





# SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

Having given up touring after Candlestick Park, we decided we would try to make our next record something special. As I was flying back from a visit to America, Mal Evans our big friendly bear of a roadie and I were having an inflight meal.

He asked me to pass the salt and pepper and I misheard it as Sergeant Pepper. This set off a train of thought that ended up in me writing a song for a fictitious band, who would be called Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, and would be the alter egos of The Beatles. When I got back, I suggested this idea to the other guys. This would free us from our normal Beatles thinking and allow us to be more adventurous in our approach to our next recording. I suggested that we all think of heroes that the members of Sgt. Pepper's Band might have, which would help us fill in their imaginary background story. I did a couple of sketches of how the band might look and, as we made the album, we experienced a sense of freedom that was

quite liberating. We pushed boundaries and tried at every turn to come up with new ideas that we hoped would surprise people who would eventually hear the record.

When we were done, I took my sketches and our ideas to a friend of mine, Robert Fraser, a London gallery owner who represented a number of artists. He suggested we take the idea to Peter Blake, and John and I had discussions with Peter about the design of the album cover. Peter and his then wife Jann Haworth had some interesting additional ideas and we all had an exciting time putting the whole package together.

It's crazy to think that, 50 years later, we are looking back on this project with such fondness and a little bit of amazement at how four guys, a great producer and his engineers could make what turned out to be such a lasting piece of art.

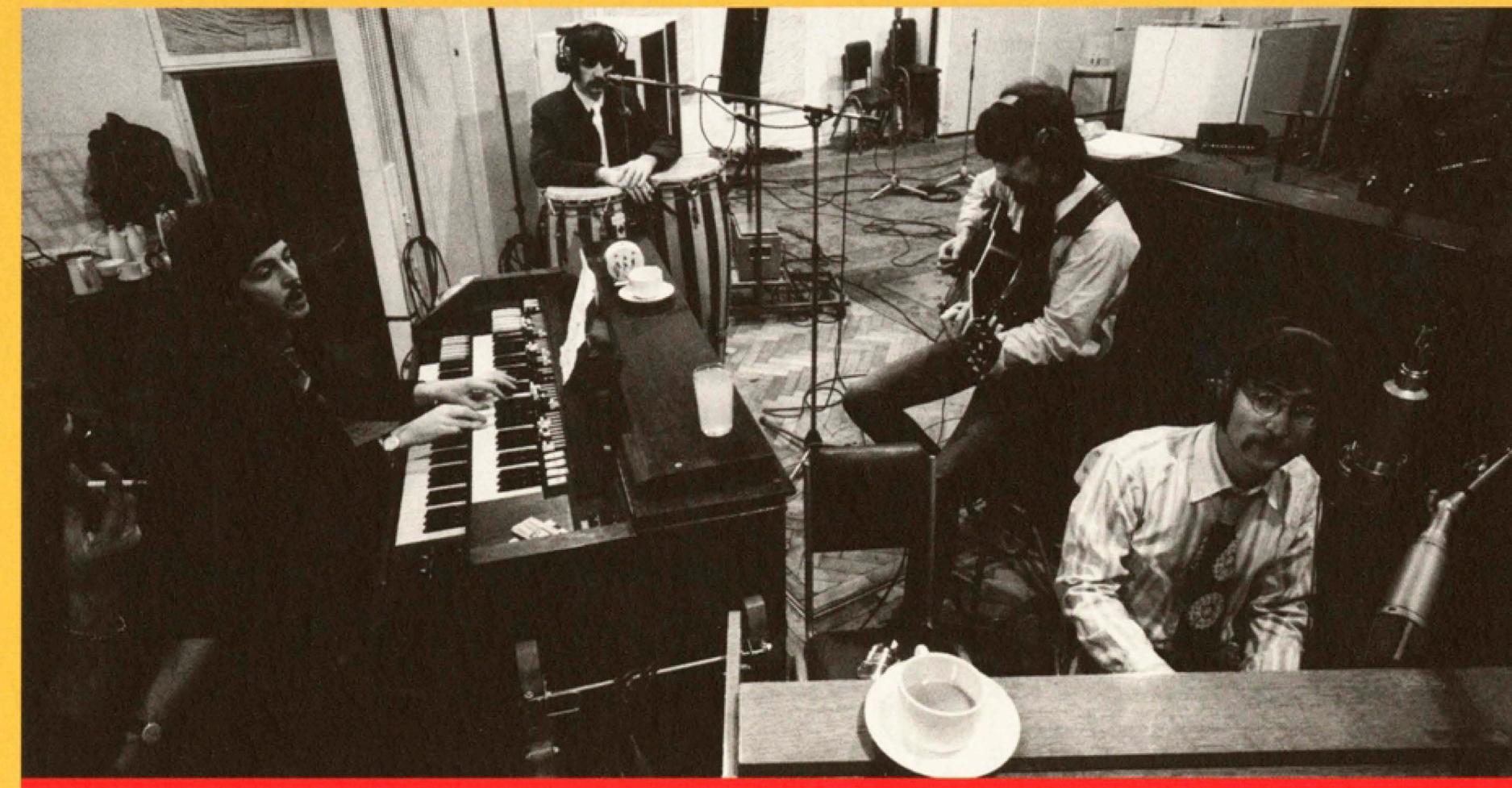
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"*Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* didn't start out life as a 'concept album' but it very soon developed a life of its own. I remember it warmly, as both a tremendous challenge and a highly rewarding experience. For me, it was the most innovative, imaginative and trend-setting record of its time."

