

***“All I’ve got to do is Act Naturally”:
Issues of Image and Performance in the Beatles’ Films***

Submitted by Stephanie Anne Piotrowski, AHEA, to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English (Film Studies), 01 October 2008.

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(signed).....Stephanie Piotrowski

Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the Beatles' five feature films in order to argue how undermining generic convention and manipulating performance codes allowed the band to control their relationship with their audience and to gain autonomy over their output. Drawing from P. David Marshall's work on defining performance codes from the music, film, and television industries, I examine film form and style to illustrate how the Beatles' filmmakers used these codes in different combinations from previous pop and classical musicals in order to illicit certain responses from the audience. In doing so, the role of the audience from passive viewer to active participant changed the way musicians used film to communicate with their fans. I also consider how the Beatles' image changed throughout their career as reflected in their films as a way of charting the band's journey from pop stars to musicians, while also considering the social and cultural factors represented in the band's image. Such elements in the Beatles' carefully constructed image reflected youth culture and countercultural thoughts and beliefs. Finally, through a close analysis of the Beatles' musical sequences I have shown how experimentation with artistic synergy enabled the band to produce new and innovative films and lyrics while allowing each member to develop as individual musicians. This experimentation and willingness to undermine traditional film and pop music practices helped to change artists' approaches in the entertainment industries.

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Introduction:

The films were manufactured as Beatle products in a Beatle world and were bound to reflect, within the limits of good mass-market taste, the reality of those for whom they were tailored as vehicles. What was not to be expected was that they should be such uncanny *symbolic* enactments of those changes, bracketed by echoes from the past and portents of things to come – the heightening into occultism and madness of Beatlemania as it mutated from its beginnings in youthful fascination into something larger and scarier, a familiar beast with new heads.¹

McKinney's statement about the Beatles' films suggest that there is more to the Beatles' film career than just producing inexpensive, exploitation pop musicals. What McKinney hints at, but does not explore further in his work, is the overlooked complexity of the Beatles' films. Specifically, analysis of the films provide answers to questions such as how the Beatles used film to reinforce the evolution of their career as musicians, what factors caused the Beatles to continually question the function of their image as pop celebrities, and how the Beatles' films challenged the form and narrative of previous pop musicals. Arguably, the Beatles' films also contributed to new approaches to the pop musical. In the short span of their career, the Beatles starred in five films: *A Hard Day's Night* (Richard Lester, 1964), *Help!* (Richard Lester, 1965), *Magical Mystery Tour* (Lennon, McCartney, Harrison, and Starkey, 1967), *Yellow Submarine* (George Dunning, 1968), and *Let it Be* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1970). As this thesis will investigate, each of these five films challenged the traditional conventions associated with the films' subgenres. As a result of the films' innovation displayed to mainstream audiences globally, the pop musical was no longer restricted to the usual format of the fictional teen exploitation picture. As McKinney rightly points out, the Beatles' films were pop musicals commissioned for the primary purpose of exploiting the Beatles' popularity while it lasted. However, those directing and starring in the Beatles' films brought with them a sense of artistic integrity, seeing the opportunity to experiment with generic conventions. For a band so regularly scrutinized, the Beatles' films have been sorely neglected. The Beatles' film career is a body of work that provides insight into the band's image, musical direction, and

¹ McKinney, Devin. *Magic Circles: The Beatles in Dream and History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. 58-59.

relationship with the fans. Their work on film informed the music industry of the limitations and unnecessary need for live performances and concert tours in maintaining success, while filmmakers and film critics noted the films' defiance of convention. This thesis seeks to identify the ways in which the Beatles used different performance codes in their films in order to fulfill the band's vision of being musicians. In doing so, I will be creating a more complete picture of the Beatles' career and understanding of their legacy than previous scholars have provided. To conclude, I will discuss how considering film form and style, the Beatles' image, the undermining of generic convention, and the manipulation of performance codes allows for a more complete study of performance. Unusually, the Beatles performances drew upon codes associated with the film, television, and music industries, often mixing the various codes within one film. Therefore my analysis provides a template for understanding how knowledge of such codes enables performers to elicit particular reactions from the audience. What I will not be addressing is any kind of specific discussion on the film or music industries' developments. This is simply because those questions are out of the scope of this thesis and perhaps an area best left for a piece of future research. Previously, Beatles scholars had not considered the meanings behind the band's performances or made a link between the band's image, performance style, and the audience's role. I think these are important factors to highlight when studying performance, especially of those performers whose work crosses over into different mediums. Frith has considered meanings behind live performance and songs as text, as well as social and historical factors that helped to shape pop/rock music and performance.² Similarly, Marshall has examined how the celebrity's use of specific codes associated with their primary medium represents specific interpretations of their performance and allows them power over their audience.³ However, I argue that in looking at all of these aspects of performance, we can come away with a more informed reading of what an actor might be conveying to the audience both on screen and off.

The function and evolution of the Beatles' image between 1964 and 1970 is a key issue in this study, especially with the knowledge that the Beatles' image was carefully constructed to gain respectability and approval from adults. Yet be unusual enough to attract a wide array of young fans. Not only did the Beatles have a strong

² See *The Sociology of Rock* and *Performing Rites* both by Simon Frith.

³ See: Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997.

image as a collective unit, but also, each had a distinct and marketable public persona. Many of the Beatles' early press and fan publications exploited each member's distinct persona in the hope of offering "something for everyone," meaning that there was the potential for more people to connect with at least one of the Beatles. As Dyer and Marshall both attest, individuality is important in a star's persona because "the star is the representation of the potential of the individual."⁴ This is one of the ways in which a star's persona can manipulate their fans' affection and sense of community. Before proceeding, I would like to first provide some background information about the Beatles' early promotion campaign in order to establish a context for my work by explaining the concept of the band's Beatlemania image and the Beatles' myth. The elements of the Beatles' myth were established before the Beatles' first film. The Beatles' myth was introduced to fans in 1963 and 1964 through a series of fan magazines and portrait booklets produced by press officers working for the band's management.⁵ Interviewed individually, each profile included "Beatletistics" such as physical description, favorite subjects at school, favorite fashion trends and hobbies, as well as what qualities the ideal girlfriend would have. Such promotional items not only broadened fan appeal, but also, the idealized profiles helped to reinforce the Beatles' teen idol status. Frontani refers to the emergence of the Beatles' myth as their "story."⁶ The elements of that story, such as the Beatles' look and their back-story, all piece together a constructed image and definition of "Beatle" that I refer to as "the Beatles' myth." Frontani argues that the Beatles' image was manufactured in a way that presented the Beatles as "safe teen idols," while embracing their unique hairstyle and British origins as exotic qualities to distinguish the Beatles from other pop stars.⁷ From the point at which the term "Beatlemania" was first used in 1963 to the height of the Beatles' popularity in America from 1964 to 1965, the Beatles wore matching tailored suits, mop-top haircuts, Cuban heeled boots, and had a refined stage act that utilized a specific set of performance codes. Each Beatle performed with a specific instrument and had clearly defined roles within the band. The Beatles primary image during this period is what I will be referring to as their "Beatlemania image" and the specific elements that make up that image will be referred to as "Beatlemania iconography." Neaverson goes as far as pinpointing the exact qualities of the Beatles' image that were

⁴ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 17.

⁵ For examples of this type of fan publication see: Barrow, Tony. *Meet The Beatles: Star Special*. No.12. Manchester: World Distributors, Ltd., 1963, and Maugham, Patrick. *The Beatles*. London: PYX Productions Limited, 1963.

⁶ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007. 10.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

exploited by Epstein and the press in order to generate broader appeal. The three “ingredients” Neaverson cites are humor, working class provincialism, and a strong sense of individuality.⁸ This combination of character traits was unusual for a pop group at that time. The Beatles’ quick-witted sense of humor, which “managed instantly to win the hearts of the US press and public,” was delivered through a range of styles “providing ‘something for everybody’ regardless of humorous disposition.”⁹ In addition to the Beatles’ sense of humor, Neaverson feels the Beatles’ background “further endeared them to the grassroots ‘underdog’ sympathies of the British public and popular press.”¹⁰ *A Hard Day’s Night* features a scene that recreates the deadpan responses given during the Beatles’ various press conferences that the band experienced early in their career. Watching this sequence and listening to the numerous interview CDs that are readily available, one gets a sense of underlying frustration at the repetitive and basic nature of the questions, as well as a frustration that the band was not taken more seriously by the popular press.¹¹ The ordinariness of the Beatles’ background not only gave the Beatles’ image an approachable, “boys next door” feeling, but also conveyed a sense of hard working honesty of a group who earned what they achieved.¹² As chapter one shows, so much of *A Hard Day’s Night* depicts a genuine enjoyment of playing rock ‘n’ roll together. When the Beatles did become successful in London after repeated attempts to be signed to a record contract, their roots became all the more poignant because a rough around the edges guitar group from the industrial North had succeeded in rising above the rigidity of the class system. For their American audience, the Beatles’ working class success story won over the general public as an example of achieving the American Dream.¹³ Frontani specifically cites the Beatles’ “humble beginnings” and “modest backgrounds” as necessary elements “of identification for their fans.”¹⁴

Another way in which the Beatles’ fans could identify with the group was through the Beatles’ strong sense of individuality. I have already touched on how fan publications provided different profiles for each Beatle so that every fan could feel a personal connection with at least one Beatle. While the Beatles maintained a sense of uniformity in their looks, each member’s differences were elements that gave depth to

⁸ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 22-24.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Ibid., 22.

¹¹ Arguably, Lester was also aware of this as one shot during the press conference sequence shows a negative strip with multiple photographs of George’s face with only slight variations to his facial expressions. It highlights how manufactured the Beatles’ image and responses really were.

¹² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 22.

¹³ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 58-59.

¹⁴ Ibid., 58.

their characters. Each Beatle had different personality traits, different artistic influences, and different artistic abilities, which only strengthened the dynamics of the group. As Mäkelä confirms, the Beatles participated in films that “attempted to reinforce and maintain [their] existing star image.”¹⁵ All of the Beatles’ promotional materials, including their films, contained specific codes and imagery that allowed the Beatles to maintain a public persona that reflected the members’ most current views and sentiments. As the Beatles interests and motives changed, the alterations to their image and public persona reflected these changes. In order to appear sincere and genuine, the Beatles’ image tried to move away from the more obviously constructed iconography of the Beatlemania period. By doing so, the Beatles were able to renew their bond with their maturing fans and maintain their position as authorities on the new trends within the youth culture. This attempt to align themselves with an image that struck a realistic balance with their musical output and social beliefs was an attempt to appear to be more authentic than their previous personas.

Defining authenticity

As the Beatles’ transition from the Beatlemania era to musicians unfolds in this thesis, I will be referring to the idea of authenticity and authentic representation. I do not use these terms to denote the real – this would be impossible when talking about images and personas that have clearly been manufactured in some way. These terms are used to express the Beatles’ desire to appear genuine in order to connect with their audience in the wake of their decision to stop touring in 1966. As I will later explain, the live performance was accepted as the most profitable way of creating a sense of community with an artist’s fans. The idea of authenticity that I use is generally accepted as being connected with the rock musician. The distinction is made because at the heart of the argument on the films’ worth is the Beatles’ shift from pop star to rock musician – a difference between obvious artifice and the attempt to represent the sincere and genuine sentiments of art and music. Grossberg, Marshall, and Mäkelä all define authenticity and the latter includes a list of criteria that I will use to illustrate how the Beatles’ image and output from 1966 onwards qualifies as authentic and what the implications of that are. Grossberg notes that the ideology of authenticity assumes

¹⁵ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004. 55.

“that authentic rock depends on its ability to articulate private but common desires, feelings and experiences into a shared public language. The consumption of rock constructs or expresses a ‘community.’”¹⁶ Since the Beatles stopped touring in 1966, their later films such as *Magical Mystery Tour* and *Yellow Submarine* were used in place of the live performance to maintain a sense of community. These films attempted to spread the Beatles’ utopian message to mainstream audiences and their image conformed to the look of the counterculture. Such elements of their message included allowing everyone the opportunity to realize their artistic ambitions, speaking for the legalization of hallucinatory drug use, and speaking out against the establishment and social oppression. These were views that the Beatles had been suppressed from vocalizing before 1966 when the band was meant to maintain a more clean and wholesome image. In this way, the Beatles’ counterculture image was more authentic in respect to their views than their Beatlemania image was. Also, Grossberg highlights a second part of his definition of authenticity, stating, in regards to “the self-consciousness of art” authenticity is “always constructed through the creativity and skill of the artist.”¹⁷ When the Beatles began to write more introspective lyrics and make the shift from live performance to developing their studio craft, as represented in *Help!*, the Beatles rejected their Beatlemania image by altering or avoiding Beatlemania iconography – including symbols such as instrumentation, viable live performance spaces, and their relationship with their fans. The focus moved away from image to the importance of the band’s musical merits as a collective unit and as individuals. Marshall notes that the 1960s was a period in which “some performers constructed their authenticity around naturalness and the rejection of performance codes.”¹⁸ While both Marshall and Grossberg agree that these trends were most commonly found in folk performers, the Beatles’ performance and musical style in *Help!* clearly signals a shift towards this kind of authenticity in their image and persona.

Mäkelä not only defines authenticity but also breaks the concept down into two categories with the appropriate criteria. Mäkelä’s definition of authenticity in the context of the rock musician (or “rock auteur” as he refers to it) informs my approach to authenticity in this work. The definition Mäkelä uses is “authenticity is not ‘natural’ but a cultural construction that is deployed with considerable symbolic force and is

¹⁶ Grossberg, Lawrence. “Cinema, Postmodernity, and Authenticity.” *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader*. Eds. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg. London: Routledge, 2000. 202.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 202-203.

¹⁸ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 161.

constantly used as an argument to justify and legitimate certain forms of music.”¹⁹ In order to move away from the artifice of popular music, the Beatles adopted new codes and symbols in their image and performance style, which can be seen in all of their films and promotional videos after *A Hard Day's Night*. Such codes and symbols are the elements that make up the construct Mäkelä refers to in his definition. Identifying and analyzing those codes from their film work is part of my methodology. In order to align themselves with the rock community, both Frith and Mäkelä acknowledge the importance of musicians from the 1960s in particular relying on their education at art schools and colleges to create a new synergy between art forms and music to form a complete visual and aural experience. In this way, the function and behavior of the community shifted from active participation in the live performance to a shared “communal experience.”²⁰ The difference meant that all played an equal role in the experience rather than adhering to the fan/star relationship. For example, while concerts are meant to bring together the community, there is still a stage that separates the performer from the audience, and each has a specific role that limits the audience’s involvement. Also, the art school experience allowed musicians to justify music’s place within the art community because musicians were applying theories and ways of thinking associated with traditional forms of art to their music. Therefore, pop music became regarded as a legitimate form of artistic expression as defined by the constructs of rock authenticity that were created, rather than purely a commodity. Criteria have been established to identify rock auteurs and as this thesis will show, the Beatles creative output and image after 1965 meet each of the criterion of the rock auteur. The criteria are:

the ability of auteurs to break new ground, innovate and cross or blur genre boundaries; the ability to perform their own original material, especially by writing their own songs; the exercising of a measure of control over various facets of the production process; and some sense of personal overarching vision of the music and its relation to the canon.²¹

The specific examples of how the Beatles achieved the status of rock auteurs, in both music and film, are too numerous to account in this introduction and will instead be included in the analysis of each film. More generally, the Beatles were actively involved with the production of their films and music, had always written their own

¹⁹ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined*. 98.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 99.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 97.

material right from the start of their career, and always carried their vision of musicianship and art through various levels of experimentation. Mäkelä further divides the idea of rock authenticity into two categories: “romantic authenticity” and “modernist authenticity.” Romantic authenticity is categorized as being influenced by “tradition and continuity with the past, a sense of community, sincerity, direct expression and ‘natural’ sounds.”²² Work such as *Beatles for Sale*, *Help!*, and *Rubber Soul* featured music that was aligned with romantic authenticity. On the other hand, modernist authenticity is defined as emphasizing “experimentation and progress, the status of the artist, obliqueness and ‘shocking’ sounds.”²³ Work such as *Revolver*, “Rain,” and “Strawberry Fields Forever,” for example, are more aligned with modernist authenticity. However, as the Beatles crossed into both categories often at the same time (*Sgt. Pepper* and “The White Album” being two examples), I believe it would stray from the main objective for this project to flag up the different instances by using these two terms separately.

Shifts in film and youth cultures

In addition to the press and fan publications, another form of promotion used to reinforce the Beatles’ image, and the one that this thesis focuses on, was film. Initially, United Artists approached the Beatles’ management in 1963 with a three-picture contract deal for the sole purpose of exploiting the Beatles’ success before the band’s popularity could wane. The Beatles’ film work expanded to five pictures when there was doubt over the contractual fulfillment of the Beatles’ very brief appearance in *Yellow Submarine*. Also, because the Beatles were interested in filmmaking, and any project that could keep the collective unit together as they started to fracture in 1967, *Magical Mystery Tour* and *Let it Be* were produced. Each film’s origin story will be fully explained in their respective chapters. As Neaverson reveals in his research on the

²² Ibid., 97.

²³ Ibid., 97.

Beatles' films, Walter Shenson confirmed that United Artists "was only interested in making a Beatles film 'for the express purpose of having a soundtrack album.'"²⁴ Shenson's brief from the European production head George H. Ornstein only contained one stipulation: Shenson had "to make a film with 'enough new songs by the Beatles for a new album.'"²⁵ However, I will argue that the five original Beatles' films were not just products to exploit fans for supplemental revenue and added exposure as pop stars had made in the past. Instead, the Beatles used their films to establish themselves as leaders of the youth culture and as a way of controlling the direction of their career as musicians and artists. I argue that the Beatles' films were more complex than previous pop exploitation films because each film not only depicts a self-conscious undermining of performance codes, but also represents the shifts in the social and cinematic trends occurring in 1960s cinema, as this section explains.

While my main interests are in British society and cinema in the 1960s, no study of this time period can be complete without acknowledging the developments in these areas in American culture. The reason for this is America's obvious influence on how films targeted towards teenagers were made in Britain, and the fact that both Britain and America developed socially and cinematically parallel to each other in the 1950s and 1960s. Arguably, America had a greater output of teen exploitation films and pop musicals, so by taking these into consideration, a clearer picture can be established of the changes that effected the production of *A Hard Day's Night*. This is necessary because I make the argument that *A Hard Day's Night* was groundbreaking in its approach to the pop musical because of the change in the social climate. This in turn allowed the Beatles the freedom within the studio system to stray from traditionally accepted conventions on their subsequent films. In the 1950s, teenagers had found themselves with more leisure time and financial prosperity than they had done before World War II. As a result of the extra money and free time, teenagers were purchasing items associated with the entertainment industries: records, radios, cinema tickets, and even cars which provided the older teenagers the freedom and independence to go where they chose, as well as allowing them a greater level of privacy than typically found at home. The level of teenage spending was so high that the entertainment industry began to specifically cater to the needs and interests of the youth culture. One area where this was most apparent was in the film industry. Doherty cites "the rise of television and the collapse of the old studio system" as factors that helped to break down the traditional familial unit that films had previously catered to

²⁴ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles' Movies*. 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁶ For these reasons, the film industry began to “narrow their focus and attract one group with the requisite income, leisure, and gregariousness to sustain a theatrical business.”²⁷ What emerged were pictures made within the studio system that exploited, or “capitalized on,” the interests of the youth, in particular teenagers.²⁸ While these films were aimed at teenagers, they were made by adults who were often much older than the oldest of their target audience. The effect this had on the films tended to filter and stereotype the images of youths that were portrayed on screen.²⁹ This stereotyping led to films in Hollywood being made

in binary form: films were made that avoided or toned down the dilemmas of youth for the sake of celebrating its carefree aspects, or films were made to further exploit and enflame the dangers of teen delinquency and decadence.³⁰

Films that qualify for the former category of portraying clean and wholesome representations of youth included Pat Boone’s *Bernardine* and *April Love* (Henry Levin, 1957), the *Gidget* series (Paul Wendkos, 1959), and Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello’s *Beach Party* (William Asher, 1963) which also spawned a number of sequels. These films also avoided “adult” issues such as premarital sex and pregnancy, drug use, violence, rebellious and insubordinate behavior, etc. The films that did tackle such difficult issues were again stereotypical and one-dimensional portrayals of youth. Such films included *Blackboard Jungle* (Richard Brooks, 1955), *Dino* (Thomas Carr, 1957), and *Blue Denim* (Philip Dunne, 1959).

Between the clean teenpics and the delinquency teenpics, another subgenre emerged in 1956 with the release of *Rock Around the Clock* (Fred F. Sears): the rock ‘n’ roll teenpic, closely followed by the pop musical. While both subgenres feature youths dealing with youth related issues and use a rock ‘n’ roll soundtrack, I would argue that the pop musical’s music sequences were informed by conventions used in traditional Hollywood musicals. For example, music sequences from the pop musical tend to be highly choreographed production numbers that break away momentarily from the film’s narrative. Rick Altman provides an example from Presley’s *Blue Hawaii* (Norman Taurog, 1961) in which the “I Can’t Help Falling in Love with You” sequence first sees Elvis singing diegetically with a music box, but soon the scene

²⁶ Doherty, Thomas. *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2002. 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁹ Shary, Timothy. *Generation Multiplex: The Image of Youth in Contemporary American Cinema*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002. 2.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 5.

transcends to a non-diegetic musical performance by an orchestra and chorus.³¹ I would also argue that pop musicals were more likely to attract a wider, cross generational audience because of the similarities to the traditional Hollywood musical, than compared with the rock ‘n’ roll teenpic. With rock ‘n’ roll music at the heart of these teenpics, the pop musical still maintained a clear division of good versus bad representations of youth. The youths were either portrayed as misunderstood rebels, like the characters Elvis Presley portrayed in his films or obedient, well behaved, and hard working young people like those portrayed by Cliff Richard. *A Hard Day’s Night*, however, was a new kind of pop musical compared to previous pop musicals and even the teen exploitation films popular in the 1950s, when it was released in July 1964. One of the main differences is that *A Hard Day’s Night*, though fictional, is meant to come across as an authentic representation of the Beatles’ celebrity. Films such as *Rock Around the Clock* and *High School Confidential!* (Jack Arnold, 1958), which featured musicians playing themselves, are based on fictional events rather than true events that were fictionalized for the film. Even the subject matter was usually contrived and patronizing towards their young adult audience. Of *The Young Ones* (Sidney J. Furie, 1961), for example, Neaverson argues that the film followed the typical musical format of being a “simple-minded morality [tale] in which a fictitious conflict between youth and age is resolved by mutual understanding and co-operation.”³² Another main difference between *A Hard Day’s Night* and previous pop musicals is the stark contrast in visual styles. *A Hard Day’s Night* deliberately avoids conventions associated with the traditional style of classical Hollywood, while earlier pop musicals adhere to a more formal structure, as I will show in chapter one.

A Hard Day’s Night came to represent the shift in ideology towards the youth culture in both Britain and American in 1964. For one example, research in the 1960s no longer focused solely on trying to understand youths from a behavioral standpoint, but rather shifted towards studying the “changing attitudes and ‘pathologies’” of youth.³³ What the research uncovered was that as the youths matured, they “began to have a different sense of their identity,” and these youths began to be aware of and question “previously repressed or diffused class, gender, and race conflicts.”³⁴ 1964 marked the birth of the youth culture – a group of youths I will define as young adults in their late teenage years into the mid-20s who became increasingly aware of and

³¹ Altman, Rick. *The American Film Musical*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989. 66-67.

³² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 20.

³³ Shary, Timothy. *Generation Multiplex*. 20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 6, 20.

vocal towards issues such as racial equality, politics, social oppression, sexuality, and class. These youths also had their own interests and tastes in music, literature, fashion, film, and philosophy that differed from their parents and other adults that dominated the decision making process in society (the establishment). The youth culture began to influence the types of goods and styles offered in the marketplace through their purchasing power and with their beliefs in the individual and the individual's needs, began to influence what social and political issues were addressed and debated by elected officials in government.³⁵ Once again, the film industry realized that in order to maintain financial security, it had to cater to the lucrative youth culture market. In agreeing to do so, many studios allowed their directors and actors more freedom in producing their ideas and experiments than the studios had in the past. The freedom United Artists allowed Richard Lester on *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* are examples of this. Arguably, the amount of freedom came out of United Artists' "lack of confidence in the film's profitability" and the "initial skepticism over the film's success."³⁶ The contract secured soundtrack rights to the Beatles' three films to United Artists, so based on prior album sales, UA were sure to break even if not make a large profit. Alternatively, the formulaic and unimaginative pop musicals such as the Presley and Richard vehicles that stuck with traditional generic conventions and storylines soon became stale in comparison. The characters portrayed by Presley and Richard never advanced past their respective stereotypes of the misunderstood bad boy and the harmless goodie-two-shoes. Yet, because of the Beatles' active involvement in the production of their films, and because of their awareness in how to reinvent their projected image, the Beatles' films' form and narrative conveyed the band's view on the nature of their celebrity and provided a commentary on their role within the youth culture. Through the Beatles' evolving image and musical direction portrayed on screen, the Beatles could situate themselves viably as leaders of the youth culture.

The Beatles as leaders of the youth culture

³⁵ Arthur Marwick refers to the youth culture as being a youth "subculture" and describes 16 characteristics as to why the youth subculture emerged and why the 1960s was a unique time for culture. See: Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 17-20.

³⁶ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 12-13.

The film and music industries saw the Beatles' five films as an opportunity to secure soundtrack rights and to supplement the band's touring revenue. The films were also seen as a gimmick, which promised fans closer access to the Beatles and the phenomenon surrounding them. However, the Beatles' films, along with key promotional music videos made by the band between 1965 and 1968, became an outlet for the Beatles to test the traditional conventions of the pop star's constructed image as well as challenge the accepted role of the pop star within society. Arguably, pop stars before the Beatles were more like representatives of the youth culture rather than leaders. Stars like Presley and Richard, to use two of the better-known examples, provided examples to their youthful audiences on how to dress, what music to listen to, and what kind of attitude to emulate. These two stars were pin up celebrities that fans wanted to be like and to be close too. However, in the case of Presley, he was one of the least accessible pop stars despite his high exposure. For example, Presley never toured or made public appearances in Britain, he hid behind the larger than life persona of "The King" – a persona so carefully constructed, it was difficult for anyone outside of his entourage to get a sense of what Presley was really like, and Presley's enlistment into the Army as well as his marriage to Priscilla Beaulieu became carefully staged publicity stunts. Even though Presley and the Beatles were considered to be contemporaries, the Beatles only met with Presley once in August 1965 and that proved to be a disappointment for the band as Presley's persona as The King was too great to see past.³⁷ I use this example to build a point of comparison between Elvis Presley's persona and the Beatles' persona. The Beatles on the other hand had a persona that, while constructed, featured elements that were accessible and similar to their fans. I have already discussed these elements (working class background, sense of humor, boys-next-door image, interaction with fans, etc) earlier in the introduction. Because the Beatles' persona at the beginning of 1964 was more "authentic" and relatable to fans and the emerging youth culture than someone like Presley, the Beatles rose to a position of speaking for and later leading the youth culture. In this way, the Beatles were able to position themselves in a new role for pop stars, thereby challenging the traditional role of the pop star, as the band became increasingly vocal on social, political, and cultural issues and ideas. There are a number of factors that allowed the Beatles the opportunity to be leaders of the youth culture, which I will now present.

³⁷ Spitz, Bob. *The Beatles: The Biography*. New York: Back Bay Books, 2006. 581-583.

As discussed earlier, the maturing youth culture became influential in changing such things as who products were made for and marketed to, and what social and political issues were being debated. What allowed this shift to happen was the large population of young adults born during the “baby boom” between the late 1940s and early 1950s had come of age, and so had a large influence economically by the 1960s. Stuart Laing specifically cites better economic conditions, education, and the new force of pop music as key factors in the younger generation’s challenge to the status quo of the late 1950s and 1960s.³⁸ With this shift in Britain centered on London, the idea of meritocracy among the youth culture began to crystallize. Meritocracy is the idea that an individual is judged on their merits and contributions rather than other factors such as class background. Creative and intellectual ideas thought up by the youth culture began to transcend the ridged class structure. While the class system in Britain has never gone away, for the youth culture in the 1960s, class became less important because there were other interests for the youth culture to connect with. Marwick notes that in the early 1960s, it became “quite clear that the spreading youth subculture was bringing together, in interaction with each other, practices associated with different social classes.”³⁹ London became the city where the youth migrated to and organized themselves around. Piri Halasz, writing in 1966, noted how London had “burst into bloom...in a decade dominated by youth. It swings; it is the scene.”⁴⁰ Halasz noted that London had always been a city of change, from Norman and medieval times to Victorian and contemporary times. From the late 1950s, London was in the process of change as Conservative power over the nation began to give way. Events such as Britain’s handling of the Suez crisis and the leak of the Profumo affair “cracked...the veneer of the upperclasses” to reveal that the Tories “were not necessarily better or even better-behaved” than those of the working class.⁴¹ The youth culture took advantage of these changes and claimed London as their city. Halasz discovered that the new London

takes away less of a person’s individuality than most big cities, and gives the individual and his rights more tolerance than any. It has developed into a...city increasing its talents for organizing a modern society without losing the simple humanity

³⁸ Laing, Stuart. “The Politics of Culture: Institutional Change.” *Cultural Revolution? The Challenge of the Arts in the 1960s*. Eds. Bart Moore-Gilbert and John Seed. London: Routledge, 1992. 73.

³⁹ Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties*. 78.

⁴⁰ Halasz, Piri. “You can walk across it on the grass.” *Time*. 15 Apr. 1966, 32.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 41.

that so many urban complexes lack...The London that has emerged is swinging.⁴²

Because of the new cultural landscape that London provided, which allowed the social mixing of the classes within the youth culture, it was possible for the youth culture to appear “classless” because “young people from different social classes came together in the distinctive centers of youth subculture.”⁴³ These different centers included the rise of the youth culture in endeavors such as photography, music, acting, art and design, fashion, academia, political groups, and other entrepreneurial pursuits. Arguably, pop music became the factor that connected all of the distinctive centers of the youth culture together. Richard Lester believed that the Beatles were responsible for introducing “a tone of equality more successfully than any other single factor” that Lester was aware of.⁴⁴ Actor Terrance Stamp, who was located in London at the time, recalled the importance of music saying, “In the ‘60s, amongst ourselves, our age group, there was an absolute coming together. And what made the coming together was basically music and dancing.”⁴⁵ The tone was set for the Beatles to be seen as leaders of the youth culture and they used their music and films as a way to secure their position within the youth movement. Not only did the Beatles have an accessible image, but also their success as pop stars was seen as a working class success story. By writing their own music and with their art school background, the Beatles continually broke new ground with the products they released. Through the unprecedented mainstream exposure and high levels of success that the Beatles achieved, they were in a respected position of privilege allowing them to reach out to their youth audience as well as the wider population. The Beatles were noticed by members of the aristocracy and those in government, especially Prime Minister Harold Wilson who thought he could reach out to the young voters by being photographed with the Beatles. As this thesis will show in each chapter, the Beatles were aware of how their work was scrutinized and their films’ form and narrative took advantage of that.

⁴² Ibid., 41B-42.

⁴³ Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties*. 57.

⁴⁴ Walker, Alexander. *Hollywood, England: The British Film Industry in the Sixties*. London: Harrap, 1974. 235.

⁴⁵ Levy, Shawn. *Ready, Steady, Go!: Swinging London and the Invention of Cool*. London: Fourth Estate, 2002. 23.

Defining performance codes

The Beatles' film vehicles defied a number of established cinematic codes, most importantly those associated with performance, as did their music and attitudes towards celebrity. I argue that this defiance towards industry standards created an environment of significant experimentation that allowed youth culture ideology to cross over into mainstream society. As I have already explained, when the youth culture came together, its members each brought their interests in different art forms, which included music, painting, literature, acting, photography, fashion, etc. Within this creative climate, new possibilities were created in music and film. In the case of the Beatles' music, the lessons learnt in Art College about the approaches one could take in abstract art for example had begun to inform the Beatles' approach to creating abstract sounds. This idea led to experimenting with studio recording and engineering equipment to create new sounds never before put on record. Just as the colors of a painting could be mixed in different ways to create new shades, sound could also be manipulated to similar effect. Members of the youth culture began to compete with their colleagues and contemporaries to push the boundaries of what was possible even further. For example, when the Beach Boys released *Pet Sounds* in 1966, the Beatles analyzed every sound and technique used in producing the album in order to raise the bar another level. The result was 1967's *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* – the first concept album that combined the art forms of music, Pop Art, and collage, and gave the song lyrics a legitimacy that rivaled any literature in printed form. In relation to this, the Beatles were also experimenting with form and narrative in their films – most notably during their music performance sequences.

As part of my methodology, my original analysis of the musical performance sequences will be informed by P. David Marshall's theory of performance codes.⁴⁶ Throughout the Beatles' film career, the band manipulated codes associated with the film, television, and music industries. This is significant because undermining established codes allowed the Beatles to control the way their image was received by the audience. The Beatles could also control their relationship with the audience as well. Each industry utilizes specific codes of performance to maintain a certain type of

⁴⁶ I have purposely focused on Marshall's work rather than Philip Auslander's examination of live performance because I believe Marshall provides this study with a more appropriate framework in which establish how the Beatles' image and performance style evolved through the course of their films. To consider the technological, industrial, and cultural changes associated with live performance are beyond the scope of this thesis but are issues that I would like to address in future research.

relationship with the audience. Marshall believes that “the celebrity is a voice above others, a voice that is channeled into the media systems as being legitimately significant.”⁴⁷ This is an important point when considering how the Beatles used film to control their relationship with their audience and to position themselves as leaders of the youth culture. Film is a way to reach a global audience, and has performance codes different from those of the television or music performer. According to Marshall, “the film star works to create a distance from his or her audience.”⁴⁸ By creating that distance, film stars are able to project an idealized image different from their private lives and interests. Film stars typically embody two different realities: their onscreen image and their “supposed ‘real lives.’”⁴⁹ In many ways, the idealized image is one that the star’s fans idolize, make a personal connection with, and strive to be like. As a way of differentiating between the two realities, stars use “a number of codes to indicate his or her ultimate independence.”⁵⁰ How the performer approaches the role, when the performer plays roles different from their usual roles, and the way the performer portrays themselves to the public are all ways in which the star can promote autonomy from their screen image. The Beatles’ films *Help!*, *Yellow Submarine*, and *Let it Be* see the Beatles manipulating performance codes aligned with the film industry as an attempt to establish themselves as musicians and as moving away from the image of the collective unit by controlling the relationship with their audience. Television stars on the other hand seek to “break down those distances and to develop a conception of familiarity.”⁵¹ This is due to the nature of television, as it is perceived to be a medium of intimacy where viewers allow newsreaders and reporters, musicians, chat show hosts, etc into the privacy of their homes. Viewers see the relationship through television as one of trust and in order for viewers to continually tune into a particular broadcast every night or every week, there are established codes of standards and expectations to adhere to. The Beatles’ entire image had been created out of the familiar – from portraying themselves as ordinary, boys-next-door to reaching out to their audience through the medium of television. A record-breaking audience of 74 million was introduced to the Beatles in February 1964 on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and in 1967, the Beatles returned to television sets to spread their countercultural, utopian message in *Magical Mystery Tour*.⁵² The third type of celebrity that Marshall identifies

⁴⁷ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. x.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 187.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 190.

⁵² Spitz, Bob. *The Beatles: The Biography*. 473.

is the pop music celebrity and these performance codes are centered on the live concert performance. Marshall believes that in the case of the pop star, concerts are used to emphasize community and to reaffirm the bond between the star and the audience. Each of the Beatles' films comments on, as well as questions the band's relationship with their audience, through the use of the musical performance sequence. In the films, the musical performance sequence replicates the ideas of community and solidarity behind the live concert performance. The sequences are placed in each of the Beatles' films as moments of high anticipation. Not only do the sequences reveal a new Beatles' song, but the sequences also represent the moment of direct communication between the band and their fans. That is why these musical sequences are worth analyzing because of that level of communication between the Beatles and their audience. The Beatles utilized the musical performance sequence to maintain their celebrity and to communicate their ideas and beliefs to the audience like no other pop musical had done before. In *A Hard Day's Night*, the concert performance is the event that the film builds up to and Lester's use of cinema vérité recreates the excitement to make a shared connection with those who had seen the Beatles live. For those who had not, Lester's technique included those fans into "the community." However, other Beatles' films began to rely on the performance codes of the film and television industries to reassert the Beatles as musicians, rather than as live performers.

One of the ideas associated with pop stars and live performers is that of authenticity, which I have defined earlier in the introduction. In order to create solidarity between the pop star and their audience, there are certain codes and signifiers used to make the experience of a live performance feel as genuine and real as possible. For example, Marshall writes about 1980s pop group New Kids on the Block who were "entirely fabricated and therefore possess no 'authentic' value whatsoever."⁵³ One could argue that the same could be said of the Beatles' image during their Beatlemania phase, or indeed throughout the whole of their career. Yet it was elements of the band's image and their lyrics that were New Kids' "legitimate claims to authenticity."⁵⁴ In this way, the Beatles too made similar claims to authenticity. Marshall makes one specific reference to the Beatles citing their own record company, Apple Corps, as a way in which the Beatles could maintain authenticity because they had power over their musical output.⁵⁵ But the Beatles had a number of methods for trying to evolve and to maintain public interest; many of these methods are on display

⁵³ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 194.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 195.

in the Beatles' films. Such methods revolve around the concept of appearing authentic, even when there is a "tension between artifice and authenticity."⁵⁶ As this thesis will show, at times the Beatles' projection of authenticity proves problematic to their role as pop stars and as leaders of the youth culture. Janne Mäkelä's work on John Lennon defines the ways in which musicians during the 1960s were able to move away from the codes of the constructed pop star in order to establish themselves as musicians. This idea is known as the "rock auteur" in which the "performer possesses an 'aura' of artistry and...represents ideals of creativity, uniqueness, self-expression, independence, and sincerity."⁵⁷ These films document each of the Beatle's individual 'auras' that emerged as the Beatles began to focus on artistry and synergy drawn from their days as art school students.

The journey motif

This thesis argues that the most important questions these films answer are: to what effect did the Beatles' manipulation of performance codes undermine generic convention and how did the results of that undermining inform the Beatles' perceived image? The analysis of these five films offer the reader an understanding of how musicians create and solidify an image or persona and for what purpose that persona evolves. My research concludes by considering the effect the Beatles' film career had on the band's image, their approach towards experimentation, and an awareness of performance that all document their journey from pop stars to rock musicians. The Beatles' films comprise an unusual case study for examining the way in which image, persona, and performance function within the star's career. These films are unusual because this body of work spans the Beatles' entire career – from being established as pop stars, to their transition towards authentic or "legitimate" musicians, to the shattering of their collective identity and their reemergence as individual musicians. That whole process unfolds throughout their film career. Arguably, the Beatles' career was the first of any pop act to chart such a progression. Previously, pop stars' film vehicles were separate products made to sell the latest album or to keep a performer's image in the eye of the public. However, the Beatles' films tell a continuous story of the band's role as celebrities. This story is presented as a common thread that runs through each of the films: the journey motif. This motif is manifested in the films both

⁵⁶ Ibid., 194.

⁵⁷ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined*. 238.

literally and metaphorically. The literal journey motif in each film shows the Beatles progression as pop stars and musicians as they move forward towards the climactic moment of the piece. *A Hard Day's Night* see the Beatles on a train journey that takes the band members from their localized celebrity in the North to widespread celebrity in London. This signifies the advent of Beatlemania and reinforces the Beatles' off screen rise to fame. The audience witnesses the Beatles practicing new song ideas, rehearsing the songs, and finally performing the songs to a live audience. In *Help!*, the Beatles are portrayed as trying to function as musicians while being surrounded by the effects of their celebrity. The band moves around to various locations in order to finish recording a new album. *Magical Mystery Tour* sees the Beatles on a coach trip that doubles as a psychedelic drug trip – a diversion into the counterculture that the Beatles' career takes. *Yellow Submarine* again sees the Beatles' journey from Liverpool to Pepperland (the utopian ideal of London) and *Let it Be* comes full circle with *A Hard Day's Night* to reveal the Beatles' songwriting, rehearsal, and live performance processes. Each process is represented by a different location. The significance of the literal journey motif is that it charts the off screen journey that the Beatles' career path takes. The audience witnesses the social attitudes towards the Beatles and the youth culture, the hysteria over the band, their daily routines, and insight into their creative processes. The metaphorical journey motif acts as the Beatles' commentary on their celebrity and their desire to be taken seriously as musicians. Through this motif, the Beatles attempted to control their audience's view of the band. *A Hard Day's Night* takes the audience with the Beatles behind-the-scenes as the band prepare for a live concert. In addition, the Beatles use concert and television settings in order to create a feeling of inclusion and community for their audience. The repercussion of creating a sense of community for the audience is that the audience is in control. The audience's involvement restricts the Beatles' movement physically and it restricts the Beatles' movement towards being musicians because the audience is satisfied with the Beatles pop based output. With *Help!*, the Beatles attempt to make a transition towards being musicians. To do so, the band begins to take control over their audience by restricting the audience's representation and movement in the film. The way in which the band is filmed visually, the locations used, and the shift from live performance to recorded performance are all methods of regaining control from the fans. The metaphorical journey in *Magical Mystery Tour* sees the Beatles placing themselves as leaders of the youth culture by acting as a bridge between mainstream audiences and countercultural ideals. To a greater extent than that portrayed in *Help!*, the Beatles take control over

the nonlinear narrative of the film, disregarding traditional conventions of form and narrative all together. Also, the Beatles take control over their image and challenge Beatlemania iconography more explicitly than in previous films and promotional music videos. *Yellow Submarine* positions the Beatles as leaders of the youth culture in animated form, in a less overt way than *Magical Mystery Tour*. In *Yellow Submarine*, the journey to being musicians continues as the music sequences take focus away from the Beatles' iconic imagery and instead create visual manifestations of the music. Finally, the Beatles' metaphorical journey as a collective unit ends with *Let it Be*. In that film, the Beatles had started to fracture as a band, which resulted in the onscreen emergence of four individual musicians. The reason for this was that each had too much control over their musical direction and ideas. Also, the Beatles control their audience's participation at the final live concert to such an extent that the audience does not seem to care as much as they had in the past. The audience's role had been altered significantly and the connection of community had been lost. All the elements that comprised the Beatles' myth were also lost.

Methodology and literature review

I shall chart the Beatles' progression from pop stars to musicians in order to gain a more complete view of how image, persona, and performance functioned within the Beatles' career, by centering my analysis on the films' consistent use of the literal and metaphorical journey motif. This thesis will use a chronological approach starting with the Beatles' first film, *A Hard Day's Night* (1964). The other four films that I examine are *Help!* (1965), *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967), *Yellow Submarine* (1968), and *Let it Be* (1970). These five films, which demonstrate the Beatles' active involvement in the creative process and were official Beatles releases, form the primary texts of this thesis. Supplemental to the films are certain promotional videos made between 1965 and 1967, which I shall consider in terms of their additional evidence of reinforcing particular trends used in the films. In chapter four, I shall also refer to episodes from the Beatles cartoon series, which aired on the American television network ABC from September 1965 to April 1969. These cartoons will create a context for the origins of *Yellow Submarine* and provide a reference point for

showing how *Yellow Submarine*'s use of innovative animation techniques created a more authentic representation of the Beatles' image at that time.

As I have previously stated, I believe the musical performance sequences in the Beatles' films to be the means in which the band communicated directly with their fans and to the wider audience. Because of the well-established function of the live performance – one that places the musicians and their audience on an equal level, the films' musical sequences allow the Beatles to place themselves in control of the performer/viewer relationship within the medium. This is achieved by the use of certain lighting and camera techniques, through editing and through the songs' lyrics. These filmic techniques, therefore, alter the perceived projected image of the band in terms of how they engage with the camera (which represents the viewing audience). By examining such techniques, my analysis will be illustrating specific examples of the ways that the musical sequences became another platform for the Beatles' views on their role as musicians. While each film's musical sequences are my primary focal points, their analysis is enhanced by the films' social themes and formal aesthetics. I will consider how the social themes presented in the films allowed the Beatles to position themselves as leaders of the youth culture and how their deviation from conventional formal aesthetics gave new possibilities to how bands promoted themselves. The Beatles' films give insight into their unprecedented level of celebrity, how that celebrity was maintained through the evolution of the Beatles' image, their development as musicians and the direct impact these films had on the Beatles' legacy. A comparison with the career path of the Beatles' closest rivals, the Rolling Stones, illustrates how the innovations made by the Beatles in film influenced the Rolling Stones' work. A prime example of this is how *Magical Mystery Tour*'s television broadcast influenced the Rolling Stones to make of *The Rolling Stones' Rock 'n' Roll Circus* (Michael Lindsay-Hogg, 1968). While *Rock 'n' Roll Circus* was not broadcast until 1996, it represented the free exchange of musical ideas between the rock 'n' roll community in the 1960s, commented on the role of the performer/audience relationship, and portrayed live performance as an event. I strongly believe that the fact it was not seen until 1996 is irrelevant to this study. The fact is that the film documents a very important moment where the rock stars sit amongst their fans in the audience, completely breaking down that barrier of the stage. We can also see the beginnings of this happening in Elvis Presley's *'68 Comeback Special* (Steve Binder, 1968). These were all the ideas that the Beatles had been presenting in their films and *Rock 'n' Roll Circus* was clearly influenced by the Beatles' film work, even going as

far as hiring the director who previously directed the Beatles' more conceptual promotional music videos for "Rain" and "Paperback Writer." The Beatles' use of film changed the way musicians promoted themselves and maintained a relationship with their audiences through image and persona changes. They also created a new form of artistic expression for musicians by defying generic conventions of the pop musical. Where a concert became limiting due to the increasing complexities of musical compositions, film allowed a complete audio-visual experience because of the medium's sophisticated post-production options. The Beatles were the first high-profile band to stop touring, not because of lagging interest or low-ticket sales, but because of the restrictive nature of the live performance. The technical, and therefore musical restrictions, formed the turning point at which the Beatles began to use film in a way that represented, and complimented, the ideas behind their musical experimentation. The idea of the music video – of lip-synching to a vocal track and of not actually playing instruments – was so new that the Beatles had to think of ways to get around broadcast and union laws in order to have their music videos played on television. The Beatles' films therefore provide a new avenue into an under researched area of not only the Beatles' creative process but to pop musicals as a sub-genre.

In examining the literature relevant to my research, I have decided on presenting the works by topic rather than use a chronological approach. I have adopted this approach as a result of the virtually non-existent scholarship on the band's film career. In order to present a full academic analysis, I have drawn on arguments and theories from authors who have studied 1960s British cinema, pop performances in film, celebrity and performance in film, and youth culture transformations. This literature review will present the main theoretical arguments and explain how my research either differs or enhances current scholarship in each area.

Despite the over-saturation of print materials chronicling the Beatles' career as musicians and pop icons, very few are works with any degree of scholarly merit and even fewer are related to the Beatles' film career. The most revered Beatles scholar is Mark Lewisohn and his works focus on chronicling every recording session, live appearance on radio, television, and film, concert, and public engagement during every day of the Beatles nearly 10-year career. Lewisohn's work provides the reader with a diary-like guide charting the Beatles rise to pop stardom. However, the information is factual rather than critical or analytical. Lewisohn's best known volume is *The Complete Beatles Chronicle* and has been utilized as the definitive source for referencing shooting schedules, film premieres, and television transmission dates, as

well as confirming personnel and location information in regards to the Beatles' promotional music videos. Three other biographers are also worth mentioning as the most consistent and accurate authorities on the Beatles' story or "myth," as I refer to it. Bob Spitz's *The Beatles: The Biography* begins by charting their career from 1960 to 1970 and is comprised of interviews, correspondence, and primary source material that expand on previous works to make the Beatles story as complete as possible. Alan Clayson is a pop historian whose biography of the Beatles was written in four separate volumes, each focusing on one member of the band and considers their upbringing and school days, their career with the Beatles, and their solo pursuits. As the Beatles' story has grown into mythical proportions, I felt it necessary to cross-reference the more reliable of these biographies by selecting relevant material, which serves to provide the most complete and accurate, as well as generally accepted story, of the Beatles' career. My work assumes that the reader has at least a basic awareness of the Beatles' career, chronology, and elements of their myth. Hunter Davies's biography is the only official biography of their career and is included because it was instrumental in endorsing elements of the Beatles' myth. Even though my work focuses on the Beatles' films, Ian McDonald's *Revolution in the Head* is the only scholarly work to give a critical analysis of each of the Beatles' recorded compositions. In addition to McDonald's appraisal of the Beatles' musical output, the author also provides a socio-historical context explaining the factors that aided the Beatles transition from pop star to musician. Similarly, Kenneth Womack's article "Reconsidering Performative Autobiography: life writing and the Beatles" examines their development as creative lyricists, which is an idea that parallels my argument of the Beatles as rock auteurs.⁵⁸ Offering a similar approach to my research, Michael Frontani sets out to "explain the transformation of the Beatles image from that of teen idols...to cultural agents and leaders of the youth movement" in his book, *The Beatles: Image and the Media*.⁵⁹ Frontani recognized how the Beatles' image reflected the cultural mood of the Sixties and how, at that time, the Beatles' image introduced mainstream audiences to countercultural ideas and beliefs. Not only did this affect mainstream trends in political and creative thought, it also affected the music that was being created. Music was being packaged not as a commodity but as a complete art package. I agree with Frontani's argument that "careful examination of [the Beatles'] image provides insight

⁵⁸ For a musical theorist's point of view see both volumes of: Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, 2001.

⁵⁹ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. xii.

not only into the history of the band, but also into the culture in which it developed.”⁶⁰ So much of the Beatles’ various images and social opinions are presented in their films and unusually the films span the beginning and the end of their career as a collective unit, as well as bookends for a turbulent decade, which was rich with diverse culture. Yet in Frontani’s book, while the films are commented upon, they are given very little consideration, despite providing documentation of the changes in the Beatles’ image. Instead, Frontani focuses primarily on “American media texts” such as newspapers, fan magazines, publications including *Rolling Stone*, *Seventeen*, and *Life*, network television footage, and sound recordings.⁶¹ By focusing on the Beatles’ reception in the US, Frontani does not consider the Beatles’ impact on British film or the pop musical, nor does he give any insight into the effect the Beatles’ films had on the way other musicians used film to promote their artistry. However, because Frontani’s and Bob Neaverson’s use of primary historical sources in their respective works are so complete, I have decided to instead focus primarily on the films themselves, bringing in first hand accounts and critical reviews where necessary.

Bob Neaverson’s *The Beatles Movies* is a rare academic text to present in-depth research into the Beatles’ films. Neaverson’s work provides some key foundational elements that are expanded and developed within this thesis. Neaverson’s work leaves many questions unanswered and these are some of the aspects that this thesis addresses and thereby offers solutions to these issues. For instance, Neaverson claims the Beatles’ films were a device for introducing the Beatles’ changes in image, attitudes, and music styles. In order to provide evidence for his claims, Neaverson examines the films within the context of British cinema history. This method allows Neaverson to show how cinematic movements such as British social realism, French New Wave, underground avant-garde, and the Free Cinema movement influenced the Beatles’ films.⁶² However, many of Neaverson’s examples focus on the narrative structure of the films rather than the musical performance sequences. These sequences depict the Beatles in their natural role as musicians rather than as actors. How the Beatles dress, how they are filmed, and how they present their music all give insight into the impetus behind their various alterations of image and performance style. This lack of analysis in terms of a techno-creative center only allows readers an

⁶⁰ Ibid., xii.

⁶¹ Ibid., xii, 2.

⁶² For literature on British social realism see: Hill, John. *Sex, Class, and Realism: British Cinema 1956- 1963*. London: British Film Institute, 1986. Or: Lay, Samantha. *British Social Realism: From Social Documentary to Brit Grit*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002. For information on underground cinema see: Tyler, Parker. *Underground Film: A Critical History*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1995.

understanding of the films' cultural value within 1960s British cinema. By disassembling the elements of the musical sequences frame by frame, I have been able to chart exactly the patterns influenced by the various cinematic movements listed above, as well as analyze what effect these trends had on the Beatles' image and where the Beatles were introducing innovation to the sub-genre. I agree with Neaverson's argument that the use of film "was central to the Beatles career" because film allowed the Beatles a means of reaching a global audience in a convenient and practical way while having greater technological and creative control of the final product.⁶³ Once the Beatles stopped touring and making live appearances on television in 1966, film was used to promote new singles and to keep the band in the public eye. The Beatles' films became key to maintaining the band's relationship with their audience. These films no longer had selling soundtrack albums as their main objective. Rather, the Beatles' films were promoting the band's image and ideas. Instead of having purely exploitation motivations, the Beatles' films became a platform for creativity. The Beatles' films chronicle these changes in the approach to the pop musical and even extend beyond the boundaries of the sub-genre. While Neaverson provides an important starting point for researching the Beatles' films, this thesis develops the context to show specific examples of how the Beatles used film to support their image changes and how that affected their role as pop stars. This thesis provides a detailed analysis of the films that Neaverson could not offer due to the large scope of his project. Neaverson considers the social, economic, formal, and ideological aspects of the films, as well as critical responses to the films, origin and production stories, and soundtrack and marketing information. However, with this information already established, I am able to focus on a specific aspect of the films, which allows me to find out how and why the Beatles' image changed in the ways that it did.

Scholars of 1960s British cinema have largely ignored the pop musical sub-genre when considering the period's contribution to cinema. I have consulted a number of well-known works in the hope of finding a documented connection between the Beatles' film career and the developments to the pop musical and, more generally, 1960s British cinema. However, the information provided focuses on genre theory and cultural trends – none of which give much, if any, consideration to pop musicals or youth films. Robert Murphy's *Sixties British Cinema* is one of the few works to consider a number of social, economic, and thematic factors in examining genres and specific film titles with a realist element. However, while Murphy includes musicals

⁶³ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 2.

and youth films in his list of genres that scholars have been prejudiced against studying, he does not include much information about them in his work either. Instead, Murphy cites horror, crime, and comedy as the key genres of the 1960s.⁶⁴ The omission of pop musicals and youth films undermines the importance of the youth culture and the impact that the youth market had on the film and music industries. Murphy does mention *A Hard Day's Night*, arguing that the film “gave substance to the British claim to be in the vanguard of a new, dynamic, youthful culture.”⁶⁵ Yet, he does not investigate this claim and its affect on British cinema. In addition, Murphy notes how influential Richard Lester’s experimental and unorthodox techniques created “an attitude and a style that crept into Swinging London films.”⁶⁶ Clearly Murphy is making the claim that Lester’s work, such as films like *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, did have a direct influence on pop musicals and swinging London films but again, does not investigate further. Charles Barr’s *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* is a collection of essays that prove the worth of British cinema’s films and argues that it is an institution of great and often overlooked innovation. This thesis realizes how the Beatles’ films have been overlooked despite their elements of innovation and the influence they have had on musicians’ approaches to using film. Barr’s work exposes the lack of scholarship on British cinema and the essay topics encourage areas for further study. For example, the essays focus on areas such as stars, directors, broadcasting, mainstream and independent cinema, documentary, and animation – areas where the Beatles’ films have made noteworthy contributions. However, the Beatles are only mentioned in passing. Robert Murphy notes:

The popularity of English rock groups like the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and the development of a myth of ‘swinging London’ made British society suddenly exciting, charismatic and fashionable, an impression confirmed by the energy and panache of films like *Tom Jones*, the James Bond films, and *A Hard Day's Night*. After decades in which Britain had followed American trends, it seemed that the process had been reversed. London was seen as the center of a youth-orientated cultural revolution, which young Americans found fascinating and appealing.⁶⁷

The Beatles position as leaders of the youth culture had helped to bring popularity and international attention to Britain and the British film industry. Yet none of the 1960s

⁶⁴ Murphy, Robert. *Sixties British Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 1997. 5.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 244.

⁶⁷ Murphy, Robert. “Under the Shadows of Hollywood.” *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*. Ed. Charles Barr. London: British Film Institute, 1996. 64.

film scholars examine the Beatles' film work. In the same volume of essays, Andrew Higson considers Britain's contribution to the documentary-realist tradition without mention of any of the rock documentaries featuring Bob Dylan (*Don't Look Back*), the Beatles (*Let it Be*, *The Beatles' First US Visit*), or the Rolling Stones (*Stones in the Park*, *Gimme Shelter*, *Rock 'n' Roll Circus*) and the wave of concert festival documentaries made in the late 1960s and early 1970s (*Woodstock*, *Monterey Pop Festival*, *Listening To You: The Who at the Isle of Wight, Festival*). Instead, Higson finds examples in the films of the British social realism movement. Again, Elaine Burrows provides a survey of British animation making a significant claim about *Yellow Submarine*, writing that the film "has an extravagance of colour and design rarely seen since the revolutionary days of the 1930s."⁶⁸ However, Burrows does not provide any explanation or support for the claim. Another key text to consider 1960s British cinema is Anthony Aldgate and Jeffery Richards' *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930 to Present*. The authors use an exemplary film as a case study for the overall trend or topic of each chapter. Their methodology is based on contextual cinematic history, which relies on evaluating and interpreting facts in order to gain a better understanding of how films change various aspects of social representations. Aldgate and Richards argue the importance of the film-maker/audience relationship and note how "films provide images of lives, attitudes and values of various groups in society."⁶⁹ Within the Beatles' films there is visual evidence of the changing attitudes and values of the youth culture during the 1960s. The authors also argue that it is of "central importance to discover who controls the production of films and what attitudes and ideas they are disseminating through them."⁷⁰ That is one of the primary objectives of this thesis because of the control the band exerted over certain production choices such as director, location, film form, soundtrack, and musical performance sequences. The Beatles were vocal about what they would and would not do during a film shoot. Right from the start, the Beatles let Epstein and Shenson know that they were "skeptical about appearing in pop musicals" and "unimpressed by the flimsy, contrived B-movie quality of British pop films."⁷¹ This point, taken into consideration with the fact that Epstein enforced tight control over the Beatles' media responses and perceived private lives, supports an argument for the films providing an outlet for the

⁶⁸ Burrows, Elaine. "Live Action: A Brief History of British Animation." *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema*. Ed. Charles Barr. London: British Film Institute, 1996. 281.

⁶⁹ Aldgate, Anthony and Jeffery Richards. *Best of British: Cinema and Society from 1930s to Present*. London: I.B. Tauris, 1999. 2.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷¹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 12.

Beatles to express themselves in a seemingly harmless way. No one found these fictional exploitation films to be controversial, unlike the teen pictures of the 1950s, but many did take issue with the band's public admission of taking LSD or the belief that the band was more popular than Jesus. In addition, looking over the reproduction of Richard Lester's original script for *Help!* shows that the musical sequences were not planned out in advance, which would have left ample room for the Beatles' input.⁷²

In recent years there have been a handful of key texts dealing with issues of popular music in film by authors such as Neaverson, Kevin Donnelly, Ian Inglis, and Claire Monk, but this is still an area of film research that is under-represented. The majority of texts focus on traditional musicals made under the classical Hollywood system such as Rick Altman's *The American Film Musical*, or *Hollywood Musical, the Film Reader*, edited by Steven Cohan. Even survey studies, which have become core classroom textbooks like Bordwell and Thompson's *Film Art* (McGraw Hill, 2004) and *The Cinema Book* (BFI, 1999), edited by Pam Cook, neglect classical musicals as well as pop musicals and the recent trends of music video aesthetics in contemporary cinema by directors such as Quentin Tarantino, Danny Boyle, Anton Corbijn, and Wes Anderson, for example. Also, Altman argues: "In moving from live entertainment to film, we are condemned to banishment from the immediacy of the original event by an intermediary, by the mediation of the medium itself."⁷³ While I agree that seeing the Beatles perform in *A Hard Day's Night* cannot replace seeing them perform in the flesh, I do believe that the film succeeds in replicating the excitement and energy of a live concert. Again, this is primarily achieved through Lester's awareness of television and the live concert performance codes. Donnelly's *Pop Music in British Cinema* is an exhaustive guide that includes an annotated filmography for each decade with listings on films not readily available commercially. The author's essay on the 1960s considers the Beatles' role in redeveloping the pop musical format. For instance, Donnelly cites *A Hard Day's Night* as "a pivotal point for the development of the relationship between pop music and cinema in Britain, an event that heralded a new culture and accelerated the association of pop music with the cinema."⁷⁴ Yet, the nature of Donnelly's methodology does not allow him much space to fully explore the elements of the Beatles' films that allowed for such a claim to be made. Nor does it enable him to take into account the other formal aspects where the

⁷² The script referred to was issued as part of a deluxe box set that included a restored version of *Help!* on DVD, along with special features, theatrical poster, and large print lobby cards. The set was an authorized Apple Corps release in conjunction with Subafilms, Ltd in November 2007.

⁷³ Altman, Rick. *The American Film Musical*. 361.

⁷⁴ Donnelly, K.J. *Pop Music in British Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 2001. 16.

films proved to be innovative to the subgenre. Donnelly rightly argues that *A Hard Day's Night* signaled a new culture and I believe the release of that film placed the Beatles firmly at the head of the youth culture. The analyses of the films in this thesis provide evidence to support that claim. In *Celluloid Jukebox*, editors Romney and Wootton compiled essays examining the role and evolution of music in film. The essays consider blaxploitation and hip-hop films, pop musicals, underground cinema, the punk movement, and rock documentaries. The editors argue that 1955's *Blackboard Jungle* was a rare instance where audiences connected directly with the film and the use of rock 'n' roll to the point of dancing in the cinema aisles. After this brief moment of cinematic history, "cinema would again become what it has always essentially been – a deferred experience."⁷⁵ I would like to take issue with this statement because the audience/star relationship in the Beatles' films, through the manipulation of performance codes, enabled the audience to feel a part of the experience in *A Hard Day's Night*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, and *Yellow Submarine*. By breaking down traditional formal and narrative conventions, the Beatles also replicate the authenticity of their live performances and "behind-the-scenes" access to their creative processes in the studio. The great travesty of the book is that the authors deliberately try to avoid the Beatles' films, arguing that it is accepted that they were successful and influential films. Medhurst's essay "It sort of happened here: the strange, brief life of the British pop film," defends avoiding the Beatles throughout, yet his conclusion is that British pop films using the conventions and form of the traditional musical were boring and terrible films that lacked the charm, humor, and charisma of films like *A Hard Day's Night*. I think Medhurst's essay would have benefited from considering the ways in which *A Hard Day's Night* reinvigorated the British pop film and how the innovative use of non-diegetic rock 'n' roll not only influenced subsequent pop musicals, but also led to the development of the music video.

Similarly, the scholarship of the youth film is lacking and mainly focuses on the rise of the teen film from the American market. Thomas Doherty considers the fall of the classic Hollywood studio system and the exploitation of the lucrative teenage market in the mid-1950s in *Teenagers and Teenpics: The Juvenilization of American Movies in the 1950s*. Doherty does examine the rock 'n' roll film to provide an excellent context for the rise of the British pop musical. Primarily, Doherty focuses on the stale and formulaic Elvis Presley vehicles, comparing them with the "clean"

⁷⁵ *Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies since the 1950s*. Eds. Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton. London: British Film Institute, 1995. 4.

teenpic of the *Beach Party* cycle. Shary's introduction in *Generation Multiplex* also provides a good context for the emergence of the teen film in the 1950s and 1960s, as Doherty does. However, Shary's work primarily focuses on the youth film of the 1980s and 1990s in American cinema. I find it interesting that the few titles out there studying the teen film look at the work produced by the British film industry, especially when I have already established that the early 1960s was when the British youth culture began informing American teenagers about the latest trends and attitudes. In this way, the work of Simon Frith, Arthur Marwick, and Lawrence Grossberg have been instrumental in providing this research with a context of youth culture transformation, especially when British perspectives were needed to balance out the factors of America's rise in the youth culture. Frith and Horne's *Art into Pop* argues the importance of the art school experience in enhancing and authenticating rock music in the 1960s. Again, the Beatles relied greatly on their art college experiences in legitimizing their role as musicians and artists in the mid to late 1960s. Frith's *Performing Rites* evaluates how the elements of popular music and performance codes create a bond and communal experience between the audience and the artist. *Sound Effects* examines rock 'n' roll's effect on the youth culture, on what rock music is and what it means, as well as more specific issues as to how rock 'n' roll is made, and how it is consumed. These works provide helpful insight into how the music industry works and the challenges of how musicians try to give audiences an authentic experience despite operating within a system that relies on artifice to market the product. Grossberg's *We Gotta get out of this Place* examines rock culture and its emergence from American 1950s rock 'n' roll. Grossberg's chapter on postmodernity and authenticity has primarily informed this research where the author considers the paradoxes of identity, image, and artifice within rock culture. The challenging of the Beatles' image came out of their "struggle to achieve some identity consistent with [the] new set of experiences" that the youth culture brought with it.⁷⁶ Arthur Marwick's *The Sixties* does not devote much space to film or the Beatles but it is a work that does allow a better sense of the cultural landscape in Britain during that period. Marwick sets out a number of ways in which changes to politics, society, technology, and the economy helped to equalize opportunities for the working class and to give rise to the youth culture. By understanding the power that the young working class possessed in the market place, it is easier to understand how the Beatles could situate themselves as leaders and role models for the youth culture. Marwick's work also gives the reader

⁷⁶ Grossberg, Lawrence. *We Gotta get out of this Place*. New York: Routledge, 1992. 203.

insight into how there could be such a strong synergy between art, culture, and commerce and what implications this had on music and cinema. By presenting an examination of the Beatles' film career I aim to show how the Beatles attempted to legitimize their cinematic output just as they had attempted to do as musicians. This was done partly by complicating the pop musical with elements taken from "serious" cinema movements.

