

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band

by The Beatles

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the release of The Beatles seminal Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band album, I was compelled to finish the review that I never completed. I was a few months short of my second birthday when the album was released, but it had a profound effect on me.



Thanks to older brothers and sisters, the album was played over and over again as I learned the basics of life and an early appreciation of music. I didn't yet know how to write or reason, but I'm confident that the countless comments that I heard at the time about the Beatles, the songs and the album were deposited into my subconscious memory for later withdrawal.

What I do remember vividly are some of the dreams I had about the imagery from the album; most notably John Lennon's glasses from the cover photos, Ringo's drum break in "A Little Help From My Friends" and the recurring nightmare I had about "Lucy In the Sky With Diamonds."

My older sister's name is Chris, known around the house as "Chrissy" as a kid, and I had this very scary dream, set at night in our backyard, that she was in the sky, with shiny things around her, hence, Chrissy in the Sky With Diamonds. It wasn't a good dream. She was kind of stuck up in the clouds with Lennon and his glasses on while the rest of us were on the ground kind of staring up at her with other weird images popping up all around.

Lennon's voice in that song really bothered me. It was as if he put Chrissy up there and was taunting us about it. There was no psychological reason for the dream. I loved my sister as I did everybody in the family and I didn't want her to be up there with that weirdo. The dream didn't go much farther than that, but it came back to me a few more times until the song was forever etched in my mind as "Chrissy in the Sky with Diamonds."

I replay the image of that dream every time I hear the song (which has only been a thousand times or so) and to this day it's one of the few Beatles songs that I don't like. The CD version of the album sounds like crap compared to my mint condition vinyl LP, but the one thing I like is that I can skip to the next song with the click of a remote control, as opposed to walking to the turntable and lifting the tone-arm and moving it to "Getting Better," which has always had a double meaning to me, as a result.

Here's how my review of the album would have sounded if I was able to put those thoughts and images together as a very mature one year-old.

The first song on this unique new album, the title track, "**Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band**," really blew my mind, which isn't saying much for a one year-old. The song is dominated by brass with some really groovy guitar licks by George Harrison woven in between. The song clomps along in a steady march and climaxes with a very

impressive ascending vocal harmony at the end. The crowd applause is a nice touch, too. Very unusual for a rock band to begin an album with an overture.

What's really cool is how the first song leads into the second; "**A Little Help From My Friends**." I don't know who these friends are that the Beatles speak of but they must have quite an influence on them. Ringo Starr shows a fine baritone voice that we've not heard before and he adds a great, albeit, simple drum break early that gives the song a moment of reflection that works to perfection.

"**Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds**" is the third track and it's quite the step back into the mellow introspective. John Lennon does the vocal and sounds almost creepy, singing in a voice we've never heard from him. The song is hauntingly breathtaking and soothing while disturbing at the same time. We aren't told who Lucy is, why she's in the sky or where diamonds come in to play but it's the Beatles, so it must be cool. It's almost as if the title of the song is an allegorical word play on something that the Beatles are not informing us about.

I don't know if I'm more frightened by the way John sings this song or the way he looks in that satin green, 19th Century military uniform on the album photos. He also now sports these round, wire-rimmed glasses that make him look really way out. It almost looks as if he's doing drugs or something, but this is the Beatles, and we all know these fine Englishmen don't dabble in that stuff.

"**Getting Better**" is next and that's right. The album gets immediately better with this song. It is a breath of fresh air following the emotional roller coaster that is the first three songs.

I've got to admit it's getting better

A little better all the time

I have to admit it's getting better

It's getting better, since you've been mine

Whomever it is that Lennon and McCartney are referring to, she must be quite a girl. I always figured since the Beatles are so famous, they must have girls throwing

themselves at them everywhere they go. I'm sure we will find out one of these days very soon who this special someone is who has had such a positive effect.

Emotions aside, Paul McCartney drives this song with his bass guitar while he and Lennon team up for a brilliant lead vocal duo throughout. It is odd to hear a bass guitar lead a song but McCartney's Rickenbacker 4001 bass does just that. Harrison's halting cadence on the guitar adds the perfect touch of an optimistic stepping forward.

Great phrasing and contradictory messages abound including *Can't get no worse*, as well as pictures of their past: *I used to be cruel to my woman*, that are perhaps better left unsaid.

Best song on the album to me; hands down.

