A splendid time is guaranteed for all: The recreation of The Beatles Sgt. Pepper album on stage

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Abstract

The Beatles "Sgt Peppers" album, released at the height of the 1967 British "Summer Of Love", combined electronic experimentalism with harmonic adventure, creating sounds that evoked an aural representation of the psychedelic experience, becoming signifiers of the counterculture of the era. The Beatles conventional assignment of instruments also diminished in importance, and together with their "studio as instrument" ethos would make stage performance of those songs by the performers on the record impossible. Paradoxically, the 50th anniversary of the album's release in 2017 included a multitude of live presentations of the album, bringing together performers and audiences to share in a musical conceit and recreate something that never actually happened. The recreation on stage of the album by Alain Pire's Lonely Hearts Club Band provided a unique opportunity for collective practice as research to deconstruct available recordings and studio outtakes, as an auto-ethnographic study to examine and reproduce performative aspects of the recording process, with live mixing establishing the final balance. This chapter considers how recreating important sonic features is entwined with notions of authenticity, staging, performance and entertainment, and discusses the value of practical reconstruction and shared tacit knowledge in the understanding of forgotten techniques.

Introduction

In 1967, The Beatles released Sgt. Pepper, an album that took 700 hours of studio time and embodied their "studio as instrument" ethos to create music that could not be reproduced live. The innovative development of recording techniques during this period created sounds that became signifiers of the counterculture of the era, as studio engineers strove to evoke an aural representation of the psychedelic experience. Together with electronic manipulation of performances, The Beatles conventional assignment of instruments also "significantly diminished in importance, an approach that would make stage performance of those songs by the performers on the record impossible", while Moore (2001) states "the only thing we have approaching an authoritative score . . . is the recording itself".

Paradoxically, the 50th anniversary of the album's release in 2017 included a multitude of live performances of the album, from the costumed orchestral bombast of The Bootleg Beatles at Liverpool Arena to lesser but no less ambitious re-enactments, bringing together performers and audiences to share in a musical conceit and recreate something that never actually happened.

The recreation on stage of the album in sequence by Alain Pire's Lonely Hearts Club Band in Huy and Mons, Belgium, on 13 and 14 October 2017, and reprised the following year, provided a unique opportunity not only to perform but also to examine the process as an autoethnographic study of music making beyond boundaries of the locality. The concerts bought together 27 musicians across Europe into a musical landscape defined by a love of The Beatles repertoire.

Due to the geographical spread of musicians, pre-production relied on a collective practice as research to deconstruct available recordings and studio outtakes. Thus, the participants collaborated in a unique interactive music-making approach, sharing research and tacit knowledge, coming together in the final rehearsal to combine into an arrangement with live mixing establishing the final balance.

This chapter discusses the logistics of production and considers how recreating important sonic features is entwined with notions of authenticity, staging, performance and entertainment.

British psychedelia and the great race

The Beatles album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was released on 26 May 1967, at the height of the British "Summer of Love" which crystallised the psychedelic-inspired counterculture into a mainstream media affair. The album was recorded at EMI Studios, in Abbey Road, London, between December 1966 and April 1967, and mixed in mono with the band in attendance, and also in stereo which was soon to become the principal format for popular music and remains the available legacy version. It was the first Beatles album released coincidently in the UK and the USA with the same track order (previous American releases had altered the content of the British releases). The resulting album expanded on the electronic experimentalism first explored on Revolver (1966) and combined this with orchestration, taking impetus from The Beach Boys album Pet Sounds, to create a fusion of sonic manipulation and harmonic adventure. Moore concurs that "The sheer visibility and stylistic diversity of the material on the album was, and remains, astonishing" (Moore, 2001: 57) and argues that McCartney succeeded in defeating the Beach Boys at their own game.

The album was released in a full colour package of gatefold sleeve with iconic cover, The Beatles in psychedelic costume filling the double inside sleeve, together with lyrics printed on the back and an insert containing cutouts of moustache, badge and Sgt Pepper stripes that invited the listener to participate fully in the occasion.

Whiteley, in The Space Between The Notes, makes the point that "the counterculture was largely concerned with alternative modes of living which involved, to a great extent, the use of drugs as a means to exploring the imagination and self expression" (Whiteley, 1992: 3) and notes that the different styles of British and American psychedelic rock had common codes that conveyed the musical equivalent of hallucinogenic experience. While the "Summer of Love", a label subsequently adopted by the media, originally describes the counterculture converging in San Francisco, encompassing music, drugs, anti-war and free-love, Barry Miles, founder of International Times, describes the British "Summer of Love" as providing a background of lighthearted festivity that was "anarchic, innocent and didn't really take itself seriously" (ibid: 29), and Whiteley concurs that the era was characterised by an optimistic escapism, a distraction from the demand of reality, and a voice that the old ways were out (ibid.).

