

THE BEATLES ON FILM - PART TWO: 1965-1970

Promotional Films 1965-1967

During the making of *A Hard Day's Night*, Richard Lester had filmed The Beatles performing their song "You Can't Do That" at the Scala Theater in London. The whole sequence, however, was excluded from the film, because Lester thought the concert would seem too long. When Lester was working on his movie *The Knack...And How to Get It* in late 1964, he was asked to forward a clip of the performance footage of "You Can't Do That" to the *Ed Sullivan Show*. Lester did not have the time to edit the film, so he asked John Victor Smith to compile a promotional film of the footage (vgl. Yule 1994: 103). The result was a quite compelling clip showing The Beatles' performance of "You Can't Do That". The way Smith edited the footage, it could easily have been included in *A Hard Day's Night*. For the first time The Beatles did not appear personally on a television program to promote a record, and sent a promotional film instead. It was a pattern they would develop in the following years.

On 23 November, 1965, The Beatles filmed ten promotional films for their latest releases at Twickenham Studios, London. The idea was to provide television programs all around the world with these performances which were to promote their recent single "Day Tripper / We Can Work It Out." This way The Beatles were able to perform in front of a worldwide audience without having to leave London. In addition, the group would not be restricted to only a few television shows, as these promotional films could potentially be shown on any entertainment program.

All in all, The Beatles filmed three versions of "We Can Work It Out" and "Day Tripper," two versions of their previous single "I Feel Fine," and one version each of "Help!" and "Ticket to Ride." The films were directed by Joe McGrath, a television director and producer, whom The Beatles had first met in April 1964 (vgl. Harry 2000: 755). They were produced by the British company Intertel and financed by The Beatles' management agency NEMS, which was owned by Brian Ep-

stein. As pointed out by film scholar Bob Neaverson, these ten promotional films occupy a unique position in television history.

“[T]hey were the first independently produced pop films to be made and distributed specifically for the international market, anticipating the beginning of contemporary pop video. Moreover, while their ultimate *raison d’être* (to allow the Beatles total control over their image and to be seen simultaneously all over the world) closely mirrors that of the group’s move into feature films, so does their form. Unlike the performance-oriented construction of contemporary pop shows, several of McGrath’s promos partially disposed of this notion, the most notable example being the “I Feel Fine” clip, which features the group miming into a punch-bag while Ringo rides an exercise bicycle” (Neaverson 1997: 40).

Although all of these promotional films feature lip-synching, some of them also contain elements of semi-diegetic performance, apparently determined to break from the realism of traditional television show performance (vgl. Neaverson 2000: 155).

The three promos of “We Can Work It Out” are basically three different takes of The Beatles miming their single hit. Two of the films feature The Beatles wearing black turtlenecks, while the third clip shows them wearing the uniforms they had worn at their famous performance at Shea Stadium on 15 August 1965, where they had played in front of 56,000 people. As all three versions of “We Can Work It Out” were edited the exact same way, it is quite certain that the performance had been storyboarded or rehearsed before the actual shoot. In all of the three versions of “We Can Work It Out” John Lennon plays an organ, while the other Beatles play their usual instruments. Paul McCartney, the lead singer on this recording, is shown in several close-ups, while the other Beatles are shown in medium shots. The performance is filmed in a more conventional way than The Beatles’ song performances in their feature movies *A Hard Day’s Night* and *Help!*, although the way The Beatles present themselves deviates from Hollywood perfectionism. Although The Beatles seem to enjoy themselves in all of the promotional films filmed on 23 November, John Lennon almost manages to interrupt the performance by fooling around on the organ. In the third version of “We Can Work It Out”, in which The Beatles wear their Shea Stadium outfits, Paul McCartney seems to be on the brink of laughing several times; and at the very end he eventually loses control and breaks out in a laughter. Lennon apparently had a very good day and can be detected fooling around in all of the promotional videos. For instance, in “Ticket to Ride” he and George Harrison intentionally mess up the miming, and Lennon pulls faces and smiles at the camera in all of the films. While “We Can Work It Out”, “Day Tripper”, and “Ticket to Ride” are otherwise rather

traditional television performances, "I Feel Fine" shows The Beatles surrounded by sports equipment. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and George Harrison play their guitars, while Ringo rides an exercise bicycle. George Harrison, again, mimes intentionally badly, and sings into a punch-bag. The third version of "Day Tripper" is similarly surreal, with George Harrison and Ringo Starr barred 'inside' a 2-dimensional train wagon, while John Lennon and Paul McCartney stand behind the painting of an aeroplane. The Beatles were quite clearly moving away from mere performance films.

BBC's *Top of the Pops* premiered two of the new promotional films, "Day Tripper" and "We Can Work It Out," on 2 December, 1965, and showed excerpts from the other promos on 25 December, 1965 (vgl. Miles 2001: 220). Later, several clips were shown on *Thank You Lucky Stars* in Great Britain. In the United States, "Day Tripper" and "We Can Work It Out" premiered on 6 January, 1966, on the show *Hullaballo*, while "I Feel Fine" was apparently not screened in the United States until the 1990s when The Beatles' company Apple provided MTV with these videos of The Beatles in order to promote the re-release of their compilation *The Beatles 1962-1966* as a double CD set in 1993.

In 1965, it was quite unusual for entertainers to promote their songs with promotional films instead of personal appearances on television shows. Tony Barrow, The Beatles' press agent at the time, released the following statement: "The boys would normally have appeared on television themselves to plug their new single, but they have been busy preparing an entirely new stage act, featuring all new numbers from their forthcoming album for their tour [...]" (Miles 2001: 215). It almost seems as though The Beatles felt the need to apologize for not personally appearing on TV.

To promote their single "Paperback Writer" and its B-side "Rain", The Beatles taped several promotional films in both black and white and color on 19 and 20 May 1966. The clips were directed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, an experienced television director who had directed the popular weekly television show *Ready, Steady, Go!* on which The Beatles had appeared several times. Filming took place at Chiswick House and at EMI's Abbey Road Studios, where the group was recording their album *Revolver* at the time. According to Bill Harry, one of the color performance clips was especially produced for use on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, featuring a short introduction by Ringo Starr apologizing for them not being there in person (vgl. Harry 2000: 889). The black and white clips were probably destined for British television shows, which were still broadcast in monochrome. The promotional videos filmed in the studio were aired

on various British television programs, such as *Thank You Lucky Stars*, *Ready, Steady, Go!*, and *Top of the Pops*.

The color clips as well as the black and white clips filmed at Abbey Road were simple performance films showing The Beatles miming the songs featured on their latest single. The promos filmed at Chiswick House, however, consisted of performance footage intercut with sequences showing The Beatles hanging out at the park. In this context it is interesting that The Beatles do not project their previous 'happy Mop-Top' image and appear rather cool and detached in these promotional films. Instead of fooling around in front of the camera, they are shown in a way resembling the contemplative image projected by the early photographs taken by Robert Freeman. In 1966, The Beatles were indeed striving for acceptance as artists rather than pop singers. Their varied interests in avant-garde music and films, classical and Indian music, art films and exhibitions as well as their political commitment all contributed to a significant change in the way The Beatles projected their image to the world.

In 1967, the British Musicians' Union issued a rule preventing performers from miming to their records on television (vgl. Harry 2000: 457). Therefore, The Beatles had to find an alternative way of visualizing their latest single release, the double-A sided "Strawberry Fields Forever / Penny Lane." Although they had pioneered non-diegetic promotional films with previous clips, such as "Rain," the Union's ruling now entirely terminated the possibility of mimed performance videos.

Having lost interest in simple performance videos anyway, The Beatles decided that they wanted a more artistic quality to their new promo clips in order to match the groundbreaking sounds of "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane." Klaus Voormann, their friend from Hamburg, was playing bass guitar with Manfred Mann's Earth Band at the time and recommended Swedish director Peter Goldman to the group (vgl. Voormann 2003). Goldman had worked with Manfred Mann's Earth Band as well as with The Troggs, The Hollies and Donovan (vgl. Harry 2000: 457). In an interview Goldman explained that he had actually been inspired to become a director by The Beatles' first movie, *A Hard Day's Night*: "Originally, my enthusiasm for presenting English groups on TV in Sweden was fired by Dick Lester's fine film of the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night*. I thought that was fantastic and wanted to try to present this music in an original and interesting manner on TV" (Sutherland 106). Filming took place in February 1967. As The Beatles were busy recording their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they were not able to go to Liverpool to film their parts on authentic locations. Instead, they filmed their parts at Knole Park Estate, near

Sevenoaks in Kent, and in London. A film team was sent to Liverpool to shoot some scenes at the locations described in the songs. The scenes of Liverpool were later spliced into the films. The promotional film for “Penny Lane” seemed to portray John Lennon wandering through the streets of Liverpool, although these scenes were actually filmed in London and were later intercut with footage shot in Liverpool (vgl. Harry 2000: 457). With “Strawberry Fields Forever” and Penny Lane”, The Beatles took the genre of promotional films to new heights. While “Penny Lane” worked well in the tradition of surrealistic films the group had created since *A Hard Day's Night*, “Strawberry Fields Forever” was especially innovative, as Peter Goldman used techniques borrowed from underground and avant-garde film, such as reversed film effects, dramatic lighting, unusual camera, and rhythmic editing. Created at the height of the psychedelic music period, these promotional films “are among the very first purpose-made concept videos that attempt to ‘illustrate’ the song in an artful manner, rather than just creating a film of an idealized performance” (“Music Video” 2005).

Magical Mystery Tour

Production History

The idea for The Beatles’ project *Magical Mystery Tour* evolved in April 1967, when Paul McCartney and the group’s manager Brian Epstein first discussed the possibility of producing a television special around some new songs provided by the band. Since The Beatles had quit touring they had been looking for alternative ways of how to stay in touch with their audience and to promote their recordings. According to The Beatles’ press agent Tony Barrow, the group was considering to send out “home-made musicals and comedy shows occasionally to the world’s theatres or television stations. This grand-scale global exposure would help to promote their albums and maintain a next-best-thing-to-touring link between The Fab Four and their millions of faithful fans” (Barrow 1999). The idea was inspired by Elvis Presley, who relied on the cinema and on television to remain in the eyes of the public after he had retired from touring.

Originally, it had been planned to produce a film to accompany the band’s most extravagant album release to date, *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Aware of the fact that it was impossible to reproduce the complex sounds of *Sgt. Pepper* on stage, The Beatles wanted to provide their audience with an adequate performance on film. Every song of

the album was going to be visualized in a short film, similar to the way the promotional films for “Strawberry Field Forever” and “Penny Lane” had been made. Tony Bramwell, one of Brian Epstein’s staff members, even filmed the recording sessions for the song “A Day in the Life.” However, this project was abandoned, as the group was mainly concerned with recording the music for their album. The promotional film for “A Day in the Life” remained in The Beatles’ archive and was eventually screened in 1983, when Abbey Road Studios opened their doors to the public for an exhibition called *The Beatles at Abbey Road*.

In April 1967, The Beatles were already busy recording the soundtrack for their next project, *Magical Mystery Tour*, although their latest achievement *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* had not yet been released. The concept of the planned film had been developed by Paul McCartney, who had heard of Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters, a hippie-community that had painted an old school bus and had traveled across the USA, dispensing LSD along the way. The trip had been filmed but the film was never released, although Tom Wolfe later wrote *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* about it (vgl. Miles 1997: 350-351).

Thinking about a way of realizing the concept of a psychedelic bus journey in a British setting, McCartney remembered a certain kind of traveling that had been common in the Liverpool area.

“It used to be called a mystery tour, up north. When we were kids, you’d get on a bus, and you didn’t know where you were going, but nearly always it was Blackpool. From Liverpool, it was inevitably Blackpool and everyone would go, “Oooo, it was Blackpool after all!” Everyone would spend time guessing where they were going, and this was part of the thrill” (Miles 1997: 350).

