

= The Beatles (album) =

The Beatles , also known as the White Album , is the ninth studio album by English rock group the Beatles , released on 22 November 1968 . A double album , its plain white sleeve has no graphics or text other than the band 's name embossed , and was intended as a direct contrast to the vivid cover artwork of the band 's earlier Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band . Although no singles were issued from The Beatles in Britain and the United States , the songs " Hey Jude " and " Revolution " originated from the same recording sessions and were issued on a single in August 1968 . The album 's songs range in style from British blues and ska to tracks influenced by Chuck Berry and by Karlheinz Stockhausen .

Most of the songs on the album were written during March and April 1968 at a Transcendental Meditation course in Rishikesh , India . The group returned to EMI Studios in May with recording lasting through to October . During these sessions , arguments broke out among the Beatles , and witnesses in the studio saw band members quarrel over creative differences . The feuds intensified when Lennon 's new partner , Yoko Ono , started attending the sessions . After a series of problems , including producer George Martin taking a sudden leave of absence and engineer Geoff Emerick quitting , Ringo Starr left the band briefly in August . The same tensions continued throughout the following year , leading to the eventual break @-@ up of the Beatles in April 1970 .

On release , The Beatles received mixed reviews from music journalists . Most critics found its satirical songs unimportant and apolitical amid a turbulent political and social climate , although some praised Lennon and McCartney 's writing . The band and Martin have since debated whether the group should have released a single album instead . Nonetheless , The Beatles reached number one on the charts in both the United Kingdom and the United States and has since been viewed by some critics as one of the greatest albums of all time .

= = Background = =

By 1968 , the Beatles had achieved commercial and critical success . The group 's previous album , Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band , was number one in the UK the previous year and charted for 27 weeks , selling 250 @,@ 000 copies in the first week after release . Time magazine had written in 1967 that Sgt. Pepper 's constituted a " historic departure in the progress of music ? any music " while the American writer Timothy Leary thought that the band were prototypes of " evolutionary agents sent by God , endowed with mysterious powers to create a new human species . " The band received a negative critical response for the film Magical Mystery Tour , but fan response was nevertheless positive .

Most of the songs for The Beatles were written during a Transcendental Meditation course with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in Rishikesh , India , between February and April 1968 . The retreat involved long periods of meditation , conceived by the band as a spiritual respite from all worldly endeavours ? a chance , in John Lennon 's words , to " get away from everything " . Both Lennon and Paul McCartney quickly re @-@ engaged themselves in songwriting , often meeting " clandestinely in the afternoons in each other 's rooms " to review their new work . " Regardless of what I was supposed to be doing , " Lennon would later recall , " I did write some of my best songs there . " Beatles author Ian MacDonald said Sgt Pepper was " shaped by LSD " , but the Beatles took no drugs with them to India aside from marijuana , and their clear minds helped the group with their songwriting . The stay in Rishikesh proved especially fruitful for George Harrison as a songwriter , coinciding with his re @-@ engagement with the guitar after two years studying the sitar . The musicologist Walter Everett likens Harrison 's development as a composer in 1968 to that of Lennon and McCartney five years before , although he notes that Harrison became " privately prolific " , given his customary junior status in the group .

The Beatles left Rishikesh before the end of the course . Ringo Starr was the first to leave , as he could not stomach the food ; McCartney departed in mid @-@ March , while Harrison and Lennon were more interested in Indian religion and remained until April . According to the author Geoffrey Giuliano , Lennon left Rishikesh because he felt personally betrayed after hearing rumours that the

Maharishi had behaved inappropriately towards women who accompanied the Beatles to India , though McCartney and Harrison later discovered this to be untrue and Lennon 's wife Cynthia reported there was " not a shred of evidence or justification " .

Collectively , the group wrote around 40 new compositions in Rishikesh , 26 of which would be recorded in very rough form at Kinfauns , Harrison 's home in Esher , in May 1968 . Lennon wrote the bulk of the new material , contributing 14 songs . Lennon and McCartney brought home @-@ recorded demos to the session , and worked on them together . Some home demos and group sessions at Kinfauns were later released on the 1996 compilation Anthology 3 .

= = Recording = =

The Beatles was recorded between 30 May and 14 October 1968 , largely at Abbey Road Studios in London , with some sessions at Trident Studios . The group block @-@ booked time at Abbey Road through to July , and their times at Rishikesh were soon forgotten in the atmosphere of the studio , with sessions occurring at irregular hours . The group 's self @-@ belief that they could do anything led to the formation of a new multimedia business corporation Apple Corps , an enterprise that drained the group financially with a series of unsuccessful projects . The open @-@ ended studio time led to a new way of working out songs . Instead of tightly rehearsing a backing track , as had happened in previous sessions , the group would simply record all the rehearsals and jamming , then add overdubs to the best take . Harrison 's song " Not Guilty " was left off the album despite recording 102 takes .

The sessions for The Beatles marked the first appearance in the studio of Lennon 's new domestic and artistic partner , Yoko Ono , who accompanied him to Abbey Road to work on " Revolution 1 " and who would thereafter be a more or less constant presence at all Beatles sessions . Ono 's presence was highly unorthodox , as prior to that point , the Beatles had generally worked in isolation . McCartney 's girlfriend at the time , Francie Schwartz , was also present at some sessions , as were the other two Beatles ' wives , Pattie Harrison and Maureen Starkey .

