

All the Songs

THE STORY BEHIND EVERY **BEATLES** RELEASE



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PREFACE BY Patti Smith

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PREFACE

On the eve of June 1, 1967, my friend Janet Hamill and I were camped in the family laundry room with a transistor radio, feverishly awaiting midnight. At that moment the Beatles new album, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, was to be premiered across America over local FM radio station. It was a unifying moment for our generation, and joining the collective mind, we listened transfixed. The moods swung madly from cut to cut—Ringo's inclusive "With A Little Help from My Friends," Paul's look into the future with "When I'm 64," George's trance-like "Within You Without You," the calliope of John's "Mr. Kite." By the time "A Day In The Life" unfolded and the final chord stretched out into forever, we were ecstatic. For two aspiring young poets, that midnight journey offered possibilities that spun off in all directions.

I had come late to the Beatles. In the great divide of the new groups from England, I preferred the darker, more visceral Animals and Rolling Stones. But as the Beatles grew musically and conceptually, I was drawn in. By Rubber Soul I felt myself along for their ride, and with Revolver was sold, acknowledging their influence and their enduring effect on our cultural voice.

I joined the legions seduced by the words of their world—all four worlds, that is. The mystic path lit by the lantern of George. The human and melancholic joy of Ringo. The cinematic visions of Paul. John's heightened, Joycean wordplay. They were so different from one another, like the four points of a compass, and yet contributed so much as a band. They combined the spiritual and the romantic, the absurd and political, and as they evolved, we evolved with them.

They aspired to literacy, which makes this book all the more revelatory. Even their earliest work "She Loves You" or "I Want To Hold Your Hand," has the simplicity of a Hank Williams song, poetry reduced to its essential phrase. By the time they reach the emotionally surreal landscape "Strawberry Fields Forever," which heralded the coming of Sgt. Pepper in that sacred spring, the abstract imagery had become dreamlike, hallucinatory. Somehow it all made sense.

Their songs got into your head, heard from passing cars, storefronts and jukeboxes. We sang along wholeheartedly. We sang lyrics knowing and yet not knowing their multi-leveled meanings. These songs offered a sometimes-undecipherable and poetic language made familiar with melodies and harmonies that fit hand-in-glove. We did not need to break them down. We felt them. They embraced the small in the humble and exquisite "Blackbird" and expanded humankind with the universal phrase "All you need is love." In between lies an arc only few are gifted-to embody the generational shift from adolescence into maturity. To grow and serve within one's words, one's music, one's art.

Patti Smith

FOREWORD

Between June 6, 1962, the date of the first audition of the Beatles at Abbey Road Studios, and May 1970, the date of the release of their last album, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr wrote an exceptional page in the history of popular music and changed the music panorama of the sixties. However, the four young men from Liverpool, the future Fab Four, could not have predicted anything so phenomenal in their early days. No one could imagine that a “group of guitarists” (three guitarists and a drummer) would become a strong influence on their contemporaries and future generations. When they landed on the tarmac at JFK Airport in 1964, Elvis did not even feel threatened.

How could we have guessed that the Beatles would open the doors to the New World to other British music groups such as the Stones, the Kinks, and the Who, and would attain such worldwide popularity?

Those who love and are interested in the Beatles are probably wondering why we would dedicate another book to the group. However, today, fifty years after the release of their first album, we have new and relevant documentation that allows us to understand more fully the creation of their songs.

In the following pages, we focus on words from the Beatles themselves and their immediate entourage to get closer to the truth and, above all, to keep us away from legends and myth. Our approach is based on verifiable content. To this end, we have cross-checked most of the existing sources and provided a footnote.

In this book, we analyze only the singles and the original English albums (omitting anthologies and collections of all kinds) planned and released by the Beatles themselves, in order to respect and have a better understanding of their artistic process. The content in the book is arranged by release date. However, without doing a comprehensive study on the Beatles discography, it seemed necessary to mention American single and album releases and their rankings (different from the British ones due to a track listing often at variance from the original) because the United States played a crucial role in their careers.

Finally, we attach an importance to technique, addressing methods, instruments, and studio practices at the time. Specialist readers will find useful information; a broader public will discover an exciting world that the Beatles themselves helped to develop, notably starting in 1966 when the Beatles decided to stop touring and focus on recording.