On the topic of theories of celebrity and performance, P. David Marshall's *Celebrity and Power* and Janne Mäkelä's *John Lennon Imagined* have primarily informed my work. Both authors acknowledge Richard Dyer's seminal work *Stars*, which set the framework for star studies. Dyer considers both the sociological and the semiotic. To explain, the sociological concerns of star studies argues that films are significant only because they have stars in them and semiotic relates to the argument that stars are only significant because they star in films.⁷⁷ Similarly, I aim to present an analysis of the cultural and aesthetic significance of the Beatles onscreen. Dyer examines the work of the great Hollywood icons. Despite the Beatles being cultural icons, this has only been considered by Beatle scholars through the band's music. Of Dyer's work, the questions that intrigued me the most when thinking about the Beatles' film career were, "What do stars signify?" and "How do stars signify?"⁷⁸ More specifically, I wanted to understand why the Beatles used film and how they used film. What factors caused the Beatles' image to evolve? What were the meanings behind how the Beatles performed music and how was it coupled with the formal aspects of film? Why did the Beatles experiment with form and narrative rather than stick with the successful pop musical formulas? Also, Dyer discusses performance signs, how we as the audience read them, and how performance signs give us insight or clues into an actor's character. Dyer lists facial expression, voice, gestures, body posture, and body movement as signs of performance.⁷⁹ However, when analyzing the Beatles' musical performances, I found these signs too limiting. I also consider dress, image, lighting and editing techniques, and how the Beatles engage with the audience. With this criteria and using Marshall's work as a guide, I found that the Beatles were using performance codes aligned with the film, television, and music industries. In doing so, the Beatles were able to control the relationship with their audience and create authentic representations of their live and studio performances onscreen. Marshall opens his book by asking a series of questions, one of which being, "What traits have

⁷⁷ Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, 2004. 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 134.

allowed the individual to rise to public acclaim?”⁸⁰ However, the origins of the Beatles’ rise to fame are well documented. What is not so well known is how the Beatles maintained their public acclaim? I think the answer lies not only in the quality of their music, but crucially, how they used film to communicate with their fans. The films’ performance codes were used to interpret specific meanings about the band’s ideology towards musicianship. Marshall’s work investigates the concept and function of the celebrity considering film stars, television personalities, and pop musicians. But what does it mean when the boundaries are not so clearly defined? Since Elvis Presley in the 1950s, pop musicians have used film and television to exploit their image and music, but arguably, the Beatles were the first pop band to use each medium to a greater effect – to spread their beliefs and artistic vision, to challenge the boundaries of pop music, and to question image and artifice. Mäkelä’s work has asked similar questions about John Lennon’s iconic cultural status arguing that the Beatle was a rock auteur. However, I believe that the Beatles’ film work shows that each Beatle’s path towards being a musician makes them just as worthy of being cultural icons and leaders of the youth movement as Lennon. Each developed a musical style and an image that allowed them to claim the idea of rock authenticity as individuals. We begin to see this transformation in the Beatles’ film work in 1966 and 1967. My work complicates Mäkelä’s arguments by considering the Beatles as a collective unit and as individuals.

Chapter summaries

A Hard Day’s Night begins with a journey by train to London from what is assumed to be Liverpool. The Beatles’ journey to pop stardom parallels the literal journey motif. In this first chapter, I will show how the film undermines the narrative/number relationship to argue that the tensions caused formally related to the entrapment theme. Richard Dyer presents the idea of the number being a utopian moment where the audience is able to escape from the conflict in the narrative. But because of the strong theme of entrapment that runs through the film, the numbers work on two registers – one that provides escape through the music while fetishizing the Beatles and one that visually reinforces the unglamorous aspects of celebrity. Also, I will discuss how Richard Lester’s directional style and the range of musical

⁸⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 3.

performances relate to Marshall's performance codes for pop stars in order to create a greater sense of authenticity and community. Music performance codes are used in order to create and reinforce a connection between the Beatles and their fans. Through film style, the role of the audience changes to one of inclusion rather than passive viewing. Film was in this way a means by which the Beatles could communicate directly with their audience by updating the backstage musical subgenre to include a pseudo-documentary feel. Lester's use of handheld cameras and cinema vérité influences avoid the conventional performance codes of the classical Hollywood film style to create a film that represents the anti-establishment or rebelliousness emerging socially in the 1960s. Also, I will analyze the musical performances to illustrate how the Beatles' performances in the film reflect the band's journey to pop stardom. The analysis presented in this chapter not only establishes a context for the Beatles' film career but also demonstrates how *A Hard Day's Night* complicated the conventions of the pop musical.

Feeling that the high demand for public appearances was having an adverse affect on their musical skills, the Beatles used *Help!* as a way of adopting performance codes associated with film stars. Chapter two focuses on how the music performance sequences in the Beatles' second film avoid the opportunity for a shared, communal experience between the Beatles and the viewing audience. Locations, Lester's style and a fictional plot with a conventional narrative structure allow the Beatles to distance themselves from Beatlemania iconography associated with their pop star image. Instead, this transitional film begins to depict an image and mentality towards music that more closely represents the attitudes the Beatles had begun to adopt. Such attitudes included viewing creating music as an art form, with performing on stage restricted greater levels of creativity for the band as they could not hear themselves or each other play. However, so as not to offend or alienate fans, the film's locations and adversaries are characterized by comedic extremes. A close analysis of the music sequences shows a shift from live performance to recorded performance and Lester's experimentation with visual effects illustrates the emergence of the influence of surrealism and underground cinema on mainstream directors. *Help!* also represents the early stages of synergy between art and forms of popular entertainment such as music and film. Away from conventional performance settings, Harrison, McCartney, and Lennon began to emerge as rock musicians rather than continue to be portrayed as pop stars. This chapter will highlight the characteristics in the Beatles' performances that show the beginnings of an individual musical style.

In chapter three, *Magical Mystery Tour* is presented as the culmination of artistic and pop music synergy. The project was unusual in that it was produced and directed solely by the Beatles. The band also had a high level of input on casting and editing, as well as financing the film through their newly created Apple Corps company. In addition, the Beatles used television and the codes associated with that industry in order to challenge their role as pop stars. Television also allowed the band to reach out to a more varied audience due to its Boxing Day evening broadcast, in order to fully realize their intentions as a link between the counterculture and mainstream culture. Chapter three examines the intended and actual outcomes of the Beatles' use of television and the result of having too much control over their output. Also, I will introduce the idea of image perception in relation to the Beatles' artistic output at this time. Image perception is an argument developed by Nannette Aldred to explain the tendencies to manipulate and question image during the psychedelic movement of the late 1960s.⁸¹ From 1966 onwards, the Beatles' films and promotional videos were consciously moving away from depicting their earlier manufactured pop star image and became concerned with portraying the "real" Beatles – that is "presenting an image more consistent with the Beatles' perception of themselves."⁸² The more authentic image came through not only visually but also in the Beatles' more introspective and nostalgic lyrics. At the center of chapter three is the argument that the Beatles' popularity with mainstream fans and critics problematized the band's efforts to promote their utopian vision in *Magical Mystery Tour*.

Despite being made with the least amount of input from the Beatles, compared to their other film projects, *Yellow Submarine* was arguably the most successful of their films in creating visual manifestations of the Beatles' music. One of the things that is most important to note about this film is that, while very experimental in style, it still retains the traditional narrative/number relationship. I argue that such a familiar structure actually allowed animators greater freedom when creating the film's distinct film style, as well as presenting the more countercultural/psychedelic themes. *Yellow Submarine* was the result of numerous experimental techniques created by animators who worked against traditional stylistic conventions made popular by Walt Disney Studios. Due to the number of animators working on the project, their varied cultural influences and artistic backgrounds introduced mainstream audiences to a wealth of

⁸¹ Aldred, Nannette. "'The Summer of Love' in *Performance and Sgt. Pepper*." *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis, and Counterculture in the 1960s*. Eds. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005. 99-122.

⁸² Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 16.

experimental techniques such as rotoscoping, cut outs, Pop Art, Op Art, live action, and graphic design in a single feature film. At the heart of *Yellow Submarine* is the journey from the working class oppression of Liverpool to the Utopian Pepperland where music is used to conquer evil. The tale parallels the Beatles' own journey from their humble beginnings to their vision as leaders of the youth culture. Analysis of the music sequences shows how the animators created a timeless myth that encompassed how the Beatles wanted to be seen. With the focus taken away from the Beatles' iconic image, the Beatles' music could be featured on its own as a piece of art.

Chapter five brings the Beatles' film career full circle with the documentary *Let it Be*. As a documentary, *Let it Be* is supposed to have been a look at the real Beatles and to provide insight into their process as musicians. However, in trying to document the real, *Let it Be* ends up being as contrived and fictionalized as *A Hard Day's Night*. One of the main reasons for this is the Beatles' awareness of the cameras. I will examine each Beatle's role as a "social actor" in this film and how their portrayals defy the Beatles' myth. In addition, the final live performance provides an interesting comment on the effects of manipulating the codes of the concert to such an extreme that passers-by are attracted only by the unusual nature of the event rather than the event itself. Those on-lookers in the streets are asked for their opinion on the performance and while the majority of the responses are positive, they are delivered with a politeness and a complacency that differ from the mass hysteria of the Beatles' earlier films. A detailed analysis of *Let it Be* reveals the importance of the audience's need to feel connected to the band in order to complete the musical experience. *Let it Be* shows that taking ownership of the music through consumption is not enough to maintain the Beatles' status as pop stars. A sense of community and interaction is also necessary for the audience to maintain a connection with the group. Around the time of *Let it Be*, and afterwards, there were a number of films that documented the audience's role within the live performance and such films include *The Rolling Stones' Rock 'n' Roll Circus*, *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970), *The Last Waltz* (Martin Scorsese, 1978), *Gimme Shelter* (Albert and David Maysles, 1970), and *The Song Remains the Same* (Peter Clifton and Joe Massot, 1976). In each film, the audience is situated in ways that question or confirm their role in the live performance that goes beyond simply affirming their solidarity with the musicians. For instance, *Rock 'n' Roll Circus* places the audience and the performers on an equal level. As the stars sit in the audience, it blurs the established star/fan relationship. Stars too can be fans of their contemporaries, while the audience is acknowledged by the stars and by the filmmaker

to be an integral part of the performance. This is in contrast to *Let it Be* where the Beatles try to undermine the audience's importance by creating a vast distance between the audience and the band. By rejecting the idea behind the live performance codes, the audience is not able to connect with the Beatles in any direct way, which results in the blasé responses from the people gathered in the streets towards the impromptu concert.

To conclude this thesis, I will give an overview of how the Beatles functioned as film actors in order to enable their vision of becoming musicians. I argue that my analysis of their films illustrates how the Beatles could not remain a collective unit and fully realize themselves as musicians. I will also make a case for the Beatles' relevance in our contemporary society and show how certain cultural products are still intrigued by the complexities of the Beatles' image. My final point will be to argue that the Beatles' groundbreaking innovation and influence have led other musicians to challenge performance codes and to defy the traditional conventions of the pop star.

Chapter One: *A Hard Day's Night*

“The fact remains that *A Hard Day's Night* has turned out to be the *Citizen Kane* of jukebox musicals, the brilliant crystallization of such diverse cultural particles as the pop movie, rock ‘n’ roll, *cinéma vérité*, the *nouvelle vague*, free cinema, the affectedly hand-held camera, frenzied cutting, the cult of sexless subadolescent, the semidocumentary, and studied spontaneity.”⁸³

Andrew Sarris, 1964

Writing for the *Village Voice* on August 27, 1964, film critic Andrew Sarris made a bold comparison between a faddish pop musical and one of the great Hollywood classics. *Citizen Kane* is best known for Orson Welles’ talents as a director and actor, its groundbreaking technical achievements, and its mesmerizing aesthetics. *A Hard Day's Night* was produced quickly and on a low budget in order to fully exploit the Beatles’ talents before they had become the next passing fad. Yet Sarris, who tried to ignore Beatlemania for as long as possible, could not deny the unusual nature of *A Hard Day's Night*. The story of how *A Hard Day's Night* came to be is the same as the countless other rock ‘n’ roll and pop musicals that preceded it. United Artists, whose head of productions office in Europe had witnessed the fervor created by an unlikely working class guitar group from Northern England, decided to capitalize on the Beatles’ success before the band’s popularity could wane. In 1963 alone, the Beatles had four number one singles and two number one albums – a feat unprecedented at the time. Producer Walter Shenson approached Brian Epstein in October 1963 with a three-picture deal that would give United Artists the right to distribute the films and give the film company ownership of the soundtrack rights. In return, the Beatles would receive large-scale exposure in Europe and in the much-coveted American market, as well as twenty-five percent of each film’s revenue.⁸⁴ Having seen the high turnovers Paramount and American International Pictures (AIP) made from the pop musicals starring Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard, United Artists were determined to secure a

⁸³ Sarris, Andrew. *Confessions of a Cultist*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970. 161.

⁸⁴ Ingham, Chris. *The Rough Guide to The Beatles*. London: Penguin, 2003. 193. Epstein’s mistake was grossly underestimating the Beatles’ selling power and so initially only asked for a 7.5% share in the deal.

contract with the Beatles. By 1964, the Beatlemania craze was fully established in both Britain and America and there was already speculation as to how much longer the Beatles' chart topping success could last.

Many writers have acknowledged the Beatles' first film as being innovative and as having contributed to the development of the pop musical. Donnelly argues that the Beatles' first film "rethought the possibilities for a film featuring pop music" and the film was not "a simple vehicle for the group."⁸⁵ Agajanian notes that *A Hard Day's Night* "has been recognized as one of the first artistic pop musicals."⁸⁶ However, all but Neaverson avoid satisfactorily answering the questions of how and why *A Hard Day's Night* was different and what effect the film's use of music had on the relationship between rock 'n' roll and film since its release in July 1964. I have already mentioned in the introduction how Medhurst's essay on the Sixties' pop musical deliberately avoids discussing *A Hard Day's Night*. Medhurst's thesis is to examine the "less celebrated mid-60s films which sought out various solutions to the continuing dilemma of how to put British pop on film," only to conclude that the pop musicals that ignored *A Hard Day's Night's* successful innovations were actually quite stale and contrived.⁸⁷ Many authors stick with the basic analyses of genre and themes but in this chapter I consider *A Hard Day's Night's* reworking of the classical musical and how, through the musical sequences, tension is created between the intimacy stardom allows for between act and audience and the restrictive nature of stardom. I also want to consider Dyer's "entertainment and utopia" argument as well as Sutton's work on "patterns of meaning in the musical" in order to gain a better understanding of how the musical sequences function in relation to the narrative, taking into consideration how these sequences may differ from the more classical teen musicals starring Presley and Richard. Dyer argues that at the heart of entertainment is the depiction of utopianism and that entertainment "offers the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide."⁸⁸ For the Beatles' audience, 1964 was a time of new social mobility based on a person's talents and creativity, rather than their position within the class structure. Arthur Marwick often refers to this as "meritocracy". Musicians and other pop culture figures began to

⁸⁵ Donnelly, K.J. *Pop Music in British Cinema*. London: British Film Institute, 2001. 18, 19.

⁸⁶ Agajanian, Rowana. "Nothing Like Any Previous Musical, British or American." *Windows on the Sixties*. Eds. Aldgate, Chapman, and Marwick. London: I.B. Tauris, 2000. 96.

⁸⁷ Medhurst, Andy. "It sort of happened here: the strange, brief life of the British pop film." *Celluloid Jukebox: Popular Music and the Movies since the 1950s*. Eds. Jonathan Romney and Adrian Wootton. London: British Film Institute, 1995. 65.

⁸⁸ Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." *Genre: the Musical: a Reader*. Ed. Rick Altman. London: Routledge, 1981. 177.

experience the level of stardom once reserved only for the great Hollywood actors, royalty, and political figures. In illustrating how the Hollywood musicals “promote an idealized ‘utopian’ view of life,” Dyer has studied the representational (character, themes, etc) and the nonrepresentational (style, music and dance patterns) elements of such films.⁸⁹ Trying to apply Dyer’s scholarship to my analysis of *A Hard Day’s Night* has unraveled contradictions and complexities that do not fit neatly into Dyer’s definitions. The function of the musical number can vary – Dyer argues that the number contains feelings of energy, abundance, transparency, community, and intensity.⁹⁰ Similarly, Bruce Babington and Peter William Evans argue that the numbers are where “the most intense meanings are registered.”⁹¹ For this reason, I have primarily focused my analysis of *A Hard Day’s Night* on the numbers. In the case of *A Hard Day’s Night*, the film works on two levels – as a backstage pop musical that allows fans into a fictionalized recreation of pop stardom and as a self-referential take on the subgenre that undermines traditional conventions of the musical that question the glamorized ideals of stardom that the audience brings to the film. While *A Hard Day’s Night’s* musical sequences provide the moments of close proximity and intimacy for the viewing audience, these are not moments of escape into some utopia for the band. Traditionally, classical Hollywood musicals used a structure that allowed for the narrative and the numbers to be integrated in a way that presents “tension between the real and the ideal,” with the real being represented by the narrative and the ideal being displayed in the numbers.⁹² However, as I will show, the mixture of location, film style, and depiction of the band’s fans create an underlying tension of entrapment for the Beatles that comes through not just in the narrative, but also, in the numbers. John Mundy notes how those performing in the numbers of traditional musicals often use a direct mode of address in order to “implicate [the viewer] in a space where the ideal appears to triumph over the real.”⁹³ Yet, a closer reading of the numbers in this film show that it is not the Beatles who are necessarily addressing the viewer in this way. Rather, the stylistic codes associated with live performance and television creates the sense of direct address that the viewers experience. Arguably, most young fans would have read the close ups of the Beatles as intimate and exclusive moments in which to fetishize their idols. The film does operate on that level but when taking into account

⁸⁹ Babington, Bruce and Peter William Evans. *Blue Skies and Silver Linings: Aspects of the Hollywood Musical*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985. 3.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁹² Mundy, John. *Popular Music on Screen: From Hollywood Music to Music Video*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999. 56-57.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 57.

all the other signs of confinement, the theme of being trapped by stardom becomes starkly apparent. Another way that the structure of classical musicals functioned was to use the numbers as a way of communicating a great deal of information or as a way of quickly pushing the plot forward.⁹⁴ Richard Kislán uses the dance numbers in *West Side Story* as an example. Neaverson, however, explains that *A Hard Day's Night's* numbers function differently:

the narrative embraces sequences which do nothing to advance the plot, and the group often seems merely to 'exist' within a series of episodic situations rather than to act as highly motivated, goal-orientated protagonists.⁹⁵

It is the purpose of this chapter to present a more accurate reading of *A Hard Day's Night* by exploring how the complexities of this film's musical sequences were constructed.

Unusually, the film begins with the Beatles already at the height of their success. Achieving fame through music was a crucial theme to the teen musicals of the 1950s and early 1960s. Such films depicted the struggles endured on the road to stardom but the Beatles' film begins with that goal already achieved. Unlike previous films of the subgenre, *A Hard Day's Night* is not a rags-to-riches story that follows the plight of the teenager who tries to defy the order of the establishment. There are no real conflicts present to reflect the plight of the teenager or young adult. That is why the numbers, on one level, are designed to allow the viewer an intimate audience with the Beatles' as performers and to admire their talents as musicians. For the fans that feel an allegiance to a particular Beatle, each gets their moment to perform original compositions. In addition, these sequences emphasize the audience's role within Beatlemania and the band's success. Sequence analysis of the numbers, based on Marshall's research on performance codes, allows me to illustrate how the band's viewing audience gained a sense that they too were part of the Beatles' story, rather than just being passive viewers. Lester's cinema vérité techniques enhance the viewing audience's high level of inclusion. Most of the research on Lester's style as a director makes a point of discussing the fact that despite not being a cinephile, Lester's practical approaches to filmmaking were very similar to the techniques made popular by French New Wave directors.⁹⁶ Adding to Lester's style was an interest in jazz music

⁹⁴ Kislán, Richard. *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980. 231.

⁹⁵ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 17.

⁹⁶ See: Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles' Movies*. 17; Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 75-77; and Sinyard, Neil. *The Films of Richard Lester*. 20-21.

that naturally made him aware of rhythm and pacing. In this way, one can understand why French directors such as Godard (also a jazz enthusiast) and Truffaut would have had an influence on Lester's style of filmmaking. Specifically, Frontani's work has discovered similarities between *A Hard Day's Night* and *The 400 Blows* (Truffaut, 1959) through Anne Gillain's analysis of Truffaut's film in *French Film: Texts and Contexts*.⁹⁷ Gillain noted how for the interior set ups, Truffaut employed "static shots and close ups," while exterior set ups were contrasted with "long and mobile shots."⁹⁸ What is most interesting is Gillain's phrase "elegant binary opposition," used to describe Truffaut's form for the film.⁹⁹ Arguably, this is the same approach to structure that Lester uses throughout *A Hard Day's Night*, and which is most apparent in "Can't Buy Me Love." Throughout, Lester shows an awareness of the duality of the Beatles' fame not only in the story but also through his directorial style. It is also important to note the ideology behind techniques associated with the French New Wave. For Lester, using these unconventional filming techniques not only aesthetically separated *A Hard Day's Night* from classical and pop musicals, but these techniques also made a strong statement against the restrictive and carbon copy nature of Hollywood cinema. Cinema had become product through the classical studios production line approach, rather than the expressive art form early cinema displays. Paralleling the rigid structure of Hollywood was the "Tradition of Quality" in France. New Wave filmmakers found such cinema to be "old fashioned," arguing that French cinema was the work of "skilled craftsmen – not by inspired artists...who put their very souls into their work."¹⁰⁰ The New Wave filmmakers, along with Lester, used location filming, handheld cameras, and non-professional actors as signs of their departure from carefully constructed artifice. For this reason, New Wave filmmakers such as Truffaut created films that upheld "the notion of truth(s)", not only through production techniques and the idea of the filmmaker as auteur, but "the need to draw close...to reality itself."¹⁰¹ Lester draws on this idea throughout the film, and as mentioned earlier, that sense of realism appealed to the Beatles, too.

Another technique that allows for this is the use of television performance codes and highlighting the mechanisms of television production. For example, the live show at the end is a televised one and the theatre the Beatles perform in has been

⁹⁷ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007. 77.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁰⁰ Greene, Naomi. *The French New Wave: A New Look*. London: Wallflower Press, 2007. 8-9.

¹⁰¹ Greene, Naomi. *The French New Wave*. 9.

converted into a television studio. The audience gets views of the Beatles from the gallery, on set monitors, and through the viewfinder of a stationary camera. Television was “the newly dominant and dexterous medium” that helped to “universalize” the Beatles’ image and performance style.¹⁰² Television provided an immediate source of entertainment and information, which could be updated more quickly than cinema. In addition, Jason Jacobs argues that television quickly emerged as a medium that could draw on theatrical and cinematic styles to create an experience that was both intimate and expansive.¹⁰³ Furthermore, actors had to be aware of the multiple cameras filming their every move during live broadcasts. Specifically, actors “needed to be aware of when and where aspects of their performance were being covered: Is my face in close up now? Where do I turn next.”¹⁰⁴ Also, the pop performances were broadcast live, giving the viewer a sense of exclusivity and closeness they might not otherwise experience at an actual gig. Marwick notes how television programs targeted towards the youth culture were “integral [to the] rock/pop-based youth subculture.”¹⁰⁵ Television was an important source of promotion for the Beatles. Between 1963 and 1965, they regularly appeared on shows such as *Top of the Pops*, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, and *Ready, Steady, Go!*, as well as record breaking appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show* and *Sunday Night at the London Palladium*.¹⁰⁶ Even after the Beatles stopped making live appearances and performing live, *Top of the Pops* used their promotional music videos regularly. I argue that the reason Lester avoided traditional film codes, opting instead for “authentic” musical performances and television codes, was because conventional film form worked to distance the audience from the film star. The idea is that film stars act in order to build “the artifice of becoming the person one was playing.”¹⁰⁷ Since as early as the 1920s, the film industry worked hard to “protect the image the star conveyed to the public.”¹⁰⁸ This control over the stars’ image would naturally make fans want to know more about whom the star really was in order to create those connections of ownership. Television on the other hand is a

¹⁰² Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day’s Night*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005. 65.

¹⁰³ Jacobs, Jason. *The Intimate Screen: Early British Television Drama*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. 117.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹⁰⁵ Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. 73.

¹⁰⁶ Other titles include local and regional appearances on *Move Over, Dad*, *Scene at 6.30*, *Day by Day*, as well as newsreels specifically about the Beatles such as *The Beatles Come to Town*. There was also an appearance in the feature film *Pop Gear* from which newsreel and other television footage of the Beatles was used. For full details on all of the Beatles television appearances, see Lewisohn, Mark. *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*.

¹⁰⁷ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 80.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 81.

medium that broadcasts programming into the intimate space of a person's home. This intimacy was exploited by television in order to give the illusion that "the hidden world of the stars" would be exposed in the more informal and "authentic" atmosphere of live television.¹⁰⁹ In addition, rather than sharing the viewing experience with a cinema full of people, a live television performance created the sense that the performance was a personal one for the lone viewer or the nuclear family watching together in the evening. Marshall makes the point that the "television celebrity embodies the characteristics of familiarity and mass acceptability."¹¹⁰ Such characteristics were integral to the Beatles' success and were again aided by their television performances. Jacobs recounts a 1939 interview with actress Sybil Thorndike in which she observed:

Television is going to give us an entirely new kind of acting...even more different from film acting because the acting is continuous and the emotional pattern of the character is decided by the actor as he acts and not by the director on the floor or by the cutter in the cutting room.¹¹¹

Since the Beatles were not trained actors and since they were not experienced in acting for film, Lester's decision to focus much of the film's action around a television broadcast allows the director to elicit a more continuous and natural performance from the Beatles. Also, by using concert and television performance codes, as well as cinema vérité techniques, the audience is offered a sense of community and a more realistic, behind-the-scenes experience than previous pop musicals. Neaverson agrees, noting that *A Hard Day's Night* "refused such a simplistic and contrived scenario" common with pop musicals and instead allowed "the audience an insight into their (albeit constructed) 'real' lives."¹¹² Unlike previous pop musicals, these 'real' lives were showing the 'real' (albeit sanitized) side of stardom – mundane, restrictive, and still aware of class differences despite rising above one's class status.

Complicating the traditional musical formula with non-Hollywood approaches such as television codes and French New Wave techniques also complicate the narrative/number opposition that Sutton proposes. Sutton considers the musicals in which the number appears "'naturally' as part of the plot," as in *A Hard Day's Night*.¹¹³ The numbers either take place during the Beatles free time or as part of the show's

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 125.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 119.

¹¹¹ Jacobs, Jason. *The Intimate Screen: Early British Television Drama*. 118.

¹¹² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles' Movies*. 20.

¹¹³ Sutton, Martin. "Patterns of Meaning in the Musical." *Genre: the Musical: a Reader*. Ed. Rick Altman. London: Routledge, 1981. 191.

rehearsal. But Sutton also argues that the musical sequences provide the viewer with “a feeling of energy, freedom, and optimism,” while the narrative creates “a sense of inhibition and repression.”¹¹⁴ I would argue against this in the case of *A Hard Day's Night*, as on one level the film's numbers work to convey the confinements of stardom as caused by their fans. The viewing audience feels a sense of intimacy through the extreme close ups and lack of on screen fans. But for the Beatles, movement is restricted in their performance spaces and the close ups can be read as not intimate but intrusive. The narrative focuses on themes of entrapment caused by the band's class and age. As youths, the Beatles continually stand up against and defy the symbols of authority. As famous pop stars, they are allowed access to both discothèques and exclusive gentlemen's clubs. However, none of the establishment figures in the film pose any real threat either because they are presented as being comical caricatures or as being misunderstood by the opposite characters (such as the scene in the police station where the officers are actually nice and just protecting Ringo and grandfather from getting hurt). The narratives of *Jailhouse Rock* and *The Young Ones* however thrive on the conflict within the social hierarchy to drive the narrative. Presley turns to music to escape the social prejudice towards him for the jail time he served. Presley's character is also portrayed as the one dimensional, rough bad boy. Similarly, *The Young Ones* places the squeaky-clean teens against the corrupt and selfish establishment figure. Again, the conflict arises over the threat to the youth club and the narrative pushes this idea forward throughout the film. In both films, the music sequences clearly act as emotional outlets both for the characters who voice their frustrations or use the number as a call to action and for the audience who paid to see Elvis and Cliff sing. On the other hand, the Beatles are presented as three-dimensional characters whose wit and humor are as much of a desired spectacle as their musical performances. The narrative works to highlight the individuality of the Beatles, just as the musical sequences do, but the narrative also works to stress the group's unity, again just as the musical sequences do. Arguably, it is the tension created within the number (rather than between the number and narrative) that makes *A Hard Day's Night* more complex and unusual than previous pop musicals.

The film's story, written by Alun Owen, is presented as a typical day in the life of the Beatles. From the opening moments, the viewing audience is witness to the fan hysteria and nonstop engagements that fill the Beatles' schedule. The generally agreed premise of *A Hard Day's Night* is that the film begins in Liverpool where the Beatles

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 191.

have been enjoying high levels of success.¹¹⁵ The Beatles run to the station and board a train to London accompanied by manager Norm, assistant Shake, and Paul's grandfather. As the train pulls into the station in London, large throngs of hysterical fans greet the Beatles. Once the band arrive at the hotel, their time is dominated by answering fan mail, appearing at press conferences, and rehearsing for a live, televised concert and then boarding a helicopter to Wolverhampton to do it all over again. The literal journey that the film portrays suggests that rather than living a luxurious lifestyle in Los Angeles, as Presley's character does in *Jailhouse Rock*, "the boys" remain humble, hard working young men who stay true to their roots. The journey motif of *A Hard Day's Night* is presented as a more realistic and natural progression than the contrived plots of previous classical musicals. Through this motif, the Beatles invite their viewing audience to play a more active role in the film by creating a strong sense of community not just at the concluding live performance, but throughout the entire film – a concept that I argue was relatively new to the pop musical. By looking at the musical sequences in chronological order, the Beatles' journey to pop stardom unfolds, providing insight into the Beatles' role as pop musicians within the youth culture.

A Hard Day's Night does not begin with a pre-credit sequence to introduce the characters and the dilemma of the film. Instead, it begins with a black screen with the title and the name of the film's collective stars superimposed in white. After a moment of silence, the familiar opening chord of "A Hard Day's Night" reverberates through the speakers. The first glimpse of the Beatles is that of the band rushing towards the camera down a narrow street and being chased by a mob of faceless fans. It is not so much an introduction to Beatlemania as it is a recreation of actual scenes that took place when the Beatles appeared anywhere in public. The use of such an upbeat number to open the film not only established utopianism, setting the tone for the rest of the film, but it also is a logical choice. "A Hard Day's Night" was released as a single and as part of the soundtrack album on 10 July 1964, four days after the film's London premiere. The song was performed on *Top of the Pops* on 8 July. So rather than save the title song for a climactic number later in the film, "A Hard Day's Night" immediately gives the fans something that seems exclusive. By reprising the song for the end credits, it recalls the energy and excitement of the film's opening because of

¹¹⁵ Even though the opening sequence was shot in London, one can make an argument that it is meant to represent Liverpool as the Beatles make their own way to the station on foot and meet Paul and his grandfather there. The idea is that the Beatles had achieved local success but arriving in London, the Beatles and the viewer gets the sense that their success in Liverpool is not an isolated incident.

the up tempo and distinctive nature of the song. The reprise also suggests strategic marketing – maximizing the exposure of the song so viewers might leave the cinema wanting to buy the soundtrack album. The song’s lyrics also tell of the Beatles’ busy and hectic life since achieving fame – a theme that runs throughout the film and is integral to the plot. “It’s been a hard day’s night, and I’ve been working like a dog. It’s been a hard day’s night, I should be sleeping like a log.” The song is a love letter from the road where the narrator tells of his longing to be home with a loved one. This idea combined with the fast paced visuals provided by quick editing and handheld cameras helps to lend a feeling of authenticity to the Beatles’ daily activities.

“A Hard Day’s Night” (opening credits)

One of the main ways Richard Lester was able to instantly create a sense of realism within the film was to have the Beatles play themselves. The Beatles were not professional actors or film stars, so the way in which the film allows them to connect with the audience is by relying on the same type of performance codes used during a live concert. Such codes are primarily related to the high level of interaction with the audience and are an affirmation of the performer/audience relationship. A concert performance allows fans the opportunity of a “‘lived’ experience” where the audience participates through singing along, clapping, and cheering, thereby showing solidarity to the performer.¹¹⁶ Even though the Beatles do not perform “A Hard Day’s Night” diegetically, Lester evokes a similar experience to that of the Beatles’ live performance by combining an up-tempo soundtrack with fast paced editing and freely moving camera work. The very first shot of *A Hard Day’s Night* achieves that feeling of a lived experience by instantly reinforcing all the major elements of Beatlemania iconography. The jarring guitar sustain of the title song’s opening chord, the uniform mop-tops and tailored suits, a moment of slapstick comedy as George falls to the ground, and the crowd of screaming fans that are in close pursuit of the Beatles are all “images with which the viewer can identify.”¹¹⁷ By creating an immediate bond of familiarity with the viewing audience, Lester was able to establish the basis for the authentic representation of the Beatles’ personae and their day in the life journey. This approach allowed Lester a platform for delivering the film’s behind-the-scenes premise.

¹¹⁶ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 159.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

Allowing fans the sense of joining the Beatles behind-the-scenes was a new idea for the pop musical taken from the classical Hollywood backstage musicals. Fans get to share in the Beatles' stardom with the promise to see what being a celebrity is "really like" from locations such as a hotel room, to a nightclub, and even on stage as the Beatles perform. With the illusion of authenticity in place, the physical barrier of the concert stage and the fictional film's fourth wall could be removed. Marshall argues that for the Beatles' fans "music seemed relatively unimportant...it was ambient to the experience of proximity to their idols."¹¹⁸ Lester's use of cinema vérité techniques allowed the director to bring a sense of closeness to the viewing audience. That sense of closeness is achieved by location shooting, hand held cameras, and close shots of the Beatles. The immediate response to the opening sequence is that such a scene could take place anywhere. Lester filmed the sequence on location in London but avoids wide shots that would reveal the true location through identifiable landmarks. Lester also avoids shots that could identify the location's class association. For example, there are no rows of terraced houses or factory smoke stacks. The primary action takes place near a city center where cafés and bars are located. These are the kinds of places where young people might be seen spending their leisure time in the 1960's new age of prosperity. By using hand held cameras and fast paced editing, the viewer gets a sense of following the pursuit rather than just watching it unfold on screen. This combination of camera work and editing allows the viewer to feel like a participant rather than a spectator and the usual approach of the behind-the-scenes effect is maintained throughout the film.

"A Hard Day's Night" also distinguishes between the onscreen fans and the viewing audience by using the cinema vérité techniques inspired by the French New Wave. The hysterical group of onscreen fans is rarely shot in close up. Primarily, Lester shoots the crowd in wide shots and out of focus as well as focusing at times on just their running legs. However, when the Beatles have lost the crowd or have hidden from them, the viewing audience remains with the Beatles. In this way, the camera acts as the viewing audience's subjective point of view. The audience's point of view works to reinforce the feeling of exclusivity and distinguishes the audience from the unruly fans. In addition, the sequence features a number of close and extreme close ups of the Beatles. In the first shot, the Beatles run towards a stationary camera until they are framed in an extreme close up before running out of shot. Shot six (00:48) presents a close up of George, Ringo, and then John before cutting to a wide shot of all three in

¹¹⁸ Marshall, P. David. "The Celebrity Legacy of the Beatles." *The Beatles, Popular Music, and Society*. Ed. Ian Inglis. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000. 166.

the telephone boxes. Shot nine (1:11) is a lingering close up of John behind a café window. Shot thirty-one (2:22) features a medium close up of Paul in his false mustache and goatee disguise, which fools the crowd of fans as the facial hair is not associated with the Beatlemania image. The final shot of the sequence is of the Beatles on the train, with the camera (and the viewing audience) looking out of the window to watch the mob they have escaped from. As this and further analysis reveals, Lester's use of the close up, and especially of the extreme close up, fetishize the Beatles' collective image as well as each member's "boy next door" good looks. By the end of the sequence there is a feeling created that the Beatles are attainable through the camera's close proximity to the band. The majority of pop musicals in the past, while fully exploiting the teen idols' looks, did not utilize close ups and extreme close ups to the extent that Lester has. The Beatles' image is "fetishized, made magical" in an attempt for the audience to "reclaim them through possession."¹¹⁹ The significance of fetishizing the Beatles' image will be considered later in this chapter. For some, "A Hard Day's Night" was an introduction to the Beatles, but for many already familiar with the band and their music, the opening sequence was designed in such a way that it feels as though the audience is about to be given access to the inner workings of the band and their guarded private lives. It is this creation of a representation of authenticity through the synergy of camera technique, on location filming, the use of non-diegetic music, and mise-en-scene that previous pop musicals lacked.

"I Should Have Known Better"

Dyer's article on entertainment and utopianism continues by discussing how entertainment works because "it responds to real needs *created* by society" and also because it is "defining and delimiting what constitute the legitimate needs of people in this society."¹²⁰ One such need is the feeling of community that the Beatles' evoke in their musical numbers between them and the viewer. "I Should Have Known Better" does represent that feeling of community – a term which Dyer defines as "togetherness" and "a sense of belonging."¹²¹ While historians may argue over how widespread the effect of the Swinging Sixties was amongst youths not located in Britain, the idea of a strong youth community certainly existed, and was thriving in

¹¹⁹ Frith, Simon. *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop*. New York: Routledge, 1988. 12.

¹²⁰ Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." 184.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 184.

London. Again, the film represents the new sense of opportunities and community amongst the newly empowered youths. The Beatles escape from their manager to the baggage carriage where they play cards inside a cage. While the handheld camera roams around the outside of the barred area, it also cuts to shots inside the cage, often using close ups. The juxtaposition of such shots highlights the tension between intimacy and entrapment. The viewer is treated to close ups of the Beatles' faces that fill up the entire frame but then is reminded that the Beatles remain confined to the cage. For the Beatles, music is the way for the band to escape or at least to distract them from the restrictive nature of stardom. For the fans too, music and the pleasure of listening to their favorite band perform provides a similar form of escape – an escape from their lack of social mobility or the problems in their lives. The onscreen audience in this scene is comprised of the “others” – those that do not fit within the establishment – school girls who have snuck away from their carriage, the working class, Irish grandfather, and the Beatles themselves – young men caught between being working class and being stars. One shot shows Paul encouraging Grandfather to sing-along showing the accessibility of the Beatles' music and of their role as pop stars. “I Should Have Known Better” is not as up tempo as “A Hard Day's Night” but its position early in the film not only provides the Beatles with a setting that represents using music as an expression of freedom, but it also encourages the viewing audience to participate in singing along with the song.

As with the title sequence, “I Should Have Known Better” uses the scene's primary pop song non-diegetically. When the song begins, it is used as background music to the Beatles' humorous banter and card game. The song is used non-diegetically for the uncommon length of twenty-three seconds before jump cutting to an extreme close up of John's left profile framed right and George in full close up framed off center to the left (13:27). In this shot, John can be seen playing the harmonica solo before singing the second verse of the song. Again, at the end of the sequence, another jump cut returns the Beatles to their card game where the music becomes non-diegetic and fades out (15:35 – 15:44). Using “I Should Have Known Better” non-diegetically “in a similar manner to conventional incidental music” allowed Lester to have greater choice with where the action of the film could take place.¹²² The Beatles were not restricted to the local café or concert stage where a musical performance of this type would have been more realistic. By removing those locations from the film's principle focus, the director was able to present a different

¹²² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 19.

kind of narrative. While Lester did strive to create an authentic experience for the viewing audience, he did not intend for the performance sequences to be realistic to the point of limiting the film's story.¹²³ For instance, previous pop musicals based the narrative around traditional performance spaces such as cafes, clubs, recording studios, and concert stages in order to “articulate the illusion of ‘real’ diegetic performance.”¹²⁴ When Presley's music is used in a manner other than as a live performance in *Jailhouse Rock* it is in the form of a record being played to a studio executive. However, when Presley performs, it is always in a viable performance space. A specific example would be the “Treat Me Nice” sequence set in a recording studio with Presley in the foreground of the shot and his band in the background. This location and the “key factor” of the pop musical “being the audience's belief that the star's performances were authentic” limits “Treat Me Nice” to two conventional stationary shots – a wide close up of Presley and a medium full shot of Presley with his band in the background.¹²⁵ While this performance was designed to function as a “genuine” live performance, its limiting set up prohibits any of Presley's trademark rebellious charisma and sexualized body language to come through in his performance. In this way, Presley does not actually engage fully with his audience as the Beatles do in *A Hard Day's Night*. The sex appeal, the confidence, and connecting with fans were the kinds of elements that a live audience would have expected and those elements comprised a more authentic representation of Presley's trademark persona. Yet, even in a wide close up during “Treat Me Nice,” Presley does not make eye contact with the viewing audience. So “I Should Have Known Better” may not be a “realistic” performance – at one point Paul lip syncs to John's vocal (14:50) – but the performance does have a more natural, impromptu feel, thereby making the sequence feel like a more authentic Beatles' performance.

Set ups removed from traditional performance spaces, such as the baggage carriage in this sequence, allowed Lester to be more artistic in his visual style. While I will argue that Lester's use of close up fetishizes the group's teen idol image, it is worth acknowledging that on a basic level, the shots are simply aesthetically pleasing. In the spirit of French New Wave, Lester again departs from the artifice of Hollywood conventions. For example, for this sequence Lester most relies on framing John in profile to the right with George framed slightly left of center in the background. There are variations where Lester pulls focus or sets instruments in close ups, but his framing

¹²³ Ibid., 19.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 18.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 18.

style and use of lighting is not dissimilar from the iconic photographs of the band taken in Hamburg by Astrid Kirchherr or of the Robert Freeman group shot used for 1963's *With the Beatles* (UK) / *Meet the Beatles* (US) album cover. Frontani acknowledges the connection between Lester's artistic sensibilities and the Beatles' continual association "with the newest trends and artistic movements...throughout the 1960s."¹²⁶ This can be considered as one of the reasons why film critics, scholars, and historians think of *A Hard Day's Night* as "groundbreaking" cinema.¹²⁷ However, Lester's style works to both fetishize the Beatles' image, as well as underlines the theme of entrapment that runs throughout the film. The beauty of Lester's photographic framing, accentuated by the close ups and the side lighting that creates a subtle contrast between light and shadows, highlights the physical attractiveness of each Beatle. Even though the song's lyrics suggest an innocent boy-girl romance, the Beatles' "confident, successful sexuality" that is on display throughout the film is "enhanced by the comparative physical unattractiveness of those around them."¹²⁸ In this instance, the Beatles are juxtaposed with Paul's grandfather. The issue of fetishizing the Beatles and that of sexual desire come across strongly in *A Hard Day's Night* as the Beatles are portrayed as trying to "pull" girls and young women throughout their journey. In this way, the Beatles' suggestive humor and attitudes towards females show a level of sexual desire not broached in previous pop musicals, yet presented in a way that seems harmless and inoffensive to adults. Many biographies about the Beatles, and especially 1994's *Backbeat* (directed by Iain Softley and focusing on the Beatles' time in Hamburg), depict the Beatles as notorious for their infidelities and sexual encounters with young women after gigs. Marshall believes that the Beatles' sexual identity bordered "decidedly between boys and men."¹²⁹ The Beatles' image was portrayed as clean-cut youths but the attitudes of the band displayed in this film, gave that image a less innocent undertone. The tight shots of this sequence also create a sense of intimacy between the Beatles and the viewing audience. Even a small group of schoolgirls that represent female fans are in close proximity to the group. While one girl sits inside the caged area, a girl on the other side of the cage reaches her arm through the wiring in an attempt to grab a handful of Ringo's hair (14:06). As this scene demonstrates, owning the Beatles' records and showing solidarity by attending concerts was not enough. According to Marshall, for

¹²⁶ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 73.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 73.

¹²⁸ Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day's Night*. 44.

¹²⁹ Marshall, P. David. "The Celebrity Legacy of the Beatles." 168.

many fans “the materiality of identity must be reinforced through the acquisition of closer representations of existence and identity.”¹³⁰ With this close proximity, the aim becomes to try to own some part of the pop star physically, and in this case it is Ringo. In doing so, the fan can reach a level of exclusivity that is limited. The fan’s fantasies would no longer be complied by elements of myth but instead the pop star becomes something concrete, something real. Yet the depiction of close proximity and intimacy is problematic. Using a pseudo-documentary style, Lester creates the illusion of “real” – the “reality” of the Beatles’ character and the “reality” of each member’s life. That illusion only perpetuated the Beatles’ myth. For instance, the juxtaposition between the close up shots inside the caging and outside of it represent the problem of the Beatles both seeming attainable and in actuality being unattainable. To clarify, the sequence can be read as a comment on the constructive nature of the Beatles’ image and the realities of their hidden/private lives.

“If I Fell”

“If I Fell” is the first of the musical numbers to be performed in a traditional performance space – on stage at the Scala theatre. While the sequence appears to adhere to the traditional conventions of the backstage musical, there are some noticeable differences. According to Dyer, the backstage musical makes use of a more ‘realist’ aesthetic, where the “narrative and the number [are] clearly separated.”¹³¹ Yet, classifying “If I Fell” as a number in a backstage musical is problematic as the film also draws from the other types of musicals that Dyer identifies. The other two types of musicals from Dyer’s article are those that “retain the division between narrative...and number...but try to ‘integrate’ the numbers” and those that “try to dissolve the distinction between narrative and numbers.”¹³² In the case of “If I Fell,” the Beatles arrive at the theatre and see the stage being dressed for their live television performance. There is a mutual excitement within the band to try out the stage and the theatre’s acoustics. This act is an escape from the tedious press interviews that were taking place in the sequence prior to this one. So the song’s placement within the scene is a natural progression and the performance seems impromptu. But unlike “A Hard Day’s Night,” the song’s lyrics are not integrated into the plot so the performance of this song could have appeared anywhere in the film. A context for the song, unlike

¹³⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 90.

¹³¹ Dyer, Richard. “Entertainment and Utopia.” 185.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 185.

traditional numbers, is not necessary for this performance. However, the slower tempo of the film's first ballad situates it in a more natural setting. For example, if "And I Love Her" were to have been placed here, it would have been too emotionally intense for the band's excited mood. Instead, "If I Fell" is inserted with some sly humor as John mocks a sulky Ringo. Throughout the performance, there are smiles from the band in between moments of noticeable concentration, but for the most part, the performance remains informal. The Beatles and the camera move around freely, stances are relaxed, the set is not yet formally dressed, and perhaps most importantly, there is a lack of audience. Just as with the previous number, "If I Fell" does not include a traditional audience. There are some stagehands that look on as they work but the theatre's seats are void of fans. By downplaying the role of the fan and of the on screen audience, the film is able to place greater emphasis on the inclusion of the viewing audience. This helps to create the sense of community and the sense of exclusivity with the viewing audience that a classical backstage musical would use as a selling point.

What is immediately noticeable in this sequence is that the Beatles' performance is entirely diegetic and takes place on a theatre stage. However, the cinema vérité approach frees the performance from the more ridged conventions of the classical Hollywood style. The sequence begins with John picking up his guitar in a medium full shot as Ringo sets his drum kit up (32:38). While John sings to Ringo, both have their backs turned towards the camera. The camera pans right following Ringo and John's movement before cutting to a high angle crane shot from above the stage area (32:50). This shot is the first shot of the group in this sequence and all four are facing away from the camera. As the rest of the band makes their entrance to accompany John's vocal and guitar, there is a cut to an extreme close up of Ringo's snare drum and hand (32:55), which then tilts up for a close up of Ringo's head. Ringo is facing John to his left and in the next shot, the camera cuts to what Ringo sees: a medium close shot of John. The handheld camera shakes and is even slightly obstructed by Paul's bass neck in the foreground (33:08). Another cut is made to a wide eye level shot of the group with the camera positioned opposite from the last group shot at 32:50. Just as with that shot, the Beatles in the foreground have their backs to the camera, George in the middle ground is looking away from the camera, and in the background the television crew are dressing the set and getting their equipment ready.

The opening five shots provide the viewing audience with a new approach to diegetic performance. There is not an audience of young fans – only crewmembers looking on in passing. For the viewing audience, the roving camera once again acts as their subjective view to allow the audience a feeling of exclusivity. In this way, Lester is able to provide a number of viewpoints – the lighting rigger, the passing stage hand, and even Ringo’s point of view by cutting to a low angle shot. With the fluid movement of pans, tilts, and walking the camera around each Beatle and their performance space, it creates a sense that the viewing audience is on stage amongst the action with the Beatles, having free access to roam around. The extreme close ups not only provide the viewer with ample glimpses of their favorite Beatle, but also, the close ups on instruments such as Ringo’s snare drum, Paul’s bass, and George’s guitar underline the level of musicianship taking place without it being overly stated by a “real” stage performance. Rather than staging a performance around a conventional set up, Lester provides close up evidence of the drums being hit and the strings being picked. By doing this, Lester brings the same amount of attention to the artistry of musical performance as he does with placing emphasis on the Beatles’ image. All of the elements of Beatlemania iconography are present: the suits and mop-tops, humor, each member’s signature instrument, and the Beatles’ original songwriting. One of the most important differences between the Beatles and most other teen idols is that the Beatles wrote their own songs. By writing their own songs, the Beatles are viewed as being more authentic musicians, despite the Beatles’ carefully constructed image. In order to “express the sincerity of personality and individuality of the performer/star,” singers like Johnnie Ray, Elvis Presley, Adam Faith, Tommy Steele, and Cliff Richard, among others, relied on very physical movements that became their trademarks.¹³³ Because Lennon and McCartney wrote “If I Fell,” the lead singer does not need to rely on showy and gimmicky movements to seem sincere to the audience. Lennon is singing the words produced from his emotions and perhaps even from his own personal experiences. As Lennon’s career progressed and a greater emphasis was placed on his musicianship, his lyrics became increasingly introspective – a device used by folk and rock musicians to add a sense of authenticity to their performances. This thesis shows how the Beatles as musicians and as performers used various codes, original songwriting being one of them, to “actively engage in the construction and differentiation of audience groups...and in authenticating their elevated position.”¹³⁴

Through the Beatles’ music and performance style, the band is able to target particular

¹³³ Ibid., 158.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 161.

audiences – in this case young female fans. As this sequence analysis shows, the Beatles not only allow the viewing audience close proximity to them onstage (and off) but the simplistic boy-girl love song acts as a personal affirmation between the singer and the audience. When the Beatles started to shift towards musicianship over teen idol status, the band's music, image, and beliefs tried to control who their target audience was. So despite the diegetic performance, the focus is more on trying to recreate an informal and impromptu performance rather than trying to pass off the performance as being "real." Lester's undermining of generic convention in this instance suggests that to do so would have patronized the audience and may have jeopardized the level of sincerity and inclusion the sequence aims to deliver. Lester's artistic style not only fetishizes the Beatles and reinforces their trademark image, but it also aligns itself with the Beatles' artistic sensibilities. Because of the sense of community and belonging Lester has created since the opening moments of the film, the constructed nature of the Beatles' image can be overlooked. The sequence comes across as authentic because of the way in which this sequence is presented when compared to more conventional pop musicals. One of the main differences is that this sequence begins by poking fun at the often overdramatic and insincerity of love songs in pop musicals.

"Can't Buy Me Love"

The Beatles' first single from the *A Hard Day's Night* soundtrack was released in March 1964 before filming began and before most of the film's songs had been written. Audiences were familiar with "Can't Buy Me Love" before they had seen the film and its success as a number one made it a likely choice as the film's big climactic number. For this reason, Lester does follow classical musical conventions by placing the number in the middle of the film and by producing a stunning visual spectacle to match the energy of the song. In addition, the song is used to realize the Beatles' growing need for momentary escape from the pressures of stardom. The lead up to the number however is so obviously acted that it must be seen as a deliberately exaggerated nod to the genre. The camera cuts to a door with large white letters proclaiming 'Fire Exit' and as Ringo throws the door wide-open, he shouts, "We're out!" with outstretched arms and a large grin. If the previous musical sequences downplayed the connection between narrative and number, "Can't Buy Me Love" firmly unites the two. By the time the film reaches this point, the viewer sees the

spectacle of Beatlemania and the humor of the Beatles at the press conference in a different light. The theme of entrapment is at its strongest and “Can’t Buy Me Love” represents an undeniable emotional release from their responsibilities. Such a suggestion is made possible in the very unconventional way in which the song is presented – at high speeds, with exaggerated camera angles, and an extreme use of handheld cameras. The vast empty space the field provides is an important consideration as it gives the Beatles’ uninhibited movement. The extreme low angled shots of the camera from the helicopter further highlight the importance of the open space. Sutton lists a number of similar environments that musicals utilize for escapist numbers and notes that such locations are used precisely because of their “excuse for movement” and their “common element of ‘play.’”¹³⁵ Sutton continues,

Open space in the musical is the most expressive of media – it gives the body room to move and, through this, the mind room to expand. Neutral space is charged with vital meaning by the dancer’s movement, it is encompassed by the individual or couple and becomes transformed into another world (their world).¹³⁶

Linked directly with the Beatles’ rule and structure free game play is Lester’s highly visual experimentation with film style. Lester’s style also makes it difficult for the viewing audience to keep up with or be included in the Beatles’ moment of escape. This is significant because the viewing audience have been in close proximity to the band up to this point in the film. The camera gets so close to each member that it is difficult to recognize who is who or to create a bond with a particular member. Whip pans and the constant interchange between extreme close ups and extreme wide shots also make a sense of inclusion by the viewer difficult. The sequence ends in a similar fashion to *Singing in the Rain*’s title performance by Gene Kelly, as the owner of the field, much like *Singing*’s police officer, breaks up the brief moment of freedom and returns the Beatles to the reality of their lives as pop stars.

Up to this point in the film, the Beatles have been confined in some way. In the opening sequence there are physical barriers the Beatles leap over as well as the barriers of their celebrity. As a result of the latter, the Beatles’ presence in public makes them targets for the hysterical crowds of fans. Once safely on the train, the Beatles are confined by their manager to stay out of trouble by staying in the carriage. The shots in the carriage are tight, low angle shots that convey the claustrophobia of the space to

¹³⁵ Sutton, Martin. “Patterns of Meaning in the Musical.” 192.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 192.

the viewing audience. When the Beatles do escape Norm and Shake, they still cannot escape the fans. The wire caging that the Beatles play cards and perform “I Should Have Known Better” in cannot keep the subjective camera from intrusive extreme close ups. Music is a form of escape but only temporarily as the physical barriers provide reminders of the lack of privacy and restrictions of movement the Beatles endure as a price of their fame. At the theatre, the Beatles’ schedule is controlled by press engagements and rehearsals. While “If I Fell” plays out as an impromptu performance, the Beatles’ movement is restricted by the crewmembers dressing the stage. Once again the camera’s free movements and high angles can be read as subjective views of onlookers. Wherever the Beatles go and whatever they do, there always seems to be an audience present. The theme of imprisonment comes to a climax at the halfway point of *A Hard Day’s Night*. Ringo spots a fire escape and the band break out to the open space of a field with Ringo proclaiming, “We’re out!” Glynn notes that “Can’t Buy Me Love” is not only an escape for the Beatles, but it is also a momentary respite for Lester. This sequence is the most visually stylized in the film, as “the musical number is freed from its generic restrictions,” such as using the entire song as non-diegetic and creating a sequence that does nothing to move the narrative forward.¹³⁷ With each sequence Lester added progressive approaches to both style and social themes whether an encounter with someone from a different generation or class background or using unconventional editing and brief moments of surrealism. One could argue that *A Hard Day’s Night* still functions within the general premise of a pop musical – the Beatles’ image and music are exploited for further commercial gains in the prosperous youth market. The difference, however, lies in the knowingness of how the subgenre works. Rather than patronize the audience by following formulaic conventions, the people the Beatles come across are mainly caricatures portrayed with outdated attitudes towards youths and class. The same approach is used with the film’s style. Rather than a close up of the star and a cut to a wide shot, Lester gives the audience an extreme close up and a cut to a wide, high angle shot, as seen in “If I Fell.” “Can’t Buy Me Love” becomes the culmination of what a musical sequence can be when the generic rulebook is put aside. Appropriately, the sequence matches the energy of the Beatles’ youthfulness and refreshing approach to music and style.

For the first time in the film, there is direct engagement between the Beatles and the camera. Where the viewer had been allowed to tag along with the band, Lester

¹³⁷ Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day’s Night*. 70.

was careful not to give the audience too much access; for example the lack of eye contact with the camera. This is especially noticeable during performance sequences and in Lester's avoidance of realism over the illusion of authenticity. From the very beginning of the film, "Lester was keen to break with uniform performance realism as early...as possible in order to 'establish the principle that there would not just be realism.'"¹³⁸ Neaverson agrees with Glynn that the anti-realist elements of this sequence are not only "the most pronounced example of this anti-realism" but also Lester's style from this point forward "freed the representation of the musical number from its traditional generic slavery."¹³⁹ Similar to the film style in this sequence, there are no physical barriers, no managers or authority figures, and no pressure for the Beatles to perform music. In this way, the representation of Beatlemania iconography is incomplete. Throughout the sequence, Lester relies most on wide shots, which downplay Beatlemania iconography. From Lennon's cap disappearing during the sequence as well as McCartney's jacket, and the lack of instruments, these are all examples of altering the Beatles' image. Shot two is a wide low angle shot of the back of the theatre (37:23). The Beatles are seen running down the fire escape stairs; indistinguishable from any other group of young men. The camera tilts down to follow their descent before cutting to a close up of the grating under the stairs. Shots four, six, and eight are extreme close ups of the stairs from underneath and the high angle camera spirals around, following the Beatles' movement. When the Beatles reach the field (37:48), John throws off his hat and Paul discards his jacket freeing them from key elements of their constructed image. At this point, Lester keeps the shots wide and removed the camera away from the Beatles' space by using aerial shots to help maintain distance. There are a few exceptions edited into the sequence. For instance, shot fifteen is a subjective point of view shot in which Paul "attacks" the camera. The camera is tilted down towards the ground before tilting up to follow Ringo and then tilts down again to reveal the cameraman's Beatle boots (38:34 – 38:40). With this last shot, it is possible that the Beatles were allowed to film some of the footage, as each was a keen amateur filmmaker. Paul's "attack" on the camera is a clear statement on the obtrusiveness of the media in the Beatles' daily lives. Another exception to the extreme wide shots is shots twenty through twenty-three. These four shots are comprised of each Beatle recreating their iconic "jumps" for the camera, which were originally the basis of Dezo Hoffmann's photographs "from Liverpool's Sefton Park of

¹³⁸ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 19.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 19.

the group leaping in the air” (39:08 – 39:13).¹⁴⁰ When the camera cuts to Ringo, the short sequence of shots turns from iconic to satirical as Ringo only takes a small jump forward.

Technically, the “Can’t Buy Me Love” sequence is a mixture of experimentation, French New Wave influence, and accidental circumstances. Much of this sequence, as well as the entire film, was developed out of Lester’s practical experimentations from other projects. Lester made his start in shooting television commercials where the necessity was on producing a very brief piece around a product rather than a plot. With the instantaneous nature of television, not only would the advertisements need to be produced quickly but they would also need to be aware of current trends and styles in order to persuade as many consumers as possible. The fast pace of “Can’t Buy Me Love” is informed by the speed in which television content had to be produced. Lester was aware of how quickly trends changed and how much slower the filmmaking process from pre-production to distribution and exhibition was. To save time with multiple takes and re-shoots, often a time consuming process when working with inexperienced actors, Lester “opted to shoot with multiple cameras,” a technique he used while filming *It’s Trad, Dad!* (1962).¹⁴¹ Glynn notes Walker’s observations on how Lester’s film centered on the traditional jazz music scene was arguably

the first feature film that successfully made the presentation techniques of television commercials and pop shows on the small screen designed for the teenage and sub-teenage audiences into an integral part of its jokey structure.¹⁴²

While using multiple cameras allowed Lester to have more choice of footage, the practice also gave the edited sequence “a ‘live’ feel” as well as “facilitated the staccato rhythm of editing Lester preferred.”¹⁴³ This live feel to the performance sequences seems as though it should be ironic when compared to the conventional approaches previous pop musical directors took to ensure a “real” musical performance. However, it can be argued that using multiple cameras gave the Beatles more freedom to do their jobs as musicians without being restricted by a director controlling every move in order to get the right shot. If there was a mistake, Lester had at least two or three other sets of footage captured from cameras at different vantage points to choose from. Also,

¹⁴⁰ Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day’s Night*. 72.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11. NB: At the time of writing, *It’s Trad, Dad!* is not available for viewing.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 11.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 11.

not requiring multiple takes meant that performers did not tire from continually having to repeat themselves, which resulted in fresher and livelier performances. During the aerial scenes in “Can’t Buy Me Love,” a dying camera battery achieved the sped up effect. To compensate for the camera’s slow motion capturing of the footage photographer Gilbert Taylor sped the footage up, telling Lester it was shot “in accelerated motion.”¹⁴⁴ Lester was so impressed with the result that he had other shots for the sequence re-shot using the same effects.¹⁴⁵

Many young people were attracted to the prospect of rising above one’s class 1950s and 1960s, which was especially attractive for many hopeful youths of working class backgrounds who yearned to leave the factories and squalor behind. This is evident in the large number of working class actors and pop bands that emerged during this time. There is no denying that the Beatles wanted fame and fortune, but Lester also presented a more realistic portrayal of the demands made on the Beatles in order to maintain those privileges. *A Hard Day’s Night* is the story of what happens after the big talent contest is won or the first record deal is made. Unlike previous pop musicals where image types tended to be of extremes, like Presley’s bad boy or Richard’s clean teen, the Beatles’ characterization compliments the “Can’t Buy Me Love” sequence’s style. For example, performers were either deemed “dangerous” and “out of control” by parents or were too sanitized to be embraced by the more liberal minded youth culture.¹⁴⁶ However, “Can’t Buy Me Love” brings to life the playfulness and energy of the Beatles’ young image. Because of the fans’ strong identification to the Beatles’ image, Lester is able to match that feeling of excitement. By using New Wave inspired camera and editing techniques, Lester gives the audience a feeling of the Beatles’ pace of life throughout the film.

“And I Love Her”/“I’m Happy Just to Dance with You”

“And I Love Her” is the first piece in the film to feature Paul McCartney singing lead vocals diegetically. It is also the first number to look as though it had been carefully choreographed and rehearsed, whereas the preceding numbers were meant to

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 28.