George Martin

1987



Look at the cover of the group's second album, *With The Beatles*. Four young men gaze confidently out of the blackness into the future. Only three and a half years later, they have made an eighth album – *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Its Pop Art cover is awash with vibrant colour. Dressed in costumes from a bygone era, The Beatles are surrounded by an intriguing collage of photos and objects, including flowers and waxwork models of their younger selves. Within that short time span, their music had undergone a change just as dramatic as the contrasting images of those two LP sleeves. In the summer of 1967, broadcasting from the ship that was the home of pirate station Radio London, DJ John Peel referred to The Beatles as 'our leaders'. After listening to *Sgt. Pepper*, who would dare argue with him?

Such a triumph was by no means certain. In 1966, The Beatles' world had tilted on its axis. Bound by a contract signed with producer Walter Shenson for three movies, a third project to follow *Help!* proved difficult to find. Having rejected *A Talent For Loving*, in which they would have played cowboys, the first three months of 1966 earmarked for shooting the film were now empty. Having returned to Abbey Road in April, the sessions for their next album unexpectedly stretched into June. John had explained the group's long absence from radio, TV, films and concerts by pointing out: 'We've done half an LP in the time we would take to do a whole LP and a couple of singles. So we can't do it all and we like recording.' Although international touring commitments were scheduled between June and August, recording new music was the sole concern. The Beatles had, in effect, already become a studio group. When they played onstage in 1966, not one song from their new album, *Revolver*, was attempted. Several tense and dangerous encounters in Asia and the US shook the group's, by now, ambivalent commitment to touring. They decided that the final performance of the North American tour at Candlestick Park, San Francisco on 29 August 1966 would be their last ever concert.

During the next three months, the group took time out from being Beatles. Within a week of leaving the stage, John was acting in the Dick Lester movie *How I Won The War*. Paul was involved in the composition of a film score for *The Family Way* and also took incognito holidays in France, Spain and Kenya. George flew to India to receive personal sitar tuition from Ravi Shankar. Ringo relaxed at home with his wife and young son and also visited John on film location in Spain. From today's perspective, the songs on *Revolver* and the single 'Paperback Writer'/'Rain' would be enough to sustain a current band for several years before starting their next project. However, this was not how the pop scene worked in 1966. The year was The Beatles' least productive – just sixteen new songs were released compared to 33 in 1965. For many, this was a cause for concern and speculation. The worries of Beatle fans – and the group's record company – were first calmed by the emergence of the double A-sided single 'Strawberry Fields Forever'/'Penny Lane' in February 1967. The disc offered tantalising clues to what else might be on the way. Once *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released in June, the album's critical and commercial success allayed all fears of break-up or burn-out.