For readers of this book, some keys are needed. First of all, when some information is still unverifiable and when the Beatles and their immediate entourage contradict each other, directly or indirectly, we mention the lack of certainty with a question mark (?), especially in the credits. In the same credits, when we speak of one musician’s singing, that means he takes all the vocal parts (chorus and harmony).

Hamburg: The Formative Years

It was August 1960. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Stuart Sutcliffe, and Pete Best were five unknown musicians from Liverpool, who were then between seventeen and twenty years old. They had just landed in the harbor of Hamburg, Germany. They had been hired by Bruno Koschmider, the manager of the Indra, a club located in the hottest neighborhood of the city. For their first concert, on August 17, he simply asked them to “supply a show.” During the next two years, the group came back four times and performed nearly three hundred concerts in Germany, including at the Top Ten Club and the legendary Star Club. “We played what pleased us the most and, as long as we played loud, the Germans liked it,” John remembered. The Beatles often emphasized the musical training they gained during their years in Hamburg, and John Lennon admitted, “I was perhaps born in Liverpool, but I grew up in Hamburg.”

It was in Hamburg that the group played for the first time with Ringo Starr, who was then the drummer for another Liverpool band, Rory Storm & the Hurricanes, and met musician Tony Sheridan, who arranged for their first recording. A British guitar player and singer from Norwich, Sheridan was the featured artist of the Top Ten Club and was regularly accompanied by different bands, including the Beatles. In the spring of 1961, he was approached by Bert Kaempfert, a German composer, arranger, and orchestra leader whose claim to fame was having written “Strangers in the Night” (Frank Sinatra) and “L.O.V.E.” (Nat King Cole). Kaempfert was also a record producer for Polydor, a prestigious label of Deutsche Grammophon, and he often hung around the club, searching for new talent. He offered Sheridan a recording contract and selected the Beatles to back him up. He was very impressed by the group, but he liked an instrumental they played, “Cry for a Shadow.”

Therefore, on Sunday, June 22 (this date differs according to various documents), the young musicians gathered at what they believed was a real recording studio but was actually a concert hall set up for this date. Under the name of Tony Sheridan & the Beat Brothers, they recorded five or six songs, including a rock version of the traditional “My Bonnie Lies over the Ocean,” renamed “My Bonnie,” as well as two other songs they performed without Sheridan, “Ain’t She Sweet” and “Cry for a Shadow.”

When the group returned to Hamburg for the second time on April 1, Stu Sutcliffe made the decision to return to his first love, painting. So Paul replaced him on bass.

When Raymond Met Brian

On October 28, 1961, a young eighteen-year-old entered NEMS, the largest record store in Liverpool, and asked the manager if he had “My Bonnie” by the Beatles in stock. Without realizing it, this young man, Raymond Jones, had just changed the life of Brian Epstein! Epstein, the owner of NEMS, inquired about the identity of the group, the origins of the record, and finally discovered that it had been recorded in Germany by a band native to Liverpool. Intrigued, he decided to go hear them play at the Cavern Club, where they performed on a regular basis. On November 9, he went and discovered the ones with whom he later found fame and fortune. After meeting with the band on December 6, Epstein decided to become their manager.

The Very First Recording

Only three songs from this record involved the Beatles. “My Bonnie,” with singer Tony Sheridan, began with a soft, very “Elvis” intro before taking off with a rock tempo. The Beatles had no problem providing the backup and proved they were already accomplished musicians.

“Ain’t She Sweet,” a song composed by Milton Ager and Jack Yellen in 1927, had become a standard of American pop music. The Beatles’ version was nervous and rock ’n’ roll, with John singing; it was rather distant from the Gene Vincent interpretation that inspired John to cover the song. John explained himself in 1974: “Gene Vincent’s recording of ‘Ain’t She Sweet’ is very mellow and high-pitched and I used to do it like that, but the Germans said, ‘Harder, harder’—they all wanted it a bit more like a march—so we ended up doing a harder version.”

