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"On the Record! (Dis)Covering The Beatles"

You Say You Want a Revolution

The arrival of sound recording in the mid-19th century radically changed how people experienced music. Physical presence at a performance was no longer necessary. Performances by specific artists were now preserved for playback in a personal ownable form – initially wax cylinders, then brittle shellac disks, and by mid-20th century, more convenient magnetic tape and vinyl disks. Records over the radio broadcasted musical styles and genres across the land. Performances now had a life beyond the actual moment. Artists could now be appreciated and influential well beyond their active years as performers. And when The Beatles entered in the early 1960s, in a short span they helped expand what it meant to be a "recording artist" by creating music reliant on studio craft to the extent that their performances could not be replicated live on stage, could in essence exist only on record. ¹

The Beatles - and for that matter rock 'n' roll itself - could not exist or persist without the vinyl record and its modern-day equivalent, the electronic sound file. How so? By mid-20th century, vinyl records were the pollinators that spread around rhythm and sound. Formerly confined vernacular musical styles shaped by the circumstances of technology, community, and tradition were now set free and crafted a new aesthetic about what could be considered musical. Rock 'n' roll in its earliest incarnation was rhythm &

blues in disguise, primarily the music of black America available through records across demographic lines and as such, vinyl vignettes of what really mattered to people engaged in struggle to transcend social stigma and status. For post WW2 baby boomers, those records, that music, could be illuminating, to a degree for them the beginning of a breakdown of racial and cultural divides.

That was certainly my experience as a white teenager growing up near Pittsburgh in the late 1950s. I heard African American R&B, blues, jazz, and gospel on local low-frequency stations at the bottom of the AM radio dial, and the music changed me, how I thought and who I was. More so, late night manipulation of the radio dial pulled in exotic sounds from faraway stations in Chicago, Memphis, and New Orleans. I got to know the music, and that turned me into a fanatic record collector. It wasn't enough to hear a song on the radio. I needed to own the physical record so that I could brag about having a copy and so that I could play it at will. Vinyl records - especially singles - were that emblematic and, as I came to understand, were also for the adolescent Beatles and for that matter our generation worldwide. By the early 1960s, records were the focal point of an unfolding international cultural dynamic.

A short aside. Records in those days were not the perfect music medium. They could not technically replicate the full sonic experience of a live performance. Absent were room ambience, stage spectacle, and audience/performer connectivity. Nonetheless, vinyl records did play a vital role in the launch and glide of many a rock artist career. The artist "brand" got out there and, though notoriously shortchanged by the powers that be, records did generate new income streams for artists, as in "go see the performer, now buy the record," ... or vice versa. When The Beatles entered the fray, vinyl singles ruled and,

in fact, singles that predated them were a profound influence. Over the span of their roughly 7-year recording career, The Beatles in turn produced singles that were equally influential to later artists, but also through sheer brilliance and appeal combined with sonic improvements managed to shift the focus from singles to beautifully packaged albums that offered a dozen tracks and more. Records, then, were not only a crucial influence on The Beatles, but were essential to their establishment as artists and the ultimate forwarding of their cachet far into the future.

Good Day Sunshine

Because of the records they made, The Beatles continue to shine beyond their active performing life as a group. What John Lennon said so seemingly outrageous all those years ago – “...We're more popular than Jesus now ...” – no longer seems to have the quite the same hyperbolic kick.² At this moment in time, The Beatles still have passionate and loyal disciples and a songbook of biblical regard. The recordings they have left are indelible, but there is a flipside worth considering. The Beatles have given as they have received. They crafted an initial sound by "covering," imitating, or repurposing from records by artists who preceded them at a time when The Beatles were figuring out who they were as musicians.