Inspired by Bob Dylan, from the arrival of *Rubber Soul* in December 1965 it was clear that The Beatles were exploring new avenues with their lyrics. Of all The Beatles' albums, *Sgt. Pepper* is the one with the least number of relationship songs. Even the two that do focus on the pursuit of love – 'When I'm Sixty-Four' and 'Lovely Rita' – approach the subject in an offbeat way. When presented with more oblique words, some listeners uncovered meanings that were unintended. For example, some missed the humour of a line in 'With A Little Help From My Friends' – 'What do you see when you turn out the light? I can't tell you but I know it's mine' – and invested the mischievous joke with a more cosmic meaning. Similarly, many assumed that because an abbreviated acronym of 'Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds' could be LSD, the song must be an evocation of the effects of the hallucinogenic drug. In fact, John's three-year-old son Julian had drawn a picture of one of his classmates. 'This is the truth,' John confirmed. 'I said, "What is it?" and he said it was Lucy in the sky with diamonds. I said, "Oh, that's beautiful," and I immediately wrote a song about it.' While they wrote the verses, John and Paul bounced figurative phrases back and forth. 'The "cellophane flowers", it's very *Alice In Wonderland*,' Paul remembered. 'We were mainly playing with words. "Newspaper taxis appear on the shore" – it's all what might have happened to Alice had the books continued and she'd gone into another land.' 'There was also the image of the female who would someday come save me,' John told David Sheff in 1980. 'A "girl with kaleidoscope eyes" who would come out of the sky. It turned out to be Yoko. It's not an acid song.'

In December 1966, Paul explained why The Beatles' entire focus was now on studio work: 'We feel that only through recording do people listen to us, so that is our most important form of communication. We take as much time as we want on a track, until we get it to our satisfaction.' As their producer George Martin recalled, their approach was imbued with a revolutionary spirit: 'When I started in the record business, the ultimate aim of everybody was to recreate on records a live performance as accurately as possible. We thought we were into another kind of art form where we were actually devising something that couldn't be done any other way and you were putting something down on tape that could only be done on tape.' EMI Recording Studios at Abbey Road proved to be the perfect laboratory for such an innovative idea. When The Beatles' demands for new sounds pushed the staff and their gear to the limit, both men and machines were able to cope.

One of the ingenious inventions made in 1966 by engineer Ken Townsend was Artificial/Automatic Double Tracking (ADT). Vocals on pop records were often enhanced by having the vocalist double a part by singing along with what had already been recorded. It was a time-consuming and laborious process to match the original performance exactly. The Beatles innocently wondered whether there might be a mechanical gadget to do it for them. The solution Ken came up with was made possible by a device he invented to alter the running speed of a tape machine by small increments. By running another machine it was possible to duplicate a vocal – or instrument – from the master tape and, at the same time by altering its speed, delay it by a fraction of a

second from the original. A delay of around 27 milliseconds gave the impression of hearing two voices or instruments. By adding just a few milliseconds of delay – and changing the amount very slightly – a favourite Beatles effect was created: 'phasing'. It was introduced on *Revolver*. It is all over *Sgt. Pepper*. 'You name a track it isn't on!' John joked in an interview with BBC DJ Kenny Everett. 'Phasing is great. Double-flanging, we call it. Phasing is too much!'