"**Fixing a Hole**" really sent me for a loop with that somber harmonium intro. I was also wondering what kind of hole needs fixing. Anyway, very nice and powerful vocal by McCartney with a great distorted guitar break by Harrison midway through. Love the rising falsettos that close out the song. McCartney's energy builds and builds, getting seemingly desperate about a seemingly banal subject. Seems like he was spooked by the hole where the rain gets in. Stops my mind from wandering. He seems to have been caught in a moment of heightened imagination. The Beatles seem to have a lot of those types of moments these days. Well, they're getting older and maybe they're starting to experiment with different ways of thinking, or something. I heard that Lennon's been hanging around with Mick Jagger, and I hear that guy hangs with the extra groovy people.

"**She's Leaving Home**" is quite the departure in emotions once again, which seems to define this album. Beautifully Victorian in its style, the string quartet provides the perfect backdrop to this sad story of a young girl leaving home and leaving her parents heartbroken.

McCartney's vocal tells a third-person story so easy to visualize, buttressed by Lennon's answer to each of his statements in the verses, placed so cleverly in the distant background.

McCartney's falsetto soars ever more toward the climatic and terribly sad conclusion, matched by Lennon's voice of his conscience. The story doesn't have a happy ending, and I feel as if I've lost someone forever, although I will never let it happen again.

"Being For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite!" is the last song on Side A.

What the hell is going on here?

A raucous calliope and thumping drums set the tone in this peculiar tune which I may never figure out. I'm not even sure the lyrics on the recording match those on the back cover of the album.

Messrs. K and H assure the public

Their production will be second to none

And of course Henry The Horse dances the waltz!

These guys are getting really weird. It's bad enough that those words make no sense but I can swear Lennon is singing *And of course Henry The Horse and Fuzzy The Whale!*

Still makes no sense but I'm glad it's the last song on the first side because I can push the stop button on my turntable to end it and turn the album over.

"With You, Without You" opens side B. We don't get many George Harrison songs on Beatles albums and I wonder why we got this one. Sitar sounds really groovy and it's fun to watch somebody play it but, like yodeling, I don't want to hear it.

I'm sorry George. I loved "If I Needed Someone" on the Rubber Soul album and I hope to hear more beautiful songs like that in the future. This is probably just a phase George is going through with this Indian music and probably the last we hear of that stuff on a Beatles album.

"When I'm Sixty-Four" is next and now we're floating back to Earth. This song is steeped in the classic Al Jolson style of crooning in the 1920s and if I didn't know better,

I might even say it was written by McCartney by himself, even though the credit is Lennon-McCartney. You don't suppose these guys just bill every song as a co-write do you? Maybe Lennon added the line *Doing the garden, digging the weeds*. The way he's been acting lately, it almost seems like he's been digging weed, although this is the Beatles, and we know these fine Englishmen don't dabble in that stuff. Certainly not McCartney.

"**Lovely Rita**" follows that and man, where is this album going? I can't imagine McCartney being attracted to the local meter maid when we see film clips of a thousand women chasing the Beatles down the street. This song is so bland in lyric and melody I can't believe it made it onto the album. Where does this fit in? Am I missing something?

"**Good Morning, Good Morning**" follows Rita and we're going down hill Daddy-O. I would have to be on drugs to enjoy this song, and I'm sure that's not the message that the Beatles are sending because we know these guys don't do that stuff; although my suspicions are growing about Lennon. Maybe those friends he's been hanging out with are having some strange influence on him. Probably just a phase, like Harrison and the Indian music.

"**Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (Reprise)**"

Finally a good song. It seems like a week ago I was excited about how this album was getting better all the time, when I was starting to think that it can't get no worse.

This song takes off like one of those rockets they're sending into orbit nowadays. A *one, two, three, four* count off from McCartney and the Beatles are rocking like the Yardbirds on their best day. This reprise of the title track moves quickly and is over before you know it, but not before you forget it. Harrison plays some mean distorted guitar with Ringo pushing the song along with a frantic pace, which ends with the first note of the last song on the album.

It leaves us winded, but poised for a song with meaning and, more importantly, a song from John Lennon.

"**A Day In The Life**" is a tour de force emotional roller coaster that epitomizes and completes the album we thought we were getting when it started.

