

= A Day in the Life =

" A Day in the Life " is the final song on the Beatles ' Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band album . Credited to Lennon ? McCartney , the song comprises distinct sections written independently by John Lennon and Paul McCartney , with orchestral additions . While Lennon 's lyrics were inspired by contemporary newspaper articles , McCartney 's lyrics were based on reminiscences about his youth . The decisions to link sections of the song with orchestral glissandos and to end the song with a sustained piano chord were made only after the rest of the song had been recorded .

The supposed drug reference in the line " I 'd love to turn you on " resulted in the song initially being banned from broadcast by the BBC . Since its original album release , " A Day in the Life " has been released as a B @-@ side , and also on various compilation albums . It has been covered by other artists , and since 2008 , by McCartney in his live performances . It was ranked the 28th greatest song of all time by Rolling Stone magazine . On a different list , the magazine ranked it as the greatest Beatles song .

= = Lyricism = =

According to Lennon , the inspiration for the first two verses was the death of Tara Browne , the 21 @-@ year @-@ old heir to the Guinness fortune who had crashed his Lotus Elan on 18 December 1966 in Redcliffe Gardens , Earls Court . Browne had been a friend of Lennon and McCartney , and had , earlier in 1966 , instigated McCartney 's first experience with LSD . Lennon 's verses were adapted from a story in the 17 January 1967 edition of the Daily Mail , which reported the ruling on a custody action over Browne 's two young children :

Guinness heir Tara Browne 's two children will be brought up by their 56 @-@ year @-@ old grandmother , the High Court ruled yesterday . It turned down a plea by their mother , Mrs. Nicky Browne , 24 , that she should have them ... This , she said , happened after Mr. Browne , 21 , from whom she was estranged , had taken them for a holiday in County Wicklow [ Ireland ] with his mother .

Mrs. Browne began an action for their return in October [ 1966 ] , naming Mr. Browne and his mother as defendants . The action , held in private , was part way through when Mr. Browne died in a crash in his Lotus Elan car in South Kensington a week before Christmas .

" I didn 't copy the accident " , Lennon said . " Tara didn 't blow his mind out , but it was in my mind when I was writing that verse . The details of the accident in the song ? not noticing traffic lights and a crowd forming at the scene ? were similarly part of the fiction . " McCartney expounded on the subject : " The verse about the politician blowing his mind out in a car we wrote together . It has been attributed to Tara Browne , the Guinness heir , which I don 't believe is the case , certainly as we were writing it , I was not attributing it to Tara in my head . In John 's head it might have been . In my head I was imagining a politician bombed out on drugs who 'd stopped at some traffic lights and didn 't notice that the lights had changed . The ' blew his mind ' was purely a drugs reference , nothing to do with a car crash . "

Author Neil Sinyard attributed the third verse line " The English Army had just won the war " to Lennon 's role in the film How I Won the War , released on 18 October 1967 , but having filmed his part in September 1966 : " It 's hard to think of [ the verse ] ... without automatically associating it with Richard Lester 's film . "

In the authorized biography Many Years from Now , McCartney said about the line " I 'd love to turn you on " , which concludes both verse sections , " This was the time of Tim Leary 's ' Turn on , tune in , drop out ' and we wrote , ' I 'd love to turn you on . ' John and I gave each other a knowing look : ' Uh @-@ huh , it 's a drug song . You know that , don 't you ? ' " Lennon on composing the song with McCartney :

" Paul and I were definitely working together , especially on ' A Day in the Life ' that was a real ... The way we wrote a lot of the time : you 'd write the good bit , the part that was easy , like ' I read the news today ' or whatever it was , then when you got stuck or whenever it got hard , instead of carrying on , you just drop it ; then we would meet each other , and I would sing half , and he would

be inspired to write the next bit and vice versa . He was a bit shy about it because I think he thought it 's already a good song . Sometimes we wouldn 't let each other interfere with a song either , because you tend to be a bit lax with someone else 's stuff , you experiment a bit . So we were doing it in his room with the piano . He said ' Should we do this ? ' ' Yeah , let 's do that . ' "

McCartney provided the middle section of the song , a short piano piece he had been working on independently , with lyrics about a commuter whose uneventful morning routine leads him to drift off into a dream . McCartney had written the piece as a wistful recollection of his younger years , which included riding the bus to school , smoking , and going to class . This theme matched with the original concept of the album which was going to be about their youth .