“Cry for a Shadow” (with the initial title “Beatle Bop”) was the only Beatles song that was written by Harrison-Lennon. Inspired by the Shadows, this instrumental was rather well done, and George’s guitar sounded good. Were they aiming for the radio, which at that time was the domain of the Shadows? No one knows for sure.

The other songs, such as “The Saints” (“When the Saints Go Marching In”) or “Why” were not very interesting in the recording history of the Beatles, except that they appeared in numerous album releases of Tony Sheridan & the Beatles. The original single came out in Germany under the name of Tony Sheridan & the Beat Brothers. Why not the Beatles? Apparently to avoid confusion with the word *Piddle*, which means “penis” in the regional dialect of northern Germany. Paul McCartney claimed: “They didn’t like our name and said, ‘Change to the Beat Brothers; this is more understandable for the German audience.’ We went along with it—it was a record.” But the name the Beat Brothers was soon forgotten.

MUSICIANS

Tony Sheridan: vocal, lead guitar

John: rhythm guitar

Paul: bass, backing vocals

George: intro guitar, 2nd lead guitar, backing vocals

Pete Best: drums

RECORDED

Friedrich-Ebert-Halle (Hamburg), June 22, 1961

TECHNICAL TEAM

Producer: Bert Kaempfert

Sound Engineer: Karl Hinze

RELEASED AS A SINGLE

“My Bonnie” / “The Saints”

Germany: August 1961

Uncertainty

The date of June 22 is still debated to this day. Conflicting documents call its validity into question.

June 6: The Decisive Audition

June 6, 1962: On this exact date, the fate of the Beatles shifted. And so did the history of pop music. Around 6:00 P.M., John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Pete Best entered EMI Studios in London for the first time—they would return for the following seven years. The studios, located at 3 Abbey Road, in the quiet residential neighborhood of St. John's Wood, were renamed Abbey Road Studios in 1970, which is also the title of the Beatles' last album.

In June 1962, the Beatles were still artists on a quest for a record company. Their manager, Brian Epstein, had been desperately searching for a recording contract since December 1961, but was rejected by all London companies. All companies, except for one: in April 1962, he made one last-ditch phone call and landed an appointment with George Martin, who was in charge of the moderate-sized small Parlophone label (which was under EMI). Interested in the track he heard, the latter agreed to let them try a test in the Abbey Road Studios. An appointment was made for June 6.

On June 6, a session of two hours was set aside for their audition: from 6:00 to 8:00 P.M., in Studio Three, according to George Martin, but in Studio Two, according to the rest of the team. The group's equipment left much to be desired. Norman Smith and Ken Townsend had to weld a jack for Paul's amplifier, which they connected to a Tannoy speaker cabinet they borrowed from an unused echo chamber. Rope had to be tied around John's amplifier to keep it from rattling. Then the session began with Ron Richards, George Martin's assistant, producing. The Beatles, including Pete Best, who had been their drummer since August 1960, had planned to perform four songs: "Besame Mucho" and three originals: "Love Me Do," "P.S. I Love You," and "Ask Me Why." When Norman Smith, the sound engineer, heard "Love Me Do," his ears perked up. Chris Neal, the assistant engineer, went to fetch George Martin. Once Martin arrived, he ran the session from that point on.

The Beatles appeared nervous in the studio. Pete Best's drumming was inconsistent, especially on the bridge (listen to the version of "Love Me Do" on *Anthology 1*, which features Best's drumming from this session). Just prior to recording, Martin had instructed Paul to sing the phrase *Love Me Do* at the end of each verse so that John could play his harmonica part. You can hear the shakiness in Paul's voice. Finally, at the end of the recording session, Martin spoke to the group to find out the impression of the session. He could see they were not happy, so he insisted, "Is there anything you don't like?" After a pause, George Harrison said, "Yeah, I don't like your tie!"¹ Everyone cracked up.

This broke the ice, including for George Martin. A connection was made.

At the end of the two-hour session, Martin was impressed enough to offer them a one-year contract with four further options of a year each. Although only moderately impressed by their performance, he guessed they had extraordinary charisma and told himself that he had nothing to lose. Furthermore, Norman Smith was also sold on their potential. But there are always winners and losers: Pete Best was fired from the group and replaced by Ringo Starr. This was the first and last time that Best ever recorded at Abbey Road. A date was set for the group's first official recording session: Tuesday, September 4, 1962. The Beatles finally had a recording contract.

