The Beatles

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The Beatles were an English rock band formed in Liverpool in 1960. With a line-up comprising John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr, they are often regarded as the most influential band of all time.[1] The group were integral to the evolution of pop music into an art form and to the development of the counterculture of the 1960s.[2] Their sound, rooted in skiffle, beat and 1950s rock and roll, incorporated elements of classical music and traditional pop in innovative ways. They also pioneered recording techniques and explored music styles ranging from ballads and Indian music to psychedelia and hard rock. As they continued to draw influences from a variety of cultural sources, their musical and lyrical sophistication grew, and they came to be seen as embodying the era's socio-cultural movements.

Led by the band's primary songwriters, Lennon and McCartney, the Beatles built their reputation playing clubs in Liverpool and Hamburg over a three-year period from 1960, initially with Stuart Sutcliffe playing bass. The core trio of Lennon, McCartney and Harrison, who had been together since 1958, went through a succession of drummers, including Pete Best, before asking Starr to join them in 1962. Manager Brian Epstein shaped them into a professional act, and producer George Martin guided and developed their recordings, greatly expanding their domestic success after their first hit, "Love Me Do", in late 1962. As their popularity grew into the intense fan frenzy dubbed "Beatlemania", the band acquired the nickname "the Fab Four", with Epstein, Martin and other members of the band's entourage sometimes given the informal title of "fifth Beatle".

The Beatles were international stars by early 1964, leading the "British Invasion" of the United States pop market and breaking numerous sales records. They soon made their film debut with A Hard Day's Night (1964). From 1965 onwards, they produced increasingly innovative recordings, including the albums Rubber Soul (1965), Revolver (1966) and Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967), and enjoyed further commercial success with The Beatles (also known as the "White Album", 1968) and Abbey Road (1969). In 1968, they founded Apple Corps, a multimedia corporation that continues to oversee projects related to the band's legacy. After the group's break-up in 1970, all four members enjoyed success as solo artists. Lennon was shot and killed in December 1980, and Harrison died of lung cancer in November 2001. McCartney and Starr remain musically active.

Yesterday

Origin

According to biographers of McCartney and the Beatles, McCartney composed the entire melody in a dream one night in his room at the Wimpole Street home of his then girlfriend Jane Asher and her family.[6] Upon waking, he hurried to a piano and played the tune to avoid forgetting it.[7]

McCartney's initial concern was that he had subconsciously plagiarised someone else's work (known as cryptomnesia). As he put it, "For about a month I went round to people in the music business and asked them whether they had ever heard it before. Eventually it became like handing something in to the police. I thought if no one claimed it after a few weeks then I could have it."[7]

Upon being convinced that he had not robbed anyone of their melody, McCartney began writing lyrics to suit it. As Lennon and McCartney were known to do at the time, a substitute working lyric, titled "Scrambled Eggs" (the working opening verse was "Scrambled eggs/Oh my baby how I love your legs/Not as much as I love scrambled eggs"), was used for the song until something more suitable was written.[8] The original song, "Scrambled Eggs", was written to hold the music and phrasing in place.

During the shooting of Help!, a piano was placed on one of the stages where filming was being conducted and McCartney took advantage of this opportunity to tinker with the song. Richard Lester, the director, was eventually greatly annoyed by this and lost his temper, telling McCartney to finish writing the song or he would have the piano removed.[9] The patience of the other Beatles was also tested by McCartney's work in progress, George Harrison summed this up when he said: "Blimey, he's always talking about that song. You'd think he was Beethoven or somebody!"[10]

McCartney originally claimed he had written "Yesterday" during the Beatles' tour of France in 1964; however, the song was not released until the summer of 1965. During the intervening time, the Beatles released two albums, A Hard Day's Night and Beatles for Sale, each of which could have included "Yesterday". Although McCartney has never elaborated on his claims, a delay may have been due to a disagreement between McCartney and George Martin regarding the song's arrangement, or the opinion of the other Beatles who felt it did not suit their image.[7]

McCartney said the breakthrough with the lyrics came during a trip to Portugal in May 1965:

I remember mulling over the tune 'Yesterday', and suddenly getting these little one-word openings to the verse. I started to develop the idea ... da-da da, yes-ter-day, sud-den-ly, fun-il-ly, mer-il-ly and Yes-ter-day, that's good. All my troubles seemed so far away. It's easy to rhyme those a's: say, nay, today, away, play, stay, there's a lot of rhymes and those fall in quite easily, so I gradually pieced it together from that journey. Sud-den-ly, and 'b' again, another easy rhyme: e, me, tree, flea, we, and I had the basis of it.[12]

On 27 May 1965, McCartney and Asher flew to Lisbon for a holiday in Albufeira, Algarve, and he borrowed an acoustic guitar from Bruce Welch, in whose house they were staying, and completed the work on "Yesterday".[13] The song was offered as a demo to Chris Farlowe before the Beatles recorded it, but he turned it down as he considered it "too soft".[14] In a March 1967 interview with Brian Matthew, McCartney said that Lennon came up with the word that would replace "scrambled eggs": Yesterday.[15]

In July 2003, British musicologists stumbled upon superficial similarities between the lyric and rhyming schemes of "Yesterday" and Nat King Cole's and Frankie Laine's "Answer Me, My Love"; originally a German song by Gerhard Winkler and Fred Rauch called Mütterlein, it was a number 1 hit for Laine on the UK charts in 1953 as "Answer Me, O Lord", leading to speculation that McCartney had been influenced by the song. McCartney's publicists denied any resemblance between "Answer Me, My Love" and "Yesterday".[16] "Yesterday" begins with the lines: "Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away. Now it looks as though they're here to stay." In its second stanza, "Answer Me, My Love" has the lines: "You were mine yesterday. I believed that love was here to stay. Won't you tell me where I've gone astray".

Yesterday

Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away

Ieri, tutte le mie preoccupazioni sembravano così lontane

Now it looks as though they're here to stay

Ora sembra come se sono qui per restare

Oh, I believe in yesterday

Oh, io credo in ieri

Suddenly I'm not half the man I used to be

di colpo non sono la metà dell’uomo che ero

There's a shadow hanging over me

c’è un’ombra che incombe su di me

Oh, yesterday came suddenly

Oh, ieri è arrivato d’improvviso

Why she had to go

Perchè lei è dovuta andare

I don't know, she wouldn't say

non lo so, non ha voluto dirlo

I said something wrong

Io ho detto qualcosa di sbagliato

Now I long for yesterday

Ora, ho nostalgia di ieri

Yesterday love was such an easy game to play

Ieri l’amore un gioco così facile da giocare

Now I need a place to hide away

Ora ho bisogno di un posto per nascondermi

Oh, I believe in yesterday

Why she had to go?

I don't know, she wouldn't say

I said something wrong

Now I long for yesterday

Yesterday love was such an easy game to play

Now I need a place to hide away

Oh, I believe in yesterday

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