¹⁴⁶ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 160.

look spontaneous. I would compare this sequence most with the title number from *Jailhouse Rock* – both are being recorded for television, both feature the musicians in full professional performance mode, and both integrate the number into the narrative but at no time does the television crew interrupt or stop the performance. There are visual differences that show Lester's reworking of generic conventions in order to weave the narrative into the number. For example, Lester edits in shots of the Beatles' performance from the gallery monitors and from the studio cameras. When Lester does shoot traditional set ups, the Beatles are positioned in an ordered fashion to create a frame that looks visually stunning. The slow tempo of the ballad allows Lester to use more conventional shots but in the case of the 180-degree pan around McCartney, also allows him to add avant-garde flourishes. Like "Jailhouse Rock," the set dressings are simple but "Jailhouse Rock's" fast tempo creates a spectacle out of the song, bringing in dancers that take focus away from Presley and turn the number into one more reminiscent of Busby Berkeley. The camera work in "And I Love Her," however works to compliment the Beatles' image as the slow paced editing allows the camera to linger in a close up or pause briefly to admire the group structure of the band and artistry of the song. The idea of presenting the Beatles as individuals with strong group unity seems to be a contradiction but Lester's careful cutting makes this possible. With "And I Love Her" the viewing audience is able to gain a better understanding of each Beatle's role within the group. We hear Harrison's Spanish guitar solo and we see him playing it in close up just as we hear Lennon's rhythm guitar strumming as we see him playing in a full shot. And as this section will explore, the performance is taking place both on a stage and on television monitors – two mediums that share similar performance codes in order to create a sense of community in the case of the former and a sense of intimacy with the latter. Again, there is no audience present in this sequence; that level of intense emotion is saved for the final number.

The function of "I'm Happy Just to Dance With You" is more obligatory than emotional release. Again the fact that the Beatles wrote their own material is one that cannot be underestimated. Many bands contemporary to the Beatles still had songs written for them or recorded cover versions. This was the case with Gerry and the Pacemakers, Cliff Richard, the Rolling Stones, and even Elvis Presley. Slowly after the Beatles' success as songwriters, more bands began penning their own material. The significance of the Beatles as songwriters stress authorship and ownership of the words they are singing. This creates a stronger bond with the fans when they realize we are hearing the words and thoughts of Lennon, McCartney, or Harrison. In this way, they

seem to be speaking directly to the listener. Harrison did not have the support of a co-author as Lennon and McCartney did, nor did the two take his songwriting interests seriously enough to help nurture him. As a result, “I’m Happy Just to Dance With You” is presented as a novelty. The number is prefaced with knowing references to the classical musical. As the Beatles enter the stage area, there is another performance taking place. Lionel Blair and his dancers are dancing in a synchronized fashion to a jazzy/easy listening rendition of Harrison’s song. When they finish, Lennon feigns excitement and says, “Hey kids, I have an idea. Let’s do the show right here. Yeah!,” a statement that was the catchphrase for many of the pop musicals that preceded *A Hard Day’s Night*. At the end of the performance, both Lennon and McCartney sarcastically comment on the value of Harrison’s performance. While Lennon and McCartney’s songwriting took center stage throughout the film, and fans and critics praised Ringo’s solo scene, Harrison emerges as the dark horse of the group. Both “And I Love Her” and “I’m Happy Just to Dance With You” highlight Harrison’s skills as a musician. Harrison is also portrayed as the most normally awkward for a young man. He trips and falls as he is running, he knocks an amplifier over as he leans on it, and most memorable is his solo scene with the television producer. Harrison’s scene is played as if he is unaware of the extent of his pop stardom. When asked about fashion and television, he answers honestly not as a pop star but as an opinionated working class youth. These moments help to add extra layers on to Harrison’s identity and character. The number can be easily inserted where it is because the next number is the grand finale – the moment that the whole picture has been leading up to.

After the Beatles brief interlude out of the theatre, they return to the stage to rehearse for the evening’s live performance. “And I Love Her” is the film’s first slow ballad and the film style matches the song’s tempo. Rather than cut from one shot to the next, Lester first allows the camera to linger longer than usual before dissolving into the next long shot. Whereas in “I’m Happy Just to Dance with You,” Lester cuts, zooms and pulls focus on the first beat of the song’s measures. The use of zooms and differential focus gives the camera movement a sense of syncopation to match Ringo’s time keeping. Both sequences physically elevate the lead singer in order to give each songwriter their due credit and to reinforce the idea of each Beatle as an equal member of the group rather than suggesting one is a leader over the rest of the group. In “And I Love Her,” the first shot is a wide shot with McCartney in the center of the frame standing on a hexagonal platform. George stands at a lower elevation off center to the left of the frame, while Ringo is positioned in the background and John sits in the

middle ground on the right side of the frame. John's positioning almost seems completely removed from the band. However, his positioning removes the potential for dominance over McCartney's turn in the spotlight. Lester does equally dissolve to close ups of Lennon during the sequence. In addition, Lester dissolves to extreme close ups of Ringo's hands drumming on a set of bongos and uses the same idea to highlight George's intricate solos on the Spanish guitar – an instrument that requires more skill and finesse than an ordinary acoustic guitar. In shot eleven (50:10), the camera is in a medium close up of Paul singing and begins a forty-five degree pan around Paul. At forty-five degrees, side lighting completely obscures Paul's face, shifting focus from his image to his voice as an instrument. The set up of the Beatles on stage as a collective is also very formal versus the impromptu formation in other musical sequences in the film. "And I Love Her" utilizes a very stylistic approach that not only brings McCartney as the song's principle author to the foreground, but also, reinforces the Beatlemania iconography of a live performance. For instance, the way that George and Paul are positioned in the opening shot (48:12) creates space for the viewing audience to see the Beatles' simple but iconic logo on Ringo's bass drum head in the background. Also, when John is in a low angle medium shot (49:52), the camera captures his enigmatic personality as he looks off camera into the distance. Lennon wears a blank expression that is impossible to read and the complexities of his character are represented by his reflection in the white platform. There is a symmetry and starkness presented with the sharp contrast of black and white. Again, Ringo is shown in a medium close shot with a wistful expression which quickly changes to his trademark smile accompanied by a slight bob of his head as the shot dissolves (49:46).

Similarly, "I'm Happy Just to Dance with You" features George as the lead singer and composer of the song symbolized by standing at a higher elevation from the rest of the Beatles. Ringo on drums faces George, leaving his back to the camera, while Paul and John flank either side of George. As the fledgling songwriter, George's lead vocals initially seemed as much of a novelty on early Beatles' records as Ringo's lead vocal tracks. With this in mind, Paul and John's close proximity to George seemed to convey a role of support that almost patronizes George's ability as lead singer. But Lester's camera work highlights George's talents as a singer. Starting with wide shots, the camera zooms in with the shuffle of the beat to frame George in a full close up (53:44 – 53:52). In the next shot, Lester once again uses differential focus with Lennon in the foreground, right frame, and Harrison in the background, left frame (54:03). This was an effect used throughout "I Should Have Known Better." Lester pulls focus

from John to George before cutting to Ringo displaying his trademark showmanship from behind the drums. Again, the sequence emphasizes Beatlemania iconography, especially in the wide shots of the band. For instance, in one wide shot (55:01) John stands playing his Rickenbacker electric rhythm guitar, moving to the music by bending slightly at the knees and George loosens up enough to give the viewing audience a sample of his trademark footwork. George often danced in such a way while on lead vocals or during guitar solos when the Beatles performed live. As an in-joke to all of those parents who thought the Beatles were named after the insect, there are pictures of large beetles in the background. As a comment on the accessibility and highly exploitable nature of the Beatles' music, the sequence begins with the Lionel Blair dancers performing to a light entertainment type version of the song (53:18). The scene also mocks the stale and outdated (albeit successful), conventions of pop musicals. Lionel Blair and the showgirl chorus dancers are juxtaposed with the trendy and more youth oriented Beatles, who wear their hair long and sport neckties, rather than short hair and a bow tie like the older Blair. Again, John's sarcastic dialogue that begins the number is of course mocking the patronizing and overly acted scenes of traditional pop musicals. John's delivery is a comment on the obviously constructed nature of those films as well as how fake the pop musicals come across.

Both "And I Love Her" and "I'm Happy Just to Dance with You" are centered on rehearsals for the televised program that the film builds up to. For this reason, there is a great emphasis on television equipment and the process of producing material for television. This awareness of television production mirrors the less obvious awareness of filmmaking. Throughout, Lester's film style reminds the viewing audience that they are watching a film – from the cinema vérité influence of the shaking handheld cameras and the moments of "anti-realism" to seeing boom microphones and the camera operator's shoes in shot, as well as a glimpse of Richard Lester on screen. In a similar way, this is overtly achieved by making the television process part of the music process. During "And I Love Her," the viewing audience sees the Beatles perform onstage from the gallery. In the gallery, the camera focuses on the television director who mixes the shots and directs the stationary camera operators on the studio floor. The director mouths and nods the beats and moves levers and dials in time to the music. Many of the Beatles' extreme close ups are presented through the television monitors in the gallery. Also, the first shot of "I'm Happy Just to Dance with You" is of the Beatles captured through the view finder of the television studio's stationary camera. There is also an awareness of the work involved and the number of

crewmembers required to produce a program for television. This heavy acknowledgement of television is a very important one as Glynn argues that the Beatles “were the first group to be marketed through television,” adding that *A Hard Day’s Night* “does not upset that successful strategy.”¹⁴⁷ Because of the Beatles’ record breaking viewing figures for their televised performances, acknowledging television’s role in the success of the Beatles is another way for Lester to connect with the viewing audience and to make them feel part of a familiar community. Before *A Hard Day’s Night*, the Beatles’ print campaign exploited their humble, ordinary roots that their image was based on. Also, the Beatles have always been known by and referred to by their first names alone. In order to make *A Hard Day’s Night* fully evoke an authentic atmosphere, Lester’s reliance on the music and television codes discussed in this chapter was crucial in maintaining a real sense of familiarity – a feeling that the majority of previous pop musicals lacked.

The Final Live Concert

(“Tell Me Why”/ “If I Fell”/ “I Should Have Known Better”/
 “She Loves You”)

Perhaps no pop musical can resist or do without the large spectacle of the final performance. It is a moment to which the entire film builds up to. If the function of a musical number is meant to be a release of pent up emotion and an extension of the feelings created by situations within the plot, then this final live concert sequence does not hold back. Lester presents a 13 minute long sequence that delivers the entire over the top spectacle of the classical musical number. Both entertainment and utopianism are undeniably present in this sequence. Unlike previous pop musical final concerts, there is an energy and excitement matched by the camera work, editing, and inclusion of the studio audience that is unparalleled to the more traditionally shot concert sequences. Rather than following the musical rulebook to the letter, Lester does insert new ideas into how to present such a sequence. While the viewing audience has waited 80 minutes for this moment, Lester makes them wait a little longer for a shot of the Beatles in their full Beatlemania stage mode. Instead, we see the hysteria of the audience from various angles and whip pans and then Lester presents close ups of

¹⁴⁷Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day’s Night*. 65.

enlarged cardboard photographs of the Beatles that dress the set. This sets up elements of the iconographic performance the Beatles deliver. The set list for the final concert is also an interesting one. There are some discrepancies over which songs from the film were actually released as singles and B-sides both in America and in Britain. I have taken my information from Lewisohn and cross-referenced it with MacDonald. The final performance exploits the lesser known songs from the album that were not released as A-sides or would not have received as much exposure as “Can’t Buy Me Love” which was already a number one hit and had been released for some months before the film’s premiere, and “A Hard Day’s Night” which had strength in being the film’s title song and a sure choice for a successful number one single. “Tell Me Why” is a mid-tempo number that was not released as a single so its inclusion would help support the soundtrack album. The song was also available in Britain as part of an EP that featured extracts from the film (Parlophone GEP 8920).¹⁴⁸ Similarly, “If I Fell” and “I Should Have Known Better” make a reprise appearance in the final performance because they were both B-sides in America and were not released as singles in Britain but did appear on the EP mentioned above. “You Can’t Do That” was filmed for the performance but because of time constraints was left out – it was the B-side to “Can’t Buy Me Love” in America and in Britain. Finally, the number ends with a well-known favorite to unite all fans and audience members regardless of their knowledge of the Beatles and their music. “She Loves You” was an unprecedented success from 1963 and appeared on the US Capitol Records release *The Beatles’ Second Album*. Released in April 1964, “She Loves You” would still be a viable choice for exploiting in the film if only to sell more copies of the *Second Album*, in addition to the film’s soundtrack. Also, it adds a sense of realism to the performance because the Beatles’ would have still been using “She Loves You” in their repertoire. The song list for the Beatles’ second film, *Help!*, would use a similar tactic with 1964’s “She’s a Woman,” a B-side to “I Feel Fine” from the substandard *Beatles for Sale* album.¹⁴⁹

The film’s final set of musical performances takes place on the theatre stage as a live concert performance, which is also broadcasted on television. Both the live setting and the medium of television operate in a way that allows the audience to recall a sense of familiarity that “reinforces the feeling of close proximity.”¹⁵⁰ With this presentation, Lester is able to fuse the ideology of both the television and music

¹⁴⁸ This EP is not to be confused with another EP that was released featuring extracts from the album that were not in the film (Parlophone GEP 8924).

¹⁴⁹ The US Capitol Records version of this album was titled *Beatles ’65* and featured a slightly altered track list.

¹⁵⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 192.

celebrity together in order to create a close connection between the band and their audience to symbolize “the ritualization of this claim to authenticity.”¹⁵¹ Lester’s unconventional approach to filming the performance give the “live” concert a real sense of authenticity as he tries to replicate the energy and excitement experienced at a Beatles’ concert. In doing so, the viewing audience who had seen the Beatles perform live could share those recollections and reaffirm their personal dedication to the Beatles. However, for those who had not seen the Beatles perform live, they could feel as though they had by the end of the sequence. One of the key elements of Beatlemania iconography is the fans. Lester opens the film with the mob of youngsters chasing after the band and he ends the film by highlighting the screaming fans in the theatre. The fans’ screaming and crying is as much a part of the performance as the Beatles’ image and barely audible music. The sequence begins with a full shot of screaming young girls who dominate the musical performance visually for the first twenty seconds (1:14:58). The pace of the camera work and editing is frantic, matching the theatre’s atmosphere. After the audience has been well-represented in the first twenty seconds, the camera then cuts to four individual wide shots of each Beatle in the form of large photographic set pieces taken by Dezo Hoffmann. Otherwise, whip pans and crash zooms of the audience dominate the first moments of the performance. Again, Lester builds anticipation for the Beatles’ unveiling by focusing on Beatlemania iconography, such as the audience and the well-known images of the band. The first shot of the Beatles on stage is of Paul and George sharing a microphone, as they would have done for a song that featured John’s lead vocals. The full close up captures the mop-tops and velvet collar suits, as well as places emphasis on Paul and George’s harmonies. The medium close up of John shows him smiling, looking around the audience, and making eye contact with the camera. John’s stage presence comes off as being strong and of noticeably enjoying the hysteria he has helped to create. The individual shots of the Beatles are mixed with close ups of the audience to convey each Beatle and audience member’s role within the Beatles’ myth. Not only does Lester continue with close up shots of instruments but he also films the Beatles in individual close ups and extreme close ups to keep reinforcing the idea of each Beatle as being an equal individual with a specific role to play in the band. In this way, Lester’s style of direction and the Beatles’ performance

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 193.

deliberately break with [Hollywood] conventions, and the group's musical renderings are shot from a multiplicity of angles...camera movements, with extraordinarily fast paced editing...and in a style which does not prioritize the singer above the instrumentation of the group as a whole.¹⁵²

This “live” concert performance highlights how the Beatles differed from Elvis Presley or Cliff Richard, which emphasized that for the first time there was a successful rock ‘n’ roll band with each member functioning as an equal part of the group. Previously and even emerging around the same time as The Beatles, there were bands with distinguishable front men (usually the vocalists) such as Bill Haley and The Comets, Buddy Holly and The Crickets, The Dave Clark Five, Smokey Robinson and The Miracles, and Diana Ross even emerged to become the figurehead of The Supremes as did Eric Burdon with The Animals. Not only were each of The Beatles an equal part of the band, but also they each had very distinctive personalities and characteristics. By realizing these strengths that The Beatles had, Lester’s primary objective was not necessarily to exploit them in a teen film but rather, as Alexander Walker and Neaverson agree, to make a film that “attempted to present audiences with a different and more complex breed of pop star than had previously been seen in Britain or America.”¹⁵³ In order to meet their objective, Lester and screenplay writer Owen realized it would be crucial to build their film on the strength of The Beatles’ already successful and unique image rather than create an inferior image from scratch as previous teenage exploitation filmmakers had done, and in many cases continued to do.

Lester does not frame the band in a visible wide shot until three and a half minutes into the performance. When he does deliver what the viewing audience had been waiting for, the shot is an authentic replica of the Beatles’ most iconic stage formation (1:18:45). Paul and George stand to the left of the frame with John to the right of the frame centered in front of the microphone. Ringo is in the background, center frame, elevated by his position on the drum riser. This part of the sequence, with the Beatles singing “I Should Have Known Better” is a checklist of Beatlemania imagery as well as a culmination of all the themes and technical innovation seen throughout the film. Not only are the Beatles’ fetishized in the close ups, but they are also presented to the viewing audience as a collective unit. The images of the trademark instruments, clothing, and physical appearance that many of the young fans

¹⁵² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 20.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 21.

connected with are highlighted. Some shots are filmed from on the stage with handheld cameras that even rove behind the Beatles to give the viewing audience an exclusive look at the Beatles' vantage point. These shots, along with shots filmed in the gallery, all show the process of film and television making as well as once again give the viewing audience behind the scenes access. While previous pop musicals strove to pass off music performances as real, *A Hard Day's Night* attempts to create a more convincing sense of realism, without trying to patronize or trick the audience. For this reason, Lester includes moments of surrealism and light humor. One example is at the end of this sequence when the performance has reached an almost over the top level of Beatlemania iconography – from the trademark Beatle bow and massive Beatles' sign illuminated with hundreds of light bulbs, to the “She Loves You” finale – Lester then throws in a moment of anti-realist humor as Grandfather rises up from beneath the stage floor at the end of the performance. The ending to the sequence is self-referential and satirical on one level and purely exploitative on another level.

Conclusion

A Hard Day's Night is a musical that does not limit itself to any one particular style or form. It complicates the classical formula by creating tensions not between narrative and number, but within the number itself. The themes, form, and visual style create a film that undermines Hollywood convention. In doing so, Lester constructed a film that seemingly provides fans with backstage entertainment from their favorite pop group, but within the same musical sequence, reveals the dual nature of the film – to also depict the realities of being a star and how that can stifle the craft of one's art. This is true not only of the Beatles as musicians but also of Lester as a filmmaker.

United Artists only invested £200,000 in the film's production and were sure that their investment would be recouped in soundtrack sales even if the film was not successful.¹⁵⁴ There were two versions of the soundtrack – one was formatted as the Beatles' latest release for the British market with a track list that had the songs from the film on side one, while side two was made of new compositions not featured in the film. For the American market, there was a more traditional soundtrack album that featured the Beatles' compositions from the film as well as George Martin's orchestral

¹⁵⁴ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 12.

score. The tracks that made up side two of the British release were later released for the US market on Capitol Records' *Something New* (July 1964). No doubt the British release of *A Hard Day's Night* would also be available to US consumers as an import. The lucrative music tie-in products available seem to have helped allow a lack of restraint on what direction Lester took artistically with the film. There are no known accounts of what the producers thought of dailies or any amount of footage available for viewing before the film premiered. Lester was simply left alone to make a film that honored his and the Beatles' wishes. If *A Hard Day's Night* would have been filmed under one of the majors within the studio system, I do not think it would have been as eclectic and distinctive in form and style. The tendency for studio pictures was to use an assembly line inspired production system. This allowed for studios to maximize time and money in order to keep supply in line with demand. However, the pictures produced tended to be formulaic and lacking full artistic potential. United Artists was created by filmmakers who wanted to create films without interference from studio heads. In addition to this, United Artists gained worldwide attention and commercial success with early 1960s releases of *Dr. No* (Terence Young, 1962) and *Tom Jones* (Tony Richardson, 1963) – two films that won favor with the notoriously difficult American mainstream audiences, as the latter was also recognized by the Academy Awards. The positive mood towards British exports was another factor that helped *A Hard Day's Night* embrace the changes taking place in society and in cinema, opening up new possibilities for the relationship between narrative and number in the pop musical.

Ultimately, *A Hard Day's Night* became widely accepted as a commentary on the Beatles unprecedented celebrity. With the very first shot of the opening title sequence Lester, using the pseudo-documentary style, reconstructs the hysteria of Beatlemania. Recreating the phenomenon of Beatlemania is so central to the themes presented in the film that the film's originally proposed title was *Beatlemania*. At one point, John Lennon even suggested *Authenticity* as a title because the authentic nature of the film "helped establish a kind of intimacy between the performer and the audience."¹⁵⁵ As Paul McCartney attests, "There was no question of doing a cheapo rip-off like the typical pop musicals of the time. We were determined to hold out for something better."¹⁵⁶ Being Epstein's pet project, the Beatles were allowed to have such a large amount of control over how their imprint was used and for what while deciding to restrict access to anyone who went against the band's wishes. Upon its

¹⁵⁵ Stark, Steven D. *Meet the Beatles*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005. 160.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 158.

release both in America and in the UK in July 1964, *A Hard Day's Night* became a commercially and critically acclaimed success authenticating the Beatles image. Fans exclaimed that the film was “fab” and “really gear” while others commented on how “all the songs were fab and fit in very well” with in the film.¹⁵⁷ Even the more mainstream, yet respected publications, like *Time* magazine declared the film to be “one of the smoothest, freshest, and funniest films ever made.”¹⁵⁸ In addition to his quote included at the beginning of this chapter, critic Andrew Sarris also noted of *A Hard Day's Night*,

I like the Beatles in this moment in film history not merely because they mean something but rather because they express effectively a great many aspects of modernity that have converged inspiredly in the personalities...they may not be worth a paragraph in six months, but right now their entertaining message seems to be that everyone is ‘people.’¹⁵⁹

Sarris notes not only the social contribution the film made in raising the youth culture’s voice but he also acknowledges one of the key components to the film: the idea of community and their individuality within it.

So successful was the film in fulfilling the objective of authenticating the Beatles image, which grossed a total of \$14 million in North America, that fans felt it necessary to attend multiple screenings in order to continually replicate the original connection created in being able to spend 90 minutes with the Beatles.¹⁶⁰ One woman, for instance, reported her daughter missing to the authorities when the young girl failed to come home after saying she was going to the cinema. Eventually, the young girl was found in the cinema watching *A Hard Day's Night* for the fifth, consecutive time that day.¹⁶¹ As this chapter has shown, the Beatles’ appeal and showmanship along with Richard Lester’s knowledge of selling a product combined to create an experience that came across as a genuine opportunity for fans to connect to their idols as the band journeyed from the North to the South paralleling their journey to stardom.¹⁶² All along

¹⁵⁷ “VR: *A Hard Day's Night*.” *Screen Education*. Ed. Ray Willis. Vol. 30. July/August 1965. London: SEFT Publications, 1965. 81.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹⁵⁹ Sarris, Andrew. *Confessions of a Cultist*. 162-163.

¹⁶⁰ Harry, Bill. *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*. New York: Hyperion, 1992. 290.

¹⁶¹ “VR: *A Hard Day's Night*.” *Screen Education*. 80.

¹⁶² It should be noted that Albert and David Maysles’ footage of the Beatles’ US visit and Washington, D.C. concert during February 1964 was screened 12 February 1964, on television in Britain on ITV (as *Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! The Beatles in New York*) showing only 36 minutes of footage. American audiences had to wait until 13 November of that year, but did see seven extra minutes of footage not shown in Britain. The footage was known as *The Beatles in America* and *What's Happening! The Beatles in the USA*. It is now commercially available as a full length feature under the title *The*

the way, the Beatles allowed fans to be apart of that journey from behind the scenes in *A Hard Day's Night*.

For much of *A Hard Day's Night*, the Beatles are on a train ride that represents the band's journey from their humble Liverpool beginning to relocating in London in order to sustain their success. While filled with humor and iconic performances, *A Hard Day's Night* already hints at the disdain for touring and the loss of personal freedom that the Beatles experienced as a result of their celebrity. Perhaps the realization of their celebrity allowed the Beatles leverage over their manager in order for *Help!* to be a film with a greater level of input from the Beatles. Within the one year between *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, the latter film represented a turning point where the Beatles began to put a greater emphasis on their music rather than maintaining an image that no longer accurately portrayed the band's interests. Although a fictional film, *A Hard Day's Night* borrows thematically from British social realism and visually from the French New Wave to create an authentic representation of Beatlemania experienced through the Beatles' viewpoint. Using handheld cameras, Lester was able to create an exclusive connection between viewers and the Beatles by presenting behind-the-scenes footage of the band performing and the rare moments of downtime when the Beatles could just be "themselves." While audiences and critics around the globe celebrated the band's music, humor, and clean-cut image, what most failed to note was how confining and lonely it was to maintain the Beatles' façade. Thematically, Lester slightly alters the social realism formula. Unlike *Room at the Top* (Jack Clayton, 1959), *This Sporting Life* (Lindsay Anderson, 1963), and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (Karel Reisz, 1960), the main characters in *A Hard Day's Night* do leave behind the industrial North and do integrate into middle class society. Again, this achievement is symbolized by the Beatles' long train journey to London. London symbolized affluence and success. For many of the protagonists of the social realist canon, London was a fresh start where anyone could realize the life they dreamed of. As the youth culture began to organize in earnest and descend upon London in the early 1960s, class boundaries began to blur. Instead, a community was established on the basis of merit, rather than class. Class was no longer seen as a necessity for social mobility by the youth culture. One's background was embraced as a characteristic to be celebrated. Despite all the polish to their image and performance style, the Beatles still clung to their Liverpoolian, working class roots with pride. This

distinction separated the Beatles from “the London-based star machinery.”¹⁶³ The provincial image of the Beatles became so desirable that Gerry and the Pacemakers, also managed by Brian Epstein, not only retained a thicker regional accent, but also starred in *Ferry Cross the Mersey* (Jeremy Summers, 1965), which was a near replica of *A Hard Day’s Night*. The difference between the two films is that *Ferry Cross the Mersey* was unashamedly filmed in Liverpool. The opening title sequence even highlights famous Merseyside landmarks. Arguably, the Beatles success as rock ‘n’ roll musicians helped to make being of a different class acceptable. As Lennon commented in a 1970s interview, “The first thing we did was to proclaim our Liverpoolness to the world, and say ‘It’s all right to come from Liverpool and talk like this.’”¹⁶⁴ In this way, the Beatles were able to attract a wide youth fan base and gain acceptance from parents who were in favor of the Beatles’ clean image and innocent lyrics.

Perhaps what had failed the poor, working class characters of social realism was their failure to embrace their backgrounds. *This Sporting Life* and *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* (Tony Richardson, 1962) both depict characters who try to rise above their class through material goods in an attempt to appear middle class. As an example from the former, Frank Machin (Richard Harris) is seen as a fraud by both the working class and the middle class instead of being accepted, leaving him completely alone – stripped of friends and even material possessions. For the most part however, Lester presents *A Hard Day’s Night* as a fashionable “what if...?” story that remains fun and positive on the surface. Lester presents the band’s unity, yet gives each Beatle a sequence in which to highlight their individuality. Furthermore, *A Hard Day’s Night* preserves the iconic imagery and performance style that made the Beatles successful in the first place. Because of the Beatles’ unprecedented success, their look and sound became the formula for a number of “British Invasion” bands that found popularity, if only fleeting, in America.

The end of *A Hard Day’s Night* can be read as a comment on the artifice of endings. For example, film provides no resolution, and does not end on a song-and-dance number in the style of a classical Hollywood musical. There is no utopian state reached by the Beatles, as they must continue with their hard work for while the final performance for the audience ends, it is not the ending of the Beatles’ “day in the life.” They board a helicopter and the process depicted in the film is begins to repeat itself. Perhaps the ending suggests that the Beatles feel they can go on achieving success

¹⁶³ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004. 45.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 45.

after success forever. Lennon's defiance, albeit humorous, towards minders Norm and Shake hint at the band's growing desire to gain more control over their lives and their music. But the final shot of the autographed photos falling from the helicopter can be read as a sly comment on the disposability of the Beatles and bands like them. It is a self-referential moment that acknowledges when one fad falls out of fashion, another will replace it soon enough. Like the photographs, bands such as the Beatles are mass-produced. More likely, however, is that Lester presented an ending that seems more appropriate for a film that claimed to provide a "realistic" story of the Beatles during the height of their stardom. Viewers would not have known the band's fate while watching the film. There was speculation as to how long the Beatles' could keep on making hit records and remain together. But no one knew for sure so as the Beatles were still performing, making live appearances, and writing new music, Lester presented an ending that represented the time in a pop band's career between unprecedented success and uncertainty for their future.

Marshall states that in the 1960s, "differentiations of style were modalized around the display of authenticity as a rupture from the performing styles of past generations."¹⁶⁵ What Marshall is referring to are the performing styles of pop stars in regards to their public image and their styles of delivering music via an album or concert stage. However, I have argued that Lester and the Beatles were the first to employ a differentiation of style through the use of nontraditional film styles. What I mean by that is Lester's directorial style matched the innovation of the Beatles' image and sound. While the Presley and Richard vehicles, for example, merely transferred their trademark styles of sound and image to the silver screen, *A Hard Day's Night's* musical sequences are evidence that the viewing audience was presented with a completely new approach to mainstream pop musicals. Lester's was a style that complimented the "rupture" of generations past that the Beatles' image and sound represented. Within the first two and a half minutes of *A Hard Day's Night*, Lester not only complicated the pop musical formula, but also created a new template that pop stars immediately followed in their pop musicals. Further deviations from the classic Hollywood style in the Beatles' subsequent films maintained a high level of complexity and meaning in relation to the Beatles' role as pop stars and their relationship with their audience. What I refer to is the level of engagement with themes such as class and the youth's position in society. Where previous pop musicals and teen exploitation films portrayed the youth culture in either a negative way or in a one-

¹⁶⁵ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 161.

dimensional way, Lester opens up points of debate with his layered portrayal of the Beatles. Each Beatle having a solo scene within *A Hard Day's Night* strengthened this approach. Films such as *Catch Us if You Can* (John Boorman, 1965) and *Ferry Cross the Mersey* replicated this idea on a very basic level, choosing to mimic visual style and the concept of the band members playing themselves during their day to day lives as local celebrities, rather than fully grasping the opportunity to question and engage the audience through a sense of inclusion. *A Hard Day's Night* displays the forward thinking and artistic innovation that defined the Beatles' subsequent films and music.

The level of inclusion that the Beatles had given their fans since the Beatles' rise to fame had grown out of control by the beginning of 1965. The Beatles seemed to be stuck in a cycle of live performances for both the concert stage and the television screen. Any Beatle biography can provide the mythical tales of how the Beatles could not even leave their hotel rooms without being mobbed, how wives and girlfriends had to be secretly smuggled in and out of hotels and performance venues, and how crowds of fans would camp outside each Beatle's place of residence for a chance of a glimpse or a brief touch of their idols. What worried the Beatles the most was the threat to their musical development. Screaming fans at their concerts often drowned out the sounds of their amplifiers on stage so the Beatles could not hear what the other members were playing. Also, their follow up album to *A Hard Day's Night* was *Beatles for Sale*, an album that not only hinted at the band's frustrations of selling out musically, but was also comprised of poor quality cover songs and original material due to the band's appearance schedule. The album did not represent the kind of music the Beatles felt they should be making, especially when they had come to discover the level of material artists like Bob Dylan were releasing. For this reason, the Beatles' follow up film with Richard Lester entitled *Help!* (1965), employs film codes rather than music and television codes in order to distance the Beatles from their fans. The film also highlights the process of music making by placing the Beatles more in the recording studio and other private spaces rather than depicting the Beatles on stage. With *Help!*, as chapter two will argue, the connection that the Beatles and Lester attempt to make with their fans is less inclusive, with the connection being made through the mutual interest in and support of the Beatles music, rather than their image and the myth that "The Beatles" represented.

Chapter Two: *Help!*

“*A Hard Day’s Night* is as open hearted and cheering as any movie musical that exists; it is also damp and dismal, preoccupied with bare white bulbs and imprisonment. *Help!* is pure splash, deep color and King’s Road corduroy; at the same time it’s cynical with itself, weary and mean, its bent to the morbid at odds with the shop window pop milieu which gives it its look and sensibility. These movies are natural twins not merely because one was sequel to the other but because they are united by the through-line of a common dream life: that of the Beatles’ evolving relationship with their audience.”¹⁶⁶

Chapter one argued that one of the unusual aspects of *A Hard Day’s Night* was the duality of the musical sequences in depicting the role of the audience. In one register, the use of the live performance mode encouraged the audience, as an integral part of Beatlemania and in the communal spirit of live performance. The Beatles performed in viable performance spaces associated with live performance, such as the theatre stage. In the other register, however, the symbolism contained in the sequences and in Lester’s choice of film style suggested that the Beatles’ feelings of imprisonment were a result of their audience suffocating them. I illustrated how Lester used tight spaces and close shots especially during music sequences to create a feeling of claustrophobia and entrapment. By 1965, the fans’ continued high level of adoration and the band’s nonstop touring and promotional schedule began to alert the Beatles to the direction they were headed in creatively. Following the lukewarm reception of the *Beatles for Sale* album in the winter of 1964, the band began to reevaluate their pop star aspirations. As the Beatles began to film their second feature for United Artists, with director Richard Lester, in 1965, the group had by that time been influenced by the songwriting talents of Bob Dylan and had begun to regularly smoke marijuana. Both influences went against the Beatles’ carefully constructed, “clean” pop star image and made an immediate impact on the band’s musical direction. *Help!* reflects these changes in the Beatles’ image and I consider it to be a transitional film for the band for this reason – it retains the humor and group unity displayed in *A Hard Day’s Night*, but

¹⁶⁶ McKinney, Devin. *Magic Circles: The Beatles in Dream and History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. 59.

brings to the screen a different message about the band's relationship with their fans. Also, the film introduces the idea of the Beatles' music as an art form. *Help!* foreshadows the band's retreat into the recording studio, a place where the Beatles will no longer just record music, but create and develop it collectively as well. One of the ways used to depict the transition from the notion of the Beatles as pop stars to that of the Beatles as musicians was to place the band in locations not normally used for musical numbers. The locations are remote, often with less than ideal conditions for performing. There is also a shift from live performance mode to an emphasis on making and recording music. Within a fictionalized plot, a parallel is suggested between the band's fans and the obsessed and violent cultists that are the film's antagonists. Unlike *A Hard Day's Night*, there are no onscreen audiences watching the Beatles perform. Both Neaverson and Frontani have studied *Help!*'s narrative style and film form focusing on the films and art movements that they argue influenced the film's structure. Neaverson notes Lester's surrealist humor, the popular trend of the spy film, and the film's use of cartoon and Pop Art; Frontani focuses on the possible influences of the pop art group from the 1950s, the Independent Group. However, I wish to examine how Lester adopts film performance codes in order to create distance between the Beatles and their fans. I analyze form and style in the musical sequences in order to show how the undermining generic conventions prevent the Beatles from being fetishized objects.

Like *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!* has a narrative and number structure that does not allow the number to provide a complete escape from the narrative. *Help!*'s storyline is completely fictional, following the band from a dilemma (preventing Ringo from being sacrificed) to a resolution (Ringo lives long enough to be spared from being sacrificed) using a linear narrative structure. Similar to classical musical numbers, *Help!*'s music sequences are moments that appear to offer escape for both the band and the audience from the events of the narrative. This is primarily achieved by retaining "the division between narrative as problems and numbers as escape."¹⁶⁷ Before explaining this idea, it is first necessary to provide a brief synopsis of the film. At the beginning of the film, a group of Eastern mystics led by the high priest Clang (Leo McKern) are about to sacrifice a young woman to their goddess, Kaili. However, just before the sacrifice is about to take place, it is discovered that the young woman is not wearing the sacrificial ring. The large, red ring is discovered to be on the finger of drummer Ringo. The pursuit by the cult begins with a number of comical failed

¹⁶⁷ Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." *Genre: the Musical: a Reader*. Ed. Rick Altman. London: Routledge, 1981. 185.

attempts to recover the ring, which soon involves a power seeking scientist and his bumbling assistant (Victor Spinetti and Roy Kinnear). When it is realized that the ring cannot be removed, the mystics interpret it as a sign from Kaili that Ringo is to be sacrificed. As the Beatles attempt to record new songs for their album, they receive help from former cult member, Ahme (Eleanor Bron). The mystics and scientists chase the Beatles across the globe until either thwarted or themselves chosen as the new sacrifice. The film ends with all parties chasing each other on the beach in a scene of mass hysteria. In this way, the narrative is situated around the idea of the Beatles being chased by fanatics. The cult members represent the band's out-of-control fans and the scientists can be read as representing authority figures. Both of these parties sought out the Beatles off screen, especially politicians and heads of state who believed an audience with the Beatles would increase their popularity with younger voters. The events within the narrative escalate to the point of suggesting physical violence towards the band members in the form of the theme of sacrifice. The plot also broaches the subjects of obsession and ownership. In order to provide relief from these more serious themes, the narrative is interrupted by musical sequences where the fans can enjoy the Beatles' music and performance, while the band are depicted as taking refuge in creating and recording their music. This idea of the band using music as a way of escaping the realities of stardom is carried over from *A Hard Day's Night*. However, *Help!* differs significantly from classical and pop musicals in two main ways, both of which are this chapter's primary focal points. While the musical sequences do on one level provide escape from the narrative for both the band and the fans, on another level, the remote locations also carry a degree of entrapment for the band. Also, rather than the narrative returning the characters back to the reality of the situation at the end of the number, as seen in classical and pop musicals, the antagonists associated with *Help!*'s narrative continually interrupt the escapist moment *during* the number. It is these moments, which disrupt the division between narrative and number. Yet, Dyer's other suggestion for one of three broad musical tendencies also becomes problematic when reading *Help!* as a pop musical. Dyer proposes that one tendency for the musical is to "try to dissolve the distinction between narrative and numbers, thus implying that the world of the narrative is also (already) utopian."¹⁶⁸ However, in *Help!* the reverse is true because the Beatles spend the entire film trying to escape from their pursuers and keep Ringo safe from being sacrificed. The narrative is by no means utopian, so the narrative's interruption of the number implies that the number is not a utopian moment

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., 185.

of escape either. Instead, the number is disrupted by the narrative rather than dissolved into the narrative. This idea is further highlighted by my second point: the role of the audience and how the number works to distance the Beatles from their viewing audience.

In *Help!*, the importance is placed not on getting to know who the band are as “real” people, as with *A Hard Day’s Night*, but on the fictional plot. The result diminishes any distinctions in individuality that the band so carefully created in *A Hard Day’s Night*. In this way, fans are not able to identify with each Beatles as easily as they could in *A Hard Day’s Night*. The struggle between the Beatles as a collective and as individuals carries through in subsequent films and albums as the band begin to question their Beatlemania image. Throughout *Help!*, the focus is on the Beatles’ desire to become musicians and to create a more complex and artistic body of work that represents the ideology of what became known as the rock auteur. The idea of being a musician requires the individual to develop his own distinct style, but in downplaying each Beatle’s individuality in the narrative, it becomes difficult for the audience to relate to the performer as an individual. As mentioned in chapter one, pop stars use performance codes that work to create a bond with their fans and the lyrics can be regarded as one of these codes. The lyrics may be insincere but the fundamental aspect is that the listener connects with the lyrics in a very real way. Music is a form of escape and while that theme does appear in *A Hard Day’s Night*, that theme is even stronger in *Help!* In addition, John Lennon has commented on the sincerity of his lyrics, and Neaverson has noted that his introspective turn as a lyricist was “based on [his] personal feelings of insecurity and desperation as the onslaught of Beatlemania took its toll.”¹⁶⁹ The band started out writing insincere lyrics and music that no longer challenged them as songwriters or as performers. And yes, the songs can be enjoyed and acclaimed without any character development in the film. But so much of the Beatles’ music was inspired and created out of their distinctive personalities and interests that I think those issues do become important when discussing their musicianship and what made their success as a pop band unusual, especially when the songs are performed in the way they are in the film. So a tension emerges with the use of the numbers in *Help!* between the band’s need for privacy and creative development and their need to maintain a relationship with the audience.

To engage with the viewing audience, the Beatles not only act in an absurd plot, but also used performance codes associated with film celebrities rather than pop

¹⁶⁹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 41.

stars during the numbers to further distance themselves from their viewing audience. Marshall argues that: “The relationship that the audience builds with the film celebrity is configured through a tension between the possibility and the impossibility of knowing the authentic individual.”¹⁷⁰ *A Hard Day’s Night* functioned under the premise that the viewing audience was allowed backstage access to the “authentic” Beatles. The image of each Beatle portrayed in the first film matched the carefully constructed image of each Beatle off screen. As the band’s manager tried to hide and deny the potentially controversial aspects of the Beatles’ real lives, the band’s management endorsed each Beatle’s persona as the “authentic” one. In this way, *A Hard Day’s Night* does not create such a tension. There are moments throughout *Help!* that play on the duality of the Beatles’ image – the ordinary, “boys next door” and the Beatles as pop stars – and people’s perception of their image. For instance, the audience sees the Beatles engaging in “ordinary” activities such as eating at a restaurant, going to the pub, and going on holiday without being recognized as celebrities. The band is also shown to live in terraced housing, which turns out to be a façade as the houses are revealed to be a living area of decadent material goods. Yet fanatics are pursuing the band. The members have to dress incognito at an airport, they are shown working in a recording studio, and they can also command the security of both the British Army and Buckingham Palace. While on the surface these moments are played to comedic effect, they offer a comment on the paradoxical nature of the Beatles’ image and stardom. The most explicit example of this from *Help!* is the scene where the Beatles each walk up to the door of their own terraced house. Two middle aged women stand across the street and one observes, “Lovely lads and so natural. I mean adoration hasn’t gone to their heads one jot, has it? You know what I mean, success.” Her companion agrees saying, “So natural and still the same as they was before they was.” The joke, however, is that each door opens up to a single, large open planned space for all four of them. Each Beatle’s individual area is personalized with highly extravagant objects such as vending machines, a Wurlitzer organ, and a carpet made of real grass. Neaverson quotes Richard Buskin to argue that the “ordinary boys next door” persona allowed the Beatles’ to convey a sense of “living out a fantasy on everyone else’s behalf.”¹⁷¹ While this can be easily argued for *A Hard Day’s Night*, the same can no longer be true for *Help!*, particularly when considering the detached role of the viewing audience. My analysis throughout this chapter highlights such instances that support this argument.

¹⁷⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 90.

¹⁷¹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 22.

Linked with this duality of the star as ordinary and unordinary is Dyer's question as to the extent to which stars are "just like you or me, or do consumption and success transform them into (or reflect) something different?"¹⁷² Again, *A Hard Day's Night* exploited the sense of the Beatles being just like their audience, showing the mundane side of being a pop star and, in the case of George Harrison's solo scene or the scene on the train with the middle class gentleman, showing that the Beatles' opinions were in line with other young people. But *Help!* makes the idea of the Beatles as ordinary problematic. The nature of the Beatles' image is a question that will follow the Beatles throughout their career both as a collective and as solo artists. *Help!* is arguably different from previous pop musicals due to its extended commentary on the complexities of pop music and of the relationship between pop star and fan.

"Help!" (Opening credits)

The film begins in a religious temple where an Eastern mysticism cult aborts a ritual sacrifice because the woman being offered to Kaili is not wearing the sacrificial ring. As the cult leader, Clang, discusses the importance of the ring for the sacrifice and instructs his followers on their mission to find it, the title song starts as the camera cuts to an extreme close up of the ring on what is revealed to be Ringo's hand (1:08). The entire performance is in complete contrast to the Beatles' live performances in *A Hard Day's Night* for "Help!" is a sequence steeped in an awareness of the artifice of performance. What is first noticeable is that the performance is shot in black and white, giving the sequence a tired and dated look when juxtaposed with cuts to the vibrant Eastmancolor of the narrative. Large comic book style lettering for the titles and credits, along with the colorful darts thrown at the screen by the antagonist also date the monochrome effect that was so fashionable in *A Hard Day's Night*. There are other details that accent the artificiality of the performance such as the darts landing on the Beatles' images and wide cuts that reveal the cult members are watching the act on a projection screen. In addition, the Beatles' body language and performing style highlight their lack of enthusiasm for live performance. This establishes the tone and direction for the Beatles' subsequent numbers in the film.

This sequence, minus the darts and titles, was used to promote the single on shows such as *Top of the Pops* as if to spread a wider campaign for the Beatles' shift

¹⁷² Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, 2004. 43.

from the iconography of their Beatlemania phase. The portrayal of the Beatles in this number seems all the more deliberate when compared with another, rarer, performance of the “Help!” on the variety show *Blackpool Night Out*.¹⁷³ The television footage clearly shows the Beatles on a stage in a similar formation to the film sequence. However, the band wear their trademark matching suits, engage with each other and the audience (which is also clearly present from the sound of the screams), and there is an energy to the performance that the film footage lacks due to the rougher sound quality. The opening of “Help!” is not sung in harmony or in tune. At one minute into the performance of the 2:26 television clip, Lennon forgets the words of the verse and mumbles through them adding a sense that the performance is truly live. This televised performance more closely resembles the final performance in *A Hard Day’s Night*. “Help!” from the film lacks the energy and engagement with the viewing audience and no on screen audience is part of the Beatles’ performance. The scene lacks the tracking shots, set pieces, in shot crew members, and most importantly, the fans that all came together in *A Hard Day’s Night* to give that performance a feeling of authenticity. Most of the performance is expressionless, with the Beatles looking around the performance space casually to suggest a lack of concentration; the stage performance lacks any sense of challenge or musical development that the band required for musical growth. What is also noticeable is the lack of microphones, the lack of eye contact, and that the sequence is over-lit – an effect that lacks sharpness and results in blurring the Beatles’ features, as well as casting them in shadow. The band wear black turtleneck sweaters rather than suits and their carefully groomed moptops have begun to grow out more. Despite close ups such as shot three (1:24), shot five (1:33), and shot seven (1:39) Ringo and John are obscured in ways that undermine the intimacy and direct address of the close-ups. Arguably, Lester sets up shots that have a more practical and artistic aesthetic than set up for the sole purpose of objectifying the Beatles. For instance, shots like shot eleven (1:53) where the foreground features an extreme close up of George’s guitar neck cutting across the frame from left to right and the background is John framed left out of focus, demonstrate consideration for even lines and planes to create symmetrical shots. In addition, the song’s lyrics illustrate the Beatles’ move towards more introspective and complex songwriting. Thematically and musically,

¹⁷³ Finding authorized footage of these kinds of performances is nearly impossible. This particular performance can be found on www.youtube.com and on an out of print, unauthorized DVD titled *The Beatles: Collection '65*, ASIN number B000VWMCX0. The footage was verified to be the Blackpool performance of 1 August 1965 by cross-referencing the performance description against Pieper and Path’s *Film and TV Chronicle 1961-1970* (p. 206) and Lewisohn’s *The Complete Beatles Chronicle* (p. 198).

“Help!” is more developed than songs like “She Loves You” and “I Want to Hold Your Hand.” Not only does the song function as being a personal reflection of Lennon’s life, but also, in the context of the scene, it is a song that represents a time of maturity and insecurity with similar feelings of confusion and isolation that growing from adolescence to adulthood can harbor. All of these elements come together in the opening sequence to establish the Beatles’ change in direction musically, and to comment on the negative consequences of celebrity.

In addition to the complexities of the Beatles’ opening performance, the theme of ownership and objectification is also established in this first sequence. Again, Lester cuts away from the Beatles’ performance to reveal that the cult members are watching the band on a projection screen. The short film lends itself to fetishizing the Beatles – each member is moving and alive. It is also being played in a private space and can be played on demand so in a way such an item is second only to possessing a Beatle. In one shot (2:09), a young woman covered in red paint stares longingly towards the projector. Her gaze can be read as fetishizing the band members in a way that represents sexual desire, which is accented by her red painted (nude) body. This level of possession recall stories of men selling two-inch squares of hotel bed sheets that the Beatles supposedly slept on. These instances of people trying to capitalize on the Beatles’ success with unconventional merchandise sounds extreme, but Beatle biographies also give accounts of fans trying to cut off locks of Ringo’s hair or touch a Beatle even if it meant creating a dangerous crush. *Help!* merchandise saturated the market and with this amount of saturation, one can argue that fans would be more encouraged to seek out items that were harder to acquire so as to mark those fans out as the Beatles’ “true” or “number one” fans. Frith mentions the importance of the market place, noting how fans “can only reclaim [pop stars] through possession via a cash transaction.”¹⁷⁴ Beatle fans tried to defy this notion to the point of putting the band in harms way. The plotline of the cultists’ pursuit of the sacrificial ring and its wearer reflect the fans’ attempts at obtaining the ultimate object: an actual Beatle. The Beatle then becomes a sought after commodity and the tension between an act as pop star and as musician drives the narrative throughout the film. At this point in the Beatles career, *Help!* marks the pinnacle of consumerism – there were more Beatles products (authorized and unauthorized) at this time than at any other point in the Beatles career. The amount of merchandise available, the locations, and the frequent references to the film being in color all add up to a grand extravagance that creates a

¹⁷⁴ Frith, Simon. *Music for Pleasure: Essays in the Sociology of Pop*. New York: Routledge, 1988. 12.

sense of irony when considering the film as a sign of the band's desire to focus on being musicians.

“You're Going to Lose that Girl”

By comparison to the “live” performance of “Help!”, “You're Going to Lose that Girl” takes place in the private and audience free setting of a recording studio. Such a location provides the band with a more natural and more relaxed atmosphere not available to them onstage. Again, Marshall notes that the function of a concert is to prove a fan's commitment and solidarity to the band rather than signifying “an appreciation of the performer's skill and technique.”¹⁷⁵ Off screen, the Beatles began to convey their desire to escape from their Beatlemania celebrity by scaling down their appearance and touring schedules as a way to distance themselves from their audience. Lester represents that shift on screen by presenting the Beatles' in an audience-free setting that protects the band from their pursuers. In deciding to reject many of the devices used in the first film, the Beatles make the move from the television studio and the concert stage – settings that had brought them closer to their audience – and instead place themselves in a location far removed from the accessibility of their audience. This creates a situation in which the Beatles not only escape from fans, but also are able focus on creating music. In addition, the studio also offers a different approach to the music's function. In the studio, the Beatles were given control over the direction of a song's structure and development, with guidance from producer George Martin. But on the concert stage, the musician has less control in the live setting and, as Marshall argues, the music plays a different role as the performance is a communal ritual connecting the audience with the performer.¹⁷⁶ Not only does the concert performance allow for an immediate affirmation of the audience's support for the performers, but a live concert allows the audience to be actively involved in the music making process. This is partly achieved when the audience's purchasing power determines set lists and requests from encores, for instance. By taking refuge in a recording studio, the band “denies the possibility of interaction between performer and audience” thereby regaining control over the creative process.¹⁷⁷ In fact, much of the sequence highlights

¹⁷⁵ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 159.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 195.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 195.

the recording process as the engineers in the control room can be seen at both the beginning and the end of the number. Also, at the end of the number the sound engineer comments on the quality of the performance saying that the take would have to be done again due to a persistent buzzing noise. Microphones are placed in the center of the frame, often obscuring the Beatles' faces, giving attention to the music over image. There is also focus on the process of recording as Ringo is seen playing both a drum kit and later a set of bongos, and Paul piano and bass. This effect dispels the possibility of the performance being live. As discussed in the first chapter, previous pop musicals tried to pass off numbers as being live in order to make the audience feel as though they were experiencing an authentic performance. However, by cutting between Paul and Ringo playing different instruments, the viewer is made to realize the recording process is more complex and multi-layered than a live performance. Most importantly, it also signals a shift in the Beatles' song writing complexities. The songs that were being written after *A Hard Day's Night* and *Beatles for Sale* were becoming more difficult for the Beatles to perform onstage without enlisting the help of extra musicians – something the Beatles refused to do as it would completely defy the Beatles' myth.¹⁷⁸ One could argue that to do so would yield a performance of a lesser quality to the original recordings, which would diminish the artistic merits the Beatles had achieved in creating such complex sounds on their own. The experimentation and multi-layering was the point of these new songs, opening up a new direction from the three chord pop song about innocent love between a boy and a girl. "You're Going to Lose that Girl" signals a budding maturity in the Beatles as songwriters and as performers. Lester's choice to place a greater visual focus on instruments and recording equipment reinforces this shift.

From the beginning of the sequence, Lester uses framing, lighting, and editing techniques that, for the viewer, conveys a sense of intrusion and claustrophobia from invading this private, creative workspace. With these techniques, Lester also establishes a sense of intimacy between the band, highlighting their instrumentation and craft over their image. For the audience, this is a false sense of intimacy, which instead creates a sense of discomfort. Lester keeps the majority of this sequence's shots in tight close ups. The lighting of each shot varies between low lit, overhead lighting and backlighting resulting in each Beatle's face to be obscured in shadow. As a result,

¹⁷⁸ The Beatles usually played all the instruments heard on their albums. The very few exceptions to this would be producer George Martin playing piano, close friends and roadies Neil Aspinall and Mal Evans playing minor percussive instruments, Yoko Ono is heard on "The White Album," as is Eric Clapton, and Billy Preston was involved with the *Let it Be* project.

Lester is taking the focus away from the Beatles' star image and instead illuminating the importance of the Beatles' music. In a manner deemed unconventional by traditional Hollywood standards, Lester breaks from convention by using lighting techniques to distort and hide the Beatles' faces as he did with their instruments. For example, in shot fourteen (14:22), Lennon is shot from his right profile, in an extreme close up. There is a bright blue streak from the overhead lighting going across the frame diagonally. In shot nineteen (14:34), the violet lighting gel is removed and the light source rotates towards the camera to nearly white out the shot. Ringo, who is seen as the main protagonist in the film, is included in ten shots throughout this sequence. Three of these are shots of Ringo in extreme close up. However, unlike a Hollywood star, Ringo's face is nearly indistinguishable due to the over saturation of light in the frame mixed with the smoky air. This occurs in shot eleven (14:12). In addition to using tight shots, Lester also uses soft focus to give the Beatles' image a hazy, dream like quality. Lester's use of soft focus does heighten that dream like quality of the Beatles image before an audience of fantasizing, young females, yet he only provides brief and distorted snatches, controlling what the audience sees.

Lester also achieves this by focusing in on instrumentation and microphones, leaving the Beatles faces out of focus. An example of this includes shot seven (13:46) with the camera focused on John's microphone, in a medium close up, with the microphone in the center of the frame. John is left out of focus and bathed in a bright, green light. Also, with John's image hidden in shadow, his voice can be featured as an instrument, too. Another example is shot twelve (14:15) in which the camera, in a medium close up of George and Paul's hands, focuses on their instruments, using frontal lighting to spotlight the instruments rather than the backlighting used when the Beatles faces are in frame. Finally, shot seventeen (14:28) of this sequence cuts to an extreme close up of Ringo's snare drum and hi-hat with Lester again opting for frontal lighting to place emphasis on the instrument. Lester also chooses to shoot the Beatles either to the left or the right of the frame, rarely opting to place them directly in the center of the frame. In addition, the Beatles are either framed in profile or with their backs turned away from the camera denying any acknowledgement of an audience. The band also keeps eye contact with each other rather than the camera. Again, these techniques aid the director in shifting his audience's attention away from the Beatles' image, placing emphasis on the Beatles' music. Without the option of being distracted by the Beatles' good looks, the audience is asked to suspend their desirous gaze to focus instead on the song being played. The viewing audience may be allowed to

witness the Beatles in the studio in this sequence, but Lester remains in control of the viewer's access. Unlike *A Hard Day's Night*, which used hand-held cameras to express unrestricted access for the audience, especially while the Beatles were performing on stage, in "You're Going to Lose that Girl," however, the camera remains stationary with Lester instead choosing to cut each shot short. For example, gone are the tracking shots, tilts, and pans of *A Hard Day's Night* that mirrored the body movement and point of view. There is a backstage musical element to this sequence not unlike the sequences in *A Hard Day's Night* as off screen, fans were never (or at least very rarely) allowed past the main gates of Abbey Road studios. So in this way, the viewing audience is being treated to a dimension of the Beatles' celebrity to which they would otherwise not be privy. However, due to the way the sequence was shot and due to the lack of engagement with the camera by the band, the audience is clearly distanced from the Beatles.

"You've got to Hide Your Love Away"

The end of the previous number results in Ringo's drum kit crashing down to the floor below as the cultists try for the fifth time to get the sacrificial ring back from Ringo. This is the first attempt at trying to capture a whole Beatle as well as the ring. The implication of this shift is that the Beatle now must be sacrificed to the goddess Kaili and the subsequent pursuits turn from harmful to violent. It is also revealed that Ringo obtained the ring from a piece of fan mail, further suggesting an extreme case female desire and possession as such a piece of jewelry is reserved to mark serious commitment in a relationship or even marriage. However, the Beatles' fans may still have been younger than the Beatles and perhaps wanting an idealized relationship with a Beatle without realizing the darker realities of pop star celebrity. Lester has set up a dichotomy between the young and the more mature females with different forms of attraction towards the Beatles. A key character in the film for this comparison is Ahme. Actress Eleanor Bron, who plays Ahme, was 31 at the time of filming and her age and maturity play an important role in representing the more ideal qualities of a fan or potential partner. Ahme is also the only female character in the film to have a significant role. There are no young female fans and the other women in the film are middle aged with very brief speaking roles. While *A Hard Day's Night* featured many young school aged girls, elevating them to a role of importance within Beatlemania, *Help!* only focuses on this one female character. Ahme's role in the film is conveyed

most clearly during the “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away” sequence. While she can be read as a representative of the Beatles’ female audience, Ahme is actually very uncharacteristic for a Beatles’ fan and the Beatles react differently to her presence than they did in the first film. Leading up to this moment where Ahme is invited into the Beatles’ house, the band displayed a subtle reverence towards her flirting. She winks and flirts slightly during her first encounter with Paul in the street as Clang tries to bribe the wrong Beatle in exchange for the ring. Ahme’s pursuit to help the Beatles is underplayed, depicting a different kind of tactic than the obvious pick up routines used by the Beatles in *A Hard Day’s Night*.

At the beginning of “You’ve got to Hide Your Love Away,” Ahme is shown sitting on a couch with George (shot six, 28:14). However, she sits as far away as possible from George on the left side of the frame while George sits on the right of the frame. While George slouches in the couch in a relaxed manner, Ahme sits rigidly with a straight back and sitting on the edge of the couch, her handbag perched on top of her lap creating a physical barrier between her and the band. She looks uncomfortable and out of place, politely listening without making a hysterical fuss over the musicians. Instead, she avoids eye contact with the members of the band for as long as possible. For example, George tries to catch Ahme’s gaze by turning towards her and accentuating his guitar playing and begins to move to the music as a way of inviting Ahme to do the same. She hesitantly looks over at George and finally gives a slight smile. In shot thirteen (28:53), Paul winks at Ahme and the camera cuts to a full close up of Ahme who concedes in giving a full grin and the camera again cuts this time with a medium close up of George who looks at Ahme out of the corner of his eye jealously before looking back towards Paul with a look of contempt. Well outside the average age of the Beatles’ main fan base, Bron provided the film with a strong leading character possessing the qualities of “emotional strength, beauty, brains, and acid wit.”¹⁷⁹ Lennon looking, as ever, for his intellectual equal became very much entranced by Bron during the duration of filming. The character of Ahme also seems to parallel a number of the characteristics possessed by Lennon’s second wife and artistic colleague, Yoko Ono: also seven years John’s senior, of an exotic ethnicity with strong feminine features, independent, forward thinking, artistic, and intellectual. Ahme was allowed to be so close to the Beatles in this setting primarily due to her characterization of being the polar opposite to the typical female of the Beatles’ target audience. The lighthearted portrayal of young female fans in *A Hard Day’s Night*

¹⁷⁹ Robertson, John. “*Help!* The End of the Beginning.” *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 164.

suggested that the Beatles endorsed that kind of pursuit and behavior. *Help!*'s extreme pursuit situations by the cult members and Ahme's mature attitude towards the band suggest the opposite of that.

This sequence also employs a private performance space in which the "fans" represented by the cultists are not allowed into, nor are they able to gain access into from the street, as the Beatles are depicted performing in the relaxed space of the sitting room of their terraced house. The song is filmed in John's section of the house. The design of the space connotes maturity and sophistication symbolized by the large library of books (including his own *A Spaniard in the Works*), as well as the natural earth tones and wooden floor. The ambiance is more somber, subdued, and grown up, which is more appropriate for the song's introspective lyrics when compared to the extreme materialism of the other sections of the house. The absence of fans allows for the absence of any distractions on the scale of *A Hard Day's Night* that may take attention away from the Beatles' performance. Of course one could argue that the shots of Bron, looking very beautiful and feminine, may be a distraction to male viewers, but this along with the surrealism of the man cutting the grass rug with chattering teeth, are minor in comparison to hysterical fans. Rather, the audience is forced to listen to the song and to watch performance instead of participating as they would at a concert.

Similarly to "You're Going to Lose that Girl," Lester includes a number of shots that focus on the Beatles' instrumentation rather than their image. For instance, shot three (27:52) is a full close up of John with Paul standing in the background, playing his bass. John is placed on the leftside of the frame slightly out of focus. In the center of the frame is John's twelve-string, acoustic guitar, which is elevated from the body sitting high against his chest. In this way, greater attention is paid to the chords John plays and to the instrument itself. The choice of guitar is interesting to note, as a twelve-string guitar is more complicated to play than the traditional six-string guitar. Again in shot seven (28:23), which is a similar set up to shot three, Lester zooms in on John's mouth as he enters the chorus, highlighting Lennon's voice as an instrument in a similar fashion to "You're Going to Lose that Girl." However, what differs from the previous musical sequence is Lester's style in which he displays some of his more conventional work. His editing style is more relaxed, discarding the jump cuts for more evenly paced ones. Lester allows the camera to linger on one shot anywhere from one full second to up to ten seconds with the average shot lasting three seconds. By doing this, Lester is presenting a more natural pace in editing that fits with the tempo of the song.

“Ticket to Ride”

As the film reaches its climactic set piece, Lester cuts away from the confrontation between the cultists and the scientists at the Beatles’ home to scenes of the Swiss Alps, reminiscent of *The Sound of Music* (Robert Wise, 1965). There is no logical connection to the jump in location and a simple caption provides a tenuous link between scenes. Although reminiscent of “Can’t Buy Me Love,” “Ticket to Ride” does have some important differences. Sutton notes how the numbers of classical musicals take place in wide, open spaces that encourage an element of play.¹⁸⁰ Like “Can’t Buy Me Love,” the Beatles escape from the pressures of stardom to play in an open space but like that number, “Ticket to Ride” was “arguably the first time that the full potential of editing for pace and rhythm was prioritized above choreography in a pop film.”¹⁸¹ Once again the music is prioritized in the film. Another difference is how the music is used. “Ticket to Ride” functions both diegetically and non-diegetically, but when it is featured diegetically the Beatles do not play instruments as a way of avoiding the iconography of a live performance. Instead, they pound randomly on a piano and Ringo air drums. Again Lester highlights the music by superimposing a large staff across the screen in which notes appear as they are sung. Perhaps the biggest difference between “Can’t Buy Me Love” and “Ticket to Ride” is the self-referential depiction of performance. Up until this point, the Beatles had been in viable performance spaces. But being placed in the Swiss Alps and with the interchangeable use of the song in diegetic and non-diegetic formats, the number becomes a satire of the musical sequence and the notion of musical performance in film as a whole. It is not merely the absence of an audience, instruments, and all of the trappings associated with traditional performance spaces that make this a satire. It also is revealed in the Beatles’ lack of any attempt to fool the audience into believing that the music track they are hearing is diegetic. In one shot, the Beatles sit around a piano and deadpan the viewing audience – Paul, for example, sits with his arms folded across his chest with only his eyes staring out between his hat and coat. The message is clear – the Beatles perform on their own terms even if it means not performing at all. In this way, it is the

¹⁸⁰ Sutton, Martin. “Patterns in Meaning in the Musical.” *Genre: The Musical: A Reader*. Ed. Rick Altman. London: Routledge, 1981. 192.

¹⁸¹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 39.

refusal to perform music for the audience and instead play on the ski slopes that becomes the escape route, rather than escaping through music.