FOR BEATLES FANATICS

There is no trace of the recordings from June 6, except for “Besame Mucho,” which reappeared in early 1980, and “Love Me Do,” which was found in the nineties and appears on *Anthology 1*, which was published in 1995.

Please Please Me:

The Beginning of the Legend

1962-1963

ALBUM

I Saw Her Standing There

Misery

Anna (Go to Him)

Chains

Boys

Ask Me Why

Please Please Me

Love Me Do

P.S. I Love You

Baby It's You

Do You Want to Know a Secret

A Taste of Honey

There's a Place

Twist and Shout

RELEASED

Great Britain: March 22, 1963 / No. 1 for 30 weeks

The First Two Singles

Very soon after the Beatles signed their first contract, it became critical for George Martin to produce a record. The Beatles' recording career began with two singles, songs that later appeared on their first album. On Tuesday, September 4, 1962, the four musicians once again entered the Abbey Road Studios for their first real recording session. Pete Best was no longer part of the group, having been replaced in August by Ringo. On the agenda, they were supposed to record "How Do You Do It?" by Mitch Murray, which George Martin believed would become a hit. The Beatles, who were reluctant to play this song, let him know they did not want to perform this kind of "schlock" but rather their own compositions. Martin's answer was, "When you can write material as good as this, then I'll record it, but, right now we're going to record this."¹ They finally did it, but demanded they also rerecord "Love Me Do." At the end of the day, George Martin did not seem satisfied with Ringo's drumming. He decided to book another date to redo the song.

Seven days later, on September 11, the Beatles returned to the studio. Ringo was replaced by Andy White, a professional drummer hired by George Martin "to make sure it was right." At the end of the session, the first single was complete—"Love Me Do" for the A side and "P.S. I Love You" for the B side. "How Do You Do It?" remained unreleased (it reappeared in 1995 on *Anthology 1*). The single came out in Great Britain on October 5, 1962, and by December, "Love Me Do" was in seventeenth place on the charts. On November 26, the Beatles recorded their second single, "Please Please Me" with "Ask Me Why" on side B, which came out in Great Britain on January 11, 1963. The single reached number 2 on the popular *Record Retailer* chart, but number 1 on most other charts.

A Live Album

Given the success of the first two singles, Martin decided to follow with an album as soon as possible. At first, he thought of recording in the Cavern Club in Liverpool, where the Beatles often performed in order to capture their power onstage. But he realized that the technical conditions of the club were not good, so he tried to think of other ways of re-creating the sound of a live recording. Norman Smith came up with the solution. Smith was the group's first sound engineer, whom John later nicknamed "Normal Smith," and he worked alongside the Beatles from the first audition up to *Rubber Soul* in 1965. To re-create the live atmosphere that characterized the group in the studio, Smith did not try to isolate each of the instruments. Instead, he positioned the microphones away from the group's instruments to capture the general ambience of the performance. This method, which simulated the sound of a live performance, was contrary to the typical recording methods of the day.

On February 11, 1963, between 10:00 A.M. and 10:45 P.M., the Beatles achieved the incredible feat of recording eleven songs in barely more than twelve hours. However, when they entered Studio Two of Abbey Road on that Monday morning, they were not in top shape. Fatigued by the many concerts they had been playing for months, they were all ill, especially John, who had a sore throat. Norman Smith remembered the "big glass jar of Zubes throat sweets on top of the piano, rather like the one you see in a sweet shop. Paradoxically, by the side of that, was a big carton of Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes, which they smoked incessantly."² Around 10:45 P.M., the eleven songs were recorded.

FOR BEATLES FANATICS

When George Martin decided to sign the Beatles in July 1962, the contract drafted by EMI indicated the date of June 4, while their audition took place on June 6. According to Martin, this was a typo. Other sources said it was a clever way of keeping the test tracks on June 6 under contract.