The sessions for the album also marked the group's first use of a recently invented DI (Direct Injection) box. For example, on 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band', rather than being recorded by placing a microphone in front of a speaker cabinet, the signal from Paul's bass guitar was plugged directly into the mixing desk. This produced a clean sound uncoloured by the acoustics of the studio. However, the tonal quality of the bass was usually the result of a mix of the direct injection on the console and the amp in the studio. Another feature of the sessions was that Paul's bass guitar parts were usually recorded as overdubs. 'It was much better for me to work out the bass later,' Paul explained. 'It allowed me to get melodic bass lines.' There was also much speeding up and slowing down of tapes during recording and mixing, which altered the tempo and pitch of a voice, instrument or whole song. This is particularly noticeable in the sound of Paul's vocal on 'When I'm Sixty-Four'. From 1966, George Martin had a young engineer by his side at the mixing desk. Geoff Emerick was nineteen years old when he was asked whether he would like to take over. 'That took me a little bit by surprise. In fact it terrified me!' Geoff recalled. Nevertheless, he enthusiastically embraced the experimentation that characterised the *Revolver* sessions and which was further explored during the recording of *Sgt. Pepper*.

The experimental and painstaking approach to recording meant that it took nearly 400 hours to complete the LP – an astonishing amount of work for an album at that time. For Ringo, the meticulous overdubbing led to some periods of inactivity. 'We were still doing the basic tracks like we always did and then it would take weeks for the overdubs. It's a fine album ... but I did learn how to play chess on it!' George Harrison remembered, 'It wasn't recorded like a band where you learn the songs. It was starting to become bitty.' When working on his only composition on the LP, the other Beatles did not play at all. George's passion for both the music and culture of India is at the heart of 'Within You Without You'. 'That was the big thing for me when that happened in '66,' he recalled. 'After that, everything else seemed like hard work. It was a job – like doing something I didn't really want to do. I was losing interest in being fab, at that point.' A fusion of styles originating from the West and East, 'Within You Without You' featured musicians from the London Symphony Orchestra and members of the London Asian Music Circle. The song ends with a peal of laughter – a typical Beatles pre-emptive ploy to deflect any accusation that they might be taking themselves too seriously.

The grand ambition of 'Within You Without You' at the beginning of side two of the LP was matched by the closing track 'A Day In The Life'. Starting from John's original idea,

Where do we start when it comes to remixing one of the most famous albums of all time? Why even attempt it?

In 1967, all care and attention to detail were applied to making the mono LP, with The Beatles present for all the mixes. Almost as an afterthought, the stereo album was mixed very quickly without them. Yet it is the stereo version that most people listen to today. After forensically working out what the team had been up to when mixing the mono album, engineer Sam Okell and I set about creating a new stereo version by returning to the original four-track tapes. We soon realised why we were doing this. The music recorded five decades ago sounds both contemporary and timeless; trapped in a time-lock waiting to pop like a cork from a champagne bottle. I believe *Sgt. Pepper* was my father's greatest achievement as a producer. We have had the privilege of passing the torch to the next generation.

Giles Martin

2017

it was co-written by Lennon and McCartney in the music room of Paul's London home. Two separately conceived pieces were merged by use of an orchestral passage. The discordant rush, heard in the middle and at the climax of the recording, was inspired by Paul's keen interest in avant-garde music. Not for the first, or last time, a random element was allowed into a Beatles record. Forty orchestral musicians were instructed by Paul to play the lowest E on their instruments and then ascend to the highest E. It was a wildly experimental idea but works perfectly within the context of the song. But as the adventurous sessions for *Sgt. Pepper* continued to April 1967, George Martin did recognise the commercial risk he and the group were taking: 'As it was getting more and more avant-garde ... there was a slight niggle of worry. I thought, "Is the public ready for this yet?"' It was. *Sgt. Pepper* quickly became The Beatles' biggest selling LP of their career so far. Over the decades since 1967, it has frequently topped lists of the greatest records ever made.

Was *Sgt. Pepper* a concept album? Certainly, Paul's initial vision was to create an 'alter-ego' band: 'It liberated you – you could do anything when you got to the mic or on your guitar, because it wasn't you.' John felt differently: 'All my contributions to the album have nothing to do with this idea of *Sgt. Pepper* and his Band; but it works, because we said it worked, and that's how the album appeared.' That is the point. The songs do range widely across musical styles and subject matter – switching in a heartbeat from the compassion expressed for the characters in the narrative of 'She's Leaving Home' to a giddy evocation of the sounds of a Victorian circus in 'Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!' – yet the album sounds like a unified work. The elimination of the usual few seconds of silence between tracks allows the songs to flow together without a break; like a surreal music hall variety show. Enriched by soulful drum fills, exciting guitar flourishes, elegant bass lines and characterful vocals, the music throughout *Sgt. Pepper* is fresh, playful, wistful, witty and joyful.