According to McCartney’s official biographer Barry Miles, Brian Epstein began to organize the production of the television special soon after McCartney’s and Epstein’s initial discussion (vgl. Miles 1997: 350). Unfortunately, however, Epstein was not to oversee the production anymore (vgl. Miles 1997: 352). When The Beatles were residing in Bangor, Wales, in order to learn about the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi’s technique of Transcendental Meditation, Brian Epstein was found dead in his London house on August 27, 1967. While Epstein’s sudden death caused a number of wild rumors to be publicized, his personal assistant Alistair Taylor confirms that Epstein had died because of an accidental drug overdose: “He died from the cumulative effect of bromide in a drug he had been using for a long time. The drug was Carbitral. The amount of bromide in him was only enough to be described as a ‘low fatal level’ but Brian had taken repeated ‘incautious self overdoses’ which added up enough to kill him” (Taylor 2003: 194).

The Beatles were still in a state of shock when they came together to discuss their future on September 1, 1967. They decided that they would continue their *Magical Mystery Tour* project and look for a reasonable solution as to the management of their business affairs. Having starred in two feature movie productions, The Beatles were convinced that they had learned enough about the film business to try and write, produce and direct their own film. As they had become the most successful songwriters and performers in the history of popular music, they believed that their approach to creating music could also be applied to the art of filmmaking. This approach seemed justified, since John Lennon and Paul McCartney had become the most prolific songwriters of their generation without having had any conventional musical training. They had demonstrated to a generation of young people that anybody can achieve public recognition regardless of their social backgrounds. Richard Lester, the director of The Beatles' movies *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, recently commented on how the group's impact on culture and creative approach influenced the traditional class system in Great Britain:

"I think they were the first to give a confidence to the youth of the country, which led to the disappearance of the Angry Young Man with a defensive mien. The Beatles sent the class thing sky-high; they laughed it out of existence and, I think, introduced a tone of quality more successfully than any other single factor that I know. Eventually it became taken for granted that they were single-handedly breaking Britain's class system without the benefit of an education or family background. They were, of course, much more middle class than most people admitted" (Yule 1994: 12).

While Lester neglects the contextual factors enabling The Beatles to represent a certain attitude and image, it is certainly true that they contributed significantly to the way popular music was perceived in the 1960s. Having celebrated such huge success as artists and having taken popular music to a different level by integrating elements from classical music, world music, and from the contemporary avant-garde, The Beatles wanted to produce their new film in a similar, easygoing way. All of The Beatles had been interested in the film business and, as with their music, were intent to contribute to a way of changing public perceptions. For instance, in 1966, John Lennon had starred in Richard Lester's anti-war-movie movie *How I Won the War*, which had shocked the audience with its inventive combination of surrealism, comedy, and Brechtian drama in a World War 2 setting. Around the same time, Paul McCartney created his own avant-garde home movies, which he liked to present to his friends. Two of these films, *The Defeat of the Dog* and *The Next Spring Then*, were described in *Punch* magazine at the time. The description

provides a rather interesting insight to McCartney's mid-60s films which would finally culminate in The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour*.

"They were not like ordinary people's home movies. There were over-exposures, double-exposures, blinding orange lights, quick cuts from professional wrestling to a crowded car park to a close-up of a television weather map. There were long still shots of a grey cloudy sky and a wet, grey, pavement, jumping Chinese ivory carvings and affectionate slow-motion studies of his sheepdog Martha and his cat. The accompanying music, on a record player and faultlessly synchronised, was by the Modern Jazz Quartet and Bach" (Miles 1997: 297).

In early 1967, Paul McCartney explained his approach to music and film to Barry Miles:

"With everything, with any kind of thing, my aim seems to be to distort it. Distort it from what we know it as, even with music and visual things, and to change it from what it is to what it could be. To see the potential of it all. To take a note and wreck it and see in that note what else there is in it, that a simple act like distorting it has caused. To take a film and superimpose on top of it so you can't quite tell what it is any more [...]. The only trouble is, that you don't have the bit that you did when you were a kid of innocently accepting things. For instance, if a film comes on that's superimposed and doesn't seem to mean anything, immediately it's weird or it's strange, or it's a bit funny to most people [...]" (Miles 1997: 301).

Denis O'Dell, who was to produce the film, remembers The Beatles' rather naïve do-it-yourself approach to filming: "They had absolutely no idea that studios have to be booked weeks or even months in advance, that contracts and union terms have to be negotiated with cast and crew, that locations have to be prepared and all manner of other things arranged" (Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 66).

According to John Lennon, Paul McCartney asked his band mates to contribute ideas to the formless screenplay: "Paul would say, 'Well, here's the segment, you write a little piece for that'" (Carr 1996: 116). Consequently, all group members came up with ideas for little sequences and fragments that were going to be filmed in the following weeks. However, none of the ideas were actually written down in a conventional screenplay. As pointed out by Paul McCartney, the group was striving for spontaneity: "I thought, well, we could just go places [...] and cobble together some sort of story as you went along, because, after all, the theme of a mystery tour is just that: that you don't know where you're

going anyway. So we thought we'd take this to the extreme and literally not know what film we were making" (Miles 1997: 366).

Without a proper script and without having finished the soundtrack recordings, The Beatles started filming their *Magical Mystery Tour* on 11 September, 1967. Their assistants Alistair Taylor, Neil Aspinall and Mal Evans had hired a coach and painted a "Magical Mystery Tour" logo on its side. The Beatles had chosen several actors from a casting magazine, *Spotlight*, and had invited some members from The Beatles' fan club to join them on their tour. The film crew consisted of four cameramen and a sound man, a technical adviser and various technical assistants (vgl. Miles 1997: 360). All in all, 43 passengers were on The Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* bus when it left London for five days of filming. The party first drove to Teignmouth, Devon, where they stayed the first night of their trip. On September 12, they continued their journey to Newquay, Cornwall, where they filmed several sequences at the Atlantic Hotel. They spent two more days on the road, capturing some surreal moments of the journey on film. The following week The Beatles and their crew spent at West Malling Air Station, Maidstone, Kent, where they filmed most of the more memorable scenes of *Magical Mystery Tour*, such as their performance of "I Am the Walrus", the car race, and the grand finale, with The Beatles trooping down a staircase singing "Your Mother Should Know" (vgl. Miles 2001: 278-280). This location was agreed upon, when The Beatles found out that film studios had to be booked in advance. Denis O'Dell, the producer of *Magical Mystery Tour*, recalls that "I was frequently forced to improvise second-rate solutions at the last minute. An example of this was when I had to book an old disused air hangar at West Malling for the [musical] sequences because it was impossible to obtain any studio time at Twickenham, Pinewood or Elstree. We also shot the marathon sequence there" (Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 68).

On September 25, 1967, Roy Benson, who had been one of the film editors on *A Hard Day's Night*, began editing the filmed material at Norman's Film Productions in London. The Beatles had originally set aside two weeks to edit the film, but due to the disorganized way the whole project had been filmed, it finally took eleven weeks for Roy Benson to edit the ten hours of material down to 53 minutes. The Beatles were involved in the editing process to varying degrees and informed Benson what to use in the film and what to leave out. Since the film had been Paul McCartney's original idea, he spent quite some time with Roy Benson at the editing suite.

While Benson was busy editing the movie, The Beatles finished recording the soundtrack for *Magical Mystery Tour* at Abbey Road Stu-

dios, London. When The Beatles realized that they had not filmed a suitable sequence for Paul McCartney's song "Fool on the Hill," McCartney spontaneously decided to fly to Nice, where he, his personal assistant Mal Evans and the cameraman Aubrey Devon spent a day filming an ad-libbed sequence for the movie on October 30, 1967.

Most accounts of the making of *Magical Mystery Tour* neglect Ringo Starr's contribution to the project. While his colleagues had been exploring different musical areas in 1966, Starr had become fascinated with photography and experimental films. At his home he developed and printed his own films and experimented with the technical aspects of photography. According to biographer Alan Clayson, Starr was well informed about the versatility of delayed-action shutters and different kinds of lenses (vgl. Clayson 1996: 157). His outstanding contribution to *Magical Mystery Tour* was the sequence showing George Harrison playing "Blue Jay Way": "[There's] a scene with George where I put him in my living room and projected slides on him. It's nothing new. It was done back in 1926 or so – but I happened to be a camera buff, and I think it came out fine" (Clayson 1996: 157). Honoring his creative contribution to *Magical Mystery Tour*, Ringo Starr was half-jokingly credited as 'director of photography' under his birth name, Richard Starkey, M.B.E.

***Magical Mystery Tour* and Swinging London**

The Beatles were among the most fashionable young men in the mid-sixties. Having set contemporary fashion trends with their unique Cardin suits and their 'Beatle boots' at the early stages of their career, they were also the leading characters in fashion during the 'Summer of Love', 1967, which constituted the climax of 'psychedelia'. For the release of their *Sgt. Pepper* album, The Beatles appeared in colorful uniforms, kaftans, and other embroidered outfits. Although *Magical Mystery Tour* itself represented the psychedelic youth culture in the way it projected an escape into a bizarre dream world, some of the costumes The Beatles used in the movie were in complete contrast to what had been worn in London in the summer. The movie marked another change in The Beatles' outer appearance. For instance, John Lennon and Paul McCartney had shaved off their *Sgt. Pepper* – moustaches, which had shocked The Beatles' fans, when the group had first sported them in the promotional videos for "Strawberry Fields Forever" and "Penny Lane".

For no specific reason, The Beatles had decided to wear suits reminiscent of 'gangster suits' featured in old Hollywood movies. The Beatles' press officer Tony Barrow recalls, "For the coach trip, the

group's film outfits recalled Chicago's legendary gangland heydays. George changed out of a favourite old blue denim jacket and into a big blue suit with black tie. John wore a brown pin-striped suit and feathers in his hat. Paul chose a pullover which was predominantly orange-red while Ringo went along with the 'gangster's suit' theme" (Barrow 1999). *The Beatles Monthly Book* even speculated at the time that clothes designers in Carnaby Street were wondering whether The Beatles were about "to spark off a nationwide craze for gangster-style Al Capone clothes" (Barrow 1999). It should be pointed out, however, that The Beatles wore these clothes mainly in the scenes showing them on the bus. In the "I Am the Walrus" – segment, for instance, they decided to wear psychedelic hippie-outfits, and in the sequence accompanying "Your Mother Should Know" they wore white suits.

The choice of clothes was also interesting in comparison to The Beatles' earlier movies *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, as their identical appearance was now definitely a thing of the past. While they had still sported uniforms on the cover of their summer release *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they had now completed their image transformation from 'four-headed monster'¹ to four individual pop artists. This is also evident in the way the group presents its image in *Magical Mystery Tour*. Except for the performances of "I Am the Walrus" and "Your Mother Should Know", The Beatles do not appear as a band in this movie. They hardly ever interact – as they had in *A Hard Day's Night* – and appear quite independently throughout the movie. Considering the fact that George Harrison and John Lennon had come to dislike The Beatles' mop-top image by then, it is quite certain that this way of presenting the group was constructed deliberately to emphasize the beginning of a new phase in The Beatles' career. It is also interesting that The Beatles do actually not just play themselves in the movie but take on various roles. For instance, John Lennon plays a travel agent, a waiter in Aunt Jessie's dream, and one of the magicians, while Paul McCartney impersonates a soldier, the 'fool' on the hill, as well as a magician. Film scholar Bob Neaverson points out that "[i]n this way, the viewer's perception of the group is constantly blurred by a series of dramatic and non-dramatic paradoxes which partially obscure any single and coherent image of the Beatles as a 'pop group'" (Neaverson 1997: 68). On the one hand, this enables The Beatles to satirize conventional modes of representation in showbusiness, while it also allows them to escape from the

1 The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger has repeatedly called The Beatles a "four-headed monster", as they complemented each other so well, for instance, at press conferences.

group image that had been projected by *Help!* and *A Hard Day's Night*, which they found too restrictive at the time (cf. Neaverson 1997: 68).