During the The Beatles sessions , the band upgraded from 4 @-@ track recording to 8 @-@ track . As work began , Abbey Road Studios possessed , but had yet to install , an 8 @-@ track machine that had supposedly been sitting in a storage room for months . This was in accordance with EMI 's policy of testing and customising new gear extensively before putting it into use in the studios . The Beatles recorded " Hey Jude " and " Dear Prudence " at Trident because it had an 8 @-@ track recorder . When they learned that EMI also had one , they insisted on using it , and engineers Ken Scott and Dave Harries took the machine (without authorisation from the studio chiefs) into Abbey Road Studio 2 for the band 's use .

The author Mark Lewisohn reports that the Beatles held their first and only 24 @-@ hour session at Abbey Road near the end of the creation of The Beatles , which occurred during the final mixing and sequencing for the album . The session was attended by Lennon , McCartney and producer George Martin . Unlike most LPs , there was no customary three @-@ second gap between tracks , and the master was edited so that songs segued together , via a straight edit , a crossfade , or an incidental piece of music .

= = = Personal issues = = =

The studio efforts on The Beatles captured the work of four increasingly individualised artists who frequently found themselves at odds . Lewisohn notes that several backing tracks do not feature the full group , and overdubs tended to be limited to whoever wrote the song . Sometimes McCartney would record in one studio for prolonged periods of time , while Lennon would record in another , each man using different engineers . Late in the sessions , Martin , whose influence over the band had waned , spontaneously left to go on holiday , leaving Chris Thomas in charge of production . Lennon 's devotion to Ono over the other Beatles , and the pair 's addiction to heroin , made working conditions difficult as he became prone to bouts of temper .

The recording engineer Geoff Emerick , who had worked with the group since Revolver in 1966 ,

had become disillusioned with the sessions . At one point , while recording " Ob @-@ La @-@ Di , Ob @-@ La @-@ Da " , Emerick overheard Martin criticising McCartney 's lead vocal performance , to which McCartney replied , " Well you come down and sing it " . On 16 July , Emerick announced that he was no longer willing to work with them and left .

Within the band , according to the author Peter Doggett , " the most essential line of communication ... between Lennon and McCartney " had been broken by Ono 's presence on the first day of recording . While echoing this view , Beatles biographer Philip Norman comments that , from the start , each of the group 's two principal songwriters shared a mutual disregard for the other 's new compositions : Lennon found McCartney 's songs " cloyingly sweet and bland " , while McCartney viewed Lennon 's as " harsh , unmelodious and deliberately provocative " . In a move that Lewisohn highlights as unprecedented in the Beatles ' recording career , Harrison and Starr chose to distance themselves part @-@ way through the project , flying to California on 7 June so that Harrison could film his scenes for the Ravi Shankar documentary Raga . Lennon , McCartney and Harrison 's involvement in individual musical projects outside the band during 1968 was further evidence of the group 's fragmentation . In Lennon 's case , the cover of his experimental collaboration with Ono , Two Virgins , featured the couple fully naked ? a gesture that his bandmates found bewildering and unnecessary .

On 20 August , Lennon and Starr , working on overdubs for " Yer Blues " in Studio 3 , visited McCartney in Studio 2 , where he was working on " Mother Nature 's Son " . The positive spirit of the session disappeared immediately , and the engineer Ken Scott later claimed : " you could cut the atmosphere with a knife " . On 22 August , during the session for " Back in the U.S.S.R. " , Starr abruptly left the studio , feeling that his role in the group was peripheral compared to the other members , and was upset at McCartney 's constant criticism of his drumming on the track . Abbey Road staff later commented that Starr frequently turned up to the sessions and sat waiting in the reception area for the others to turn up . In his absence , McCartney played the drums on " Dear Prudence " . Lewisohn also reports that , in the case of " Back in the U.S.S.R. " , the three remaining Beatles each made contributions on bass and drums , with the result that those parts may be composite tracks played by Lennon , McCartney or Harrison .

Lennon , McCartney and Harrison pleaded with Starr to reconsider . He duly returned on 5 September to find his drum kit decorated with flowers , a welcome @-@ back gesture from Harrison . McCartney described the sessions for The Beatles as a turning point for the group , saying " there was a lot of friction during that album . We were just about to break up , and that was tense in itself " , while Lennon later said " the break @-@ up of the Beatles can be heard on that album " . Of the album 's 30 tracks , only 16 have all four band members performing .

= = Songs = =

The Beatles contains a wide range of musical styles , which the authors Barry Miles and Gillian Gaar each view as the most diverse of any of the group 's albums . These styles include rock and roll , blues , folk , country , reggae , avant @-@ garde , hard rock and music hall . The production aesthetic ensured that the album 's sound was scaled @-@ down and less reliant on studio innovation , relative to all the Beatles ' releases since Revolver . The author Nicholas Schaffner viewed this as reflective of a widespread departure from the LSD @-@ inspired psychedelia of 1967 , an approach that was initiated by Bob Dylan and the Beach Boys and similarly adopted in 1968 by artists such as the Rolling Stones and the Byrds .

The only western instrument available to the group during their Indian visit was the acoustic guitar , and thus many of the songs on The Beatles were written and first performed on that instrument . Some of these songs remained acoustic on The Beatles and were recorded solo , or only by part of the group (including " Wild Honey Pie " , " Blackbird " , " Julia " , " I Will " and " Mother Nature 's Son ") .