Lennon brings back his "Lucy" voice, sounding unusually winded and disappointed, not like we've heard from a Beatle before. He tells the sad story of *a lucky man who made the grade and blew his mind out in a car because he didn't notice that the lights had changed. A crowd of people stood and stared. They'd seen his face before* although they weren't sure *if he was from the House of Lords*.

Lots of imagery here. Perhaps Lennon is speaking metaphorically and cynically of McCartney's rise to the forefront of the band, which seems to have happened in the past year. If that is his point, he speaks as though his band mate has died, artistically, losing touch with reality and succumbing to his exploding ego.

We can't tell what's going on behind the scenes with the Beatles but Lennon has developed a very introspective and brutally honest way of expressing himself in his songs. If you ask me, strange as it may seem, he's talking about himself.

The song does an about face when the melody changes abruptly and McCartney chimes in with *Woke up, got out of bed, dragged a comb across my head*. Very interesting interlude from the guy this song may be about. I'm just getting confused with all of that when they do a brilliant drop back into the original melody.

Lennon picks back up with the vocal spouting off about 4,000 "small" holes at the Royal Albert Hall, which, coincidentally, seats about 4,000. I don't think John is going to be invited to Tea with the Queen any time soon.

The song concludes with Lennon's line, *I'd love to turn you on*, followed by an orchestral hyper-climax that ends with all hands on the piano for the final note, which rings on in a terrifying manner for what seems like eternity. I think I'll hide under the covers now.

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

It was twenty years ago today,
Sgt. Pepper taught the band to play
They've been going in and out of style
But they're guaranteed to raise a smile
So may I introduce to you
The act you've known for all these years,
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,
We hope you will enjoy the show,
We're Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.
Sit back and let the evening go
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely, Sgt. Pepper's Lonely
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.
It's wonderful to be here,
It's certainly a thrill,
You're such a lovely audience,
We'd like to take you home with us,
We'd love to take you home,
I don't really want to stop the show,
but I thought that you might like to know,
That the singer's going to sing a song,
And he wants you all to sing along,
So let me introduce to you
The one and only Billy Shears
And Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.

A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

A little help from my friends
What would you think if I sang out of tune,
Would you stand up and walk out on me,
Lend me your ears and I'll sing you a song,
And I'll try not to sing out of key,
I get by with a little help from my friends,
I get high with a little help from my friends,
going to try with a little help from my friends,
What do I feel when my love is away
(Does it worry you to be alone)
How do I do by the end of the day
(Are you sad because you're on your own)
No I get by with a little help from my friends,
Do you need anybody,
I need somebody to love,
Could it be anybody,
I want somebody to love,
Would you believe in a love at first sight,
Yes, I'm certain that it happens all the time,
What do you see when you turn out the light,
I can't tell you, but I know it's mine,
Oh I get by with a little help from my friends,
Do you need anybody,
I just need somebody to love,
Could it be anybody,
I want somebody to love,
I get by with a little help from my friends,
Yes I get by with a little help from my friends,
With a little help from my friends.

LUCY IN THE SKY WITH DIAMONDS

Picture yourself on a boat on a river,
With sycamore trees and sunlit shade
Somesbody calls you, you answer quite slowly,
A girl with kaleidoscope eyes
Cellophane flowers of yellow and green,
Towering over your head
Look for the girl with the sun in her eyes,
And she's gone
Lucy in the sky with diamonds,
Follow her down to a bridge by a fountain
Where rocking horse people eat
marshmallow peas,
Everyone smiles as you drift past the flowers.

That grows so incredibly high
Newspaper taxis appear on the shore,
Waiting to take you away,
Climb in the back with your head in the clouds,
And you're gone,
Lucy in the sky with diamonds,
Picture yourself on a train in a station,
With Plasticine porters with looking glass ties,
Suddenly someone is there at the turnstile,
The girl with the kaleidoscope eyes.