Story and Aesthetics

The movie starts with a voice-over (John Lennon) telling the audience to get ready for a 'Magical Mystery Tour'. Ringo Starr buys tickets for himself and his aunt Jessie at a travel agency. The travel agent is played by a disguised John Lennon. They get on the tour bus, a big yellow vehicle with a blue stripe running horizontally along the side. The guests are welcomed by the courier, Mr. Jolly Jimmy Johnson, and the attractive tour guide, Miss Wendy Winters. As the bus rolls out, the other passengers are introduced. Among many others, all The Beatles are on board, along with a midget photographer, some old men, an actress, a little girl called Nicola, and Mr. Buster Bloodvessel, who believes he is the courier. Ringo is sitting beside his corpulent aunt, whose husband has just recently passed away. Ringo provokes a conflict when he points out that Jessie has been eyeing the men on the bus. The song "Fool on the Hill" suddenly starts to play. At first, Paul McCartney is still on the bus, smoking a cigarette, but suddenly he is shown wearing different clothes, standing on a mountaintop. The footage accompanying "Fool on the Hill" shows McCartney walking, running, and jumping around the French countryside. The sequence merely illustrates the song in a non-diegetic manner, as it does not feature any performance footage. Interestingly, The Beatles' *Anthology*-video project contains outtakes filmed for the "Fool on the Hill" – sequence, which show McCartney miming the words to the song. Consequently, it must have been a deliberate decision by The Beatles and Roy Benson to leave out the performance scenes in favor of non-diegetic footage illustrating the song. The other song sequences were "I Am the Walrus", "Flying", "Blue Jay Way," and "Your Mother Should Know".

During the making of *Magical Mystery Tour*, each Beatle was allowed to direct at least one sequence. According to editor Roy Benson, the performance of "I Am the Walrus" was John Lennon's directorial piece for the movie (vgl. *A Long and Winding Road* 2003: DVD 3). At first, the sequence had been planned to show a diegetic performance of Lennon's song. During the process of editing the piece, however, Benson and Lennon realized that they did not have enough usable material for the sequence. Lennon asked Benson to come up with some ideas, and Benson edited the sequence in a way that combined The Beatles' slightly surreal performance sequence with rather arbitrary footage The Beatles

had filmed for the movie (vgl. *A Long and Winding Road* 2003: DVD 3). Interestingly, Benson's way of editing the sequence mirrored The Beatles' attitude toward the recording of John Lennon's psychedelic classic "I Am the Walrus". The lyrics to the song were reminiscent of nonsense poetry of the likes of Lewis Carroll, whose poem "The Walrus and the Carpenter" had actually inspired Lennon's lyrics. In addition to these obvious influences, journalist Ian McDonald has noted that "Lennon was satirising the fashion for fanciful psychedelic lyrics cultivated by Dylan's then much-discussed output" (McDonald: 1994: 215). The recording itself featured a rather conventional backing track, supplemented by John Lennon's voice, which was distorted by channelling it through the loudspeaker of a Leslie organ, a string arrangement by George Martin, and The Mike Sammes Singers chanting "everybody's got one/everybody's got one". What added to the recording's revolutionary impact on the psychedelic music of 1967 was The Beatles' use of a random radio scan that broke into a BBC broadcast of *King Lear*. This avant-garde technique of using coincidental and arbitrary sounds to complement The Beatles' performance was taken up by Roy Benson, who complemented the footage of diegetic song performance with random footage of The Beatles and their entourage.

The sequence accompanying The Beatles' only joint composition "Flying" features breathtaking footage of Icelandic landscapes presented in psychedelic colors. While, in the *Anthology*, Ringo Starr remembers that The Beatles had sent somebody to Iceland to film the sequence, the footage actually consisted of outtakes from Stanley Kubrick's movie *Dr Strangelove* (Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 68). By suggesting that the color-filtered cloud formations and landscapes are seen by the people on the *Magical Mystery Tour*-bus, it is made clear that the bus really takes its passengers on a magical trip.

"Blue Jay Way", mainly directed by Ringo Starr and George Harrison, again emphasizes the psychedelic nature of the whole experience, with George Harrison performing his song on a keyboard painted on the floor of his garage. The performance is intercut with the aforementioned sequences of slides projected upon Harrison's face and footage showing The Beatles in John Lennon's garden, playing a white cello, and fooling around with a football. It has been pointed out that "[w]hile [Harrison] appears to be visibly 'tripping' (and therefore presenting himself as a Leary-inspired advocate of mind-expanding drugs), his 'lotus' posture also implies a contradictory advocacy of spiritual purity via transcendental mysticism and meditation" (Neaverson 1997: 69). Although Neaverson describes the atmosphere conveyed by the "Blue Jay Way" sequence in a quite adequate way, the statement referring to drugs is not correct, as

the Beatles had never advocated the use of LSD and other psychedelic drugs. Although they supported a newspaper advertisement in favor of legalizing marihuana in July 1967, they later refrained from promoting the use of drugs, especially after George Harrison had witnessed the effect drugs had on American youth culture, when he visited a gathering of hippies in San Francisco in August, 1967. In *The Beatles' Anthology*, Harrison explicitly explains that he quit LSD after his trip to San Francisco (Beatles 2000: 259).

Therefore, it is simply wrong to suggest that The Beatles were advocating the use of drugs in *Magical Mystery Tour*. Although it was a colorful and mystical road movie with a hefty dose of surrealism, it was quite definitely not designed as a commercial for drugs. In contrast, George Harrison's encounter with eastern philosophy and transcendental meditation introduced a new phase in The Beatles' career, where they moved away from drugs – at least for a while – to explore alternative methods of achieving a heightened awareness. In February, 1968, The Beatles went to Rishikesh, India, where they studied the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi's technique of transcendental meditation. While Ringo Starr and Paul McCartney returned to England after a few weeks for various reasons, George Harrison and John Lennon stayed in Rishikesh for four months, during which they refrained from taking drugs and composed some of their best songs.

The film's final song sequence, accompanying "Your Mother Should Know", also constitutes a surprising finale for *Magical Mystery Tour*. The sequence, which unexpectedly follows a scene filmed at a striptease club, shows The Beatles on a lavish film set reminiscent of 1950s Hollywood musical sets, where the group perform a loosely choreographed dance down a big staircase to the music of Paul McCartney's dancehall song pastiche. By parodying the conventions of grand-scale Hollywood musicals and television gala shows, The Beatles pointed out that their far-out television special was intentionally designed to contradict the audience's expectations of old-fashioned show entertainment. It was a subtle criticism of established norms in show business and fit very well into the film's humorous view at the establishment, which The Beatles had always made fun of since the early stages of their career. Film scholar Bob Neaverson describes the way *Magical Mystery Tour* undermines established ideology.

"Perhaps the most poignant example of the mockery of state authorities is the sequence in which the party stop off in an army recruitment office, only to be confronted by a Sergeant (Victor Spinetti) who aggressively shouts abstract, meaningless orders at the entourage until Ringo gently asks 'why?' The scene then cuts to a similar sequence in which the same character is seen attempting

to impose his gibberish orders upon a stuffed cow which is mounted on the back of a plank” (Neaverson 1997: 63).

The police as well as representatives of the Church of England are also ridiculed in several scenes. While the “I Am the Walrus” sequence features dancing policemen, the marathon sequence shows several vicars making objectionable gestures toward the winners of the race. (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 63). Moreover, the narrative form itself, the amateur aesthetics, as well as The Beatles’ overall attitude toward the whole project reflect a desire to challenge social and moral norms, and the established system of values.

With the release of the movie’s soundtrack, The Beatles also broke with conventional forms, as it was decided that they would release the six songs featured in *Magical Mystery Tour* on an unprecedented format – a double EP (Extended Player) instead of an album. The Beatles had released several EPs before, as this was a quite popular format in Great Britain. An EP usually consisted of four songs and, in The Beatles’ catalogue, often contained exclusive recordings. The concept of a double EP was a first in the history of the British music business. In the United States, where EPs had never been a great success, Capitol Records insisted on releasing a soundtrack album. As The Beatles had only recorded six proper songs for their television special, Capitol Records added five songs The Beatles had released only as singles (“Hello Goodbye”, “Strawberry Fields Forever”, “Penny Lane”, “Baby You’re a Rich Man”, and “All You Need Is Love”).

The British EP release, as well as the American album release, contained an extensive 24-page full color picture book featuring a slightly different version of the movie’s storyline, which was based upon The Beatles’ original ideas. The differences reveal several changes made by The Beatles during the editing process.

“AWAY IN THE SKY, beyond the clouds, live 4 or 5 Magicians. By casting WONDERFUL SPELLS they turn the Most Ordinary Coach Trip into a MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR. If you let yourself go, the Magicians will take you away to marvelous places.

Maybe YOU’VE been on a Magical Mystery Tour without even realizing it. Are you ready to go?

SPLendid! The story begins on Page 7...or 8...

1. RINGO AND AUNTIE JESSIE are always quarrelling about one thing or another. But they both agree it would be exciting to go on a Mystery Tour. ‘Your Uncle Jack always liked a Charabanc Trip’ says Auntie Jessie. ‘And this is a MAGIC trip’ adds Ringo.

2. A few days later, VERY early in the morning, they set off to start the tour. Auntie Jessie looks at the B-I-G bus and smiles: 'It's all yellow and blue! My favourite colours!' When everyone is ready JOLLY JIMMY JOHNSON (THE COURIER) climbs aboard.
3. 'Good Morning Ladies And Gentlemen, Boys And Girls! WELCOME TO MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR! I am your Courier. All my friends call me Jolly Jimmy and YOU are ALL my friends! Everyone comfy? SPLENDID!'
4. Then Jolly Jimmy introduces the Tour Hostess, THE DELIGHTFUL WENDY WINTERS. 'And over HERE...' he goes on 'is our driver for the trip, a wonderful driver (WE HOPE!) whose name is ALF. Away-way-way we go, Alf! SPLENDID!'
5. Needless to say Auntie Jessie finds something to argue about. 'You ain't coming with me anymore' she tells Ringo. 'Who bought the tickets? I DID, DIDN'T I!' replies Ringo. 'Yes, YOU bought the tickets' agrees Auntie Jessie 'BUT I GAVE YOU THE MONEY!'
6. At the front of the bus sits a Sad Little Man in a funny old uniform. 'Who IS that man?' whispers Wendy Winters. 'That's Mr. Buster Bloodvessel' answers Jolly Jimmy 'He's quite harmless. He thinks HE'S THE COURIER! Last trip he thought he was THE DRIVER!'
- THE MAGIC BEGINS TO WORK!
7. The other passengers are enjoying the bright sunshine, the green countryside. 'Excuse me' says LITTLE GEORGE to PAUL 'I'd like to take a photograph of your young lady.' 'O.K.' says Paul. 'All right' says MAGGIE, THE LOVELY STARLET.
8. 'This IS my lucky day!' chuckles Little George who loves to take LOTS of pictures. Click! Clack! CLICK! Meanwhile PAUL BEGINS TO DAYDREAM. His thoughts fly FAR AWAY. He is standing high up on a warm, grassy hill...
9. SUDDENLY Paul's daydreaming is over. He hears the delightful voice of the Hostess: 'I JUST WANTED TO SAY THAT IF THERE IS ANYTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU...YOUR WISH IS OUR COMMAND!' 'But I wonder where the MAGIC comes in?' thinks Paul.
10. Little does he know that THE MAGIC IS ALREADY BEGINNING TO WORK! Somewhere up in the sky, beyond the little white clouds, FIVE MAGICIANS study their mysterious maps and gaze into their magic telescope. They are CASTING WONDERFUL SPELLS.
11. At last one of the MAGICIANS looks up from his work: 'THE BUS IS TEN MILES NORTH ON THE DEWSBURY ROAD AND THEY'RE HAVING A LOVELY TIME!' he cries. The others dance with glee: 'THEY'RE HAVING A LOVELY TIME!!!'
12. Even as they dance THE MAGIC TAKES EFFECT and the bus is SPIRITED AWAY TO THE AMAZING MUSICAL LAND OF THE WALRUS! 'I AM THE WALRUS' says John. 'NO, YOU'RE NOT' cries Nicola, laughing at his funny feathery hat.
- WHAT A MARVELOUS LUNCH!

13. NICOLA is the VERY YOUNGEST LITTLE GIRL on the bus. 'I'VE GOT A PRESENT FOR YOU!' says John. And he gives her a BIG RED BALLOON. She hasn't quite enough PUFF to blow it up for herself so JOHN and GEORGE help her.