Just as the Beatles' original songwriting gave them greater autonomy and control over their musical direction, "Ticket to Ride" is a display of Lester's freedom from the conventions of genre. With the first shots of the Beatles in the "Ticket to Ride" sequence, it is a whole ten seconds into the sequence before the Beatles become clearly visible and distinguishable to the audience. For Lester, who is master of the jump cuts and fast paced editing, ten seconds is a significant length of time, especially when the Beatles' image has been at the forefront of every musical performance sequence up to this particular one. With "Ticket to Ride," Lester has immediately disassociated the Beatles' music from any specific image of the Beatles. In fact, the Beatles do not break the fourth wall to acknowledge the audience until shot ten (38:17), nearly thirty seconds into the sequence. Instead, Lester captures the band skiing and enjoying themselves on the slopes as if they were on an uninterrupted holiday. When the Beatles do look directly at the camera, it is in shot ten, which is also repeated later in the sequence at shot fifty-seven (40:37) towards the end of the sequence. At the center of the frame is a small piano. John and George sit on the piano while Paul sits on the ground leaned up against it and Ringo stands on the left side of the frame in right profile. In this instance, the piano is treated more like a prop than an instrument. Having a piano in the middle of the Alps is also an instance of Lester's trademark surrealist humor. This is to contrast the highlighting of instrumentation in the previous sequences, "You're Going to Lose that Girl" and "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away." Again, John mockingly bangs on the piano keys backwards, Ringo and George clap out beats, and Paul sits with his arms tightly folded, with no attempt to pretend to perform or to accurately lip-synch to the vocal track.

One convention that is abandoned during this performance is the close up. Lester lingers on shot ten for ten seconds before cutting to shot eleven and for that duration, the Beatles are kept at a distance by Lester's choice of a long shot. When the Beatles are in close up and facing the camera as in shots eleven (38:26) and twelve (38:27), the Beatles do not play or sing, but rather stand there staring at the camera. MacDonald argues that directly confronting the camera is one way that allows the person being objectified to "suggest they are not an erotic image."¹⁸² Such a device is used throughout *Help!*'s numbers which further distance the band from their fans and again Lester's style helps to control how the Beatles' image is presented to the

¹⁸² MacDonald, Paul. "Reconceptualising Stardom." in Dyer, Richard. *Stars*. London: British Film Institute, 2004. 188.

audience. For instance, in shot eleven as Paul stands center frame, he wears large sunglasses and glare on the camera lens is placed right over his face. Throughout the “Ticket to Ride” sequence, Lester continually blurs and distorts the Beatles’ image. For example, in shots forty-six (39:52), forty-seven (39:54), and forty-eight (39:56) Lester cuts to each Beatle (George and Ringo are paired up in shot forty-seven) out of focus and then quickly pulls focus back and forth until making the next cut, presenting each Beatle in an out of focus blur for the majority of the shot’s duration. Again, in shot fifty (40:01), Lester cuts to Paul out of focus. As Lester starts to pull focus, he also whip pans to completely obscure Paul’s center framed image. During both of Lester’s two jump cut sequences (shots 20-42, 38:57-38:59 and shots 39-45, 39:48-39:50), it becomes very difficult to discern one Beatle from the next with the shots changing so quickly. Therefore, one can deduce that Lester’s primary focus is not to reinforce the Beatles’ image, but to present a highly stylized piece of work that mirrors the surrealism and pop art elements of the narrative.

“Ticket to Ride,” the song, also represents a maturity and growth in the Beatles’ persona. Lester represented a complexity and skillful craft technically and the Beatles’ displayed effectiveness in aesthetically rejecting and satirizing the traditional conventions of musical performance. In this way, choosing “Ticket to Ride” as the song for this number also signifies change for the Beatles’ musical direction. What is most distinctive about this song is its sound. Listening to “Ticket to Ride,” one gets a great sense for the feeling of rock ‘n’ roll versus the simpler love-oriented pop songs from the Beatles’ earlier albums. Bob Stanley describes this experience as the point where “mop-top Beatlemania ends and their weightless, ageless legend begins.”¹⁸³ While not a very well explained description, Stanley’s comment does make the distinction of acknowledging “Ticket to Ride” as being a turning point for the band. With a heavier rock ‘n’ roll beat than previous Beatle songs, it is clear to see that the Beatles’ musical influences had changed. In the beginning of their career, the Beatles were influenced by Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Jerry Lee Lewis, Little Richard, and soul artists. However, by 1965, the Beatles, while still respectful of their early influences, continued their musical development by listening to contemporaries such as Bob Dylan, The Beach Boys, The Rolling Stones, The Yardbirds, The Animals (who used uncommercial sounds and song lengths as a promotion for “House of the Rising Sun”), and The Kinks. Not only is the sound more ambitious and aggressive, but also

¹⁸³ Stanley, Bob. “Riding so High.” *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 169.

the lyrics of these bands are more adult in nature, full of more political and sexually suggestive content.

“I Need You”

Like “You’re Going to Lose that Girl,” “I Need You” and “The Night Before”/“She’s a Woman” also symbolize the Beatles’ shift in focus from stage performances to working in the recording studio. As the Beatles’ continually find themselves confronted by the cult members, despite going to far and remote places, the band enlist the help of an army unit complete with tanks and automatic weapons. The band was not safe in their recording studio so Scotland Yard arranged for the Beatles to record on Salisbury Plain. Photographs and news footage of police officers struggling to hold back lines of pushing and hysterical fans had been published in newspapers and magazines all over the world. Lester uses his surrealist humor to represent an exaggeration of the need for protection wherever the Beatles went. In fact, after seeing such photographs and news footage, the idea of the Beatles needing that level of protection may seem slightly absurd, yet somehow not completely unrealistic.

To examine “I Need You” first, this sequence, in which recording equipment and a makeshift control room surround the Beatles, differs from the intimacy of “You’re Going to Lose that Girl” where the Beatles are in a real recording studio. Lester does not allow for the audience to be given the same intimate access to the Beatles as they record their latest song. Nor is the audience allowed an all access pass to witness the Beatles’ creative processes at work as Lester often cuts from the Beatles to the imposing soldiers. From the very beginning of the sequence, the audience is already being kept away from the Beatles, as the first shot is a close up looking down the barrel of a tank’s cannon. Such hostile and unwelcoming imagery is used throughout the sequence. Lester’s editing is very interesting because first he will cut to a shot of the Beatles, focusing on them performing for a decent length of time. Shot eight is an example of this in which John, Paul, and George are framed in a medium full shot for a whole eight seconds. Previously in other musical sequences, the editing was face paced. Here the audience has the time to admire the Beatles as pop stars and to watch them as performers. After eight seconds, instead of an expected close up of the Beatles, Lester cuts to a close up of two artillery crewmembers in a tank. Where a close up may be used to signify an elevated status, Lester’s choice of subject for a close up is interesting. He does not fill the screen with an image

objectifying the band but instead chooses to fill the screen with the stern glares of military personnel. Such “threatening and aggressive” glares again work to “divert their erotic potential.”¹⁸⁴ Another example of this is shot thirteen and shot fourteen (49:20-49:27). Shot thirteen is a wide shot with the Beatles in the background and out of focus. In the foreground and in focus are a group of soldiers who guard the Beatles. After four seconds, Lester cuts not to the Beatles but to another shot of soldiers. A soldier is lying on the ground with an automatic weapon. The camera shoots the soldier at his level with the soldiers in the background hovering over the camera. This gives the audience a greater sense of intimidation as the soldiers are being shot at a more elevated angle. These two shots together take seven seconds away from the Beatles’ image. The hostile images of the soldiers’ presence convey the lengths the Beatles will go to in order to ensure their privacy. They are clearly making a choice to highlight other images over their very lucrative image. Again, half of the shots in this sequence feature images other than the Beatles’. Lester’s use of featuring soldiers in this musical sequence reinforces the Beatles transition away from their Beatlemania image. While working within the parameters of a teenage exploitation film, Lester breaks with convention by not exploiting the Beatles’ image to its fullest capacity, even during the musical sequence. Therefore while the emphasis is taken off of the Beatles’ image, Lester shifts the focus onto the Beatles’ music by highlighting the technology and craftsmanship that is needed to produce music.

“The Night Before”/“She’s a Woman”

Traditional musicals rely on the “tension between realistic plot and spectacle/fantasy number.”¹⁸⁵ Up to a point, *Help!* maintains that balance. The plot is not realistic but its basic idea of the pursuit and escape is plausible. However, “The Night Before” is the moment in the film where the plot and number merge into one sequence as the antagonists continue their pursuit of the Beatles during the number. Sutton proposes that the narrative/number opposition is another example of the “polity/personal, society/individual clash” but by combining the narrative and number, Lester exposes a problematic reading of the film’s narrative where the lines of division

¹⁸⁴ MacDonald, Paul. “Reconceptualising Stardom.” 188.

¹⁸⁵ Sutton, Martin. “Patterns in Meaning in the Musical.” 191.

become blurred.¹⁸⁶ The intrusion of the antagonists, those that are meant to symbolize the band's fans, suggests that despite the Beatles' efforts to separate themselves, inevitably the Beatles need their fans as much as the fans need them. "The Night Before"/ "She's a Woman" sequence provides a very interesting commentary on the Beatles' transition and how their fans previously perceived them. Like the musical sequences before, this sequence depicts the Beatles performing in a manner different from what their audience had come to expect from a known live stage act. *A Hard Day's Night* worked to reinforce that image, depicting the Beatles on stage and in a television studio for the majority of the film. However, this sequence in *Help!* instead conveys a new performance style for the Beatles' new persona. "The Night Before" uses a number of visual devices that convey a rejection of the Beatles' old image. First, the Beatles' location on Salisbury Plain is used again as the Beatles' performance space. Taking the high ground is a defensive military strategy and the Beatles' choice to perform here symbolizes a decision that they do not actually want their performance to be seen or to be disturbed in any manner. The military personnel that surround the band reinforce this idea. Not only is it the most unlikely place for a band to perform, but under the windy and rainy weather conditions, it would have been impossible for the Beatles to play, which is an idea that parallels the impossible conditions of screaming fans and projectiles the Beatles faced in venues across the world. Lester highlights the absurdity of trying to perform under such adverse conditions. In addition, Lester is careful in how he presents the Beatles' image. Not only do they avoid the eye contact with the camera, but also they are either in profile or with their back to the camera. Ringo is almost out of the shot completely. Despite the close shot of Paul that Lester recycles at various moments throughout the sequence, Paul does not address the audience with eye contact. What could have been a very intimate and almost seductive moment, had Paul looked directly at the camera, instead is interpreted as being more claustrophobic. The audience wants to be close in an attempt to gain the Beatle's attention. This is evident from real life accounts and footage that show fans trying to get as close as possible to the Beatles, even trying to make physical contact with them, all in an attempt for their heroes to acknowledge them. I believe these acts by the Beatles' fans to be another attempt of claiming ownership on the Beatles. It also supports my argument that the Beatles' were fetishized and highly sought after objects of fan's affection. These fans could not actually possess John, Paul, George, or Ringo.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 190.

Lester uses these examples of the Beatles denying their audience acknowledgement over and over again. George, in shot six (52:44) is also framed in a close shot in which he is framed slightly off center and again does not make eye contact with the camera. Also, Ringo, who the film's plot centers around, is continually in the background and/or shot from the side or back, if at all as Lester again chooses close ups of Ringo's sticks and drum kit over the star himself. What is also very interesting is John's function in this sequence. The Beatle who is often thought of as the leader of the group is very much downplayed throughout this sequence. John is always shot in profile or from the back. Five times (shot five, 52:42, and shots thirteen, eighteen, twenty-eight, and forty) in this sequence Lester frames John in a wide close up (right profile). However, in each of those shots John's face is obscured either by being out of focus or by being covered by Ringo's cymbal in the foreground. The first decent shot of John comes almost two minutes into the sequence in shot twenty-five. In this shot, John is in focus in the right side of the frame. Immediately it is clear to see that this kind of camera work is unorthodox for shooting such high profiled star personae. Not only does it go against classical Hollywood and British cinema conventions of displaying celebrities on screen, but it also goes against the practicalities of presenting stars for the purpose of exploitation, which in this instance is the teen market. Lester's direction in *Help!* defies viewer expectations of what a musical performance sequence is supposed to be.

Another important point about this number is that it also features the song "She's a Woman." Ahme uses a reel-to-reel copy of the song to deceive Clang and the cultists in regards to the Beatles' precise location. The song is a rare B-side to "I Feel Fine" and was left off of 1964's *Beatles for Sale* album. So, like the footage of the Beatles singing "Help!" that the cultists watch at the beginning of the film, another rare piece of Beatle memorabilia makes an appearance in the film. Again, its presence in the film further underlines the theme of ownership and possession. To have such an item in one's collection would have meant getting close to the Beatles. Also, the song is one of the first in the Beatles songbook to express more explicit feelings for a woman rather than to sing about the innocent feelings between a boy and a girl. The desire to be around more mature women comes through in the film with the elevated role of Ahme and the absence of teenage girls. But a closer look at the Beatles' lyrics from the songs used in this film also suggests this desire as well. As the analyses of the numbers have shown, the Beatles' journey from pop stars to musicians not only comes through in the themes of the film, but also in the complexities of the music and lyrics.

While “She’s a Woman” presents itself as what sounds like a typical rock ‘n’ roll song, Ian MacDonald notes it is not only “the most extreme sound the Beatles had manufactured to date” but that it is also “in all respects an experimental recording.”¹⁸⁷ McCartney kept experimenting with the sound and structure resulting in both “The Night Before” and “Another Girl.”

“Another Girl”

The cultists’ pursuit precipitates to full military battle and Ringo is dropped into an underground pit with an uncaged tiger. The Beatles then adopt disguises and take a flight to the Bahamas. When the band arrives and disembarks from the plane, the scene is reminiscent of countless other airport arrivals made by the band. But as they wave and walk down the steps, the camera pulls back to reveal that there are no crowds of fans waiting for them, no screaming, and no banners proclaiming undying love. Jokingly, the band frantically takes pictures of each other as they run around in a circle. The sequence continues with the comedic arrivals of the cult members, the head of Scotland Yard, and the scientists, which leads to the “Another Girl” number. However, the number is not connected to the narrative in anyway, nor does it begin or end with any disruption from the antagonists. The number is simply dropped into the middle of the Bahamas portion of the film. The song’s placement within the film undermines the usual narrative/number tension. Instead, the tension comes from within the number as Lester combines “a realist and an anti-realist approach.”¹⁸⁸ For example, McCartney is seen lip synching to the song, but using a woman as if she were a bass guitar. So not only does Lester undermine the function of the number, but he also challenges the number’s form. While most of the film features pop art and comic book art, along with references to Americana and spy films (all of which are explained by Frontani and Neaverson), “Another Girl” is a very avant-garde influenced piece that is the culmination of stylistic and formal experimentation combined with the Beatles’ new artistic musical direction. In the introduction, I introduced Mäkelä’s idea of the rock auteur, noting the importance of achieving a sense of authenticity in the music through experimentation and, in some cases, art school approaches to creative synergy. The audience had watched the Beatles go from a tired, monochrome reproduction of a performance to working in a recording studio to abandoning performance all together

¹⁸⁷ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. London: Pimlico, 2005. 133-134.

¹⁸⁸ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 40.

and arriving at a number that unveils a new look, new visual performance style, and new sound for the band.

Help! saw the Beatles emerge at the cusp of the music scene where the idea of rock music and the Romantic notions of music took hold in 1966 and 1967 over the artifice of pop music.¹⁸⁹ Examples of undermining artifice in pop music included more than just original songwriting and using experimental techniques in developing sound and song structure. While perhaps not a widespread phenomenon, a number of pop bands began to draw on their interests and talents from their time at art school to create their own album art, slogans, and advertisements. I believe that the number of bands that were influenced by their art school experiences or the experiences of their contemporaries is great enough to warrant further investigation. Mäkelä argues that the British art school experience was one of the “most powerful forces underpinning the rock auteur in the 1960s.”¹⁹⁰ The ideology behind creative practices taught in art school also influenced how a band looked and acted. Obvious examples of this include The Rolling Stones and The Who. However, Frith argues that the Beatles’ image though clearly artifice only differed from The Stones “authentic” (and equally constructed image) because the Stones “were clearly in charge of their own selling-out process.”¹⁹¹ By moving away from Beatlemania iconography the Beatles began a campaign to take control over their image and music and to do this Lennon and McCartney especially turned to applying artistic principles to their song writing process. Emphasis was no longer placed on the single or a three-minute time limit; the possibilities began to not only include the song, but the album cover, printed lyrics, and conceptual ideas that carried through the whole album, as well. “Another Girl” is a precursor to that all encompassing idea of music as part of an artistic package. Lester’s artistic form and experimental style within the number help to create a sequence that is as visually artistic as the music. Like “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away,” “Ticket to Ride,” and “I Need You,” this sequence begins without a shot of the Beatles. Instead, Lester uses a crane shot that pans across the palm trees. In the next three shots, Lester cuts to a full close up of a single Beatle. Yet, like “You’re Going to Lose that Girl,” each Beatle is shot in right profile looking away from the camera. These shots are jump cuts that are placed in between two relatively longer shots of the palm trees. In this sequence, Lester experiments with his directorial style. The way in which Lester uses

¹⁸⁹ Mäkelä, *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004. 103.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 103. See also Frith and Horne’s *Art into Pop*.

¹⁹¹ Frith, Simon and Howard Horne. *Art into Pop*. London: Methuen, 1987.102.

the Beatles in a number of the shots suggests he is using them more like set pieces to dress his shots of the landscape. For instance, shot twenty (1:12:05) is a close up of a portion of a white wooden fence with the camera focusing in a narrow slit between two of the fence's planks. That gap carries on uninterrupted as far as the eye can see, suggesting a series of parallel fences lined up perfectly. This shot, like many others in this sequence, does not have an obvious meaning to be interpreted from it. It simply looks aesthetically pleasing. The shot continues with each Beatle appearing between the slit in the boards looking at the camera starting with Paul far off in the distance and ending with a close up of Ringo. It is a technique that has been copied since in television programs and commercials. Shots twenty-one and twenty-two (1:12:07, 11:12:09) each have two Beatles paired up with one woman. They are in a garden with colorful orange flowers and green foliage. Paul is framed left in the foreground with a woman framed right positioned slightly behind him with George center framed in the background behind the woman. Within this deep focus arrangement, Lester racks focus from Paul to the woman to George. This use of technique, along with the striking contrast in colors, looks like a piece of art rather than a conventional film. This deep focus shot is recreated with Ringo and John. Another example of Lester using the Beatles as set pieces to create visually artistic shots is shot twenty-three. This shot (1:12:11) is a series of jump cuts that places central focus on an open garden growing around two sets of old stone stairs in bold white. The steps lead to remains of an old structure with Gothic style framework and marble columns. Sitting on the bottom of the steps, each jump cut advances the group further up the steps until they are barely visible. In shot twenty-nine (1:12:30), Lester features these ruins in close up and places the Beatles at the very top of ledges, standing still like statues. Lester positions the camera low, tilted at a high angle to include the top of the ruins where the Beatles are but eye remains focused on the architecture. Again, these shots merely look pleasing, as if viewing landscape photography; as a result, the Beatles become secondary to the scene.

Lester also experiments with color filters in this sequence. Where he utilized colored lighting gels in "You're Going to Lose that Girl" to create a sense of a dreamy atmosphere, here he uses the color experimentation because of the bright natural light available to him and the boldness in contrasting colors and shadows the landscape presents him with. In shot seventeen (1:11:56), there is a high angle shot from jutting rocks as the Beatles mime playing baseball below. Using an orange lens filter, the shadows cast along the pocked surfaces contrasts the orange with black accents. Shot

eighteen (1:12:01) utilizes a violet lens filter and while the Beatles are almost in complete silhouette, the blue of the sky is very deep while the cloud shapes are distinct and purple.

The use of women in this number is an important point to address. The women are most likely the same age as the Beatles and are certainly older than most of the fans that were filmed in *A Hard Day's Night*. None of these women act hysterically around the Beatles or hero worship them. At times, their placement in the sequence allows the eye to focus more on them rather than on the Beatles. Because of their mature behavior around the band, they are allowed to be in their company. Also, while the first film knowingly objectifies the Beatles and this film spends much time commenting on the negativity of being fetishized, in this number it is the women who are objectified. For instance, Lester uses the women as set pieces for the garden shots. Arguably, these shots could be read as Lester drawing attention to the artistic merit of the shot and the natural beauty of those in it, rather than fetishizing the Beatles. For example, Paul “plays” one of the women like a bass and where the women are all wearing revealing bikinis, the Beatles wear jeans and long sleeve shirts despite being in a warm climate. They can be seen swimming in the water with their clothing on and the choice of clothing is a way to avoid bringing a sense of eroticism to the Beatles’ natural good looks. Not only does the number undermine the performance “reality” of pop musical with its unorthodox placement in the narrative, but it also undermines the accepted roles within the band. Each member is seen playing a different instrument to what they normally are portrayed as playing onstage – John plays drums, Ringo plays guitar and Paul and George also switch instruments with each other. As stated earlier, the band wears more casual clothing and has abandoned standing in any arranged stage formation. Like “Ticket to Ride” the number is at times both diegetic and non-diegetic and when the Beatles do lip-synch, it is obvious that they are out of synch or moving their mouths too fast. John can be seen doing this in shot sixteen (1:11:49). Ultimately, the number can be read as a send up of the Beach Party cycle as the band swim on the shore in their clothing, romp along the beach in an exaggerated manner, and include sight gags such as running down a set of stairs only to leap into a pile of sand. As Frith and Horne attest, “pop’s established sense of escapism seemed inadequate to the dominant cultural mood of optimism. Music still confirmed the desires of youth, but those desires were changing: music was needed, now, to symbolize and express the feeling of a new generation that it could embody real cultural and political change. Pop

became rock and musicians redefined their practice.”¹⁹² With this number, the Beatles show that the conventional pop musical has become irrelevant to the complexities and maturity of the kind of pop music that began to establish itself as rock. The band’s physical appearance, attitudes towards performing and the film’s themes on fandom and celebrity add further evidence to this argument.

Conclusion

Help! attempts to distance the young fans that the first film worked so hard to bring closer to the band. While *A Hard Day’s Night* used performance codes associated with music and television performances in order to build a sense of community between the fans and the band, *Help!*’s central theme is a commentary on the sometimes violent and obsessive nature of the Beatles’ fans and how that relationship has proved problematic to the band’s development as musicians. In order to exploit this theme, the Beatles are presented more as film stars than as musicians as they play fictionalized versions of themselves in a fictionalized plot. Doing so not only creates a further distance between the band and their audience, but it also keeps the more adult activities of the Beatles’ real lives off screen. The audience cannot claim to gain backstage access or inside biographical information from the Beatles’ second film so the appeal of the film relies on the music and caricatures of the Beatles’ public persona.

Because of the Beatles’ high profile and established celebrity, *Help!* had the appearance of being a far more commercial product especially when compared with the lower budget, new wave influenced *A Hard Day’s Night*. Due to the first film’s success, United Artists doubled *Help!*’s budget, which gave returning producer Walter Shenson and director Richard Lester £400,000 to create another song driven, hit film for the studio.¹⁹³ From the beginning of the production meetings to the end of filming on March 11, 1965, the Beatles were allowed a greater role in the film’s production than they were previously allowed with *A Hard Day’s Night*. By the time filming was underway, the Beatles had already reduced their television and radio appearances and had even seriously started to think about not touring anymore. Partly for this reason

¹⁹² Ibid., 56.

¹⁹³ Walker, Alexander. *Hollywood, England*. London: Harrap, 1986. 267.

and due to United Artists still speculating over the Beatles' longevity, promoting *Help!* included a full scale marketing campaign to exploit the band's commercial appeal. Such a marketing campaign had not been used for *A Hard Day's Night* as United Artists were only concerned about soundtrack rights and presumably the widespread appeal for the Beatles was underestimated. The promotional merchandise for *Help!* can be grouped into three different categories: soundtrack albums, film posters, and toys/collectables. The American market has always been regarded as an outlet for success and merchandisers were eager to exploit the high demand for Beatle related goods while such a demand lasted. The album released on the British market and the one released for the American market differed in both musical content and in design. This is due partly because of the fact that two different record companies had released the album – Capitol Records in the US and their parent company EMI in the UK.¹⁹⁴ In America, however, there was a complete tie in with the film and soundtrack album. Released two days after the film's US premier in New York City, the album was awarded gold status within a week. Furthermore, the album was the first to ever have over one million advanced orders in the US.¹⁹⁵ With all the craft that had gone into the designing of the US album for *Help!*, for record buyers, it was not just another Beatles' record but instead, a movie memorabilia keepsake. The album cover is very vibrant and exciting with an enticement to see the film on every fold and flap. On the other hand, Robert Freeman's UK cover design was stripped down and simplified to represent the Beatles' mood and sell the music. Unlike the US album that clearly sets out to sell the film, which also creates an excitement for the Beatles that would coincide with a tour of North America, including the band's legendary Shea Stadium performance on August 15, 1965. I mention the promotional campaign for *Help!* because a closer examination of album covers and other related film merchandise raises issues that parallel those of image and performance that the films address. This is an area where future research is needed.

Because of the high demand for Beatle products after *A Hard Day's Night's* success, the American and British markets were over-saturated with a number of

¹⁹⁴ Legally, Capitol Records own the rights to all of the Beatles songs in the US, which conflicted with United Artists original idea behind signing the Beatles to a three-picture deal solely for the purpose of making money off of the soundtrack album. UA were able to release a soundtrack version of *A Hard Day's Night* in 1964 because EMI sold the then unwanted rights of the soundtrack to UA. Capitol regretted this deal once Beatlemania broke out in the US. As a result, Capitol did not make the same mistake again and kept the rights to the new songs featured in *Help!* while UA could only legally release an album with the film's orchestrations.

Source: Cross, Craig. "American Albums." <<http://www.beatles-discography.com/index.html>>. 8 Jan 2006.

¹⁹⁵ Carr, Roy. *Beatles at the Movies*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1996. 73.

different Beatles' products, further evidence of promoters' expectations that the Beatles' popularity would soon decline. These products also helped to tie in advertising with the band's second film. The most general form of advertising for *Help!* was the singles released of the new songs from the film. From all across Europe, as well as countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Japan, all of the singles' record sleeves featured the Beatles photographed on the set of *Help!* The anticipation for the film began to grow since the first UK single of "Ticket to Ride" was released with the B-side "Yes it is" on April 9, 1965. As the film's release drew closer the marketing campaign turned to one of exclusivity as little badges with the Beatles' heads on them and the caption, "I needed *Help!* so I got my Beatles movie ticket. Did you?" had been made available with the purchase of a ticket for a screening of the film.

Unlike *A Hard Day's Night*, critical opinion about *Help!* was not as positive. Similar to *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!*'s UK premier in London attracted thousands of fans who gathered around the cinema and throughout nearby streets. In the US, *Help!* was estimated to gross over \$13 million in box office receipts.¹⁹⁶ A popular success in the fans' opinion, *Help!* prompted a very different opinion from the majority of critics. *Time* magazine wrote in 1965 that *Help!* was "a Beatle product rather than a Beatle movie," with the only motivation for making the film being to keep Beatles fans stimulated and interested in new Beatles merchandise.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*, had once praised *A Hard Day's Night* for its innovation, but a year later found *Help!* to be "a fiasco of farcical whimsies" and a "clutter of mechanical gimmicks" that had just been "thrown together."¹⁹⁸ Crowther's final verdict of *Help!* was that the Beatles had "become awfully redundant and...dull."¹⁹⁹ In addition, the critic for the *Daily Mail* voiced similar sentiments arguing that the film's tiresome plot "reduces them to robots"²⁰⁰ while *Sight and Sound*'s critic, Peter Harcourt, wrote that Lester's technique had "become wearying by the end" of the film.²⁰¹ The one-line jokes come fast yet lack the natural ease of the Beatles' tested repertoire of responses in *A Hard Day's Night*, which had been recycled from real answers given to journalists worldwide. The Beatles had been playing "The Beatles" that were portrayed in that film for at least two years. Where the Beatles' familiarity with the subject matter in *A Hard Day's Night* allows the audience a close proximity to on screen action, and

¹⁹⁶ Bart, Peter. "Keeper of the Beatles." *New York Times*. 5 Sept 1965. X7.

¹⁹⁷ Harry, Bill. *The Ultimate Beatles Encyclopedia*. New York: Hyperion, 1992. 303.

¹⁹⁸ Crowther, Bosley. "Singers Romp through Comic Adventures." *New York Times*. 24 Aug 1965. 25.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰⁰ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 44.

²⁰¹ Harcourt, Peter. "Help!" *Sight and Sound: The International Film Quarterly*. Vol.34. No.4. Autumn 1965. 200.

reinforces the Beatles' appealing "boys next door" quality, *Help!* instead lacks the intimacy and the rapport with the audience that many had expected to carry over from the first film. Therefore, the film lacks the character development and realism needed to prevent the fictional "John," "Paul," "George," and "Ringo" from merely being stock characters. Arguably, that was the point though as the Beatles did want to distance themselves from their fans.

One of the reasons why *Help!*, was so unfavorably viewed by critics could have been the Beatles' decision to portray themselves as fictional characters and in rejecting generic conventions to move towards a new twist to the comedy and pop musical genres. Challenging these ideas allowed Lester and the Beatles an opportunity to present images that undermined mainstream ideas about film form, style, and themes. While the Beatles at first did not have the influence to "dislodge the foundations upon which the structure of the popular music industry had been built," their success after *A Hard Day's Night* firmly cemented the Beatles "status and influence...[which] 'had provided them with a massive deposit of idiosyncrasy'...and they began to introduce a range of innovative features into their activities."²⁰² One such activity was focusing on more complex and artistic promotional videos. In November 1965, Joe McGrath was hired by the Beatles' management to direct the group in ten promotional videos featuring variations of five new Beatle songs.²⁰³ McGrath modeled the style and structure of these videos from Lester's style used especially on "Ticket to Ride." In addition, these promotional videos became "the first independently produced pop films to be made and distributed specifically for the international audience."²⁰⁴ Not only did these promotional videos differ from the conventional performances typical of pop music television shows during the 1960's, but the films also allowed the Beatles to take control over their image

In 1966, the Beatles played their final tour to embark on a journey of musical experimentation. Their influences shifted from Dylan and pop in 1965 to Brian Wilson, LSD, and spiritual enlightenment by 1967. The Beatles would go on to release *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver*, and *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* before releasing a made for television film. These three albums progressed in musical and lyrical complexity, developing a sense of authorship and the idea of releasing music as part of a greater artistic package. Music became an experience. Rock music became the soundtrack to

²⁰² Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004. 92-93.

²⁰³ Neaverson, Bob. 40.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

the counterculture because it invited the meritocratic values recognized by the youth culture. Frontani argues that what was so unusual about the Beatles was not that they were seen as leaders of the youth culture, but that they wanted to be a part of it in the first place.²⁰⁵ The youth culture found it easy to identify with them and, as a result, the Beatles would spend the rest of their career mending an often-contradictory relationship with their audience.

²⁰⁵ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 193.

Chapter Three: *Magical Mystery Tour*

“In the post-Beatlemania period following the end of touring, the Beatles attempted to leave behind their show-business image and to make their public image more authentic and consistent with their perceptions of themselves. The Beatles’ new image broke with the “Fab Four” of the Beatlemania years and instead presented them as artists and committed counterculturalists...Their image comprised, in part, two seemingly inconsistent qualities: They were exceptional and they were identifiable as ‘us,’ meaning youth and the counterculture. Thus, while their uniqueness was assumed, they nonetheless were viewed ‘whether they liked it or not,’ as ‘mirrors of ourselves.’”²⁰⁶

Chapter two examined how the Beatles began to transition from an image that was associated with pop stardom to aligning themselves as musical artists. This was achieved by reducing both their touring schedule and live television appearances, as well as starring in a film that enabled some distance between the Beatles and their audience. As a result of the Beatles’ shift in creative direction, the band stopped touring completely in 1966 and took refuge at Abbey Road studios to focus on recording music. The studio became the band’s bohemian hang-out, reminiscent of their art school days when they would stay up all night discussing and making art. The Beatles’ success allowed the band unprecedented access to the studio after hours and gave them a greater freedom to experiment by taking control of the recording and mixing equipment. As the Beatles began to work on tracks for the *Sgt. Pepper* album, they were changing the well-established music production process of the popular music industry. Previously, the pop act’s output was based around lyrics written by an external songwriting team chosen with input by a Svengali-like manager. The act’s producer would have a large percentage of control over the sound and structure of the song, which often followed generic conventions. Arguably for the first time in Britain, a pop band had taken artistic control over the content, production, packaging, and promotion of an album. The Lennon-McCartney songwriting team was an important precursor leading up to total autonomy in the creative process and the Beach Boys’ *Pet*

²⁰⁶ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007. 123. 193.

Sounds was a clear influence. Not only would *Sgt. Pepper* help to shift the music industry's sales focus from singles to albums, but it also signaled a change in the way the Beatles as a collective created and recorded music. The emergence of each Beatle as a songwriter with a distinctive style was deeply reflected in the band's new image. As the Beatles began to mature as songwriters and as individuals, the principles and beliefs associated with the counterculture and psychedelia became imbedded within the band to the point of positioning them as a link between mainstream audiences and the youth culture. Promotional videos directed by Joe McGrath, Michael Lindsay-Hogg, and Peter Goldmann highlight the maturity in the band's image as well as depict the Beatles undermining and avoiding Beatlemania iconography. These videos are worth close analysis in order to place the direction of the Beatles' third film in context. *Magical Mystery Tour* and the preceding promotional music films not only document a major change in direction for the Beatles' image and sound, but also represent a wider trend by musicians wanting to take control over their output and in doing so, releasing art that was deemed more authentic than the product manufactured through the industry's traditional Tin Pan Alley system.²⁰⁷

Magical Mystery Tour undermines the ridged production process of the music industry, but as a film also challenges the way in which mainstream cinema was produced, manufactured, and distributed. Uniquely, the Beatles completely funded the project as well as wrote the "script," starred in, and directed the film. This approach bypassed any of the studios as the band had released the film through their own film company and negotiated a sale and broadcasting rights to the BBC directly. A medium that had been regarded as belonging to large studios, had now emerged from the underground and art house cinemas to become a possible choice for artists and anyone with an interest in filmmaking who were looking to independently create or promote themselves in a new way. Photographs and footage of the Beatles on their first American visit in 1964 are widely available depicting the band with their own home movie cameras documenting their interest in film from early on. Also, earlier chapters discuss the level of involvement that the Beatles had in production choices for their first two films and MacDonald had written about how McCartney was making private avant-garde influenced home movies in 1966 and screening them to Michelangelo Antonioni.²⁰⁸ For these reasons, it makes sense that the Beatles would eventually make

²⁰⁷ Tin Pan Alley was the location for groups of songwriters who were commissioned by record companies to write hit songs for pop singers and bands. There was a similar system in place in the US. As I argue throughout this work, the Beatles' role as songwriters adds to the band's uniqueness and especially during their mid to late career was used to distinguish themselves as musicians.

²⁰⁸ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. London: Pimlico, 2005. 256.

their own film as they became increasingly involved with a variety of artistic projects and had the financial means and influence to do so. What is striking, however, is *Magical Mystery Tour*'s disregard of the generic conventions associated with musicals and instead uses tropes that became characteristic of 1960's "head" films. To help illustrate this idea, my analysis of the Beatles' image and performance style will be informed by Nannette Aldred's thesis that psychedelic art represented a three-tiered frame of mind (Perception, Performance, and Liberation) rather than a type of style. Aldred does not discuss *Magical Mystery Tour* in her essay "The Summer of Love," but through her work, I have found a link between her theory on image perception and the themes found in *Magical Mystery Tour*. The idea of psychedelic art as a frame of mind does help make sense of what the Beatles were trying to achieve with their film. Aldred considers how *Performance* (Donald Cammell and Nicholas Roeg, 1970) and the *Sgt. Pepper* album are creations of inward thought and reflection on the nature of image and performance. It is believed that by questioning and discussing these issues, it was possible for one to achieve liberation from one's unauthentic self in order to find one's true self. I will also be considering how the Beatles returned to the medium of television in order to reconnect with their audience in order to fully realize their vision of utopia. Calling to mind Marshall's argument in the first chapter that television was a medium that enables celebrities to create a close, intimate connection with their audience, versus film codes, the Beatles and the BBC's decision to screen *Magical Mystery Tour* on Boxing Day 1967 is significant. Not only would the Beatles' primary fan base be tuned in, but so would a wider, potentially more conservative demographic. The Beatles had up to this point enjoyed a wide demographic purchasing albums and attending screenings of their first two films. Being slightly edgy and rebellious secured the band's core fan base but parental approval helped to make the band more financially successful. So that mix of viewers would have been ideal for the band to present their vision of utopia to mainstream viewers as well as those aligned with the youth and countercultures. In this way, the Beatles could secure their position as a link between mainstream society and the counterculture.

Unlike traditional musicals, *Magical Mystery Tour* breaks down the narrative/number relationship, allowing the idea of the number as a utopian moment to blend into the very loose "narrative." Rather than the number being the moment of escape, the entire film functions on various levels of escape – from nostalgia for the prewar dance hall days and mystery coach trips to the seaside to seeing the Beatles perform and even escaping one's conscious thought through "trippy" visual effects.

Nostalgia for the past was a key component to psychedelia and the Beatles' lyrics also contain such ingredients. Many Beatle biographies acknowledge the influence of Timothy Leary's co-authored *The Psychedelic Experience* and the impact of that book on the Beatles' pre-production planning for the film up to the editing can be seen in the final product. Just as Leary speaks about using LSD to "turn off your mind, relax, and float downstream," *Magical Mystery Tour* follows the free form flowing of a hallucinatory drug trip.²⁰⁹ I will be using Neaverson's work on the film's narrative themes and influences to argue that the Beatles were liberating themselves from the restrictions of the establishment in order to further develop their own styles of artistry. Yet, the film is problematic in its "liberated" depiction of the Beatles' image. On one level, such a project allows the Beatles to acknowledge their exploitative relationship with their audience – it is a brash, over produced film screened during a prime time slot. But on another level, the Beatles really seem to struggle with adapting to a new, counterculture influenced image. They try to shed their Beatlemania iconography, but instead end up questioning what "Beatle" is and what "Beatle" can be. The depiction of the Beatles' image in *Magical Mystery Tour*, is therefore problematic because there is no clear, "liberated" resolution about the Beatles' role as pop stars, as musicians, or as leaders of the youth culture. True to the inward, reflective nature of psychedelia the Beatles' leave viewers with more questions about their image and greater purpose than they provide answers for. Understandably, for those casual viewers settling in for a festive night of television with the family, *Magical Mystery Tour* proved to be too confusing and too challenging.

Producing and promoting *Magical Mystery Tour*

1967 was a time of upheaval for the Beatles as they went from having their appointments booked for them to suddenly taking control over their own business affairs, musical decisions, and official product releases. Between *Magical Mystery Tour*'s inception in April and the television film's broadcast on BBC 1 in December, many critical events had taken place in the Beatles' lives with each event allowing the band more autonomy over their affairs, including directing the film on their own. First,

²⁰⁹ Leary, Timothy, Ralph Metzner, and Richard Alpert. *The Psychedelic Experience: A Manual Based on the Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1997. 104.

the Beatles built upon the authorship of 1966's *Revolver* album with the experimentally groundbreaking and highly conceptualized *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Released on July 1, 1967, the album helped to signal the beginning of the "Summer of Love." The album resulted in the beginning of an experimental period for the band that considered creating art out of every aspect of the production process: lyrics were printed for the first time on an album sleeve to elevate their status to that of poetry, the cover was a Pop Art collage that opened up to reveal photographs of the band, there was a sheet of cut outs so the owner could potentially interact by dressing up as a member of the Lonely Hearts Club Band. Three of the four albums to follow *Sgt. Pepper* would present the whole package as a piece of art. This focus on the artistry of their output was primarily a result of the band's decision to stop performing live. As McCartney told reporters in 1967, "The only thing about [touring] is performance. For us it had gone downhill because we can't develop when nobody can hear us. So we're trying to get better with things like recording."²¹⁰ Within weeks of *Sgt. Pepper's* release, the Beatles were chosen to represent Britain in the world's first live satellite broadcast. For the *Our World* program, the Beatles wrote "All You Need is Love," which reached number one on the singles chart on July 1 and became not only "the soundtrack for that summer" but was also the anthem of the counterculture.²¹¹ Furthermore, on August 14, 1967 pirate radio DJ Johnnie Walker chose "All You Need is Love" for Radio Caroline's first broadcasted record because it "summed up the times of 1967 and what Radio Caroline stood for."²¹² The Beatles held the nation's attention captive throughout the year. Next, the Beatles were confronted with the news that their manager and friend, Brian Epstein, died of a drug overdose on August 27 while they were at a meditation retreat in Wales. Even though the Beatles were deeply saddened by the news and briefly felt lost without Epstein, the Beatles' press officer Tony Barrow recently revealed that when Epstein's five-year contract ran out at the end of 1967, "the group had already agreed among themselves that it would not be renewed."²¹³ Fearing the band was getting even closer to disbanding, McCartney quickly proposed that the Beatles pursue his idea for a television film. The project was designed to restore confidence in the band and bring about cohesion as all four would be required to work on the project together. Lennon and Harrison had become disillusioned with their Beatlemania celebrity status and everyone in the group felt that

²¹⁰ *The Summer of...Love 1967*. Dir. Melissa FitzGerald. Blakeway Productions Ltd. BBC 1. May 2006.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*

²¹³ Barrow, Tony. *The Making of the Beatles' Magical Mystery Tour*. London: Omnibus Press, 1999. 7.

touring had diminished their musical craft. With the death of their manager, there was a feeling that no one would be able to at least guide them as they took control over their own “empire.” For these reasons, McCartney felt that the success of such a project would prove the band were capable of being their own manager.

In April 1967, McCartney began to have ideas about a potential film. Unlike the Beatles’ previous two films, McCartney’s ideas were very abstract. While on a trip to America, McCartney had heard about Ken Kesey and the Merry Pranksters – a group of West Coast LSD experimenters who drove around in a brightly painted bus. I stated earlier that psychedelia was a time of cultural and personal nostalgia that recalled childhood innocence, so McCartney began to reminisce about the old mystery coach trips with unspecified destinations, as well as the weekend coach trips from Liverpool to Blackpool during his youth. Under the influence of LSD and his interest in the avant-garde, McCartney became obsessed with the idea of creating “magical” experiences. For instance, during the *Revolver* sessions, McCartney’s main goal was to experiment with sounds because “It’s all [about] trying to create magic,” and even those working with the Beatles were told to be spontaneous in order to “distort and create magic.”²¹⁴ To allow for such spontaneity during the *Magical Mystery Tour* project, McCartney approached the band with only a sheet of paper that had a circle drawn on it. Divided into segments adding up to approximately sixty minutes, some sections of the circle had rough ideas or phrases written in while many were empty. Each member of the band was then instructed by McCartney to provide an idea for the segments while any left over spaces would be improvised when the time came.

Neaverson asks why the Beatles would want to produce and direct their own film, arguing that because “none of the Beatles has actually discussed reasons for such involvement in any depth, one can only speculate.”²¹⁵ However, looking at what the Beatles had produced up to *Magical Mystery Tour*, it was first Beatles’ product in which the band had complete control over their image and music. In trying to display a more authentic image than their Beatlemania look, *Magical Mystery Tour*, with all of its paradoxes and confusion, comes the closest to allowing the Beatles to be themselves. Neaverson hints at this argument by offering that the Beatles “felt that their early ‘loveable mop-top’ image had been over-exploited” in *A Hard Day’s Night* and that, in Lennon’s opinion, *Help!* “was just bullshit because it really had nothing to

²¹⁴ Irving, Jim. “Into Tomorrow.” *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 199.

²¹⁵ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 47.

do with the Beatles.”²¹⁶ Moreover, chapter two examined the synergy that arose in the popular culture and art scene with bands and artists, who had been influenced by their art school backgrounds and explored other art forms in order to enrich through experimentation their preferred medium. These ideals, along with McCartney’s interest in the avant-garde, gave rise to his experimentations with filmmaking. Being “a cinema-fan and a maker of ‘underground’ home-movies, McCartney saw the motif of a psychedelic road show as the basis for a film.”²¹⁷ In addition, as Barrow points out, McCartney “hoped to establish himself as a filmmaker, The Beatles’ filmmaker, by handling all aspects of *Magical Mystery Tour* without hiring outsiders to organize things.”²¹⁸ All of the band’s promotional videos over the previous two years allowed the group close access to the decision- and film- making processes. By creating Apple Corp. in November, the Beatles had created their own corporate investor to fund and distribute their project, as well as provided them with the crew to operate equipment, hire a coach, and find cast members. Apple Corp. gave the band £30,000 for their project, which was released by Apple Films.²¹⁹ Many of those involved with the project, including Alistair Taylor, Mal Evans, Tony Barrow, Denis O’Dell, Derek Taylor, and Neil Aspinall, had been friends of the Beatles and had worked for the band since as far back as the band’s days in Hamburg. Location filming for the majority of *Magical Mystery Tour* began between September 11-15 in Devon and Cornwall, with location and studio work continuing in London between September 18 and 25, and finally McCartney’s “Fool on the Hill” sequence was filmed in Nice, France between October 29 and 31. Having only a loose script and with most of the dialogue improvised, *Magical Mystery Tour* included local actors and actresses, fan club secretaries, friends of the Beatles, the humorist Ivor Cutler, Victor Spinetti, and variety performer Nat “Rubber Man” Jackley as passengers. With cameramen instructed to record anything that seemed interesting, the Beatles ended up with ten hours of film that needed to be cut to just under sixty minutes in order to approach the BBC to request a televised broadcast.²²⁰ The daunting task of editing the film went to associate producer Denis O’Dell’s friend, Roy Benson, who also acted as second assistant editor to John Jympson on *A Hard Day’s Night*.²²¹ While the Beatles thought the film could

²¹⁶ Ibid., 48.

²¹⁷ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 254.

²¹⁸ Barrow, Tony. *The Making of the Beatles’ Magical Mystery Tour*. 6.

²¹⁹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 47.

²²⁰ Barrow, Tony. *The Making of the Beatles’ Magical Mystery Tour*. 9.

²²¹ No text makes the connection between Benson’s work on *A Hard Day’s Night* and his role as editor on *Magical Mystery Tour*. Benson is interviewed and credited as assistant editor on “Things they said today” and other bonus materials included on *A Hard Day’s Night* DVD, Miramax Collector’s Series, 2002.

be edited in one week, it took that long to hire someone to log all of the footage and make the continuity notes. The Beatles insisted on actively participating in the editing process, which took three months to complete.²²² Because of McCartney's persistence in pursuing the *Magical Mystery Tour* project, the title song was recorded as early as April 1967 with the other songs being recorded between September and November. Benson's only instructions were to edit with the idea of the mystery tour in mind and to edit footage suitable for the songs the Beatles had written.

Released on December 8, 1967, *Magical Mystery Tour* proved to be another Beatles' first. With only six songs, all featured in the film, the Beatles did not have enough for a full length LP and too many songs for an EP. Since the Beatles never released their UK singles on the actual albums so as to give the consumer a truly new product, the band decided to release a double EP set consisting of "Magical Mystery Tour," "The Fool on the Hill," "Flying," "Blue Jay Way," "Your Mother Should Know," and "I am the Walrus." In addition, the package came with a 28-page cartoon booklet with drawings by cartoonist Bob Gibson, and photographic stills from the film by John Kelly. The cartoon booklet was a detailed summary of the film telling the story from start to finish about the wonderful mystery tour that the Beatles had taken their friends, the listeners, on. Also included were all the stops made along the way from the episodes with the jolly couriers, the great marathon race, the introduction to the magicians, and even the trip to the striptease. The cartoons that accompany each episode's narration deal with the adult themes of sexuality and drug use in a more innocent and lighthearted way. The Beatles, in the guise of magicians, conjure the "magic" of the coach tour and any moment of hallucination caused by LSD is referred to as "a daydream." These dreams are both frightful (Aunt Jessie's spaghetti dream) and of a more adult nature (Happy Nat's "happy" dream about young women clad only in skimpy swimwear). Similarly, the cartoon depicting the striptease only shows Jan Carson's leg as George's hands cover John's face. After leaving the show, everyone returns to the bus "very pleased" without the more graphic suggestions displayed in the film. In addition, there are playful criticisms of establishment figures such as parents (the drawings of the obese Aunt Jessie take up most, if not all, of the frames in which she appears and is either nagging or complaining in the story), clergy (the vicars are referred to as "the five cheating vicars"), and the military (once inside the "strange place" that no one likes the looks of, the officer sits around lazily with his feet on the desk while his sergeant bellows out unintelligible orders and insults at the guests

²²² MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 255.

“about haircuts and Other Military Things.” Jolly Jimmy tells his passengers, “and if they try to get you to join up DON’T TAKE ANY NOTICE!”).

The photographs in the booklet include both scenes from *Magical Mystery Tour*, and scenes that were later edited out due to there being no final cut until after the booklet was released. These photographs provide evidence of the surreal and abstract turn the Beatles had taken both in regards to their image and their states of mind. Rather than depicting a sequence of events, the photographs seem random, showing each Beatle in a different role suggesting the film is a series of sketches versus the linear narrative of the band’s previous films. Included are stills from the bizarre dream sequence in which Lennon plays a Spanish waiter shoveling spaghetti onto Aunt Jessie’s plate, George and John eyeing up the off camera stripper, and the prism lens photo of George in an orange suit. In the photographs where the band are not together as a group, each looks ordinary wearing clothes that do not make them stand out from their bus load of passengers, perhaps suggesting their equality to the other passengers. Another suggestion might be that in rejecting Beatlemania iconography, the band is able to “hide” amongst ordinary people. This was the idea behind *Sgt. Pepper* – the Beatles wore different clothes and had altered their physical appearance to become a different band. However, in the photographs that present the Beatles in the foreground, each member is dressed uniformly in strange and psychedelic costumes – in red flowing gowns with tall, pointed caps with flowers as the magicians, with their identities masked in animal costumes for “I am the Walrus”, and in matching, psychedelic patterned kaftans for the booklet’s centerfold photograph.

In this way, *Magical Mystery Tour* (the album) was not only a preview of what viewers could expect on Boxing Day – preparing their viewers for the visual confirmation that Beatlemania was over and that the four individuals had moved on to more artistic and adult pursuits – but also from a marketing standpoint, the contents and new format provided consumers with a unique product. In America, however, the album was released on the LP format and included five singles, “Hello Goodbye,” “Strawberry Fields Forever,” “Penny Lane,” “Baby You’re a Rich Man,” and “All You Need is Love.” The high demand for Beatles products in America, as discussed in chapter two, allowed consumers to have the double EP and singles on one album, which was also packaged with the cartoon booklet. Released on November 27, at the start of the Christmas shopping season, *Magical Mystery Tour* sold 1.75 million copies in seven weeks, many of which were advanced sales orders, and eventually sold a total of 5 million copies. In addition, this LP format was available in Britain as an import

and sold a respectable 50,000 copies.²²³ Despite the film not being on general release at cinema venues in America, the *Magical Mystery Tour* LP earned over \$8 million in just ten days.²²⁴ In Britain, the double EP, which was hampered slightly by being difficult to market in its unique format, sold half a million copies before Christmas.²²⁵ While the album may not have been the Beatles' highest grossing album, it still had healthy sales.

Perception, performance, liberation – psychedelia's influence on the Beatles

As early as 1966, the Beatles had begun using LSD and started exploring both Eastern philosophy and Timothy Leary's LSD induced guide to enlightenment, *The Psychedelic Experience*. These influences affected the band's songwriting and artistic approaches to their music, image, and performance style. Aldred's essay provides a context for approaching the way *Magical Mystery Tour* depicts the Beatles' evolving image, as she argues that psychedelia is a particular mindset that influences consciousness to "question identity and representation."²²⁶ It was the beliefs and look of the establishment that the counterculture questioned and distanced themselves from. Examples of this can be found in the abstract art of the period, films that go against established conventions, fashions that predated the then current styles, music that created soundscapes and mixed styles rather than follow traditional musical logic, etc. Many followers of the counterculture recalled their art school backgrounds as a gateway to unlimited possibilities of experimentation. As stated earlier behind the beliefs of the counterculture, and experimentation with spirituality and hallucinogenic drugs, emerged the style associated with words like "psychedelic" and "psychedelia." Aldred proposes three levels of the psychedelic frame of mind: perception, performance, and liberation. Closely interlinked, each is an element of participating in the counterculture. Rather than just wearing the clothes or quoting psychedelic tracts, it was believed that this mindset could completely free a person of their imprisonment

²²³ Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 144.

²²⁴ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 71.

²²⁵ "Beatles 1964-1967: Records." *Beatle Money: Economic History of the Beatles*. <<http://www.beatlemoney.com/beatles6467records.htm>>. 31 July 2006.

²²⁶ Aldred, Nannette. "'The Summer of Love' in *Performance and Sgt. Pepper*." *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis, and Counterculture in the 1960s*. Eds. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005. 101.

from the establishment – mind, body, and soul. Even though the terms are somewhat self-explanatory, it may be helpful to include a short description of each. Perception involves questioning one's identity and how others see that identity. This involves delving deeper into one's psyche and analyzing meaning rather than just accepting hallucinatory visions, for example. Simply put, it is a process of questioning and meditation – whether that is psychological, religious, or philosophical. Performance is taking the idea of perception to a more concrete experience. This would involve transforming the revelations discovered into art pieces, paintings, verse, music, acting, etc. Using costumes to physically question identity is a common association. Finally, when one has found oneself and conveyed this to the community whole heartedly, does one reach liberation from mainstream society and one's former, establishment self. As I have stated, the Beatles had begun to experiment musically and visually by 1965 and 1966 with ways to challenge the audience's perception of the outdated Beatlemania iconography and what their definition of "Beatle" was. This was first achieved musically with albums such as *Help!* (1965), *Rubber Soul* (1965), and *Revolver* (1966) as the Beatles began to craft more autobiographical songs with distinct instrumental styles. Visually, the Beatles' challenged their audience's perception of Beatlemania with a series of promotional videos made between 1965 and 1967. These projects not only allowed the Beatles a chance to experiment with their images, but it also led to the culmination of craft and experimentation that would become *Magical Mystery Tour*.

The Beatles' psychedelic promotional films

Before moving on to an analysis of *Magical Mystery Tour*, it is first necessary to look at a couple of key promotional films the Beatles made in 1966 and 1967 in order to establish a context for their televised short film. By looking at "Rain," "Paperback Writer," and "Strawberry Fields Forever," it becomes clearer to understand how the Beatles' introspective songwriting and depiction of their new image on film led to the undermining, and even rejection, of classical and pop musicals. In producing short promotional films, the Beatles and the directors they worked with brought forward a new way of promoting their music as well as a new way to present art. These

works cannot be thought of as simply moments of escape or of utopian moments because they are self contained, often with no narrative presented. The songs became more personalized as the lyrics drew on past experiences and influences but were often written as abstract thoughts. The combination of complex lyrics and visuals present the audience with a number that does not fit within traditional definitions of the number's function. Instead, these promotional films became statements containing the Beatles' messages about individuality and countercultural ways of thinking.

The first series of promotional videos were made with director Joe McGrath in late 1965 of which there were a total of ten videos from five different Beatles' songs: three versions of "We Can Work it Out," three versions of "Day Tripper," two versions of "I Feel Fine," and one version each of "Ticket to Ride" and "Help!"²²⁷ Costing the Beatles' management company, North End Musical Stores (NEMS), only £750 to produce, the set of ten promotional videos were sold to television companies, including the BBC, for £1,750, and were aired numerous times on programs such as *Top of the Pops*, *Thank Your Lucky Stars*, and *Hullabaloo*.²²⁸ Of the ten videos made from McGrath's sessions, six are still available for public viewing on Internet sites such as YouTube. These are: "Ticket to Ride," "Help!," "Day Tripper" (version two), "We Can Work it Out" (versions two and three), and "I Feel Fine" (version one).

"Rain" and "Paperback Writer"

These videos all lack the wit and surrealist humor on display in the band's first two films. Even the stage performance sequences of *A Hard Day's Night* displayed more earnest and professional performances from the Beatles. Again, it is clear to see that with these videos, the Beatles' image is a product that consumers are still willing to buy despite the price and the quality of the performances. Lennon's acting out is not seen as rebelling against an establishment television producer, but rather part of the innocent cheekiness that the public found endearing from the mop-tops. With the Beatles' next set of promotional videos, made in 1966 with director Michael Lindsay-

²²⁷ McGrath's path had crossed with the Beatles as early as April 1964 when McGrath produced an installment of David Frost's *A Degree of Frost* which featured a solo appearance by McCartney at the Scala Theatre, London, where the band were filming *A Hard Day's Night*. In November 1964, McGrath produced the Dudley Moore and Peter Cook series *Not Only...But Also* in which Lennon made a guest appearance. Finally, McGrath went on to direct Starr in 1969's *The Magic Christian*. NB: Pieper, Jörg and Volker Path. *The Beatles: Film & TV Chronicle 1961-1970*. Stockholm: Premium Publishing, 2005. 235-236.

²²⁸ Lewisohn, Mark. *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*. London: Chancellor Press, 2004. 208.

Hogg, the band fared better creatively, yet still are made to cling to their Beatlemania image.²²⁹ Even worse for a band trying to be progressive is how inappropriate and awkward the four matured adults look in an image created by Epstein years ago for his “boys.” Perhaps this is Lindsay-Hogg’s point as he is able to compromise between allowing the Beatles to wear pieces of clothing that alter their image slightly but still resemble Beatlemania enough to satisfy the band’s public. The juxtaposition of these elements can be read to represent a transition from Beatlemania iconography to an image that fit better with the band’s new musical direction. Moreover, Lindsay-Hogg injects sly moments of commentary on the validity of Beatlemania during the “Chiswick House” versions of both songs. This awareness acknowledges the Beatles’ struggle between trying to establish themselves as musicians and having to cater to the demand of a specific image.

Version three of “Rain” and version one of “Paperback Writer” were both shot in color, made specifically for *The Ed Sullivan Show*, and present the Beatles on stage performing for an unseen audience who clap politely before and after the song. Despite standing on stage in their typical Lennon lead vocal formation in “Rain” the mop-tops were unkempt and grown out past their collars, John hid behind dark sunglasses, and both Lennon and McCartney wore flower patterned shirts under their jackets. In “Paperback Writer” the stage set up is less uniform and less formal with the band’s interest in the emerging counterculture more visibly apparent. For instance, the flower pattern shirts are more prominent owing to the lack of jackets and ties. Each member of the group dons different colored sunglasses and the beginning of the performance is prefaced with Ringo apologizing to the television audience on the band’s behalf for not being able to perform live. He goes on to explain that each member is too busy with other engagements. Also, there is a brief reference to the band’s controversial “butcher cover” for the forthcoming US release, *Yesterday...and Today*, the significance of which shall be explained later in the chapter. These two performances deliver a seriousness and maturity that the McGrath promos lacked. Lindsay-Hogg’s videos do not patronize the Beatles, but rather allow room for the Beatles’ new personalities and strong individual style to emerge. The camera’s more imaginative and fluid style matches the complexity of the song, the colors are natural, autumnal hues, and the lighting is under lit. The significance of the natural, autumnal hues, like the similar

²²⁹ The Beatles knew of Michael Lindsay-Hogg due to his work on ITV’s *Ready, Steady, Go!*, which was marketed specifically to a young audience and seen as an alternative to the more establishment-minded BBC. Lindsay-Hogg would later direct the Beatles’ promotional videos for “Hey Jude” and “Revolution” (both 1968) and their final film project, *Let it Be* (United Artists, 1970).

tones on the cover photograph of the *Beatles for Sale* album, helps to signal the band's desire for the death of Beatlemania and their choice to move away from iconography associated with that phase. Under lighting the band, as seen in *Help!*, allows the director to highlight their musicianship over their looks.

For both songs, an alternate version was filmed (rather than taped) at Chiswick House in west London. Being out in the estate's conservatory and statue garden, the bright natural lighting cannot mask the changes in the Beatles' physical appearances. As stated previously, the long hair is grown out and accompanied by thick sideburns, and the band further obscure their faces by wearing colored sunglasses. Each wears a turtleneck sweater under their varied suit jackets rather than opting for a shirt and tie. Lennon acts more pensive and distant versus the humor of the McGrath videos and McCartney's trademark soft features are spoilt by a badly chipped front tooth and swollen, cut lip. Technically, the Chiswick House films are more Lester-esque in style, using jump cuts, tracking shots, and a variety of different spaces within the grounds. Both films mix performative and non-performative styles, which helps the director to take the primary focus off of the Beatles as stage performers. When the Beatles are lip-synching to "Rain," the director favors closer and even tight shots to disallow full views of the instruments and Ringo's drums do not appear at all. Throughout "Rain," Lindsay-Hogg edits in moments when the crew are setting and marking shots for the camera and the film starts with a close up on the clapperboard. Rather than recreate a façade of performance as Lester had done in *A Hard Day's Night*, Lindsay-Hogg defuses some of the Beatle myth by capturing real "behind the scenes" moments. Finally, what is most significant about "Rain" in particular is the underlying commentary about the nature of the Beatles' fame. The Beatles are on a walled and gated estate free of any audience. However, there is a very brief cameo in which a group of fans cling to the iron gate at the entrance and as Ringo walks away with his back to them, a sign that says "Way Out" can be seen next to the gate. Clearly, the Beatles are prepared to walk away from the mass adoration that they feel jeopardizes their artistic development. The option Ringo walks away from may be the more viable way in terms of wealth and acceptance, but it is the more wearing and soul destroying. At the end of "Rain" a camera positioned at a low angle uses a reverse shot as the cameraman follows Paul and John around the conservatory, and this is similarly inter-cut with footage of George and Ringo. Both pairs shut a wooden gate in front of the camera – John does not look back and walks away while in George and Ringo's segment, the two Beatles wave goodbye to the ostracized camera. The door has

literally been closed and a physical barrier established to signal an end to the Beatlemania era. These brief shots foreshadow the direction the Beatles take with their decision to make the video for “Strawberry Fields Forever” and *Magical Mystery Tour*.

“Strawberry Fields Forever”

Directed by Peter Goldmann in February 1967, “Strawberry Fields Forever” represented visually the experimentation and changing identity the Beatles had developed sonically with *Revolver*.²³⁰ In examining the “Strawberry Fields Forever” video, the idea from *Help!* of distancing themselves from their audience and confronting the nature of their celebrity becomes clear as it dominates the Beatles performance. Not only will the techniques of the video carry through to *Magical Mystery Tour*, but so will the counterculture influence that is presented. The promotional video begins with a shot of a bare field. In the middle ground, right frame, is a large tree without foliage. Tympanis are scattered around in the background and in the foreground, framed left, is a mutilated upright piano with its top off, stripped down as much as possible, and its wires stretched vertically along with pieces of string. With the color desaturated, there is a muted and autumnal feeling to the piece. Goldmann opens the video by focusing on the upper branches of the bare tree, slowly panning down to reveal the above-described scene. The Beatles walk from the background into the middle ground and disappear behind the tree’s trunk. In shot two (00:11), which has been given a more noticeable injection of color, the group emerge from off camera, right frame, walking backwards towards the piano where George comically bumps into the instrument and joins the other four in a line. Immediately the viewer is confronted with the Beatles’ new image, which must have looked very strange to Beatles’ fans. George and John had undergone the most change, which parallels their growing ambivalence towards being a Beatle. Most remarkably, apart from the band’s new wardrobe, is the presence of facial hair. Thick hair carpets the sides of each Beatle’s face along with the now iconic moustaches and beards displayed on the *Sgt. Pepper* album sleeve (June 1967). Marshall makes the important observation about the Beatlemania Beatles’ hairless faces as representing innocent, boy-like maleness and

²³⁰ Peter Goldmann was a Swedish filmmaker and had produced music programs on television. He was a friend of the German artist Klaus Voorman, who had befriended the Beatles during their time in Hamburg. Goldmann directed the Beatles in the equally surreal “Penny Lane” the same year.

non-masculinity simultaneously in order to appeal to their younger female fans.²³¹ Here, however, is the first official public appearance of undeniably grownup and mature men with long hair. With the band's withdrawal to the studio and the public appearances dramatically reduced, "Strawberry Fields Forever" unveiled the Beatles' new image. However, the military tunic, scarves, orange and red shirts, and pink and lavender striped jackets were not part of a coordinated image retooling nor were the outfits purchased tailor-made from "tailor to the stars" Dougie Milling. To further distance themselves from the brand the Beatles had become, the band began wearing their own clothes bought from the shops in Soho and Camden where everyone else shopped. In addition, the Beatles are no longer depicted as baby faced and cute but rather as sophisticated and handsome. In shot seven (00:33), the director dissolves to a superimposed extreme close up of Paul's left sideburn and pans around Paul to stop at an extreme close up of his eye looking directly into the camera. Shot ten (00:43) is presented in a similar fashion, exchanging Paul for John's right sideburn and short fringe. As the camera pans around to an extreme close up of John's face, the director stops at John's bespectacled eye. John's "granny" glasses and their role in authenticating the Beatle's new image will be discussed more thoroughly later in the chapter. The extreme close ups mirror those used in *A Hard Day's Night* but convey the irony of the shots in *Help!*. Again, Goldmann uses a similar technique for Ringo in shot eleven (00:48) in which the camera presents an extreme close up on Ringo's right profile, while George is presented in dark shadows and obscured by a hat, scarf, and beard on the footage under the superimposed footage of John and Ringo.