= = = Side one = = =

McCartney wrote " Back in the U.S.S.R. " as a surreal parody of Chuck Berry 's song " Back in the U.S.A. " A field recording of an aeroplane taking off and landing was used at the start of the track , and intermittently throughout it , while the backing vocals were sung by Lennon and Harrison in the style of the Beach Boys at the request of Mike Love , who had accompanied the group to India . The track became widely bootlegged in the Soviet Union and became an underground hit . McCartney subsequently recorded a cover album the title of which , ????? ? ???? , is Russian for " Back in the U.S.S.R. "

" Dear Prudence " was one of the songs recorded at Trident . The style is typical of the acoustic songs written in Rishikesh , using guitar arpeggios . Lennon wrote the track about Mia Farrow 's sister Prudence , who rarely left her room during the stay in commitment to the meditation .

" Glass Onion " was the first backing track recorded as a full band since Starr 's brief departure . MacDonald claimed Lennon deliberately wrote the lyrics to mock fans who claimed to find " hidden messages " in songs , and referenced other songs in the Beatles catalogue ? " The Walrus was Paul " refers back to " I Am the Walrus " (which itself refers to " Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds ") . McCartney , in turn , overdubbed a recorder part after the line " I told you about the Fool on the Hill " , as a deliberate parody of the earlier song . A string section was added to the track in October .

" Ob @-@ La @-@ Di , Ob @-@ La @-@ Da " was written by McCartney as a pastiche of ska music . The track took a surprising amount of time to complete , with McCartney demanding perfectionism that annoyed his colleagues . Jimmy Scott , a friend of McCartney , suggested the title and played bongos on the initial take . He demanded a cut of publishing when the song was released , but the song was credited to " Lennon @-@ McCartney " . After working for three days on the backing track , the work was scrapped and replaced with a new recording . Lennon hated the song , calling it " granny music shit " , while engineer Richard Lush recalled that Starr disliked having to record the same backing track repetitively , and pinpoints this session as a key indication that the Beatles were going to break up . McCartney attempted to remake the backing track for a third time , but this was abandoned after a few takes and the second version was used as the final mix . The group , save for McCartney , had lost interest in the track by the end of recording , and refused to release it as a single . Marmalade recorded a version that became a number one hit . In 2004 , an online poll by Mars ranked the song as the worst ever .

McCartney recorded " Wild Honey Pie " on 20 August at the end of the session for " Mother Nature 's Son " . It is typical of the brief snippets of songs he recorded between takes during the album sessions .

" The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill " was written by Lennon after an American visitor to Rishikesh left for a few weeks to hunt tigers . It was recorded as an audio vérité exercise , featuring vocal performances from almost everyone who happened to be in the studio at the time . Ono sings one line and co @-@ sings another , while Chris Thomas played the mellotron , including improvisations at the end of the track . The opening flamenco guitar flourish was a recording included in the Mellotron 's standard tape library .

" While My Guitar Gently Weeps " was written by Harrison during a visit he made to his parents ' home in Cheshire . He first recorded the song as a solo performance , on acoustic guitar , on 25 July ? a version that remained unreleased until Anthology 3 . He was unhappy with the group 's first attempt to record the track , and so invited his friend Eric Clapton to come and play on it . Clapton was unsure about guesting on a Beatles record , but Harrison said the decision was " nothing to do with them . It 's my song . " Clapton 's solo was treated with automatic double tracking to attain the desired effect ; he gave Harrison the guitar he used , which Harrison later named " Lucy " .

" Happiness Is a Warm Gun " evolved out of song fragments that Lennon wrote in Rishikesh . According to MacDonald , this working method was inspired by the Incredible String Band 's songwriting . The basic backing track ran to 95 takes , due to the irregular time signatures and variations in style throughout the song . The final version consisted of the best half of two takes edited together . Lennon later described the song as one of his favourites , while the rest of the band found the recording rejuvenating , as it forced them to re @-@ hone their skills as a group playing together to get it right . Apple 's press officer Derek Taylor made an uncredited contribution to the song 's lyrics .

= = = Side two = = =

McCartney got the title of " Martha My Dear " from his sheepdog , but the lyrics are otherwise unrelated . The entire track is played by him backed with session musicians , and features no other Beatles . Martin composed a brass band arrangement for the track .

" I 'm So Tired " was written in India when Lennon was having difficulty sleeping . It was recorded at the same session as " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill " . The lyrics make reference to Walter Raleigh , calling him a " stupid get " for introducing tobacco to Europe ; while the track ends with Lennon mumbling " Monsieur , monsieur , how about another one ? " This became part of the Paul is Dead conspiracy theory , when fans claimed that when the track was reversed , they could hear " Paul is dead man , miss him miss him " .

" Blackbird " features McCartney solo , accompanying himself on acoustic guitar . According to Lewisohn , the ticking in the background is a metronome , although Emerick recalls capturing the sound via a microphone placed beside McCartney 's shoes . The birdsong on the track was taken from the Abbey Road sound effects collection , and was recorded on one of the first EMI portable tape recorders .

Harrison wrote " Piggies " as an attack on greed and materialism in modern society . His mother and Lennon helped him complete the lyrics . Thomas played harpsichord on the track , while Lennon supplied a tape loop of pigs grunting .

" Rocky Raccoon " evolved from a jam session between Lennon and Donovan in Rishikesh . The song was taped in a single session , and was one of the tracks that Martin felt was " filler " and only put on because the album was a double .

" Don 't Pass Me By " was Starr 's first solo composition for the band ; he had been toying with the idea of writing a self @-@ reflective song for some time , possibly as far back as 1963 . It went by the working titles of " Ringo 's Tune " and " This Is Some Friendly " . The basic track consisted of Starr drumming while McCartney played piano . Martin composed an orchestral introduction to the song but it was rejected as being " too bizarre " and left off the album . Instead , Jack Fallon played a bluegrass fiddle part .