14. In no time at all everybody is ready for lunch and the bus draws up beside a small cafe. Jolly Jimmy leads the way and all the people follow eagerly because they're HUNGRY! 'WHAT A MARVELOUS LUNCH!' says everyone. AND IT IS!

15. There is Chicken Soup followed by Roast Beef and Carrots with Thick Brown Gravy to go over the Potatoes! A small band plays Jolly Tunes in the corner of the room. Nobody is enjoying himself more than HAPPY NAT.

16. 'If I eat any more' says HAPPY NAT 'I SHALL FALL ASLEEP!' 'Then you'll MISS ALL THE MAGIC!' warns Little Nicola. While the waiters scurry away to get the pudding, the band plays a very exciting Spanish Dance.

17. 'I'm no Spanish Dancer but I certainly know my onions!' laughs HAPPY NAT. Up he gets from the table and becomes a FAMOUS SPANISH BULLFIGHTER. After all that eating and all that dancing no wonder Happy Nat nods off.

18. So while the others tuck into Strawberry Ice Cream or Aunt Mary's Apple Pie, HAPPY NAT has a HAPPY DREAM...all about his adventures with a bunch of pretty girls beside the seaside!

MEET MAJOR McCARTNEY & SGT. SPINETTI!

19. The sound of AUNTIE JESSIE PLAYING THE DRUMS brings Happy Nat's delicious dream to an abrupt end! Yes, there she is SITTING WITH THE BAND – banging away and singing at the top of her voice!

20. 'I suppose it runs in the family' suggests Happy Nat. 'I never knew she had it in her' replies Ringo. Soon the bus is on its way again and everyone congratulates Auntie Jessie because THEY didn't know she had it in her!

21. Presently Driver Alf brings his bus to a halt outside a STRANGE BUILDING. 'What a funny place!' remarks John. 'I don't like the look of it' adds George. 'WE'RE JUST PASSING THROUGH' says Wendy Winters reassuringly.

22. Before long Jolly Jimmy has led everybody into an Official sort of Office. Behind an old desk sits MAJOR McCARTNEY looking Very Important. Beside him stands SGT. SPINETTI looking over his shoulder.

23. 'Just follow me' whispers Jolly Jimmy 'and if they try to get you to join up DON'T TAKE ANY NOTICE!' Now that is easier said than done! Eventually they leave the Sergeant screaming about haircuts and Other Military Things.

24. 'Now!' says Wendy Winters 'We'll split into two groups. All the Ladies – THIS WAY PLEASE!' 'And ALL THE MEN should come with me' chortles Jolly Jimmy, a special twinkle in his eye 'I've got a NICE SURPRISE FOR YOU!'

THE GREAT MARATHON RACE

25. 'Hello!' says George 'We're going into a striptease club.' AND THEY ARE TOO! 'Whoops Johnny! Hey! Tee hee hee!' cries John. 'Front row seats for all you lucky lads!' shouts Jolly Jimmy ordering up the drinks.

26. 'Cheer Up Mr. Bloodvessel' says John giving him a friendly nudge 'Sup up your milk and enjoy the show!' Before the show is over Mr. Bloodvessel HAS FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT HIS MILK!

27. When they are back on the bus all the Men look VERY PLEASED WITH THEMSELVES. So do the Ladies – but THEY don't say where THEY'VE been! After a while Jolly Jimmy jumps up again: 'NOW FOR THE MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR MARATHON RACE!'

28. WELL! Have you EVER seen so many people IN ALL YOUR LIFE? Everyone lines up for the start – The Rugby Team, The Little Wrestlers, The Five Cheating Vicars and ALL the people from the bus. BANG! THEY'RE OFF!

29. It looks as though Five Vicars might win because they are cheating by RIDING BICYCLES. So some of the others use MOTOR BIKES and CARS which are MUCH BETTER ways of CHEATING!

30. GOOD OLD RINGO! HE finds the BEST WAY of cheating – BY DRIVING THE MAGICAL BUS! So the Mystery Tour Team wins the BIG RACE in the end WHICH SERVES ALL THE OTHERS RIGHT!!!

AUNTIE JESSIE'S DREADFUL DREAM

31. NO WONDER people are a bit sleepy after all that racing around! Poor Auntie Jessie nods off and has a dream ABOUT MOUNTAINS OF SPAGHETTI! 'Wake up Ringo! Wake up Auntie Jessie!' It is LITTLE GEORGE speaking.

32. 'NO MORE SPAGHETTI!' moans Auntie Jessie. 'Come on!' insists Little George. The rest of the party has already disappeared into a SMALL TENT standing in the middle of a meadow.

33. 'If we ALL manage to squeeze into THAT TINY TENT it will be MAGIC!' declares Ringo. I won't tell you the MARVELOUS and AMAZING things which happen in the tent BUT I WILL TELL YOU IT IS MAGIC!

34. By now the sun is setting behind the hills and it's time to head for home. SHIRLEY THE ACCORDIONIST plays Happy Tunes while everybody sings the words. Even MR. BLOODVESSEL! All the Magic has made him forget.

35. Funnily enough nobody notices the EXTRA PASSENGERS ON THE BUS. But there they are...THE FIVE MAGICIANS, SINGING AND LAUGHING ALONG WITH EVERYBODY ELSE! 'WE'RE HAVING A LOVELY TIME!' THEY CHANT.

36. Auntie Jessie and all the other people have NEVER enjoyed a Mystery Tour so much in their lives! Thanks to Jolly Jimmy, Wendy Winters AND THE FIVE MYSTERIOUS MAGICIANS. And, of course, THANKS TO JOHN, PAUL, GEORGE AND RINGO!!! WHOOPEE!

THE END."

(*Magical Mystery Tour* 1967).

While there are slight changes in the sequence of the scenes, the most obvious difference between the comic book version and the finished movie is the sequence titled “What a Marvelous Lunch” in the comic. The Beatles had filmed an extensive lunch scene at a hotel, which was almost completely cut from the film. Only short segments of this scene made it into the “I Am the Walrus” sequence. However, whereas it is easy to point out the marginal differences between The Beatles’ outline and the finished result, it should be noted that – contrary to what some critics have claimed – The Beatles did have an idea of what the movie was supposed to be like.

Even though *Magical Mystery Tour* was clearly designed for a young, open-minded audience rather than for a general mainstream audience, the BBC decided to broadcast it at prime time. Denis O’Dell recalls his reaction when he found out about this.

“You can imagine my horror when BBC 1 screened the film on Boxing Day 1967 at 8.35 p.m. in black and white. The timing of the transmission could not have been more insensitive. Its screening, at a time traditionally reserved for more conventional forms of family entertainment, was totally inappropriate for an avant-garde film which would have been much more at home in a 10 p.m. slot on BBC 2. Worse still, the unfathomable decision to show the movie in monochrome totally undermined its swirling hallucinatory imagery, rendering its aesthetic *raison d’être* completely redundant” (Neaverson/O’Dell 2002: 70).

O’Dell’s concerns were quite justified, considering the public reaction to The Beatles’ first self-produced television special. The British press simply loathed the movie and slated it in their reviews. For instance, the *Daily Express* called it “blatant rubbish,” the *Daily Mirror* criticized it because “it was chaotic,” while the *Daily Mail* declared: “It’s colossal, the conceit of the Beatles” (Sutherland 114). *Magical Mystery Tour* became The Beatles’ first and only flop in Great Britain. The media’s outrageous reaction to The Beatles’ movie prompted Paul McCartney to release several statements justifying the group’s first attempt at art films. On January 6, 1968, the *New Musical Express* published an interview with McCartney.

“We could easily have assembled a team of experts [...] and asked them to come up with a first class show for Christmas which would star the Beatles. But that would have been easy. We wanted to try and do it ourselves [...]. The mistake was that too many people were looking for a plot when there wasn’t one. It was just a series of unconnected events which we thought would be interesting or humorous or just pleasant to watch” (Sutherland 114).

The film contributed significantly to The Beatles' departure from their early 'mop-top' image, which the group had gradually abandoned since their tour of America in 1966. John Lennon was quite aware of the public's conception of The Beatles, and commented on the way *Magical Mystery Tour* disappointed the public's expectations of The Beatles in 1968: "Sie hatten den Eindruck dass wir aus der Rolle fielen. Sie würden uns am liebsten in den Pappanzügen lassen, die für uns entworfen wurden. Was auch immer für ein Bild sie für sich selbst haben, sie sind enttäuscht, wenn wir dem nicht entsprechen. Und das tun wir nie, also gibt es immer viele Enttäuschungen." (Beatles 2000: 274). While it was a critical flop in the United Kingdom, the whole project proved to be highly lucrative for the group. The film had cost £40,000 to make and reportedly grossed \$2,000,000 in rentals to American universities and colleges alone (vgl. Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 72). In addition, the soundtrack album grossed \$8,000,000 in its first ten days of release (vgl. Miles 1997: 369).

Promotional Films 1967-1968

In 1967, The Beatles were invited to represent Great Britain at the first worldwide satellite television broadcast, *Our World*, which was going to be broadcast in June. The group accepted the invitation, and John Lennon wrote the song "All You Need Is Love" especially for the occasion. He was careful to use simple words in order to enable a worldwide audience to understand The Beatles' message. The band recorded a backing track for their television appearance two days before the show, and on June 25, The Beatles were shown in front of an audience of about 400 million viewers, as they performed a live overdub for "All You Need Is Love," which was also going to be their new single release. The event was filmed at EMI's Abbey Road Studios, where The Beatles had recorded most of their music up to then. The Beatles invited many of their famous friends to the broadcast, in order to create a party atmosphere that would appeal to the worldwide audience. Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithfull, Keith Richards, Keith Moon, Mike McCartney, and Eric Clapton were among The Beatles' guests and participated in the infectious chorus of "All You Need Is Love" (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 260). With all these superstars in attendance, The Beatles proved once more that they were the world's leading pop group. The Beatles and their following sported lavish and colorful psychedelic outfits, although the audience could not see that, as the satellite transmission was in monochrome. With their landmark album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* released three weeks

before the *Our World* performance, The Beatles had now become the beloved protagonists of Swinging London. When EMI released “All You Need Is Love” as a single on July 7, 1967, the BBC repeatedly screened The Beatles’ performance of the song on various programs (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 260). Therefore, it can be regarded as a promotional video. The single itself topped the charts worldwide in the summer of 1967.

According to film editor Roy Benson, who had worked with The Beatles on their *Magical Mystery Tour* television extravaganza, The Beatles wanted to use some of the outtakes of *Magical Mystery Tour* for a promotional film for their Christmas Single “Hello Goodbye”: “After the *Magical Mystery Tour* was virtually completed, John wanted to use some of the unused footage for a full colour promo film for ‘Hello Goodbye’, so we put together about three minutes of film which included the luncheon at the Atlantic Hotel, footage shot in Nice, etc. To this day the film has never been seen” (Barrow 1999). Instead, The Beatles decided that they would produce a more conventional promotional video, which could also be shown on *The Ed Sullivan Show* in the USA. Consequently, on November 10, 1967, The Beatles met at the Saville Theater in London to film two promotional films for their forthcoming single release “Hello Goodbye.” Paul McCartney had thought of the original idea of a performance video and directed the filming. The promo was to show The Beatles perform their new single on stage in order to undermine the BBC’s regulations against musicians miming on television. However, the BBC noticed that The Beatles’ did quite obviously not play the song live. The films were edited on November 12, and Paul McCartney supervised the process.

The Beatles wore three different outfits in the “Hello Goodbye” promotional films. One film showed them in their *Sgt. Pepper*-costumes, while they wore casual clothes in the second film. In addition to these contemporary outfits, the *Sgt. Pepper*-promo contained short scenes showing them in their collarless Pierre Cardin suits from 1962. A third promo clip was made up of out-takes from the other two films. One of the films was shown on November 26, 1967, on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, while the BBC decided not to show the band’s promotional films. On December 2, 1967, *New Musical Express* reported that “The Beatles promotional clip of their new hit single ‘Hello Goodbye’ has been banned by BBC-TV. The last-minute decision by senior executives prevented the film from being screened in BBC-1’s ‘Top of the Pops’ last Thursday. A Corporation spokesman explained that a ‘minor portion of the film contravened the Musician’s Union regulations concerning miming on television” (Sutherland 115).