GETTING BETTER

It's getting better all the time
I used to get mad at my school
The teachers who taught me weren't cool
You're holding me down, turning me round
Filling me up with your rules,
I've got to admit it's getting better
It's getting better since you've been mine,
Me used to be a angry young man
Me hiding me head in the sand
You gave me the word
I finally heard
I'm doing the best that I can
I've got to admit it's getting better
I used to be cruel to my woman
I beat her and kept her apart from the things that she loved
May I was mean but I'm changing my mind
And I'm doing the best that I can
I admit it's getting better
A little better all the time
Yes I admit it's getting better
It's getting better since you've been mine

THING A BOLE

I'm living a hole where the rain gets in
And stops my mind from wandering
Where it will go
I'm filling the cracks that ran through the floor
And left my mind from wandering
Where it will go
And it really doesn't matter if I'm wrong
I'm right
Where I belong I'm right
Where I belong See the people standing there who disagree and never win
And wonder why they don't get in my door
I'm painting my nose in the colourful way
And when my mind is wandering
There I will go
And it really doesn't matter if I'm wrong I'm right
Where I belong I'm right
Where I belong
Silly people run around they worry me
And never ask me why they don't get past my door
I'm taking the time for a number of things
That weren't important yesterday
And I will go
I'm living a hole where the rain gets in
And stops my mind from wandering
Where it will go

MY SISTER MARY

Wednesday morning at five o'clock as
the day began
Silently closing her bedroom door
Leaving the note that she hoped would
say more
She goes downstairs to the kitchen
clutching her handkerchief
Quietly turning the backdoor key
Stepping outside like is free
She (We gave her those old magazines)
in leaving (Sacrificed most of our lives)
home (We gave her every thing
money could buy)
She's leaving home after living alone

For so many years. Bye, bye
Father sees us his wife gets into her
dressing gown
Picks up the letter that's lying there
Standing alone at the top of the stairs
She breaks down and cries to her husband
daddy our baby's gone
Who would she trust so thoughtlessly
How could she do this to me,
She (We never thought of ourselves)
is leaving (Never a thought for ourselves)
home (We struggled hard all
our lives to get by)
She's leaving home after living alone
For so many years. Bye, bye
Friday morning at nine o'clock she is far
away
Waiting to keep the appointment she
made
Meeting a man from the motor trade
She (What did we do that was wrong
to leaving. We didn't know it was wrong
for us)
Fun (is the one thing that
money can't buy)
Something inside that was always denied
For so many years. Bye, bye
She's leaving home bye bye

BEING FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. KITE!
For the benefit of Mr. Kite!
There will be a show tonight on
television
The Hendersons will all be there
Late of Pablo Fanque's Fair - what a scene!
Over men and horses hoops and garters
Landy through a broadhead of red fire!
In this way Mr. K. will challenge the world!
The celebrated Mr. K.
Performs his feat on Saturday at
Bishopgate
The Hendersons will dance and sing
As Mr. Kite flies through the ring they'll
be late
Messrs. K. and H. assure the public
Their production will be second to none
And of course Henry The Horse dances
the waltz!
The band begins at ten to six
When Mr. K. performs his tricks without
a sound
And Mr. H. will demonstrate
Ten summers he'll undertake on
solid ground
Having been some days in preparation
A splendid time is guaranteed for all
And tonight Mr. Kite is topping the bill.
John Lennon & Paul McCartney

WHY TRY WITHOUT YOU
We were talking - about the space
between us all
And the birds - who hide themselves
in a cloud of blission
Never planning the truth - then it's far
too late - when they pass away
Who pass the world and lose their sense
they don't know - they can't see - and
you're out of them!
To try our best to hold it there - with
our love
Which our love - we could have the best
if they only knew
To be sure we'll still within yourself
because she can make you change
And in any of mine really - only very small
and life flows on within you and without
you
We were talking - about the love that
grows so tall and big and deep
Who pass the world and lose their sense
they don't know - they can't see - and
you're out of them!
When you're seen beyond yourself
then you may find - peace of mind - is
waiting there -
And the time will come when you see
we're all one, and life flows on within
you and without you.
George Harrison

WHEN I'M SIXTY-FOUR
When I get older losing my hair,
Many years from now,
Will you be sending me a Valentine
Birthday greetings bottle of wine,
If I'd been out till quarter to three
Would you lock the door,
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four
You'll be older too,
And if you say the word,
I could stay with you,
Every summer we can rent a cottage,
In the Isle of Wight, if it's not too dear
We shall scrimp and save
Grandchildren on your knee
You'll chuck it Dave
I could be handy, mending a fuse
When you're lights have gone,
You can knit a sweater by the fireside
Sunday morning go for a ride,
Doing the garden, digging the weeds,
Who could ask for more,
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four
Every summer we can rent a cottage,
In the Isle of Wight, if it's not too dear
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Doing the garden, digging the weeds,
Who could ask for more,
Will you still need me, will you still feed me,
When I'm sixty-four