In synchronicity with the experimentalism resonating with the countercultural ethos of upsetting the established order, bands like The Beatles, with producer George Martin, and The Beach Boys led by producer/auteur Brian Wilson began a parallel exploration of the possibilities that lay inside the studio control room, and in tandem with the innovations in performance practice, some engineers also began developing novel methods to manipulate sounds that pushed equipment beyond specification parameters, to satisfy the imaginations of the emerging bands, creating worlds that could only exist on record, songs which could not be reproduced onstage.

MacDonald notes "the countercultural lifestyle was still the preserve of an LSD using elite in California and London's Notting Hill" (MacDonald, 2005: 143). While the artistic elite translated

the effects of LSD into sonic representations, the results were interpreted as indicative of a psychedelic experience and were adopted as signifiers by the mainstream during the 1967 "Summer of Love". The innovative development of recording techniques during this period led to the creation of experimental soundscapes. The subsequent adaptation of these techniques by other bands created the psychedelic genre and allowed the sounds to become signifiers of the counterculture of the era.

Savage refers to this surge of new sounds in popular music as the "Great Race" (Savage, 2015: 115) citing Bob Dylan's July 1965 single "Like a Rolling Stone" that lasted over six minutes, as the starting gun on "a new age of pop ambition" culminating with Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band in 1967, when the psychedelic genre became a mainstream cultural phenomenon. The list of releases, for instance, "Eight Miles High" The Byrds, February 1966, "Paperback Writer"/"Rain" The Beatles, May 1966, "Pet Sounds" LP, The Beach Boys, May 1966, "Revolver" LP, The Beatles, August 1966, "Good Vibrations" The Beach Boys, November 1966, "Penny Lane"/"Strawberry Fields Forever" The Beatles, February 1967, and "Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band" LP, The Beatles, May 1967, provides a clear path of innovation as records were conceived to out-do each other in experimentation, creativity and importance, pushing the boundaries of the domain. Savage states that "1966 began in pop and ended in rock" (ibid: iv) DeRogatis makes the point that while the psychedelic influence seemed omnipresent:

Many of the bands that recorded psychedelic rock songs in the wake of the groundbreaking efforts of 1966 had never taken psychedelic drugs but the subculture told them everything they needed to know to sound authentic. (DeRogatis, 1996: 9)

Post "Revolver", The Beatles were now versed in the language of the avant-garde and able to take ideas from the margins and present them to the mainstream. By combining the influence of art music and non-European music, and more generally, connections with psychedelia within the sociocultural context of the mid-1960s, sounds now had a sonic distinctiveness that placed them in a thematic role within the track rather than as a novelty, taking on a musicological significance that supported the songs with a third layer of meaning. Unterberger concurs:

What is significant is up till then it was live recordings or novelty, afterwards the creation of signifiers allowed a third layer of meaning onto records and this coincided with rock, LP's, and the counterculture, which changed the business forever. (Unterberger, 2003: 18)

The described altered sensory effects of LSD range from mild changes in sensory perception to cognitive shifts. Visual experiences such as intensification of colour and brightness, blurred vision, images morphing into new shapes, after image trails, solid surfaces becoming liquid, moving geometric patterns, inanimate objects becoming animated, and changes in spatial dimensions are all common manifestations of the drug (Masters & Houston, 2000: 5). Sonic enhancements are also experienced, such as reverberation, repeating echo on sounds, intensification of experience of music, a loss of intelligibility and jumbling of sources and changes in temporal cohesions such as slowing down time, jumping in time and suspension of time.

These descriptions match closely with the technological interpretations the engineers were able to produce in the studio following descriptions by musicians, and there is a strong correlation between the verbal descriptions of psychedelic experiences and the aural signifiers created using studio technology or captured in the recording process. These aural signifiers include sounds manipulated by tape machines, such as altered speeds, backwards playback, phasing created by running two tape machines with the same recording in synchronisation while varying the speed of one, automatic double tracking created in a similar fashion, repeat echoes, jump cut editing between non-serial sections, multiple recording of the same voice, found sound temporal events, and time-shifted

performances such as excerpts from radio broadcasts, cut and re-assembled to create random performances.

Also included are sounds created by electronic manipulation such as distortion, compression of transients, tone controls to manipulate and intensify particular timbres, reverberating instruments, Doppler effects with Leslie speakers and artificial sounds such as tone generator and amplifier feedback. Performed sounds added to the encyclopaedia of experimental opportunities such as Indian raga with endless improvisation, doubling of instruments, intentional out-of-tune, jumping between time signatures and speed, dampening of strings and drum skins, detuning, exotic instruments, and these sonic manipulations were employed by The Beatles during the Sgt. Pepper sessions, having been investigated during the prior Revolver recordings.

