

BEATLES in
YOUR  SOUL

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DENNIS ALSTRAND



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INTRODUCTION

I think I've become so interested in this book because not only is Beatlemania the central pillar of my life, but I know it is for others too! I want people to realize that Beatlemania is a true part of their life and that they should embrace it and be proud! Don't hide it, there's so many of us in the world!

~ Robyn Perry

In our distant past, a tidal wave swept from Liverpool out through the world. It affected us as none other had before. Now, we can only look back. Just one second is all we ask: One passing moment of those Beatles being back together again. Well, your Beatle moment is in this book, somewhere. As you read on, a long discarded memory will open its door and walk into the sunshine again. But read with care. You might find yourself laughing again at something you had long ago forgotten. Or your moment might be filled with bittersweet memories, as it did with my wife Sandi. I happened to walk into the room and found her in tears, reliving the death of John Lennon. It was an incident she had suppressed all of these years.

This project began about three years ago. Mike Montana (creator of the Facebook page *The Beatles' Universe*) and I were writing essays about various Beatle songs and albums. We worked well together, and had a blast doing them. The Beatles Universe responded from all parts of the world, each with different Beatle-shaped viewpoints and memories. It was the “*from around the world*” part that turned me on to compiling people’s thoughts. After all, The Beatles weren’t only big in America or England. Wouldn’t it be interesting to hear from someone who grew up in Finland, The Netherlands, Malaysia, Canada (barely?), China (yes, China), or Mexico? And what of Australia where the impact was the biggest of all? I set out to encapsulate how The Beatles affected the world, regardless of age or nationality.

I'm sad to say that two countries are not represented in this book: Japan and the Philippines. I had contact with only one person who was in Japan back in the day, but received no response. I know a number of elder Filipinos/Filipinas. The aftermath of The Beatles' infamous decision to decline a dinner party thrown by Imelda Marcos is imbedded deep in The Beatles' memory, but none of my Filipino friends remember it. They barely remember The Beatles.

Paul McCartney has said that he no longer reads Beatle books because they're always inaccurate. Paul, I wish you would read this one. Ringo, too. It cannot be inaccurate because these are *our* thoughts and memories. These are our love-letters to you along with John, George, Stu, Pete, Brian, the other George, and everybody who was involved in bringing us the dream. And sorry, John, but in compiling this book I've discovered that the dream is not over. The tidal wave that the four of you created over fifty years ago has not quite receded yet.

I recommend that you get your Beatles record collection ready as you read the book, especially the sections on the songs and the albums. We're going in depth!

Reader, this is your book. You might be in it. I hope it brings back at least one second of The Beatles alive and well.

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BEATLES in
YOUR  SOUL

♪ Chapter 7

INNER REFLECTIONS ON EACH BEATLE

History is a sculptor of lives, turning famous people into statues that we choose to love, hate . . . or ignore. We all see the statue differently. Some will view it from one angle and love it. Others will look at it from a different aspect and detest the thing.

At times it's hard to keep in mind that these people of history were (or are) living, compassionate, breathing human beings experiencing the same day-to-day problems and foibles that we all do.

If the person went through the 24-hour-a-day grind that it takes to become famous, they probably were driven by deep inner insecurity issues, and had a real need to be loved and accepted. The Beatles drove relentlessly to a new level of fame that eclipsed all that came before it.

This chapter is about the individuality of The Beatles. It will be obviously woefully short of commentary about each Beatle.

♪ STU SUTCLIFFE

Stu Sutcliffe is the man for those who look for the romantic side of a story. He was 'The Beatles' bass player for a few years and went with them on their first two hellish trips to Hamburg, Germany. He was an art student and philosopher, seemingly much more tender-hearted than the other hard-edged Beatles ever dreamed of being. Paul McCartney was a constant thorn in Stu's Beatle-life. During one of their German stays, he met and fell in love with Astrid Kirchherr. The sad ending came not long after he left the Beatles to stay in Germany with her. He died, suddenly, of an intracerebral hemorrhage on April 10, 1962, leaving Astrid and best friend John Lennon shattered.

Stan Edwards says, "my friend, Geoff Davies, saw them, knew them. Liverpool days says Stu was a very talented artist. He says he was a competent bass player. He saw the quarrymen at the cavern in 57, and saw most cavern gigs."

Steven Jackson says, "From everything I have read, Stu was a very talented young man."

Emiliano De Blas Gomez says, "Well his hair and the sunglasses make him look beast."