During The Beatles formative years in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the 7-inch 45-rpm (revolutions per minute) single, one song per side, was the primary delivery platform. The most popular records could be heard on the radio, but the passionate collectors wanted to own their own copy and sought out hard-to-find records by the more obscure artists. Rock critic Parke Puterbaugh described the Brit scene in a 1988 *Rolling*

Stone article. “In the Fifties the U.K. had little more to offer than pallid imitations of American rock & roll singers. British pop was ‘pure farce,’ according to writer Nik Cohn. ‘Nobody could sing, and nobody could write,’ he said, ‘and in any case, nobody gave a damn.’ ...A handful of powerful managers groomed a stable of homegrown singers in the mold of Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly,” but, Puterbaugh points out, “a movement of musical purists, enamored of black American music...would indirectly lead to The Beatles and an indigenous British rock & roll sound.”

Early on, The Beatles and other UK rockers did not record much original material. Instead, they “covered” not just songs, but actual records with the aim of copying the sound as closely as possible. For example, Brit proto-rocker Lonnie Donegan in 1955 recorded covers of African American blues artist Huddie “Leadbelly” Ledbetter’s “Rock Island Line” and “John Henry.” The style was branded “skiffle,” and again as Puterbaugh describes, the early Beatles' sound was “a souped-up form of beat music — essentially amplified skiffle with a heavy R&B influence, a style inspired by the records imported from the States by Liverpool’s merchant seamen.”³

Keith Richards of The Rolling Stones tells a similar story about approaching a stranger - Mick Jagger - on a train platform because Jagger was holding two hard-to-find record albums, Chuck Berry’s *Rockin’ at the Hops* and *The Best of Muddy Waters*. ”It was, always, all about records,” Richards wrote in his 2010 biography. "From when I was eleven or twelve years old, it was who had the records who you hung out with. They were precious things...Mick and I must have spent a year, while the Stones were coming together and before, record hunting. There were others like us, trawling far and wide, and meeting one another in record shops...⁴

American records steered the musical and philosophical direction of many early British rockers, including and most certainly The Beatles. They related to both content and sound. Expressions from outsiders, renegades, or the socially marginalized. Real life unfiltered and ill-mannered. Sounds and structures that broke the rules of conventional music making. Ungrammatical lines and rhymes, gritty unschooled vocals, amped-up electric bass or distorted guitars, thrumming piano, or drum rhythms punched way out front. George Harrison memorably encompassed it all in his spontaneous shout out in "For You Blue" to a Chicago blues legend he knew only from records, "Elmore James got nothin' on this, baby!"⁵

Maybe the most telling examples of records that shaped The Beatles are on the portable jukebox John Lennon carried on their mid-Sixties world tours. The machine was a suitcase-sized British KB Discomatic that held forty vinyl singles, fully loaded weighing in at fifty pounds, that they carried it an indication that The Beatles never wanted to be too far from their favorite records.

Those records reveal song ideas, instrumental licks, song constructions, and rhythmic feel that inspired or were outright sampled by The Beatles. Included among the rock 'n' roll and R&B records that The Beatles covered were "Twist and Shout" (1962) by the Isley Brothers and "Please Mr. Postman" (1961) by the Marvelettes. Also prominent were pioneering black rock 'n' rollers such as Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and Larry Williams and their progeny, rockabilies Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis, Buddy Holly, and Gene Vincent. Motown and soul artists Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Wilson Pickett, and Otis Redding all also represented on the jukebox.⁶

Less obvious influences are also present. For one, Bob Dylan's single "Positively 4th Street" (1964), and while The Beatles did not cover or imitate Dylan, he did have a decided impact on their lyrical direction. Said John Lennon, there had been a "separate songwriting John Lennon who wrote songs for the meat market...", who didn't consider the lyrics "to have any depth at all... Then," says Lennon, "I started being me about the songs...thinking about my own emotions, ...what I felt about myself. ...It was Dylan who helped me realise (sic) that." ⁷

There are also records that The Beatles borrowed from in one form or another. Pee Wee Crayton's R&B hit "Do Unto Others" (1954), for one, provided whole cloth the opening power chords that launch "Revolution" (1968). Similarly, The Beatles lifted the signature lick for "I Feel Fine" (1964) from Bobby Parker's "Watch Your Step" (1961). "Well, yeah," said John Lennon, "this is one of them oldies but goldies, as it were..., which I call son of 'What'd I Say,' ...the great record...by Ray Charles... The lick you'll recognize, 'cause I've used it, all The Beatles have used it, sort of in various forms." ⁸