DeRogatis notes that:

The word psychedelic came to signal a set of sonic clues . . . circular mandala like song structures, sustained or droning melodies, altered or affected instrumental sounds, reverbs, echoes and tape delays, that created a sense of space, and layered mixes that rewarded repeated listening by revealing new and mysterious elements. The presence of all or any of these sounds is enough to earn a piece of music the label "psychedelic". (DeRogatis, 1996: 10)

In contrast to studio engineers creating ever-elaborate soundscapes by employing tape, distortion, reverberation and temporal alterations, musicians playing live on stage struggled to evoke these sounds with limited technology, resorting to distortion, echo and raga-influenced improvisations. Hicks describes the San Francisco concert sound as "Extremely loud, reverberant, contrapuntal rock, slowed in tempo, unstable in harmony. And juxtapositional in form . . . at least some of the music's parameters must go through devices that create 'molten' shapes in timbre, articulation, and spatial placement" (Hicks, 2000: 73).

Practice as research

Alain Pire's Lonely Hearts Club Band series of concerts proposed a unique opportunity of recreating an assemblage of all the recorded tracks on Sgt. Pepper, according to the track sheets and researched analysis. The myth of Sgt. Pepper is that it was recorded on a four-track tape machine, but of course, four-track relates to the compositional process of overdubbing ideas, bouncing reduction mixes between two machines and spinning in slave reels of orchestration. This complex recording process, mixing multiple parts onto one track for space, meant the original performances were hard to identify, buried in the soundscape. Advances in technology eventually allowed these performances to be separated out onto their own tracks, and the musical arrangements to be spread across a wide mixing desk, as producer George Martin and others have often revealed in retrospective TV programs (Bragg, 1992).

The scale and ambition of Alain's project provided a vehicle to imagine a mixing desk filled with all the parts being played in real time and be the multi-track mix come to life. It was a unique opportunity to understand how the arrangement developed, which would also reveal how the technological constraints of the era pushed the decision-making process during recording.

Re-enactment allows research to directly engage with these processes and ask questions, understanding the true roles and forgotten techniques that connect the musical and technological contributions that texts do not uncover. Whereas expert opinion, text and interviews illuminate some aspects of the period, there is a confusion and lack of memory of the detail of the historic practices, inherited traditions, implied values and tacit knowledge that by definition cannot be explained. "We can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi, 1966).

Further inaccuracies and contradictions from sources directed more towards entertainment than academic research prove that practical reconstruction can add a valuable layer of information about an era that is fast fading from living memory. Hence, the project provided an ideal opportunity to apply practice as research analytical techniques developed during previous historical recording session re-enactment projects to understand some of the compositional processes behind the recording of Sgt Pepper, how the technology of the time created the timbre, character and arrangement of the song soundscapes (Meynell, 2017).

In particular, discovering the arrangements split between musicians within the constraint of live performance would reveal what is important to the rendition of the songs, what can be discarded and where the performance needs to be supported by modern technology. Within the concert setting, the immediacy of audience feedback provided vital information regarding reception and authenticity, while the experience would add to the wider understanding of historical musical styles and performance practices that are venerated within subcultural communities and value systems based on the continued interest in psychedelia, and the transcultural legacy and importance of The Beatles Sgt. Pepper some 50 years after the album's release.

This ethnographic approach by employing the practice-based method of re-enactment was achieved by extending an already planned Sgt. Pepper's anniversary concert into a programme to capture and share the data as a collaborative enterprise. The project was also helped by various participants having professional academic, recording and performing backgrounds and an empathy and understanding to experience the flow of creativity, interaction and options, and this approach adds a tacit understanding of the opportunities not experienced by normal ethnographic studies. Performing inside the creative process allows a unique perspective and avoids the possibility of reluctance by other participants to share or be observed from an ethnographic perspective.

Research methodology

The research combined three different stages of methodology: (1) archive digging and evidence gathering (including history, iconography, audio, video/film, production analysis, track sheets, studio information, microphones, instruments etc.); (2) a rehearsal stage of reproducing and performing particular technical processes, often employing historic equipment; a skill phase that is essential for acquiring tacit knowledge and understanding of individual parts and (3) the reconstruction phase that allowed the team to combine the individual performances and tacit knowledge into a practical situation by staging the live recreation of the recordings.

Although musical performance, meaning live performances in a broader sense, is the main object of interest, the research also reveals levels of studio mediation on recordings that musicological analysis often fails to address. Musicology cannot answer all the questions, whereas practice as research and re-enactment can find the performative input to understand technological ingenuity and its importance to the creative process, thereby acknowledging the input of the creative team beyond the band performances.