The four cool rhythm and blues fans photographed on the cover of *With The Beatles* could never have imagined the dizzying heights to which their musical passion would lead. Before the release of *Sgt. Pepper*, there were many who were sceptical about the unconventional choices the group had made – no concerts, months away from the spotlight, bold experimentation with unusual instruments and recording techniques, many long nights spent in the studio. As Ringo remembered, 'While we were making the album, they thought we were actually in there self-indulging, just in the studio as the Fabs. We, however, were actually recording this fine body of work, and making one of the most popular albums ever.' In fact, The Beatles were getting better all the time. They were 'our leaders'.

## THE COVER STORY

With an extravagant Pop Art collage on the front and assorted images and extras inside, if ever an album cover conjured up the spirit of the record it was wrapped around, this is it. Not only did the sleeve encapsulate the merry jumble of ideas bursting from the LP, it also helped to give the impression of a concept unifying the album's songs. The story of how the artwork was created is a striking example of how The Beatles were able to carry off an innovative idea – no matter how unprecedented, expensive and risky it might be.

Paul took his original musical concept – that The Beatles had assumed the identity of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band – and developed it into a visual idea. His initial sketches for the cover show the group wearing the uniforms of a military band while standing in an Edwardian sitting room with framed photographs of some of their heroes. John holds a clarinet, Paul an E-flat bass tuba, George a trumpet and Ringo has a kettle drum. Paul also drew the band next to a typical floral display seen in British public parks.

The key factors leading to the creative success of the front cover were that the figures standing behind Sgt. Pepper and his Band would be a

'I did drawings of us being presented to the Lord Mayor, with lots of dignitaries and friends of ours around, in front of a big northern floral clock,' he remembered.

This was not only an era of experimentation in a variety of art forms, it was also a time of exciting cross-pollination between them. Through various connections on the vibrant London scene, The Beatles had become friends with art dealer Robert Fraser. When shown Paul's ideas for the cover, he suggested the involvement of Peter Blake and his then wife, American artist Jann Haworth. The original concept for the cover evolved. 'In my mind, I was making a piece of art not an album sleeve,' Peter Blake remembered. 'It changed in good ways,' Paul recalled. 'The clock became the sign of The Beatles in a flower bed. Our heroes in photographs around us became the crowd of dignitaries.'

Large prints were made and hand-tinted by Jann Haworth, stuck on particle board (chipboard) and cut to size. The crowd was then assembled in a set built in a photographic studio used by Michael Cooper at Chelsea Manor Studios in Flood Street, London. A range of objects was placed around the stage, including several cloth figures made by Jann Haworth. In a magnanimous gesture, her Shirley Temple doll wears a Rolling Stones sweatshirt. Peter Blake had rescued a Madame Tussauds model of boxer Sonny Liston just before it was due to be melted

down. His imposing figure was positioned next to waxworks of The Beatles, as they had looked in 1963. In keeping with the cover concept, The Beatles were not really depicted twice because, as Peter Blake explained, 'It made sense that The Beatles would be fans of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.'

