

= Strawberry Fields Forever =

" Strawberry Fields Forever " is a song by the English rock band the Beatles . The song was written by John Lennon and credited to the Lennon ? McCartney songwriting partnership . It was inspired by Lennon 's memories of playing in the garden of Strawberry Field , a Salvation Army children 's home near where he grew up in Liverpool .

The song was the first track recorded during the sessions for the Beatles ' Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band ( 1967 ) , and was intended for inclusion on the album . Instead , with the group under record @-@ company pressure to release a single , it was issued in February 1967 as a double A @-@ side with " Penny Lane " . The combination reached number two in the United Kingdom , breaking the band 's four @-@ year run of chart @-@ topping singles there , while " Strawberry Fields Forever " peaked at number eight on the Billboard Hot 100 in America .

Lennon considered the song his greatest accomplishment . The track incorporates reverse @-@ recorded instrumentation and tape loops , and was created from the editing together of two separate versions of the song ? each one entirely different in tempo , mood and musical key . The song was later included on the US Magical Mystery Tour LP ( although not on the British double EP package of the same name ) .

" Strawberry Fields Forever " is one of the defining works of the psychedelic rock genre and has been covered by many artists . The Beatles made a promotional film clip for the song that is similarly recognised for its influence in the medium of music video . The Strawberry Fields memorial in New York 's Central Park is named after the song .

= = Background and writing = =

Strawberry Field was the name of a Salvation Army children 's home just around the corner from Lennon 's childhood home in Woolton , a suburb of Liverpool . Lennon and his childhood friends Pete Shotton , Nigel Walley , and Ivan Vaughan used to play in the wooded garden behind the home . One of Lennon 's childhood treats was the garden party held each summer in Calderstones Park , near the home , where a Salvation Army band played . Lennon 's aunt Mimi Smith recalled : " As soon as we could hear the Salvation Army band starting , John would jump up and down shouting , ' Mimi , come on . We 're going to be late . ' "

Lennon 's " Strawberry Fields Forever " and McCartney 's " Penny Lane " shared the theme of nostalgia for their early years in Liverpool . Although both referred to actual locations , the two songs also had strong surrealistic and psychedelic overtones . Producer George Martin said that when he first heard " Strawberry Fields Forever " , he thought it conjured up a " hazy , impressionistic dreamworld " .

The Beatles had just retired from touring after one of the most difficult periods of their career , including the " more popular than Jesus " controversy and the band 's unintentional snubbing of Philippines First Lady Imelda Marcos .Lennon talked about the song in 1980 : " I was different all my life . The second verse goes , ' No one I think is in my tree . ' Well , I was too shy and self @-@ doubting . Nobody seems to be as hip as me is what I was saying . Therefore , I must be crazy or a genius ? ' I mean it must be high or low ' " , and explaining that the song was " psycho @-@ analysis set to music " .

Lennon began writing the song in Almería , Spain , during the filming of Richard Lester 's How I Won the War in September ? October 1966 . The earliest demo of the song , recorded in Almería , had no refrain and only one verse : " There 's no one on my wavelength / I mean , it 's either too high or too low / That is you can 't you know tune in but it 's all right / I mean it 's not too bad " . He revised the words to this verse to make them more obscure , then wrote the melody and part of the lyrics to the refrain ( which then functioned as a bridge and did not yet include a reference to Strawberry Fields ) . He then added another verse and the mention of Strawberry Fields . The first verse on the released version was the last to be written , close to the time of the song 's recording . For the refrain , Lennon was again inspired by his childhood memories : the words " nothing to get hung about " were inspired by Aunt Mimi 's strict order not to play in the grounds of Strawberry Field

, to which Lennon replied , " They can 't hang you for it . " The first verse Lennon wrote became the second in the released version , and the second verse Lennon wrote became the last in the release .

### = = Musical structure = =

The song was originally written on acoustic guitar in the key of C major . The recorded version is approximately in B @-@ flat major ; owing to manipulation of the recording speed , the finished version is not in standard pitch ( some , for instance consider that the tonic is A ) . The introduction was played by McCartney on a Mellotron , and involves a I ? ii ? I ? ? VII ? IV progression . The vocals enter with the chorus instead of a verse . In fact we are not " taken down " to the tonic key , but to " non @-@ diatonic chords and secondary dominants " combining with " chromatic melodic tension intensified through outrageous harmonisation and root movement " . The phrase " to Strawberry " for example begins with a somewhat dissonant G melody note against a prevailing F minor key , then uses the semi @-@ tone dissonance B ? and B notes ( the natural and sharpened 11th degrees against the Fm chord ) until the consonant F note is reached on " Fields " . The same series of mostly dissonant melody notes cover the phrase " nothing is real " against the prevailing F # 7 chord ( in A key ) .