LOVELY RITA
Lovely Rita meter maid,
Lovely Rita meter maid,
Lovely Rita meter maid,
Nothing can come between us,
When it gets dark I low your heart away,
Standing by a parking meter,
When I caught a glimpse of Rita,
Falling in a net in her little white book,
In a cap she looked much older,
And the bag across her shoulder
Made her look a little like a military man,
Lovely Rita meter maid,
May I inquire discreetly,
When are you free,
To take some tea with me,
Took her out and tried to win her,
Had a laugh and over dinner,
Told her I would really like to see her
again,
Get the bill and Rita paid it,
Took her home I nearly made it,
Sitting on the sofa with a sister or two,
Oh, lovely Rita meter maid,
Where would I be without you,
Give us a wink and make me think of you

GOOD MORNING, GOOD MORNING
Nothing to do to save his life call his wife in
Nothing to say but what a day how's
your boy been
Nothing to do it's up to you
I've got nothing to say but it's O.K.
Good morning, good morning
Glad to work don't want to go feeding
the world
Feeding the home you start to roam
this traffic in town
Everybody knows there's nothing doing
Everything is changed it's like a rain
Everyone you see is half asleep
And I hope one day you're in the street
Good morning, good morning
After a while you start to smile now you
feel cool
Then you decide to take a walk by the
old school
Nothing had changed it's still the same
I've got nothing to say but it's O.K.
Good morning, good morning
People running round it's five o'clock,
Everywhere in town it's getting dark,
Everyone you see is full of life,
It's time for fish and meat the wife,
Somebody needs to know the time, glad

that I'm here
Watching the skirts you start to flirt now
you're in gear
Go to a show you hope she goes
I've got nothing to say but it's O.K.
Good morning, good morning . . .

SGT. PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND

We hope you have enjoyed the show
Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.
We're sorry but it's time to go
Sergeant Pepper's lonely
Sergeant Pepper's lonely
Sergeant Pepper's lonely
Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.
We'd like to thank you once again
Sergeant Pepper's one and only Lonely
Hearts Club Band
It's getting very near the end
Sergeant Pepper's lonely
Sergeant Pepper's lonely
Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

I read the news today oh boy
About a lucky man who made the grade
And though the news was rather sad
Well I just had to laugh
I saw the photograph
He blew his mind out in a car
He didn't notice that the lights had
changed
A crowd of people stood and stared
They'd seen his face before
Nobody was really sure
If he was from the House of Lords
I saw a film today oh boy
The English Army had just won the war
A crowd of people turned away
But I just had to look
Having read the book
I'd love to turn you on
Woke up, fell out of bed,
Dragged a comb across my head
Found my way downstairs and drank a
cup,
And looking up I noticed I was late
Found my coat and grabbed my hat
Made the bus in records flat
Found my way upstairs and had a smoke,
Somebody spoke and I went into a dream
I read the news today oh boy
Four thousand holes in Blackburn,
Lancashire
And though the holes were rather small
They had to count them all
How they know how many holes it takes
to fill the Albert Hall
I'd love to turn you on
John Lennon & Paul McCartney

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There is this developing tavern tale with Beatles weirdos that Paul is dead. There are countless "clues" on the album giving credence to the story such as Paul standing with his back to the camera on the back album cover and the lyric, He blew his mind out in a car. There is also a message divulged on the recent single, "Strawberry Fields Forever," which conveys that I Buried Paul at the end of the track. Incidentally, that song and "Penny Lane," the B-side, would have fit much better on this album than any number of the other tracks that made it.

The Paul is dead thing is actually a clever ploy on the part of the Beatles marketing bandwagon but I have to ask myself, why would they need more publicity? Also, who is

the guy they found to replace him who writes songs, sings, plays incredible bass, guitar and keyboards? I guess it must be those guys from Phil Spector's "Wrecking Crew."

The next thing you know, they're going to be circulating stories that it wasn't Lee Harvey Oswald who killed Kennedy.

"Sgt. Pepper" is undeniably original, at times scary and sometimes too weird for listening pleasure. I think the guys are spending a little too much time with their friends, although I'm sure they have lots more friends now that they're The Beatles. Nonetheless, I'm sure there are plenty of great albums to come, and I bet Lennon starts hanging around with the right people again. I heard he has this really nice new girlfriend who's from Japan.

I bet she straightens his life right out and the band is together for the next 20 years.