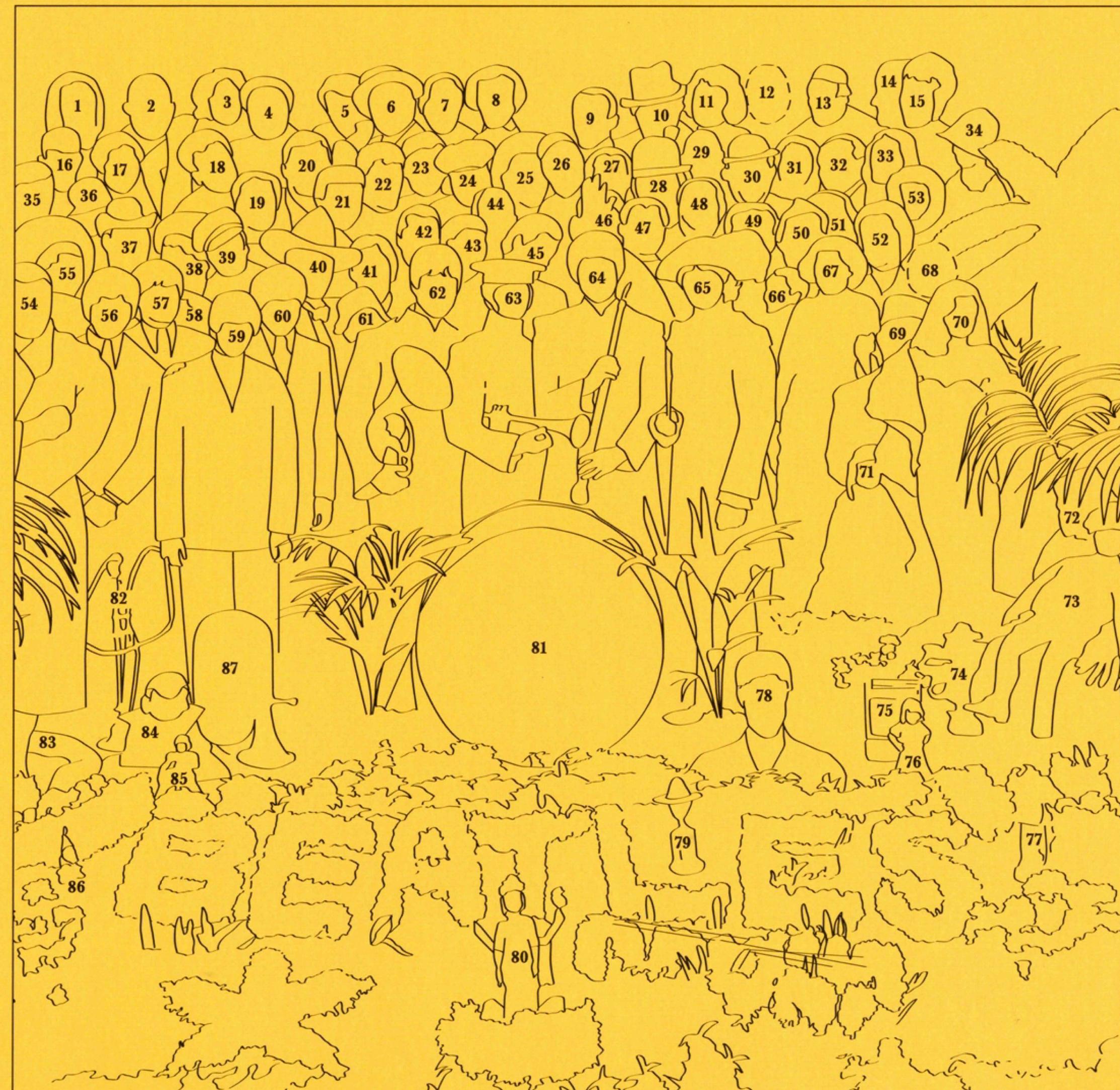
The drum skin at the focal point of the image was made by fairground artist Joe Ephgrave. He painted two designs – the unused version with more modern lettering was attached to the other side of the bass drum, just in case there might be a change of mind. When flowers from Clifton Nurseries arrived on the day of the photo session, 30 March 1967, an unexpected feature was introduced when the delivery boy asked if he could make a guitar shape with white hyacinths. Contrary to legend, there is not a row of marijuana plants above BEATLES. Appropriately, they are Peperomia plants.