A single song, “Hold Me Tight,” would not be finalized and would be found on their second album *With the Beatles*. Five of the songs are original tunes composed by McCartney-Lennon. Their names were reversed on writing credits after their fourth single, “She Loves You” (with “I’ll Get You” on side B), which came out on August 23, 1963. The total cost of the album was around £400 (or roughly \$600 US). For the entire day’s work on February 11, 1963, the Beatles each earned £14.10 (\$21.25 US) as session musicians.

Please Please Me came out in Great Britain on March 22, 1963. As early as May 11, the album reached the top of the British charts. It stayed there for thirty weeks, which held the record for the entire sixties: it was bumped out of first place on December 7 by the group’s second album, *With the Beatles*. In the United States, Brian Epstein had only found Vee Jay (a rather second-rate label specializing in blues) to sign the Beatles, since Capital Records (EMI’s American affiliate) did not yet believe in their success. The album came out under the title *Introducing ... The Beatles* on July 2, 1963 (but it was not marketed) and was rereleased first on January 6 and then on January 27, 1964, each time with different track listing than the British version.

The “Beatles Sound”

Norman Smith always disagreed with George Martin’s choice to use reverb or an echo chamber when recording the Beatles’ vocals or solo instrumentals. Contrary to Martin, Smith preferred a “dry” sound to maintain the genuine quality of the recordings. He also preferred to tone down the voices in order to highlight the rhythm section. They reached a compromise: fewer vocals for the first album and less rhythm section for the second. This was exactly what gave such a particular character to the Beatles’ sound, which was imitated by other groups. In a 1963 interview, John stated that they were all ready to record it a second time if it did not meet their expectations: “We are perfectionists but ultimately, we were more than happy with the results”—although in 1975, he qualified his opinion, believing that the record did not succeed in transmitting the excitement of their Hamburg and Liverpool performances. He admitted, “That record tried to capture us live, and was the nearest thing to what we might have sounded like in Hamburg and Liverpool. It’s the nearest you can get to knowing what we sounded like before we became the ‘clever’ Beatles.”³

The album was almost called *Off the Beatles Track*, an idea of George Martin’s. For the cover, he recruited Angus McBean, a photographer with whom he worked regularly, who took the photo in which the four Beatles posed in the stairway of the Manchester Square Building, the headquarters of EMI (since then demolished). McBean would re-create the pose for the abandoned “Get Back” project.

The two photos would appear on the covers of the *Red* and *Blue* albums, respectively.

THE SESSIONS

The album was recorded in one single day on February 11, 1963, which was divided into three sessions and breaks:

The Morning Session: 10:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

“There’s a Place” / “I Saw Her Standing There”

Break: 1:00 P.M. to 2:30 P.M.

The Afternoon Session: 2:30 P.M. to 6:00 P.M.

“A Taste of Honey” / “Do You Want to Know a Secret” /

“A Taste of Honey” [overdubs] /

“There’s a Place” [overdubs] /

“I Saw Her Standing There” [overdubs] / “Misery”

Break: 6:00 P.M. to 7:30 P.M.

The Evening Session: 7:30 P.M. to 10:45 P.M.

“Hold Me Tight” / “Anna (Go to Him)” / “Boys” / “Chains” /

“Baby It’s You” / “Twist and Shout”

A Real Find for Collectors

The “Please Please Me” single, edited by Vee Jay, has an interesting typo: on the label, Beatles was spelled Beattles, with two ts.

The Instruments

John used a 1958 Rickenbacker 325 Capri, which remained one of his favorite guitars for the rest of his life. He bought this guitar for about £100 (\$150 US) on a whim in Hamburg around the fall of 1960. In 1963, he had it repainted black: you can see it on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, as well as in the Hollywood Bowl concerts. He used it in the studio until 1965, and he used it during the recording sessions of his last solo album, *Double Fantasy* (this information was confirmed by producer Jack Douglas and Yoko Ono). Today it belongs to his second son, Sean.

Another guitar that John used as much as George was the Gibson J-160 E. It was an electric acoustic guitar that each of them ordered in 1962 from Rushworth in Liverpool, and that they used to record every album from that point on. Ordered from a catalogue, the guitars were shipped from the United States, but it is difficult to state that they arrived in time for the recording of “Love Me Do” on September 11.