" Why Don 't We Do It in the Road ? " was written by McCartney in India after he saw two monkeys copulating in the street and wondered why humans were too civilised to do the same . He played all the instruments except drums , which were contributed by Starr . The simple lyric was very much in Lennon 's style , and Lennon was annoyed about not being asked to play on it . McCartney suggested it was " tit for tat " as he had not contributed to " Revolution 9 " .

" I Will " was written and sung by McCartney , with Lennon and Starr accompanying on percussion . In between numerous takes , the three Beatles broke off to busk some other songs . A snippet of a track known as " Can You Take Me Back ? " was put between " Cry Baby Cry " and " Revolution 9 " , while recordings of Cilla Black 's hit " Step Inside Love " and a joke number , " Los Paranoias " , were released on Anthology 3 .

" Julia " was the last track to be recorded for the album and features Lennon on solo acoustic guitar which he played in a style similar to McCartney 's on " Blackbird " . This is the only Beatles song on which Lennon performs alone and it was a tribute to his mother Julia Lennon , who was killed in 1958 in a road accident while Lennon was only seventeen , and the lyrics deal with the loss of his mother and his relationship with Ono , the " ocean child " referred to in the lyrics . Ono helped with the lyrics , but the song was still credited to Lennon @-@ McCartney as expected .

= = = Side three = = =

According to McCartney , the authorship of " Birthday " was " 50 ? 50 John and me , made up on the spot and recorded all on the same evening " . He and Lennon were inspired to write the song after seeing the first UK showing of the rock 'n'roll film The Girl Can 't Help It on television , and sang the lead vocal in the style of the film 's musical star , Little Richard . After the Beatles had taped the track , Ono and Pattie Harrison added backing vocals .

" Yer Blues " was written by Lennon in India . Despite meditating and the tranquil atmosphere , he still felt unhappy , which was reflected in the lyrics . The style was influenced by the British Blues Boom of 1968 , which included groups such as Fleetwood Mac and Chicken Shack . The backing track was recorded in a small room next to the Studio 2 control room at Abbey Road . Unusually for a Beatles recording , the four @-@ track source tape was edited directly , resulting in an abrupt cut @-@ off at 3 ' 17 " into the start of another take (which ran into the fade out) .

McCartney wrote " Mother Nature 's Son " in India , and worked on it in isolation from the other members of the band . He performed the track solo alongside a Martin @-@ scored brass arrangement .

" Everybody 's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey " evolved from a jam session , and was originally untitled . The final mix was sped up by mixing the tape running at 43 hertz instead of the usual 50 . Harrison claimed the title came from one of the Maharishi 's sayings (with " and my monkey " added later) .

" Sexy Sadie " was written as " Maharishi " by Lennon , shortly after he decided to leave Rishikesh . In a 1980 interview , Lennon acknowledged that the Maharishi was the inspiration for the song : " I just called him ' Sexy Sadie ' . "

" Helter Skelter " was written by McCartney and was initially recorded in July as a blues number . The initial takes were performed by the band live and included long passages during which they jammed on their instruments . Because these takes were too long to practically fit on an LP , the song was shelved until September , when a new , shorter , version was made . By all accounts , the session was chaotic , but nobody dared suggest to any of the Beatles that they were out of control . Harrison reportedly ran around the studio while holding a flaming ashtray above his head , " doing an Arthur Brown " . The stereo version of the LP includes almost an extra minute of music compared to the mono , which culminates in Starr famously shouting " I 've got blisters on my fingers ! " Charles Manson was unaware that helter skelter is the British name for a spiral slide found on a playground or funfair , and assumed the track had something to do with hell . This was one of the key tracks that led Manson to believe the album had coded messages referring to apocalyptic war , and led to his movement of the same name .

The final song on side three is Harrison 's " Long , Long , Long " , part of the chord progression for which he took from Bob Dylan 's " Sad Eyed Lady of the Lowlands " . MacDonald describes the song as Harrison 's " touching token of exhausted , relieved reconciliation with God " and considered it to be his " finest moment on The Beatles " . The recording session for the basic track was one of the longest the Beatles ever undertook , running from the afternoon of 7 October through the night until 7 am the next day . McCartney played Hammond organ on the track , and an " eerie rattling " effect at the end was created by a note causing a wine bottle on top of the organ 's Leslie speaker to resonate .

= = = Side four = = =

" Revolution 1 " was the first track recorded for the album , with sessions for the backing track starting on 30 May . The initial takes were recorded with the aim of it being a possible single , but as the session progressed , the arrangement became slower , with more of a laid @-@ back groove . The group ended the chosen take with a six @-@ minute improvisation that had further overdubs added , before being cut to the length heard on the album . The brass arrangement was added later .

" Honey Pie " was written by McCartney as a pastiche of the flapper dance style from the 1920s . The opening section of the track had the sound of an old 78 RPM record overdubbed while Martin arranged a saxophone and clarinet part in the same style . Lennon played the guitar solo on the track , but later said he hated the song , calling it " beyond redemption " .

" Savoy Truffle " was named after one of the types of chocolate found in a box of Mackintosh 's Good News , which Clapton enjoyed eating . The track featured a saxophone sextet arranged by Thomas , who also played keyboards . Harrison later said that Derek Taylor helped him finish the lyrics .

Lennon began writing " Cry Baby Cry " in late 1967 and the lyrics were partly derived from a tagline for an old television commercial . Martin played harmonium on the track .