A half @-@ measure complicates the meter of the verses , as well as the fact that the vocals begin in the middle of the first measure . The first verse comes after the refrain , and is eight measures long . The verse ( for example " Always , no sometimes ... " ) starts with an F major chord in the key of B ? ( or E chord in the key of A ) ( V ) , which progresses to G minor , the submediant , a deceptive cadence . According to Alan Pollack , the " approach @-@ avoidance tactic " ( i.e. , the deceptive cadence ) is encountered in the verse , as the leading @-@ tone , A , appearing on the words " Always know " , " I know when " " I think a No " and " I think I disagree " , never resolves into a I chord ( A in A key ) directly as expected . Instead , at the end of the verse , the leading note , harmonized as part of the dominant chord , resolves to the prevailing tonic ( B ? ) at the end of the verse , after tonicizing the subdominant ( IV ) E ? chord , on " disagree " .

In the middle of the second chorus , the " funereal brass " is introduced , stressing the ominous lyrics . After three verses and four choruses , the line " Strawberry Fields Forever " is repeated three times , and the song fades out with guitar , cello , and swarmandal instrumentation . The song fades back in after a few seconds into the " nightmarish " ending , with the Mellotron playing in a haunting tone ? one achieved by recording the Mellotron " Swinging Flutes " setting in reverse ? scattered drumming , and Lennon murmuring , after which the song completes .

### = = Recording = =

The working title was " It 's Not Too Bad " , and Geoff Emerick , the sound engineer , remembered it being " just a great , great song , that was apparent from the first time John sang it for all of us , playing an acoustic guitar . " Recording began on 24 November 1966 , in Abbey Road 's Studio Two on a 4 @-@ track machine . It took 45 hours to record , spread over five weeks . The song was meant to be on the band 's 1967 album Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band , but was released as a single instead .

The band recorded three distinct versions of the song . After Lennon played the song for the other Beatles on his acoustic guitar , the band recorded the first take . Lennon played an Epiphone Casino ; McCartney played a Mellotron , a new home instrument purchased by Lennon on 12 August 1965 ( with another model hired in after encouragement from Mike Pinder of The Moody Blues ) ; George Harrison played electric guitar , and Ringo Starr played drums . The first recorded take began with the verse , " Living is easy ? " , instead of the chorus , " Let me take you down " , which starts the released version . The first verse also led directly to the second , with no chorus between . Lennon 's vocals were automatically double @-@ tracked from the words " Strawberry Fields Forever " through the end of the last verse . The last verse , beginning " Always , no sometimes " , has three @-@ part harmonies , with McCartney and Harrison singing " dreamy background vocals " . This

version was soon abandoned and went unreleased until the Anthology 2 compilation in 1996 .

Four days later the band reassembled to try a different arrangement . The second version of the song featured McCartney 's Mellotron introduction followed by the refrain . They recorded five takes of the basic tracks for this arrangement ( two of which were false starts ) with the last being chosen as best and subjected to further overdubs . Lennon 's final vocal was recorded with the tape running fast so that when played back at normal speed the tonality would be altered , giving his voice a slurred sound . This version was used for the first minute of the released recording .

After recording the second version of the song , Lennon wanted to do something different with it , as Martin remembered : " He 'd wanted it as a gentle dreaming song , but he said it had come out too raucous . He asked me if I could write him a new line @-@ up with the strings . So I wrote a new score ( with four trumpets and three cellos ) and we recorded that , but he didn 't like it . " Meanwhile , on 8 and 9 December , another basic track was recorded , using a Mellotron , electric guitar , piano , backwards @-@ recorded cymbals , and the swarmandel ( or swordmandel ) , an Indian version of the zither . After reviewing the tapes of Martin 's version and the original , Lennon told Martin that he liked both versions , although Martin had to tell Lennon that the orchestral score was at a faster tempo and in a higher key ( B major ) than the first version ( A major ) . Lennon said , " You can fix it , George " , giving Martin and Emerick the difficult task of joining the two takes together . With only a pair of editing scissors , two tape machines , and a vari @-@ speed control , Emerick compensated for the differences in key and speed by increasing the speed of the first version and decreasing the speed of the second . He then spliced the versions together , starting the orchestral score in the middle of the second chorus . ( Since the first version did not include a chorus after the first verse , he also spliced in the first seven words of the chorus from elsewhere in the first version . ) The pitch @-@ shifting in joining the versions gave Lennon 's lead vocal a slightly other @-@ worldly " swimming " quality .

Some vocalising by Lennon is faintly audible at the end of the song , picked up as leakage onto one of the drum microphones ( close listening shows Lennon making other comments to Ringo ) . In the " Paul is Dead " hoax these were taken to be Lennon saying " I buried Paul . " In 1974 , McCartney said , " That wasn 't ' I buried Paul ' at all ? that was John saying ' cranberry sauce ' ? That 's John 's humour ? If you don 't realise that John 's apt to say cranberry sauce when he feels like it , then you start to hear a funny little word there , and you think , ' Aha ! ' " Shortly before his death in 1980 , Lennon expressed dissatisfaction with the final version of the song , saying it was " badly recorded " and accusing McCartney of subconsciously sabotaging the recording .