Both George and Paul used the Vox AC-30 as an amplifier. In 1962, Brian Epstein had made a deal

with Jennings Music Shop in London to purchase the same amplifiers as the Shadows. He had promised that his group, which he claimed would become bigger than Elvis, would never use another brand than Vox in concerts. Reg Clark, the manager of the store, believed him. Later on, he said to Brian, “He kept his word!”

Paul used a Hofner 500/1 bass, a violin bass that he bought in 1961, at Steinway’s in Hamburg, for £30 (\$45 US). The advantage for Paul, who was left-handed, was to have a symmetrical instrument that would not look strange when held upside down. It seems that—there is controversy about this—he even ordered a tailor-made left-handed bass from Steinway. One thing is for sure: not being one of the richest men in Great Britain yet, he had to agree to buy it on credit in ten installments! His amplifier was a Leak TL 12 Plus, connected to the Tannoy Dual Concentric loudspeakers and cabinet. George used a Gretsch Duo Jet from 1957, a guitar he purchased in 1961 through an ad in the *Liverpool Echo* for the sum of £75 (\$113 US). This guitar was soon replaced by a Gretsch Country Gentleman, which he used in Hamburg, at the Cavern Club, on tours in Europe and the United States (in 1964), and, from time to time, during the recordings. Ringo, finally, used Premier Mahogany Duroplastic drums that he bought in July 1962, just before joining the Beatles.

I Saw Her Standing There

McCartney-Lennon / 2:52

1963

SONGWRITER

Paul

MUSICIANS

Paul: vocal, bass, hand claps

John: rhythm guitar, backing vocals, hand claps

George: lead guitar, hand claps

Ringo: drums, hand claps

RECORDED

Abbey Road: February 11, 1963 (Studio Two)

NUMBER OF TAKES: 12

MIXING

Abbey Road: February 25, 1963 (Studio One)

TECHNICAL TEAM

Producer: George Martin

Sound Engineer: Norman Smith

Assistant Engineers: Richard Langham, A. B. Lincoln

Genesis

The candor and expressive energy that exude from “I Saw Her Standing There” made it the right choice to start the album. Paul was entrusted with the honor of singing the very first song of the group for its very first record.

As with practically all the songs of that period, Paul composed it on his first guitar, a Zenith Model 17. It seems he got the inspiration for it when returning from a concert in Southport, one day in June 1962, as he was thinking about seventeen-year-old Iris Caldwell, his girlfriend at that time. Iris was the sister of Rory Storm, the leader of the rival yet friendly group, Rory Storm & the Hurricanes, which featured none other than Ringo Starr.

In 1988, Paul confided in Mark Lewisohn that he wrote the song with John in the living room at 20 Forthlin Road, in Liverpool, in September 1962, five months before it was recorded: “We sagged off school and wrote it on guitars and a little bit on the piano that I had there. I remember I had *Just Seventeen* and *seventeen never been a beauty queen*, John screamed with laughter, and said ‘You’re joking about the line, aren’t you?’ What? Must change that ... We came up with: *You know what I mean.*”¹ The song

was finished that day. The bass line was inspired by “I’m Talking about You” by Chuck Berry (1961). Paul said, “I played exactly the same notes as he did and it fitted our number perfectly. Even now when I tell people about it, I find few of them believe me. Therefore I maintain that a bass riff doesn’t have to be original.”² John claimed that Paul had done a good job in producing a piece that George Martin characterized as being “nutritious.” He played this song with Elton John at Madison Square Garden in New York City on November 28, 1974, where he presented it to the public as a song written by a “old estranged fiancée of mine called Paul!”

FOR BEATLES FANATICS

When the Vee Jay technicians received the master tape of *Please Please Me* to produce the American version of *Introducing the Beatles*, they thought Paul’s countdown was an error that had gone unnoticed and tried hard to correct it, by more or less deleting it. Since they did not manage to correctly cut out the “4,” they resigned themselves to leaving it in. So the song starts with “4!”