" Revolution 9 " evolved from the overdubs from the " Revolution 1 " coda . Lennon , Harrison and Ono added further tape collages and spoken word extracts , in the style of Karlheinz Stockhausen . The track opens with an extract from a Royal Schools of Music examination tape , and ends with Ono 's infamous comment , " you become naked " . Ono was heavily involved in the production , and advised Lennon on what tape loops to use . McCartney did not contribute to the track , and was reportedly unhappy on it being included , though he had led similar tape experiments such as " Carnival of Light " in January 1967 . The track has attracted both interest and disapproval from fans and music critics over the years .

" Good Night " was a lullaby written by Lennon for his son Julian , and he specifically wanted Starr to sing it . The early takes featured just Lennon on acoustic guitar and Starr singing . Martin scored an orchestral and choral arrangement that replaced the guitar in the final mix , and also played the celesta .

= = = Singles = = =

" Hey Jude " was recorded at the end of July 1968 during the sessions for The Beatles , but was issued separately as a single nearly three months before the album 's release . (It would , however , make its LP debut in the US two years later as the title cut of the compilation album Hey Jude) The B @-@ side , " Revolution " , was a different version of the album 's " Revolution 1 " . Lennon had wanted the original version of " Revolution " to be released as a single , but the other three Beatles objected on the grounds that it was too slow . Instead , the single featured a new , faster version , with heavily distorted guitar and an electric piano solo from Nicky Hopkins . This was the first release on Apple Records and went on to be the band 's most successful single , with world sales of over 5 million by the end of 1968 and 7 @.@ 5 million by October 1972 .

The convention amongst record companies in the 1960s was that singles and albums were distinct entities and should not duplicate songs . However , though no singles were taken from The Beatles in either Britain or America , " Ob @-@ La @-@ Di , Ob @-@ La @-@ Da " backed with " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " was a commercial success in several countries , including Australia (where it spent five weeks at number one in the Go Set charts) , Japan , Austria and Switzerland .

= = = Unreleased material = = =

Some songs that the Beatles were working on individually during this period were revisited for inclusion on the group 's subsequent albums , while others were eventually released on the band members ' solo albums . According to the bootlegged album of the demos made at Kinfauns , the latter of these two categories includes Lennon 's " Look at Me " and " Child of Nature " (eventually reworked as " Jealous Guy ") ; McCartney 's " Junk " ; and Harrison 's " Not Guilty " and " Circles " . In addition , Harrison gave " Sour Milk Sea " to the singer Jackie Lomax , whose recording , produced by Harrison , was released in August 1968 as Lomax 's debut single on Apple Records . Lennon 's " Mean Mr. Mustard " and " Polythene Pam " would be used for the medley on Abbey Road the following year .

The Lennon @-@ written " What 's the New Mary Jane " was demoed at Kinfauns and recorded formally (by Lennon , Harrison and Ono) during the 1968 album sessions . McCartney taped demos of two compositions at Abbey Road ? " Etcetera " and " The Long and Winding Road " ? the last of which the Beatles recorded in 1969 for their album Let It Be . The White Album versions of " Not Guilty " and " What 's the New Mary Jane " , and a demo of " Junk " , were ultimately released on Anthology 3 .

" Revolution (Take 20) " , a previously uncirculated recording , surfaced in 2009 on a bootleg . This ten @-@ minute take was later edited and overdubbed to create two separate tracks : " Revolution 1 " and the avant @-@ garde " Revolution 9 " .

= = Release = =

The Beatles was issued on 22 November 1968 in Britain , with a US release following three days later . The album 's working title , A Doll 's House , had been changed when the English progressive rock band Family released the similarly titled Music in a Doll 's House earlier that year . Schaffner wrote in 1977 of the name that was adopted for the Beatles ' double album : " From the day of release , everybody referred to The Beatles as ' the White Album . ' "

The Beatles was the third album to be released by Apple Records , following Harrison 's Wonderwall Music , and Two Virgins . Martin has said that he was against the idea of a double album at the time and suggested to the group that they reduce the number of songs to form a single album featuring their stronger work , but that the band decided against this . Interviewed for the Beatles Anthology television series in the 1990s , Starr said that he now felt that it should have been released as two separate albums (that he nicknamed " The White Album " and " The Whiter Album ") . Harrison felt on reflection that some tracks could have been released as B @-@ sides , but " there was a lot of ego in that band . " He also supported the idea of the double album , to clear out the backlog of songs that the group had at the time . By contrast , McCartney said that it was fine as it was , adding : " It 's the bloody Beatles ' White Album . Shut up ! "

= = = Mono version = = =

The Beatles was the last Beatles album to be mixed separately for stereo and mono , though the mono version was issued only in the UK and a few other countries . All but one track exist in official mono mixes ; the exception is " Revolution 9 " , which was a direct reduction of the stereo master . The Beatles had not been particularly interested in stereo until this album , but after receiving mail from fans stating they bought both stereo and mono mixes of earlier albums , they decided to make the two different . Several mixes have different track lengths ; the mono mix / edit of " Helter Skelter " eliminates the fade @-@ in at the end of the song (and Starr 's ending scream) , and the fade out of " Yer Blues " is 11 seconds longer on the mono mix .

In the US , mono records were already being phased out ; the US release of The Beatles was the first Beatles LP to be issued in stereo only . In the UK , the following album , Yellow Submarine , was the last to be shipped in mono . The mono version of The Beatles was made available worldwide on 9 September 2009 , as part of The Beatles in Mono CD boxed set . A reissue of the original mono LP was released worldwide in September 2014 .