On February 11, 1968, The Beatles intended to film a performance of their next single “Lady Madonna” at Abbey Road Studios, London. However, when the film team arrived, the group had decided to record a new song for the soundtrack of *Yellow Submarine*, “Hey Bulldog.” They instructed the head of their own company Apple Films, Denis O’Dell and his assistant Tony Bramwell, to shoot footage during the recording of “Hey Bulldog” and to edit the filmed material in a way that would suggest that The Beatles were actually performing “Lady Madonna.” Denis O’Dell recalls the situation: “We tried to edit the footage so that it echoed the rhythm of ‘Lady Madonna’ (which wasn’t too difficult since the songs have roughly similar tempos) [...]” (Neaverson/O’Dell 2002: 87). Interestingly, the result was shown on the March 14, 1968, edition of BBC’s *Top of the Pops*, as well as on the next day’s edition of *All Systems Freeman*, as the promo film did not violate the BBC’s rules concerning miming on television – The Beatles were not seen miming “Lady Madonna”, because they were actually playing a different song. Unintentionally, The Beatles undermined the BBC’s and the Musician’s Union’s regulations.

While The Beatles were residing in India when “Lady Madonna” was released, they returned to London for the release of their first single on their own label Apple Records, “Hey Jude.” In order to market their new single internationally, promotional films were required. Film editor Roy Benson was asked to design a storyboard for the promo film. Benson reportedly produced “an imaginative 38-scene storyboard idea” (Lewisohn 2000: 297). However, when The Beatles learned that it would take three days to shoot the film, they rejected Benson’s idea. Denis O’Dell, who was still the head of Apple Films and produced the clips for “Hey Jude” and its B-side “Revolution”, came up with an alternative. He remembers, “I felt that since the A-side was essentially a sing-along this should be echoed visually in the promo clip, with a studio audience joining in live for the final extended refrain” (Neaverson/O’Dell 2002: 129). Although it took some time to convince the group to stage a live performance of the song, they eventually agreed when their friend Michael Lindsay-Hogg, who had directed several of The Beatles’ promos in 1966, was brought in to direct the films on September 4, 1968. As the group was not interested in a real live performance, only the lead vocals were sung live, while The Beatles, an orchestra and an invited audience basically mimed to their recorded tracks of “Hey Jude” and “Revolution”. Lindsay-Hogg filmed three takes of “Hey Jude”, which were later edited to two finished color clips. In addition, he filmed two almost identical versions of “Revolution”. In the “Hey Jude” videos, Paul McCartney is sitting at the piano, John Lennon and George Harrison play guitars, and

Ringo Starr plays the drums. In the “Revolution”-videos McCartney plays his legendary Höfner bass guitar.

Popular television host David Frost was also at Twickenham Studios, where the filming took place, to tape an introduction to the songs for use on his Frost on Sunday program. While this gave viewers the illusion that The Beatles were playing live on David Frost’s show, it also fooled the Musician’s Union into believing that no miming was involved (vgl. Miles 2001: 309). “Hey Jude” became The Beatles’ most successful single to date, selling more than six million copies in the first three months of the single’s initial release.

Yellow Submarine

Since 1965, Al Brodax, the producer of the cartoon series *The Beatles*, had been negotiating the production of a feature length animated Beatles film with Brian Epstein and The Beatles. As the television show was quite a success, Brodax finally managed to convince Epstein and The Beatles of his idea in early 1967. Although the group had not particularly liked the television series, they thought that a cartoon feature was an easy way to fulfil their contract with United Artists, which obligated the group to participate in three movies, the first two having been *A Hard Day’s Night* and *Help!*. Again, the production company insisted on a tight production schedule, as the producers were concerned that The Beatles’ popularity might not sustain for a long time. Consequently, they only provided a budget of \$1,000,000 and a time frame of eleven months to create the movie from start to finish (vgl. Hieronimus 2002: 33). Although The Beatles contributed four new songs to the soundtrack of the movie, they were not personally involved in the creation of *Yellow Submarine*, as pointed out by George Harrison in 1999: “The thing I liked the most about the movie was that we didn’t really have anything to do with it. They just took our music, we met with them and they talked basically about what they were going to do and then Heinz Edelmann – who was fantastic – went off and created all these characters, showed them to us and that was basically it” (vgl. Hieronimus 2002: 53).

Brodax employed the London based TVC studios who had also worked on The Beatles cartoon series, and outlined the project together with the Canadian director George Dunning and line producer John Coates. Heinz Edelmann, now regarded as one of his generation’s major contemporary graphic artists, was brought in to design the new cartoon Beatles and all the other characters for the movie. As The Beatles had undergone major image changes and had been broadening their musical

horizon since the television series had first been broadcast, it was decided that the group was to be portrayed in an entirely different way compared to their cartoon series. After the creators of *Yellow Submarine* had been invited to listen to The Beatles' latest work, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they decided that it was necessary to develop the characters as well as the visualization, and to use a more contemporary, psychedelic setting for the movie's storyline, in order to be up-to-date with The Beatles present state of artistic awareness, their music and their public image. Because of the short production schedule, work on the movie began when the screenplay had not even been finished. This is a very unique situation for any film project, and it was a very particular situation for an animation project, as the recording of the soundtrack, i.e. the dialogues, are usually the first step in creating an animated film.

When *Yellow Submarine* went into production, numerous prolific writers were asked to submit treatments for *Yellow Submarine*, but The Beatles' manager Brian Epstein rejected all of them – most famously he turned down Joe Heller's treatment because he did not like the treatment's purple cover. Finally, The Beatles themselves were consulted and they agreed to a basic idea initially developed by Al Brodax and Lee Minoff, who had worked on Stanley Kubrick's most recent project *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The story, which was to be an "odyssey into the world of fantasy" (vgl. Hieronimus 2002: 190), was going to be based upon some of The Beatles' songs. According to Brodax, Ringo Starr suggested using The Beatles 1966 single release "Yellow Submarine," a song for children created by Paul McCartney and John Lennon, as the theme song for the animated picture.

More than a hundred people worked for more than ten months to realize this psychedelic odyssey that became *Yellow Submarine*. In order to proceed within the projected time frame, Brodax gave George Dunning, Heinz Edelmann and their team full artistic freedom to create psychedelic sequences for some of The Beatles' songs, which were later going to be fit into the storyline. In the meantime, Brodax' quest for the ideal screenplay led him to Yale professor Erich Segal, who was considered to be the right man for the project, because he had previously collaborated with Richard Rodgers on a musical. Segal joined the production team in London and wrote most of the screenplay for the movie within three weeks. When it was considered necessary to bring in a few more humorous ideas, i.e. Liverpudlian humor, Liverpool poet Roger McGough, who had been in the band The Scaffold with Paul McCartney's brother Michael, was brought in to help with the dialogue. Finally, California-based screenwriter Jack Mendelsohn was contacted to write, rearrange and edit several scenes of *Yellow Submarine*. While many parts of the movie were

rewritten throughout the production process, most of the screenplay was finished when the movie was already in the fifth month of production. The film's eventual storyline was summarized in United Artists' official press folder.

“‘Once upon a time – or maybe twice ... there was a place called Pepperland’. On a peaceful day in this happy kingdom, a concert by Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band is interrupted by an anti-music missile attack from the Blue Meanies. The Chief Blue Meanie, his assistant Max, and their 99 numbered henchmen turn their splotch guns on the docile Pepperland populace, determined to rid the world of music, happiness and love (‘A World without music is a Blue World!’)

Old Fred, conductor of the Band, flees to the old Lord Mayor, who puts him into the Yellow Submarine for a last-minute escape. The sub surfaces in Liverpool where Ringo wanders aimlessly in boredom. The sub, radar-like, follows Ringo to his house. Fred enters Ringo’s house, explains the situation and enlists his aid. They proceed to round up the others.

John materialises out of a Frankenstein-like figure, Paul is found playing classical music, and George appears out of a haze of transcendental meditation.

Armed with a battery of puns and four new songs, the Beatles board the Yellow Submarine and head for Pepperland. They are detoured through the Seas of Time, Science, Monsters, Consumer Products, Nowhere, Phrenology, Green and Holes.

They undergo time warps, chase Lucy through her ‘sky of diamonds’; climb clocks and soup cans; become ancient and infantile, molecularized, actually ‘disappear up their own existence’ and almost drown in the avalanche of apples, among other adventures.

Characters they encounter on their mad ‘Modyssey’ include the US Cavalry, Father Mackenzie, assorted monsters (including a vacuum-flask monster), cowboys, Indians, King Kong and several unidentifiable ‘things’. Ringo takes a liking to the super-intellectual Boob (a poetic personification of the ‘Nowhere Man’) and takes him along on the trip: in the Sea of Green he is captured by a giant blue hand.

A Pepper-powered sneeze propels the Beatles through the Sea of Holes into occupied Pepperland, which has been almost completely drained of colour. The Lord Mayor is astonished at the resemblance between the Beatles and the original Sergeant Pepper Band. Disguised as an Apple Bonker, they infiltrate the musical instrument compound. Then it’s Beatles versus Meanies, with guitars against splotch guns; the ferocious Flying Glove, the Butterfly Stompers, the Hidden Persuaders with guns in their shoes, the snapping Turtle Turks with their mouths in their bellies and the Count Down Clown with his nose-cone nose. A battle is waged to the tune of ‘All You Need Is Love’ and love becomes the overwhelming power. A surprise ending carries the fantastic fracas right into the theatre” (Harry 1985: 39-41).

The story of *Yellow Submarine* is very simple, but it contains several unconventional elements which complement the innovative animation. While there had not been any real antagonists in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, *Yellow Submarine* works in the tradition of the oldest and most commonly used story-pattern – the eternal fight between good and evil. This particular pattern has evolved from mythic stories and constitutes the basis for most of today's popular culture narratives, such as movies, television series, comics, and novels. However, while most of the narratives in this tradition feature a brutal confrontation between the two Manichaeic forces, the conflict is solved in a rather original way in *Yellow Submarine*, as The Beatles defeat their antagonists, the Blue Meanies, in an entirely peaceful manner with their song "All You Need Is Love". In the Beatles' world, love alone manages to save the beautiful Pepperland with all its surreal inhabitants.

With "All you Need Is Love" The Beatles instigate a symbolic social revolution by the powers of music instead of violent retribution (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 90). It is interesting that this movie was released at a point in history when many young people turned to radicalism and violence, in order to bring about social change, because they had been disappointed by Flower Power – ideology. While the movie's message seemed slightly anachronistic at the time, it was, however, the ideology The Beatles, i. e. John Lennon, still promoted at the time, while other rock stars, such as Mick Jagger from The Rolling Stones ("Street Fighting Man"), seemed to sympathize with a more radical approach. As pointed out by Neaverson, "[a]t no point in the film do the Beatles take punitive action against the Meanies; they merely want to re-establish the utopian peace of Pepperland" (Neaverson 1997: 90).

The animated Beatles' journey from Liverpool to Pepperland is basically realized in the tradition of famous odysseys, from Homer to Tolkien. Like the heroes of the great works of literature, such as *Odysseus* and *Gulliver's Travels*, The Beatles travel through several fantasy worlds and encounter numerous unexpected tasks and barriers. However, while the monsters and other opponents in the classics are usually defeated in a violent fight, even the most dangerous and unusual creatures in *Yellow Submarine* are presented in a humorous and loving way, which allows the audience to laugh at them rather than fear them. Using the artistic frameworks of fashionable and contemporary Pop Art and Psychedelia, Heinz Edelmann and his team create their own cosmos of monsters and surreal objects, which the animated Beatles encounter with surprising indifference.