Production

“I Saw Her Standing There” was the second song to be recorded on Monday, February 11, 1963, after “There’s a Place.” “Seventeen,” which was then its working title, required nine takes. Only the last take included the famous countdown, “1, 2, 3, 4!” called out by Paul. After the lunch break (to the surprise of the production team, the Beatles skipped the break to rehearse), Martin suggested adding hand claps to the first take, which was designated the best. The Beatles then added hand claps to take 12 (a process called overdub). After several attempts, they reached take 12. On February 25, Martin and his team proceeded to edit the song and picked up the countdown of the ninth take to paste it at the beginning of the twelfth take. After this, there was the mix, in the absence of the Beatles, who were on the road doing a concert in Leigh in Lancashire. Two versions—one mono and one stereo—were produced. In those days, the mix meant only putting the track of the playback at the level of the voices. Unlike current techniques, it was a rather simple and quick operation.

Technical Details

In 1963, recordings were only done on two-track BTR3 tape recorders called Twin Track: one track for playback and another for voice or solo instrument. It was the prehistoric times of multitrack recordings. The Beatles recorded on this type of machine from their first audition on June 6, 1962, up to the end of 1963, when EMI started using four-track tape recorders. The overdubs were fairly complicated to produce. Therefore, to record the hand claps of “I Saw Her Standing There,” the technique consisted of injecting, through the mix console, the two tracks recorded that morning on the first Twin Track (take 9) into a second Twin Track, that recorded the hand claps in real time.

Misery

McCartney-Lennon / 1:47

1963

SONGWRITERS

John and Paul

MUSICIANS

John: vocals, guitar

Paul: backing vocals, bass

George: lead guitar

Ringo: drums

George Martin: piano

RECORDED

Abbey Road: February 11, 1963 (Studio Two) / February 20, 1963 (Studio One)

NUMBER OF TAKES: 11

MIXING

Abbey Road: February 25, 1963 (Studio One)

TECHNICAL TEAM

Producer: George Martin

Sound Engineers: Norman Smith, Stuart Eltham

Assistant Engineers: Richard Langham, A. B. Lincoln, Geoff Emerick

Genesis

On January 26, as they were giving a concert at King's Hall in Stoke-on-Trent, John and Paul found themselves backstage, where they wrote a song for Helen Shapiro, who was the star of the nation's tour in which they participated for the first time. Barely sixteen years old, she already had two number 1 hits on the charts in Great Britain ("You Don't Know" and "Walkin' Back to Happiness"). Therefore, having her perform this song would have been a coup for Lennon and McCartney. But Helen's manager, Norrie Paramor, declined the offer without even notifying the young singer. Why? Probably because the lyrics were too pessimistic, according to Paul. "Misery" was completed a few days later, at Forthlin Road. "It was kind of a John song more than a Paul song, but it was written together,"² John said in 1980. Finally, another singer from the tour, Kenny Lynch, ended up singing "Misery." He ended up making a rather saccharine version of it. It was the first remake of a Beatles song, although it was not a success.

A Missed Opportunity

“I really hate myself... when I think I could have been the first artist to record a song of the Beatles, but I’m happy for good old Ken [Lynch] that he got the honor.” Helen Shapiro, from her 1993 autobiography¹.

Production

Toward the end of the afternoon, the Beatles tackled “Misery.” George Harrison had problems playing the little guitar riff that accompanied the line *I’ll remember all the little things we’ve done*. George Martin then decided to replace George with a piano solo, which he did on February 20. Martin had asked Norman Smith to record the song at twice the normal speed (30 ips [inches per second] rather than 15 ips) so that he could overdub his solo at the slower speed of 15 ips. The eleventh take was selected as the best. It was 6:00 P.M.

At this time, the Beatles were very much influenced by the pioneers of rock ’n’ roll—Elvis Presley, Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and the like. And to sound like them, they altered the pronunciation of certain words to sound more American. For example, the sentence *Send her back to me* turned into *Shend her back to me*. On February 20, Martin returned to the studio by himself. He was assisted by Stuart Eltham and Geoff Emerick, who was then sixteen years old and became one of the main sound engineers of the group. Martin sat at the piano and recorded the riff to replace George. Five days later, “Misery” was mixed with the rest of the album.

Technical Details

When George Martin asked Norman Smith to record “Misery” at twice its speed, it was for a very specific reason: he wanted to play his piano part slower, at half speed. When the piano overdub was played at the normal (30 ips) speed, it had a crystal sound that resembled a tack piano or a harpsichord. Martin used this method many times, including the solo in “In My Life” in 1965. He added reverb while playing the piano part, which meant that, at normal speed, it acquired a distinctive sound.