= = = Packaging = = =

The album 's sleeve was designed by pop artist Richard Hamilton , in collaboration with McCartney . Hamilton 's design was in stark contrast to Peter Blake 's vivid cover art for Sgt. Pepper 's Lonely Hearts Club Band , and consisted of a plain white sleeve . The band 's name was discreetly embossed slightly below the middle of the album 's right side , and the cover also featured a unique stamped serial number , " to create " , in Hamilton 's words , " the ironic situation of a numbered edition of something like five million copies " . In 2008 , an original pressing of the album with serial number 0000005 sold for £ 19 @,@ 201 on eBay . In 2015 , Ringo Starr 's personal copy number 0000001 sold for world record \$ 790 @,@ 000 on auction .

Later vinyl record releases in the US showed the title in grey printed (rather than embossed) letters . The album included a poster comprising a montage of photographs , with the lyrics of the songs on the back , and a set of four photographic portraits taken by John Kelly during the autumn of 1968 that have themselves become iconic . The photographs for the poster were assembled by Hamilton and McCartney , and sorted them in a variety of ways over several days before arriving at the final result .

Tape versions of the album did not feature a white cover . Instead , cassette and 8 @-@ track versions (issued on two cassettes / cartridges in early 1969) contained cover artwork that featured high contrast black and white (with no grey) versions of the four Kelly photographs . These 2 @-@

tape cassettes were both contained in a black outer cardboard slipcase cover that stated " The Beatles " and an Apple logo in gold print . A reel @-@ to @-@ reel tape release of the album by Ampex (in two separate volumes , and again using the Kelly cover artwork) features edits on eight tracks .

During 1978 and 1979 , for the album 's tenth anniversary , EMI reissued the album pressed on limited edition white vinyl in several countries . In 1981 , Mobile Fidelity Sound Lab (MFSL) issued a unique half @-@ speed master variation of the album using the sound from the original master recording . The discs were pressed on high @-@ quality virgin vinyl .

The album was reissued , along with the rest of the Beatles catalogue , on compact disc in 1987 . It was reissued again on CD in 1998 as part of a 30th anniversary series for EMI , featuring a scaled @-@ down replication of the original artwork . This was part of a reissue series from EMI that included albums from other artists such as the Rolling Stones and Roxy Music .

A painting of the band by John Byrne was at an earlier point under consideration to be used as the album 's cover . The piece was later used for the sleeve of the compilation album The Beatles ' Ballads , released in 1980 . In 2012 the original artwork was put up for auction .

= = Critical reception = =

= = = Contemporary reviews = = =

On release , The Beatles gained highly favourable reviews from the majority of music critics . Others bemoaned its length or found that the music lacked the adventurous quality that had distinguished Sgt. Pepper . According to the author Ian Inglis : " Whether positive or negative , all assessments of The Beatles drew attention to its fragmentary style . However , while some complained about the lack of a coherent style , others recognized this as the album 's *raison d'être* . "

In The Observer , Tony Palmer wrote that " if there is still any doubt that Lennon and McCartney are the greatest songwriters since Schubert " , the album " should surely see the last vestiges of cultural snobbery and bourgeois prejudice swept away in a deluge of joyful music making " . Richard Goldstein of The New York Times considered the double album to be " a major success " and " far more imaginative " than Sgt. Pepper or Magical Mystery Tour , due to the band 's improved songwriting and their relying less on the studio tricks of those earlier works . In The Sunday Times , Derek Jewell hailed it as " the best thing in pop since Sgt. Pepper " and concluded : " Musically , there is beauty , horror , surprise , chaos , order . And that is the world ; and that is what The Beatles are on about . Created by , creating for , their age . " Although he dismissed " Revolution 9 " as a " pretentious " example of " idiot immaturity " , the NME 's Alan Smith declared " God Bless You , Beatles ! " to the majority of the album . Jann Wenner of Rolling Stone called it " the history and synthesis of Western music " , and the group 's best album yet . Wenner contended that they were allowed to appropriate other styles and traditions into rock music because their ability and identity were " so strong that they make it uniquely theirs , and uniquely the Beatles . They are so good that they not only expand the idiom , but they are also able to penetrate it and take it further . "

Among the less favourable critiques , Time magazine 's reviewer wrote that The Beatles showcased the " best abilities and worst tendencies " of the Beatles , as it is skilfully performed and sophisticated , but lacks a " sense of taste and purpose " . William Mann of The Times opined that , in their over @-@ reliance on pastiche and " private jokes " , Lennon and McCartney had ceased to progress as songwriters , yet he deemed the release to be " The most important musical event of the year " and acknowledged : " these 30 tracks contain plenty to be studied , enjoyed and gradually appreciated more fully in the coming months . " In his review for The New York Times , Nik Cohn considered the album " boring beyond belief " and said that over half of its songs were " profound mediocrities " . In a 1971 column , Robert Christgau of The Village Voice described the album as both " their most consistent and probably their worst " , and referred to its songs as a " pastiche of musical exercises " . Nonetheless , he ranked it as the tenth best album of 1968 in his ballot for Jazz

& Pop magazine 's annual critics poll .

= = Retrospective assessments = =

In a 2003 appraisal of the album , for Mojo magazine , Ian MacDonald wrote that The Beatles regularly appears among the top ten in critics ' " best albums of all time " lists , yet it was a work that he deemed " eccentric , highly diverse , and very variable [in] quality " . Rob Sheffield , writing in The Rolling Stone Album Guide (2004) , commented that its songs ranged from the Beatles ' " sturdiest tunes since Revolver " to " self @-@ indulgent filler " , and while he derided tracks such as " Revolution 9 " and " Helter Skelter " , he acknowledged that picking personal highlights was " part of the fun " for listeners . Writing for MusicHound in 1999 , Guitar World editor Christopher Scapelliti described the album as " self @-@ indulgent and at times unlistenable " but identified " While My Guitar Gently Weeps " , " Happiness Is a Warm Gun " and " Helter Skelter " as " fascinating standouts " that made it a worthwhile purchase .