When Goldmann has exhausted this motif, he then begins to shoot each Beatle individually looking straight at the camera in a range of close shots to full close ups with a deadpan expression. The effect is a poignant confrontation with the viewer. Rather than avoiding eye contact with the camera as they had done in *Help!*, each Beatle stands at a comfortable distance from the camera, which pauses long enough for the viewer to see the Beatles' new look plainly and long enough for the stern gazes to begin feeling slightly uncomfortable. For example, shot fourteen (1:08) presents a low angle, full close up of Paul with his eyes looking down into the camera. The low angle conveys a sense of superiority of Paul over his audience, the tops of his shoulders are straight, and his head remains elevated to give the Beatle the quality of looking down his nose. There is an imposing feeling enhanced by the lack of lighting, both natural and artificial, as by this point in the film Goldmann is filming at night with only very

²³¹ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 170.

minimal light. Another example, is shot seventeen (1:23), where Goldmann cuts to a full close up of John with his gingery handle-bar moustache and glasses, which is proceeded by a quick zoom to an extreme close up of Lennon's eyes staring expressionlessly back at the camera. Half of his face is lit in dark, red lighting and between the camera and John is the fence-like barrier of the piano wires. Where Paul was shot at a low angle as a device to symbolize distance, Goldmann switches to a more obvious physical barrier with Lennon. Most interesting of all these shots is shot nineteen (1:28) of George in a wide close up behind the foreground of the crisscrossed wires. While Harrison is center framed, his eyes do not look directly into the camera. Instead, he is looking off camera to the left and then quickly turns his head around as if someone or something is behind him. The turn is instinctive as if Harrison is still haunted by Beatlemania wherever he goes, fearful that he may never escape the association of being a Beatle. This could suggest that Harrison found the Beatles myth he was associated with to be restrictive to his development as a musician.

Finally, the Beatles' image is disassociated from the Beatles as musical performers as the Beatles do not play any instruments in the video. Instead, the tympanis and piano serve as props and the main motif of the video (that of the Beatles centered on the gutted piano in the darkness) introduces the viewer to the Beatles' new preoccupation with surrealism as an avant-garde art form rather than as a comedic device, which Richard Lester was fond of. For example, in *Help!* an Indian band plays Beatles music on sitars in an ethnic restaurant, Clang disguises himself as a snowman to get closer to the Beatles, Paul shrinks when injected with a serum, Clang has a religious discussion over tea with an Anglican and an Orthodox minister, Ahme uses an extremely long grabber to try to get the ring off Ringo's finger and he falls out of bed, and a bathroom hand dryer pulls off clothing George and the sinks from the wall. Instead of just juxtaposing conflicting or absurd images, "Strawberry Fields Forever" instead uses images and techniques that simulate an LSD trip. Lennon's wordplay, backwards tape loops, and the video's dream-like state are all elements that differentiate "Strawberry Field's" surrealism from Lester's approach. In addition, colored filters for the backlighting and running footage backwards to match the music's effects enhance the surrealism. Shots twelve and thirteen (00:50-1:08) capture Paul at the piano and then running backwards in a precursory Python-esque "silly walk" towards the tree. After two jumps, the camera cuts almost seamlessly to a low angle shot of Paul on one of the highest branches where the "controls" connecting the piano wires are. With divinity-like powers, Paul turns one of the bulbs and the daylight

turns into darkness with only a single red light bulb shining eerily. As the Beatles sit and stand around the piano, George plucks at the wires experimenting with sound and in another shot (2:59) depicts the Beatles not playing the piano, but painting it with abstract strokes and various colors as the footage then switches to an overexposed negative effect. This sequence of shots clearly proclaims that music is not a commercial product to be dictated by rules of structure, but rather, music is experimental art. This statement, all the more poignant with the Beatles' backs turned to the camera symbolizing exclusivity to their music-making process, is at the very heart of the idea behind a rock auteur.

***Magical Mystery Tour* as psychedelic trip**

While Neaverson approaches *Magical Mystery Tour* by analyzing its narrative themes, this chapter instead makes the argument that throughout *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles' commentary on their image proves to be contradictory and problematic as they manipulate the codes of image. In this way, the Beatles continued to question the limits of what was acceptable and expected from a performer of high celebrity status. Also, the band had begun to distance themselves from the establishment who held them in such high regards or at least those who were willing to tolerate them. Earlier in this chapter it was highlighted that each Beatle began to establish their own individual identity within the band. Harrison became devoted to Eastern thought and spirituality, Lennon sought rebirth through hallucinatory drug use, McCartney developed an interest in intellectual pursuits through the underground scene, and Starr remained well rooted in family life living outside London. Having each authenticated their own sound on *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper*, which had been influenced by their individual interests, the Beatles used similar experimentation and beliefs to create a project that represented who they had become. For the Beatles, Beatlemania represented a controlled, artificial image that altered the true personalities of each member in order to make them more marketable to a wider range of teenagers. However, as McCartney later protested, he was something more complex than his "The Cute One" character label.²³² *Magical Mystery Tour* can be read as the first project, as a complete aural and visual package, in which the Beatles present

²³² Richards, Steve. "Interview: Paul McCartney." *New Statesman*. 26 Sept. 1997. 38.

themselves in the way that they wanted to be seen by their audience. In addition, the film provides viewers with a number of paradoxes that mirror the Beatles' own complex struggle to authenticate their image. Using the influential ideas of the avant-garde, the Beatles challenge their audience's perception of the band as celebrities, performers, and representatives of the youth culture.

Even though *Magical Mystery Tour* is not a Hollywood film and was completely financed and distributed from the Beatles' income, this film is constructed from elements and motifs also used by the cycle known as psychedelic LSD films that emerged from the more commercial "head film." Mark Gallagher defines the psychedelic film as having "fanciful imagery and visual effects, nonlinear or expanded time sequences, and other disruptions of narrative cohesion [that] function both as a lure to countercultural and collegiate audiences and as a connection to modernist and experimental cinema."²³³ While it is important to stress that *Magical Mystery Tour* is not a Hollywood film, it does at its most basic function as a visual recreation of an LSD trip and as a result, the film's content does fit Gallagher's definition. Gallagher goes on to present a commonality found in the LSD films' themes by stating that: "Like avant-garde films, the commercial films can deploy modernist elements for critical purposes such as challenges to dominant worldviews and schema of perception and representation."²³⁴ As discussed earlier, the Beatles wanted to present their audience with something different and so chose to create a film around the avant-garde elements that had recently influenced their art. Using this foundation, the Beatles presented *Magical Mystery Tour* to a mass audience in order to challenge that audience's tired and outdated perception of what the Beatles were. As the film's analysis will show, the Beatles present their new image while at times mocking the uniformity to which their wider audience clung. Furthermore, by using the principles behind counterculture art and avant-garde cinema, the Beatles were able to separate themselves from the established worldview. As Neaverson confirms, the Beatles "had now outgrown and rejected any desire to be seen as the establishment's role model for youth."²³⁵ Viewers were confronted with not only the Beatles' dividing individuality, but also their endorsements for drug use, spirituality through Eastern mysticism, and a freer attitude towards sexuality.²³⁶ In his article on the LSD film, Harry M. Benshoff

²³³ Gallagher, Mark. "Tripped Out: The Psychedelic Film and Masculinity." *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*. Vol. 21. 2004. 163.

²³⁴ Ibid., 163.

²³⁵ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 67.

²³⁶ McCartney openly supported drug use and publicly admitted to LSD use, making the comment that everyone, including lawyers and politicians, should use the drug. In addition, the band, along with other rock bands, artists, and MPs, took out a page long advertisement in *The Times* petitioning for the

more specifically defines the cycle by stating, these are the kinds of films that are “either specifically produced to be experienced on drugs or that has subsequently become identified by drug users as a film that can be pleurably enhanced via... hallucinogens.”²³⁷ Moreover, in order to achieve or enhance the feeling of ingesting hallucinogenic drugs, the LSD film commonly employs the use of such technical effects as “superimpositions and dissolves, as well as saturated, polarized, and ‘solarized’ color effects, filters and gels, and enhanced sound design.”²³⁸ Similarly, Gallagher points out the uses of “abstract color patterns, disjunctive editing, gratuitous excesses of camera placement and movement, [and] extreme lens effects such as the use of the fish-eye and prismatic lenses.”²³⁹ Again, the analysis of this film will show a wealth of examples of these aesthetic effects.

By acknowledging Hollywood’s involvement with LSD films, one is able to argue that there was a market for such films, including the Beatles’ project. Also, the presence of LSD films shows that the counterculture had begun to break out from the underground and to permeate mainstream society. However, not everyone associated with the underground movement shared the Beatles’ view that the counterculture was something to share with mainstream society. One example is the movement’s most respected film critic, Parker Tyler, who wrote against these types of LSD and “head” films. Tyler’s main criticism of the LSD film was how these films were built out of artificial and unnatural (i.e. chemically induced) experiences by saying that: “In our psychedelic age it is possible that people (including filmmakers) depend too much upon the optical ‘explosions’ occasioned by drugs, too little upon the parallel explosions of the creative imagination.”²⁴⁰ Clearly Tyler felt that these filmmakers were missing the idea behind avant-garde and underground cinema and instead just trying to replicate the aesthetics. Yet, one can see a case for disagreement from Tyler’s own writing. For instance, Tyler states in the opening pages of *Underground Film*, that underground film’s purpose is to “present and confront taboos in society” and that for the underground film to “surface in more and more places, [it] must convert the ‘squares’ of the world, must initiate” the people who are too scared to try the

legalization of marijuana. The establishment’s disillusionment with the Beatles can be connected with the police drug raids on Harrison and Lennon’s homes. Members of The Rolling Stones had faced trials and jail time for possession of illegal substances. With the Beatles’ outspoken support of the Stones and drug use, the band were no longer immune from police scrutiny. See: Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 67.

²³⁷ Benschhoff, Harry M. “The Short-Lived Life of the Hollywood LSD Film.” *The Velvet Light Trap*. No. 47, Spring 2001. 31.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 32.

²³⁹ Gallagher, Mark. “Tripped Out: The Psychedelic Film and Masculinity.” 162.

²⁴⁰ Tyler, Parker. *Underground Film: A Critical History*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1995. 121.

alternative or are happy with traditional conventions.²⁴¹ By using their celebrity power and influence, the Beatles can arguably be seen as attempting to achieve this underground creed with *Magical Mystery Tour*, as the analysis of the film will prove.

Just as this film is divided into very distinctive segments, so to is a hallucinatory trip. The Beatles, Lennon especially, were devotees to Timothy Leary's *The Psychedelic Experience* – a manual for preparing first time users for a safe and enjoyable experience. While Leary acknowledges the possibilities for an acid trip to be a communal experience, he does prefer to stress the trip as an individual experience. This is because the tripper brings his or her own experiences and emotions on the trip. Leary suggests that a trusted friend not under the influence of LSD be the person who reads the manual to the tripper. Getting to the point of successfully turning off your mind, relaxing, and floating downstream without bringing mental baggage is a level of tripping that takes time and experience. Any thought or vision can influence the experience either for better or worse. The purpose of an LSD trip is ultimately to surrender to the Void and reach rebirth through enlightenment. The Void lies “beyond the restless electricity of life” and is “ultimate reality.”²⁴² Many trippers have commented that somehow, while on LSD, there is a great sense of understanding – on LSD, everything finally makes sense and connects to the bigger picture.²⁴³ For a band trying to shed their old, manufactured image for something that better represents their artistic direction this concept of ultimate reality would be highly appealing. The different phases of the trip are what Leary calls “Bardos.” There are three Bardos and each Bardo can have a certain number of stages depending on the tripper. The first Bardo is “The Period of Ego-loss or Non-Game Ecstasy” in which the tripper sheds their ego and all the unharmonious “games” people play with each other either consciously or unconsciously. These “games” are basically an instance of bad karma inflicted on one's fellow man. Next is the second Bardo where the tripper enters “The Period of Hallucinations.” These visions can either be peaceful and enlightening or horrific nightmares depending on the success of the first Bardo. There is a potential for seeing at least one of seven different peaceful visions. Finally, the third Bardo is “The Period of Re-entry” in which the tripper starts to come down from their trip. The success of this Bardo will determine whether or not one has become reborn through enlightenment. Those not reacting ultimate enlightenment will at least have the potential to come away as a better person, as long as they do not revert back to their

²⁴¹ Ibid., 1-2.

²⁴² Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience*. 116.

²⁴³ Benschhoff, Harry M. “The Short-Lived Life of the Hollywood LSD Film.” 36, 37.

old ego-games.²⁴⁴ *Magical Mystery Tour* does structure itself along these lines: “Magical Mystery Tour” is the invitation to the trip and the first Bardo, “The Fool on the Hill,” “Flying,” and “I am the Walrus” are all variations of the second Bardo’s visions, “Blue Jay Way” is an example of one of the second Bardo’s wrathful visions, and “Your Mother Should Know” with its nostalgia for the 1930s can be read as representing the third Bardo’s rebirth. In addition, the structure of the music aids in enhancing the experience by setting a backdrop for the “trip.” For instance, “The Fool on the Hill,” “I am the Walrus,” “Flying,” and “Blue Jay Way” all contain trance like elements achieved through either droning orchestration and organs or through vocalization. These songs are built upon simple and repetitive musical phrases that are layered with rich experimentation such as backwardstracking, creating a sound collage using different recordings, and a mixing of musical styles. For those whose senses would have been heightened by LSD, the viewer or listener’s experience would have varied from the numerous sounds available to trigger responses, unlike the listener or viewer not influenced by hallucinatory drugs who needed repeat viewings in order to grasp all of the nuances that add to the music and the visuals.

“Magical Mystery Tour”

The Beatles begin their psychedelic trip with a song that calls viewers to join the mystery trip, footage of the colorfully painted coach winding down narrow country lanes, and a montage of curious footage to entice and perhaps prepare the viewers for what they can expect over the next fifty-five minutes. From watching this opening sequence, it is not only clear that this film functions as a representation of a drug trip, but also, that the Beatles’ representations of their image and performance style have changed. Just as the band’s first two films’ opening sequences provided an examination into the Beatles’ persona, so does “Magical Mystery Tour.” For example, “A Hard Day’s Night captured the relationship between the Beatles and their fans – a relationship that the band are portrayed as finding humorous, and at times seen instigating the crowd’s hysteria. “Help!” on the other hand, portrays a maturing group who is aware of the limitations of Beatlemania and as a result tries to gently distance themselves from their audience throughout the film. However, “Magical Mystery

²⁴⁴ All information learned from: Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience*.

Tour” is more overt in presenting the Beatles’ newfound beliefs in the counterculture, which is embedded into the metaphor of the magical coach trip. As the Beatles only appear clearly in one shot together (shot nine, 00:20), the band minimize the emphasis on the band as a whole. Instead the group opts to be shot individually to represent the four different paths each had taken. Also, each Beatle wears a different outfit and even though Lennon, Harrison, and Starr wear suits, they are not uniform. Each wears at least one item of clothing that represents their individuality. Starr, who preferred the quiet life of the family man, represents his stability with a traditional black, pinstriped suit, while McCartney sheds the dark colors of Beatlemania for a psychedelic rainbow knit vest. The ever-retreating Harrison hides behind large sunglasses, hat, and an oversized suit coat, while later in the film he dresses in orange – a color embraced by devotees of Hinduism (even Harrison’s *Sgt. Pepper* tunic was orange).

For Lennon, the adoption of his wire framed “granny” glasses, not only set Lennon apart as an individual from the rest of the band, but also, “deeply affected such issues as...the search for authenticity in pop music.”²⁴⁵ What this means is that the pop industry has always been very image conscious and when someone of Lennon’s stature adopts a symbol of weakness or denotes strength intellectually versus physically, this challenges established iconography. In this way, Lennon’s adoption of glasses denoted a more authentic representation of what his persona had evolved to.²⁴⁶ For instance, most Beatle and Lennon biographies write anecdotally how Lennon had been terribly short sighted since his youth, yet he refused to wear the thick, black rimmed NHS glasses because they went against the tough, rebellious image Lennon created to hide his insecurities. While it is true rock ‘n’ roll singers like Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison wore thick-framed glasses, Lennon chose to model his look after the Teddy Boys. Besides, there was already one member of the Quarry Men, Ken Brown, who performed in his Buddy Holly glasses and Lennon being the leader would not have been one to copy an inferior member of the group.²⁴⁷ Roy Oribson was not known in Britain until 1960 when his first single “Only the Lonely” reached number one on the

²⁴⁵ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 2004. 108.

²⁴⁶ A parallel example would be James Bond versus Michael Caine’s Harry Palmer. Palmer can be seen as a more authentic representation of the spy than James Bond. Palmer spoke with a Cockney accent, wore unattractive glasses, and was depicted doing more observational and reconnaissance work. Also, to further stress the importance of Lennon’s glasses, after his death Yoko Ono photographed his bloodied and broken glasses, on their own, against a white background. This image alone symbolized the loss of a very particular cultural icon.

²⁴⁷ Originally, Brown was a member of rival group The Les Stewart Quartet and after a spat with Stewart, Brown went on to perform with the Quarry Men at the Casbah – a café owned by Beatle drummer Pete Best’s mother, Mona. See: Clayson, Alan. *George Harrison*. London: Sanctuary Publishing, 2001. 55.

UK charts. In 1963, Orbison opened for the Beatles on a tour of Europe. By this time, Lennon's image was already firmly established as the tough looking leader of a rock 'n' roll band. However, the wire-rimmed glasses became part of Lennon's identity around the same time he became interested and more outspoken in political, philosophical, and intellectual ideals. As Mäkelä argues:

For Lennon, a reconstruction of his identity as a star and through his own past constituted a watershed in his career. The imaginative return to a time before the Beatles suggested a return to a state of innocence and provided an opportunity for Lennon to purify and authenticate his status as an artist, and thus refine his star image.²⁴⁸

The adoption of the wire-rimmed glasses became an outward sign of Lennon's transformation. The "state of innocence" and purification Mäkelä refers to is Lennon's quest for enlightenment and rebirth. Recalling earlier arguments in this chapter, Lennon not only found it necessary to change his physical appearance but also regularly used LSD and heroin to shed his Beatle image, and in order to find his "true" self.

However, this is where the problematic view that "Magical Mystery Tour" projects comes in. The audience will never be able to know any of the Beatles' true selves because of the Beatles' own confusion and lack of clarity throughout *Magical Mystery Tour*. The title itself evokes a kind of personal journey of self-exploration. Moreover, the Beatles interchange between four different performance types: (1) the Beatles playing completely fictional characters, (2) as "John," "Paul," "George," and "Ringo" (sometimes "Richard B. Starkey"), (3) as non-fictional representations of themselves, and (4) as musicians. Aldred argues, "dressing up, trying on new identities, signaled the expansive nature of psychedelia."²⁴⁹ The opening sequence also displays a number of ways the Beatles experiment with their image. For example, in shots five (00:14) and thirty-two (1:34), George and Paul are actors playing the magicians who are controlling the coach trip. In shot thirty (1:12), while John plays a fictional shop owner, Ringo plays "Richard B. Starkey" (a slight alteration of his Christian name) who purchases coach tickets for him and his Aunt Jessie. Also, the viewer is treated to very brief moments of the Beatles as themselves, such as shot nineteen (00:45) where John chats with Ivor Cutler without acknowledging the camera's presence. Finally, shot eighteen (00:44) provides a brief look at a shot from the "I am the Walrus" sequence in which John and Paul are in frame playing

²⁴⁸ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined*. 117.

²⁴⁹ Aldred, Nannette. "'The Summer of Love' in *Performance* and *Sgt. Pepper*." 112.

instruments. The analysis of “I am the Walrus” will apply Aldred’s idea of trying different identities and how the Beatles questioning their identity as a rock ‘n’ roll band reaches its pinnacle.

Another important issue presented in the opening sequence is that of class and the relationship between the Beatles and the working class in particular. While the Beatles were far from being working class in 1967, there is evidence to suggest that the group still very much aligned themselves with the lower classes. Of course the notion of a day out or weekend coach trip has its roots in working class traditions as being affordable entertainment. The idea for the film came, in part, from the reminiscing of the mystery tours from McCartney’s childhood.²⁵⁰ First, Mäkelä argues that the Beatles initial embracing of their ordinary, boys next door roots for their Beatlemania image “made local identity and cultural background a fundamental part of fame and image.”²⁵¹ In addition, the Northern traditions have held onto their “strong notions of community and support.”²⁵² By surrounding themselves with local actors and actresses, variety performers, and the friends who had been with the band from the start, the Beatles act as poster boys for successfully entering the “Swinging Sixties” society of “classless” youth. The view presented however is problematic because while the Beatles were no longer living a working class lifestyle, they began to challenge established notions of class. For example, Lennon had a Tudor mansion and a Rolls Royce because his celebrity enabled him to afford such symbols associated with the upper classes and aristocracy. Yet, in a satirical statement, Lennon had an artist paint a psychedelic mural all over his Rolls Royce. These items were no longer symbols of class, but of wealth. Similarly, the presence of working class, variety performers engaged in repetitive and unchallenging entertainment is designed as a satirical representation of traditional Christmas viewing. The over the top camp and insincerity of Jolly Jimmy the courier and Aunt Jessie’s large presence in the first seven minutes of the film, the scenes with the magicians, and any instance where there are people in animal costumes are all elements of the Christmas pantomime, which is typically working class entertainment.

With the abstract collage at the beginning of *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles merge their celebrity status and avant-garde sensibilities to establish, from the very start, their move from darlings of the establishment to leaders of the counterculture. To support this, Ian Inglis stated that he saw the Beatles as the leaders of a movement

²⁵⁰ Barrow, Tony. *The Making of the Beatles’ Magical Mystery Tour*. 2.

²⁵¹ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined*. 36.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 38.

whose role it was “to define and guide a global counterculture.”²⁵³ By embracing their class roots, the Beatles not only show support for the creation of a utopian society through counterculture pursuits, but they also project themselves as having successfully made that leap from the mainstream. This film works as an advertisement for the movement and viewers can either dismiss it (as many had) or join them. Just as the Swinging Sixties movement of “classless” youth had attracted many of the working class musicians and actors, so too had the psychedelic counterculture, with the Beatles at the forefront. As Andrew Wilson attests, “young aristocrats and artists and musicians and writers, [were] responsible for influencing sharply the patterns of the New Vanguard of British Culture and intellectual life.”²⁵⁴ The Beatles had brought the counterculture to mainstream society by utilizing their celebrity status, through their commercial projects, and via the creation of Apple Corps in November 1967. Not only did Apple Corps give the Beatles control over their finances but the company also provided the opportunity for many aspiring artists to have access to the funding and facilities needed to launch their careers. McCartney stated in 1967 that Apple “exists to help, collaborate with and extend all existing organizations [particularly underground ones], as well as start many new ones.”²⁵⁵ Within Apple were a number of divisions including music, film (responsible for releasing *Magical Mystery Tour*), art, electronics, and fashion/clothing. Apple’s existence tried to make possible the 1960’s adage that “Fame can be obtained by anyone.”²⁵⁶ With too much being submitted to Apple by aspiring artists and without any system of quality control in place, the availability of the Beatles’ finances was grossly taken advantage of. The tropes commonly found in psychedelic films are in abundance just in the opening musical sequence. First, the film starts with a very colorful title card announcing the film’s title in cartoon bubbled, rainbow lettering. Second, the sequence itself uses a high number of shots (forty-seven in two and a half minutes), which are edited together with jump cuts. Many of the images are taken from scenes throughout the film and depict the Beatles in various guises. Some shots are almost subliminal – either of women being objectified or of the Beatles performing. As for the latter, the Beatles never actually perform as a group to this song in any traditional capacity. Arguably, the Beatles know the mainstream viewer’s expectations and in a satirical manner manipulate those

²⁵³ Ibid., 119.

²⁵⁴ Wilson, Andrew. “Spontaneous Underground: An Introduction to London, Psychedelic Scenes, 1965-1968.” *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis, and Counterculture in the 1960s*. eds. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005. 64.

²⁵⁵ Shapiro, Harry. “The Big Apple.” *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 280.

²⁵⁶ Mäkelä, Janne. *John Lennon Imagined*. 49.

expectations. After all, it is not necessarily a musical performance that the viewer wants to see, but rather the Beatles as a particular, fetishized object, as chapter two argued. Benschhoff points out that the aesthetic that the Beatles have created with their opening sequence very clearly replicates experiences some LSD users have had while on a drug-induced trip. One such effect of LSD is known as “flashing.” This is “the quick imaging on the mind’s eye of another scene, a phenomenon LSD filmmakers have approximated through the use of jump cuts and subliminal inserts.”²⁵⁷

In an attempt to lend authenticity to the band’s image and the idea of the “mystery trip,” the Beatles employ an unscripted, handheld camera style of filmmaking reminiscent of the *cinéma vérité* style used in *A Hard Day’s Night*. This adapted style, injected with an avant-garde inspired visual collage motif can be read as representing the Beatles’ anti-establishment views. For example, this aesthetic, inspired by Lester’s handheld filmmaking techniques, rejects the conventions of the classical Hollywood style and also allows the Beatles an artificial sense of realism to authenticate the experience. Even though that statement is paradoxical, it parallels the paradox of using a hallucinatory drug to reach enlightenment, which again was one of the main attractions of the drug for the Beatles. The creation of a visual collage is important to mention because it was the product of the Beatles’ newfound interest in experimentation. The level of experimentation in the opening sequence functions as a way to present their visual art as “self-conscious and serious ‘art,’ which demanded an active, rather than passive, audience.”²⁵⁸ This concept of active participation had already been successfully attempted with *Sgt. Pepper*, using devices such as an opening number set in a concert hall atmosphere with lyrics addressing the audience, printing lyrics on the album cover (a first for anyone), and including a sheet of Pop Art inspired cut outs so the listener could be a member of Sgt. Pepper’s band, too. This sense of inclusion, made more noticeable by the use of handheld cameras and subjective point of view, was essential for replicating the psychedelic trip.

“The Fool on the Hill” and “Flying”

After the opening musical sequence, the film progresses into what can be considered a distortion of the traditional narrative. While *Magical Mystery Tour* does

²⁵⁷ Benschhoff, Harry M. “The Short-Lived Life of the Hollywood LSD Film.” 33.

²⁵⁸ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 61.

not have the cause and effect relationship that fits Bordwell and Thompson's definition of narrative, the film does use few devices such as voice-over narration to establish a basic story line.²⁵⁹ The narrator introduces the idea of the mystery trip and introduces characters played by Ringo and Jesse Robins. Starr plays "Richard B. Starkey," an anxious and spoilt young man who is seen aggressively trying to coax his Aunt Jessie up the street where the coach awaits their arrival. The lack of any formal structures liberates *Magical Mystery Tour* from the conventions of established cinema, just as the counterculture's impromptu Happenings liberated the "old ideas of gallery art."²⁶⁰ On the bus, Richard tells his aunt that he will sit by the window rather than ask his aunt for her preference. Like a mother eager to pacify her child in order to avoid an unpleasant tantrum, Jessie says, "Oh alright, so you'll have the window seat." The dialogue continues in this way and the narration suggests a relationship of this nature is normal between the two. Fed up with Richard's attitude, Jessie threatens, "You ain't coming away with me anymore" to which Richard protests that it was he who bought the tickets for the trip. However, Jessie reminds him that it was with her money. Frustrated Richard quickly changes the subject and accuses Jessie, almost jealously, of "eyeing up all the fellas" on the coach, but Jessie's retort ("You're old enough at 21") suggests Richard had felt repressed under his aunt's guardianship and that Jessie is giving him permission to find a mate which would lead Richard to, perhaps finally, moving out of the house. Starr's character can be read as an exaggerated representation of how controlled the Beatles felt by their parent-like management and by those fair-weather fans and older adults who refused to allow the Beatles to shed their Beatlemania image and to grow up. The mustachioed Starr, with flecks of gray hair, plays his fictional character more like an adolescent than a mature young adult. This exaggeration is meant to look distorted and inappropriate just as the Beatles had looked in their outgrown Beatlemania image in Lindsay-Hogg's "Chiswick House" videos.

The theme of nostalgia for childhood memories is closely linked with the Beatles' music during this period and is also linked with many LSD trip experiences. Music critic, Ian MacDonald, concluded that the "true subject of English psychedelia [was] nostalgia for the innocent vision of the child."²⁶¹ Just as Lennon's sonic trip in "Strawberry Fields Forever" references childhood memories while evoking an LSD trip, McCartney does a similar thing with "The Fool on the Hill." For instance,

²⁵⁹ Bordwell, David and Kristin Thompson. *Film Art: An Introduction*. 6th ed. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2001. 60.

²⁶⁰ Aldred, Nannette. "'The Summer of Love' in *Performance* and *Sgt. Pepper*." 116.

²⁶¹ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 186.

McCartney runs and skips along carelessly in the French countryside and in shot eight (7:30) he grins childlike and wide eyed looking more pretty and innocent rather than world weary handsome. However, these scenes are juxtaposed with scenes of McCartney looking out wistfully from the top of bare, rocky hills. Such examples include shot four (6:38) with McCartney placed on top of a cliff in left profile and shot from a high angle. He turns his head away from the camera but as the camera persistently zooms in, McCartney arguably turns to confront the invasion of his privacy. These scenes convey a “paradoxical air of childlike wisdom and unworldliness.”²⁶² Throughout the entire sequence, there is only Paul and the lyrics along with the visual interpretation of the song suggest individuality, isolation, and non-conformity. In addition, McCartney’s isolation also represents the singularity of an LSD trip. As Aldous Huxley noted from his LSD experiences,

For persons are selves and, in one respect at least, I was now a Not-self, simultaneously perceiving and being the Not-self of the things around me...the very thought of the self – it had momentarily ceased to be, and of the other selves...seemed...enormously irrelevant. I realized that I was deliberately avoiding the eyes of those who were with me in the room, deliberately refraining from being too much aware of them.²⁶³

Huxley writes about his first experience using LSD and how the trip’s purpose was to look inward and examine himself, his feelings, and his understanding of the world. The whole experiment involves a man asking Huxley for his opinion on how he perceives various works of art and philosophical thinking while under the influence of LSD. Again, as McCartney sings, “His head in a cloud, the man of a thousand voices is talking perfectly loud, but nobody ever hears him or the sound he appears to make and he never seems to notice,” he observes the differences between those conforming to mainstream society and those finding utopia in the counterculture. This fool is a man shunned and banished by mainstream society, referencing the intolerance society directed towards many minority groups. The fool is someone experiencing a trip and as a result of those experiences has a multitude of ideas about the observations he has made from stepping outside of mainstream society. Yet no one wants to risk leaving the safety of their conformist life to experience these thoughts. This man on the hill does not consider himself the fool, but rather, sees those “straights” of the “normal” society as being the fools for being the slaves of the establishment and content with that existence. In a way, there also seems to be an autobiographical element to the song. McCartney can easily be read as being “the man of a thousand voices” whom nobody

²⁶² Ibid., 271.

²⁶³ Huxley, Aldous. *The Doors of Perception*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1960. 27.

wants to listen to. This chapter has investigated some of the ideals that McCartney endorsed in regards to psychedelia and the counterculture but such endeavors were not successfully accepted by the mainstream, not even *Magical Mystery Tour*. This gives further evidence of the Beatles' frustration of still being expected to deliver the Beatlemania iconography despite their evolution towards new and more engaging ideas artistically.

What has been on display in the film thus far is a juxtaposition of the real world (represented by the narrative) and this other world of hallucinations, which is continually beckoning the audience to escape into it (i.e. the counterculture). In shot one of "The Fool on the Hill" sequence (5:54-6:21), McCartney looks longingly out of the coach's windows without acknowledging the camera. As the viewer starts to hear the non-diegetic music begin, McCartney starts nodding in time to the nonexistent music. With one cut, McCartney and the audience are transported to this scene in France. This other world is a place where the authoritative aunt does not exist. Instead Jessie escapes to a parallel world where she is happily in love with Buster Bloodvessel. Between 22:09 and 22:16, Buster expresses his feelings to Jessie on a beach, where the narrative had broken away from the action on the coach, and Jessie reciprocates his feelings. As they embrace and walk along the beach together, a string arrangement plays one of the Beatles' earliest hits, "All My Loving." These scenes, which represent the hallucinatory visions of the second Bardo, are where the utopian visions are most likely to be experienced. Utopian visions are also a common trope of the psychedelic LSD film. Many members of the counterculture saw LSD "as a key to unlocking a utopic potential in humankind."²⁶⁴ These visions during the trip are contrasted with non-trip moments on the bus. Back on the coach, Buster has been allowed to play courier and, with a sober voice, addresses the passengers, "enjoy yourselves...within the limits of British decency." These rules on the bus are contrasted with an earlier announcement from Jolly Jimmy, the tour guide, "If you look to your left ladies and gentlemen, the view is not very inspiring. Ah, but if you look to your right..." he says with excitement.

This announcement takes the viewer back out of the coach windows to another escapist Beatles music sequence, which is the band's only collaborative instrumental entitled, "Flying." Initially, the piece looks to be an experiment with tracking shots and over saturated color lens filters. Much of this sequence draws on Richard Lester's use of such shots during the "Another Girl" sequence from *Help!*. The song itself was

²⁶⁴ Benschhoff, Harry M. "The Short-Lived Life of the Hollywood LSD Film." 33.

created as a distraction from the *Magical Mystery Tour* filming schedule. MacDonald describes the atmosphere as being “casual” and this is reflected in the song’s “gently doodled...sleepy C blues decorated with pseudo-Indian melismas and some beautiful varispeeded Mellotron by Lennon.”²⁶⁵ The latter’s effects inject a trance quality one and a half minutes into the song that lasts until its conclusion at two minutes, seventeen seconds. The song as a whole is multi-layered in its recording technique and the different layers enter into the song one after the other. First, in the left channel, is one basic rhythmic theme that is very rock ‘n’ roll and with a high treble as a duet between drums and guitar. An organ later joins in laying down smooth chord accents. Second, in the right channel, is a mellower and blues based rhythm that plays around the rhythm in the left channel. Maracas accompany this theme to accentuate the beat. Over top of both themes are the vocalizations from all four Beatles singing a chorus of “la, la, la’s” with an accompaniment from a synthesized horn. These themes breakdown to give way to the song’s trance theme as if each theme replicates one of the three Bardos, and finally, either the enlightenment or re-entry phase of a psychedelic experience. In addition, while this song might be seen as a throwaway piece, it does display strong qualities of authorship from each Beatle. For example, there is a synthesized horn part representing McCartney’s music hall influence, the distortion and Mellotron that influenced a great deal of Lennon’s work between 1966-1968, as MacDonald states earlier, there are the Eastern melodies crafted by Harrison, and the strong and steady backbeat is underiably Starr.

While “Flying” allows the Beatles a chance to try such effects out for themselves and create a visually interesting sequence, this sequence also doubles as the film’s psychedelic LSD trip. First, very few cuts are made to give the impression that one is floating through the sky as each shot dissolves into one another, high above the clouds and the sometimes rocky or watery landscape below. So in that sense, the viewer is flying carefree high above the unevenness and turmoil that runs rife beneath them. In addition, Leary’s *The Psychedelic Experience* heavily influenced this sequence. “Flying” creates a visual depiction of the visions Leary wrote about and the visions the Beatles would have experienced on their own LSD trips. For instance, the manual starts off with this introduction:

A psychedelic experience is a journey to new realms of consciousness. The scope and content of the experience is limitless, but its characteristic features are the transcendence of verbal concepts, of

²⁶⁵ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 270.

space-time dimensions, and of the ego or identity. Such experiences of enlarged consciousness occur in a variety of ways: sensory deprivation, yoga exercises, disciplined meditation, religious or aesthetic ecstasies, or spontaneously...The nature of the experience depends almost entirely on set and setting...Setting is physical – the weather, the room’s atmosphere; social – feelings of persons present towards one another; and cultural – prevailing views as to what is real...²⁶⁶

Taking into account Leary’s instructions on the importance of setting and mood, the film up to this point carefully prepares the viewer for this hallucination inspired trip. Without a structured narrative, the film does function outside of traditional space and time boundaries. There is no cause and effect relationship as all of the segments that make up the film could be viewed independently without depending on any other part of the film to set context. No one event has any cause or effect on any of the other events depicted. Space expands far beyond the reaches of the universe into the realm of the mind and there are no substantial references to time that would allow the viewer to discern a relationship between segments. Also, the Beatles use “Flying” and their previous two musical sequences as a way to represent sensory deprivation (the over-saturation of color), meditation (McCartney isolated with nature), aesthetic ecstasies (almost subliminal flashes of strippers during “Magical Mystery Tour”), and spontaneity (breaking away from the “narrative” for the dream-like segments). Leary argues that “the scope and content of the experience is limitless,” and one gets the feeling that the Beatles’ aspired to make that motto true of *Magical Mystery Tour*.

With McCartney being a champion of the underground movement, the style of both “Flying” and “The Fool on the Hill” are more abstract than previous musical sequences. In addition to the landscape shots in both sequences, which MacDonald interprets as “the world turn[ing] in cycles of struggle and rest, shadowed by clouds drifting indifferently across the sky,” in “The Fool on the Hill” there are a number of extreme close ups on parts of McCartney’s face.²⁶⁷ While some of these shots synchronize with the lyrics, such as shot seventeen (8:26), others, such as the extreme close up of McCartney’s eyes and nose in shot five (6:58), look good visually rather than act as a way to fetishize the Beatle. Arguably, art can be seen as taking precedence over image when evaluated in context with the layered landscape effects, 90 degree panning, and experiments with colored lens filters. Without McCartney being joined by the rest of the band in a traditional lip synched performance, and with the experimental camera work and lack of a linear narrative, this sequence posses the

²⁶⁶ Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience*. 1.

²⁶⁷ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 271.

authorship, home movie ideology, and interrogation between film image and the spectator that Walter Metz has identified as being some of the criteria of avant-garde cinema.²⁶⁸ To look briefly at the song itself, there is no question of authorship over “The Fool on the Hill.” Despite the “Lennon-McCartney” writing credit, this is very much a McCartney composed song, which “characteristically follows classical practice by ‘stating’ tonal ambiguity in a four-bar piano introduction.”²⁶⁹ Even with its minor chord to create a melancholic feel, “The Fool on the Hill” is still the light and whimsical pop song. Previous examples include, “Here, There, and Everywhere,” “For No One,” “Eleanor Rigby,” “When I’m Sixty-Four,” “She’s Leaving Home,” and “Penny Lane.” These are examples of McCartney establishing himself as a pop auteur as the songs are products of primarily McCartney’s creative input where as in the past, a Lennon-McCartney composition would have been more evenly balanced between the two. With the avant-garde movement representing individuality and non-conformity, the avant-garde influence was an appropriate format for McCartney to utilize for “The Fool on the Hill” as it reflects the personal changes in the Beatles’ lives since they were last depicted in a movie – in fact, it presents a very stark contrast. This depiction of individuality, along with the fictional characterizations of the Beatles during the narrative portions of the film creates paradoxes that “constantly blur the viewer’s perception” of the Beatles by “obscuring any single and coherent image of the Beatles as a ‘pop group.’”²⁷⁰

As the Beatles’ direction at the end of “Flying” takes the viewers higher into the clouds, the narration informs the viewers that they are going to a secret place which no one had ever laid eyes upon before. This mysterious place is where “the magicians” live and manipulating their recognizable image, McCartney, Starr, and Harrison fill the acting duties for these characters. In this way, the Beatles are able to visually create a literal interpretation of their main goal: to be the ones orchestrating a very magical experience for the viewer. Earlier discussions in the chapter have argued this point. The idea of the Beatles as magicians signifies two points. The first point is that the Beatles’ are able to use their celebrity status and popularity to control and persuade the ideas and actions of their fans. Chapter two had established that there was a period of over-saturating the market with a variety of Beatles’ products and yet consumers still created a strong demand for Beatle related merchandise, especially in America.

²⁶⁸ Metz, Walter. “‘What Went Wrong?’: The American Avant-Garde Cinema of the 1960s.” *The Sixties*. Ed. Paul Monaco. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 233.

²⁶⁹ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 271.

²⁷⁰ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 68.

Second, this scene depicts the Beatles in the ultimate position of control as they live high above the clouds with omniscient and omnipotent characteristics. The god-like status that the Beatles portray parallels the band's own desires to be entirely in control of all aspects of their empire. Unfortunately, *Magical Mystery Tour* also portrays the irony in having complete control and that is too often it results in one being out of control as there are no systems of checks and balances in place.

"I am the Walrus"

So much has been written about "I am the Walrus" from the standpoint of its lyrical content and context within the late 1960's. Ian MacDonald has provided great insight into the song's craft as literature and as a protest against the establishment. However, there is a feeling that perhaps "I am the Walrus" is too commercial now and has already received too much scrutiny. Yet this sequence is the first musical sequence in the film that features all of the Beatles performing together. This climatic piece is also the film's most complex with over 103 shots and a number of experimental effects. Despite the claim that the lyrics are completely meaningless, the sequence does support anti-establishment sentiment. In addition, this sequence uses satire to comment on the Beatles' image and even rejects their image at times.

While the camera work and editing do not necessarily function with the accentuating meaning that Lester's technique held, the Beatles had taken a lot of inspiration from Lester in regards to meshing together sound and image. Before beginning to examine Lester's work in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*, one's first impressions are that his shots just look interesting and can be appreciated at face value. One immediately calls to mind the scene of mistaken identity between Lennon and Anna Quayle in the corridor or McCartney shot on stage with the floodlighting beaming and sweat rolling down his face in *A Hard Day's Night*. In *Help!*, there is the murky and hazy footage from "You're Going to Lose that Girl" or the stark simplicity of "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away." In a similar fashion, arguably the Beatles set out first to make a sequence that looked visually appealing and "I am the Walrus" opens fulfilling this objective. First, the Beatles are shot through a large concrete cylinder from the disused air base, giving the shot a stationary iris effect reminiscent of the days of early cinema. This is an interesting choice for an opening shot where the

audience may have expected to see the Beatles framed from the front. Also, the shot lasts for a relatively long fourteen seconds. The Beatles continue to apply lessons learned from Lester as they employ standard medium close ups with combinations of tilts and pans between the band and instrumentation, extreme close ups and, most Lester-esque, countless examples of the jump cut which often synchronize to the beat of the music. The effects the Beatles use are more aesthetically interesting rather than being a feat of creative ingenuity. Most of the effects on display during "...Walrus" are either basic photography derived effects Lennon could have learned at Liverpool's Art College or are standard options available on a vision mixer. For example, in shot twenty-one (26:23) the Beatles use a dissolve effect and then insert a split screen effect. In the top 2/3 of the screen are the Beatles in animal costumes while in the lower 1/3 part of the screen is a long shot of police officers on a blast wall holding hands and swaying to the music. While the split screen had been around since the 1920's, the affect did see a revival in popularity in the 1960's being used in such films as *Grand Prix* (John Frankenheimer, 1966) and *The Thomas Crown Affair* (Norman Jewison, 1968). Another effect taken from photography that the Beatles rely on for three shots is solarization. Used in shots twenty-four (26:44), twenty-six (26:48), and shot forty-one (27:20), this is a process where portions of the visible light spectrum are absorbed in order to create a temporary change in color. The resulting effect looks as though the live action shot has been outlined with colored pencils. However, this effect is not to be confused with posterization, which is more colorful and can be extreme enough to hurt the viewer's eyes. Finally, the Beatles also experiment with super imposition. In shot thirty-seven (27:07), there is a cut to the sequence's opening shot and a number of old black and white images of people are superimposed. This effect is known as a multi-screen, soft edged super imposition and because of the images the Beatles chose, there is a sense of nostalgia being evoked. Again a variation of this technique is used during the sequence's final shot, shot 103 (28:23). At 29:04, a soft edged super imposition appears at the top left of the screen. The superimposed footage is of the cast members eating and can be read as a commentary on consumerism as each greedily puts food into their mouths. The last piece of footage, following the cast members, is a nuclear explosion with a mushroom cloud.

"I am the Walrus" became a song that provoked much debate over its lyrical content. The song was first released as a single in November 1967 and within a very short period, had been banned from radio airplay by the BBC. The reason for this was due to the belief that the use of "knickers" was some kind of obscene codeword and

that the changing at the end sounded suspiciously like “Everybody smoke pot.” Due to the emerging tensions between the youth culture and the establishment, Lennon’s meaningless song meant to poke fun at all those who were analyzing the Beatles’ lyrics, the song instead became an anti-establishment anthem. This along with “I am the Walrus’s” visual counterpart delivers a powerful statement by the Beatles concerning their search for authenticity. “I am the Walrus” is the point on the reconstructed drug trip that represents elements of the seven visions of the second Bardo. These visions are products of either ignoring or accepting external stimuli and will have either emotional or intellectual aspects. Vision five: the vibratory waves of external unity, much like the “I am the Walrus” sequence, are the moments when the tripper begins to experience “the unity of all living forms.”²⁷¹ Leary writes of plastic puppets and how the ego is determined to maintain a separate identity and these ideas can be read throughout this sequence. For example, there is the paradox of the hippy and psychedelic movements of becoming an individual who breaks away from mainstream society, yet conforms to counterculture beliefs. This can be seen, in Leary’s terms, of the self trying to reach enlightenment but still being held back by ego games. However, cognitive psychologist Jerome S. Bruner argues that, while people seek a freedom of choice, it is natural for people to immediately form hierarchal structures within a constructed group.²⁷² This act is most likely one of the characteristics of what Leary calls “ego games.” The Beatles illustrate this point by satirically presenting themselves in uniform psychedelic kaftans. The band has shed a uniform that represented the establishment (smart suits and ties) for a uniform that aligns them with the counterculture. With the outfits maybe similar, the patterns are different and so is the Beatles’ instrumentation. Most noticeably is Lennon’s large, white piano, similar to the one that would become an iconic symbol in the “Imagine” video, and finally, the Rickenbacker bass that fans had heard on albums as early as *Help!*, is on display in this sequence. Harrison can be seen playing a Fender guitar rather than his Beatlemania Gibson and while Starr still uses his Ludwig black and pearl four piece, it now is decorated with a psychedelic bass drum head, rather than the old one with the iconic ‘The Beatles’ logo on the front (all black capital letters with the long ‘T’). What is also noticeable in this sequence is the Beatles’ reluctance to address the camera while playing their instruments. For example, in shots two (25:22) and four (25:28), both Harrison and McCartney look down at their instruments as they

²⁷¹ Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience*. 133.

²⁷² Womack, Kenneth. “Reconsidering Performative Autobiography: life writing and the Beatles.” *Life Writing*. Vol. 2. No. 2. 2005. 35.

play and McCartney can be seen nodding his head in time and mouthing his bass line. Even though Lennon does look at the camera, the majority of his body is hidden behind the piano which is framed center. As in *Help!*, instrumentation still plays a central role in the Beatles' new phase of authenticity. When the Beatles do address the camera, such as in shot ten (25:52), they are without instrumentation and are standing in a row, arm in arm, with their artificial image satirically on display. In addition, at over twenty-five minutes into a fifty-five minute film, this is the Beatles' first group 'photograph'. Despite the Beatles looking similar, their beliefs about the world and the future of the band could not have been more different. Where the Beatles had been individual as a unit during the very early days of Beatlemania, by *Magical Mystery Tour*, each member has grown into their own very different individual and therefore the band unit begins to fracture.

The sequence at first seems problematic because of the depictions of manufactured imagery by a band seeking to authenticate an image that is appropriate for the musicians they have become. However, when viewed as a satirical commentary on the nature of uniformity and mass consumerism, this sequence can be read as a joke made at the expense of the Beatles' mass audience. The 20 million viewers who tuned in to see the Beatles were finally given the opportunity to see what they thought would be a traditional Beatles' performance; everything that is depicted is artificial from the lip-synched performances to the relationship between the Beatles and their audience. In shot twenty-one (26:23) there is the appearance of "the eggmen" who are dressed in identical white bald caps, black trousers, and a large, white tarp that binds the group of people together as they march in synch and follow the Beatles. These eggmen can be read as the consumer who conforms to what their capitalistic society prescribes for them. They uniformly and unquestioningly follow a rock 'n' roll band around, buying whatever products are placed on the market. The final shot of the sequence (28:23-29:40) depicts the Beatles in their animal costumes following behind the *Magical Mystery Tour* bus and the Beatles are in turned being blindly followed by the eggmen in a trancelike state, who are followed by a photographer. These eggmen are the masses of varied fans, the hangers on and fair-weather fans that stifle the band's creativity by refusing to move forward with the band's new developments. In addition, recall the superimposed footage of people engaged in a hurried consumption.

“Blue Jay Way” and “Death Cab for Cutie”

Both “Blue Jay Way” and “Death Cab for Cutie” each display a theme popular with the counterculture – openness in regards to religion and spirituality and sexuality respectively. Both sequences are mocking and satirical towards the establishment in some way and both display elements of the psychedelic LSD film. Much like the beginning of *Help!*, the sequence for “Blue Jay Way” starts off with members of the mystery tour sitting in a make-shift auditorium to watch Harrison’s performance on a projection screen. Not only does the presence of the screen reflect ownership and consumption, but also in this context, there is a satirical reference to a cheap day out at the cinema for the working class. For example, Jolly Jimmy acts in a very idiotic and exaggerated manner in an attempt to perform a variation of a variety routine before the main feature. Also, there is seaside organ music playing and the female courier acts as the attractive and dense usherette offering drinks from a tray and flirting with the men. The sequence begins with Harrison sitting cross-legged in a meditation position; he is wearing an orange suit (orange is a sacred color for those who practice Hinduism and can represent enlightenment), and “playing” a chalk drawn keyboard on the sidewalk with a paper cup next to him.

One reading of this scene is that it is perhaps a reference to Harrison’s visit to Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco where Harrison thought he would meet all of the beautiful, LSD dropping hippies. Instead, Harrison was shocked and disillusioned to only come across a street full of “panhandling drug casualties.”²⁷³ Also, Harrison chose this scene to be filled with fog and for the cameraman to use a multi-prism lens attachment – elements that can be found in *Help!* and are representative of the LSD film. As the sleepy dissolves bring Harrison closer to the screen, it is clear to see the Beatle has dark circles under his eyes and as he sings the opening lyrics, “There’s a fog upon LA, and my friends have lost their way, they’ll be over soon they say, now they’ve lost themselves instead,” it becomes clear that Harrison is portraying a man busking in the street for more LSD. The song’s minor chords, distortion, the paper cup, and Harrison sitting on concrete as if on a sidewalk or street again symbolize this. In this context, Harrison’s bleak sequence is a detour on the psychedelic trip to speak out against the evils of hallucinatory drug use but he does offer a solution: reach rebirth

²⁷³ Spencer, Neil. “Eastern Rising.” *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 235.

through spirituality, not through artificial means. This message is achieved by juxtaposing the scenes of Harrison's drug addict with scenes of Indian art, Hindu symbolism, and surreal shots of nature. The shift comes in shot eight (38:02) when the screen is completely washed with an orange liquid and when the fog clears, there is an extreme close up of George's face with that of a cat superimposed over it. Next, in shot twenty (38:33) the low angle shot of George sitting on the sidewalk has a Hindu god statue superimposed over it. This is preceded by a wide close up of George with bold colored flower patterns superimposed over his face and hands like an elaborate Henna tattoo. After this moment of enlightenment, George and the rest of the Beatles can be seen enjoying themselves happily by playing football together in a large estate garden. They are in an audience-free environment, looking more natural and relaxed without any coded uniforms.

Another reading of this sequence would suggest that this is one of the wrathful visions that can occur during the second Bardo of an LSD trip. This too is represented by the minor chords and distortion of the music, the use of the prism lens and fog, and Harrison looking pale and as if in a trance. The lyrics are not sung, but rather chanted in a monotone and expressionless voice. Wrathful visions can happen in anyone's LSD trip. The difference, however, is that if the tripper does not realize that the frightening hallucinations are coming from their own mind and if they do not confront and accept these demons, then the tripper cannot move on to liberation. Instead, they will proceed to the third Bardo (re-entry) with their ego-games in tact and be no closer to enlightenment. For those who can recognize the wrathful visions for what they are, the tripper will move on from this stage very quickly. If not, these visions can lead the tripper on a painful downward spiral controlled by the Wheel of Ignorance and Illusion.²⁷⁴ The desaturation of color and the low lighting aid the visuals in looking even more chilling and provide a sharp contrast to the rest of the film's colorful sequences. In shot thirty-three (39:42), footage of children dressed up and playing in the garden appear superimposed over footage of Harrison. The children dance and weave closely into the low angled, subjective camera's lens, crowding and overwhelming the viewer. It becomes clear that their faces are painted like skeletons. The children wear Mardi Gras beads, head wear with feathers, and seem to be performing a kind of voodoo ceremony to rid bad spirits. The children's dance and the other visual images in this sequence all make reference to spirituality and rebirth and if those symbols are recognized by the viewer, the wrathful visions end and the trip

²⁷⁴ Leary, Timothy, et al. *The Psychedelic Experience*. 73, 139.

continues towards enlightenment. Both Leary and Huxley write about the connection between an acid trip and spirituality, the former having based his book on the Tibetan *Book of the Dead*. While on LSD, Huxley was able to understand the appeal of Eastern religions by observing that:

In the inner world there is neither work nor monotony. We [Christians] visit it only in dreams and musings, and its strangeness is such that we never find the same world on two successive occasions. What wonder, then, if human beings in their search for the divine have generally preferred to look within!²⁷⁵

For those of the Western world not accustomed to the ways and teachings of Eastern religion, hallucinatory drugs were the key to understanding what the established Western churches could not explain – those unanswerable questions that required the believer to just have faith and trust their church leaders. With LSD, trippers could find out those secrets that had been kept from them by the elite. However, the paradox is that this process of enlightenment was achieved by artificial means and arguably, the tripper is only seeing what their mind has created. Once Harrison became a devotee to Eastern religion, the Beatle gave up hallucinogenic drugs.

As a way to authenticate his image, Harrison began introducing his beliefs and interests in Eastern religion into his music as early as 1966. While the other Beatles had tried to be enlightened by the Maharishi's teachings, none of them fully embraced the practices and eventually, all but Harrison, had moved on to other things. One reason why Harrison was so taken by the Hindu faith can be argued that it was because Hinduism offered Harrison an escape from his Beatle persona. When Harrison had set off on a trip to India in 1966 to meet with Ravi Shankar, the musician told George to "disguise yourself, grow a mustache and cut your hair."²⁷⁶ For the first press conference upon Harrison's arrival in Bombay, Shankar instructed the press to give them privacy as Harrison had come to India "not as a Beatle, but as a disciple."²⁷⁷ Among the true practitioners of the faith, Harrison could finally be accepted for who he truly was and not just for what he had once become. Of his entering into the Hindu faith George offers this telling comment, "It was the first feeling I'd ever had of being liberated from a Beatle or a number" and when he met Shankar at Heathrow airport in his colorful Indian clothes while Shankar was in an European suit, Harrison realized the religious movement was not about clothing or a particular image.²⁷⁸ In this way,

²⁷⁵ Huxley, Aldous. *The Doors of Perception*. 36.

²⁷⁶ Spencer, Neil. "Eastern Rising." 230.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 233, 235.

“Blue Jay Way” also depicts George rejecting performance during his solo piece. For those hoping to see him perform, Harrison instead pokes his fingers at a drawing of a keyboard and noticeably lip synchs to the vocal track, looking sullen and unhappy. One should also note that Harrison’s involvement with this project appears to have been done reluctantly as he rarely speaks throughout the entire film.

Another theme of the late 1960’s, and one that was perhaps became more mainstream with the youth culture’s help, was that of sexual “freedom.” “Death Cab for Cutie” is an Elvis Presley inspired pastiche on the traditional 1950’s teen musical performance, as performed by Beatle contemporaries, Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band. Like the Beatles, many of the Bonzos had attended Art College and their music and stage act reflected this. Most notably, the Bonzos made regular appearances on *Do Not Adjust Your Sets* and had a UK number one in 1968 with the McCartney produced, “I’m the Urban Spaceman.” This performance takes place at Raymond’s Revue Bar in Soho and can be read as a complete mockery of working class entertainment and traditional modes of performance. Wearing 1950’s Teddy boy suits and featuring a horn section, “Death Cab for Cutie” was written as a satire of the Presley-esque, late ‘50’s/early ‘60’s, tragic love songs such as Presley’s own “Heartbreak Hotel,” Wayne Cochran’s “Last Kiss,” “Leader of the Pack” by the Shangri-Las, and Mark Dinning’s “Teen Angel” in which the singer tells the tale of the rebellious young teen who is killed in a senseless auto accident or wishes they had been if only to save the young loved one who perished. “Death Cab...” describes a how a lover is pleaded with not to leave home, but she does and is killed as her taxi runs a red light. With his lip curled, Stanshall bellows out the farcical chorus line of “someone’s going to make you pay your fare.” Just as “Death Cab for Cutie” is a satire of the genre, so is the Bonzo’s performance. The movements are exaggerated and the song is sung melodramatically. Lead singer, Vivian Stanshall, swaggers around the stage led by his hips and pelvis, tossing his microphone cable around, and badly lip-synching to the vocal track. At one point, Stanshall turns to face the camera wearing large false teeth that prevent any moment from his lips at all. The horn section also exaggerates their movements, raising their instruments high above them as they play and swing them down in large circular motions. A lack of seriousness can be sensed in this satirical, and at times highly camp, performance.

While Presley’s arrival on the rock ‘n’ roll scene shocked mainstream culture due to his sexually suggestive lyrics and body movement, the Bonzos took the title for “Death Cab...” from Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy*. Written in 1957,

Hoggart's book includes a chapter called "The Newer Mass Art: Sex in Shiny Packets," in which the author examines the novels filled with scenes of sex and violence and offers his own satirical list of the types of titles these books are published under, one of which is "Death-Cab for Cutie."²⁷⁹ To add to the sexual atmosphere of the song, the Bonzos' performance is accompanied by a strip-tease act performed by Jan Carson. While Carson strips to her underwear, the camera cuts to shots of the audience, namely George and John sitting together in the front, and Buster Bloodvessel (Ivor Cutler) sits at a table behind them. George sits stiffly upright and John is wide eyed and slouched far in his chair, both have hands covering their midsections in shot ten (46:27). Even more blatantly obvious of the high sexual nature of this sequence is Buster Bloodvessel who frantically wipes his glasses with a white handkerchief in shot twenty-six, simulating an act of masturbation, and he is hunched forward, sucking the straw of his drink (47:28); his face is awash in seedy blue lighting. When Carson removes her bra and faces the camera, a large "censored" bar appears across her bare chest (shot thirty-one, 47:51). Neaverson argues that the blatant censorship of the moment "is a slyly satirical dig at both the BBC and self-righteous moral crusaders such as Mary Whitehouse" to create "a running battle between the advocates of permissiveness and tolerance and those of purity and censorship."²⁸⁰ In addition, Gallagher argues that one of the psychedelic LSD film's common tropes is to depict the "familiar iconography of female objectification, as women frequently appear bare-chested or fully naked, unlike their male partners."²⁸¹ The viewer witnesses this objectification not only during this sequence, but also during the title song when there were almost subliminal flashes of scantily clad women which were presented in close up. Gallagher also notes how most LSD films reflected the countercultural attitude that women were underpowered and weak. Looking at the women in *Magical Mystery Tour*, this statement is also true. For example, Jenny the courier is a blonde, buxom, and flirtatious woman and the actress in the fur coat that Paul sits next to on the coach utters only a couple of words and gets eyed up by the photographer she willingly poses for. Paul even makes a reference to her being in a film titled *Blue Lady*, which carries pornographic connotations. Furthermore, the only authoritative woman in the film is Aunt Jessie and she is depicted negatively as being large, loud, and always bossing Richard around. There had been a scene featuring the old variety performer Happy Nat

²⁷⁹ Hoggart, Richard. *The Uses of Literacy*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1957. 259

²⁸⁰ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 65.

²⁸¹ Gallagher, Mark. "Tripped Out: The Psychedelic Film and Masculinity." 163.

in which he had a dream about gorgeous young women in bikinis swimming in a pool, but that was cut due to time constraints.

Unlike the Rolling Stones, the Beatles had been fortunate to be seen as the establishment's darlings, and despite their honesty in promoting free love and drug use, the Beatles up to this point had remained such. Yet, even though the 1967 "Summer of Love" had seen a revolution in sexuality across mainstream society, for example abortion and homosexuality were legalized, the birth control pill had been regulated, and censorship laws concerning the cinema had begun to be lightened, the highly suggestive nature and pure voyeuristic objectification of a woman's body would have still been a very shocking and awkward moment in lounges across Britain as mixed viewers witnessed this scene unfold together on Boxing Day evening. As one young viewer commented to the *Daily Mirror*, "I was amazed that the Beatles would stoop to striptease," it is clear to see that the Beatles' avant-garde satire was lost on most of their Boxing Day audience and before long, the Beatles were no longer safe from the scrutiny of the establishment.

"Your Mother Should Know"

Ending the film is the most blatantly satirical send up of mainstream entertainment done in a style parodying the traditional Christmas viewing fare that *Magical Mystery Tour* set out to reject. "Your Mother Should Know" is a clear pastiche of the Busby Berkley musicals of the 1930s which includes a lavish set piece in the form of a towering, glittery staircase. As the Beatles descend the staircase in matching white tuxedos, the image is reminiscent of the band's Beatlemania uniform suits. Like the Lindsay-Hogg promotional videos, the outfits look awkward and inappropriate on the young men with long hair and moustaches. Throughout the film, problematic imagery of this sort is presented and this over the top pastiche confirms that the Beatles have moved on from traditional conventions. As the Beatles reach the bottom of the staircase the camera pulls back to reveal a large ballroom full of men and women in evening dress. This highly choreographed piece also utilizes camera and editing techniques more likely to be found in a classical Hollywood musical than a psychedelic visual collage. For example, rather than fast paced editing, the camera in shot one (48:20) tilts and pans following the band's descent and then zooms out. This

process takes a full minute to complete before cutting to an aerial shot of a line of WWII era women volunteers in Air Force dress uniforms walking past a parted crowd of dancers. While previous musical sequences were comprised of a large number of shots, “Your Mother Should Know” only has ten, making the pace more leisurely and whimsical. In addition, this is clearly a McCartney penned song whose composition “shows him finding his way back to discipline and...paying respects to the old fashioned values of his father Jim’s musical era.”²⁸² In this respect, it is a simple song without any added effects or experimentation. Also, being placed at the end of the film, “Your Mother Should Know” foreshadows the direction McCartney, and the rest of the Beatles’, image and song writing would take. Finally, to bring the film full circle, as the sequence ends the Beatles freeze for an instant until a reprise of “Magical Mystery Tour’s” chorus begins and the Beatles now appear in the front of the crowd of ballroom dancers in their magicians’ costumes, leading their faithful flock towards another mystery trip.

Conclusion

The tropes of the LSD film are ever present as the final sequence of *Magical Mystery Tour* can be seen as representing the third Bardo of the psychedelic trip. During this Bardo, the tripper begins re-entry into the conscious world. From this experience, a successful trip will yield rebirth and for very few, full enlightenment. The set is brightly lit, the Beatles tuxedos are white as if to symbolize the innocence and purity of birth, and everyone is happily dancing together as if the Beatles’ ideal utopia has been realized. The idea of rebirth is a theme that had featured heavily in the Beatles’ work since *Help!* when the band began to experiment with different images in an attempt to discover a more authentic representation of themselves. In rejecting the confines of Beatlemania, each member was able to freely explore their personal interests and develop individual styles of performance. By combining the influences of performance, drug use, and spirituality, the Beatles, like many members of the counterculture movement, were able to liberate themselves “from the shackles of a system that involved exploitative social relations.”²⁸³ Primarily, the Beatles were able to achieve this by exposing the very origins of the relationship with their audience that had continually held the band back from crafting their art. Throughout this chapter

²⁸² MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 264.