The Beatles were always forthcoming about their desire early on to copy American records. Speaking for the group, John Lennon said, "I'd like to make a record like 'Some Other Guy' [Richie Barrett, 1962]...Or 'Be-Bop-A-Lula' [Gene Vincent and the Bluecaps, 1957] or "Heartbreak Hotel" [Elvis Presley, 1956] or "Good Golly, Miss Molly" [Little Richard, 1958] or "Whole Lot of Shakin.'" [Jerry Lee Lewis, 1957]...I mean we're still trying it. We sit there in the studio and we say, how did it go, how did it go? Come on, let's do that." ⁹ Ringo Starr launched his solo career with covers of Johnny Burnette's "You're Sixteen" (1961) and Buck Owen's "Act Naturally" (1963).

Paul McCartney acknowledged Buddy Holly. "... John and I started to write because of Buddy Holly. It was like, 'Wow! He writes and is a musician'" ¹⁰. The Beatles did in fact take a cue from Buddy Holly's Crickets in coming up with their own name. "I remember," said McCartney, "talking to John about this. 'Cricket. What a fantastic idea... but we were turned on like nobody's business by the idea of the double meaning, so with our wit and wisdom and whatever, ... Beetles ... little insects, ... but with an "a" it became something to do with beat.'" ¹¹

Then You Will Remember Things We Said Today

What goes around comes around. As much as records influenced The Beatles, so too have Beatles records influenced artists who followed. Also, though, because The Beatles exist as ubiquitous easy accessed sound recordings, now roughly fifty years beyond their last group-recorded releases, *Abbey Road* and *Let It Be*, The Beatles remain relevant and in play. There are myriad reasons why including consumer access via new technologies, reimagined or sonically improved remixes, renewed interest in vinyl collecting, high media visibility, cross genre covers by other artists, family relationships in the 21st century, and in the end, what so far seems to be a timeless sound and lyrical appeal.

As to access and ubiquity, everything intended for release or not The Beatles ever recorded — albums, singles, outtakes, alternates, studio chatter, remixes, and literally every recorded interview — is available via delivery platforms that were not imagined in the era of strictly vinyl, tape, or radio. Beatles fans have no need to seek out hard copies of long out of print or obscure recordings. In The Beatles' day, vinyl was the primary

option. Today though digitalization makes any Beatles track readily available via download. The technological shift from analog to digital in the late 1980s, among other outcomes, gave the music industry impetus to repackaging the whole sweep of popular music and most certainly the entire Beatles catalogue.¹²

CDs (compact disks) eliminated the physical contact of a diamond needle cutting its way through a vinyl groove, and "the record" became an obsolete or at least a greatly diminished technology. By 1986, The Beatles catalogue began to be digitized.¹³ Beatles tracks were now downloadable via the Internet. The first online sound recording "store" was Napster launched in 1999 with a peak of 80 million registered users before it collapsed under the weight of copyright and royalty legalities. Over the years other sites stepped up and today streaming is the prevailing means of song acquisition.¹⁴ In 2019, 75 percent of music industry revenue came from streaming.¹⁵ The availability of The Beatles catalogue has been a vital, perhaps central factor, in their sustained popularity, maybe even more so than covers of their songs by high profile artists who spread the word to younger generations. Since nothing was any longer real, physical recordings no longer necessary, there was nothing to get hung about. Why listen to Beatles covers when you could have the real thing?

Nonetheless, covers of Beatles songs down through the years certainly has to be factored in to their endurance. Early on, for example, the iconic Ray Charles covered "Eleanor Rigby" (1968) and fellow Brit Joe Cocker had a hit with his eccentric take on "With a Little Help from My Friends" (1969). Wilson Pickett hit with "Hey Jude" (1969), Elton John with "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" (1975), and bluegrass/country artist Allison Krause with "I Will" (1995). None eclipsed the Beatles' originals, but they were

warm reminders of how appealing the songs were even as interpreted in other stylistic approaches.