According to Slant Magazine 's Eric Henderson , The Beatles is a rarity among the band 's recorded works , in that it " resists reflexive canonisation , which , along with society 's continued fragmentation , keeps the album fresh and surprising " . In his review for AllMusic , Stephen Thomas Erlewine said that because of its wide variety of musical styles , the album can be " a frustratingly scattershot record or a singularly gripping musical experience , depending on your view " . He concludes : " None of it sounds like it was meant to share album space together , but somehow The Beatles creates its own style and sound through its mess . "

Among reviews of the 2009 remastered album , Neil McCormick of The Daily Telegraph found that even its worst songs work within the context of such an eclectic and unconventional collection , which he rated " one of the greatest albums ever made " . Writing for Paste , Mark Kemp refuted the White Album 's reputation as " three solo works in one (plus a Ringo song) " ; instead , he said , it " benefits from each member 's wildly different ideas " and demonstrates Lennon and McCartney 's considerable versatility as composers , in addition to offering " two of Harrison 's finest moments " . In his review for The A.V. Club , Chuck Klosterman wrote that the album found the band at their best and rated it " almost beyond an A + " .

In 2003 , Rolling Stone ranked The Beatles at number 10 on its list of the 500 greatest albums of all time . On the 40th anniversary of the album 's release , Vatican newspaper L 'Osservatore Romano wrote that it " remains a type of magical musical anthology : 30 songs you can go through and listen to at will , certain of finding some pearls that even today remain unparalleled " . In 2011 , Kerrang ! placed the album at number 49 on a list of " The 50 Heaviest Albums Of All Time " . The magazine praised the guitar work in " Helter Skelter " .

= = Cultural responses = =

According to MacDonald , the counterculture of the 1960s analysed The Beatles above and beyond all of the band 's previous releases . The album 's lyrics progressed from being vague to open @-@ ended and prone to misinterpretation , such as " Glass Onion " (e.g. , " the walrus was Paul ") and " Piggies " (" what they need 's a damn good whacking ") . The release also coincided with public condemnation of Lennon 's treatment of Cynthia , and of his and Ono 's joint projects , particularly Two Virgins . The British authorities similarly displayed a less tolerant attitude towards the Beatles , when London Drug Squad officers arrested Lennon and Ono in October 1968 for marijuana possession , a charge that he claimed was false . In the case of " Back in the U.S.S.R. " , the words were interpreted by Christian evangelist David Noebel as further proof of the Beatles ' compliance in a Communist plot to brainwash American youth .

Lennon 's lyrics on " Revolution 1 " were misinterpreted with messages he did not intend . In the album version , he advises those who " talk about destruction " to " count me out " . Lennon then follows the sung word " out " with the spoken word " in " . At the time of the album 's release ? which followed , chronologically , the up @-@ tempo single version of the song , " Revolution " ? that single word " in " was taken by the radical political left as Lennon 's endorsement of politically

motivated violence , which followed the May 1968 Paris riots . However , the album version was recorded first .

Further to the betrayal they had felt at Lennon 's non @-@ activist stance in " Revolution " , New Left commentators condemned The Beatles for its failure to offer a political agenda . The Beatles themselves were accused of using eclecticism and pastiche as a means of avoiding important issues in the turbulent political and social climate . Jon Landau , writing for the Liberation News Service , argued that , particularly in " Piggies " and " Rocky Racoon " , the band had adopted parody because they were " afraid of confronting reality " and " the urgencies of the moment " . Like Landau , many writers among the New Left considered the album outdated and irrelevant ; instead , they heralded the Rolling Stones ' concurrent release , *Beggars Banquet* , as what Lennon biographer Jon Wiener terms " the ' strong solution , ' a musical turning outward , toward the political and social battles of the day " .

Charles Manson first heard the album not long after it was released . He had already claimed to find hidden meanings in songs from earlier Beatles albums , but in *The Beatles* he interpreted prophetic significance in several of the songs , including " Blackbird " , " Piggies " (particularly the line " what they need 's a damn good whacking ") , " Helter Skelter " , " Revolution 1 " and " Revolution 9 " , and interpreted the lyrics as a sign of imminent violence or war . He played the album repeatedly to his followers , the Manson family , and convinced them that it was an apocalyptic message predicting an uprising of oppressed races , drawing parallels with chapter 9 of the Book of Revelation .

Sociologists Michael Katovich and Wesley Longhofer write that the album 's release created " a collective appreciation of it as a ' state @-@ of @-@ the @-@ art ' rendition of the current pop , rock , and folk @-@ rock sounds " . The majority of music critics categorize the *White Album* as postmodern , emphasizing aesthetic and stylistic features of the album Other scholars situate all Beatles ' work within a modernist stance , based either on their " artificiality " or their ideological stance of progress through love and peace . Scapelliti cites it as the source of " the freeform nihilism echoed ? in the punk and alternative music genres " .

In early 2013 , the Recess Gallery in New York City 's SoHo neighbourhood presented *We Buy White Albums* , an installation by artist Rutherford Chang . The piece was in the form of a record store in which nothing but original pressings of the LP was on display . Chang created a recording in which the sounds of one hundred copies of side one of the LP were overlaid .