"Through all these years, forever, Stu Sutcliffe was just this guy from history.," says Rocco Procione. "Just a guy who died a long time ago, never really alive if you know what I mean. Then I read *The Beatles Anthology*, the big book that came out with the other stuff. And there, amongst the story-telling quotes from the other Beatles, was one from Stu Sutcliffe, living and breathing and talking about being in the band and what he was going to do. Suddenly he had flesh and blood and living thoughts and dreams of a future. More than the guy with the sunglasses in the black and white photographs. His death really jarred lives, especially Astrid and John's."

♪ JOHN LENNON

John Lennon was the heart of The Beatles through all of their early years: Never the most technically talented, but always the one who kept the others going.

Rich Allen remembers John well. “John was a genius. More than that, he was prophetic. He knew that he would be a rock star, bigger than Elvis. As Paul, then George, and finally, Ringo came aboard, it was John who was the driving force. He pushed the others to improve. He saw a vision of The Beatles being bigger than anyone. He strove for perfection and that carried over to the others. John KNEW that The Beatles were going to be the best ever. And John never lifted his foot from the pedal.”

Kathryn Campbell says, “When I was 13, I fell for John Lennon. I didn’t realize at the time how powerful that would become over the years. All I knew was I related to John’s wit and irreverence. He was the first ‘boy’ who made my heart flutter and my knees weak. Whenever I watched The Beatles in movies or on TV, it was always John who caught my eye. All the other girls I knew were Paul fans. Paul was cute and all, but John just jumped off the screen for me. As I grew older, I identified with John even more. His ideology and passion matched my own. I was indignant about social injustice and John had a message for the world of Peace. I admired John’s courage to be honest. He always told the truth. I tell people that if you want to know who John was, or how he felt, just listen to his music. It was always the music that made me admire him more and more. I shall love John Lennon until I draw my last breath.”

Denise Culton is “not certain *exactly* why it’s John but I have always had a soft spot for him in my heart after hearing about his childhood. Love his voice. Songs. Darn cute too but that is only a part of it.”

Ben Bettles remembers “John’s sense of humour. The humour in his lyrics and his books gives him the edge over Ringo, who comes into the reckoning because I have never seen anyone so ‘laid back’ when performing and in normal conversation.”

“John Lennon,” says Maxwell Martello, “represented the force and the vulnerability of The Beatles to me. At first he was just the force, an overwhelming superhuman best represented by the concert scene in the movie *A Hard Day’s Night*. Look at him! Listen to that voice! He was on guard and nothing could touch him. That force of will spread to the other Beatles. During John’s days at the helm, they played together with a power that we all felt. Everybody in the world. Then, if you looked for it, he started letting his guard down. “Let me take you down. The world is treating me bad. Deep inside I’m a loser and I need help. I’d better hide my love away.” All of it done with the power of The Beatles behind it made it easy to think they were just pop songs, but I noticed. The Beatles didn’t play the blues, but John expressed them as well as anybody ever.

“John always seemed self-conscious to me. How many times would he be walking by a camera and, though he was looking forward, you *knew he was aware of that camera?* And he’d always finally glance at the camera, pull a face, and then go looking forward again. When you think of it, when you’re one of the four most famous people in the world, it would be difficult to *not* be self-conscious. When, as in the later Beatle years, every word is analyzed, of course you’d hide your messages.

“Paul McCartney’s Beatles were incredible, there is no denying. That was *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper*. What more eye opening, technical greatness has ever been achieved? I love those albums. But give me the heart-felt John Lennon Beatles all playing together, the force of those four men strapping on their instruments and sitting behind the drums and unleashing a torrent of energy that captured the world and held us hostage.” More from Maxwell about John in the chapter entitled “And in the End . . .”

♪ RINGO STARR

At first, few respondents offered their thoughts on Ringo. Not wanting to leave the lovable drummer behind, I went to The Beatles Universe Facebook page and asked for help there. The first to respond was Emiliano De Blas Gomez who says that “Ringo Starr’s personality is funny, his appearance in movies are funny. His singing is very different because he has a deeper, voice which makes the songs different; recognizable. He drums in a way that others don’t. He could literally tune into a song like in ‘Ticket To Ride’ and ‘Get Back.’ He is the master of feel. Ringo Starr may be very undervalued, but when you start reading about him you start to learn that he has talent, he can really show what he is made of.”