The inclusion of cover versions in popular movie soundtracks and in some cases entire film storylines also contributed to The Beatles long term cross-generational appeal. The film *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1978) had moderate success as a musical comedy about the struggles of a fictional band trying to make it. The best thing about the film was the soundtrack. The vinyl album featured covers of Beatles tracks by some of the most popular artists of the day including the Bee Gees, Aerosmith, Peter Frampton, Alice Cooper, and Earth, Wind & Fire.

More successful almost a decade later even without many high profile "hitmakers" (Bono, Jeff Beck, and Eddie Izzard excepted) was the film *Across the Universe* (2007). The film, originally screened in theaters, has through digital streaming services become a cult classic with a soundtrack drawing from the entire Beatles catalogue, 32 songs in all. The film's characters take their names from Beatles songs - Jude, Prudence, Maxwell, Lucy, et al. The film with a storyline that takes viewers back to the 1960s and young people dealing with life and love in the Vietnam era resonates with enough millenials and gen-xers to give songs new traction within those age groups. Covers along with the title track include "Helter Skelter," "I Want to Hold Your Hand," "Let It Be," "Why Don't We Do It in the Road?," "If I Fell," "I Am the Walrus," "Something," "Strawberry Fields Forever," "Revolution," "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," "Blackbird," "Hey Jude," "All You Need Is Love," and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds." ¹⁶

Beatles' staying power is also helped by original recordings used in the occasional film soundtrack or on television. For example, in *Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (1986) The Beatles cover of "Twist and Shout" by The Isley Brothers; "Come Together" in *A Bronx Tale* (1993); "Fool on the Hill" in *Dinner for Schmucks* (2010); and "Baby, You're a Rich Man" in *The Social Network* (2010) ¹⁷

TV commercials also cast an occasional spotlight on Beatles songs, such as "Hello Goodbye" in a 2007 Target stores ad campaign or "Help" in a 2018 ad for the Google search engine. ¹⁸

Perhaps the Beatles seeds most likely to take hold come from television programming geared for younger audiences. The cycle began in the 1984-1986 seasons of the Disney Channel's *Kids Incorporated*, about a "kid" musical group that performed Beatles songs including "Paperback Writer," "We Can Work It Out," "All You Need Is Love," "In My Life," and "Ticket to Ride," the program syndicated well into the 1990s. ¹⁹ Next came a Netflix animated series *Beat Bugs* that ran for three seasons beginning in 2016 and still available through streaming tells of five animated "kid" insects, the narrative propelled exclusively by Beatle songs, both originals recordings and covers. ²⁰ Similarly, Nickelodeon's *Big Time Rush* (2009-2013) features real actors who play four Minnesota friends off to Los Angeles to make it as a "boy band." The storyline has showcased covers of "I Want To Hold Your Hand," "We Can Work It Out," "A Hard Day's Night."

Another way television keeps Beatles songs in the contemporary purview is through popular network programs. In the 2000s, for examples, "talent" shows have once again taken center stage. Contestants often enough display their talents through the

performance of Beatles favorites. For example, the long running *American Idol* (based on the British program *Pop Idol*) in a memorable 2008 segment required contestants to perform songs from the Lennon-McCartney songbook. Covers included "Michelle," "If I Fell," "She's a Woman," and "I've Just Seen a Face," with a performance of John Lennon's "Imagine" by series runner-up, 17-year old David Archuleta.²¹

TV awards and ceremony shows also contribute to the tenacity of The Beatles legacy. At the 47th Grammy Awards program in 2005, Billie Joe Armstrong performed "Across the Universe," and at the 82nd awards James Taylor performed "In My Life." One particularly electrifying "gone viral" television moment was Prince's performance of "While My Guitar Gently Weeps" at the 2004 posthumous induction of George Harrison into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The band included George's son Dhani along with Tom Petty, Jeff Lynne, and Steve Winwood.²² In 2012 at the internationally televised *London Olympic Games Opening Ceremony*, The Arctic Monkeys performed "Come Together."²³