= = Commercial performance = =

As it was their first studio album in almost eighteen months (and coming after the success of Sgt. Pepper 's *Lonely Hearts Club Band*) expectations were high at the time of the release of *The Beatles* . The album debuted at number 1 in the UK on 7 December 1968 . It spent seven weeks at the top of the UK charts (including the entire competitive Christmas season) , until it was replaced by the Seekers ' *Best of the Seekers* on 25 January 1969 , dropping to number 2 . However , the album returned to the top spot the next week , spending an eighth and final week at number 1 . The album was still high in the charts when the Beatles ' follow @-@ up album , *Yellow Submarine* , was released , which reached number 3 . In all , The Beatles spent 22 weeks on the UK charts , far fewer than the 149 weeks for Sgt. Pepper . In September 2013 after the British Phonographic Industry changed their sales award rules , the album was declared as having gone platinum , meaning sales of at least 300 @,@ 000 copies .

In the United States , the album achieved huge commercial success . Capitol Records sold over 3 @.@ 3 million copies of the *White Album* to stores within the first four days of the album 's release . It debuted at number 11 on 14 December 1968 , jumped to number 2 , and reached number 1 in its third week on 28 December , spending a total of nine weeks at the top . In all , The Beatles spent 155 weeks on the *Billboard* 200 . The album has sold over 9 @.@ 5 million copies in the United States alone and according to the Recording Industry Association of America , *The Beatles* is the Beatles ' most @-@ certified album at 19 @-@ times platinum .

= = Track listing = =

All songs written and composed by Lennon ? McCartney , except where noted .

= = Personnel = =

The Beatles

John Lennon ? lead , harmony and background vocals ; acoustic , lead , rhythm and bass guitars ; piano , Hammond organ , harmonium , Mellotron ; harmonica , tenor saxophone ; extra drums and assorted percussion (tambourine , handclaps and vocal percussion) , tapes , tape loops and sound effects (electronic and home @-@ made)

Paul McCartney ? lead , harmony and background vocals ; acoustic , lead , rhythm and bass guitars ; acoustic and electric pianos , Hammond organ ; assorted percussion (timpani , tambourine , cowbell , hand shake bell , handclaps , foot taps and vocal percussion) ; drums (on " Back in the U.S.S.R. " , " Dear Prudence " , " Wild Honey Pie " and " Martha My Dear ") ; recorder and flugelhorn ;

George Harrison ? lead , harmony and background vocals ; lead , rhythm , acoustic and bass guitars ; Hammond organ (on " While My Guitar Gently Weeps ") ; extra drums and assorted percussion (tambourine , handclaps and vocal percussion) and sound effects

Ringo Starr ? drums and assorted percussion (tambourine , bongos , cymbals , maracas and vocal percussion) ; piano and sleigh bell (on " Don 't Pass Me By ") ; lead vocals (on " Don 't Pass Me By " and " Good Night ") and backing vocals (on " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill ")

Guest musicians

Eric Clapton ? lead guitar on " While My Guitar Gently Weeps "

Mal Evans ? backing vocals and handclaps on " Dear Prudence " , handclaps on " Birthday " , trumpet on " Helter Skelter "

Jack Fallon ? violin on " Don 't Pass Me By "

Pattie Harrison ? backing vocals on " Birthday "

Jackie Lomax ? backing vocals and handclaps on " Dear Prudence "

Maureen Starkey ? backing vocals on " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill "

Yoko Ono ? backing vocals , lead vocals and handclaps on " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill " , backing vocals on " Birthday " , speech , tapes and sound effects on " Revolution 9 "

Session musicians

Ted Barker ? trombone on " Martha My Dear "

Leon Calvert ? trumpet and flugelhorn on " Martha My Dear "

Henry Datyner , Eric Bowie , Norman Lederman and Ronald Thomas ? violin on " Glass Onion "

Bernard Miller , Dennis McConnell , Lou Soufier and Les Maddox ? violin on " Martha My Dear "

Reginald Kilby ? cello on " Glass Onion " and " Martha My Dear "

Eldon Fox ? cello on " Glass Onion "

Frederick Alexander ? cello on " Martha My Dear "

Harry Klein ? saxophone on " Savoy Truffle " and " Honey Pie "

Dennis Walton , Ronald Chamberlain , Jim Chest and Rex Morris ? saxophone on " Honey Pie "

Raymond Newman and David Smith ? clarinet on " Honey Pie "

Art Ellefson , Danny Moss and Derek Collins ? tenor sax on " Savoy Truffle "

Ronnie Ross and Bernard George ? baritone sax on " Savoy Truffle "

Alf Reece ? tuba on " Martha My Dear "

The Mike Sammes Singers ? backing vocals on " Good Night "

Stanley Reynolds and Ronnie Hughes ? trumpet on " Martha My Dear "

Chris Shepard ? stumpf fiddle on " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill "

Tony Tunstall ? French horn on " Martha My Dear "

John Underwood and Keith Cummings ? viola on " Glass Onion "

Leo Birnbaum and Henry Myerscough ? viola on " Martha My Dear "

Production team

Geoff Emerick ? engineer , speech on " Revolution 9 "

George Martin ? producer , executive producer ; string , brass , clarinet , orchestral arrangements and conducting ; piano on " Rocky Raccoon "

Ken Scott ? engineer and mixer

Barry Sheffield ? engineer (Trident Studio)

Chris Thomas ? producer ; Mellotron on " The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill " , harpsichord on " Piggies " , piano on " Long , Long , Long " , electric piano , organ and saxophone arrangement on " Savoy Truffle "

= = Certifications = =

BPI certification awarded only for sales since 1994 .

= = Charts = =

= = = Weekly charts = = =

= = Release history = =