²⁸³ Aldred, Nannette. “‘The Summer of Love’ in *Performance* and *Sgt. Pepper*.” 116.

there have been numerous examples of the Beatles acknowledging and lampooning the manufactured nature of their Beatlemania image. While members of the counterculture wanted to be personally liberated because of the “promise of a better life...that could be achieved through altering one’s perception of the world,” the Beatles became a representative of the countercultural lifestyle in an attempt to make mainstream society more liberating by challenging the world’s perception of itself.²⁸⁴ *Magical Mystery Tour* was the manifestation of that challenge. Where *Help!* depicted a band in transition and wrestling with their unprecedented celebrity, *Magical Mystery Tour* represents the climax of the Beatles’ collective musicianship. Aldred argues that this period in the band’s career is “the moment where they are moving in different artistic and personal directions – no longer the Beatles, the jolly ‘mop tops’ of their earlier selves, they turn to a new performance.”²⁸⁵ That new performance is as individual rock auteurs. The diverse nature of their individual interests and artistry could no longer be contained within one collective unit.

Screened at 8:35 on Boxing Day evening, 1967, the Beatles’ intention to use *Magical Mystery Tour* as a new and challenging spectacle for their viewers failed to replicate the band’s previous record breaking viewing figures or even gain much positive critical response. While it may be easy to blame the film’s transmission in black and white when *Magical Mystery Tour* was intended to be viewed in color, the film was repeated in January 1968 in color and still received low viewing figures. One of the reasons for its poor reception can be discerned by examining *Magical Mystery Tour*’s time slot.²⁸⁶ Traditionally, Christmas time programming for the BBC was conservative throughout the decade. BBC 1 was dependable for airing family friendly variety entertainment, classical music and light ballet and opera, as well as classic film favorites. Each year, the programming for Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and Boxing Day was nearly an exact repeat of the previous year’s schedule. Throughout the decade, there was very little scheduled for the holiday weekend that would have appealed exclusively to a teenage audience in terms of popular music. For example, the tame *Tommy Steele Show*, could be seen on ITA on Christmas evening in 1960, but nothing similar appeared until Christmas 1964 when ITA screened the more fashionable *Ready, Steady, Go!*. On Christmas night 1965, *Top of the Pops* broadcasted a Christmas special on BBC 1 at a time when parents and grandparents would have

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 115.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 110.

²⁸⁶ The information on program dates and times was taken from *The Times*’ Digital Archive. I accessed each December 24th holiday television listings from 1960 to 1970.

been retiring to bed (10:35pm). In addition, family friendly Cliff Richard and the Shadows appeared on Christmas day on ATV, at 2pm in 1966, well after Richard's career had peaked in 1962 with *Summer Holiday*. The Queen's speech, a Bogart and Hepburn film, St. Alban's choir, and a Doris Day and Sinatra film followed his show. Therefore, it becomes easier to see how misplaced *Magical Mystery Tour* was within a line up of traditional programming. Since the BBC did not screen the film before purchasing the broadcast rights, confident in the Beatles' commercial power, and since much of the world still held onto the image of the Beatles as "loveable mop-tops," *Magical Mystery Tour* was scheduled between conservative programming such as *Frost over Christmas*, *This is Petula Clark*, Norman Wisdom's *Square Peg*, and Peter Ustinov's *Christmas Conversation*. The Beatles' psychedelic road film probably would have felt even more out of place on BBC 2 had it followed variety shows hosted by Andy Williams and Danny Kaye. With all of the criticism that followed, the BBC reverted back to traditional family favorites in 1968 and 1969, placing a Norman Wisdom film and music hall style performances into the time slot that the Beatles held the previous year.

Despite critics such as Peter Black acknowledging the difficulties of presenting something radically new during the holiday schedule, most papers were quick to label *Magical Mystery Tour* as the Beatles' first failure and began speculating the band's downfall as soon as the next morning's papers. For instance, Black argues that the film "provoked more uproar than it deserved...but slotting also creates a climate in which surprise is unwelcome."²⁸⁷ The *Daily Mirror* quoted viewers' response toward the film: "rubbish," "nonsense," and "they needn't have bothered."²⁸⁸ However, some of the people who were interviewed were a man in his thirties and a pensioner. Those interviewed were not typically within the core demographic of the Beatles' intended fan base. While an 18-year-old female was interviewed, she clearly missed the satirical elements of the film. In addition, the *Daily Mirror*'s critic, Mary Malone, dismissed the film as having "no aim" and "being chaotic."²⁸⁹ However, as I have examined in detail throughout this chapter, the techniques of jump cuts, fades, surrealist humor, cinéma vérité, and the use of handheld cameras were not dissimilar from the ideas behind those techniques used in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* Even though many critics and viewers stressed negative viewpoints over the film, *The Times* reported that an estimated 20 million viewers did watch *Magical Mystery Tour*, which the newspaper

²⁸⁷ Black, Peter. "Nay, Nay, Nay." *The Listener*. 4 Jan. 1968. 27.

²⁸⁸ Jenour, Kenelm. "Beatles' Mystery Tour Baffles Viewers." *Daily Mirror*. 27 Dec. 1967. 1.

²⁸⁹ Malone, Mary. "No Magic in this Sad Beatles' Tour." *Daily Mirror*. 27 Dec. 1967. 12.

claimed to have received “the highest total for any programme in the holiday period on any channel.”²⁹⁰ However, according to the *New York Times*, “previous Beatles programs have attracted [average] audiences of 26.5 million...on lesser occasions.”²⁹¹ These facts, along with *Magical Mystery Tour*'s popularity at midnight screenings and on college campuses in the US, as well as the high sales of the album, suggest that the Beatles' core fan base reacted positively to the film.

Reaching out to their core fan base was most likely the Beatles' intention for such a radical and complex project. As I have established in earlier chapters, using television can create a sense of exclusivity and intimacy for the viewers. After *Help!*, the Beatles stopped making live television appearances to not only free up their schedules, but to also distance themselves from their fans. The promotional films that they had recorded for television were staged and either commented on the stale nature of Beatlemania iconography or rejected that image. One of the real problems to cause disillusionment in viewers was how *Magical Mystery Tour* was screened. The Beatles' shot the film as a film – their characters are fictionalized, there is very little engagement with the viewers, and the band controlled what the viewers saw and when they saw it. For example, the viewer has to wait until half way into the film to see the band perform as a collective. In addition, casual fans of the Beatles or even those who were aware of the band but not really interested in them would have been shocked to see such a portrayal of the Beatles when prior output had not been nearly as radical. From McCartney's statements to the press, it is clear that the band knew what they were trying to achieve and were familiar with the types of programs that were broadcasted during the holidays. McCartney defended the decision to use television by saying, “I think it's better that we try to do something ourselves, and that we try to present the viewers with something different from all the phony tinsel of Christmas shows.”²⁹² Presenting their film at such a prime time allowed the Beatles to address the large, cross-generational fans and admirers who had all praised *A Hard Day's Night*. Where *Help!* denied viewers the clichés of Beatlemania, *Magical Mystery Tour* brought counterculture ideas and tropes to a mainstream audience and to critics aligned with the establishment. What these two groups had anticipated was more of the same lighthearted and “clean” antics that they had come to expect from the Beatles. Mainstream society still held onto a very specific idea of what “The Beatles” represented, even after the band had taken steps to distance themselves from that idea.

²⁹⁰ “Beatle Reply to TV Film Critics.” *The Times*. 28 Dec. 1967. 2.

²⁹¹ “Beatles' TV Film Mystifies British.” *New York Times*. 28 Dec. 1967. 46.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 46.

Not only did *Magical Mystery Tour* allow the Beatles to once and for all shed their Beatlemania image but they could also display the new artistic and more mature direction that they had chosen to take. In addition, the band was able to disillusion anyone not within the primary fan base – the blind followers whose purchasing power was holding the Beatles back from progressing to another level of art. One can argue that by losing these “fans,” the Beatles were able to create the art that they envisioned without all of the pressures of having to conform to mainstream expectations.

Running parallel to the *Magical Mystery Tour* project was the full-length feature *Yellow Submarine* (George Dunning, 1968). By contrast, the latter had minimal involvement and minimal input from the Beatles. As my research of *Yellow Submarine* will show, it is the lack of the Beatles’ control over the project and the way in which the band are depicted that helped to make the film such a commercial success, and arguably a film with as much longevity as *A Hard Day’s Night*. *Yellow Submarine* is a film as radical and experimental as *Magical Mystery Tour* but retains a basic narrative/number relationship favored by classical and pop musicals. And rather than questioning or challenging the band’s Beatlemania iconography, the artists inspired by the band’s music chose to portray the Beatles as mythological characters. In doing so, viewers were able to bring their memories and preferred vision of the Beatles to the characters. To be involved with such a project may have created the bond with their audience that the Beatles had tried to achieve with *Magical Mystery Tour*. But all the while, the Beatles continued to be involved with albums, films, and art projects that continued to control their audience and to question the Beatles’ myth. While the Beatles work together to defeat the establishment villains in *Yellow Submarine* by spreading a message of love and peace through music and community, in real life the band had begun to fracture into such opposite directions that working towards such a goal as leaders of the youth culture had become impossible.

Chapter Four: *Yellow Submarine*

“...*Yellow Submarine* was of great importance to the group since, for all its drug-induced imagery, it presented the public with the cosy, safe and affable Beatles they knew and loved, deflecting, albeit briefly, the hostility garnered by *Magical Mystery Tour*. ...*Yellow Submarine* was important to the group’s increasingly controversial late sixties image in that it pacified the mainstream press and public by providing a tonic for the group’s increasingly bewildering and erratic output and behaviour.”²⁹³

Despite the Beatles’ lack of involvement with *Yellow Submarine* and the film’s frequent use of various experimental animation techniques, the project was a great commercial success for the band. Like *A Hard Day’s Night*, the Beatles’ fourth film works on two registers. On one register, the experimental animation and countercultural influences provided the youth culture with a psychedelic “head” experience, while reinforcing the Beatles’ position as leaders of that subculture. Yet, on another register, *Yellow Submarine* was received as being mainstream friendly especially to children for the simple “peace and love will conquer evil” message. Also to those adult members of mainstream society who were uninitiated in the radical ideology of the counterculture, the film provided a generic and universal depiction of the Beatles’ characters made mythical perhaps by the band’s absence in portraying their animated selves. This depiction of the Beatles is worth further scrutiny because in three key numbers (“Eleanor Rigby,” “Only a Northern Song,” and “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds”) the animators were able to achieve something that the Beatles had not been able to succeed in with their promotional films: through the animators’ unusual visual style, they were able to take focus away from the Beatles’ problematic questioning of their pop star image and instead create visual manifestations of the Beatles’ music. I define “visual manifestation” as animating the Beatles’ music in such a way that it reflects the imagery associated with the Beatles’ “musicians as artists” persona. Also, by using animation the animators were able to create visual art that could arguably express the Beatles’ songwriting thought process and capture the more abstract concepts behind their more challenging output.

²⁹³ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 95-96.

Yellow Submarine's form and style are also worth a closer analysis because of its unusual approaches to the generic conventions of both the animated feature and the pop musical. While animators undermined the conventions of traditional Disney films that provided the industry's standards, the narrative/number relationship functions similarly to classical and pop musicals. As I will show, the latter point is a deviation from the kinds of films the Beatles had participated in prior to *Yellow Submarine*. Arguably, with the level of control the Beatles had over their promotional films and *Magical Mystery Tour*, one could suggest that much of their experimentation had been in mimicking interesting or unusual techniques and effects that they had seen or discovered without understanding *how* and *why* such devices were used. This can only be speculation as no concrete evidence of the Beatles discussing their film influences can be found, but it is a hypothesis that could give some insight into the critical reception of the band's mid- to late period film and musical output. Comparatively, the animators working on *Yellow Submarine* understood the conventions of traditional animation and the formal production process at Walt Disney Studios. Yet, *Yellow Submarine* is situated around a basic plot of good versus evil as the Beatles journey from Liverpool to Pepperland on a quest to free the utopian community from the oppressive and dictatorial Blue Meanies. The narrative first establishes the story's conflict – that of Sgt. Pepper's band being imprisoned, Pepperland being turned to a colorless and emotionless wasteland, and the Blue Meanies take over of the community. Old Fred is made an admiral by the Mayor and sent out to find help in a yellow submarine. Fred ends up in Liverpool and enlists the help of the Beatles who look similar to Sgt. Pepper's band members. As the group makes their way through various seas and landscapes on the journey to Pepperland, they come across strange creatures and situations. Moments of minor mishaps and delays, as well as the moments of conflict between protagonists and antagonists in Pepperland are interrupted by musical numbers that provide an escape from the narrative. For example, "Eleanor Rigby" depicts moments of color and hope in a land of conformity and loneliness, while "Only a Northern Song" and "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds" provide viewers with moments that create an aurally and visually entertaining spectacle. These sequences present the alternative ideal of community, peace, and love from the establishment-controlled society in the narrative. In this way, the number functions to "offer the image of 'something better' to escape into, or something we want deeply that our day-to-day lives don't provide."²⁹⁴ Yet, *Yellow Submarine* perhaps

²⁹⁴ Dyer, Richard. "Entertainment and Utopia." *Genre: the Musical: a Reader*. Ed. Rick Altman. London: Routledge, 1981. 177.

takes this idea one step further by proposing to the audience that such a utopian community is possible.

Arguably this is achieved through the film's live action sing-a-long finale with the Beatles, and with the viewer's knowledge of the band's agenda to bring communities together through their boundary crossing film and musical output. While the Beatles' live action appearance is very brief, it does create a bridge between the fantastical, fictional plot and the countercultural ideas about community and utopianism endorsed by the band. What is also worth pointing out about *Yellow Submarine* is the strong emphasis on the importance of non-representational signs throughout the film. Dyer argues that non-representational signs such as "colour, texture, movement, rhythm, melody, and camerawork" are the elements of a film that get recognized but are rarely discussed.²⁹⁵ The non-representational signs in *Yellow Submarine* are used to great effect in highlighting the various contrasts in the characters and situations presented in the narrative. This chapter will provide examples of this point in the analysis of the film but one immediate instance is the way the contrast between Liverpool and Pepperland is made. Liverpool is recreated in the film by using photographs that have been rotoscoped in thick lines and dark colors and the sequence relies on cutting from shot to shot rather than using pans. By using photographs, there is a sense of the real being presented, while the rotoscoping underlines the grimness. The stifling cityscape is juxtaposed with the yellow submarine and the bright, psychedelic colors of Ringo's outfit that represent an alternative. Pepperland on the other hand is full of vibrant colors, a diversity of people, and full of sweeping pans and wide shots. In reading the non-representational signs the viewer can get a more complete picture of the alternative to everyday life that the film's themes and characters are offering.

King Features and The Beatles Cartoon

While the Beatles were planning and filming *Magical Mystery Tour* throughout 1967, American producer Al Brodax of King Features had arranged with Brian Epstein

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 178.

and United Artists to create an animated, full-length feature film starring the Beatles. The basis for such a project was the result of the commercial success of the Beatles cartoon series. Because a number of the staff who worked on the cartoon series also worked on *Yellow Submarine*, it is first necessary to provide information about the cartoon series. The Beatles cartoon series aired on ABC in America from September 25, 1965 until April 20, 1969 and was comprised of 39 episodes over four seasons. Each half hour episode's action was centered on two Beatle songs with each song having its own 15-minute segment. Unlike *Yellow Submarine*, each segment was quickly and crudely drawn, and capitalized on the established Beatlemania image even after that image was no longer an authentic representation of the actual Beatles. Similar to *Yellow Submarine*, the cartoon series fully exploited the Beatles current hit songs, included no involvement from the Beatles themselves, and employed voice actors for the Beatles' dialogue. Included in *Beatles at the Movies* by Roy Carr are four, bullet-pointed briefs on how each Beatle should be drawn and what their typical characteristics were. Clearly, the cartoon Beatles are a representation of how the Beatles were portrayed in *A Hard Day's Night* – the film that firmly cemented the Beatles carefully constructed Beatlemania image. For instance, the cartoon brief instructs that “John, especially when delivering important lines, really looks the leader,” while Paul “is the most poised and stylish Beatle...he always looks straight at whoever he is talking to.”²⁹⁶ Lennon's leader tag is undisputable, and McCartney is drawn to exude confidence as well as maintain “the cute one” label. Paul's brief continues to say that Paul should assume “a mock innocent look, eyes wide and head tilted to one side.”²⁹⁷ For George, animators were told that “the quiet one” should look “awkward and angular” even when seated and that the elusive Beatle “never looks at who he is talking to,” while Ringo's character is reminiscent of the wistful walking sequence in *A Hard Day's Night*.²⁹⁸ Not only was Ringo drawn smaller than Paul and George, but also animators were told, “Ringo is the nice gentle Beatle, although he always looks rather sad.”²⁹⁹ With such stereotypical representations, it becomes clear to see why the Beatles were not enthusiastic about participating actively with the *Yellow Submarine* project, especially when they had tried so hard to distance themselves from Beatlemania iconography. In addition, the Beatles had begun to spend their time almost exclusively at Abbey Road Studios focusing more on their musical

²⁹⁶ Carr, Roy. *Beatles at the Movies*. New York: HarperPerennial, 1996. 88.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 88.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 89.

development rather than on public appearances. The cartoon series was an inexpensive, easily produced money earner which also helped to promote new singles without any extra effort from the Beatles. When the larger project was proposed, the men behind the cartoon series' production had to prove the feature film would not resemble the crudeness of the cartoons. Also, the Beatles disapproved of the cartoon series' cringe worthy Americanized Liverpudlian accents. Production supervisor John Coates remembers when the film idea was first proposed to Epstein and the Beatles, "in spite of reassurance from us, they were still suspicious it was going to be a full-length version of the TV series."³⁰⁰ Furthermore, the Beatles' press officer Tony Barrow notes the two-fold nature of the cartoon series:

Whilst generally helping to sustain The Beatles' record sales at a healthy level between concert tours (and beyond that short-lived era), the cartoon programs also preserved in Peter Pan fashion the early carefree and playful "Four Mop Tops" image, which children loved and parents approved of, and which the real life Beatles were abandoning during these years in favour of druggy lyrics and a "hipper" appearance.³⁰¹

Despite the Beatles' mature and outspoken stance of countercultural issues both through their lyrics and public interviews, the cartoon series remained firmly a children's show.

ABC retained control over approving every aspect of the show's content. Before animators could begin work on the episodes, ABC requested to see the storyboards and sent a memo back to Brodax confirming approved scenes and demanding particular scenes to be amended before production could proceed. An example of this is found in a memo from Theresa Villani of ABC's Department of Broadcast Standards and Practices to Brodax (June 22, 1965) concerning the "Thank You Girl" episode (aired January 22, 1966). Villani instructs Brodax for a second time that John will not jab Ringo with a form in frame 34 and that the character of Margarite should not be "too sexy."³⁰² Not only was content monitored, but the animation style was the traditional 2D animation with only the sing-a-long feature in between the episodes becoming slightly more experimental after *Yellow Submarine's*

³⁰⁰ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine: The Making of The Beatles' Animated*

Classic. Iola, WI: Krause Publications, 2002. 32.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰² Axelrod, Mitchell. *Beatletoons: The Real Story behind the Cartoon Beatles*. Pickens, SC: Wynn Publishing, 1999. 45. See also Axelrod 46 for a reproduced memo in which Villani rejects an electric chair depiction and heavily chastises Brodax for its inclusion.

release. In addition, the introduction to the sing-a-long feature was reused to save time and money so only eighteen introductions were made. A number of those were variations rather than completely different segments. Even if a song featured both in the main episode and the sing-a-long, the action was different from each other. However, as the series went on, there were a number of factors that led to the show's cancellation. One factor was over saturating the television schedule with too many reruns of the series between seasons. Another factor was the rise in popularity of superheroes. Since the premier of *Batman* (which was a mix of live action and animation) in 1966, there was a rise in superhero-based cartoons, including *The Beatles'* main competitor: *Space Ghost* (1966, CBS).³⁰³ As *The Beatles'* ratings slipped, ABC ordered less episodes in advance before canceling the show completely after the show's fourth season in 1969.

One of the main differences between the cartoon series and *Yellow Submarine* was the way in which the Beatles' music was used. This section will examine one episode and sing-a-long from before and after *Yellow Submarine's* release. "I Should Have Known Better" aired on ABC on December 11, 1965. The episode begins with a wide shot of the Vatican's St. Peter's Square before cutting to the Beatles talking to an Italian concert promoter. The dilemma of this episode is centered on the Beatles trying to find a place to rehearse for the evening's concert. At the first theatre, there are opera rehearsals, the second ballet rehearsals, and the third was in ruins. Eventually, the Beatles ended up at the Coliseum. Once the music begins, the performance is shot as a typical, televised live action performance. First, there is a wide shot of the Beatles in their typical stage positions for a Lennon lead vocal. The camera alternates between zooming in on each Beatle and cutting to another Beatle or group shot. Like *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* other shots include close ups on the Beatles' instruments. As this sequence also shows, the music is almost always diegetic, with the Beatles seen singing and playing their instruments for the majority of the sequence. The performance does take place within the narrative of the episode. Also, the performance begins with a spoken reference to the song's title. "Penny Lane" (original air date unknown, circa 1969), is an example of the episodes' tone and use of music after *Yellow Submarine's* visionary approach. Despite the film's innovative approach to presenting the music, the cartoon series had not evolved. In "Penny Lane," the Beatles are upstaged by new detective sensation James Blonde. In an attempt to win their fans' attention back, the Beatles go to Penny Lane in Liverpool to stop a robbery. At Penny

³⁰³Ibid., 124.

Lane, the Beatles pass a barbershop, which prompts the musical number. The band has donned instruments and, as in the case of the earlier episodes, the music is primarily diegetic. Rather than create something similar to the Beatles' live action promotional video for "Penny Lane," the cartoon sequence literally interprets the lyrics from depicting the bus shelter in the middle of a roundabout with the nurse selling poppies to the fireman washing his fire engine. Also, to play the horn part, the animators included a busker with a trumpet to maintain the diegetic approach. Like the earlier episode, the Beatles sing to camera, which occasionally zooms out from a close up on an instrument to a close shot of a Beatle, and so on and so forth. The Beatles' promotional video for "Penny Lane" however features the band riding through London – as substitute for Liverpool – on horseback, as passersby seem to take no notice. Shot dreamlike using soft focus, the band ends up at Knole Park for a surreal tea party. Filmed in February 1967 by Peter Goldmann, "Penny Lane" features a number of elements of and references to the counterculture ideology, while the cartoon episode does not.

Where the sing-a-long feature is concerned however, there is a noticeable change before and after *Yellow Submarine*. "Dizzy Miss Lizzy" is the sing-a-long for the "What You're Doing"/ "Money" episode (February 12, 1966, ABC). Of the twenty shots in the episode, only the first shot features animation as apposed to static drawings. The first shot is of a digger against an orange and brown colored background. From the digger's movement across the screen, it is clear that cel animation was used and that the one cel with the digger was moved manually across the recycled background rather than animate the digger. Even the puffs of smoke do not move position or shape in relation to the digger. The rest of the sequence contains static rostrum shots and each has a section of lyrics on acetate. When animation is used, as in the first shot of this sequence or any of the earlier sing-a-long segments, the movement is very basic – animation pops up from static foreground objects, or only a hand or mouth moves. Reasons for this use of basic animation could be a combination of the following factors: a short schedule in which to produce each episode, staff inexperience with the animation format, and sub-contracting to another studio to help with the workload in order to meet the strict deadlines.³⁰⁴ One of the last episodes to have been animated for the series was "Penny Lane"/ "Strawberry Fields Forever" and included the "Rain" sing-a-long. *Yellow Submarine* animator Tony Cuthbert worked on these final episodes and speculates, "I think because our unit produced the films in half

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 65.

the time, and because of the competence of our group, they gave us some of the weirder songs to animate.”³⁰⁵ The influence of Cuthbert’s *Yellow Submarine* experience is unmistakable in “Rain.” Primarily, the sequence utilizes still photographs of objects and fully silhouetted people. One such shot is of a man holding an umbrella – his face is completely obscured by darkness and the background is purple. In a mix of techniques much like *Yellow Submarine* a cut out of a boat pans across the still photograph. At the beginning of the song, jump cuts flash between images (still photography, rotoscoped surreal landscape, and cut out) to the beat of the drum fill. Jump cuts are used throughout, as are dissolves. Unlike the majority of the episodes, this sequence does not feature the Beatles, nor does it animate literal representations of the lyrics. There is an overall theme of rain but the depictions are far more abstract and surreal than previous sing-a-longs and it is clear that there is a greater focus on the music rather than the musicians’ image.

***Yellow Submarine* – film form and style**

Working to a fixed, eleven-month deadline, *Yellow Submarine* was directed by George Dunning of TV Cartoons, the same company who were contracted to animate the Beatles cartoon series. *Yellow Submarine*’s animation process involved between 40 and 200 animators at various stages to bring Heinz Edelmann’s drawings to life. The film’s unique visual style was a result of the animators’ different cultural influences and artistic backgrounds. Prior to *Yellow Submarine*, the most successful studio to produce full-length feature animation films was Walt Disney Studios.³⁰⁶ While Hollywood studios such as Warner Bros. and MGM had in house animation divisions to produce animated shorts to precede their live action features at the cinema, Disney’s primary product were full-length animated features in addition to producing live action films. Between 1960 and 1969, Disney released no less than forty-nine films with a new animated feature being released on average between two and five years.³⁰⁷ These included *101 Dalmations* (1961), *The Sword and the Stone* (1963), and *The Jungle Book* (1967). Since Disney’s *Fantasia* (1941), where imaginative visuals were merged with a high culture soundtrack, the studio was dedicated to placing a focus on creating

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 126.

³⁰⁶ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 116-117.

³⁰⁷ Brode, Douglas. *From Walt to Woodstock: How Disney Created the Counterculture*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2004. 2

stunning visuals and underlining the importance of music within the films. Douglas Brode notes that Disney's early work shows how he "early on understood youth's need for its own identity" and that music "would be the central element of youth culture."³⁰⁸ Brode makes a specific link between *Fantasia* and *Yellow Submarine*. Of *Fantasia*, he writes, "the more perceptive critics noted the film's desire to bypass any normal viewing experience, striking directly at the audience's 'psychic stream,' thus allowing moviegoers to 'glide through the space of consciousness.'"³⁰⁹ Brode argues that these same phrases can be applied to *Yellow Submarine*, which the author considers to be a "significant artifact of the late 1960s."³¹⁰ Other important Disney films included *Alice in Wonderland* (1951) and *Mary Poppins* (1964). *Alice in Wonderland* continued the Disney tradition with its surreal and often nightmarish imagery. While the film may have been embraced by the counterculture in the late 1960's for its psychedelic references and aesthetic, *Alice in Wonderland* preceded Aldous Huxley's *The Doors of Perception* by three years. Brode is unclear, suggesting Huxley's book must be a reference due to the small doors leading to larger rooms and the mushrooms that Alice experiments with in order to alter her body's height.³¹¹ Not only did *Mary Poppins* present an adult figure that defied the more establishment leaning characters, but the film was also a successful mixture of live action and 2D animation – themes and techniques utilized by *Yellow Submarine*.³¹² Disney Studios established a reputation for formulaic, assembly line films whose motifs and characteristics in themes and drawing styles came to define the "Disney style," which was applied to any product, Disney or otherwise, to represent the more commercial, mainstream fair. Wells notes that with the success of Disney's films, "a dominant visual aesthetic for animated film" was created.³¹³ Those animators who did not want to conform to the orthodox Disney model "sought to maintain their own aesthetic distinctiveness," which led to the distinction between Disney style and experimental animation.³¹⁴ For example, Disney Studios required a consistency in drawing style and used a standard number of frames per drawing, which gave the characters' movements a particular look. Where Disney

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., 17.

³¹⁰ Ibid., 17.

³¹¹ However, David Bradshaw claims Huxley submitted the original *Alice in Wonderland* screenplay but it was rejected for being too literary. Bradshaw, David. *Aldous Huxley's "Those Barren Leaves."* London: Vintage Classics, 2005. xii.

³¹² Beatle legend attributes McCartney's "Uncle Albert/Admiral Halsey" from his *Ram* (1971) solo album to have been inspired by his love of *Mary Poppins*. Brode, 26, backs this up although the author incorrectly states the song is a Beatles song.

³¹³ Wells, Paul. *Animation: Genre and Authorship*. London: Wallflower Press, 2002. 34.

³¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

used a single frame or two frames per drawing, *The Flintstones*, for example, used “four or six frames per drawing” making the movement “jump around very crudely.”³¹⁵ The difference with *Yellow Submarine*, and the reason why the film is considered experimental despite its use of common techniques, is that the animators had to adapt the standard frame’s size in order to fit in Edelman’s drawings completely. This was done rather than changing Edelman’s drawings to fit the standard frame.³¹⁶ In addition, *Yellow Submarine* animators took well established animation techniques and not only swapped styles throughout the film, but also combined techniques at the same time – something that had been unprecedented in commercial animation at that time. As Neaverson explains, *Yellow Submarine* took advantage of

highly eclectic methods of animation technique, which comprise conventional cel animation, rotoscoping...and conventional live action sequences...Although alternating between the first two was not especially new to animated features (it had been used in Disney films since the thirties), *Yellow Submarine* integrates these styles simultaneously rather than interchangeably.³¹⁷

It is necessary to make this distinction between the traditional style associated with mainstream animation such as Disney and the more avant-garde influence animation such as *Yellow Submarine* in order to understand how the latter was allowed to develop into its unique visual style. Arguably, misunderstanding the difference may have been one reason why the Beatles had initially distanced themselves from the project. TV Cartoons (TVC) was adamant about avoiding the crude animation of the Beatles’ cartoon series and avoiding the calculated formula of the Disney production style. However, McCartney wanted a “more classic *Pinocchio* or *Snow White*” rather than a film that he thought “lacked the ingenuity and the warmth and the overall magic you associate with Disney.”³¹⁸ While McCartney was a fan of animation and avant-garde films, as established in chapter three, his statement betrays his lack of understanding in regards to the studio’s work versus Disney’s labor practices.³¹⁹ As a later section will examine, *Yellow Submarine*’s fixed eleven-month deadline, relatively low budget of \$1 million, and the techniques and backgrounds of the animators were all factors that created new approaches to animation.³²⁰

³¹⁵ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 315.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 77.

³¹⁷ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 87

³¹⁸ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 48.

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 316.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

Most animation at this time was in the form of shorts and commercials, with the exception of Disney. As mentioned earlier, Hollywood studio animation departments produced shorts as filler for their main feature screenings. When cinemas began to abandon a focus on double features and the longer program schedules the need for shorts was not in as high of a demand, causing studios to shut down their animation departments.³²¹ With the growing popularity and ownership of television sets in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, cartoons and animated shorts found a greater audience on, first, primetime network television in the US and then during a specially created Saturday morning slot. At the forefront of television cartoons was Hanna-Barbera Productions followed by Warner Bros' *Merrie Melodies* and *Looney Tunes*. This argument is proposed due to the volume and diversity of Hanna-Barbera's programs and characters. For example, Hanna-Barbera were responsible for *The Huckleberry Hound Show*, *Quick Draw McGraw*, *The Flintstones*, *Top Cat*, *The Yogi Bear Show*, *The Jetsons*, and *Jonny Quest* between 1958 and 1964, with *Space Ghost*, *The Banana Splits*, and *Scooby-Doo* created before the decade was out. Many of these characters and shows remain in syndication today on channels such as Cartoon Network and Nickelodeon. In the 1960s, small cartoon production companies began to rise up taking advantage of television producers' need to fill television schedules. Many of these small companies contracted animators based outside of the US in order to keep production costs down and to avoid the restrictions of the Cartoonist Union based in California.³²² One such company was New York based King Features Syndicate headed by producer Al Brodax. Brodax's division had produced a large number of new *Popeye* cartoons in color, as well as a cartoon trilogy that included the "Beetle Bailey" character. Just as Beatlemania had become fully established in 1964, Brodax had secured the animation rights to the Beatles image in November 1964. Once a deal was struck with ABC and the storyboards had passed the network's inspection, Brodax approached the small, London-based TVC studios to bring the storyboards to life for the Beatles cartoon. The studios were run by Canadian George Dunning and John Coates who would later direct and supervise production, respectively, on *Yellow Submarine*. Dunning favored the experimental aspect in animations, having "pursued major animation research throughout the 1960s."³²³ Notably, Dunning started out in 1943 as "one of the first group of animators to be hired by John Grierson" for the

³²¹ Axelrod, Mitchell. *Beatletoons*. 18.

³²² *Ibid.*, 20.

³²³ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2007. 175.

National Film Board (NFB) in Canada.³²⁴ In addition, Frontani argues that it was Dunning who “helped establish Great Britain...as a center for internationally recognized animation.”³²⁵ With such a prime location and laid back atmosphere that encouraged expression through animation, TVC attracted a number of young artists from around the globe, including, perhaps crucially, Eastern Europe where that region was experiencing acclaim for art and animation.

Robert Russett and Cecile Starr’s 1974 study of experimental animation is only one of a few to compile a definitive collection of essays and interviews with the pioneering artists of experimental film. According to their research, experimental animation in Europe is as old as cinema itself. Russett and Starr define “experimental animation” work that “suggests individual techniques, personal dedication, and artistic daring.”³²⁶ Like Paul Wells, the authors also stress how experimental animators avoid the “production-line procedures of the commercial studio,” instead placing a personalized touch on their techniques as well as being know for working with a particular piece of equipment.³²⁷ Like live action films, experimental animation went through waves of innovation. Most directly related to *Yellow Submarine* is the period between WWII and the end of the 1950s. In 1935, Hitler had abstract art outlawed in Germany because of the possible threat of resistance messages or ideas.³²⁸ As a result, many animators fled to Britain and North America where experimental animation flourished as new techniques and styles were being introduced. Russett and Starr credit animators Len Lye and Norman McLaren, then based in Britain, as two artists who introduced new approaches to sound and color in their work.³²⁹ In addition, the London Film Society supported the moment by screening “virtually all the important animated films produced in Europe in the 1920s and early 1930s.”³³⁰ From London, Lye and McLaren had sought out America and Canada, as many German animators had, for their base.

Previous research has not established any specific artistic influences by other artists on *Yellow Submarine*. Only George Dunning briefly lists three artists he had been influenced by at the time: McLaren, Alexeieff, and Bartosch.³³¹ Norman McLaren

³²⁴ Ibid., 175.

³²⁵ Ibid., 175.

³²⁶ Russett, Robert and Cecile Starr. *Experimental Animation*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1976. 7.

³²⁷ Ibid., 7.

³²⁸ Ibid., 34.

³²⁹ Ibid., 34.

³³⁰ Ibid., 34.

³³¹ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 162.

and Berthold Bartosch had both worked with and mentored Dunning. McLaren of course having established an animation studio within NFB was best known for new techniques that synchronized music to animation.³³² Bartosch was an Eastern European living in Paris who specialized in special effects techniques and had experimented with different types of paper to create layered backgrounds and characters.³³³ Alexandre Alexeieff was a Russian artist also living in Paris but who had made films in Canada with the NFB around the same time Dunning worked there in the early 1940s. No known source makes a direct link between Dunning and Alexeieff but it is more than likely that the two would have been at least aware of each other's work. Alexeieff was well known due to his experimental "pinscreen" technique, which created textural effects cel animation was incapable of.³³⁴ *Yellow Submarine* is full of styles that particular artists were associated with but the film's animators do not say that their work was the result of Bridget Riley or Peter Max's influence, for instance. While the styles may have been similar, Hieronimus argues that "rather than one influencing the other, the style seems to have evolved collectively."³³⁵ Because of the freedom that art school encouraged and because of the strong sense of community between experimental artists, it is likely that designers "were picking up the same 'vibe' and adapting it their own way all at the same time."³³⁶ To really get a sense of the level of experimentation on *Yellow Submarine*, one only needs to examine the film's musical sequences, as this chapter will do shortly.

The authors of *Experimental Animation* make references throughout to the work of Georges Méliès and how the French filmmaker's techniques were used and developed by experimental animators in the 1940s and 1950s. One such example is how Méliès would often stop the camera "in the middle of shots to produce trick effects."³³⁷ No research has found a direct link between Méliès influence and the artists working on *Yellow Submarine*. However, Russett and Starr do note how Norman McLaren, founder of the National Film Board of Canada's animation studio and school, continually considered George Méliès's work to be of great influence.³³⁸ As director George Dunning was a protégé of McLaren's, it can only be assumed that

³³² "Norman McLaren." 30 July 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norman_McLaren>. 31 July 2007.

³³³ "Berthold Bartosch." 4 June 2007. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berthold_Bartosch>. 31 July 2007.

³³⁴ "Alexandre Alexeieff." 15 June 2007.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandre_Alexeieff_and_Claire_Parker>. 31 July 2007.

³³⁵ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 84.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

³³⁷ Russett, Robert and Cecile Starr. *Experimental Animation*. 125.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 117.

Méliès's techniques were studied at the NFB. In addition, Méliès died in 1938, a time when a new wave of experimental animation was being realized and in 1952, French director Georges Franju had directed a bio-drama titled *Le Grand Méliès*. Therefore, Méliès's work would have certainly been known by the European community of experimental animators, many of who were living in France or were Eastern Europeans who had fled the Nazis for North America and Britain. With this information, one can more easily justify the likelihood that *Yellow Submarine* had in some way been influenced by Méliès's work. Certainly parallels can be drawn between the journey narrative of *Yellow Submarine* and *Voyage to the Moon* (1902). In fact, looking through Méliès's filmography yields a number of titles concerned with journeys or dreams. The following is a sample of examples: *Passengers Disembarking at Quiberon* (1899), *Charmant voyages de nocces* (1899), *The Artist's Dream* (1898), *The Beggar's Dream* (1898), *A Nightmare* (1897), *Fantastical Illusions* (1898), *The Man in the Moon* (a.k.a. *The Astronomer's Dream*) (1899), and *The Hallucinations of Baron Munchhausen* (1911).

One such artist at the cutting edge of avant-garde art was Czechoslovakian-born designer, Heinz Edelmann, who had been working in Germany in the 1960s for a progressive arts magazine called *Twen*. Charlie Jenkins, who worked on special sequences and directed special effects on the "Eleanor Rigby" sequence, was responsible for discovering Edelmann through his work at *Twen*. Edelmann created slender, two-dimensional drawings of each Beatle that embraced not only embraced the Beatles' new interests in the counterculture, but also, maintained the look and personality quirks fans were familiar with. The level of detail was great, down to the precise ways in which eyes, noses, and hair were supposed to be drawn.³³⁹ One problem for animators was how Edelmann's drawings were flat, 2D representations rather than the 3D style that animators were used to. In order to maintain the drawings distinctive look, animators had to experiment with ways to create 3D motion on 2D planes. As mentioned earlier, the standard field of twelve inches wide and nine inches high in which footage was shot had to be changed to fifteen inches wide and twelve inches high to fit the characters comfortably within the frame. To achieve this, parts of the rostrum camera used to shoot animation had to be modified.³⁴⁰ In addition, Edelmann's line drawings were "totally different to anything that had been done in animation before."³⁴¹ Unlike other artists, Edelmann drew in a continuous line with no

³³⁹ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 72-77. (NB: Illustrations)

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

³⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 78.

sketching or scrubbing, which is often taught in art classes or associated with Disney style drawings.³⁴² So even before production began on *Yellow Submarine* groundbreaking techniques had already been utilized.

The narrative/number relationship

While Neaverson acknowledges the journey narrative of *Yellow Submarine*, his primary focus is on the artistic and countercultural influences of the plot. He also notes how the film's aesthetics are reminiscent of psychedelic imagery and "head" film tropes. But neither he nor Frontani comment on the contradiction in the film's experimental style and traditional narrative structure. Through out Hieronimus' book of interviews and recollections, surprisingly only a few pages mention the narrative structure. In taking a closer look, there is an interesting point of comparison between the animated feature's success and *Magical Mystery Tour's* failure. Simply, pleasing both mainstream audiences and counterculturalists was achieved by being stylistically innovative, yet maintaining a basic linear narrative. While the music sequences provided some viewers with sensory heightening stops along their "trip," for the majority of viewers the traditional narrative/number structure kept the film light and entertaining. Neaverson notes how the film's screenplay came with the written objective stating, "The goal should be nothing less than to take animation beyond anything seen before in style, class and tone, but avoiding the precious and pretentious."³⁴³ That statement gives the impression that many might have thought of avant-garde and countercultural art as pretentious, including mainstream audiences. Dyer argues for musicals as entertainment and even though musicals can present complex themes and situations, he continually states that these ideas are presented in a way that captivates the viewer's emotions. By using a traditional narrative structure, *Yellow Submarine* is able to convey its primary themes to the audience without the distraction of convoluted narrative devices. The numbers are evenly presented throughout the film to give audiences a feeling of escape and also to allow an escape

³⁴² Ibid., 78.

³⁴³ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 83.

for the protagonists – an idea that was often lacking in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help! With Magical Mystery Tour's* free form structure and lack of narrative, the questioning of the Beatles' image and role as pop stars carries through both “narrative” and number. For this reason, it made for difficult viewing during a time slot when viewers sought escapist entertainment. Hieronimus reveals that the narrative was created around the musical sequences because the artists had access to the songs before a final script was completed.³⁴⁴ This allowed the artists more time to focus on creating visual spectacles to accompany the Beatles' new sounds. When the script was completed, the artists were running out of time and director George Dunning felt a traditional narrative was also more suitable on a practical level: “a lot of the narrative and a lot of the general sequences ended up with this good old standard background on the bottom, a level perhaps there for two characters, another level for another head, a level for Paul's body” and so on.³⁴⁵ This made it easier for animators to change pieces of the characters' bodies in order to create movement. A traditional narrative also worked to create continuity by bringing the musical sequences together in a coherent and logical fashion.

Yellow Submarine is comprised of a number of experimental animation styles commonly used in 1960s art. What makes *Yellow Submarine* unique however is that it was arguably one of the first commercial projects of the era to use so many different styles within one medium. Not only do the styles and techniques used give insight into the art school experience (briefly mentioned in chapter two), but also, *Yellow Submarine* can be read as allowing an insight into the counterculture – both in themes and in its execution of style. The numbers vary in degrees of complexity and involvement with the narrative. The film's most grand sequence, “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” is saved for the climatic middle. Other sequences use certain experimental animation techniques in order to emphasize contrast, such as “Eleanor Rigby” and “All You Need is Love.” Sequences like “Hey Bulldog” and “Sgt. Pepper” move the narrative along very quickly and use animation styles not unlike the 2D animation of the narrative. “Nowhere Man” provides a brief musical interlude from the narrative as the character of the Beatles' companion, Jeremy Hillary Boob, PhD, is introduced. This sequence takes place primarily with a white background and cel animation. And some sequences use a combination of techniques that might not have necessarily been considered before as displayed in “Only a Northern Song” and “All Together Now” – the latter is a mixture of 2D animation, photographic cut outs, and Op and Pop Art,

³⁴⁴ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 184.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 161.

while the former relies on a combination of graphic art, cut outs, abstract drawing, and live action. In all cases, the numbers match the tempo and subject matter of the lyrics whether literally (“When I’m Sixty Four” and “All You Need is Love”) or in a more conceptualized way (“Only a Northern Song”). The film’s title song functions to move the narrative along while preparing viewers for the kind of odd journey they are about to go on. A little Letra set yellow submarine that carries Fred through the various seas and underwater landscapes to Liverpool moves playfully across each frame. The backgrounds are mainly crude paintings that give the sequence a childlike quality.

“Eleanor Rigby”

With the Beatles’ minimal involvement on *Yellow Submarine*, animators relied on the spirit of the Beatles and their music to dictate the tone of the film. Music was at the core of the producer’s objective to create a product that represented the experience that the Beatles’ performances and music delivered. In order to set the right tone, animators were treated to advance playbacks of the *Sgt. Pepper* album in the spring of 1967. When Coates, Dunning, and Jack Stokes (the animation director) heard *Sgt. Pepper*, the consensus was that the Beatles had taken pop music into a new territory that fit perfectly with the animators’ style of experimentation. As a result, the production team were “determined to combine this music with images” that would make the film “a genuine celebration of the ‘60s youth rebellion.”³⁴⁶ One such example of this confronts viewers once Fred had reached Liverpool. Originally released on 1966’s *Revolver*, “Eleanor Rigby” is not only a haunting elegy to the title character, but also, an elegy to a section of society lost amongst the façade of English middle class prosperity. McCartney’s lyrics, written during a time when “nostalgia perform[ed] a central function” in the Beatles’ songs, address all the “lonely people” that society has passed by.³⁴⁷ Yet these people still keep appearances because that is what society dictates. For instance, Eleanor daydreams at her window, perhaps optimistic after picking up rice from the wedding. Rigby wears “the face that she keeps in a jar by the door” but the narrator asks, “Who is it for?” Father McKenzie mends the socks that no one will see and he writes a sermon that no one will hear. Who needs God when money can provide happiness through material goods? The chorus asks,

³⁴⁶ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 94-95.

³⁴⁷ Womack, Kenneth. “Reconsidering Performative Autobiography: life writing and the Beatles.” *Life Writing*. 2:2. 2005.42.

“Where do these forgotten people belong?” Womack argues that McCartney exposes the problems of the establishment and how mainstream society “has ignored – even deplored [Rigby’s] inability to conform.”³⁴⁸ MacDonald describes the song as having a “monochrome pessimism” which is exactly what the “Eleanor Rigby” sequence captures almost literally using a photographic technique called Kodalith.³⁴⁹

The sequence begins with an establishing shot that McCartney’s lyrics only speculate: a montage of typical industrial and working class structures to represent Liverpool. Charlie Jenkins, who was responsible for special effects on this sequence, took still photographs around Liverpool and converted the images to Kodaliths – “high contrast negative black and white film” transparencies.³⁵⁰ Images that have been transferred to Kodalith will either be pure white or jet black. These images could also be rotoscoped to add detail if necessary. Using the monochrome look of the Kodaliths to capture the rows of terraced houses and the Liver Building, animators poignantly establish the contrast between Liverpool and Pepperland. The image is at first lit with a green filter making the detail in the houses dark and anonymous. As the sun starts to rise, the filters change to dark blue with the red sunlight burning in the background. Once the sun rises, multiplaning is used as the background sinks away and the foreground rises up, framing rows of chimneys in close shot. The chimneys simultaneously blow up smoke to again underline the industrial and conformed nature of this society. By rotoscoping the characters and some of the still images, the aesthetic carries an air of realism within this animated film. The technique also has the ability to emphasize the darkness and grime that lies beneath the surface of the photographs. Imprisonment is one of the main themes that feature throughout the “Eleanor Rigby” sequence, which is dominated by tight shots and full frames that give the impression that there is no end in sight to the rows of bricked buildings. In shot seven (11:31), a high contrast photograph is used to depict a man who tries desperately to get out of a public call box and in shot nine (11:46), the camera cuts to a brick house with ten windows; each window has an identical woman stroking a cat. In shot eleven (12:08), two women sit at a table eating chocolates and stare longingly out of the window, not talking to each other. A young man in a motorcycle helmet cries behind his goggles (12:22). He appears in a close up forcing the viewer to take notice of him. Even Eleanor Rigby is confined beneath the ground, buried only with her name. As the

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 42.

³⁴⁹ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. London: Pimlico, 2005. 204.

³⁵⁰ Vaughan, Keith. “Using Kodalith to create artistic montage derivations.” *PSA Journal*. July 2003. <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1306/is_7_69/ai_105618892/pg_1>. FindArticles.com. 31 July 2007.

businessmen with bowler hats and umbrellas (photograph cut outs of Dunning and Edelmann) are perched high atop the city on rooftops (shot 16, 12:39) it seems for some the only way out is to jump from the top factory window (shot eight, 11:38). Conformity is everywhere: from the desperate housewives with their cats and the bankers on the roof, to the two football teams (shot ten, 11:54 – 12:03) each have cut out faces of the same two men – Geoff Hughes, who voiced Paul’s character in the film, as the blue team and the red team is Tony Cuthbert, a principle animator on both the film and the cartoon series. There is even evidence of the Old Empire to represent McCartney’s fondness for nostalgia: the bulldog draped in the Union Jack (shot three, 10:54), live action footage of soldiers on parade (shot three, 10:54), which is projected on a cinema screen, and a lion statue seen in shot seven (11:31). Most people depicted throughout the sequence are rotoscoped photographs and cut outs of members of the crew, again adding realism to the piece. “Eleanor Rigby” does have brief moments of hope as glimpses of the yellow submarine float through random frames. Also, the young motorcyclist wears a psychedelic colored scarf and helmet, and an intellectual sits in contemplation on the rooftop wearing colorfully painted butterfly wings (shot 17, 12:44). According to Hieronimus, the thinker with butterfly wings and the men with bowler hats are references to the works of Rodin and surrealist René Magritte, respectively.³⁵¹

After Liverpool’s distinctive character is established in the “Eleanor Rigby” sequence, the viewer sees a depressed Ringo walking around the rubble of the city’s back streets. His colorful, psychedelic clothes look out of place amongst the coal-tarnished landscape. Even the mix of styles, dark rotoscoped cityscape and painted animation, gives Ringo a kind of surreal, 3D look (recall how the characters are actually drawn in 2D). The appearance of the yellow submarine that follows Ringo around offers the promise of hope and unity after a little help from friends. The journey from Liverpool to the sea is made by a series of jump cuts through color photographs of English countryside and famous monuments. Once the Beatles reach the sea with Admiral Fred in the submarine, they travel through various seas. On the submarine, the narrative segue ways into another episode of light hearted escape that also helps move the narrative along. Using Op and Pop Art, 2D animation, and photographs “All Together Now” depicts everyone on board working together to control the submarine through the sea. In shot five (22:55), the music is established as diegetic as all on board sing along. This emphasizes the theme of music’s importance

³⁵¹ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 263.

in creating a harmonious community. The colorful Op Art fish, octopi, and other sea creatures are also shown adhering to the utopian values of the underwater community. Similar in function and design is the “When I’m Sixty-Four” number. As the submarine passes through the Sea of Time, the Beatles and Fred both get very old and very young. “When I’m Sixty-Four” begins with the aged Paul singing along to the opening lines in another instance of diegetic music as the other Beatles dance around the submarine. Shot four (27:42) cuts to the sea where there are pillars of clocks and sea creatures keeping time to the music to reinforce the motif of music keeping everything in harmony. Subsequent shots feature timepieces and boots keeping time with the music in order to create a connection between the visual and the aural. Shot thirteen (28:49) cuts to a mini sequence of numbers starting with zero and carrying through onto sixty. Each number has a different drawing or pattern contained inside of it and the sequences uses a number of animation techniques all in the space of one minute, including drawings, sketches, paintings, 2D animation, Op Art, and comic book style lettering. The sequence ends with a silhouetted couple kissing with love and peace through music once again represented.

“Only a Northern Song”

Like the Sea of Time being set up around a number that uses time as a theme, “Only a Northern Song,” with its clever use of instruments that undermine the rules of key and time signatures, is situated around the Sea of Science. For instance, the percussive instruments such as wind chimes, triangle, and xylophone play to a beat in opposition with Starr’s timekeeping on the drum kit. A similar opposition can be heard between the organ and the piano, with the brass section mixing sharp and natural notes, playing in high and low registers, and going between minor and major chords. While Starr keeps time to an even beat, the other instruments play around and off the main beat.³⁵² Considered to be one of the Beatles’ second-rate, throwaway songs, “Only a Northern Song” was written by George Harrison and recorded by the Beatles in February and April 1967.³⁵³ The cynical “Only a Northern Song” includes lyrics such

³⁵² For a more technical explanation of “Only a Northern Song’s” musical dissonance, please refer to Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 127.

³⁵³ Upon hearing “Only a Northern Song” George Martin recalls: “I groaned inside when I heard it...I suggested [Harrison] come up with something a bit better.” *Ibid.*, 111.

as “it doesn’t really matter what chords I play, what words I say, or what time of day it is” and “it doesn’t really matter what clothes I wear, or how I fare, or if my hair is brown.” For Harrison, there was a growing frustration with how the Beatles’ established image had affected the choices the band had to make and how the band had felt pressured to conform to a certain image and sound. This is the argument presented in chapter three with *Magical Mystery Tour* being a product of that frustration. With “Only a Northern Song,” Harrison delivers his commentary on the paradox that affected the Beatles during the mid-1960s – on the one hand, the craft of the music should be celebrated on its own merits. Yet, on the other hand, Harrison makes the point that he can create a song with meaningless lyrics and a lot of improvised, off key and out of tune instrumental squawks and squeals that critics will acclaim as ironic genius and innovative merely because it is a Beatles’ product.

However, within the context of the film, “Only a Northern Song” lends itself to a different interpretation. In its animated visualization, “Only a Northern Song” can be more clearly interpreted as conveying the countercultural mantra of “It’s all in the mind.” The lyrics no longer seem to be a statement about the trials of celebrity, but rather a celebration of diversity and community. It does not matter what sounds or words are produced because it can all be considered music. Those sounds transcend language barriers to bring a universal message of harmony. Evidence for the focus on the Beatles’ song rather than the band’s image is found with the inclusion of an oscillator. Throughout this sequence, the oscillator feature prominently either center framed or in the foreground of a shot. An oscillator is center framed with four boxes surrounding each side of the object in shot two (30:18). At first, each box has a life-like drawing of a Beatle painted in multi-colors. However, the boxes unfold and refold to feature an ear on each box, placing emphasis on the music. Before the shot cuts, the boxes change once more to feature fingers pointing at the oscillator. Shot three (30:47) is a close up of the oscillator, which is reminiscent of Mary Ellen Bute’s 1954 film, *Abstronic*. In that film, the artist focuses on the shapes and designs made by an oscilloscope set to Copeland’s “Hoe Down.” Bute believed that using an oscilloscope would create endless aesthetic possibilities stating, “I venture to predict that the forms and compositions artists can create on the oscilloscope, and organize and preserve on motion picture film, will...give esthetic pleasure to all kinds of men and women.”³⁵⁴ In a 1954 article published in *Films in Review*, Bute continued to extol the benefits of using an oscilloscope, writing,

³⁵⁴ Russett, Robert and Cecile Starr. *Experimental Animation*. 105.

The figures and forms on the oscilloscope can be made to move on the horizontal and vertical planes, toward or away from the spectator...the tempo of their movements can be changed at will...and the illusion of three dimensional space can be aroused.³⁵⁵

This last point about creating a sense of the third dimension is most applicable to the “Only a Northern Song” sequence. As stated previously in the chapter, Heinz Edelmann’s two-dimensional drawings made the transfer to animation difficult because of the contrasting styles. Similarly, this sequence relies on graphic design patterns that, along with the live action oscillator, help to create the optical illusion of 3D and depth.

“Only a Northern Song” utilizes a strong use of straight and uniform lines, boxes animated in 3D, the live action oscillator, and a heavy use of 2D and 3D spheres. Graphic design art is appropriate for this sequence because of the precision and sharpness of the lines and shapes represented in mathematical and scientific calculations that one would expect in such a place as the Sea of Science. Also, music is of course mathematical in regards to time signatures and the value given to each note. Foregrounding Harrison’s composition against a more concrete form of art underlines the complexities of the song’s make-up, timbre, and time signature especially during the seemingly random orchestral improvisations. Despite the use of playing flat and sharp notes against natural ones, as well as the unorthodox use of the higher registers on the woodwind instruments, somehow the song ends up making musical sense to the ear. “Only a Northern Song” sounds very different from the Beatles’ work prior to *Sgt. Pepper*, yet it is still musically valid. This level of experimentation on precise notes parallels the artistic experimentation with styles in the film. To further express the appropriateness of graphic design with “Only a Northern Song,” director George Dunning’s mentor Norman McLaren wrote in 1950 about animated sound on film, noting how animated sound pioneer A.M. Auzaamov relied on “geometric figures such as rectangles, triangles, trapezes, ovals, parabolas, ellipses, etc.” to form the basis of his sound waves.³⁵⁶ Again, the oscillator’s sound waves are juxtaposed throughout this sequence with geometric shapes as well.

At the end of the sequence in shot fifteen (32:06), a relatively new process for the time called Letraset was used to produce hundreds of little cartoon Beatles emerging from the graphic design box in order to easily replicate the numerous cartoon figures without drawing and painting each separately by hand. Letraset was also used

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 105.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 167.

throughout the film to animate the yellow submarine in long shots as it traveled across each frame, most notably during the title sequence. What distinguishes the Letraset pieces from the hand drawings is the glossier cut out look similar to the texture of stickers. Animators used a process not unlike photocopying and were able to stick the pieces down on each cel in order to conserve time. A similar technique, which Paul Wells refers to as Xeroxing, was first used by Disney Studios on 1960's *Goliath II* (Wolfgang Reitherman, USA) and more famously used in *101 Dalmatians*.³⁵⁷ Critics were quick to note that the technique was a "un-Disney style."

"Nowhere Man" is situated between "Only a Northern Song" and the Sea of Holes sequence. What is worth noting about this number is that the four Beatles are cut out as one block with flowers and rainbows trailing them as they move across the screen. At 43:50, the sequence starts to run backwards with the Beatles taking the rainbow and the only bits of color in the sequence with them, leaving Jeremy to cry on his own. On one level this can be read as the Beatles are being portrayed as leaders of the youth culture who bring peace and happiness through their music. On another level, this act of emitting rainbows and flowers can simply be read as music providing pleasure and escape. The motif of music and musical iconography is present once again in the form of record grooves in shot fifteen (42:51). The Beatles and Jeremy rotate around the record grooves as they dance and sing to the song. This effect also gives the frame a sense of 3D.

Another sequence that was constructed out of an animator's graphic design experience is the "Sea of Holes." The Sea of Holes is the last sea before the Sea of Green, which takes the Beatles to Pepperland. The sequence consists of nothing more than a white frame of infinite number of perfectly round and uniformly spaced black circles. Each black hole appears to be two-dimensional but as the camera pans over all the black holes, the illusion of depth is created. This illusion creates a "very clever manipulation of perspective" and looks very similar to a piece of Bridget Riley's Op Art.³⁵⁸ A number of shots feature a frame full of black holes and nothing else. The skill of the cameraman's camera movements is what makes each frame appear vast and never ending. The challenge in creating the Sea of Holes sequence was not so much the animation but the filming. Cameraman Bev Roberts took an entire night to shoot the sequence due to the high volume of camera movements involved.³⁵⁹ When the Beatles and Jeremy Hilary Boob first appear in the Sea of Holes, they slip around on

³⁵⁷ Wells, Paul. *Animation*. 125.

³⁵⁸ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 269.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

the surface, fall through a hole and reappear out of a different hole. Because the animators bend the characters, the hole-filled background seems to have walls and a ceiling. Crash zooms and quick pans add a feeling of disorientation as if the viewer is being flung upside down like the characters on screen. The frame remains, of course, a flat cel with two-dimensional animations. George Martin's score for this sequence features plucked strings and backwards music to enhance the surreal atmosphere.

Again, while none of the animators admits to being influenced by Op Art artists such as Bridget Riley, Neaverson argues that the influence of her work, especially on the *Sea of Holes*, is "obvious."³⁶⁰ The *Sea of Holes* sequence features a similar feel of "disorientating geometric distortion of space and perspective" as Riley's mid-Sixties pieces.³⁶¹ Like Riley's Op Art, the *Sea of Holes* can be enjoyed as a clever piece of graphic design on one level and on another level it lends itself to deeper interpretations. The innovations of *Yellow Submarine* parallel the achievements of Op Art and symbolize a rejection of traditional styles. In this way, Op Art became an art form associated with the youth culture. Similarly, the Beatles' creative endeavors also challenged pop music norms. With the rise of LSD use, the way in which a person approached this art, whether it be the Beatles' music, viewing *Yellow Submarine*, or a piece of Op Art, could be radically altered. Without LSD, Riley's Op Art has the ability to stimulate the eye-brain system. With LSD, the mind is opened in such a way as to "enhance, or even transcend" the personal experiences each individual brings to a piece of Op Art.³⁶² Frances Follin attributes Christopher Booker with the argument that Op Art is comprised of two primary components. The first is Op Art as a technological dream where Op Art's creation symbolizes "power, freedom, silent efficiency, and scientific mastery" over previous acceptable norms. The second is that Op Art is a representation of a libertarian dream in which art is freed from "conventions, inhibitions, and repressions" both within the arts and, crucially, within society.³⁶³ The former is concerned with how art style and form is approached while the latter transcends the medium to have great sociological implications. The Beatles' freedom to experiment with their music and image was just enough to be tolerated and even accepted by a cross generational audience, yet edgy enough to have a strong identification with the counterculture. Like Riley's art work, the key word is "perception" and the Beatles' music and *Yellow Submarine* are constructed in a way

³⁶⁰ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 86.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁶² Follin, Frances. *Embodied Visions: Bridget Riley, Op Art, and the Sixties*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2004. 64.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 65.

that allows for different levels of interpretation by a wide demographic with a variety of experiences.

Not only is Op Art prevalent throughout the film but also so is Warhol-esque Pop Art. The most obvious example is during the Liverpool sequence when Old Fred enters the Beatles' house. There are hundreds of doors lined down a never-ending corridor. Ringo and Fred enter one door and walk through what looks like a museum. On display are large hotdogs, a hamburger, a pear, a piece of cake, and a sausage. Also, in the foreground, center framed is a bottle of "Fizz" soda, which can be read as a reference to the Pop Art claim on such products as Coca-Cola and Campbell's soup. Such products became icons through Andy Warhol's work especially. Ringo and Fred then pass through a room with cut outs of iconic figures: superheroes, General Custer, Marilyn Monroe, Fred Astaire, and John Steed from *The Avengers*. Other Pop Art influences might not be as obvious but can be found throughout *Yellow Submarine*. Examples include the "When I'm Sixty-four" sequence (27:31-29:50) in which Edelman's drawings of a sixty-four number sequence (28:49-29:50) is used to illustrate how long sixty-four seconds actually is. Within the numbers are drawings and patterns based on Op Art, 2D animation, and comic book style lettering. Another example is the illustration of words such as "LOVE" and the lyrics to "All You Need is Love" (1:09:24-1:11:06). One could argue that turning such icons as the Beatles into cartoon could also be considered a form of Pop Art, too. Film critic David Wilson wrote in 1968 for *Film Bulletin* that both the film and the Beatles' myth are ephemeral.³⁶⁴ However, due to the lasting nature of film and art, the Beatles, like Warhol's soup cans, are forever preserved as iconic imagery.³⁶⁵ The illustrating of lyrics in "All You Need is Love," as well as "When I'm Sixty-Four," the "All Together Now" reprise, and positive words such as "Yes" and "OK" during "It's All Too Much" bring attention to the song lyrics in a way that suggests they should be thought of as art too.

"Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds"

³⁶⁴ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 308.

³⁶⁵ A testament to the longevity of the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine* image can be found anywhere Beatles' merchandise is sold today. The official Beatles' store online has a special section devoted solely to *Yellow Submarine* related products. Even the crudely drawn Beatles TV cartoon figures hold a high kitsch value with fans and collectors.

The most complex sequence of *Yellow Submarine* is “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds,” which utilizes a number of different styles and influences within three minutes. Originally the first sequence to be used for test footage, the “Lucy” sequence was what eventually won the Beatles over on the idea of an animated feature film. This sequence captured the innovation and level of experimentation that paralleled the Beatles’ own creative activities. “Lucy” begins with a wide pan across a colorful patched field full of busts in profile. The heads are cross-sectioned to reveal words in a Pop Art style, along with other, more abstract images. Shot seven (46:52) is a close up of the cross section, which features a flashing rainbow. The image wipes to reveal colorful, Pop Art influenced Ginger Rogers rotoscoped in a variety of pastel colors. Like Warhol’s paintings of Marilyn Monroe and Elizabeth Taylor, shot eight (46:53) features three of the same rotoscoped images of Rogers. Against a black background, one of the images is of a yellow Rogers with blue hair, green lips, and a blue bathing costume with red detailing. Another is of Rogers with a pink body, green hair and lips, and a red bathing costume with green detail. The rotoscope technique lacks any great detail but is still painted within the lines. Like a zoetrope effect, another series of multi-colored Gingers, this time with a white background, wipe over the Gingers with the black background. Shot nine (46:57) cuts to a wide shot of many identical women dancing on yellow stars on a blue background. The only detail is in the clearly traced outlines of the stars and the women but there is no variation in color. Shot ten (47:05) gets closer to the style that dominates the chorus of the song. Shot ten features a ballroom scene where the color variation differentiates between clothing and faces rather than outline detail, of which there is very little.