Lennon wrote the song 's final verse inspired by a Far & Near news brief , in the same 17 January edition of the Daily Mail that had inspired the first two verses . Under the headline " The holes in our roads " , the brief stated :

There are 4 @, @ 000 holes in the road in Blackburn , Lancashire , or one twenty @-@ sixth of a hole per person , according to a council survey . If Blackburn is typical , there are two million holes in Britain 's roads and 300 @, @ 000 in London .

The story had been sold to the Daily Mail in Manchester by Ron Kennedy of the Star News agency in Blackburn . Ron had noticed a Lancashire Evening Telegraph story about road excavations and in a telephone call to the Borough Engineer 's department had checked the now famous annual number of holes in the road . Lennon had a problem with the words of the final verse , however , not being able to think of how to connect " Now they know how many holes it takes to " and " the Albert Hall " . His friend Terry Doran , managing director of Apple , suggested that they would " fill " the Albert Hall .

= = Musical structure and development = =

In a 1968 editorial for Jazz & Pop , writer Gene Sculatti called the Beach Boys 1966 single " Good Vibrations " the " ultimate in @-@ studio production trip " , positing that it was a primary influence for the recording of " A Day in the Life " .

= = = Basic track = = =

The Beatles began recording the song , with a working title " In the Life of ... " , on 19 January 1967 , in the innovative and creative studio atmosphere ushered in by the recording of " Strawberry Fields Forever " and " Penny Lane " over the preceding weeks . The two sections of the song are separated by a 24 @-@ bar bridge . The track was refined with remixing and additional parts added at recording sessions on 20 January and 3 February .

Starr elaborated his approach to drumming on the song :

I only have one rule and that is to play with the singer . If the singer 's singing , you don 't really have to do anything , just hold it together . If you listen to my playing , I try to become an instrument ; play the mood of the song . For example , ' Four thousand holes in Blackburn , Lancashire , ' - boom ba bom . I try to show that ; the disenchanting mood . The drum fills are part of it .

At first , the Beatles were not sure how to fill its linking section . Thus , at the conclusion of the recording session for the basic tracks , the transition solely consisted of a simple repeated piano chord and the voice of assistant Mal Evans counting the bars . Evans ' guide vocal was treated with gradually increasing amounts of echo . The 24 @-@ bar bridge section ended with the sound of an alarm clock triggered by Evans . The original intent was to edit out the ringing alarm clock when the missing section was filled in ; however it complemented McCartney 's piece well ; the first line of McCartney 's song began " Woke up , fell out of bed " , so the decision was made to keep the sound . Martin later said that editing it out would have been unfeasible in any case .

= = = Orchestra = = =

As a solution for the missing 24 @-@ bar middle section of the song , McCartney proposed the idea

of bringing in a full orchestra to fill the gap . To allay concerns that classically trained musicians would not be able to improvise the section , producer George Martin wrote a loose score for the section . It was an extended , atonal crescendo that encouraged the musicians to improvise within the defined framework . The orchestral part was recorded on 10 February 1967 , with McCartney and Martin conducting a 40 @-@ piece orchestra . The recording session was completed at a total cost of £ 367 ( equivalent to £ 6 @,@ 007 in 2015 ) for the players , an extravagance at the time . Martin later described explaining his improvised score to the puzzled orchestra :

What I did there was to write ... the lowest possible note for each of the instruments in the orchestra . At the end of the twenty @-@ four bars , I wrote the highest note ... near a chord of E major . Then I put a squiggly line right through the twenty @-@ four bars , with reference points to tell them roughly what note they should have reached during each bar ... Of course , they all looked at me as though I were completely mad .

McCartney noted that the strings were able to keep themselves in the designated time , while the trumpets were " much wilder " . McCartney had originally wanted a 90 @-@ piece orchestra , but this proved impossible ; the difference was made up , as the semi @-@ improvised segment was recorded multiple times and eventually four different recordings were overdubbed into a single massive crescendo . The results were successful ; in the final edit of the song , the orchestral bridge is reprised after the final verse . It was arranged for the orchestral session to be filmed by NEMS Enterprises for use in a planned television special . The film was never released in its entirety , although portions of it can be seen in the " A Day in the Life " promotional film ( included in the three @-@ disc versions of the Beatles ' 2015 video compilation 1 ) , which includes shots of studio guests Mick Jagger , Marianne Faithfull , Keith Richards , Brian Jones , Donovan , Pattie Boyd , and Michael Nesmith . Reflecting the Beatles ' taste for experimentation and the avant @-@ garde at this point in their careers , the orchestra players were asked to wear or were given a costume piece on top of their formal dress . This resulted in different players wearing anything from fake noses to fake stick @-@ on nipples . Martin recalled that the lead violinist performed wearing a gorilla paw , while a bassoon player placed a balloon on the end of his instrument .