During their voyage through the Seas of Time, Science, Monsters, Consumer Products, Nowhere, Phrenology, Green, and Holes, they en-

counter several dangerous situations, but they don't seem to be able to take anything seriously. For example, when Ringo accidentally ends up in the sea of monsters and is chased by an army of "Red Indians", the others stay quite cool:

"[George:] I don't half miss Ringo
[John:] He's far out there.
[Paul:] Always was.
Here comes Ringo!
[...]
[John:] There goes Ringo.
[...]
[George:] There goes Ringo again.
[John:] Rides well, doesn't he."
(*Yellow Submarine* 1999).

The dialogues were written in the style that had been characteristic of all of The Beatles' movies – except for *Magical Mystery Tour* – and was full of puns and good-natured banter. While the real Beatles had become slightly more serious in their public appearances, discussing drug abuse, politics, and civil rights issues, the cartoon Beatles' sense of humor and their continuous play with words resembled very much the way they were portrayed in *A Hard Day's Night*. Although The Beatles' contemporary activities and interests were also reflected in *Yellow Submarine*, the cartoon Beatles' innocence and humor connects it to *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* rather than The Beatles' self-produced *Magical Mystery Tour*. On the other hand, the development of the theme of escape in *Yellow Submarine*, which basically characterizes all of The Beatles' movies, makes it an almost logical sequel to *Magical Mystery Tour*, which also describes a kind of escape into a surreal world. In a way, The Beatles' bizarre bus trip resembles their cartoon counterparts' odyssey through fantastic dream worlds in their cartoon adventure.

The second distinctive feature that links *Yellow Submarine* with The Beatles' previous movies is the element of satire, which is realized in countless visual jokes as well as the way the characters are portrayed in the movie. Some of the characters the animated Beatles encounter on their quest to save Pepperland are exaggerated versions of certain social groups or movements. For instance, there is the Lord Mayor, who is a lovely caricature of the older generation, insisting on finishing his string quartet while under attack from the Blue Meanies. Another prominent example of send-ups in the movie is Jeremy Hillary Boob, a caricature of pseudo-intellectuals, who engages in some sort of conversation with the cartoon Beatles.

“[Jeremy:] Medic, pedic, zed oblique,
 orphic, morphic, dorphic, Greek.
 Ad hoc, ad loc and quid pro quo.
 So little time, so much to know.
 [John:] Can you tell us where we’re at?
 [Jeremy:] A true Socratic query that.
 [John:] And who the Billy Shears are you?
 [Jeremy:] Who? Who indeed am I? [hands out cards]
 [...]
 [Jeremy:] Eminent physicist, polyglot, classicist,
 prize-winning botanist, hard biting satirist,
 talented pianist, good dentist, too.
 [John:] Lousy poet.
 [Jeremy:] Critic’s voice. Take your choice
 [Ringo:] Must be one of them angry young men.
 [Paul:] Or a daffy old creep.”
 (*Yellow Submarine* 1999).

It is quite interesting that the character of John Lennon engages in the conversation with Jeremy, since it was Lennon who was regarded as the intellectual Beatle. He had published two acclaimed books, and was now engaged in several avant-garde happenings with his future wife Yoko Ono. However, in 1967 and 1968, The Beatles were irritated by many critics and scholars trying to read impossible things into their work. Most of all, Lennon had recently been annoyed by people interpreting his song “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” as a direct reference to the drug LSD. As a defense he recorded the song “Glass Onion” in 1968, which ridiculed the cult concerning ‘hidden meanings’ in The Beatles’ lyrics. In this context, the Beatles’ encounter with the omniscient Jeremy can be regarded as a gentle retribution directed at all the intellectuals judging and interpreting their work.

The animated Beatles themselves are basically just caricatures of the ‘real ones’. Their individual images are a slight development of what had been projected by *Help!* and *A Hard Day’s Night*. Although the character developers integrated elements of The Beatles’ more recent activities, the individual Beatles’ characteristics are presented in a stereotypical way. The cartoon Ringo, who plays the most important role in the movie, is introduced in a way that is reminiscent of Ringo’s solo sequence in *A Hard Day’s Night*. As in The Beatles’ first movie, Ringo feels lonely and left out as he wanders along a river bank. “Nothing ever happens to me,” he complains, not noticing that a yellow submarine is following him through the streets of Liverpool. Paul McCartney is described by de-

signer Heinz Edelmann as a “modern day Mozart” (*Yellow Submarine* 1999) – he is interested in classical music and is presented very much as ‘the Cute One’ throughout the movie. George Harrison appears on a mountain top, lost in transcendental meditation, which had fascinated The Beatles in early 1968. Harrison had introduced the sound of Indian instruments to pop music, and when he is introduced in the movie, the sitar sounds of his song “Love You To” contribute to the exotic flair of Indian culture, which he helped to popularize in the West at the time. John Lennon is introduced in a quite particular way in *Yellow Submarine*. Although all of the cartoon Beatles first appear in extravagant, surreal scenes, Lennon’s entrance is the most spectacular, as he looks like Frankenstein’s monster at first, and then transforms into a cartoon version of John Lennon. The creators of *Yellow Submarine* were obviously aware of the fact that Lennon’s public image was by far the most controversial of all of The Beatles. He had caused quite a few scandals with his comments on society and religion, and he would cause even further provocations in the following years, when he engaged in several political movements in the United States.

While the characterization and the portrayal of the characters contained several unusual elements, the movie’s animation itself was completely original at the time. Animated feature films had previously been released almost exclusively by Disney, whose *Jungle Book* had been a great success in 1967/68. With *Yellow Submarine*, the team around director George Dunning and designer Heinz Edelmann managed to break with most of the conventions of animated feature films in the tradition of Walt Disney. By integrating elements of contemporary art and aesthetics typical of genres outside of the Disney universe, the creators of *Yellow Submarine* demonstrated that animated films could also appeal to an adult audience. Dunning avoided the cuteness of Disney-style animation and substituted it with a more contemporary, artistic touch. Although Disney had used live-action footage as basis for several animated sequences in *Snow White* and *Bambi*, Dunning takes this a step further and includes photographic images and filmed material in some of the song sequences. For example, the “Eleanor Rigby” sequence contains cut-out photographs of houses and people in Liverpool, as well as short scenes of black-and-white footage. The animation of “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”, on the other hand, was realized by the technique known as rotoscoping, which simulates animated drawings over live-action sequences (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 87). In a similar manner, countless scenes in *Yellow Submarine* combine elements of cartoon animation with still photography. As pointed out by Bob Neaverson, “the film is rooted in a range of sixties pop styles, and the eclecticism of its colour imagery [...] is derived

from a vast range of contemporary styles, including imagery culled from the pop art paintings, prints and designs of artists such as Peter Blake and Andy Warhol, the ‘op’ art of Bridget Riley, surrealist and expressionist art [...]” (Neaverson 1997: 84). What Neaverson forgets to mention is the fact that The Beatles themselves personally knew the likes of Peter Blake and Andy Warhol, with whom they engaged in discussions on underground culture and art.² As The Beatles became more involved in the process of making *Yellow Submarine* when they realized its innovative potential, it is quite possible that they contributed several ideas to the movie’s style. Although most of the animation techniques and ideas had been realized in some way in art films, as well as in advertising, it was an entirely new idea to integrate these elements in a commercial feature movie. Similar to the way The Beatles used and popularized elements of the avant-garde and world music, the animators of *Yellow Submarine* pushed the boundaries of traditional standards of animation by approaching the project with a more artistic attitude. In a way, the impact *Yellow Submarine* had on the public conception of animation enabled artists, such as Terry Gilliam from Monty Python, to integrate avant-garde techniques in mainstream entertainment. For instance, Gilliam’s animated contributions to the Python’s television show *Monty Python’s Flying Circus* featured a similar aesthetic to parts of The Beatles’ “Eleanor Rigby” sequence, which combined photography and animated drawings.

On January 25, 1968, The Beatles filmed their cameo appearance, which constituted the finale of *Yellow Submarine*, at Twickenham Studios, London. It was only a short piece of live action with The Beatles encouraging a worldwide audience to sing along with one of the songs they had recorded especially for the soundtrack – “All Together Now.”

The world premiere of *Yellow Submarine* took place on July 17, 1968, at the London Pavilion in Piccadilly Circus. All four Beatles attended the premiere and caused a traffic standstill, as more than 3,000 fans were awaiting their musical heroes around the cinema. While The Beatles had been heavily criticized for their own television movie *Magical Mystery Tour* only seven months earlier, the critics as well as the public reacted quite enthusiastically to The Beatles’ cartoon adventure. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* commented: “Not since Disney’s *Snow White* or *Make Mine Music* has a full-length animated film cartoon come upon us with such surprising skill and charm and freshness as this inventive little epic” (Harry 1985: 42), while the *Evening Standard* wrote: “*Yellow Submarine* is the key film of the Beatles era. It’s a trip

2 Sir Peter Blake designed the cover for The Beatles’ landmark album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* in 1967, while Andy Warhol was a personal acquaintance of both, Paul McCartney and John Lennon.

through the contemporary mythology that the quartet from Merseyside have helped create. It's a pop voyage – 'mod-odyssey' is the word, I suppose – that sails under the psychedelic colours of Carnaby Street to the turned-on music of *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*" (Harry 1985: 43). The film was shown in only 50 cinemas in Great Britain, but it became a major commercial success in the United States, reportedly generating more than \$8,000,000 on its original release (vgl. Hieronimus 2002: 303). Even more money was made through tie-in merchandising, which ranged from alarm clocks to lunch-boxes and toy models of the yellow submarine and The Beatles themselves. As pointed out by Denis O'Dell, the head of The Beatles' film company Apple Films, "the film was one of the first fully to realize the potential profits of associated products. Although movie merchandising was hardly new in 1968, the vast range of related items which the film generated [...] formed an important blueprint for the multi-marketing spin-offs of such seventies productions as *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, a tradition which continues to this day" (Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 85).

In order to provide the fans with the songs featured in *Yellow Submarine*, The Beatles initially wanted to release a soundtrack EP, containing the four new songs they had provided for the movie – "Only a Northern Song", "It's All Too Much", "Hey Bulldog", and "All Together Now". For unknown reasons, however, this initial idea was rejected in favor of a soundtrack album featuring the four new songs, the title song "Yellow Submarine", the crucial "All You Need Is Love", as well as George Martin's instrumental film score. Interestingly, the album was released some five months after the movie had been released to the cinemas, in order to avoid an interference with The Beatles' double album release *The Beatles*. As their album *The Beatles* was still occupying the number one spot in the American album charts when *Yellow Submarine* was released, the soundtrack album became the first Beatles album release not to reach the top of the charts since 1964.

Yellow Submarine was first shown on British television in 1974 and has since been broadcast at least ten times. After its initial cinema release, The Beatles and their company Apple ignored *Yellow Submarine* for a long time, due to a long dispute over ownership rights. In 1999, however, after The Beatles had celebrated a tremendously successful comeback with their *Anthology* CDs and videos, *Yellow Submarine* saw its premiere on DVD. The release was accompanied by an unprecedented publicity campaign, including the official launch in Liverpool, where Lord Mayor of Liverpool, Joseph Devaney, declared Bank Holiday Monday August 30th, 1999, "Yellow Submarine Day". It was celebrated by approximately 300,000 people and captured the attention of the inter-

national media. The DVD soon topped the charts around the world, and a CD release, *Yellow Submarine Songtrack*, stormed the top ten in Great Britain. What is more, with the release of *Yellow Submarine* on DVD, the production of merchandise, such as toys, key-chains, mugs and badges, was revived and proved to be such a great success that new *Yellow Submarine* products have been released every year since. In September 2004, The Beatles' company Apple published a *Yellow Submarine* book for children in an attempt to introduce new generations of potential fans to the works of The Beatles. As pointed out by George Harrison, *Yellow Submarine* has been a quite effective vehicle to evoke the interest of young audiences: "I think each generation of kids enjoys it" (Hieronimus 2002: 49).

