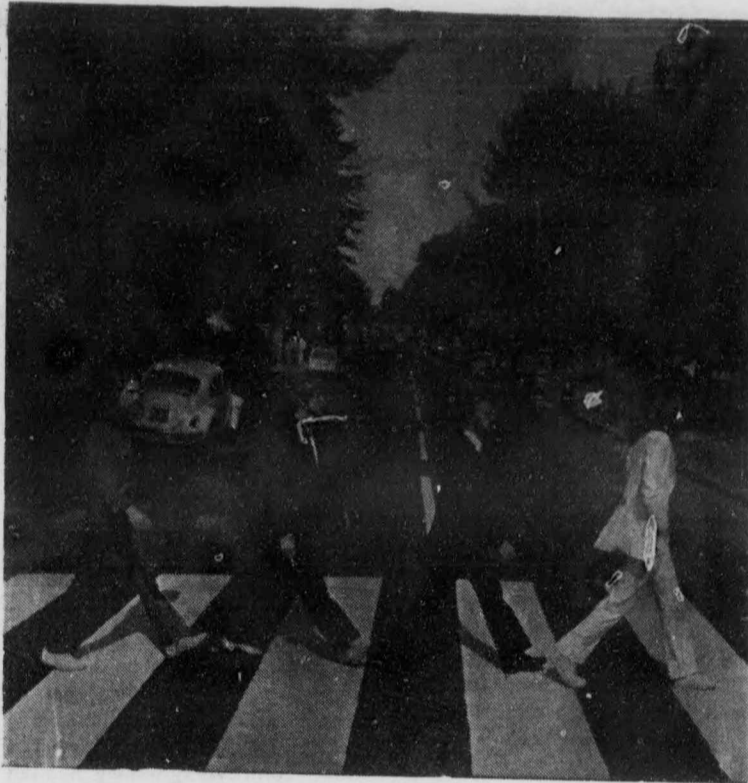
So where are we today? Offers of \$60 million can not bring back the legend. McCartney said recently he thinks it's "weird" trying to resurrect... The Beatles... (they're) like a dead person." Says John Lennon of the breakup: "It's just a rock group, nothing important."

*You and I have memories  
Longer than the road  
that stretches out ahead...*  
— From *Two of Us*,  
1969

Memories, and lots of great records, are all we have left of the Beatles today. (Except maybe attempted exploitations like the recent "Sgt. Pepper" movie; the only purpose this served was to point out the excellence of the original material.)

Rather than brood over the past, why not enjoy what was and what is, accept what never will be, and take McCartney's advice of 10 years ago:

Let it be.



ABBEY ROAD



SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND



LET IT BE