= = Release = =

When manager Brian Epstein pressed Martin for a new Beatles ' single , Martin told Epstein that the group had recorded " Strawberry Fields Forever " and " Penny Lane " , which in Martin 's opinion were their two finest songs to date . Epstein said they would issue the songs as a double A @-@ side single , as they had done with their previous single , " Yellow Submarine " / " Eleanor Rigby " . The single was released in the US on 13 February 1967 , and in the United Kingdom on 17 February 1967 . Following the Beatles ' usual philosophy that songs released on a single should not appear on new albums , which wasn 't always the case , both songs were ultimately left off Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band . Martin later stated that this was a " dreadful mistake " , even though both were given a belated album appearance on side two of the LP of " Magical Mystery Tour " . It was released as a double EP in the UK , but in the USA the LP had the whole soundtrack on side one with the 1967 singles released on side two ; however , the US LP version is now the CD version .

For the first time since " Love Me Do " in 1962 , a single by the Beatles failed to reach number one in the UK charts . It was held at number two by Engelbert Humperdinck 's " Release Me " . In a radio interview at the time , McCartney said he was not upset because Humperdinck 's song was a " completely different type of thing " . Starr said later that it was " a relief " because " it took the pressure off " . " Penny Lane " reached number one in the US , while " Strawberry Fields Forever " peaked at number eight . In the US , both songs were included on the Magical Mystery Tour LP ,

which was released as a six @-@ track double @-@ EP in the UK .

The song was the opening track of the compilation album 1967 ? 1970 , released in 1973 , and also appears on the Imagine soundtrack issued in 1988 . In 1996 , three previously unreleased versions of the song were included on the Anthology 2 album : Lennon 's original home demo , an altered version of the first studio take , and the complete take seven , of which only the first minute was heard in the master version . In 2006 , a newly mixed version of the song was included on the album Love . This version builds from an acoustic demo ( which was run at the actual recorded speed ) and incorporates elements of " Hello , Goodbye " , " In My Life " , " Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band " , " Penny Lane " and " Piggies " .

= = Promotional film = =

The Beatles produced a promotional film clip for " Strawberry Fields Forever " , which served as an early example of what became known as a music video . It was filmed on 30 and 31 January 1967 at Knole Park in Sevenoaks , Kent . The clip was directed by Peter Goldmann , a Swedish television director who had been recommended to the Beatles by their mutual friend Klaus Voormann .

One of the band 's assistants , Tony Bramwell , served as producer . Bramwell recalls that , inspired by Voormann 's comment on hearing " Strawberry Fields Forever " ? that " the whole thing sounded like it was played on a strange instrument " ? he spent two days dressing up a large tree in the park to resemble " a piano and harp combined , with strings " . Writing for Mojo magazine in 2007 , John Harris remarked that Bramwell 's set design reflected the " collision of serenity and almost gothic eeriness " behind the finished song .

The film features reverse film effects , stop motion animation , jump @-@ cuts from daytime to night @-@ time , and the Beatles playing and later pouring paint over the upright piano . During the same visit to Knole Park , the band shot part of the promotional film for " Penny Lane " .

In 2015 , the promo film was included in the three @-@ disc versions ( titled 1 + ) of the Beatles ' compilation 1 .

= = Critical reception = =

Among initial reviews of the single , the NME 's Derek Johnson confessed to being both fascinated and confused by " Strawberry Fields Forever " , writing : " Certainly the most unusual and way @-@ out single The Beatles have yet produced ? both in lyrical content and scoring . Quite honestly , I don 't really know what to make of it . " Time magazine hailed the song as " the latest sample of the Beatles ' astonishing inventiveness " .

" Strawberry Fields Forever " has continued to receive acclaim from music critics . Richie Unterberger of AllMusic describes the song as " one of The Beatles ' peak achievements and one of the finest Lennon @-@ McCartney songs " . Ian MacDonald wrote in Revolution in the Head that it " shows expression of a high order ? few if any [ contemporary composers ] are capable of displaying feeling and fantasy so direct , spontaneous , and original . " In 2004 , this song was ranked number 76 on Rolling Stone 's list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " .

In 2010 , Rolling Stone placed it at number three on the 100 Greatest Beatles Songs . " Strawberry Fields Forever " was ranked as the second @-@ best Beatles song by Mojo , after " A Day in the Life " . The song is ranked as the 8th greatest of all time by Acclaimed Music . XFM radio placed the song 73rd in their list of the 100 Best British Songs and 176th in their Top 1000 Songs of All Time list .