Hugh Arromont feels about the same way. “They had to have Ringo. He had to be there. What would The Beatles have been like without him? What would *A Hard Day’s Night* have been like? What would the records have been like? Most importantly, what would the chemistry have been? If you give it some thought and work Pete Best into the equation, it might have worked just as well. It’s impossible to tell how creative Pete would have become. Who knows? All I know is that Ringo was one fourth of that four headed monster.”

Andrew Jungelson responded, “Erm, I’d say it was Ringo’s charisma more than his drumming skills. He was always smiling, bobbing his head, taking center stage in their films, etc. Had it been someone like Best, regardless of drumming skill, he didn’t have the charm. Say what you want about his nose, Ringo made the band look so much better.”

Jaime Benenate replied to Andrew, “Sorry, but Ringo, for his time, and for that particular band, was a great drummer. He is vastly underrated.”

Both make good points. Ringo *did* bring an individuality to the group that would have been different with another drummer. And also true that I have yet to read an interview with a top-flight drummer who didn’t think Ringo was great.

♪ GEORGE HARRISON

There's a sub-culture of under-appreciated band musicians. Usually there are one or two band members up front and then there's a musician who turns out to be creative and had a lot to do with the band's sound. They are referred to as "the George Harrison of . . ." Richard Wright was the George Harrison of Pink Floyd, John Paul Jones was the George Harrison of Led Zeppelin, and George Harrison was the George Harrison of The Beatles. He, too, was a full one-fourth of the collective and brought a nice sound to The Beatles' mix.

"George was often referred to as the quiet Beatle," wrote someone whose name, sadly, has been lost to history. "I believe that he was anything but. It was George who often pushed the boundaries. He introduced the sitar and eastern philosophy to the band. Some of his songwriting, particularly on *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, did up the game and nudge John and Paul to expand their songwriting. I hear little of this but the first song recorded by The Beatles for a record label was 'Cry For A Shadow,' written by George and John. The first recording ever by the 3 of them was 'In Spite Of All The Danger,' written by Paul and George. George would never collaborate with either Beatle again. George brought much more to The Beatles than most realize."

Hugh Arromont is still a fan. "I'm a 'behind the scenes' guy. If I see a band and someone is up front shouting and waving and saying 'hey, look at me!' I'll instinctively find myself craning my head to look around that person. I want to see what those background guys are doing because they're usually the best in their own way. Ringo and George filled that bill for The Beatles. All of them were fantastic in every way, but I like to listen to R&G revving the motor of the songs.

"By the time The Beatles broke up, George Harrison had developed his own unique sound. No one else sounded like him. That slide guitar style he used on his solo songs was pure George. When it comes on, you know right away. He didn't have much of a voice but seemed

to recognize that fact and kept songs into his own range. When he allowed it, his songs were great fun to listen to. ‘Crackerbox Palace,’ ‘Blow Away,’ ‘When We Was Fab,’ they all make me feel glad to be alive. I miss that man.”

. . .

♪ Chapter 8

AND IN THE END . . .

Looking back, all the signs were there. The four men were galloping off into their own sunsets. Not many of us chose to think it could actually happen that the closing credits to the biggest story of our lives would roll.

The sheer effrontery of such a thought might have buzzed like a bee outside of our bonnets.

And how many years did it take to believe John's nonsense that "the dream is over"? How dare them plant the dream in the garden of the world and then rip it out by the roots? But then . . . was it really a dream? Was it? Were The Beatles so powerful that they could waggle their guitars around and cause us to fall into a trance?

John was the only one with the fortitude to let us in on the new reality, that the dream was, indeed, over. He had to if he wanted to transform into John Lennon instead of John Lennon, Beatle. But those were the saddest of all possible words: the dream is over. I still cringe.

This chapter will require some refresher breaks, so read on knowing that good memories will be supplied with tearful ones.

EMILIANO DE BLAS GOMEZ: Every time I listen to "The End" or "Get Back" and think about their break up, I really do feel bad. At some points I even want to cry because they made a whole

lot in little time and it's just heart breaking that they had to end that way.

TONY CHRISTO: If you want to know the truth I feel that it had to do with Paul more than anything else, but I cried when they broke up.

DARCIE NAOMI: I was in complete disbelief. Didn't want to accept it. Cried and cried. Still not over it and get emotional quite often when I listen to or watch them play. Just try and make it through a Paul McCartney concert without shedding any tears . . . can't!