Another notable TV moment that introduced millions of contemporary viewers to The Beatles canon was an episode of late-night talk show host James Cordon's "Carpool Karaoke." In 2018, Cordon and Paul McCartney drove through the streets of Liverpool in a car visiting Beatles sites while unabashedly singing Beatles classics such as "Penny Lane," "Drive My Car," "Let It Be," and "Blackbird." "...I sort of just prodded him that it would be fun," said Cordon, "and it would be worthwhile and that he absolutely wouldn't ever regret doing it. I felt on the day that we captured something quite special. But in truth we were all kind of blown away by the response and the reaction to it, because I think across the internet now, across Facebook and YouTube and stuff, it's been watched

like 140 million times or something...People have watched it on their phones or their laptops or whatever for 23 minutes, and yet it's testament to him really. It's testament to what he means to people; it's testament to what that music means to people. ²⁴

All that said, old fashioned technology still plays a role in keeping The Beatles in play. In 2019, there is a robust cross-generational market for original vinyl pressings, prized like rare books in first or early original editions, but also in the form of new pressings on high quality vinyl with ultra-deluxe packaging. For baby boomers the motivation may in part be the nostalgia of memories rekindled, but for audiophiles also a preference for the perceived "warmer" sound of vinyl over digital. Young collectors though, according to Vinyl Me, Please, a vinyl LP subscription service catering to twenty and thirty somethings, are more intrigued by the idea of "exchanging convenience for an experience." To their customers who have not grown up with vinyl, they say, "the idea of owning is really interesting... [Vinyl Me, Please] wanted to offer a service that puts the album as the central piece of ... listening experience, ... this incredible thing that you sit down and participate in, ... the Napster generation" craving a "tangible, tactile relationship with music." ²⁵

Notable Beatles anniversaries also spawn the release of luxurious media attention-getting vinyl albums. At this writing, for example, there has been a 50th anniversary release of *The Beatles, aka The White Album*, the original double vinyl gatefold package coming out in 1968. The package offers a 164-page book with original and new mixes by George Martin's son Giles, demos and unreleased takes, all sequenced by recording date, 107 tracks in all. Platform options, in addition to CD and Blu-Ray disks, include for record buffs four LPs pressed on high quality 180-gram vinyl and gloriously packaged in

a special box with replica gatefold sleeves and additional lithographed graphics not part of the original package.

We Hope You Have Enjoyed the Show

Well into the 21st Century, The Beatles are still an indelible presence, part of America's entertainment landscape. So, for instance, what happens in Las Vegas doesn't necessarily stay in Las Vegas. Running since 2006 at a specially built theater at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas is *The Beatles LOVE by Cirque du Soleil*, a multimedia performance that delivers Beatles songs in spectacular fashion. The show features sixty costumed aerialists, dancers, and acrobats performing to surround-sound classic Beatles recordings remixed, reimagined, and revitalized by Beatles producer George Martin and son Giles. Tourists from all across the world leave Vegas with a fresh experience of The Beatles, the youngest ones hearing songs for the first time and falling for them the same as their parents and grandparents before.²⁶ As reported in *The New York Times*, "The show has turned the Mirage into a bona fide pilgrimage site — the only place in the world you can see a Beatles-approved theatrical production with an enveloping surround soundtrack, direct from the master tapes. A spokeswoman for Apple said that the continuing demand for the production suggests that fans would come back for more. ...And, in the end, *Love* is a measure of how the Beatles' music continues to speak to new listeners, and how the group's constituency has continued to expand: The show's audience of eight million is vastly larger than the number of people who saw the Beatles perform live. And its...run is even longer than the group's recording career."²⁷