Due to the multiple takes required to perfect the orchestral cacophony and the final chord , as well as their considerable procrastination in composing the song , the total duration of time spent recording " A Day in the Life " was 34 hours . In contrast , the Beatles ' earliest work , their first album Please Please Me , had been recorded in its entirety in only 10 hours , 45 minutes .

= = = Final chord = = =

Following the final orchestral crescendo , the song ends with one of the most famous final chords in music history . Lennon , McCartney , Starr , and Evans shared three different pianos , with Martin on the harmonium , and all played an E @-@ major chord simultaneously . The final chord was made to ring out for over forty seconds by increasing the recording sound level as the vibration faded out . Towards the end of the chord the recording level was so high that listeners can hear the sounds of the studio , including rustling papers and a squeaking chair .

The piano chord was a replacement for a failed vocal experiment . On the evening following the orchestra recording session , the four Beatles had recorded an ending of their voices humming the chord , but after multiple overdubs they wanted something with more impact . This final E chord represents a VI to the song 's tonic G major , although Pedler argues that the preceding chord changes ( from F ( " them all " ) to E ( " Now they know " ) Em7 ( " takes to fill " ) C ( " love to turn you " ) and B ( " on " ) ) followed by the chromatic ascent , shift our sense of the tonic from G to E ; creating a different feeling from the usual emotional uplift associated with a VI modulation .

= = = Personnel = = =

= = Variations = =

On the Sgt. Pepper album , the start of " A Day in the Life " is cross @-@ faded with the applause at the end of the previous track " Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band ( Reprise ) " . On The Beatles 1967 ? 1970 LP , " A Day in the Life " fades in through the Sgt. Pepper cross @-@ fade , but on Imagine : John Lennon and the CD version of 1967 ? 1970 , the song starts cleanly , without any fade or cross @-@ fade .

Following " A Day in the Life " on the Sgt. Pepper album ( as first released on LP in the UK and years later worldwide on CD ) is a high @-@ frequency 15 @-@ kilohertz tone and some randomly spliced Beatles studio chatter . The frequency is best understood as what we know as a dog whistle as the frequency is picked up by a dog 's ear and was part of their humour . They joked about picturing barking dogs should they be present when the album would finish . Recorded two months after the mono and stereo masters for " A Day in the Life " had been finalised , the studio chatter ( titled in the session notes " Edit for LP End " ) was added to the run @-@ out groove of the initial British pressing . There are even a few variations of the chatter , though the best known one is them saying during the laughter and chatter " never could see any other way . "

The Anthology 2 album includes an early , pre @-@ orchestral version of the song and Anthology 3 includes a version of " The End " that concludes by having the last note fade into the final chord of " A Day in the Life " ( reversed , then played forwards ) .

The Love version has the song starting with Lennon 's intro of " sugar plum fairy " , with the strings being more prominent during the crescendos .

= = Supposed drug references = =

The song became controversial for its supposed references to drugs . The BBC announced that it would not broadcast " A Day in the Life " due to the line " I 'd love to turn you on " , which , according to the corporation , advocated drug use . Other lyrics allegedly referring to drugs include " found my way upstairs and had a smoke / somebody spoke and I went into a dream " . A spokesman for the BBC stated , " We have listened to this song over and over again . And we have decided that it appears to go just a little too far , and could encourage a permissive attitude to drug @-@ taking . " The ban was eventually lifted on 13 March 1972 .

Lennon and McCartney denied that there were drug references and publicly complained about the ban at a dinner party at the home of their manager , Brian Epstein , celebrating their album . Lennon said that the song was simply about " a crash and its victim " , and called the line in question " the most innocent of phrases . " McCartney later said " This was the only one in the album written as a deliberate provocation . A stick @-@ that @-@ in @-@ your @-@ pipe ... But what we want is to turn you on to the truth rather than pot . " However , George Martin later commented that he had always suspected that the line " found my way upstairs and had a smoke " was a drug reference , recalling how the Beatles would " disappear and have a little puff " , presumably of cannabis , but not in front of him . " When [ Martin ] was doing his TV programme on Pepper " , McCartney recalled later , " he asked me , ' Do you know what caused Pepper ? ' I said , ' In one word , George , drugs . Pot . ' And George said , ' No , no . But you weren 't on it all the time . ' ' Yes , we were . ' Sgt. Pepper was a drug album . "

When Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band was released in South Asia , Malaysia and Hong Kong , " A Day in the Life " " With a Little Help from My Friends " and " Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds " were excluded because of supposed drug references .