The whole of the “Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds” sequence is centered on footage of old Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire musicals by RKO in the 1930s. Stars such as Ruby Keeler and Eddie Cantor were also rotoscoped for the sequence. Much like the choreographed precision and spectacle of a Busby Berkeley number, Dunning wanted to capture the “internal flow” of those old dance sequences.³⁶⁶ In order to convey that feeling, a “‘painted’ image, which is made with direct free brush strokes” was chosen to contrast from the other two dimensional animation styles.³⁶⁷ Disney Studios had rotoscoped photographs to create the characters of Snow White and Prince Charming in order to give those characters a more realistic look. However, in the “Lucy” sequence, Fred and Ginger are rotoscoped in a more abstract and surreal way.

³⁶⁶ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 167.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 166.

The direct, free brush strokes allowed for a liberal application of bright, contrasting colors. Arguably, the effect is similar to the dream-like quality associated with the use of soft focus. The effect becomes all the stronger when juxtaposed with the nostalgic imagery of the musical footage.

As explored in chapter three, nostalgia for past cultural experiences was a theme commonly found in psychedelic art, music, and style of dress embraced by the counterculture. Just by looking at *Yellow Submarine* and *Magical Mystery Tour* in a casual way can one see the reoccurrence of certain motifs, one of which being the choreographed musical number presented in the “Lucy” sequence and the “Your Mother Should Know” sequence from *Magical Mystery Tour*. Because the “Lucy” footage was at first test footage, it is possible that the latter sequence was somehow influenced by the animators’ work. For the most part though no sources suggest that the two projects were in any way connected; both films were made independently of each other. The use of such sequences cannot be considered merely coincidence, especially when both sequences are strategically placed within each film. “Lucy” is clearly meant to stand out from the rest of the film because of its elaborate use of rotoscoping and because it is at the film’s climax. “Your Mother Should Know” occurs as the grand finale of the film and it emulates the sweeping, lush style of a Busby Berkeley number. While both pieces are a pastiche of the 1930s musical, both animators and the Beatles add their own interpretation to the style. For example, as the Beatles walk down the staircase and towards the camera in “Your Mother Should Know,” they walk in a slow, exaggerated manner, snapping their fingers with wide smiles, and their backs straight and stiff. A knowingness about the precision is understood and slightly spoofed but not to the point of satire. Similarly, there is a slow motion quality to the shots of “Lucy” dancing during the chorus causing a dream-like suspension of reality that parallels the suspension of the narrative in 1930s musicals. Such musical sequences broke from the narrative to deliver a choreographed spectacle of color and talent. At the end of the “Your Mother Should Know” sequence, the dance routine breaks out of the fictional world as the camera zooms out to reveal the film set. The celebration and dancing continues in “reality” with the whole cast and crew joining in. Neither of these sequences reject the traditional style, rather both embrace it but give each piece the distinctive mark of the counterculture; something to make the piece their own. Other nostalgic elements embraced by the counterculture and found in *Yellow Submarine* include the Edwardian style of dress worn by Admiral Fred, Sgt. Pepper’s band, the Apple Bonkers, and the Lord Mayor of Pepperland. Many of the

men of Pepperland and the busts of the Headlands in the “Lucy” sequence have the short haircuts, long sideburns, and the well trimmed but full mustaches with the long, almost curling ends associated with that time period. The Victorian period is also represented in the evil flying glove. Edelman “used the glove as a symbol of its obvious Victorian predecessor, the pointing figure of authority.”³⁶⁸ A similar pointing figure was a common staple of Terry Gilliam’s animation in *Monty Python’s Flying Circus*, a name that also conjures turn of the century, Edwardian imagery but, again, with that surreal twist of countercultural thought.

These elements of nostalgia are linked with the psychedelic art forms found in *Yellow Submarine* to link with the film’s harmless countercultural message. In reaching out to a large demographic of primarily mainstream viewers, animators would not have wanted to taint the Beatles’ image or promote anything that would harm the Beatles’ loyal following. The film promotes the values of the counterculture: peace, love, happiness, and working together as a community in a nonviolent way in order to achieve a utopian society. However, the film does this without any references to drugs, sexuality, or protest. With such a sanitized version of the counterculture, the biggest risk would have been a backlash by the youth culture. When one faction became too popular and mainstream, members of the counterculture would reject that faction’s trends and start new factions. Neaverson notes the film’s more overt psychedelic aesthetics and argues that one of the “most pronounced styles to be absorbed into the film’s animation is that of British and American psychedelic poster art.”³⁶⁹ Many of these elements of psychedelic poster art have already been described in this chapter as parts of other art styles: the bright primary colors found in Pepperland, the Beatles’ clothing, the “Lucy” sequence, and the vibrant yellow of the submarine; the surreal imagery of the Sea of Holes, the various monsters, and objects found throughout the Beatles’ house in Liverpool; that such imagery can be enhanced by hallucinogenic drug use; the typography of sequences such as “When I’m Sixty-four” and “All You Need is Love,” and, finally, “psychedelic art’s nostalgic celebration of all things Edwardian.”³⁷⁰ Again, all of these elements create an experimental film associated with countercultural themes.

The film ends with the Blue Meanies being defeated peacefully through the happiness and sense of community brought to Pepperland by the Beatles’ music. This is one example where live performance codes were not used in a Beatles’ film yet still

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 237.

³⁶⁹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 84.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 85.

achieved and promoted community and audience participation – a balance that the Beatles struggled to achieve in *Help!*, *Magical Mystery Tour*, and their promotional films. There are a number of little flourishes and accents throughout the film that help to achieve a communal experience: words are printed on screen, the audience is directly addressed by captions during “When I’m Sixty-Four,” and there are brief moments throughout the film where a character speaks to the camera. One example is just after the “Eleanor Rigby” number when Ringo walks along the streets feeling alone and delivers a “woe is me” monologue addressed to the camera (13:00). But it is on Hope Street that the yellow submarine finds Ringo. Another example is the Beatles’ live cameo at the end of the film when the band directly address the audience and ask for their help in defeating any “Blue Meanies” they might know of by peacefully singing “All Together Now.” It is suggested that harmony can be achieved and by uniting in song, personal differences can be overlooked. To further stress this idea, the words “all together now” are superimposed on the screen in different languages.

The Beatles’ live action cameo is the result of a number of factors. As discussed earlier, the Beatles were not enthusiastic about the idea of an animated feature film and while the film was in the pre-production phase, the band was resolved to have minimal participation. Instead, the Beatles focused on their own projects, the *Sgt. Pepper’s* album and their self-directed short film *Magical Mystery Tour*. Once the Beatles realized how creative *Yellow Submarine* was with its innovative experimental animation techniques, reception towards the film began to warm. In addition, a real Beatles’ appearance, no matter how brief, gave the film more credibility as an authorized and official Beatles’ project. For these reasons, the Beatles agreed to spend one day on set at the animation studios where footage was shot for the end cameo and for the film’s theatrical trailer. Interestingly, the three-minute, theatrical trailer used to promote the release of *Yellow Submarine*, contains footage of the Beatles that would lead the viewer to believe the band not only provided the voices for their animated counterparts, but also, that the Beatles had full and active involvement with the production of the film. The footage of scenes from *Yellow Submarine* is edited together with footage of the Beatles onset behind cameras, using light meters and tape measures. By the time the trailer would have been seen by the general public, most would have been aware of the fact that the Beatles had created *Magical Mystery Tour* on their own. With the backing of United Artists and the knowledge that *Yellow Submarine* had an independent production team, there was a sense of higher standards associated with the project. The opinions on the Beatles’ live action appearance in the

film are mixed – some, like *Yellow Submarine* screenplay writer Erich Segal, felt the live action sequence overshadowed the work of the animators while others, like Beatles scholar Mark Lewisohn, feel that the Beatles look at ease with a classic, timeless look.³⁷¹ Even though the footage would have helped lure in the crowds of fans anxious to see an appearance by the Beatles, the sequence can be read as having a significant contribution to the overall theme of the film. When juxtaposed with the live action sequence, the animated Pepperland represents a colorful dream world of harmony and happiness, of communities living together, a world not yet fully realized by the real world. The use of live action makes a connection between the imagined and the real as the Beatles reference the fictional villains of the film. In addition, the Beatles encourage the audience to sing a refrain of their song “All Together Now” as a way of keeping evil at bay.

Conclusion

Upon its theatrical release in July 1968, *Yellow Submarine* proved to be popular with audiences and critics. However, *Yellow Submarine* suffered due to the Rank Organization’s limited distribution of the film in its British cinemas. The reasons for this are unclear and I can only offer speculation that perhaps a mixture of the poor response to *Magical Mystery Tour*, less traditional album releases, and being skeptical about the concept of a psychedelic cartoon film for the whole family could all be possible factors for Rank officials to decide to order a low number of prints. Official MGM figures show that the film earned over \$8 million worldwide.³⁷² Alexander Walker said in 1968 that it was,

the key film of The Beatles era...Its inventiveness never flags. It’s a trip through the contemporary mythology that the quartet from Merseyside has helped to create. It’s a pop voyage - mododyssey is the word I suppose – that sails under the psychedelic colours of Carnaby Street to the turned-on music of Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band. It combines sensory stimulation with the art of the now in a way that will appeal to teenage ravers and Tate Gallery-goers alike.³⁷³

³⁷¹ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 52.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 303.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 300.

Similarly, in the US, critic Judith Crist writing for *New York Magazine* commented: “It is sheer delight in its concept and in its execution. The animation is superb...op, pop, and psychedelic!”³⁷⁴ What is more interesting than these praises for the film’s overall visual experience is an observation made by a *Time* magazine art critic. Of Heinz Edelmann’s art direction, the critic noted how Edelmann avoided recreating life like representations of the Beatles’ and instead he “chose to seize attitudes rather than to simulate motion.”³⁷⁵ I believe this comment acknowledges the important factor that allowed the artistry of the Beatles’ music to come through in the musical sequences. Care is not given to replicating the experience of a Beatles’ performance or in accurately reproducing the band’s distinctive image. Without having to deal with the logistics of filming the music sequences in live action, the animators were able to bring the idea behind the Beatles’ music to life. Their willingness to experiment and push the boundaries of mainstream art and entertainment was very similar to how the Beatles worked as musicians.

Arguably, the success of the Beatles’ was their ability to create projects that lent themselves to various levels of interpretation. When the balance was off, instances of criticism can be found in the popular press reviews and negative comments made by audiences outside of the Beatles’ core fan base. Such remarks surrounded *Magical Mystery Tour* and can be found in chapter three. However, *Yellow Submarine* is a film that does successfully cater to a wide audience that can consist of young fans, mainstream parents, countercultural art enthusiasts, and members of the drug culture. This was perhaps achieved by keeping the film’s overall message simple: goodness and love will always conquer evil and hate. The film proves that goodness can win with a nonviolent approach. Yet, for those attuned to countercultural beliefs and iconography, *Yellow Submarine* can be read as “an underground parable of how the psychedelic Beatles...overcome the forces of state power to establish a new regime of karmic awareness and universal goodwill.”³⁷⁶ Chapter three argued that the Beatles saw themselves as the bridge between mainstream society and the counterculture in an attempt to promote the idea of creating a harmonious utopia. Recall how McCartney admitted to LSD use in an interview with *Life* magazine, the televised “Happening” at Alexandra Palace that members of the Beatles had been seen at, Harrison’s devotion to Eastern philosophy and religion, and McCartney and Lennon’s interests in and promotion of avant-garde art. *Yellow Submarine* subtly references these beliefs in a

³⁷⁴Ibid., 305.

³⁷⁵Ibid., 304.

³⁷⁶ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 88.

way that is not obvious to children and “innocent” adult viewers. For example, when George is introduced, he is meditating but there is no explanation of this or even dialogue that suggests his standing on a mountain is anyway religious. Also, the line “It’s all in the mind” is said at least twice, while “Nothing is Real” was an unofficial tagline for the film. Both slogans were used by the counterculture in relation to being under the influence of hallucinatory drugs. They were statements to ponder during a drug trip or while having “deep” philosophical conversations with other “enlightened” people. However, such phrases can encourage a more innocent interpretation of the fantastical characters and situations in the film. For children, the mind can be a place where imagination runs wild. The land of make believe does not have to make sense and the animators attempted to bring such inventive creations to life. As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, even the songs are open to different interpretations when placed within the context of the film. McCartney’s “All Together Now” is full of “risqué references to promiscuity” but in *Yellow Submarine*, the song becomes a sing-a-long for unity over evil.³⁷⁷ Neaverson does highlight the ways in which *Yellow Submarine* can be read on different levels by different types of audience members in his chapter on the film in *The Beatles Movies*. Jack Stokes, the director of animation on the film, recalled: “the first script...was full of ‘look at the psychedelic colors’ and all this crap. It was ‘60s stuff. We didn’t particularly want to do that.”³⁷⁸ Yet, the psychedelic style comes through so strongly due to animating sequences of the Beatles’ music as well as having an eclectic set of artists in an atmosphere that encouraged experimentation and avant-garde thinking. In addition, research shows that Edelman’s avant-garde drawing style was a “sophisticated forerunner of psychedelic art” due to his particular “use of color and line” style.³⁷⁹ Edelman’s drawings and work for the avant-garde magazine *Twen* that predate *Yellow Submarine*’s production dates are proof of this. However, artists such as Peter Max, Tom Daly, and Milton Glaser arguably gained greater mainstream exposure due to their location in the US and for their artwork with musicians such as Bob Dylan. The similarity in styles has often placed undue credit on Peter Max for an involvement with *Yellow Submarine* when he was never associated with the project to begin with. Thematically, Edelman could not help but see a parallel between *Yellow Submarine*’s message and the fact that the 1960’s society they were all apart of was “changing with new values and a new vision of the world in

³⁷⁷ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 89.

³⁷⁸ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 119.

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

which the Beatles played an important part.”³⁸⁰ Therefore, arguably, the audience, by bringing their own interpretations to the film, made *Yellow Submarine* “a head film,” “a psychedelic film,” or “a children’s film.” As Aldred argues, psychedelia is not a style of art but rather a mindset, which is expressed through certain characteristics that have become associated with the term “psychedelia.”³⁸¹ This layering of meaning and the combination of art styles and idealistic theme is *Yellow Submarine*’s success, especially over a project that was too representative of one particular subgenre like *Magical Mystery Tour*.

Most of the animators working on *Yellow Submarine*, especially the principle crew, tended to be a few years older than the Beatles. The younger, art school students that worked on the project only dealt with secondary unit work such as tracing and painting. Many of the crew members were not interested in or did not have time for the hippy lifestyle and apart from after work drinks at the local pub, hard drugs were not consumed. Much of the work was too detailed and complex to undertake while on drugs. Both Dunning and Edelman were perfectionists who worked long hours and did not hesitate to make animators redo any substandard work. Therefore, the inspiration for *Yellow Submarine* primarily came from the Beatles’ music and the spirit of their myth. As the Beatles remained elusive for the duration of the project, a strong mythology became the blue print for the Beatles’ characterization in the film. John Clive, who provided the voice of John Lennon, stated, “(The Beatles’ legend) was the prime motive for all of us on the whole project.”³⁸² Antal Kovacs, the Czech born assistant dubbing editor adds that the *Sgt. Pepper* album cover was a direct influence on the look of *Yellow Submarine*.³⁸³ All involved recognized the new direction that the Beatles were heading towards with the Pop Art/turn of the century pastiche. Unlike the cartoon series, the established reputation of the animators and the Beatles gave the animators the opportunity to approach the project with unorthodox ideas – something the animators did not have the time or freedom to do on the cartoon series. The cartoons were simply a cheaply made product that earned the Beatles extra money from merchandise and promotion.

Worried that the film would lower the respect they had from the intelligent and “hip” circles they were part of, the Beatles were reluctant to endorse *Yellow Submarine*. McCartney especially was worried that the film “would put their image

³⁸⁰ Ibid., 121.

³⁸¹ Aldred, Nannette. “‘The Summer of Love’ in *Performance* and *Sgt. Pepper*.” 101.

³⁸² Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 45.

³⁸³ Ibid., 45.

back at least three years” after the Beatles took numerous steps to distance themselves from the Beatlemania iconography.³⁸⁴ However, *Beatlefan Magazine* columnist Walter J. Podrazik argues that the cartoon images of the Beatles could help preserve their legend:

At this point The Beatles are more legend than the sum of their remaining real life members. And cartoon images stop time...(In the remastered *A Hard Day's Night*...and Shea Stadium films...Paul, John, George, and Ringo (appear) as much younger representations of boys would become respected statesmen of rock. There's no such problem with the animated Beatles. They look exactly the way they did in 1968 because they are already caricatures...This may well turn out to be the best possible way to catapult the group into the 21st century with new generations of fans.³⁸⁵

Podrazik makes an interesting point that exposes poor decision-making on the Beatles' part. Yes, the film is essentially a cartoon that would have attracted a young audience, especially with the continued success of the Beatles' cartoon show at the time. However, being such fans of the avant-garde, the Beatles would have been aware of the groundbreaking animation coming out of Eastern Europe. Had the Beatles had the foresight, they would have realized the potential their influence and control could have had over the film. Instead, the Beatles became pretentious having decided that they were “serious musicians” who were too grown up for kid's cartoons. Not only has *Yellow Submarine* introduced young children to the Beatles forty years after the film's release, as Podrazik predicted, but there continues to be an abundance of *Yellow Submarine* merchandise available to fans and collectors alike. The Beatles' hesitation can be understood though. Recall from chapter three that *Magical Mystery Tour* was a pet project of McCartney's since April 1967 and perhaps he was afraid the project would be jeopardized by *Yellow Submarine*'s similarities. Those fears became more substantial when one also recalls that McCartney believed *Magical Mystery Tour* to be the project that would reunite the band.

Still, animators were motivated to make the best homage to the Beatles that they could because of the animators' respect towards the band as fellow artists. Similar to the cartoon series, the animators were given a brief on the Beatles' characterization. Unlike the cartoon series, the brief was not made up of bullet points of stereotypical characteristics of each Beatle's persona. Instead, Edelmann provided detailed drawings on how *exactly* each Beatle should look. Edelmann drew precise examples of how Ringo's eyes should look in close up and in long shots, the proportion of his hair to his

³⁸⁴Ibid., 38.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 38.

face, how John's hair had to be shaggy, never round, how to draw George's high cheek bones, and Edelmann even drew a model sheet of Paul's mouth movements for the letters "o" and "u."³⁸⁶ Unfortunately, Hieronimus does not provide any insight into why or how Edelmann drew the Beatles like he did. Hieronimus only relays the story about how a member of the production team was familiar with Edelmann's work and approached him to submit drawings. Edelmann sent an envelope of drawings and everyone was impressed with the uniqueness of his style. There is no explanation about Edelmann's influences or the particulars of his style.

Ringo is the first Beatle to appear in *Yellow Submarine* and his introduction comes thirteen minutes into the film. Like *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!*, and *The Beatles* cartoon series, the Ringo of *Yellow Submarine* is portrayed as the wistful, down on his luck character. The Beatle walks around the derelict streets of Liverpool with a sullen look, lamenting that nothing ever happens to him and that he would jump into the Mersey but it looked as if it might rain. When Admiral Fred finds Ringo, there are a couple of references to *Help!* including Fred quoting lyrics from "Help!" and the Beatles dingy house has an interior with numerous doors housing a museum, laboratory, a theatre, and a large meditation room complete with clouds and cows. Ringo and Fred gather each Beatle one by ones, stopping first at the laboratory where Frankenstein's monster lays on a medical table. The monster gets up and in a medium close shot, the monster transforms into John. This juxtaposition, while humorous on the surface, hints at Lennon's enigmatic, darker side. Of his Beatlemania image, Lennon was quoted saying around this time:

The trouble is, I suppose, I've spoiled my image. People want me to stay in their own bag. They want me to be loveable. But I was never that. Even at school I was just "Lennon." Nobody ever thought of me as cuddly.³⁸⁷

What is also interesting about *Yellow Submarine* is that John does not stand out as the leader – a role that his Beatlemania image firmly established him as. In fact, apart from each brief introductory scene, *Yellow Submarine* is very much an ensemble piece with equal amounts of screen time and dialogue. In reality though, this was a time when the band began to slowly fragment and to explore their individuality. Yet in *Yellow Submarine*, they remain perfectly unified. George is next to be revealed to the audience and he is in a vast room with live action yellow clouds taken from the "Flying" sequence in *Magical Mystery Tour*. There are also cows and George teleports to the top

³⁸⁶ Ibid., 71-75.

³⁸⁷ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 95.

of a mountain where he meditates. This scene of course references the importance of spirituality to Harrison's life at this time. With the three Beatles and Fred outside in the hallway, a door opens and much applause and cheering can be heard as Paul walks out adjusting his tie with a bouquet of flowers under his arm. This portrayal of McCartney is insightful as research in chapters three and five argue that McCartney emerged as the "reluctant" leader of the group and tried desperately to keep the Beatles together at all costs. Of his character, McCartney commented, "It's being the straight guy in the group...I think my cartoon character is a bit bland...You become the young executive, sing ballads; you get typecast..."³⁸⁸

One thing of note that previous Beatles scholars have missed is that in the Liverpool of *Yellow Submarine*, the Beatles are individuals with their own, very different spaces. Each Beatle in the beginning is found on his own, engaged in a solitary activity. However, on the journey the Beatles are together the entire time and they band together to defeat the Blue Meanies. In this way, the film stresses the importance of community and teamwork to reach a common goal of establishing a utopia. In the end, even the villains become friends with the citizens of Pepperland as differences are put aside. Also, the film subtly picks up on the idea of the Beatles' alter egos created for the *Sgt. Pepper* album. At one point, the Lord Mayor of Pepperland, upon seeing the Beatles, exclaims that the Beatles look just like the "originals," referring to Sgt. Pepper and his band. When the Beatles arrive in Pepperland, they disguise themselves in Sgt. Pepper's extra uniforms and instruments to act as decoys in order to defeat the villains. Why do the Beatles need the disguise? One can only speculate that it is due to the mythical nature of Sgt. Pepper's legend. The Blue Meanies had first imprisoned Sgt. Pepper and his band in a sound proof bubble – there music being powerful enough to keep love and happiness flourishing in Pepperland. The disguises are also yet another instance in a Beatles' film of the band changing their image and questioning their identity. Under the disguises, their own myth is concealed, even denied to the viewer.

In animation, the character voices are recorded first and then animators draw to the soundtrack. Because of this, voice actors were used to voice the Beatles due to the band's lack of involvement during that stage of production. Unlike the Americanized accents of the Beatles in the cartoon series, the film employed native Liverpudlians Geoffrey Hughes and Peter Batten to voice Paul and George, respectively. English actors Paul Angelis and John Clive voiced Ringo and John, respectively. On the one

³⁸⁸ Hieronimus, Dr. Robert R. *Inside the Yellow Submarine*. 53.

hand, some of the voice actors claimed that the voices were not meant to be undistinguishable imitations of the Beatles' distinctive Liverpudlian accents. As Paul Angelis explains,

We didn't try to imitate them...I think we could have got it almost to perfection if we'd really wanted to work at it. But that would have been wrong, because then it would have been just an imitation and not an actual creation.³⁸⁹

Angelis continues by stating that they approached the job as actors playing the part of the Beatles. When this statement is taken into consideration with other events involving the voice actors, what emerges are the makings of a cover-up to pass off the voice actors' work as the Beatles themselves. Angelis's statement appears to be a way of fending off criticism that questioned the authenticity of the voices. In addition, while the voice actors are given on screen credit during the title sequence, their names appear in a small font in the bottom corner of the screen. Also, the voice actors were not invited to the London premiere of *Yellow Submarine*, while the Beatles were in attendance. Moreover, Geoffrey Hughes relates the story of why he was hired to voice Paul: it was because he explained (unknowingly) to Dunning in the office reception the differences between George and Ringo's accents from Paul and John's. Hughes also explained how Paul and John's posher accents had a tendency to raise the inflection of certain words.³⁹⁰ In this way, Hughes demonstrated a precise knowledge of how his character's voice was supposed to be imitated and kept that thought in mind when recording Paul's dialogue. A further example is how United Artists told *The Daily Mail* that if the newspaper "printed the story of it not being the Beatles in the film, United Artists would withdraw all their advertising from *The Daily Mail* in perpetuity... They didn't want the public to know it's not The Beatles."³⁹¹ The Beatles live action cameo at the end of the film along with a very deceptive trailer for *Yellow Submarine* helped to maintain the façade of the Beatles' involvement. As the Beatles saw themselves as the bridge between their mainstream audience and the enlightening benefits of the counterculture, it seems appropriate that the Beatles would appear after the film to endorse the virtues of an alternative society. The harsh realities of a society embroiled in war and racial turmoil is accentuated by the lack of color with the Beatles' scene instead shot against a black background and the band wearing dark clothing – a departure from their psychedelic wardrobe featured in the film and in the Beatles'

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 112.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 112.

³⁹¹ Ibid., 114.

public appearances since early 1967. By the time *Yellow Submarine* was released in 1968, the Summer of Love had long since ended but the film does try to provide optimism for the future. However, in only a matter of months, such optimism could not be felt for the future of the Beatles as *Let it Be* would reveal.

Chapter Five: *Let it Be*

“So they were standing on the rooftop, playing to an audience of television antennae and clouds. The human audience on the street – consisting, as ever, of fans and detractors, the curious and the concerned, those who felt blessed by their presence and others irritated by their audacity – looked skyward to discern the source of the wind-muffled sound, the stymied shouts of rock and roll. And saw nothing but sky.”³⁹²

“Lindsay-Hogg shoots in such a way that you get pushed farther and farther away from the simple reality of the music going down. For most of the film, cameras are in tight close-ups or (at best) medium close-ups...a technique which painfully misses the point that music is a *collective* activity in which musicians work together...”³⁹³

Michael Goodwin, *Rolling Stone* 1970.

The point that Goodwin missed from his viewing of 1970's *Let it Be* was that director Michael Lindsay-Hogg used a documentary style that captured the fracturing of the Beatles as a collective. The extreme close ups and lack of group shots visually reinforce the individuality and creative tensions that had arose as early as 1967 when the Beatles' writing and recording styles began to stray from the songwriting partnership of Lennon and McCartney. Each member's personal interests and influences began to establish themselves in their output, while the entrenched creative differences meant band members recorded their material on their own, as a partial band, or with an outside musician. *Let it Be* is also a problematic examination of the relationship between the Beatles and their audience. This is reflected in Lindsay-Hogg's use of documentary techniques, as well as the band's lack of engagement and address with the camera and their choice to stage their final concert performance on the rooftop of Apple Corps at Savile Row. The Beatles had always grappled with their relationship with the fans and by physically distancing themselves from their audience, completely undermining the codes of live performance, the audience (both the viewing

³⁹² McKinney, Devin. *Magic Circles: The Beatles in Dream and History*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003. 334.

³⁹³ Harry, Bill. "Let it Be." *Beatlemania: The History of the Beatles on Film*. Vol. 4. London: Virgin Books, 1984. 49.

audience and the onscreen audience) can no longer feel part of a community, nor any sense of ownership. The Beatles' career had also been a time of attaining autonomy within the music industry by undermining the traditional image, recording process, and promotional methods accepted by previous pop artists. The foundation for this first began with Lennon and McCartney's original compositions dominating the Beatles' early output. As the band's success increased, so too did their control over their own career. Because each member had begun to develop different opinions over musical direction, the Beatles' became fractured by their emerging individualities. Lennon favored avant-garde influenced sonic experimentation. Harrison developed as a songwriter influenced by Eastern philosophy, as well as blues and acoustic folk. McCartney focused on strong pop songs with nostalgic themes. Also, by the time of *Let it Be*, the Beatles had manipulated the role of their audience to the extent of exclusion, as this chapter's analysis will show. Within the band, McCartney had been trying to keep the group together by reverting to projects like the *Magical Mystery Tour* film and as *Let it Be* shows, McCartney was interested in touring again with the belief that it would save the Beatles from disbandment. However, Lennon and Harrison stressed strong opinions to the contrary. Neither of them wanted to tour again and both wanted to break away from the Beatles myth – that idea of the Beatles as the mop top legends of pop music. Although it did not really involve the Beatles, *Yellow Submarine* presents the group as characters developed around generic Beatlemania ideology, meaning people could bring their own ideas of what the Beatles were and meant to them to their interpretation of the characters. This reinforced the idea of the Beatles myth. Lennon and Harrison felt creatively restricted by the Beatles myth and the frustrations of trying to create music within the “perfect” world of Beatlemania come across most strongly in *Let it Be*.

In order to understand why *Let it Be* was made and what the idea behind the film's “get back” theme was, it is first necessary to briefly discuss *The Beatles* (AKA “The White Album”). While the Beatles had previously developed as musicians within a collective working environment, 1968's *The Beatles* is the result of the departure from the active involvement of crafting individual songs that all had previously participated in. This new way of approaching the writing and recording process liberated the Beatles from the restrictive nature of traditional member roles. Most importantly, the new approach allowed each member to develop a strong sense of individuality and personal style. However, in developing their individual styles on *The Beatles*, each member began to formulate the characteristics that would define their

work as solo artists. The vast rifts that were created during the recording sessions for *The Beatles* hindered progress throughout the “Get Back” and *Let it Be* sessions.

The Beatles utilized new approaches to creating art in an attempt to liberate the band from the Beatles myth. Where *Magical Mystery Tour* was a commentary on the perception of the Beatles’ image and performance style, *The Beatles* clearly rejects previous Beatlemania iconography. Primarily, Aldred argues “personal liberation would include freeing oneself from the shackles of a system that involved exploitative social relations.”³⁹⁴ This is the type of system that the Beatles had been created for – satisfying a highly consumer driven audience and tailoring their sound and image to a specific audience in order to maximize profits. It was also a system that restricted each Beatle from developing artistically. With *Sgt. Pepper* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, the Beatles began to closely supervise production and engineer duties and in many instances, each Beatle took over those duties with *The Beatles*. Signs of the Beatles attempting to liberate themselves from their myth is evident as Harrison, for example, started to write more songs with a solo album in mind and Lennon began to find more of an equal artistic partner in Yoko Ono than with McCartney. Even the cover’s almost anonymous, plain white cover can be read to symbolize rebirth or a fresh start in how pop and rock music is approached. Also, because of what “The Beatles” signified there were limitations on what could be tried musically or what could be done in a performance setting and still be accepted by the band’s lucrative mainstream audience. For instance, while Lennon and Ono’s sound collages and primal scream therapies on *Two Virgins* (1968) and *The Wedding Album* (1969) found a niche among avant-garde circles, and truly devoted Lennon fans, the mainstream Beatles’ fan was only allowed a sample of Lennon’s new found interests on *The Beatles* track entitled, “Revolution 9.” Arguably, this is a track that most would skip over after hearing it once, if the casual listener even made it through the entire eight minutes, while some would have preferred it if the track were omitted. However, the sound collage was intended “to disperse the stale, institutionalized consciousness” of the mainstream listener.³⁹⁵ That kind of anti-institutionalized sentiment became the basis for *Let it Be* and the balance between being true to artistic integrity and satisfying the mainstream audience led to the problems displayed in *Let it Be*. While the Beatles had stopped using LSD, discarded their psychedelic patterned kaftans, and admitted that the Maharishi

³⁹⁴ Aldred, Nannette. “‘The Summer of Love’ in *Performance* and *Sgt. Pepper*.” *Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis, and Counterculture in the 1960s*. Eds. Christoph Grunenberg and Jonathan Harris. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005. 116.

³⁹⁵ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. London: Pimlico, 2005. 287.

provided no spiritual enlightenment or liberation for them, the beliefs and principles of the counterculture were still present in the Beatles' work and image.

Let it Be was filmed in January 1969 and released theatrically in May 1970 by United Artists. Musically, the Beatles had been a fractured unit that had released a self-titled album in 1968 that featured a high level of musicianship and elaborate studio technology. The "Get Back" sessions, as the film shoot was originally called, was an opportunity for the Beatles to return to a working arrangement that required the band to create new music as a collective unit. The music would reflect a new, back to basics approach reminiscent of the band's early career. Under the direction of Michael Lindsay-Hogg, *Let it Be*, the film, utilized a similar approach by using a minimalist, observational documentary style to capture a realistic portrayal of the Beatles at work. The impetus for filming the Beatles was to watch them rehearse for a one-time, live concert performance. Originally, that performance was planned to be the subject of a televised special with some of the rehearsal footage used to introduce the main event. However, as soon as filming began, all involved began to realize how difficult it was getting the Beatles to agree on a venue for the concert.³⁹⁶ In addition, creative differences and opinions had begun to fracture the already fragile dynamics of the collective unit, as "the White Album" sessions proved. While television started to emerge as the forum for documentaries, Beatle manager Allen Klein advised the group that they would make more money releasing *Let it Be* as a feature film versus a televised special.³⁹⁷ That advice would have been appealing to the Beatles since their company Apple Corps was hemorrhaging money and each member must have realized that the Beatles was coming to an end.

While Lindsay-Hogg's film took newspaper critics by surprise, documentaries on musicians and musical events had become popular from 1967 to 1970. In addition to *Let it Be*, the musical documentary came to the forefront with Bob Dylan's performance at the Royal Albert Hall in D.A. Pennebaker's *Don't Look Back* (1967), The Rolling Stones in the studio for Jean-Luc Godard's *One Plus One* (1969), and in 1968, CBS televised Elvis Presley's live "comeback" special. Furthermore, at the end of the 1960s, there was a demand for the nostalgic communal experiences that captured the innocence and free spirited nature that the counterculture advocated as the market was saturated with festival documentaries such as the Monterey Pop Festival

³⁹⁶ The "far-out" suggestions for performance locations included: on an ocean liner, an old flour mill on the Thames, and a Roman amphitheatre in North Africa with an audience of Arabs. See: Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles' Movies*. 102.

³⁹⁷ Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. 236.

(Pennebaker, 1968), *Festival* (Murray Lerner, 1967), *Woodstock* (Michael Wadleigh, 1970), *Listening To You: The Who at the Isle of Wight Festival* (Murray Lerner, 1970) and *Gimme Shelter* (David and Albert Maysles, 1970). Before analyzing *Let it Be*, it is first necessary to understand why direct cinema became popular in the 1960s and why music was such a fitting subject.

Chapter three's analysis of *Magical Mystery Tour* showed that there was a high level of experimentation happening throughout various artistic mediums. In many cases, artists experimented with combining different artistic disciplines together. *Magical Mystery Tour*, for example was created out of the synergy between music and avant-garde inspired approaches to filmmaking. Similarly, the 1960s saw a rise in filmmakers experimenting with film form. Barsam identifies a number of technological advances that made documentary film more accessible to experimental artists in the 1960s. These advances include lightweight, mobile equipment, documentary film production and distribution becoming more independent, and television started to become a forum for exhibiting documentary projects.³⁹⁸ Musicians and large scale musical events were perfect subjects because, like the filmmakers, musicians were experimenting with and manipulating the traditional conventions of their art form, the youth culture were still valuable consumers to the entertainment industry, there were no shortages of subjects or "Happenings" to film, no scripts or rehearsals were required, and direct cinema proved to be cost effective for filmmakers as they did not have to hire actors or sets – they only had to show up and start filming. While Barsam argues that 1960's filmmakers had "material rather than social" values, the musical documentaries do allow for an analysis into the youth culture by providing insight into how musicians captivated and influenced audiences in the way that they did.³⁹⁹ These films also preserve the spectacle of unique performances and capture the essence of the brief countercultural movement.

Michael Lindsay-Hogg had a captivating subject with the Beatles and it was easy for him to aim the cameras at the band to let the performances speak for themselves. Observational documentary allowed the Beatles to create music without interference and the rejection of traditional conventions suited the Beatles' anti-establishment sensibilities. Also, as mentioned earlier, Lindsay-Hogg's use of documentary techniques parallel the Beatles' desire to create organic, back to basics music. Arguably, the objective of capturing the Beatles as realistically as possible met

³⁹⁸ Barsam, Richard M. "The Nonfiction Film." *The Sixties*. Ed. Paul Monaco. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001. 198.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 198.

John Lennon's agenda of breaking the Beatles' myth which would allow each member the opportunity to finally leave "The Beatles" behind and shift the focus towards solo pursuits. At the time, Lennon felt that *Let it Be* would portray the Beatles with "no glossy paint over the cover and no sort of hope." Lennon continued by saying, "This is what we are like with our trousers off, so would you please let us end the game now."⁴⁰⁰ For these reasons, *Let it Be* meets direct cinema's main goal of "seeking realism in both form and content."⁴⁰¹ The following analysis of *Let it Be* will illustrate exactly how Lindsay-Hogg achieves this as well as underlining the main themes presented in the film.

Observational documentary's function in *Let it Be*

True to the minimalist form of direct cinema, Lindsay-Hogg refrains from traditional documentary devices to place emphasis on the Beatles and the unprecedented access to the creative process from rehearsals to live performance. What is immediately apparent is the lack of titles and voice over narration. Lindsay-Hogg chooses to introduce the audience to his subjects by focusing on a bass drum head with the Beatles logo printed on it rather than artificially superimpose a caption. This icon of the Beatles myth is then placed off to the side. When Lindsay-Hogg does use captions, it is done with a distinctive purpose. After the disposal of Starr's old drumhead, the film's title, *Let it Be* appears on the screen. Taken literally, the caption can be read as inviting the audience to focus on the unique experience of watching the Beatles create and perform music rather than be distracted by iconography and the expectations such symbols would bring to the film. When the Beatles move from the vast and impersonal working space at Twickenham Film Studios to the more natural and work-conducive environment at Apple Studios, Lindsay-Hogg opens the sequence with a close up of the Apple Headquarters' placard on the building's exterior. This sets up a noticeable shift in the film to establish a sense of chronology, progression, and a change in the Beatles' relationship with each other. Lindsay-Hogg's last caption not only signifies the end of the live performance and the film itself, but also formally states the status of the Beatles. Rather than inundate the viewer with a lot of unnecessary information in the form of captions and voice-overs, Lindsay-Hogg's few

⁴⁰⁰ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 112.

⁴⁰¹ Barsam, Richard M. "The Nonfiction Film." 200.

signposts are more poignant and allow viewers to interpret what is onscreen for themselves.

Another way in which Lindsay-Hogg undermines the classical documentary mode is by using unusual or “strange” juxtapositions. Bill Nichols explores this concept throughout his work, defining strange juxtapositions as a kind of “hybrid style in which the filmmaker chooses to turn to techniques associated with one of the other modes” of non-fiction film.⁴⁰² This technique is used in two ways in *Let it Be*. Lindsay-Hogg’s crew interviews a mixed demographic of people watching the Beatles’ rooftop performance. The interviews are a primary device of expositional documentary. However, the crew’s questions are absent so the audience only hear the varied replies. In this way, the strange juxtaposition serves “as epiphanies and seem ‘real’” as if having “originated in the historical world rather than in the defamiliarizing strategies of an argument.”⁴⁰³ Most of the responses are favorable towards the Beatles’ performance, which shows that the Beatles are still a dominant force on the music scene and that there is still an excitement and intrigue in seeing the Beatles perform live. *Let it Be* was always meant to document the insight into the Beatles unique creativity and how it culminates in an energetic live performance. Paul McCartney wanted to prove that the Beatles could still play live without the aid of studio gimmicks. Lindsay-Hogg’s clever use of the bystanders’ responses was evidence that not only could the Beatles’ perform well, but the band could also still command an audience.

In addition, Lindsay-Hogg uses strange juxtapositions in order to “jar and unsettle” the viewer.⁴⁰⁴ Not only does this function assist the film in maintaining the forward motion and “twists and turns” that are a part of real life, but Lindsay-Hogg is also bringing the Beatles’ myth into question with the way he juxtaposes shots.⁴⁰⁵ The most overt examples involve Yoko Ono and how she is juxtaposed with McCartney. Keeping in mind the over all objective of the project – to return to the Beatles’ rock ‘n’ roll roots – McCartney and Lennon are shot sharing a microphone during the rehearsals for “Two of Us.” The song is an Everly Brothers pastiche with lyrics reminiscing about a close, inseparable relationship that many interpreted to be about Lennon and McCartney. The shot Lindsay-Hogg presents at 7:01 perfectly accommodates the Beatles’ myth and gives the viewer a hint at how interconnected

⁴⁰² Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1991. 41.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 41.

Lennon and McCartney's wavelengths are. Both easily pick up on each other's improvisations. However, Lindsay-Hogg jars the viewer back to reality by cutting to a shot of Yoko Ono standing away from the action, on her own for the first time in the film (7:05) with a look of contempt. Another example that illustrates the change in dynamics between Lennon and McCartney and Lennon and Ono is captured during the "Let it Be" music video. Lindsay-Hogg uses camera placement and editing in a way that creates the illusion that each Beatle has a large amount of physical space between them to convey a sense of separation within the collective unit. Interestingly, Lennon and McCartney do not share a microphone or any shots together in this sequence nor do they throughout much of the film. Rather, Lennon and Ono are instead framed together (51:55) to confirm their creative and personal partnership. *Let it Be's* portrayal of Lennon and Ono's relationship should not be undermined because it goes against one of the most crucial elements of the Beatles' myth. The Beatles were built upon and developed by Lennon and McCartney's relationship, which in this film is portrayed as being distant and disconnected.

The Beatles as social actors

Lindsay-Hogg's use of the observational mode might not allow for him to make explicit comments on the state of the Beatles' fractured group dynamics, but his camera placement and editing does allow the director to tell a very particular story. While there are no formal chronological structures in place, such as clocks, calendars, captions, or voice-overs to separate the days and weeks of filming, the editing does show a progression in the Beatles' musicianship as well as the band's ever growing, insular attitudes and a strengthened sense of individuality. Rather than open the film with a group shot of the Beatles, as Richard Lester had done in *A Hard Day's Night*, Lindsay-Hogg instead employs the use of individual close-ups – a motif he relies on throughout the film – in order to present a study of each member's role within the band. When Lindsay-Hogg deviates from this motif, it has a poignant effect much like his use of strange juxtapositions. For example, the viewer does not see a group shot of the band until three minutes and fifteen seconds into *Let it Be*. The shot has minimal lighting with Harrison and Starr in darkness; parts of their faces are just barely visible,

while Lennon and McCartney have their backs to the camera. Also, Lindsay-Hogg rarely uses the motif during the live performance on the rooftop. Arguably, the director does this to strengthen the differences between the Beatles as musicians and the Beatles as live performers. The Beatles may make performing live look easy and fun, but Lindsay-Hogg shows that it is a complex process to arrive at that stage. In order to achieve an appreciation of that creative process, Lindsay-Hogg needs to present the challenges behind the concept of what “The Beatles” is, which include the struggle between developing as a musician and maintaining artistic integrity but also being able to maintain a connection with the fans. Viewers might not gain insight into the Beatles’ phenomenon, as *Morning Star* critic Nina Hibbin pointed out in 1970, but viewers do gain an appreciation of the Beatles’ creative process.⁴⁰⁶ To fulfill this objective, it makes sense for the director to place the cameras back and allow the action to unfold without interference from him or his crew. Again this is another advantage of using the observational documentary mode.

Despite the voyeuristic nature of the handheld cameras and low volume on the microphones, a theme that is fully explored in the next section, there is an awareness of the cameras by the Beatles. This section is an analysis of the Beatles’ performance as social actors and what each member’s role is within the film. Nichols has argued that subjects in documentary films cannot be truly objective because of their awareness of being filmed. In this way, there is a tendency to act up for the camera in ways that would be different if the subject was unaware of being filmed. Throughout his work, Nichols refers to these knowing subjects as “social actors.”⁴⁰⁷ For Nichols, the term social actor is defined as “the degree to which individuals represent themselves to others.”⁴⁰⁸ In *Let it Be*, each Beatle reveals different facets of their personality. Sometimes there is a deliberate performance for the cameras when members address the cameras directly. For example, in the film’s second scene, McCartney and Starr look somber as they wait at the piano for the others to arrive. When Harrison walks in and greets Starr, the camera zooms in and the viewer is unable to hear their exchange but both face the camera with large, contrived grins. Arguably, this shot (1:52) is a nod to the pressure the Beatles felt in having to maintain the Beatlemania image in public. It is important to stress that the band believed “The Beatles” was a specific entity that

⁴⁰⁶ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 114.

⁴⁰⁷ I have focused on Nichols because of his work on the documentary genre. However, Erving Goffman takes a more psychological approach by providing an in depth study on how a person’s awareness of his or her presentation in everyday situations does either consciously or unconsciously convey “sign-vehicles” for observers to decode. See: Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin, 1990.

⁴⁰⁸ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 42.

had limitations. Evidence of this can be found in the transcripts of dialogue between the Beatles, and that also included conversations with Michael Lindsay-Hogg and Yoko Ono. In reading these transcripts, it becomes clear that much of the “Get Back” sessions were concerned about presentation and what image the Beatles would be projecting during the live performance.⁴⁰⁹ Lennon and McCartney propose wild ideas such performing naked, performing for animals rather than people, or more plausibly, inviting musical luminaries to join in them onstage. However, Harrison points out, “Any of us can do separate things as well and that way it preserves the Beatles a bit.”⁴¹⁰ With this comment, George acknowledges the limitations of being in the Beatles. He concludes by saying how many songs he has written, but knows that his compositions will never come to fruition the way he intended within the confines of the Beatles – a band where each member has a specific role. Lennon confirms this sentiment saying, “Say it’s his number, well it’s compromised because it’s turned into our number more than his number. It’s alright but that’s what is bugging you because it’s turned into a rock number as apposed to a quiet number or whatever.”⁴¹¹ This comment shows how important a song’s primary musician’s artistic vision had become to the Beatles and how aware they were of each other’s diverse styles.

On the other hand, there are many moments when it seems as though the Beatles are holding back from the more intense disagreements. As a group, the Beatles come across as feeling ambivalent about their future as a collective unit. Research shows that the Beatles wanted to reconnect with their fans in some way, and in agreeing to participate in the “Get Back” project, one can deduce that the Beatles relished the challenge of creating new songs with little reliance on studio technology.⁴¹² Lindsay-Hogg juxtaposes footage from Twickenham Studios with that from Apple Studios not just to show progression, but as a study in the complexities in music making and the complexities of the Beatles’ relationship with each other. The Twickenham footage is sparsely lit with colored lighting gels to add atmosphere to the minimalist set-up. Many of Lindsay-Hogg’s shots are close ups of individual members with only a handful of group shots. Again, this captures the disjointed and separated feeling of the band. The first song the viewer sees the Beatles rehearse is “Don’t Let Me Down” (1:55). In this brief segment Lindsay-Hogg confirms the characteristics of

⁴⁰⁹ For such examples, see Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back: The Beatles’ ‘Let it Be’ Disaster*. London: Helter Skelter Publishing, 1998, as well as the *Let it Be...Naked* two CD set.

⁴¹⁰ Beatles, The. “Liner notes.” *Let it Be...Naked*. CD. Apple Corps Ltd./EMI, 2003. 29.

⁴¹¹ Beatles, The. “Fly on the Wall.” *Let it Be...Naked*. CD. Apple Corps Ltd./EMI, 2003. 21:05.

⁴¹² Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 101-102.

the Beatles working habits and therefore adds a sense of realism to the rehearsals. Viewers do not know how long this rehearsal has been in progress for, but Lindsay-Hogg joins the Beatles at the chorus – the genesis of countless Beatles' songs. From the chorus, the Beatles could establish the song's chords and basic structure. In addition, this segment shows McCartney trying out different ways to harmonize with Lennon on the chorus. This display would have been a treat for viewers as the moment is reminiscent of the early harmonies of their Beatlemania phase. Lindsay-Hogg authenticates the experience by editing in close ups of Ono looking on in adoration of Lennon, who is out of focus in the foreground (2:07). The emphasis on Ono's presence, and physical proximity, to Lennon hint at how his creative interests have shifted towards conceptual influences versus the more traditional styles of music that Lennon created with McCartney. Next, Lindsay-Hogg captures the Beatles rehearsing "Maxwell's Silver Hammer" (3:16) after McCartney tells the band that more progress would be made if they got the basics down and moved on rather than trying to perfect the song in one sitting. What is interesting about the "Maxwell" rehearsal is that McCartney is introducing a new song to the whole group where as Harrison later premieres his new songs only to Starr (and visa-versa). Again, the band established the song's chorus first, and then learned the verses as McCartney plays and sings the chords to the others in the tune of the song. Here, the audience sees how independent a musician McCartney has become from the group. Lindsay-Hogg then makes a seamless segue into footage of the chorus (3:49). The good deal of progress made is symbolized by the lighter blue background and brighter lighting, as well as McCartney playing piano (meaning Harrison had learnt the bass chords by that point).

From "I've Got a Feeling" (8:06) onwards, tension mounts and while voices are kept low due to the awareness of the camera, this is the point in the film where the band fractures. During the "I've Got a Feeling" segment, McCartney becomes frustrated with Lennon's lack of communication as the former tries to suggest the tempo of the descending guitar chords at the bridge of the song (9:01). As McCartney explains, Lennon continues to play over his voice without attempting to properly learn McCartney's suggestion. The camera stays on McCartney as he uses hand gestures to represent the pace of the decrease, tries to get Lennon to stop playing, and finally closes his eyes pausing briefly to regain his composure. The exchange between McCartney and Harrison is probably the best-known example of the tension experienced during the "Get Back" sessions. McCartney stops the band during "Two of Us" (15:08) to express his dissatisfaction with how rehearsals are going. He notes

how the band are neglecting to polish the basics, such as song structure and playing together at the same tempo. Harrison finally speaks out to McCartney in which a heated argument ensues. Even Lennon breaks his silence, also frustrated with McCartney, telling him that he does not “need to get bitchy about it.” This is the first time anyone had challenged McCartney in the film. Shortly after, Harrison walked out on the sessions, which Lindsay-Hogg withheld from the viewers.

Lindsay-Hogg contrasts the tense Twickenham footage with the noticeably amicable Apple footage. As previously stated, Lindsay-Hogg sign posts this change with a close up of Apple Corp’s exterior placard as well as creates a montage to make it appear as if the Beatles were arriving at the same time. The studio is white with bright lighting, with no one hidden in shadow. Lennon and Ono now wear white rather than black to symbolize a fresh start to the sessions. Everyone is physically closer to each other and the sessions begin with a new Harrison composition being performed. What is notable about “For You Blue” is that it is a love song that starts the Apple sessions on an upbeat vibe versus the scathing “I, Me, Mine” that the Twickenham sessions ended on. In this way, events seem to have taken an optimistic turn. This segment shows the Beatles conversing with each other and rehearsals are not so tightly structured. In addition, Lindsay-Hogg presents footage of the Beatles playing old rock ‘n’ roll standards that the band had started out playing at local clubs. Surprisingly, the medley of these standards in the film is terrible as the vocals are off key and only George seems to know the correct words to “You Really got a Hold on Me.” It was recorded by the Beatles in 1964, was released on the US Capitol Records, *The Beatles’ Second Album*, and had been performed by the Beatles as early as 1963. So to include the performance does on the one hand indulge in nostalgia for the band’s heyday, but on the other hand, presents a reality that the Beatles’ performance skills were lacking any kind of “greatness” associated with their myth. The candid discussions about the trip to India (26:03) and McCartney’s views on live performance (45:20) along with footage of the Beatles arriving by car and playing with McCartney’s step-daughter, Heather, and even the lackluster performances are all attempts by the director to humanize the Beatles’ myth. *A Hard Day’s Night* was built on the Beatles’ myth and, along with the Beatles’ public image, had perpetuated the myth even at a time when the Beatles could no longer live up to the myth. So if Twickenham portrays the break down of the Beatles as a collective unit, Apple portrays a break down in the Beatles’ myth.

A fifth Beatle?

One point of contention for the band was keyboardist Billy Preston's role within the Beatles' myth. Preston's role within the Beatles' is primarily for practical reasons. First, it was hoped that his presence would put the Beatles on their best behavior and diffuse high tensions. Also, Preston would be able to help the Beatles achieve their main objective of performing brand new songs in an organic style (no overdubs or complex studio technology). This arrangement allows McCartney to perform live on bass at the rooftop concert and as well as play piano for the music videos. Coincidentally, Preston met the Beatles during the band's long residency in Hamburg nightclubs in 1962. Preston played in Little Richard's backing band, which adds to the symbolism of musically coming full circle. Perhaps purposefully, Lindsay-Hogg does not give Preston much screen time due to the debate over his role within the band. Preston first appears playing a soulful keyboard part for Smokey Robinson's "You've Really got a Hold on Me" (33:34). During the oldies jam session, Preston is on screen for a total of one minute and forty-one seconds. Not until 42:43 is he featured in a close up. Previous shots place Preston center frame but behind McCartney who plays piano. For the music video segment, Preston is seen for three seconds (52:37) during "Let it Be" and for thirteen seconds (56:59) during the keyboard solo in "The Long and Winding Road." In these two shots, Preston's face is barely visible, the camera instead centered on his hands. The focus is on the music rather than the musician. Preston's keyboard parts for these two songs were eliminated on the original *Let it Be* album but restored in 2003 for *Let it Be...Naked*. Throughout the live performance on the roof, Preston's playing can be heard but he is only seen twice: for three seconds during "I've got a Feeling" (1:07:06) and for eight seconds during the second version of "Get Back" (1:17:55). The Beatles themselves had debated in what capacity Preston should be part of the band. While Lennon was adamant about Preston joining the band on a permanent basis, McCartney strongly disagreed, "one doesn't have to be a member of the Beatles to play with them."⁴¹³ A discussion about Preston's ethnicity begins and Harrison wonders if Preston's skin color would cause "undue attention" but that it would not "be fair to Billy to disqualify him because his presence would take focus off The Beatles."⁴¹⁴ In the end, Preston was paid his due and offered a recording contract with Apple Records, as well as given full

⁴¹³ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 178.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 180.

credit for his role on the *Let it Be* album but was never acknowledged as a member of the Beatles. Lindsay-Hogg stresses this point by not including Preston in any (albeit scarce) group shots during the live performance.

The preceding section discussed the Beatles' awareness of the camera and how that affected their group performance as social actors. In regards to social actors, Nichols notes how the viewer picks up on signs or modes of behavior "that fold back over characters and give further density to their behavior."⁴¹⁵ This section looks at each Beatle's individual performance as social actors in order to gain a better understanding of the character portrayed on the screen. Also, individual opinions and agendas come across strongly in *Let it Be* highlighting the problematic creative differences that led to the band's break-up. How each Beatle acts alone or with certain members of the group proves to be intriguing because of the noticeable difference in character versus when they are filmed as a group. What these moments reveal are a different side to the Beatles than their myth purports.

George Harrison: the 'quiet one' speaks

In *Let it Be*, viewers are presented with a more authentic portrayal of Harrison when compared with previous Beatles' films. In *A Hard Day's Night*, Harrison plays his character as someone "who is always 'cool'...unruffled by any occurrence."⁴¹⁶ While in *Help!* Harrison is reduced to a handful of one-liners for comic relief. The Harrison of *Let it Be* is reserved but straight talking and who holds fast to his opinions, especially when it comes to the subject of the live performance. Unlike *A Hard Day's Night*, he does lose his cool in the first act of *Let it Be*. Also, Harrison is aware of the cameras and of Lindsay-Hogg's agenda, which is to exploit the Beatles' appeal by offering the viewer real "back-stage" footage of the Beatles at work and interacting with each other. In addition, Harrison is conscious of the function of the Beatles' image, how it is being exploited, and how images and personas brought tension to the band. The Harrison that is portrayed in *Let it Be* is a character who would rather be a solo musician than be trapped within the confines of the Beatles' myth.

First, extra footage and tape transcripts show that Harrison was adamant about not returning to touring because of its self-destructive nature. After the Beatles' final

⁴¹⁵ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 42.

⁴¹⁶ Glynn, Stephen. *A Hard Day's Night*. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005. 55.

tour, Harrison commented how an end to touring meant an end to being a “Beatle.” With that statement, Harrison acknowledged the primary function of the Beatles, which was being a live act. That stage of the Beatles’ career had been associated with a particular image – one that Harrison wanted to move on from. In the film, the only opinion the viewer gets from Harrison in regards to touring and playing live, comes from McCartney. McCartney relays his frustrations to Lennon about Harrison’s steadfast resolve towards live performance. Harrison would rather enter a new phase and just focus on musical development much like Stravinsky (45:20). The performance is in the music and the Beatles’ image on a stage runs the risk of detracting from that focus. In documented transcripts, the conversation continues and the real issue comes to light. The issue is not necessarily being nervous about performing, but the worry is that after one live performance, the Beatles will want, or be requested, to do another performance and then another. Evidence for this is Lennon revealing that Harrison would consent to a large event performance with people like Bob Dylan, Eric Clapton, and Elvis Presley, to which McCartney replies, “but do that one after we do one.” McCartney later adds: “Then we could do another couple of smaller shows until we hit it and get over our nervousness with the audience.”⁴¹⁷ Sulphy and Schweighardt’s transcripts reveal that on the third day of rehearsals, Harrison arrived at the studio and declared that they “should drop the idea of doing a live show.”⁴¹⁸ To get all of those musical luminaries on stage would result in the likelihood that the performance could truly be a one-time event.

Not only is the live show a point of contention between McCartney and Harrison, but also so are their differences in working methods. The argument during the rehearsal for “Two of Us” finally led Harrison into confronting McCartney about the lack of progress being made. While McCartney chooses to speak in a lower voice, slightly off mic, Harrison’s frustrations at being hindered as a musician within the band are captured clearly on microphone. Because of the creative control a song’s principle musician had, the song’s author often held onto their artistic integrity rather than consider feedback from the other musicians. So the focus is not necessarily on the music and what would be best for the song, but is more on the author’s control. This is the basis for the “Two of Us” argument. In addition, the argument causes Harrison to distance himself from the group by introducing new songs to Starr first and eventually keeping his compositions to himself for his solo album. For example, Sulphy and Schweighardt note how initially, Harrison presents a surfeit of new material but

⁴¹⁷ Beatles, The. “Liner Notes.” 26-27.

⁴¹⁸ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 42.

because of how the rehearsals on his work is not taken seriously, only two of his songs appear in the film and on the album. Harrison premiered “I Me Mine” to Starr and Lindsay-Hogg and the footage used came from a camera zoomed out in a wide shot and placed on an overhead track. Harrison’s back is turned towards the camera as he plays what he has written (20:10). It is clear to see what kind of songwriter Harrison is from this brief moment in the film. His nearly complete lyrics are handwritten on a piece of paper and he has most of the chords and rhythm pattern worked out. In fact, the song Harrison sings does not sound much different from the version that appears on the album. Harrison knows that he is being filmed and knows Lindsay-Hogg wants typical Beatle songs and typical Beatle performances for the television show. That is what is behind the idea of having a live performance – to present the audience with the Beatles’ myth. Tellingly, Harrison says, “I don’t care if you don’t want it in your show” (20:27), aware that “I Me Mine” is a scathing attack on the egos of the other band members and that ultimately it is Lindsay-Hogg’s show. After this moment, Harrison’s performance is a deliberate non-performance for the cameras, as he does not address the cameras during the rehearsals or the music videos, instead keeping his head down – hidden in shadow, and he does not sing during the live performance.

In this way, Harrison denies the viewer of the Beatlemania image many were expecting to see. Harrison is the Beatle whose developments as a musician come across most strongly. Throughout the filming, Harrison confronts the idea of image and persona, commenting that, like solo music, each Beatle should just be themselves rather than continually trying to contrive images to adhere to. Unfortunately, Lindsay-Hogg does not include Harrison’s opinions on image into the film but other resources have documented his feelings on the subject. After the performance of “For You Blue,” Lindsay-Hogg cuts to a scene where McCartney talks about having watched the footage from their trip to India in 1968 (25:52). Where this conversation leaves off in the film, the excerpts from the *Let it Be...Naked* liner notes pick up. McCartney states: “We totally put our own personalities under. We weren’t very truthful there...we should have...” and Lennon offers, “Been ourselves.” Harrison interjects with “That’s the biggest joke, to be yourselves. That was the purpose...And if you were really yourself, you wouldn’t be any of who we are now.”⁴¹⁹ Arguably, Harrison tries to make the others see just how deeply ingrained into the Beatles’ myth they are.

When only the footage contained in the final edit of *Let it Be* is considered, Harrison is portrayed as a complex character whose actions and silence are all the

⁴¹⁹ Beatles, The. “Liner Notes.” 22-23.

more poignant. Those few moments when Harrison does speak, his words carry very strong opinions against being confined by the group. One easily gets a sense of how stifled Harrison's musical development within the Beatles really was especially when five months after the film premiered, he released a highly successful triple solo album.

Ringo Starr: musician

For reasons unknown, Ringo Starr does not feature prominently in *Let it Be*. Not only does Starr lack the screen time compared to the other three Beatles, but also, he has very few lines of dialogue. The Starr shown in *Let it Be* is a very different portrayal from previous Beatle films, one of which included Starr in the leading role. In addition, Starr relished acting and was even scheduled to start filming his part in *The Magic Christian* (Joseph McGrath, 1969) soon after filming wrapped on the "Get Back" sessions.⁴²⁰ However, the Beatle who came to the group with a persona and stage name already established seems the most uncomfortable with being under the scrutiny of the cameras in a role as himself. Lindsay-Hogg primarily captures brief snap-shots of Starr looking on as the rest of the band rehearses. These shots show a withdrawn, tired figure different from the broad grins and moptop shaking mannerisms that became Starr's trademark during the time of early Beatlemania. Starr's portrayal is reminiscent of his character in *A Hard Day's Night* where Starr played a wistful and lonely version of himself as he walked around a London neighborhood with a camera. However, the scenes he does feature in throughout *Let it Be* show an unexpectedly talented musician who was beginning to develop his musical craft, if somewhat apprehensively.

There is no insight into Ringo Starr, the drummer, in *Let it Be*, and very little insight into how Starr composed or the extent of his musical knowledge. During the rehearsals, the main focus is on perfecting the guitar and bass parts. As a result, Starr either watches the sessions silently from behind the drum kit, sometimes he keeps time with his hi-hat, or he plays along with no instruction or input from the other members. Allowing Ringo to play what he wanted would have been an anomaly considering the care and scrutiny the other parts of a composition were given. For example, McCartney demonstrates the rhythm and the feel that he wants to achieve with his compositions. Yet, *Let it Be* gives no visual evidence of any of the other three

⁴²⁰ This is the same Joe McGrath that directed the Beatles' first promotional videos in 1965 after the band starred in *Help!*

musicians developing precise drum parts. One can only speculate that Starr is given more space and musical freedom over his contributions musically due to the strained relations with the other members. During the recording of *The Beatles* in August 1968, Starr had “quit” the band for two weeks, frustrated over his lack of artistic freedom. Any Beatles biography will recall how Starr felt unappreciated. At any rate, *Let it Be* depicts a detached Ringo Starr who undoubtedly felt the pressure of having to write songs because that is what the focus was on within the group during this time.

In the film, Starr first premieres “Octopus’s Garden” to Harrison during the Apple studio portion of the film, just as Harrison unveiled “I Me Mine” to Starr at Twickenham Studios. Prior to this moment, transcripts of the unused footage show that McCartney tried to encourage Starr to bring his original material to the sessions.⁴²¹ The transcripts continue with Starr exclaiming frustration over the difficulties of song writing when he only knows a couple of chords. Even though Starr would present three original compositions during the “Get Back” sessions, only one was eventually recorded (“Octopus’s Garden” for the *Abbey Road* album, 1969) and that song’s development had substantial contributions from the other members.⁴²² Because of the focus on musicianship at this time, it would not be unreasonable to claim that Starr felt alienated and even inferior to the other three Beatles. The film reveals that Starr and Harrison formed an alliance where they could each premiere new material to the other in a respectful and encouraging environment. As the earlier analysis concluded, Harrison felt restricted creatively by McCartney and transcripts give evidence that Lennon and McCartney quickly became bored of Starr’s first two (undeveloped) compositions “Picasso” and “Taking a Trip to Carolina.”⁴²³ Harrison, however, is more nurturing towards Starr’s musical development as seen at 29:15. Starr has a basic story for his song as well as a snatch of a melody and a couple of lines. After listening to Starr play, Harrison suggests some different chords. Unlike McCartney, Harrison plays his ideas out on the piano while teaching Starr why those chords fit together and how they end up neatly back to the chord they started out with. The song is then played again by Starr, with Harrison on guitar, George Martin vocalizing, and Lennon on drums.