Let It Be

The Beatles had enjoyed the filming of the promotional films for "Hey Jude" and "Revolution" so much that they considered filming a concert for a new television special for Christmas 1968. In October and November 1968 newspapers and magazines reported that The Beatles were indeed preparing a concert at the Royal Albert Hall. Paul McCartney announced The Beatles' plans in an *NME* interview at the time: "What is probable is that before anything else, we will do our own TV show in which we'll perform numbers from the new album" (Sutherland 124). The new album was a double album simply called *The Beatles*, and it marked The Beatles' return to more straightforward rock music. When the album became their best-selling LP ever, The Beatles realized that there was no necessity to promote the album in a television special. Instead, they decided to stage a concert with entirely new material in early 1969. They wanted to prepare the concert in the first weeks of January. Denis O'Dell claims to have suggested filming the rehearsals for the concert at Twickenham Studios, in order to collect some footage for a possible television documentary about the concert performance (Neaverson/O'Dell 2002: 138). Michael Lindsay-Hogg, who had directed the promotional films for "Rain," "Paperback Writer," "Hey Jude", and "Revolution" was brought in to direct the filming of the rehearsals.

On 2 January, 1969, The Beatles met at Twickenham Studios, where they had previously filmed most of *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!* as well as several of their promotional films, to select and rehearse the material for the planned concert. The first days of filming were spent writing and arranging some of the new songs The Beatles considered playing at their concert. In addition, the group, together with director Michael Lindsay-

Hogg and producer Denis O'Dell, discussed possible locations for the concert. However, it soon became apparent that Paul McCartney was the only Beatle really interested in the project. Ringo Starr was preparing for an acting role in the film *The Magic Christian* and refused to perform anywhere outside of London, while John Lennon had not composed many new songs since they had released their album *The Beatles*. George Harrison, who had initially tried to contribute several songs to the project, was becoming frustrated by Lennon's and McCartney's refusal to rehearse his material. On the seventh day of the rehearsals he quit the band after another disagreement with John Lennon. The three remaining Beatles continued the rehearsals for another two days. Finally, differences between the four Beatles were put aside at a band meeting on 15 January, 1969, and the group reconvened in front of the cameras at a studio owned by their own company Apple at Savile Row on 22 January, 1969. It had been part of George Harrison's terms for returning to the group to cancel plans for a live concert and end the filming at the rather uncomfortable Twickenham Film Studios (vgl. Miles 2001: 331). In 1970, John Lennon remembered the conditions at the Twickenham studios: "It was a dreadful, dreadful feeling in Twickenham Studio, and being filmed all the time. I just wanted them to go away, and we'd be there in the morning. You couldn't make music at eight in the morning or ten or whatever it was, in a strange place with people filming you and coloured lights" (Wenner 2000: 101).

George Harrison had invited Billy Preston, a legendary organ player The Beatles had known since their Hamburg days, to join them at their sessions. According to George Harrison, Preston's presence improved the atmosphere immensely, and The Beatles continued their jam sessions for another ten days of filming. In the last few days of January The Beatles also decided that they would not book any specific place for a performance. Because of Ringo Starr's commitment to begin work on the movie *The Magic Christian* in February, the group agreed to perform a surprise concert on the roof of their Apple Studio building (vgl. Sulpy/Schweighardt 1997).

On January 30, The Beatles played a set of their new songs on the roof of their Apple building in Savile Row. Extra cameras had been ordered to film the event. The group performed for forty-two minutes and was finally stopped by the police because of the traffic chaos they had caused in the area (vgl. Miles 2001: 333). Nobody knew that they had just witnessed the last concert performance by The Beatles. On the next day, the group returned to the basement studio at Savile Row for one last time, as they wanted to film some proper performances of songs they had not been able to perform on the roof. Although The Beatles had enjoyed

the final concert on the roof of the Apple headquarter, they were quite frustrated by the whole project and did not want to be involved in the process of compiling an album and a film out of the material they had recorded and filmed. Glyn Johns, who had produced most of the audio recordings, was initially asked to compile an album of the recordings they had made in January. However, as none of The Beatles was pleased with Johns' work, John Lennon and George Harrison decided to contact legendary record producer Phil Spector and asked him to supervise the production of this particular album.

Michael Lindsay-Hogg was left with the task of making an acceptable film of 29 hours of filmed material. As the original idea of filming The Beatles' sessions for a television documentary about The Beatles preparing a live concert, which was to be filmed and broadcast as another television special, had been abandoned midway in the production, Lindsay-Hogg was trying to arrange the filmed sequences in a way that would show The Beatles record an album and rehearse the live roof-top show.

The final result provides a rather interesting view of The Beatles' work as a recording band. In the tradition of cinema vérité, the film allows the audience to attend The Beatles' sessions, as they rehearse and perform a set of completely new songs. While most documentaries of this kind usually feature interviews and/or an over-narration voice, *Let It Be* breaks with these conventions and presents the band's rehearsals without commentary.

“As well as avoiding the classical documentary techniques of reportage and interview, the edited film lacks the traditional narrative signifiers of temporal construction, and although the audience must naturally assume that the acts of the triptych are presented chronologically, there are no titles or voice-over narration to clarify this. Indeed, beyond the ‘correct’ ordering of the sequences, the only other sense of temporal progression is provided by the increasingly accomplished musicianship of the Beatles [...]” (Neaverson 1997: 110).

In a way, *Let It Be* is what *A Hard Day's Night* pretends to be – a documentary about The Beatles' everyday life in their profession as rock band. However, many things had changed since the group's early success in 1964. In the meantime they had quit touring, they had recorded concept albums, and they had become less involved with each other. Since the death of their manager Brian Epstein, considerable tension had evolved over business matters. During the making of their double album *The Beatles*, artistic tensions had added to an unpleasant atmosphere within the group, and Ringo Starr temporarily left the band. Although he returned after a few weeks, the group was not able to sort out their problems within the band. With *Let It Be*, Michael Lindsay-Hogg manages to

capture different facets of the band and achieves a seemingly honest portrayal of The Beatles at a critical point in their career. On the one hand, he presents a marvelous rock 'n' roll band, which is able to come up with numerous inventive ideas to improve their songs and their performance. On the other hand, Lindsay-Hogg also presents The Beatles at their worst, in moments of complete boredom and demotivation. Even though he does not include the scene where George Harrison leaves the group, he shows an argument between Paul McCartney and George Harrison, which added to the tensions at Twickenham Studios.

“[Paul:] I always hear myself trying to annoy you.

[George:] You're not annoying me. You don't annoy me anymore.

[...]

[George:] I'll play what you want me to play. I won't play at all if you don't want me to. Whatever it is that will please you, I'll do it.”

(*Let It Be* 1970).

The film premiered in New York on 13 May, 1970 with none of The Beatles attending the occasion. While Paul McCartney was dissatisfied with Phil Spector's remixes of The Beatles' soundtrack, John Lennon criticized the film because in his opinion it portrayed Lennon, Harrison and Starr being McCartney's sidemen: “That film was set up by Paul, for Paul. That's one of the main reasons The Beatles ended [...]. And the camera work was set up to show Paul and not to show anybody else. That's how I felt about it. And on top of that, the people that cut it, cut it as 'Paul is God', and we're just lying around there” (Wenner: 2000: 23). Although Lennon's comment must be seen in the emotional aftermath of The Beatles' break-up, his observation that the movie focuses on Paul McCartney is quite accurate. Footage of the sessions, which was discovered years later and was included in The Beatles' *Anthology* shows The Beatles in many more pleasant situations, with everybody contributing ideas to the realization of their live show. When the movie was released, The Beatles had just disbanded, and John Lennon and Paul McCartney were at war with each other in the mass media. Therefore, many critics concentrated on the less pleasant aspects of the movie and declared it to be the document of The Beatles' break-up. Interestingly, this still seems to be the public conception of *Let It Be*. What is often forgotten, however, is the fact that the time The Beatles spent recording and filming *Let It Be* was another very productive period in their career. It must be noted that The Beatles only needed three weeks to write, rehearse, and record the songs for a whole album. Considering the fact that contemporary major pop artist spend three or four years recording an album, The Beatles' pace and energy are truly remarkable. Although the *Let It Be* sessions

were probably not the most pleasant experience in The Beatles' history, the resulting movie offers a rare insight to the working methods of the group.

The movie was first shown on British television in 1975 and has been shown only three times since. It is the only Beatles movie that has never been released on video. However, when The Beatles released a re-mixed version of their *Let It Be* album in 2003, their company Apple announced that a *Let It Be* DVD was in preparation.

Promotional Films 1969-2005 and *Paul Is Dead*

The Final Singles

When The Beatles' single "Get Back" with its B-side "Don't Let Me Down" was released in April 1969, Apple distributed color promotional clips for both songs to television stations around the world. The footage consisted of scenes filmed by Michael Lindsay-Hogg for *Let It Be*. "Get Back" featured performance footage of The Beatles' rooftop concert, while "Don't Let Me Down" combined rooftop footage with segments filmed during the rehearsals at Twickenham Studios. Both promotional films featured footage not seen in *Let It Be*. The films were broadcast several times on the charts show *Top of the Pops* in Great Britain, while CBS-TV broadcast them in the United States (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 313).

Although "Get Back" was still at the top of the charts in Great Britain, John Lennon insisted on releasing his song "The Ballad of John and Yoko" as a single on 30 May, 1969. Two almost identical films were compiled to promote the newest Beatles release on television. The films illustrated the lyrics of Lennon's song and featured footage of John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono in Paris, Amsterdam, Vienna, at their London airport press conference, and traveling around Britain in their famous white Rolls Royce (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 319). Only a few short segments show all four of The Beatles at the rehearsals for their *Let It Be* project; most of the footage presents just John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Although the footage works as an appropriate illustration of the song's lyrics, the song "Ballad of John and Yoko" and the accompanying promotional films marked a turning point in the way The Beatles, i.e. John Lennon, projected themselves to the world. While The Beatles had previously always appeared as a group in their promos, "The Ballad of John and Yoko" was clearly designed to concentrate on John Lennon's new personal and artistic partnership with Yoko Ono. It became clear that The

Beatles were now becoming more interested in their various solo projects instead of their work as a group. The fact that the recording of “The Ballad of John and Yoko” only featured John Lennon and Paul McCartney, and the rather ill-advised decision to release it when their previous single was still relevant on the charts can now be regarded as a clear signal that John Lennon was dissociating himself from his band, in order to pursue a new career with Yoko Ono. The couple’s obsession to capture their artistic and private life on film found its first expression in the “Ballad of John and Yoko” films. In the following years, John and Yoko produced countless films of their happenings, their recording sessions, and their private moments. Their most famous films include *Imagine* (1972), a film accompanying John Lennon’s landmark solo album, as well as the promotional film for Lennon’s comeback single “Starting Over” (1980). The promotional films for “The Ballad of John and Yoko” were repeatedly shown on British and American television in 1969, supporting the single’s way to the top of the charts in the UK.

In order to promote their double-A sided single “Something”/“Come Together”, Neil Aspinall, the director of The Beatles’ Apple company, produced a film showing each individual Beatle walking around in an English park with his wife. At that point, The Beatles would not even come together for the filming of their own promotional films anymore. Therefore, each Beatle’s scenes were filmed separately at different dates and locations. Although the footage of The Beatles with their respective wives supports the lyrics of George Harrison’s love song, it also clearly shows that each group member had now found a new partner, substituting band life with family life. “Something” was the first and only song by George Harrison to grace the A-side of a Beatles single.

To promote the single release of “Let It Be”, Apple distributed color films of one of The Beatles’ performances of the song at Apple Studios, London, on 31 January 1969. The footage was combined with footage of The Beatles’ performance of “The Long and Winding Road” and “Two of Us”, filmed on the same day. The promotional film was shown on major television programs worldwide, such as *Top of the Pops* in Great Britain, and *The Ed Sullivan Show* in the United States. When “The Long and Winding Road” was released as The Beatles’ last new single for 25 years, a similar promo film was released in May 1970.

Single Releases after the Break-Up

On 10 April, 1970, Paul McCartney publicly announced that The Beatles had broken up. The following years the group’s members were involved

in unpleasant law-suits to legally dissolve their partnership. As soon as their recording contract had run out in 1976, EMI started to re-release The Beatles' classic recordings in various formats, which infuriated the group's ex-members, although this move made sure that a new generation of fans was introduced to the music of The Beatles. To promote a compilation called *Rock'n'Roll Music* on the radio, EMI released the song "Back in the U.S.S.R." as a single in Great Britain. A promotional video for the single was produced, helping it to reach #19 in the charts. The film featured footage of The Beatles in 1964, although the song was actually recorded in 1968. It showed several crucial moments in the group's career – their arrival in the United States, in Australia, in Liverpool, and in the Netherlands. It was clearly a very nostalgic perspective on The Beatles' most successful year, showing the group's impact on enormously large crowds of hysterical teenagers.