Okay, breathe. . . . Let's put A Hard Day's Night into our player. Fast forward. Blippeldybloppeldybloopeldyscrimsonscramson . . . wait! Roll back a bit. There they are, once again, coming down those steps and running onto the field! Can't buy me love no! Okay. We all good?

TRUETT GARNER: I remember riding to school, reading McCartney's announcement of the break-up in the newspaper. I was thunderstruck. It was like JFK's assassination all over again, (a feeling I would reprise on Dec. 8, 1980, and Nov. 29, 2001).

In the back of my mind, I'd thought they'd go on forever making the soundtrack of my life, like they had been doing. I had recently started my own band and had been depressed at the breakup of two of my favorite groups at the time, Buffalo Springfield and Cream. The breakup of The Beatles was much worse in that it left a hole that has never been filled to my satisfaction, although Led Zeppelin came the closest. As George Harrison so eloquently wrote, "All things must pass."

JOHN BEZZINI: One of The Beatles great assets was their great sense of timing. They arrived in America when the USA had just

suffered a terrible tragedy and they provided the soundtrack for one of the 20th century's most tumultuous decades. They ended on top of the musical world making people wish for more.

HUGH ARROMONT: The Beatles were like heroin, weren't they? Like *some* kind of wonder drug. And we got plenty of doses in the earlier days. There were the movies, albums, all that. Okay, we were able to come down a bit when they stopped all the touring and appearances, right? And the mustaches were fine, although I missed the mop top thing. But okay. Then, we came down a bit more when they asked us to accept just one album a year. Okay, we can go along with that. Because each album was so different than any other anyone had done. Okay. It took some getting used to, but it wasn't too bad considering. We got by. But . . . *no more Beatles? No more Beatles?! Are there any questions? Yes! Are you fucking crazy?!!* Noooooo! No break up!!

RICH ALLEN: I, to this day, believe that it would have been a better outcome had Brian not passed away so tragically young. There would probably not have been Apple Records, which was the beginning of the end of The Beatles.

They were used, abused, robbed and taken advantage of in every way imaginable. I doubt that that would have happened with Eppy still their manager. It was legally impossible for a Beatles reunion while the court cases were ongoing (thanks a lot, Allen Klein). Just as the last of the lawsuits were winding down, just as John rediscovered his passion for writing, he was gone.

DAVID SALES: I cried when they broke up. I moved on. Then 10 years ago I chanced to hear "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" and thought, that's a good song. I bought the red and blue albums and rediscovered their music all over again, I now own every CD they have released.

BONNIE MASTERJOHN: I thought it was really really sad. It was like a whole era, something epic, had finished. Something really important that was over now and we could never go back.

HETTY HADEN: I did not really blame Yoko, but I knew after watching *Let It Be* that they were not happy as a group anymore. I did resent seeing her in every single song footage at that time. I was actually happy for George that he was finally getting the recognition he deserved, as a songwriter and musician, when *All Things Must Pass* came out. And Ringo and John had their own solo successes, so their music continued on without them as a group entity. It was nice to see them contribute to each other's successful solo efforts, but I did notice Paul was not part of that. He formed Wings and flew off to do his own thing. That made the Anthology project even more of a surprise and very special.

MARY SQUIRES: I was very sad when they broke up, but wasn't that surprised. You could see they were not happy together. Growing up with them and seeing this group with songs and sounds unlike any other at that time; they were a tight knit group, laughing, joking. Then they became four very different people who had done everything music-wise and looking unhappy.

JOHN BEZZINI: I am probably in the minority believing that it was a good thing that The Beatles never got back together, as the expectations of a reunion could never be matched by our imaginations. The breakup was a progression, which had a lot of positive elements like giving George the opportunity to flourish as a songwriter.

MAXWELL MARTELLO: During the days of the breakup, everyone thought John was crazy with his slogans and bed-ins. And even with Yoko and her screaming. Not me. What he was doing made total sense to me. And I could not believe that he was being

maligned for being with his soul mate and trying to bring peace to a violent world. Yet he was. He was clear and open about what he was doing and the way he was doing it. And yet, people called him a clown. All that weirdness was his way of dealing with a deep-rooted sadness, of having been part of a huge pop-machine that he ended up regretting. Depressed people, the talented ones like John, write with a greater depth. Another one of those, Don McLean, wrote some of the most beautiful words I've ever heard. They were meant for Vincent Van Gogh, but to me, they describe John Lennon in those days. "Now I understand what you're trying to say to me. How you suffered for your sanity. How you tried to set them free. They would not listen, they did not know how. Perhaps they'll listen now." I'm still listening. Peace.