Once There was a Way to Get Back Homeward

Once upon a time when The Beatles were new, rebellion was in the air, palpable rancor and a schism between the WW2 generation and their offspring, the children of the Sixties, inheritors of advancing technology, increasing prosperity, broader opportunity, and idealistic values. Philosophizers and pundits called it the "generation gap." Rock 'n' roll was fired up in that rebellion, part of the makeup of a border wall that demarcated division. The crumbling of that divisive generational wall is another reason The Beatles persevere. Certainly there will always be friction between children and parents, but in the broadest sense, that large scale dynamic no longer holds. Paul Taylor, formerly of the Pew Research Center, writes in *The Next America* that "today's young adults get along better with their parents than older adults did when they were young," and that part of the reason for the "low level of generational tension" is because "more than 50 million Americans, a record, are living under the same roof in multi-generational family households, their fortunes braided together by the bonds of love and the stress of economic insecurity." ²⁸

If anything, the music of The Beatles and of the 1960s in general has in large measure helped bridge that gap, narrowed the distance between parents and children. Young people today frequently describe growing up in homes where The Beatles were part of a shared and positive family experience, particular songs becoming emblematic of family harmony and love, the stuff of 21st Century childhood memories. As Taylor points out, what there is of present-day rebellion is not so much generational as societal and political. Points of view on environmental, social, economic, and world issues can no longer be compartmentalized by generational differences. The style and content of Beatles songs continue to have cachet across the demographic spread as the 21st century

unfolds. Personally, as both a musician and an educator, I am often enough mildly surprised when twenty-somethings and younger tell me that their musical embrace includes 1960s music and especially The Beatles. Beatles songs continue to resonate. The songs are still in rotation. We live in an age, after all, when Sirius satellite radio finds it profitable to feature an entire 24/7 channel devoted exclusively to The Beatles.

If, however, The Beatles had left nothing worth remembering, they would not be remembered. They, unlike the bulk of their contemporaries, were far from "one hit wonders." They are inextricably woven into the cultural fabric with hundreds of memorable recordings. The Beatles literally top the record books as multi-hit wonders, according to the Record Industry Association of America, having sold over 178 million units and still counting.²⁹

It has to be kept in mind that The Beatles are now iconic, seminal in pop music history. When they came along, rock 'n' roll was stalled, essentially in a doldrum. The Beatles broke out of the pack as a force in a cultural shakeup that redefined what rock 'n' roll could be. With producer George Martin, by the mid-1960s, they had set a standard by revolutionizing the sound and very being of rock 'n' roll. The Beatles had taken an American pop music form and exploded it worldwide. Even their physicality, their look, their demeanor was game changing. The outrageous (as it then seemed) long hair, and the comically snarky media interviews. The Beatles set a foundational template that, like their music or not, lives on to this day as a reference point for aspiring and established musical artists no matter the genre.

The proof of it is in, for example, the perennial cross genre tributes to The Beatles.

Old guard jazz artist Herbie Hancock with vocalist Corrinne Bailey Rae performing "Blackbird" at the 2010 Gershwin Prize Ceremony at the White House; that same year Ramsey Lewis releasing *Ramsey Lewis Plays the Beatles Songbook*; or in 2014 the multi-artist compendium, *The Beatles: A Jazz Tribute - Celebrating 50 Years* with jazz covers of "Something," "Taxman," and "Here Comes the Sun." (High Note – HCD 7260)

Hip-hop covers such as "Help!" by Lil Wayne on his 2007 album *The Drought Is Over Pt.2* (The Carter III Sessions MixTape) and in 2011 at the Hollywood Bowl Usher performing "With a Little Help from My Friends." Or sampling such as "Hold On John" by Los Angeles artist Blu, John Lennon's original "Hold On" looped and interwoven into Blu's reimagined track. ³⁰

R&B artist Betty LaVette's 2010 Interpretations: *The British Rock Songbook* (-Anti) with covers of "The Word," McCartney's "Maybe I'm Amazed," Harrison's "Isn't it a Pity," and Starr's "It Don't Come Easy," "Can't Buy Me Love," "Help!," and "Revolution." ³¹