= = Cultural influence = =

Paul Revere & the Raiders were among the most successful US groups during 1966 and 1967 , having their own Dick Clark @-@ produced television show , Where the Action Is . Mark Lindsay ( singer / saxophonist ) heard the song on the radio , bought it , and then listened to it at home with his producer at the time , Terry Melcher . When the song ended Lindsay said , " Now what the fuck

are we gonna do ? " later saying , " With that single , the Beatles raised the ante as to what a pop record should be " .

It has been written by Steven Gaines in the biography *Heroes and Villains* that Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys heard the single while he was underway with his legendary unfinished album , *Smile* . Later , the event was claimed by Gaines to have been one of many factors that accelerated Wilson 's already plummeting emotional state and the project 's imminent collapse , as Wilson could not find a way to complete the album to his satisfaction , and by the Beach Boys ' former manager Jack Rieley 's account , feared that what he had accomplished over the last several months of recording would sound dated to contemporary rock audiences . In 2014 , Wilson stated that he thought " *Strawberry Fields Forever* " was " a weird record " , but denied that it had " weakened " him .

The promotional films for " *Strawberry Fields Forever* " and " *Penny Lane* " were selected by New York 's MoMA as two of the most influential music videos of the late 1960s . Both were originally broadcast in the US on 25 February 1967 , on the variety show *The Hollywood Palace* , with actor Van Johnson as host . The *Ed Sullivan Show* and other variety shows soon dropped their time constraints to allow for psychedelic music performances .

A cartoon based on the song was the final episode produced for *The Beatles* animated television series . " *Strawberry Fields Forever* " figures prominently in the Spanish film *Living Is Easy with Eyes Closed* ( 2013 ) , in which a fictional story is told of Lennon 's true , original development of the song in 1966 in Spain .

= = Cover versions = =

The song has been covered a number of other times , notably by Peter Gabriel in 1976 on the musical documentary *All This and World War II* , and by Ben Harper for the soundtrack of the film *I Am Sam* . *Vanilla Fudge* , the debut album by American rock band *Vanilla Fudge* , also contains a brief homage to " *Strawberry Fields Forever* " at the end of their cover of " *Eleanor Rigby* " ( the homage is entitled " *ELDS* " on CD versions of the album , and CD versions of the album in fact additionally spell out an acrostic of the song as an homage , with portions of preceding tracks entitled " *STRA* " , " *WBER* " and " *RYFI* " ) . Todd Rundgren 's version of the song was released on his 1976 album *Faithful* . The song was also covered by Jim Sturgess and Joe Anderson for the 2007 movie *Across the Universe* . *Los Fabulosos Cadillacs* recorded a ska version of the song featuring Debbie Harry for their album *Rey Azúcar* , which was a hit throughout Latin America .

" *Strawberry Fields Forever* " has also been covered by Richie Havens ( at the Woodstock Festival ) , Trey Anastasio , the Bee Gees , the Bobs , Campfire Girls , Eugene Chadbourne , Justin Currie , Design , Noel Gallagher , Richie Havens , Hayseed Dixie , Laurence Juber , David Lanz , Cyndi Lauper , Zlatko Manojlović , Marilyn Manson , Me First and the Gimme Gimmes , Mother 's Finest , Odetta , Andy Partridge , Plastic Penny , Pip Pyle , the Residents , Miguel Ríos , the Runaways , the Shadows , Gwen Stefani , Tomorrow , Transatlantic , Michael Vescera , the Ventures , Cassandra Wilson , Otomo Yoshihide , XTC , Ultraviolet Sound , Sandy Farina , the Deviants , and Karen Souza .

The song returned to the charts 23 years later when British dance group Candy Flip released an electronic version of the song . The song was generally well @-@ received , AllMusic describing it as " funkier and more club @-@ happy than the Beatles ' original " and was a commercial success on both sides of the Atlantic , reaching number three in the UK pop charts and number eleven on the US Modern Rock Tracks chart .

In the realm of contemporary or experimental classical music , the vocal melody for " *Strawberry Fields Forever* " is referenced as source material for the piano score of composer Alvin Lucier 's 1990 composition " *Nothing is Real* " in which the piano part , recorded in real time , is subsequently played back through a small speaker located within a teapot . Following instructions in the notated score , the pianist then raises and lowers the teapot lid , changing the acoustic filtering properties of the teapot as a resonator while attempting to filter specific frequencies as notated in the score .

= = Personnel = =

According to Ian MacDonald :

The Beatles

John Lennon ? vocals , acoustic guitar , bongos , Mellotron

Paul McCartney ? Mellotron , bass , electric guitar , timpani , bongos

George Harrison ? electric slide guitar , swarmandal , timpani , maracas

Ringo Starr ? drums , percussion

Additional musicians and production staff

= = Chart positions = =