= = Recognition and reception = =

" A Day in the Life " became one of the Beatles ' most influential songs . Paul Grushkin in his book Rockin ' Down the Highway : The Cars and People That Made Rock Roll , called the song " one of the most ambitious , influential , and groundbreaking works in pop music history " . In " From Craft to Art : Formal Structure in the Music of The Beatles " , the song is described thus : " ' A Day in the Life ' is perhaps one of the most important single tracks in the history of rock music ; clocking in at only four minutes and forty @-@ five seconds , it must surely be among the shortest epic pieces in rock .

" Richard Goldstein of The New York Times called the song " a deadly earnest excursion in emotive music with a chilling lyric ... [ that ] stands as one of the most important Lennon @-@ McCartney compositions ... an historic Pop event " .

The song appears on many top songs lists . It placed twelfth on CBC 's 50 Tracks , the second highest Beatles song on the list after " In My Life " . It placed first in Q Magazine 's list of the 50 greatest British songs of all time , and was at the top of Mojo Magazine 's 101 Greatest Beatles ' Songs , as decided by a panel of musicians and journalists . " A Day in the Life " was also nominated for a Grammy in 1967 for Best Arrangement Accompanying Vocalist Or Instrumentalist . In 2004 , Rolling Stone ranked " A Day in the Life " at number 28 on the magazine 's list of " The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time " , and in 2010 , the magazine deemed it to be the Beatles ' greatest song . It is listed at number 5 in Pitchfork Media 's The 200 Greatest Songs of the 1960s .

= = Legacy = =

In July 1978 Barry Gibb released a cover version of the song , taken from the multi @-@ platinum double covers compilation album Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band , which is regarded as one of the worst albums ever recorded .

On 27 August 1992 Lennon 's handwritten lyrics were sold by the estate of Mal Evans in an auction at Sotheby 's London for \$ 100 @,@ 000 ( £ 56 @,@ 600 ) . The lyrics were put up for sale again in March 2006 by Bonhams in New York . Sealed bids were opened on 7 March 2006 and offers started at about \$ 2 million but it failed to sell . The lyric sheet was auctioned again by the owner at Sotheby 's in June 2010 . It was purchased by an anonymous American buyer who paid \$ 1 @,@ 200 @,@ 000 ( £ 810 @,@ 000 ) .

McCartney has been performing this song in a majority of his live shows since his 2008 tour ; the most recent performance was after the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix on 13 November 2011 . It is played in a medley with " Give Peace a Chance " . The Beatles ' friend and contemporary Bob Dylan references the song 's opening lyrics in his 2012 tribute to John Lennon , " Roll on John " . David Bowie paraphrased the line " I read the news today , oh boy " with the line " I heard the news today , oh boy " on his 1975 single and album title track " Young Americans " as did Devo who paraphrased the line " I read the news today , oh boy " with the line " I saw the news today , oh boy " on their 1988 song " Some Things Never Change " from the album " Total Devo " .

In 2015 , the Royal Albert Hall released supposed correspondence between their Chief Executive and John Lennon , showing the RAH 's displeasure at the reference to holes in the building . This was an April Fool stunt .

= = Live performances = =

Paul McCartney performed the song live for the first time by any Beatle on 1 June 2008 at Anfield stadium , Liverpool , England . Both Beatles widows , Olivia Harrison and Yoko Ono , attended the concert . Also he performed the songs at some Spring and Summer shows in 2008 ( Kiev , Quebec City and Tel Aviv ) and 2009 ( Indio , Las Vegas ) and throughout his subsequent tours : Summer Live ' 09 , 2009 Good Evening Europe Tour , 2010 ? 2011 Up and Coming Tour and 2011 ? 2012 On the Run Tour .

= = Covers = =

The song has been recorded by many other artists , notably by Jeff Beck on the 2008 album Performing This Week : Live at Ronnie Scott 's Jazz Club which was also used in the film Across the Universe and won the 2010 Grammy Award for Best Rock Instrumental Performance . As of winter 2013 , the jam band Phish has covered the song 61 times .

The London Symphony Orchestra released an orchestral cover of the song in 1978 on Classic Rock : The Second Movement . It was also covered by Barry Gibb in 1978 for the film Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band and was included on the soundtrack of the same name , recorded in

September 1977 and produced by George Martin . Gibb 's version was released as a single , with " Nowhere Man " as the B @-@ side ( also recorded by him and intended for the film ) . Also in 1978 , his version was used as the B @-@ side of Robin Gibb 's version of " Oh ! Darling " released only in Italy .