Anna (Go To Him)

Arthur Alexander / 2:54

1963

MUSICIANS

John: vocal, acoustic guitar

Paul: backing vocals, bass

George: lead guitar, backing vocals

Ringo: drums

RECORDED

Abbey Road: February 11, 1963 (Studio Two)

NUMBER OF TAKES: 3

MIXING

Abbey Road: February 25, 1963 (Studio One)

TECHNICAL TEAM

Producer: George Martin

Sound Engineer: Norman Smith

Assistant Engineers: Richard Langham, A. B. Lincoln

Genesis

“Anna (Go to Him)” was one of John’s favorite songs. So he suggested doing a remake of it for the first album. The composer, Arthur Alexander, was an African-American singer and composer whose first success, in 1961, was “You Better Move On.” In 1963, Arthur repeated this success with “Anna (Go to Him).” The original version, recorded in the great Fame Studios in Muscle Shoals (Alabama) was a bit faster-paced than the Beatles’ version, and the orchestration, supported by violins, sounded like similar R&B records. But the adaptation of the Fab Four bests Alexander’s version, thanks to John’s voice, which is poignant and dynamic, and the background harmonies of Paul and George.

FOR BEATLES FANATICS

Vee Jay Records, a black music label, was planning on producing “Anna (Go to Him)” as a single, on the flip side of “Ask Me Why.” It seems then that the Beatles’ performance was deemed likely to appeal to the black audience. Therefore, a very limited series of test records was pressed for disc jockeys. But ultimately the idea was dropped. Today, it is believed that there are only four copies left in the world. One of them was sold in July 2012 for \$35,000. This was the highest bid for a single ever made by a Beatles collector.

Production

After a break of only an hour and a half, during which it seems the Beatles kept improving their work, the entire team began the last session of the day. It was 7:30 P.M. and there remained six songs to record. After Paul's "Hold Me Tight," which was left off the album, they began the second remake of the day, "Anna (Go to Him)." Since the piece was part of the usual repertoire of the group, three takes were sufficient. John played his Gibson J-160 E and did the singing. It is noteworthy that the title of the song was "Anna (Go to Him)," whereas John, as well as Alexander, sang, "go with him." Totally performed live, the song did not require any editing. It was mixed along with the other songs on February 25.

Chains

Gerry Goffin–Carole King / 2:23

1963

MUSICIANS

George: vocal, lead guitar

John: backing vocals, rhythm guitar, harmonica

Paul: backing vocals, bass

Ringo: drums

RECORDED

Abbey Road: February 11, 1963 (Studio Two)

NUMBER OF TAKES: 4

MIXING

Abbey Road: February 25, 1963 (Studio One)

TECHNICAL TEAM

Producer: George Martin

Sound Engineer: Norman Smith

Assistant Engineers: Richard Langham, A. B. Lincoln

Genesis

The Cookies were a black American female vocal trio formed in 1954 who, four years later, joined Ray Charles and became the Raelettes. Reestablished in 1961, the trio recorded “Chains” the following year, a composition by Gerry Goffin and Carole King, one of the famous songwriting duo that had offices in New York’s Brill Building. “Chains” was a song that the Beatles had discovered less than three months before recording it. Performed by the Cookies in November 1962, it reached seventeenth on the American pop charts a month later. The enthusiasm it generated among British teenagers convinced the Beatles to include it on their album. Even though they gave the song an unbeatable dynamism and freshness, the real innovation came from the harmonica solo played by John in the intro. John used a chromatic harmonica in C.

FOR BEATLES FANATICS

Around 1:27 on this song, you can hear words that sound like “Is that enough?” or “Is that the rhythm?” The voice probably came from the control room, although it could have been John asking a question.

Production

It was the second song performed by George on the album, after “Do You Want to Know a Secret,” and it was the first song in which you could hear three-part harmony. It was not until “This Boy,” in October 1963, that the Beatles would use three-part harmony again. Although four takes were recorded live during the evening session, George Martin kept the first one, ending the song with a fade-out. The song was mixed on October 25.

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