In 1982, a medley of some of The Beatles movie songs was released as a single to cash in on a recent trend of rock'n'roll medleys. The promotional film for the single, which was actually called "The Beatles Movie Medley", features scenes from all of The Beatles' movies, except *Yellow Submarine*. It starts with a scene taken from *A Hard Day's Night*, showing The Beatles being chased by a crowd of girls, and successively builds up to a performance of "Get Back" taken from the *Let It Be* rooftop concert. The video features some of the most legendary scenes from The Beatles' movies, including the semi-diegetic performance of "I Should Have Known Better" and the non-diegetic "Ticket to Ride" sequence showing The Beatles skiing in the alps.

In 1994, Apple released a collection of The Beatles' live recordings for various BBC radio programs as a double CD set called *Live at the BBC*. The release was promoted by a single, "Baby It's You", which reached #7 in the U.K. charts. The video for "Baby It's You" was surprisingly unspectacular, simply showing The Beatles travel around Britain in their van in 1963 as well as at the photo session for the picture that was used as the cover of *Live at the BBC*. The video promoted the group's image of their early suit-and-moptop era, which was a suitable representation of the period featured on the *Live at the BBC* album.

The Reunion. An Excursion into Beatles Fan Mythology: *Paul Is Dead*

In 1995, the three surviving Beatles, George Harrison, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr, came together to promote their band history project *Anthology* with the first new Beatles single in 25 years. It was called "Free

as a Bird” and featured the voice of John Lennon, taken from a demo recording he had made around 1977. The single was co-produced by Jeff Lynne and the surviving Beatles, who worked together in a recording studio for the first time since 1970. In order to promote the single, which amazingly entered the top ten in the single charts around the world, a lavish video was produced by Apple, The Beatles’ company still controlling all of The Beatles’ output. The Grammy-Award winning video was directed by Joe Pytko, who had previously worked for Michael Jackson. It is filmed in a way that suggests a bird’s perspective, with the camera floating over significant Beatles-related places in Liverpool and London. The video contains literally hundreds of references to various Beatles songs. Several segments were filmed in Liverpool and showed the places known from classic Beatles songs. For instance, there is footage shot at the Penny Lane roundabout, showing the barber, the fireman, and the nurse from the song “Penny Lane”, while other scenes include footage of Strawberry Field. Digital picture processing allowed Joe Pytko to combine scenes filmed on location with historic footage featuring The Beatles in the 1960s.

On the one hand, the video for “Free as a Bird” contains a bulk of iconic Beatles footage and symbols related to the history and fan mythology of The Beatles. It is a clever collection of references to the group’s songs, films, and history. On the other hand, it is interesting that the group’s comeback video does not feature any footage of hysterical, screaming fans, or of The Beatles trying to escape from a mob of fans. This is all the more interesting, as footage of screaming fans has constituted a significant part in some of The Beatles’ own film projects (*A Hard Day’s Night*, *The Beatles* cartoon series, etc.), as well as in their autobiographical documentary series, where each episode begins with The Beatles’ performance of “Help!” being drowned out by the sound of thousands of screaming fans. Hysterical fans were also the focus in EMI’s 1976 promotional film for “Back in the USSR”. Apple probably decided against the use of such footage, as it would not support the slow and atmospheric song.

The video’s countless references to Beatles songs appeal to a particular target group of extreme Beatles fanatics who have been busy interpreting the group’s songs and artwork in reference to The Beatles’ own experience and history. These interpretations have developed into a set of myths which many Beatles fans and scholars mistake for reality. They often overlap with the band’s actual development and have caused quite substantial confusion of facts and fiction in several representations of The Beatles’ history.

The trend of scrutinizing The Beatles' lyrics started in 1967, when Lennon's song "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" was interpreted as a song about LSD, a popular drug in the psychedelic era, which The Beatles, in fact, consumed at the time. Although much was read into the song and its title, Lennon insisted that a drawing by his son Julian had inspired the lyrics (vgl. Everett 1999: 104).

It is quite interesting that the hype surrounding The Beatles' lyrics evolved at that particular point in time. No one has apparently realized the fact that The Beatles themselves actually initiated the interest in their lyrics by printing the words to their songs on the sleeve of their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967). This was a complete novelty and revolutionized the way pop songs have since been perceived. By printing the lyrics on the album sleeve, they gained significance and meaning, which the fans were eager to decipher. Although they had intended to elevate the status of their song lyrics, no one was more surprised than The Beatles, when fans and intellectuals interpreted the lyrics of "A Day in the Life" as a reference to heroin, while even the rather harmless "With a Little Help from My Friends" was thought to be about LSD.

Lennon was amused by the interpretations of his 1967 surrealist lyrics and wrote a song about the whole craze for The Beatles' album *The Beatles* aka *The White Album* (1968). In "Glass Onion", Lennon quotes several Beatles songs, claiming that there is no deep meaning hidden in their songs: "Yeah, I was having a laugh because there'd been so much gobbledegook about Pepper, play it backwards and you stand on your head and all that. Even now, I just saw Mel Torme on TV the other day saying that 'Lucy' was written to promote drugs and so was 'A Little Help From My Friends' and none of them were at all" (Wenner 2000: 86). With his sense of irony, Lennon sings "Here's another clue for you all/The walrus was Paul", a 'clue' which has kept Beatles fans and scholars busy for the past 40 years. Tragically, several songs on *The Beatles* were mis-interpreted by a group of deranged fanatics as an encouragement to commit several brutal murders. One of the victims was film actress Sharon Tate. The murderers claimed that The Beatles' songs contained secret messages inciting them to commit the murders (vgl. Harry 2000: 715). This time, The Beatles were shocked. In a tragic way, these incidents have evoked several unpleasant myths about The Beatles. For instance, it has been claimed that The Beatles were satanists, or the 'Riders of the Apocalypse,' announcing the end of the world. It is interesting that the band who pronounced "All You Need is Love" to the world would have to face such accusations.

The most popular Beatles myth, however, evolved in 1969, and, despite its complete absurdity, was believed by a considerable number of people – the “Paul is dead” myth. When The Beatles released their album *Abbey Road* in August 1969, it had become quite normal that fans would read meanings into the group’s songs and cover artwork. In October, 1969, an American DJ jokingly announced in a bizarre Halloween radio show that Paul McCartney was dead, and that The Beatles had replaced him with a look-alike. A fantastic story was dreamed up, claiming that McCartney had tragically died in a traffic accident in 1966. The Beatles’ lyrics and the album sleeves of *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, and *Abbey Road* were reported to contain numerous hidden clues about McCartney’s death.³

The story of Paul McCartney’s death was the subject of a German movie called *Paul Is Dead* (2000). The movie, which was written and directed by Hendrik Handloegten, revolves around the adventures of a young Beatles fan, Tobias, who is quite surprised when the VW Beetle from the *Abbey Road* cover suddenly appears in a small German town in 1980. He investigates the matter and learns about the supposed death of Paul McCartney. He suspects the owner of the VW, who is now his English teacher, to be McCartney’s murderer. When he finds out that the death of Paul McCartney was really just an invention by a radio DJ, he is terribly disappointed. Soon afterwards, his English teacher leaves Germany to go to New York City. One night, his brother wakes him up to tell him the shocking news that John Lennon has been shot dead in New York.

The charming low-budget production takes an innovative approach in dealing with the ‘Paul is dead’ myth, integrating all the elements of this supposed conspiracy, and taking it to a new level by the surprise ending, which establishes a connection with John Lennon’s tragic death in 1980. Many famous Beatles-death clues are mentioned in the movie, with the protagonist finding the evidence increasingly credible as the story progresses. The boy’s confusion of facts and fiction mirrors quite adequately the process of mythification of The Beatles’ history in real life.

3 At least two books deal with this delightful chapter in Beatles mythology: R. Gary Patterson. *The Walrus Was Paul. The Great Beatle Death Clues*. New York: Fireside, 1998.
Andrew J. Reeve. *Turn Me On, Dead Man. The Beatles And The “Paul-Is-Dead” Hoax*. Bloomington: Authorhouse, 2004.

Promotional Videos 1996-2005

In February 1996, the release of The Beatles' second *Anthology* album was also accompanied by a new single, "Real Love", which was recorded in a similar manner to "Free as a Bird". The video for this single combined home-movie footage of George Harrison, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr recording their parts for "Real Love" with historic footage of The Beatles, and some sequences featuring computer-generated special effects.

The video for "Real Love" has got a unique standing in The Beatles' canon of promotional films, as it is the only video showing contemporary footage of George Harrison, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr recording their second 'reunion' song in McCartney's studio in Sussex, U.K. In addition, the directors Kevin Godley and Lol Creme, use digital video effects to quote and recreate one of John Lennon and Yoko Ono's better known films, *Two Virgins*, which features slow-motion footage of the faces of Lennon and Ono superimposed on each other. In the "Real Love" video, a similar effect is achieved, when new footage of Harrison, McCartney, and Starr's faces merge into each other.

Another narrative level of "Real Love" plays upon the idea of resurrection by having iconic Beatles-related objects ascend to the sky. The video starts with Lennon's famous white piano, which he used on the recording of his solo hit "Imagine", slowly flying above Liverpool. Later on, the *Sgt. Pepper* uniforms, The Beatles' famous instruments (Lennon and Harrison's Rickenbacker guitars, McCartney's Höfner bass guitar, and Starr's Ludwig drum set), and their album sleeves ascend to the sky. All these objects have played a quite important role in the history of The Beatles' image, and their inclusion in the "Real Love" video did not mark the first time they were featured in a video. Paul McCartney had previously produced two videos containing similar references to The Beatles' history. In his award-winning video for "Coming Up" (1980) he wears a collarless Beatles-suit from 1962-1963 and plays his Höfner bass for the first time in ten years, while "My Brave Face" revolves around the story of a Japanese Beatles collector, who tries to acquire Beatles-related objects, such as McCartney's blue *Sgt. Pepper* uniform and, again, the famous Höfner bass guitar, which McCartney revived on his album *Flowers in the Dirt* (1989) and during his world tour in 1989/1990. George Harrison's video for his single "When We Was Fab" also contains numerous references to The Beatles. The song itself is Harrison's humorous evocation of his time in The Beatles and features an arrangement consisting mainly of what have become Beatles-clichés, such as the sounds of sitars, distinctive harmony vocals, and a string arrange-

ment resembling the arrangement of Harrison's Beatles song "Blue Jay Way" (1967). The video features a guest appearance by Ringo Starr, who actually plays the drums on Harrison's single, while the bass player in the video wears a walrus mask, which refers to Lennon's lyrics "the walrus was Paul" ("Glass Onion", 1968). Harrison also wears his *Sgt. Pepper* costume in one scene. It is quite remarkable that The Beatles' outfits, their instruments, as well as their album covers have become such iconic objects, which are instantly recognizable not only to The Beatles' fan community. No other act has got his or her public image tied to such an array of visual representations. As these images are persistently reinforced in accounts of The Beatles' history as well as in their group and solo videos, their status as symbols of not only The Beatles but the 1960s is continually confirmed.

In 2003, The Beatles released a re-mixed version of their *Let It Be* album, now called *Let It Be...Naked*. To promote the release, a video for the song "Two of Us" was produced by Apple. It was shown on music television stations around the world, and was available as a download on The Beatles' internet homepage. The video features footage of The Beatles' rehearsing the song for their *Let It Be* film. Instead of presenting a performance at the studio, however, digital video technology allowed the producers to cut out The Beatles and place them in a CGI surrounding.

The video for The Beatles' "Tomorrow Never Knows/Within You Without You", which was released to promote the remix album *Love* (2006), also featured various digital effects creating a visual representation of the recording's psychedelic soundscapes.