Earlier in the film, Starr plays an improvised piano duet with McCartney unofficially titled “Jazz Piano Song” by the Apple record label for copyright purposes (13:23). McCartney is at the piano and greets Starr by his Christian name as the latter

⁴²¹ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 26.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 205.

⁴²³ *Ibid.*, 46.

arrives for the day's rehearsals. The duet lasts just over one minute and features Starr playing the lead part. Two things are significant about this brief moment of improvisation. This is the first time viewers would have seen Starr play any instrument other than drums and percussion. In fact, *Let it Be* captures each Beatle playing an instrument other than their primary one. Displaying a level of aptitude for other instruments provides further proof that each Beatle was developing their skills as musicians. Also, this scene conveys Starr's interests in the 1950s, "boogie woogie" style of rock 'n' roll with country and western influences. These styles would come through in "Octopus's Garden" once it was recorded as well as Starr's 1970 solo album *Beaucoups of Blues*. Despite contributions from the other members, Starr's compositions still come through as sounding distinctively Ringo.

Paul McCartney: (reluctant?) leader

For all of the ambivalence towards the "Get Back" sessions and the future of the Beatles by the other members, McCartney seems to be the most eager to proceed with rehearsals and a live performance. Lindsay-Hogg captures a number of moments where McCartney tries to keep rehearsals as productive as possible displaying, at times, total frustration and at other times an awareness of the camera that allows the Beatle to look reassured and relaxed. What is also interesting to note is how McCartney's agenda starts to become more apparent as the film progresses. McCartney stated from the beginning that the "Get Back" sessions needed to be a project in which the Beatles could have the opportunity to truly develop as musicians. The band would actually have to demonstrate that they could perform live without studio aid. While all believed the proposed live concert would be the Beatles' final live show, McCartney slowly reveals that his intentions are to bring the band closer and to reconnect with the fans by performing live as a group again.

McCartney's eagerness can be seen in the first minute of *Let it Be* as he sits at a piano waiting for the other members to arrive. Sulphy and Schweighardt document throughout their book that McCartney was the only Beatle to be consistently on time for rehearsals. When Lindsay-Hogg resumes filming in the middle of McCartney's piano improvisation, he and Starr had been waiting over two hours before Harrison arrived and it was even longer before Lennon showed up and this was only the second

day of rehearsals.⁴²⁴ “Don’t Let Me Down” is the first song the band rehearsed as a group and after it breaks down, McCartney is immediately established as the one leading the rehearsals and the one to keep the band on track (2:54). McCartney suggests they all move on to his song, “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer” in order to get to basics down first and then move on in an attempt to keep the momentum going throughout rehearsals. Each song during the Twickenham sessions shows McCartney instructing the band at some point. As mentioned earlier, “Maxwell” begins with McCartney teaching the chords of the song to Harrison and Lennon. Also, McCartney tries to show Lennon how the descending chords of “I’ve Got a Feeling” should be paced, while “Two of Us” proves to be a continual point of frustration and disagreement. In the argument with Harrison (15:11), McCartney tries to convince Harrison that this and past (unseen) disagreements from the sessions arose out of concern for the band, not out of personal reasons. Arguably, McCartney is aware of the camera and how his image is being portrayed as he speaks off microphone and quietly to Harrison who remains defiant. Harrison’s comment that he will play whatever McCartney wants or not even play at all – whatever pleases McCartney, conveys a sense of domination by McCartney that is stifling creative development. However, Lindsay-Hogg does include shots of McCartney holding his head with his eyes closed in frustration (14:36), shouting out “Good morning!” during “Two of Us” when Lennon gets the chord pattern wrong again (10:00), and lacking the energy to play through Lennon’s underdeveloped “Dig a Pony” (18:37). The session transcripts document “the problems he has been facing as de facto leader” and McCartney “challenges” the other members to come up with better ideas. Yet McCartney’s suggestions are only met with silence.⁴²⁵ By the filming of the Apple studio sessions, McCartney backs down from being an overt leader and this along with Billy Preston’s presence seem to lighten the mood and alleviate some of the tensions. For example, during rehearsals for “The Long and Winding Road” (36:35), McCartney says to the band, “Right lads, that’s enough. We could go on all bloody day like this” but in a lighthearted way.

On his own, McCartney seems far more confident as the camera records the Beatle almost showing off for Lindsay-Hogg and a few members of the crew. McCartney plays a very short snatch of “Oh! Darling” (11:12) in a very rough form, almost pounding sloppily on the piano rather than playing, to the excitement of the crew who take turns saying, “lovely.” With his audience captivated, McCartney begins

⁴²⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁴²⁵ Ibid., 74.

to tell them all the story of “One After 909” – one of the earliest and unused Lennon and McCartney compositions, which led Lindsay-Hogg to exclaim, “That is fantastic!” It is obvious from McCartney’s posture that he enjoys the adoration and attention from that very brief performance. As the crew stand around McCartney and praise him, with one man even showing off his knowledge of the Beatles’ myth for McCartney to confirm, the Beatle reminisces about the days when Lennon and McCartney would play truant in order to write songs. McCartney is sure to make it clear that he knows how simple and naïve the rhymes are. However, McCartney is also quick to brag about how he and Lennon had a notebook of over 100 original compositions. What this scene also demonstrates is an understanding of how important a relationship with fans is. After spending the latter part of their career in the studio, isolated from their fans, McCartney believed that strengthening the Beatles’ connections with fans, via live performance, might in turn strengthen the band’s camaraderie, therefore bringing the Beatles closer together. McCartney also acknowledges to Lennon (45:20) the need to keep “contact on [the concert] scene” because fan satisfaction would provide financial security and guarantee the Beatle’s longevity. Between McCartney and the other three Beatles is the struggle to find the balance to maintain the Beatles’ commercial success but to do so on the band’s terms, which would, for Lennon and Harrison at least, have to place a large amount of focus on artistic integrity. Arguably, “The Beatles” could not have contained such a level of individual representation and deviation from the Beatles’ myth, especially when fans and critics of the Beatles’ work bring specific expectations with them. *Magical Mystery Tour’s* low viewing figures and the press’s unanimous criticism of the television special was deemed a failure because the Beatles put on a show they wanted without taking those fan expectations into consideration. *Let it Be* begins to bring these problems to light.

John Lennon: the enigma

Where McCartney had practical reasons for wanting to “Get Back” to the Beatles’ roots, Lennon was heavily influenced by artistic and personal reasons. Beatles scholar Walter Everett suggests that psychedelia had been just a passing phase for McCartney, while for Lennon it became an inspiration that allowed for the breaking of established rules in art. Psychedelia also provided Lennon with “another perspective

on the puzzle of himself.”⁴²⁶ Rather than argue with McCartney onscreen, the Lennon that Michael Lindsay-Hogg captures is an uncommunicative character with an agenda to “break the Beatles...break the myth” so he could move on to freely pursue his artistic ideas with Yoko Ono.⁴²⁷

By the time of the “Get Back” sessions, McCartney and Lennon had become divided. Before filming began, Lennon had performed with two other acts. Dirty Mac was a “super group” consisting of Jimi Hendrix’s drummer Mitch Mitchell, Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, and Yoko Ono who gave a one off performance for Lindsay-Hogg’s *The Rolling Stones’ Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus*. The other performance is less well known – Lennon assembled a group to perform with him at the Rock ‘n’ Roll Festival in Toronto, Ontario. By performing with other musicians, Lennon realized how limited his abilities had been in just playing with the Beatles. Harrison had also had this experience when he performed with Bob Dylan and other musicians during a trip to California. In addition, Lennon’s focus had shifted to create a synergy between music and art that had overt political and social statements. Lennon was also out to prove that art did not have to be complicated.⁴²⁸ In the same way, *Let it Be* marked a period where Lennon was inspired to simplify his musical output in the hopes of making a record that expressed his early rock ‘n’ roll interests. However, McCartney deemed his work inappropriate for the Beatles. For example, Everett describes how Lennon’s composition “Cold Turkey,” a song about heroin addiction and that featured minimalist vocalizations, was turned down as a possible single for the Beatles.⁴²⁹ Lennon had been addicted to heroin at this time and Sulphy and Schweighardt do note throughout their work that the unused footage from the “Get Back” sessions suggest as much. Not only was Lennon’s song writing and playing greatly affected by drug use, which is painfully obvious throughout *Let it Be*, but Lennon was only communicating (via “heightened awareness”) with Ono, causing even more tension and frustration.

As briefly mentioned previously, Lindsay-Hogg juxtaposes shots of Lennon and Ono with shots of Lennon and McCartney. When Lennon and McCartney share a frame together, Ono is either sitting between the two or Lindsay-Hogg cuts to a shot of Ono. These shots along with Lennon’s relationship with Ono challenge the Beatles’ myth. Ono’s role within the Beatles had been hinted at during the recording for *The Beatles* as Ono can be heard singing on Lennon’s “The Continuing Story of Bungalow

⁴²⁶ Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. 213.

⁴²⁷ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 112.

⁴²⁸ Everett, Walter. *The Beatles as Musicians: Revolver through the Anthology*. 213.

⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

Bill” and she had also helped to make the sound collage “Revolution 9.” Another part of the myth that is challenged in this film is Lennon’s role within the Beatles. Lennon had always been considered the leader of the band. However, as this chapter already examined, McCartney is the Beatle who emerges as the band’s leader. Instead, Lennon portrays himself as a complex character presenting different personas to the camera. First, the audience sees a practical and humane Lennon who does speak as himself within the group when necessary. During the “Two of Us” rehearsals, Lennon interjects when McCartney’s control over the song’s structure becomes too intense and in one instance he can be heard agreeing with Harrison in order to get McCartney to back down a bit. Before rehearsals start on Lennon’s “Across the Universe,” he again reiterates Harrison’s idea that listening back to tape recordings of what the band had achieved so far would be helpful so everyone could actually hear what mistakes were being made. Whenever the issue of listening to playbacks comes up in the film, McCartney ignores the suggestion and instead tries to convince Harrison and Lennon that they just need to get the basics down first. However, Sulphy and Schweighardt’s transcripts of the Twickenham sessions show that these rehearsals were marred by out of tune instruments, off key vocals, and out of synch tempos. One can only speculate that if McCartney realized this, he might have thought listening to the playbacks could lower the already low morale. At Apple Studios, McCartney’s stepdaughter Heather is present for part of the rehearsals and Lennon is heard greeting her enthusiastically. He also lets Heather sit by him and as he sings “Dig It,” Lennon sings to her in comical voices (44:45). Second, Lennon presents himself as uncommunicative. When McCartney expresses frustration over Harrison’s decision not to return to any aspect of Beatlemania, (no films, no concerts) Lennon looks on acting disinterested by shuffling about and moving his arms around. He also looks at McCartney with a mock seriousness as he makes faces and shakes his head in agreement in an exaggerated way (45:23). Lennon cannot hide his boredom for the issue of a live performance. Again, when McCartney is trying to suggest a way to play the bridge in “I’ve Got a Feeling” Lennon ignores the advice and instead keeps playing. There are also moments when McCartney has to ask Lennon to sing into the microphone. Again, the transcripts of the sessions document how on January 7, the band comes “perilously close to falling to pieces” and their “decade-old relationship [was] on the verge of disintegration,” yet Lennon still said nothing.⁴³⁰

⁴³⁰ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 74.

Perhaps Lennon's silence was part of his agenda to break the Beatles' myth. This would explain his lack of trying to talk problems out with the other members of the band. When McCartney sought out Lennon's opinion, Lennon would remain silent.⁴³¹ The film does provide other examples of Lennon in a persona that tries to take the focus away from the music or tries to jeopardize an already fragile relationship. One such example of the former is when Lindsay-Hogg's camera pulls away from Harrison's performance of "I Me Mine" to film Ono and Lennon embracing before dancing a waltz around the studio (21:15). The intrigue of Lennon's relationship with Ono takes more focus off of the musically underrepresented Harrison. Also, during the Apple sessions, McCartney tries to be more jovial and less of a leader. The viewer sees McCartney try to reconnect with Lennon by recalling their trip to India. All the while, Lennon only makes patronizing remarks in an exaggerating manner, delivered with childlike expressions. Again, during the conversation between McCartney and Lennon about live performance, McCartney mentions "bagism" – Lennon's art form created with Ono that involved appearing or performing in a black bag in order to make a statement about image and prejudices. McCartney can see that Lennon is disinterested but his reference to bagism as a way of connecting with Lennon is lost. Arguably, Lennon knows McCartney is not really interested in Lennon's avant-garde art as it is obvious there is no relationship between bagism and the Beatles as live performers. Bagism spoke out against image while the Beatles' live performances promoted very specific iconography.

The viewer as voyeur

These insights into the Beatles' characters are presented in such a way that the viewer's role to the film is more voyeur than explicitly addressed by the Beatles. *Let it Be's* tagline promises "an intimate experience" but this intimacy is gained more through the peephole than directly from the Beatles giving a tour of their inner world. The role of the viewer is problematic in this way, especially as the Beatles acknowledge in the transcripts that they always tended to keep people out of their inner circle.⁴³² How to reconnect with the audience but still maintain some distance is presented as the ultimate conundrum for each of the members and an issue that they

⁴³¹ Ibid., 74.

⁴³² Ibid., 140.

discuss throughout the “Get Back” sessions. While it is not spoken, the Beatles do visually put barriers up to distance themselves from the viewer and from their fans (which is represented during the live performance). When the Beatles are playing “The Beatles” there is a safety from fans in hiding behind the myth during live performances. This is shown in the music video section when McCartney directly addresses the camera. However, when the Beatles are playing themselves, there are visual barriers such as backs to the camera, the camera outside of a physical circle, or cameras placed high above and away from the action. This section examines these instances to illustrate the Beatles’ ambivalence to reconnect with fans even when that is what was needed in order to secure the band’s longevity.

Observational documentary is meant to be an unobtrusive way of filmmaking. Cameras are given access to areas and moments that would be unprecedented for traditional filmmakers. This approach allows the viewer to “imagine the screen pulled away and direct encounter possible.”⁴³³ As stated earlier in the analysis, the Beatles are aware of the camera’s presence but rarely play to the camera directly in the first two segments. When they do acknowledge the camera, it is initially in a sarcastic and exaggerated sense – a performance. Lindsay-Hogg’s camera work and editing create a performance as well. Lindsay-Hogg believed that “one *can’t* view a film as one views a live event because the relationship between the audience and performer is different,” which results in an aesthetic that controls what the viewer sees and therefore controls that relationship between the performer.⁴³⁴ Lindsay-Hogg’s control over what the viewer sees can be considered to be another way of creating a strange juxtaposition. The director’s device of placing the viewer in a voyeuristic does not allow for “an unproblematic transfer of motivation” from the band to the viewer nor does it “encourage a strong indentificatory bond” between the Beatles and their audience.⁴³⁵ Evoking strong feelings for the subject and its characters as well as creating a bond are the primary functions of the documentary film. However, Lindsay-Hogg presents a film that constantly questions the fans’ role and the viewer’s place within the Beatles. Even arguments in the film are centered on these questions to which a compromise is not possible because in order to function as a successful commercial act, the Beatles need fan support.

In the first segment of *Let it Be*, the camera often acts as the viewer’s voyeuristic “peephole” rather than allowing the Beatles to engage directly with their

⁴³³ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 43.

⁴³⁴ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 114.

⁴³⁵ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 113.

audience. In this space, the Beatles sit in a circle and the audience only sees the band in shots as a unit from outside this circle and all other shots are extreme close ups on individual performers. This conveys that while the Beatles are allowing recordings of the band at work in a studio, viewers are still restricted in some way. Two minutes and forty-two seconds into *Let it Be* the viewer gets an almost complete shot of the band (bar Starr) during the rehearsal for “Don’t Let Me Down.” The shot is wide with Harrison’s back to the audience on the left side of the frame, Lennon and Ono are centered in the background and McCartney is in the middle ground at the right of the frame. In the very far back a film crewmember is just visible. This shot is poorly lit, casting faces in shadow and Harrison’s positioning acts as a barrier between the viewer and entrance into the circle. Also, there is no eye contact with the camera, which represents a lack of acknowledgement of the audience. Another example occurs during “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer” (3:15 and later used at 3:34). This is the first shot of the film in which all four Beatles are shown. This shot is filmed from the reverse angle of the previous example and again from outside of the circle. McCartney and Lennon have their backs to the camera, while Harrison and Starr’s faces are almost completely obscured in darkness due to very low lighting. These shots can be compared to the Beatles’ performance of “I Should Have Known Better” in the baggage compartment of the train in *A Hard Day’s Night*. In that sequence, the band is physically separated from their fans by the wire cage. In regards to *Help!*, similarities can be seen during the performance of “You’re Going to Lose that Girl” which takes place in a recording studio but employs low lighting and a camera style that still manages to exclude the audience. However, this technique does instead place the focus on the musical performance rather than the band’s image. The high angle, wide shot is better lit with back lighting on a large projection screen but now in addition to being outside of the circle, the viewer is placed back at a further distance. Another example is during the argument over “Two of Us” between Harrison and McCartney. Lindsay-Hogg uses high angle shots that put the viewer just on the outside of the argument. When Lindsay-Hogg cuts to a medium close shot of Harrison (face in shadow, no acknowledgement of the camera), McCartney’s back is still in shot to act as a physical barrier between the action and the audience. In addition, the viewer has to strain to hear most of the argument due to both the awareness of the film crew’s presence and the microphone’s inability to clearly pick up the full conversation. Despite this moment’s inclusion in the film, the audience only gets a scratch at the surface of the creative differences that were pulling the band apart.

For creative insight into the band's song writing process or insight into the Beatles' phenomenon, again the audience only sees a glimpse of this from a distance. The two best examples of this include a composition by McCartney and one by Harrison. In the first instance, a high angle shot depicts McCartney playing a brief excerpt from "Oh! Darling" as senior members of the film crew including Lindsay-Hogg look on (11:10). Again, McCartney's face is in silhouette and he does not make eye contact with the camera. Throughout this scene, the camera from the overhead track zooms in and out, reminding the viewer of their position as voyeurs. Even though the viewer is still outside of the circle, the film crew sits at McCartney's feet enthralled at his reminiscing about how he and John used to write songs together. The second example is Harrison's premier of "I Me Mine." As with the previous example, the camera is placed on an overhead track. Harrison's back is turned towards the camera as he plays to Ringo while Lindsay-Hogg and other crewmembers look on (20:10).

When the location moves to a smaller, more intimate studio at the Apple Corps headquarters at Savile Row, there is a greater feeling that this arrangement was more accurate to how the Beatles would have recorded in the early 1960s. The lighting is brighter and more natural, there are children's drawings on the wall, and the band has lighthearted conversations. Again, Harrison's "For You Blue" marks a transition in the film as the performance is more complete rather than the fragments that filled the Twickenham Studio footage. With the more relaxed space, there is more eye contact with the camera. Also, the viewer is not as confined due to the use of handheld cameras. The camera now puts the viewer inside the physical circle and shots are at a level plane, not at higher or lower angles. An example of this is when Starr plays "Octopus's Garden" with Harrison. Both are facing the camera and the brighter lighting illuminates both musicians' faces clearly. The lighting as well as the banter and nostalgic conversations help to create a warmer, less hostile ambiance to these sessions. With "Octopus's Garden" (29:40), the viewer no longer feels like the voyeur but like an audience with the camera's point of view shots. This shot lasts for a full sixteen seconds before cutting to a medium close shot from the right side of the piano. The camera then zooms out slightly (31:01) to reveal George Martin, creating the illusion that Martin is standing next to the viewer at an equal level.

What is also interesting to note is Lindsay-Hogg's use of cameras. Handheld cameras are primarily used in order to move freely around and to get closer to the subjects. However, there are shots when the handheld camera is fixed at a higher point away from the action. In these moments, large stationary cameras can be seen also

filming the Beatles. The presence of stationary cameras suggests that the footage would primarily have been used for a televised broadcast. In addition, it also adds to the feeling that the viewer is watching the Beatles being filmed to heighten the sense of being behind-the-scenes, much in the same way as the final performance in *A Hard Day's Night* where the handheld cameras capture glimpses of the television studio cameras and director Richard Lester. Also, the crew of *Let it Be*, as well as the director, is often seen on camera. This helps to add a feeling of exclusivity and authenticity. Nichols notes how important it is for all of these functions of documentary film to come together in order to present a slice of reality rather than allow the viewer to recognize that they are actually seeing constructed images.⁴³⁶

The issue of live performance: “Revolution” and “Hey Jude”

The Beatles as live performers contain three distinctive elements: specific iconography that conforms to the Beatles’ myth, songs that feature a strong rock ‘n’ roll influence without aid from studio technology or other musicians, and the presence of an audience. Lindsay-Hogg’s promotional videos for the Beatles’ “Revolution” and “Hey Jude” along with the final rooftop concert present and challenge these elements of how a Beatles’ performance should be and what each member’s role (including the audience) is. As musicians, the Beatles do not want to compromise artistic integrity but as performers, they understand the value of having a relationship with their audience. Problems for the Beatles arise when they try to control traditional aspects of live performance and the concert experience. As this section will illustrate, footage of the Beatles’ performing live or in mock live setups are ways in which the band explore various compromises to live performances. Where “Revolution” used the stage as a barrier but did not include a live audience, “Hey Jude” is at the opposite end by depicting those barriers being broken down to allow the audience to fully interact with the band. However, the rooftop concert places literal barriers between the Beatles’ and the fans in a compromise that goes against the purpose of the concert experience.

After the breakdown of the band as a collective unit on *The Beatles*, McCartney was interested in producing projects that put the music back at the forefront. Michael Lindsay-Hogg was the ideal candidate to work with the Beatles

⁴³⁶ Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 57.

again on their promotional videos because of his experience on *Ready, Steady, Go!* which focused on “live” performances and also due to his previously well organized and efficient work ethic on the earlier promotional videos “Rain” and “Paperback Writer.” While Lindsay-Hogg’s reasons for desiring the Beatles to perform live are not specifically documented, there is plenty of visual evidence to suggest Lindsay-Hogg, like many, enjoyed seeing the Beatles perform live and the energy and excitement one of their live performances could capture. For someone who worked with many artists in the 1960s, Lindsay-Hogg would have been able to see the contrast with the Beatles’ popularity and performance style compared to other artists who appeared on *Ready, Steady, Go!* When examining Lindsay-Hogg’s work from the 1960’s, it is undisputable that there was a preference for the director to work with live and mock live set ups.

Unlike previous promotional videos like “Hello Goodbye” or “I am the Walrus,” “Revolution” is not presented as a satire on live performance and the Beatlemania imagery. Instead it is one of the first attempts to reign in the studio experimentation and abuse of power that the Beatles had previously relied on too heavily. In order to reunite the band as a collective unit, the idea of performing a live, basic rock ‘n’ roll song was proposed. To compensate for most of the members’ ambivalence towards playing in front of a live audience, the set up was designed to at least evoke the iconography of a live performance. For instance, the Beatles stand in their traditional stage formation with Lennon on the right and McCartney and Harrison sharing a microphone on the left. Starr is set on a drum riser behind them at the middle of the stage. While the Beatles are casually dressed in their own, non-uniform clothing, McCartney does use his Hofner bass and Starr plays his black and pearl drum set. While there is no audience present and while this clearly features a prerecorded backing track due to the evidence of a keyboard part being heard but not seen, the standard editing with a number of close ups and extreme close ups puts Lennon in the position of having to address the audience watching at home. Also, keeping in mind the types of musical and variety programs this video aired on, the directorial style is in line with such programs – more structured and orthodox camera methods as if to replicate cutting to different cameras on the floor of a television studio. Camera movement is stationary rather than “roving.” In addition, this video was videotaped rather than filmed. These aesthetic choices help to create a sense of authenticity and mark a shift back to the more structured style the Beatles experienced at the earlier stages of their career. While used on a lesser scale than *A Hard Day’s Night*, “Revolution” ends with quicker, more frantic editing to aid in creating a sense of wild

applause and hysteria typical of early Beatles' performances. However, at this point in their career, the Beatles did not want to revert back completely to the traditional live performance resulting in the greater emphasis being placed on *evoking* those experiences rather than recreating them entirely. As both promotional videos show, the Beatles are willing to consider reconnecting with their audience but it has to be on their more controlled terms.

"Hey Jude" was the first of the two Lindsay-Hogg videos to be taped and the one that was more frequently broadcast on British television. Rather than play live, something that would have required the presence of close to forty orchestral musicians, and perhaps numerous takes, the Beatles played to a backing track. Also, because of the Musician Union's ban on lip-synched performances, the Beatles recorded an introduction to the song with David Frost. While the introduction serves for practical reasons (a presenter introducing the band's segment), it also lends an authenticity to the performance as the home viewers get to see Lennon playing a guitar rendition of the Frost theme song and light banter between the band. In addition, Frost's introduction to "Hey Jude" includes him saying that this is the band's "first audience performance in over a year." This statement makes the performance seem like an exclusive event, despite the fact that the Beatles are not playing live. The performance begins with a close up of McCartney at the piano addressing the camera with the song's opening lyrics. As with "Revolution," the viewer is directly addressed without any hint of satire. What the audience gets is a straight performance by a matured group of musicians. The focus is on the music and not on imagery gimmicks.

Similar to "Revolution," the camera work is traditional, television studio work providing close ups of McCartney as the lead singer and then cutting to Lennon and Harrison who provide harmonies and sit casually on Starr's drum riser. However, there is a strong feeling, due to the camera work, that the other three are McCartney's backing band. For instance, both Lennon and Starr refrain from interacting with the other members – there are no glances or smiling head nods that cue entrances or acknowledge a good piece of musicianship that one often sees in live performances. Also, Starr looks expressionless until the song's sing-a-long chorus. There is also very little Beatlemania iconography visible in this video – only Starr's trademark drum kit. Perhaps for the first time the audience sees McCartney playing piano rather than his bass. Much like the Beatles' earlier performances however, this video displays a high level of interaction with the studio "audience." Just before the sing-a-long chorus a large number of young people crowd in near the Beatles. There are no barriers to keep

the fans away from the Beatles like the concert stage once provided. Previous chapters have examined the relationship between the Beatles in concert and the role of the audience. Again, Marshall writes about the function of the live performance and how it is a “communal ritual” that provides “concrete evidence of the...audience’s support.”⁴³⁷ Critics may have felt that the Beatles’ popularity was beginning to wane and that “The White Album” included primarily filler songs. For example, MacDonald refers to “The White Album” as “rambling” and “flawed and bulked out with filler material.”⁴³⁸ Also, in 1968 William Mann of *The Times* commented: “There are too many private jokes and too much pastiche to convince me that Lennon and McCartney are still pressing forward.”⁴³⁹ However, the majority of “Hey Jude” captures the studio full of fans singing and dancing in solidarity. Even a young man’s erratic tambourine playing can be heard. So this marks a point where the Beatles reconnect with their audience and once again allow the audience to perform during the Beatles’ performance. This also creates that sense of ownership Marshall and Frith discuss in chapter one. With the Beatles’ countercultural beliefs still present, “the close connection and apparent commitment of the audience” enables visual evidence of the “representation and embodiment of the crowd and the crowd’s power in contemporary culture.”⁴⁴⁰ Chapter three stressed the importance of community to countercultural beliefs and both this chapter and the previous one give evidence of this through the Beatles’ focus on the “Happening” and the “event” of a performance. The arrival of the crowd seems spontaneous and the refrain seems never ending.

What “Revolution” and “Hey Jude” capture is the essence of an iconic performance. These are not authentic, live performances but rather authentic representations of iconic symbolism associated with the Beatles’ earlier performances. While *Let it Be*’s final live performance appears to deliver a larger than life, iconic performance, Lindsay-Hogg actually subverts the conventions of an iconic performance. Throughout the filming of *Let it Be*, Lindsay-Hogg was in search of the “payoff” – the grand finale for the film. This concert is the main climax that everyone has been waiting for but it comes with limitations. The Beatles as musicians are in control of the terms versus the Beatles as pop stars in *A Hard Day’s Night* who were never in control. McCartney, who tried so hard throughout *Let it Be* to keep the Beatles

⁴³⁷ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 195.

⁴³⁸ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 281. Also: MacDonald, Ian. “White Riot.” *Beatles, The: Ten Years that Shook the World*. Ed. Paul Trynka. London: Dorling Kindersley, 2004. 343.

⁴³⁹ MacDonald, Ian. “White Riot.” 343.

⁴⁴⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 195.

together as a collective unit, finally acknowledges that the Beatles have become “four individuals who are strong individuals.”⁴⁴¹ As a result, the rooftop concert ends up being a compromise both for the band and to the audience. Nichols believes that the challenge for documentary films “is to sustain a sense of magnitude...that acknowledges the tensions among historical person, narrative agent, and mythic persona.”⁴⁴² The section on the Beatles as social actors examined those tensions and illustrated the complexities behind each individual’s character. Lindsay-Hogg perhaps promised an “intimate experience” but the Beatles’ awareness of the camera and of their mythical status makes such an experience problematic.

Instead, viewers experience what turns out to be an illusion of proximity. At the moment of the concert, Lindsay-Hogg shifts from observational documentary to expositional documentary. Not only does this change allow Lindsay-Hogg to editorialize the enormity of the Beatles’ last performance, but it also allows the director explicit control over what the viewer sees and hears. Where the Beatles constantly expressed the importance of the music, Lindsay-Hogg exploits the moment of nostalgia and sells the concert as an “event” much like the build up to the Rolling Stones’ performance at the end of ...*Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus*. Music documentaries in the 1960s offered viewers closeness to the performer, displayed active participation from the audience, and captured iconic, “event” performances. For example, Pennebaker’s *Don’t Look Back* allows the viewer to watch Dylan’s sold out performance from the stage’s wings. Another example is Jimi Hendrix’s performance at the Monterey Pop Festival in which the guitarist set fire to his guitar on stage (an image was immortalized on the cover of *Rolling Stone* magazine). A final example is the Rolling Stone’s performance in ...*Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus*. Not only does the show set itself in the context of a literal event with its circus pastiche and Mick Jagger’s awareness of his iconic status, but the audience also plays an important role. In ...*Rock ‘n’ Roll Circus*, the audience is often in shot and is made up of not only fans but also famous musicians. The Stones end the show by singing “Salt of the Earth” among the audience much like the final chorus of “Hey Jude.” However, like Pennebaker’s *Don’t Look Back*, where the audience does not gain any insight into Dylan’s true self, the Beatles’ final performance also lacks any real connection with the audience. Noticeably, a concert is given without an audience actively involved, contrary to the festival documentaries in which audience participation is paramount to the communal experience. Even the viewer does not get to witness the performance in *Let it Be* in its

⁴⁴¹ Beatles, The. “Liner Notes.” 27.

⁴⁴² Nichols, Bill. *Representing Reality*. 255.

entirety. There are practical reasons for playing on Apple's rooftop but this segregation from the audience is quite poignant. In simple terms, the point of a live performance is to play to an audience and thereby interact and communicate with the audience on some level. This thesis has argued how the purpose of the concert had conflicted with the Beatles' idea of musical development and their audiences' hysterical reactions only exacerbated the band's contempt for playing live. Recall Marshall's definition of the concert/live performance:

The concert is therefore not an introduction to the music for the fans, but a form of ritualized authentication of pleasure and meaning through a "lived" experience...The concert, then, becomes much more a display and expression by the audience member...than an appreciation of the performer's skill and technique in performing live.⁴⁴³

However, the Beatles defy this traditional definition by placing themselves far out of the reach of the audience by playing on the rooftop and by not allowing an audience to be present at the filming of the music videos in *Let it Be* as had been done for "Hey Jude." What is noticeable throughout *Let it Be* is the lack of an audience, but it is not until the concert that the audience's diminished role becomes so apparent.

By performing high above the Mayfair streets from the rooftop of Apple Headquarters, the Beatles are positioned in an exclusive area where there is a dramatic physical barrier between them and their "audience" below. While the symbolism suggests that the Beatles are affirming their position as "rock gods," this performance space allows the focus to be taken away from the Beatles' image and placed on the music. In this way, the physical elevation is another element in breaking the Beatles' myth because the performance the viewer sees is an edited version of the better takes of the songs played that afternoon. The Beatles played on the rooftop for 42 minutes playing ten songs – only six of those were different songs with five appearing in the film.⁴⁴⁴ Lindsay-Hogg cuts away from the performance to mask the lackluster performance. For example, when the director cuts away from the Beatles to the crowd on the street, the performance can be heard in the distance but the sound quality is tinny and echoed. Examples of this are found at 1:06:07 with the start of "I've Got a Feeling." The intro on guitar is sloppy with at least one wrong note obvious to the casual listener, and at 1:07:48, McCartney's vocals are echoes from off the surrounding buildings. The most telling example of the poor sound quality is at 1:09:36 – 1:09:46. The band has just finished playing "I've Got a Feeling," but when the camera cuts to

⁴⁴³ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*. 159.

⁴⁴⁴ Lewisohn, Mark. *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*. London: Chancellor Press, 2004. 312.

more reactions from the crowd, one can still hear “I’ve Got a Feeling” playing, although it is difficult to hear. One can only speculate that the sound from earlier in the performance was overdubbed due to the fact that sound quality was an issue and because the practice of recording visuals and sound separately had been used throughout the rest of the film. Overdubbing the sound would have provided the viewer with better sound quality, thus strengthening the illusions of proximity and authenticity. A similar technique is used with the visuals and zooms. The camera at one point zooms out to show that the seemingly close shot of the group was actually filmed from a rooftop across the street (1:00:23). Not only does this maintain a sense of voyeurism as discussed in the previous section, but the shot also depicts how far away from the action the viewer is. The shot at 1:04:31 reveals that there is no way a person could actually see the Beatles from ground level because of the building’s position on the street and the band’s distance from the roof’s edge. Certain shots mask this such as 1:09:34 where the camera is most likely leaning over the edge to capture footage of the audience below. Also, zero visibility would explain why so many took to the roofs of nearby buildings to see what was going on. Arguably, because of the poor sound quality and lack of visibility, Lindsay-Hogg is selling the ideas of the event and spectacle rather than an authentic performance.

Finally, this analysis of the Beatles’ final live performance would not be complete without examining the role of the audience. There are actually two audiences in the film: the crowd that gathers in the streets and the exclusive audience of the film crew, wives and girlfriends, and members of the Beatles’ office staff that are also on the top of Apple’s roof. Because the issue of nervousness is highlighted in the film and throughout Sulphy and Schweighardt’s book, one can speculate that the Beatles’ primary audience is those friends and colleagues on the roof whom the band felt most comfortable in front of. These are the people who applaud and cheer after each song. Evidence for this comes at 1:09:34 at the end of “I’ve Got a Feeling,” which was discussed earlier, and at the final performance of “Get Back” where a woman cheers loudly (1:19:46). McCartney says into the microphone, “Thanks, Mo” to Maureen Starkey, Starr’s wife. The few gathered can also be heard clapping as Lennon delivers his final witticism, “I’d like to say thank you on behalf of the group and ourselves, and I hope we passed the audition.” It should be noted that there was no “Beatles bow” at the end of this performance. On the other hand, those gathered in the street act more like spectators than participants. No one in the crowd is shown clapping or cheering, nor do the Beatles actually address any of those watching from below. Rather, the

crowd is asked for their opinion on the Beatles, instead of commenting specifically on the performance. The response is mainly positive with only a few negative reactions that are more humorous than malicious. What is also telling is that the responses are all subdued – the opposite of traditional Beatle performances and this type of depiction is yet another element that goes against the Beatles’ myth. Through editing and technique, Lindsay-Hogg creates strange juxtapositions that include these reactions from the audience – a cross section of young and old, black and white, and people of various professions. In this sample of people, Lindsay-Hogg seems to be asking if the Beatles are still popular and relevant. At a time when critics were lukewarm about their music and talks about a break up had been rumored since the Beatles stopped touring, Lindsay-Hogg surprises the viewer with the crowd’s reaction, especially from the older members of the public. One example includes an old man climbing a ladder to a nearby rooftop to get a better view of the performance (1:01:05). A middle-aged vicar comments, “It’s nice to have something free in this country at the moment” (1:09:40). Again, there are no scenes of mass hysteria like those depicted in *A Hard Day’s Night*. As one young woman casually comments, “Yeah, I think it’s great. Well, it breaks up the office hours at least” (1:07:45). Beatle fans had grown up just as the Beatles had done and to present a concert as a throwback to Beatlemania would have undermined the Beatles’ development as musicians and as unique individuals.

While Neaverson argues that *Let it Be* captures the Beatles with “a mythical sense of timelessness and universality,” the use of direct cinema exposes the flaws of that myth.⁴⁴⁵ Arguably, the conflict between the myth that the subjects bring to the film and the realism that direct cinema aims to re-present is what causes *Let it Be* to be such a problematic film to interpret. In addition to the multi-layered subjects, Lindsay-Hogg interchanges between direct cinema and *cinéma vérité*. The paradoxes this creates throughout the film, as well as the debates over the two terms by scholars Nichols and Barsam are reasons why this chapter avoids categorizing the film. However, Erik Barnouw’s distinction sheds light on *Let it Be*’s problematic nature:

Direct cinema found its truth in events available to the camera. *Cinéma vérité* was committed to a paradox: that artificial circumstances could bring hidden truth to the surface.⁴⁴⁶

On the one hand, Lindsay-Hogg’s structured film shoot and location choices put a pressure on the Beatles because it went against what the band was familiar with. This

⁴⁴⁵ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 110.

⁴⁴⁶ Barsam, Richard M. “The Nonfiction Film.” 204.

is perhaps why the progression between the Twickenham Studios footage and the Apple Studios footage is so abrupt. On the other hand, when Lindsay-Hogg allows the cameras to remain zoomed out and be unobtrusive, the Beatles' as social actors begin to let their guard down and for glimpse of their true selves to be captured for the viewer to see.

Conclusion

By December 1969, Lindsay-Hogg had finished post-production work on *Let it Be* after editing nearly 500 rolls of film down to a 90-minute feature film, with any prospects of a television special officially abandoned.⁴⁴⁷ Rather than abort the entire project, United Artists released Lindsay-Hogg's film in order to fulfill the Beatles' three-picture contract signed in 1964. Music producer Phil Spector, who was known for lavish, high production values achieved through his "Wall of Sound" process of multiple overdubs, put together an album of twelve original Beatles' compositions for an accompanying soundtrack album.⁴⁴⁸ The album was released in May 1970 along with the feature film.

Upon its release, the press and McCartney criticized Spector's version of *Let it Be*. Throughout the film, McCartney is seen as trying to achieve a particular sound for songs, especially his own compositions. Clearly, Spector's finished project undermined McCartney's original vision of a more natural sounding album that fulfilled the idea of the "Get Back" theme. Instead, *Let it Be* was full of the studio trickery of overdubs and grand orchestrations. McCartney felt that the focus on the music and the Beatles' "back to roots" approach had been lost in the "event" Spector created.⁴⁴⁹ In addition, the album's packaging was seen by McCartney to be an extreme example of exploiting the record buying public. The album was packaged with a book of photographs taken by Ethan Russell (who photographed the Stones for *Rock 'n' Roll Circus*). The inclusion of the book, which was only available for initial pressings, raised the retail price by 33 per cent.⁴⁵⁰ Unlike previous Beatles albums, critics and fans had become firmly divided over both the *Let it Be* film and album. Critics saw *Let it Be* as half-hearted and a ploy

⁴⁴⁷ Sulphy, Doug and Ray Schweighardt. *Get Back*. 234.

⁴⁴⁸ Phil Spector came to the project via John Lennon. Spector had produced Lennon's "Instant Karma!" in January 1970. Spector also went on to produce George Harrison's triple album, *All Things Must Pass*. While Harrison's album was recorded between May and September 1970 and released in November, most of the songs had been written during the *Let it Be* sessions.

⁴⁴⁹ MacDonald, Ian. *Revolution in the Head*. 339.

⁴⁵⁰ Lewisohn, Mark. *The Complete Beatles Chronicle*. 341.

to exploit consumers before the band's impending break up. Upon its release, critics appeared unanimous in their decision: *Let it Be* was "a cheapskate epitaph, a cardboard tombstone, a glorified EP."⁴⁵¹ Derek Jewell of the *Sunday Times* called the album "a last will and testament, from the blackly funereal packaging to the music itself... brilliant at their best, careless and self-indulgent at their least." Furthermore, David Skan from *Record Mirror*, also in May 1970, wrote "It was tampered with...some people will say castrated is a better word...This awful spectre, the very idea that John or Paul's songs need slick production techniques is an impertinence."⁴⁵² Finally, Robert Hilburn writing for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1970 ran the headline, "'Let it Be' an album for Beatle Loyalists," commenting that the album lacked "the ambition and achievement" of the Beatles' psychedelic/experimental period and that overall the album lacked "the raw enthusiasm of...early Beatle albums."⁴⁵³ Despite this, *Let it Be* stayed at number one for three weeks, had three number one singles in the US and sold 3.2 million copies in 13 days to gross \$26 million proving that there was still a market and a strong fan base for the Beatles' projects.⁴⁵⁴ In addition, newspapers started reporting on the litigation, the anticipation of McCartney's first solo album, and speculation that the Beatles had broken up in April 1970 – a month before *Let it Be's* release. If the Beatles were really over, it can be argued that people wanted to be a part of that event and to purchase the last remains of "a dying civilization."⁴⁵⁵

Just as fans and film critics disagreed with each other over the worth of the *Let it Be* album, so too was there disagreement over the film. Rather than reading *Let it Be* as an example of the evolution of the Beatles' performance style from a collective unit to individuals, many critics saw *Let it Be* as the Beatles' failed attempt at a grand exit. The *Evening Standard's* Alexander Walker noted how the film was a contractual obligation, for which reason Walker commented that the film as appeared "like a chore" for the band.⁴⁵⁶ "They are dull and unfunny",⁴⁵⁷ he concluded. This statement is quite telling as to what people outside of the Beatles' primary fan base expected from the band. While many mainstream admirers had come to associate the Beatles with the lighthearted *A Hard Day's Night* and the cheeky responses of early press conferences,

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., 340.

⁴⁵² Harris, John. "Can you Dig it?" *The Beatles: 10 Years that Shook the World*. London: Dorling Kindersley Press, 2004. 418.

⁴⁵³ Hilburn, Robert. "'Let it Be' an album for Beatle Loyalists." *Los Angeles Times*. 31 May 1970. C40.

⁴⁵⁴ "The Beatles' record sales, worldwide charts." <<http://www.answers.com/topic/the-beatles-record-sales-worldwide-charts>>. 12 Mar 2007.

⁴⁵⁵ "Beatles Latest Film Premiered in London." *Los Angeles Times*. 29 May 1970. G14.

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., G14.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., G14.

Walker's comment made in 1970 shows the mainstream's reluctance to let go of Beatlemania expectations and iconography. If anything, the viewer can get a sense of how the Beatles had moved on artistically from the early period and how returning to methods of the early successful formula no longer worked. Perhaps those disappointed with the film finally had to confront the realization that the Beatles had moved on from their Beatlemania days and could no longer carry on as a collective unit. Just as the ideas of the counterculture – classless society, free love, free exchanges of ideas and art, utopian aspirations – had become irrelevant in the context of the 1970s with realities of unemployment, recession, Vietnam, and race riots, so too had the Beatles.

Neaverson argues that the negative press towards *Let it Be* might be due to the mainstream critics' lack of knowledge about direct cinema and the documentary genre. The critics focused on the Beatles without taking the genre's form and style into consideration. Also, the critics arrived at screenings with particular expectations to see the Beatles in more comedic roles. Comedy and quick wit were two of the qualities that were exploited during the early 1960s in order to set the Beatles further apart from competing acts. In addition, *Morning Star* critic Nina Hibbin felt the film was "disappointingly barren" of any insight into "the development of the Beatles phenomenon."⁴⁵⁸ As Neaverson points out:

To criticize the film's sparsity of insight is one thing, but to lampoon... a cine-direct documentary for its less than crystal-clear sound and picture quality, or the Beatles, for being 'dull and unfunny'...is rather like a horror buff pouring scorn on a romantic drama for it not being sufficiently terrifying.⁴⁵⁹

One wonders if critics were expecting a "real" version of *A Hard Day's Night*. *A Hard Day's Night* may have had a similar aesthetic and a similar "access" to the Beatles, but *Magical Mystery Tour* proved that the Beatles had moved away from trying to satisfy a mainstream audience by rejecting traditional cinematic conventions even with basic elements, such as plot structure, the concepts of time and space, and aesthetics. Most of the critics tended to miss the completeness of the Beatles' journey as musicians. The Beatles' music and cinematic efforts were diverse enough to provide something for everyone but, out of context key points about the Beatles' shift from pop stars to musicians can go unnoticed. What critics also missed was the band's desire to evolve from their original, well-worn persona. The Beatlemania persona no longer reflected

⁴⁵⁸ Harry, Bill. "Let it Be." 56.

⁴⁵⁹ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. 114.

moods, beliefs, and social trends. *Let it Be* presents an image of the band that is more authentic to the changes and turmoil of 1969 and 1970. To address, Hibbin's comment about the lack of insight into the Beatles phenomenon, despite the seemingly unrestricted access *Let it Be* allows the viewers, the Beatles are still very guarded and have moved on from the type of recording process that this film depicts. As both Dyer and Marshall suggest, audiences are always "obsessively and incessantly searching the star persona for the real and the authentic."⁴⁶⁰ Arguably, the reason *Let it Be* does not offer such insight is because the Beatles had been constantly evolving from one set of personae to another throughout their career. What is on display on screen might be a faithful representation of a Beatles persona or contain elements of the Beatles' myth, but the audience can never have access to who the Beatles really are. Any real element of each member's real identity had been deeply buried so the audience is connecting with perhaps a real depiction of Paul McCartney, for example, but not the *real* Paul McCartney.

On the other hand, despite not being as popular as the Beatles' first two films, the Beatles' fans still showed up to cinemas in droves to be a part of the Beatles' last project and to analyze *Let it Be* for any clues foreshadowing the band's demise. *Rolling Stone* journalists Cott and Dalton writing in July 1970 believed the film was popular with fans because of the Beatles' iconic stature: "It is one of the paradoxes of reverence that we always wish to know the most intimate details of those we idolize, even when the details are not flattering."⁴⁶¹ However, by having those details, fans are able to bring their idols down to their level and create a bond. One of the definitions of idol is an ideal instance; a perfect embodiment of a concept. People strive for perfection and for a model to base their choices on. Chapter one stated that the Beatles were always sold as four ordinary boys and exposing their flaws would only make the Beatles more human and obtainable in the eyes of their fans. For a band that had been previously so guarded and had come to live double lives, the more controversial the footage, the more enticing the film would be. The press had reported on some of the less harmonious scenes and posters for the film presented the tag line: "an intimate bioscopic experience with The Beatles." The tag line suggests fans would see something new, personal, and authentic from the Beatles and it also suggests that it had the Beatles' full endorsement. With all of the legal battles and with McCartney, arguably the most dedicated member at the time, announcing he was leaving the

⁴⁶⁰ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power*: 17.

⁴⁶¹ Cott, Jonathan and David Dalton. "Daddy's Gone Away Now: *Let it Be*." *Rolling Stone*. 9 July, 1970. 18.

Beatles, no fan would want to miss out on such an experience and one that would prove to be the Beatles last appearance together.

Let it Be is a visual struggle between ending the Beatles' myth and glorifying the achievements and talents of the band. Lindsay-Hogg finds himself caught between trying to authenticate an image that represents where the Beatles were in their career and longing for the iconography and excitement of the Beatles' early days. The film was sold as an "intimate experience" that promised the audience an unrestricted look into the world of the Beatles as musicians which had been so closely guarded in the past. However, what the audience get are four guarded individuals often shielded behind traces of their public personae. If there are moments of the Beatles "for real," those moments are brief and debatable. By this point in the Beatles' lives, one wonders if it is actually impossible to separate the personae from the real self. On a practical level, Lindsay-Hogg's knew he had captivating subjects to film so the minimalist, observational style suited his needs. Unlike the Beatles' first two films, there were no rehearsals for the shoot, nor was there a script to learn. Also, the organic, back to basics approach to filmmaking worked in conjunction with the Beatles' own idea of returning to a more simplistic style of music making.

Not only does *Let it Be's* form deviate from classical documentary tropes, but these deviations also represent the shifting social climate towards traditional generic conventions. What these changes in documentary form and style represent are the focus of both Barsam and Nichol's work. Barsam notes at the beginning of his essay on nonfiction film in the 1960s that cinema for the youth culture became "a leading art form" often reflecting "a political and aesthetical revolution."⁴⁶² This is the primary reason why the Beatles' films are so important to study. Each piece of the film work has, in some way, been innovative either in style and/or in the way they promote the Beatles' image and music. *Magical Mystery Tour*, for example, saw the Beatles creating an entire project on their own which had been informed by the artistic expressions of the time to not only shake up the way in which a film could be made but also sent out strong messages about the nature of consumerism and marketing. The negative press for *Let it Be* proves that the Beatles had continued to challenge mainstream conventions. As Barsam argues, the 1960s was "a decade shaped by chaos and liberation, direct cinema represented a change from tradition, an opportunity to confront directly the social forces of the time."⁴⁶³ On another level, *Let it Be's* form is a suitable way to aid in the Beatles' quest for personal liberation from "The Beatles."

⁴⁶² Barsam, Richard M. "The Nonfiction Film." 198.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 206.

Even though the Beatles did not set out to make a film that exposed the cracks in their myth this is what *Let it Be* becomes. The film re-presents the reality of the Beatles' fractured relationship. *Let it Be* ends up confronting the mainstream critics and fans by showing how unlikely it is for the Beatles to carry on indefinitely - a young band who had been marketed for a young audience with both parties having grown up and matured. By continuing with "The Beatles" façade, each member's personal and artistic development was being stunted. In a July 1970 article for the *Chicago Tribune* the Beatles' long time press officer Derek Taylor wrote that during the latter stages of their career the band had often declared that "We can't be 30-year-old Beatles."⁴⁶⁴ That statement gives evidence that even the band knew what "Beatles" represented, what it had been built on, and what its purpose had been. But as the Beatles moved away from ideas that were no longer relevant to them in 1969, the demise of the world's most successful pop band was imminent.

⁴⁶⁴ Taylor, Derek. "The Beatles split: a report from a front-row seat." *Chicago Tribune*. 26 Jul 1970. 7.

Conclusion

“That each Beatles film was so stylistically different from its own predecessors and from the classical pop musical in general is perhaps a tribute to both their makers’ creativity and, from a broader perspective, the Beatles’ unrelenting desire to immerse themselves and their collaborators in experimentation. Unlike many other pop acts in history, they simple refused to stand still, to rest on the laurels of a successful formula...always keen to explore uncharted territories and, equally important, able to inspire a willingness in their audience to go along with them. Love them or hate them, there is no getting away from the fact that the Beatles movies are, on several counts, probably the most ‘deviant’ series of British films to attain mainstream commercial success on an international level.”⁴⁶⁵

Looking back through the histories of the music and film industries there have been a lot of “firsts.” Often such claims are open to argument and debate. Within a consumer driven society, the entertainment industries are always trying to anticipate trends and sell the “next big thing.” Some might argue that the Beatles’ career was no different. Certainly the Svengali-like managers of 1960s pop groups, including Brian Epstein, recognized the opportunity to exploit the emerging youth culture. These managers groomed and packaged their talent to fit into an idealized image even when that image could not have been further from the truth. Rivalries between pop groups had even been created to generate more publicity. For example, while the Beatles were slightly edgy and rebellious, they still had the parental seal of approval unlike the Rolling Stones whose image was created to target those harder fans who were not attracted to the Beatles. But Epstein and Andrew Loog Oldham had worked together to ensure the Beatles’ and Stones’ single and album releases did not compete in the market place.⁴⁶⁶ Also, Lennon and McCartney had given the Stones their first big hit, “I Wanna be Your Man.” Perhaps the Beatles and their successes are so well known as to be taken for granted today, but as I have shown throughout this thesis, the Beatles’ approach to music making and their undermining of established conventions onscreen

⁴⁶⁵ Neaverson, Bob. *The Beatles Movies*. London: Cassell, 1997. 117-118.

⁴⁶⁶ Oldham managed the Rolling Stones until the late 1960s and had started out as a minor press officer for the Beatles. Influenced by Epstein’s success, Oldham approached the Stones with a management deal.

and off not only influenced their contemporaries, but their legacy is still felt in contemporary pop culture.

I have shown, through a close analysis of the Beatles' films how performance styles, and film form and style undermined the generic conventions of classical and pop musicals. The conscious challenging of such conventions not only reflected the social changes brought forth by the youth culture, but also, such an approach confronted the role of the audience. Dyer writes about how musicals provide entertainment and escape for the audience while commenting on the "realities" of everyday lives and situations. His work on "Entertainment and Utopia" produced categories of various social tensions in the narrative of classical musicals and the utopian solutions the numbers provide. But I have discovered that the role of the audience was not necessarily one of passive viewing for entertainment purposes. The idea of entertainment is certainly a primary function of the Beatles' films, but for the artists involved it was no longer about simply selling a cheap product and exploiting a particular image or sound. Instead, an understanding of how musical form and performance codes worked within the genre enabled the band's filmmakers to manipulate such conventions rather than just mimic them. In understanding these issues, the filmmakers could then change the way the audience viewed the films and the way they connected with the stars. Knowledge of performance codes allowed Lester and the Beatles to control how their audience engaged with what was happening onscreen. As the pop musical was a relatively new subgenre, arguably, it would have been relatively easy to still be groundbreaking within formal and stylistic conventions by focusing on the presentation of the pop star's performance and music. The uses of rock 'n' roll music and youth orientated themes were initially enough to distinguish the pop musical from classical musicals and in doing so, naturally attracted a teenage audience demographic. But as I discussed in the introduction, thematically pop musicals focused on extremes – wholesomeness or delinquency. What makes teen films and pop musicals so important is that for the first time these films gave youths a voice. By the time a new youth culture started to emerge in the early 1960s, these more traditional pop musicals became formulaic and outdated. However, in understanding the changes to society and the youths' role within that society, and in understanding how social realism and French new wave challenged classical filmmaking, Lester was able to more accurately portray the complexities of young adulthood than had been done in the past. And in using performance codes the way he did, the viewing audience became a crucial part of the filmmaking process, rather than passive viewers.

The Beatles' films became a commentary of the nature of the performer/audience relationship. In examining film form and style, image and identity, and performance codes through the Beatles' journey from pop stars to musicians, a constant factor has been the problematic question of "What role does the audience play in the band's evolution?" In *A Hard Day's Night* the Beatles consciously use live performance codes and a backstage musical set up in order to create a sense of community with their audience but one year later, with *Help!*, the band had tried to distance themselves from their young and often hysterical audience. Frontani argues that "an important factor in the Beatles' continued success and influence...was their ability to mature with their audience."⁴⁶⁷ However, I would argue that rather than maturing *with* their audience, it was the Beatles that led their audience into maturity. When examining the Beatles' films, I gained a sense that the band's relationship with their fans was problematic and that the band often tried to place that relationship under their terms. For mainstream audiences and some critics the shift from the idealized loveable mop-tops, those Fab Four from Liverpool, was a difficult one to accept. I wonder if one of the reasons for this was because in turbulent times, it can be reassuring to hold on to something that is safe and constant, especially when the image of Beatlemania evokes a number of positive feelings. The sometimes critical and lukewarm reception of such projects as the films *Help!* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, as well as the albums post *Sgt. Pepper* are perhaps evidence of this. The Beatles' time in Hamburg kick-started their maturity perhaps well before their contemporaries still living with parents in Liverpool. From *Help!* onwards, the band was always moving towards more mature and complex ways of thinking and acting. Their film work reflected this change and asked the audience to follow them towards these new directions.

The Beatles' most iconic image, their Beatlemania image, evoked a feeling of youthfulness and the sense of good, hard working "boys next door." And in maturing, challenging the limits of that image became central to everything the Beatles released after 1965. Primarily, the band spent most of their time questioning the Beatles' myth and attempted to evolve from the iconography associated with their mop top period. While many pop stars went through phases of redefining their image, and one immediately thinks of Elvis Presley as an example, for the Beatles it was not simply a case of reinventing themselves with a new twist to the old persona. The Beatles had avoided similar gimmicks when making their films. As I have shown, moving away

⁴⁶⁷ Frontani, Michael R. *The Beatles: Image and the Media*. 227.

from Beatlemania iconography was problematic because they had a well-loved myth and a pressure to continue to work within the confines of that myth. I think this is why we can see a constant line of enquiry about the band's image throughout their career to the point where image and identity become strong themes in their films. It is this questioning of image and identity and its effect on all aspects of the band's career that have been neglected by Beatles scholars. The reason for this could be because so much work has focused on the Beatles' musical output rather than their film career. As the latter is an underrepresented area of scholarship, there is still much to write about. Important works by Neaverson, Frontani, and five pages in Ian Inglis's article on the band's album covers begin to consider the band's changing image and identity representations in visual media but this research had begun to tie all the aspects of the band's career together. For instance, through my analysis of the Beatles' films, I have considered the band's image onscreen while also acknowledging how these representations also appear in the band's music and album covers. Unfortunately, the scope of this work has restricted me from presenting a more in-depth study of how the band's album covers and evolution as songwriters connect to my main thesis of the Beatles' transition from pop stars to musicians as depicted in their films. But my work has begun to raise these issues to show where future research is needed and how reading performance goes beyond traditional mediums of stage and screen.

While Marshall has studied how stars use performance codes from the different industries separately and Dyer has primarily focused on Hollywood stars and performance, I have taken these theories to present a case study of a new approach to viewing performance. This new way places a bigger emphasis on the role of the audience and could lead to a greater discussion on audience effects in media. Also, I have presented a way of reading performance that is based on an interdisciplinary approach reliant on considering a wider range of issues than just form, style, and image. I have considered these along with social and industry changes, as well as how traditional performance codes can be undermined to manipulate audience expectations and the way in which they view and engage with performance. In looking at performance in this way, one can gain a more complete insight into how performance is constructed and maintained using a variety of media. With the emergence of new media and a greater level of involvement required of audiences, I do not think the old structures of film codes, television codes, and music codes can be exclusively used for studying performance in contemporary society. The media synergy being utilized by music performers today crosses these neatly arranged categories. The Beatles work,

lead by their film career, can be seen as a prototype for this new media experience that exists today. For example, so much of the Beatles' work depended on creating an experience for their audience – this includes the way the final concert sequence in *A Hard Day's Night* was shot, the Beatles use of mainstream television to broadcast the very countercultural *Magical Mystery Tour*, and even the inclusion of cut outs and printed lyrics on the *Sgt. Pepper* album. The Beatles as performers were not restricted to one medium or one set of performance codes and I believe that my work has shown how limiting such studies have been in the past not to consider how all these aspects of performance connect.

Today, that idea of creating an interactive experience for audiences is at the very heart of gigs, music videos, and video games. I think this research has also raised areas for debate regarding the nature of celebrity. The Beatles exploited their ordinariness even at the height of their success and their film work promoted the idea that anyone could be give the same chance of success that they had experience. Part of Apple Corps was designed with that idea in mind as the Beatles had advertised for anyone with artistic interests to submit their work to them with a promise of funding their project. The demand however was too great and there was not enough money to go around. But the idea was there and it is an idea that has started to come to fruition with the Internet and video games where the player acts as the rock star celebrity by using their own talents.

In the introduction to this work, I asked a series of questions about performance, celebrity, and image that I hoped my research on the Beatles' films would answer. One such question was: why did the Beatles use film and how did they use film? Examining the Beatles' performance in their films show us that using film allowed them not only to connect with and communicate to their audience, but it was also a way for the band to further express their artistic sensibilities. By approaching film and music as art forms, the band was able to undermine the formulaic restraints of both the film and music industries. Experimenting with different forms and styles also helped to achieve a fresh approach not only to their sound, but to their image as well. On a practical level, film enabled the band to develop as musicians since feature films and short promotional films were quicker and easier for the band to make than to spend large amounts of time touring. As the band members were largely playing themselves (even if the characterizations were at times fictional representations), and because they had an unprecedented say in the films' production, the Beatles used film to gain autonomy over their image and over their music. For example, their lyrics

could be open to multiple interpretations by listeners but in producing a music film, the Beatles could present their own interpretation. The visuals of film visually reinforced what they were not allowed to say overtly.

Another question I asked was “what factors caused the Beatles’ image to evolve?” I have argued that their use of visual media, especially film, had a direct impact on the band’s image. Again, the Beatlemania image had been carefully constructed to attract a large and wide ranging fan base, even to the point of hiding truths about the band’s personal lives. *A Hard Day’s Night* reinforces the Beatlemania image throughout the narrative and in the set ups for the musical sequences. When the Beatlemania image became restrictive, it was not just performance codes that the band changed, but their image as well. In *Help!* the band members do not wear identical suits, although their clothing is similar. They also wear trendy corduroy outfits in a variety of colors. In addition, the band’s iconic mop-tops appear more full and grown out rather than carefully groomed. *Magical Mystery Tour* symbolizes a maturity on a number of levels – the band have grown facial hair to signify adulthood, they created their own film without help from a professional director, and throughout the film the band challenge Beatlemania iconography and more generally question image. This is achieved by hiding their identity with animal costumes, wearing matching psychedelic patterned kaftans, and interacting less as a collective than in previous films. *Yellow Submarine* does not give as much focus to the Beatles’ image. Yes, they do wear colorful things and are distinguishable but the characters are not drawn with that much detail, not when compared to the Beatles’ image in “Strawberry Fields Forever,” “Rain,” or *Magical Mystery Tour*. The animators were trying to focus less on a particular image that might date the Beatles or alienate fans who favored one period of their career over another. The look of the characters is generic enough to promote the idea of a universal interpretation of the band. Everyone can bring their own idea of what the Beatles are to the film. In doing so, the animators could then place a greater emphasis on the band’s music. *Let it Be* ends the Beatles’ career as filmmakers and musicians by presenting the band as four completely separate individuals in look, thought, and musical style. The image of the band portrayed does shatter the Beatles’ myth. For example, Ringo is filmed looking ill and depressed and has a spot on his face rather than swishing his head around to the beat of the music with a wide grin, and being fetishized in a tight close up. While *A Hard Day’s Night* glamourized the Beatles’ image but depicted being a celebrity as not so glamorous, *Let it Be* portrays a very unglamorous look at celebrity and the Beatles. Had there not been as much

emphasis placed on the importance of the Beatles' film appearances and had they continued to promote themselves in the traditional ways of the pop industry, I do not think an awareness of the Beatles' image at the time would have been one of such importance. But because film was central to the band's career, they used image as a way to signify transition from pop stars to musicians just as much as they did through their music.

One final point I would like to make is that arguably, in studying the Beatles' films, there are signs of the beginnings of celebrity culture. From examining the Beatles' image and performance I have shown how the band operated as a collective and as individuals. And with the rise of the meritocracy in the early 1960s, ordinary people became widely recognized by society in a way that differed from the kind of stardom established by Hollywood.⁴⁶⁸ Musicians, footballers, actors, fashion designers, photographers, and other artists emerged as being the voice of the youth culture. In chapter three, I discussed how the Beatles positioned themselves not just as members of the counterculture but also as leaders and they publicly spoke about issues that represented the like-minded thinking of the youth and counter cultures. Marshall argues throughout his work that, "the public personality or celebrity is the site of intense work on the meaning of both individuality and collective identity in contemporary culture."⁴⁶⁹ In the Beatles' films the band's image and performance reflects the changes that took place in 1960s culture that made the decade unlike previous decades. In understanding this idea of the Beatles as celebrities representing the youth culture in the 1960s, it becomes clearer to see how the band and their works can be differentiated from previous pop musicals and pop stars. The Beatles constructed new meanings in their image and music representative of the social and cultural changes happening in 1960s society. These new meanings became the framework upon which they experimented with in their music, films, art, image, and performance style. Marshall states, "The celebrity... is the public representation of individuality in contemporary culture, where their movements and personality transformations are significant."⁴⁷⁰ Through my analysis, I have discovered Marshall's statement to be true and detailed how such transformations affected the band's career and relationship with their audience. If the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night* represented the youthfulness and optimism of the Swinging Sixties, *Let it Be* represents maturity

⁴⁶⁸ Marwick, Arthur. *The Sixties*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999. 78.

⁴⁶⁹ Marshall, P. David. *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1997. 241.

⁴⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 242.

and the end of a unique period of time for the youth culture. The journey the Beatles take in between their first and last films depict the turbulence, challenges, and new possibilities of individuality that come from questioning and undermining traditional ways of thinking.

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*Please note: References are consistently formatted under Chicago/Turabian style guidelines. It should also be noted that American spelling is used consistently throughout, except where I have quoted from British sources.

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