Americana, that folksy minimally produced homespun mostly acoustic genre, weighs in with a 2013 cover of "I Will" by Steve Earle on a McCartney/Beatles tribute album *Let Us In Americana* (Reviver Records, 2013). Other tracks, Lee Ann Womack's "Let 'Em In," Matraca Berg's "Yesterday," mandolinist Sam Bush's "I've Just Seen a Face," singer/songwriter Bruce Cockburn's "The Fool on the Hill," and by the McCrary Sisters a gospelized version of "Let It Be." ³²

There are karaoke singalong Beatles albums, tributes to each Beatle individually, and multi-artist cross-genre collections such as the 2005 album, *This Bird Has Flown – A*

40th Anniversary Tribute to the Beatles' Rubber Soul (Razor and Tie) with covers of "Michelle," "Drive My Car," "Norwegian Wood," "Nowhere Man" "The Word," "Girl" "Run for Your Life" by a diversity of artists including Dar Williams, Ben Harper, the Fiery Furnaces, the Donnas, the Cowboy Junkies, Ben Kweller and Albert Hammond, Jr.

The message one can take from this is about the sheer volume of contemporary artists who think enough of The Beatles to want to tribute them in song. That said, though, The Beatles continued popularity is not so much rooted in covers of their songs as it once was for artists back in the vinyl era. The true legacy of The Beatles is their inextricable presence in the very DNA of American and world pop music. So many contemporary artists owe something to The Beatles in one way or another. Maybe it is stylistic, maybe in the instrumentation, an approach to harmony, in the songwriting, in the sonic character of a track, in a choice of chords or how they are hung together, a snippet of melody line, an altered sound, an idea, or even the ambition to experiment with something never before tried. Bruce Springsteen, an old school icon himself, told the audience at an emotional 1980 concert in Philadelphia shortly after John Lennon's death, "The first record that I ever learned was a record called 'Twist and Shout.' It was a Beatles record. If it wasn't for John Lennon, we'd all be some place very different tonight." And some thirty years later on being invited by Paul McCartney join the band at the 2012 Grammy Awards in a performance of the *Abbey Road* closing medley, Springsteen, referring now to McCartney, remarked, "There's a basic realization that you simply would not be here, the way you are here, without this specific person. Who actually is a person!"³³

Dave Grohl of the Foo Fighters, partner with Kurt Cobain in Nirvana, were similarly profoundly influenced by The Beatles. Grohl and the surviving members of Nirvana performed with "Sir" Paul McCartney as "Sirvana" at a 2012 Concert for Hurricane Sandy Relief. "When I was young," said Grohl, "that's how I learned how to play music – I had a guitar and a Beatles songbook. I would listen to the records and play along. Of course, it didn't sound like the Beatles, but it got me to understand song structure and melody and harmony and arrangement. So, I never had a teacher – I just had these `." And as to his Nirvana bandmate, "...the Beatles [were] such a huge influence. Kurt loved the Beatles because it was just so simple. Well, it seemed simple... they sound easy to play, but you know what? They're hard!"³⁴

The entry on The Beatles in *Rolling Stone* magazine's *Encyclopedia of Rock & Roll* reads as follows:

The impact of the Beatles – not only on rock & roll but on all of Western culture ... is simply incalculable ... [A]s personalities, they defined and incarnated '60s style: smart, idealistic, playful, irreverent, eclectic. ...No group has so radically transformed the sound and significance of rock & roll. ... [they] proved that rock & roll could embrace a limitless variety of harmonies, structures, and sounds; virtually every rock experiment has some precedent on a Beatles record.³⁵

And in the end, records - recorded sound - were and continue to be at the heart of it all. Lest we forget, The Beatles did, after all, remind us in the title of one of their most

significant albums. "We suddenly thought," said Paul, "Hey, what does a record do? It revolves. Great! You know - and so it was a Revolver." ³⁶

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