During the assembly of the collage, the possibility that anyone would not want to

be part of a Beatles sleeve had not been a consideration. Asserting that 'it is too light hearted to believe no one will sue,' EMI Records insisted that each person depicted, or their estate, should have granted permission for their likeness to be shown. The inclusion of all the lyrics on the sleeve had also been a challenge. As this had never been done before, agreement had to be sought from the publishing company, which feared its sheet music sales would be adversely affected.

EMI had also been troubled by another major point concerning the cover: its cost. At this time, the usual fee for album artwork would be well under £100. The budget for *Sgt. Pepper* had risen to nearly £3,000. In 1967, it was possible to buy a house for that price. In a letter to the group's manager Brian Epstein, EMI advised him that it would only agree to pick up the bill for the cover if the album sold a million copies around the world. That turned out not to be a problem for The Beatles.

- 1 Sri Yukteswar Giri *guru*
- 2 Aleister Crowley *dabbler in black-magic*
- 3 Mae West *actress*
- 4 Lenny Bruce *comic*
- 5 Karlheinz Stockhausen *composer*
- 6 W.C. (William Claude) Fields *comic*
- 7 Carl Gustav Jung *psychologist*
- 8 Edgar Allan Poe *writer*
- 9 Fred Astaire *dancer/actor*
- 10 Richard Merkin *artist*
- 11 The Varga Girl *by artist Alberto Vargas*
- 12 Leo Gorcey \* *actor*
- 13 Huntz Hall *actor, with Leo Gorcey one of the Bowery Boys*
- 14 Simon Rodia *creator of Watts Towers*
- 15 Bob Dylan *musician*
- 16 Aubrey Beardsley *illustrator*
- 17 Sir Robert Peel *politician*
- 18 Aldous Huxley *writer*
- 19 Dylan Thomas *poet*
- 20 Terry Southern *writer*
- 21 Dion (di Mucci) *singer*
- 22 Tony Curtis *actor*
- 23 Wallace Berman *artist*
- 24 Tommy Handley *comic*
- 25 Marilyn Monroe *actress*
- 26 William Burroughs *writer*
- 27 Sri Mahavatara Babaji *guru*
- 28 Stan Laurel *comic*
- 29 Richard Lindner *artist*
- 30 Oliver Hardy *comic*
- 31 Karl Marx *philosopher/socialist*
- 32 H.G. (Herbert George) Wells *writer*
- 33 Sri Paramahansa Yogananda *guru*
- 34 Anonymous *hairdressers' wax dummy*
- 35 Stuart Sutcliffe *artist/former Beatle*
- 36 Anonymous *hairdressers' wax dummy*
- 37 Max Miller *comic*
- 38 The Petty Girl *by artist George Petty*
- 39 Marlon Brando *actor*
- 40 Tom Mix *actor*
- 41 Oscar Wilde *writer*
- 42 Tyrone Power *actor*
- 43 Larry Bell *artist*
- 44 Dr. David Livingstone *missionary/explorer*
- 45 Johnny Weissmuller *swimmer/actor*
- 46 Stephen Crane *writer*



\* Painted out because he requested a fee # Painted out at the request of EMI  
 † Also used by Peter Blake and Jann Haworth as the basis for the cutout of Sgt. Pepper

John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr

Special thanks: Yoko Ono Lennon and Olivia Harrison

Executive Producer: Jeff Jones Project Producers: Jonathan Clyde and Guy Hayden

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ANNIVERSARY EDITION

**SGT. PEPPER'S  
LONELY HEARTS  
CLUB BAND**

**AS YOU HAVE NEVER  
HEARD IT BEFORE!**

- 01. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**
- 02. With A Little Help From My Friends**
- 03. Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds**
- 04. Getting Better**
- 05. Fixing A Hole**
- 06. She's Leaving Home**
- 07. Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite**
- 08. Within You Without You**
- 09. When I'm Sixty-Four**
- 10. Lovely Rita**
- 11. Good Morning Good Morning**
- 12. Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (Reprise)**
- 13. A Day In The Life**
- 14. Strawberry Fields Forever**
- 15. Penny Lane**