JOHN LENNON: Everybody wants the image to carry on. You want to carry on. The press around, too, because they want the free drinks and the free whores and the fun; everybody wants to keep on the bandwagon. We were the Caesars; who was going to knock us when there were a million pounds to be made? All the handouts, the bribery, the police, all the fucking hype. Everybody wanted in, that's why some of them are still trying to cling on to this: Don't take Rome from us, not a portable Rome where we can all have our houses and our cars and our lovers and our wives and office girls and parties and drink and drugs, don't take it from us, otherwise you're mad, John, you're crazy, silly John wants to take this all away. (*John Lennon: The Rolling Stone Interview*, Jann S. Wenner, 1970)

♪ INTERVIEW: ROBYN PERRY

Nineteen-year-old Robyn Perry is a super fan. Not only that, but a young super fan. In the 30,000 strong Facebook group, The Beatles Universe, Robyn is the Youth Ambassador. And she does her job well.

ALSTRAND: I don't even know what "Beatle generation" you would be labeled as being in, but it seems to me that you are almost defiantly

proud of being such a fan at your age. In fact, I'd say that you are as much (or more) of a committed Beatle fanatic as many of us old-timers. The stage is yours. Just how did you get into these four guys, anyway?

PERRY: I have two specific instances that were very special and have stayed with me. The first is that my mom always used to rent The Beatles' 1 album on CD from the local library. She rented and renewed it so much I actually thought we owned it. I remember having the CD booklet in my hands and flipping through it, looking at all the colorful pictures of them and their various albums. They were gorgeous, absolutely gorgeous. I remember I would have a chunky little portable CD player next to me and I would play "Love Me Do" over and over again so much that my mom got mad and threatened that she wouldn't rent the CD anymore if I kept playing it. I actually learned how to use a CD player because of that album. I couldn't have been older than seven. The second experience is with the same album I was in the car with my mom and she was playing "Day Tripper" as loud as the car stereo could go. I can still feel the guitar riff echoing throughout my entire body just as I did "all those years ago." The entire song was perfect: the voice, the guitar, the beat. It gave me the shivers and it still does. 4th grade was when I officially became obsessed.

ALSTRAND: Officially obsessed?!

PERRY: Officially. I began buying all their albums on CD and buying and wearing t-shirts. They had become an essential part of my life. Now that I think back on it and begin to analyze the psychology behind it, I think the reason why I became so obsessed with them is because I was always very different from the rest of the kids. I was always so much more mature: I usually just hung out with the teachers, or when I did play, I wanted to lead so much it drove the other kids insane. Also in fourth grade, I was the first girl in my grade to hit puberty, which didn't add much to my acceptability. The Beatles were there for me, so I clung to them. They were my safety net and I'm so glad I had them.

ALSTRAND: As the creation of this book has gone on “The Beatles were always there for me” seems to have become its theme. Keep rolling, Robyn!

PERRY: In the 5th grade, I had just purchased *Please Please Me* on CD back when they still came in the hard cases, not the 2009 remaster ones that come as a whole piece of printed cardboard or whatever. I remember ripping the plastic off while still in the car, just so excited for my new album. I opened up the case, and on the back of the CD booklet was the picture of the boys from the front, but they were all divided up so you could see them individually. For some reason, I was absolutely smitten after seeing that photo. I just thought they were so beautiful. I had already been obsessed for about a year at that point, but that was the point I absolutely knew they had me and I had them for the rest of my life. I felt it in my soul. I still remember the feeling to this day: my solar plexus began to hurt, it hit me so hard. I was a goner forever.

ALSTRAND: You mentioned “Love Me Do” earlier. One of the revelations during the creation of this book is how much that song did to introduce The Beatles’ music to the world. You’ve told us about your earliest experiences. How do you view your Beatle world today?

PERRY: My experiences are probably very different from the average Beatles fan that actually grew up in the 60s. The Beatles have always been a part of my life: They didn’t come in at a later time such as when I was a pre-teen or teenager. They are my everything and I would never change it for the world. I am so very proud of being such a big fan and I’m so glad other people love it, too. I guess I can be considered The Beatles’ personal Youth Ambassador not only to The Beatles Universe (Facebook group), but to the entire world. It’s an honor to spread their love.

ALSTRAND: With all the help you were in the development of this book, I hope your star will continue to rise. Thank you, Robyn!