Parts were split between musicians according to a provided spreadsheet (in Illustrations below), which also indicated the complexity of each song by virtue of the changing number of mixing desk inputs required. Although harmonies, string and horn parts were scored, guitar parts in particular were often hard to define in the recordings and created interesting research projects. However, parts were not combined. For instance, if a guitar overdub part was only played for a verse, an additional guitarist would be on stage to perform that part.

Because of the number of musicians involved in the project and their geographical spread between Belgium, France, Germany and Great Britain, the parts had to be shared remotely and the band only came together for "dress rehearsal" on the day before the first concert.

Although the on-stage layout of musicians remained the same at the four concerts, differing stage sizes and facilities presented unique challenges to the large ensemble. The main logistical issues were getting people on and off stage in time, the different stage layouts, monitoring and microphone placements and the sound mixer whose role was to mix the album "live" since the balancing of parts was as important as the actual individual performances. The sharing of parts, knowledge of the album and level of musicianship ensured that the songs were performed to a professional standard.

The repertoire was extended beyond the performance of Sgt. Pepper in sequence to include "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever", from the original studio sessions that had been released as a prior single, "All You Need Is Love" single recorded at the height of the "Summer of Love" in June 1967, and closed with the 1968 Joe Cocker arrangement of "With A Little Help Of My Friends" to create a 60-minute setlist.

The concerts

There were four concerts, and each venue allowed the performances to be examined in different social and cultural contexts, providing the perfect contrast to consider the impact of audience and setting.

- **Huy 13 October 2017** – The "serious" Concert Hall headline auditorium
- **Mons 14 October 2017** – The Concert Hall "Beatles festival"
- **Battice 15 March 2018** – A modern indoor stadium production
- **Longueville 28 July 2018** – Open air festival, a laid-back atmosphere

Huy

The 1,000-capacity Centre Culturel de Huy venue, in Alain's hometown, provided a formal concert hall for launching the project and presented to a capacity audience as a headline event. The stage setting was perfect to accommodate the musicians; there was time to rehearse and adjust the sounds the day before.

Mons Beatles festival

The second concert was at the annual Beatles festival in the large Theatre Royal de Mons, a festival of 20 or so Beatles tribute bands in front of Beatles fans. The sheer size of the Alain Pire Band created an atmosphere of the event rather than joining the procession of four-piece bands dressed in various era Beatle costumes. The logistics of staging so many bands in procession meant organising was more improvised but the mixture of inebriated audience and confident band, having performed the night before, combined to create a performance that recreated much of the excitement of Beatles theatre performances at the height of Beatlemania but with Sgt. Pepper songs, providing a glimpse of historic interaction.

The following year provided two more opportunities to reconvene the musicians.

Battice

The first was an annual Bel'zik contemporary pop and rock concert headlined by Neo pop/soul artist Typh Barrow, so it set The Beatles music as a legacy or revival performance in front of the younger

and more general audience. The 5,000-capacity steel and concrete agricultural hall and staging equipment created a modern stadium atmosphere, with a reverberant indoor sound. The experience revealed similarities between the Sgt. Pepper's performance that required some programmed sound effect elements and contemporary artists who rely wholly on the support of programmed music as part of modern production stage shows.

Longueville

The final Folestival concert was a daytime open-air event, and the hot mid-summer atmosphere somewhat mimicked the "laid back and hippy" countercultural atmosphere of the 1960s, with the audience singing along. The interaction between musicians and the audience inspired a looser "west coast" performance. With no hall reverberation to enhance the music, it was the furthest from recreating the recorded sounds.

Musicological considerations

Eisenberg writes that "one of the paradoxes of the recording situation, namely that the audience is not there . . . is the flip side of the fact that, for the listener, the performer is not there" (Eisenberg, 2005: 157).

By performing Sgt Pepper, we meet this recording dichotomy in reverse as the act of constructing a 'live performance' in the studio without an audience is now translated into the goal of trying to re-create the imaginary sound world of Sgt Pepper, a virtual construct of mediation and studio manipulation, as a live performance in front of an audience. This complication is further extended by Riley's assertion of Sgt Pepper that "On record, we're listening to a pretend audience that is pretending to listen to the pretend Sgt. Pepper band" (Riley, 2002: 218).

Whereas when listening to records, we rely on the recorded script without the agency of live performance embellishments, by bringing the experience to life in a communal setting, we become active participants, and the live performance brings into play other actors and poses some broader aesthetic considerations, which can be investigated directly through re-enactment. For instance, an audience that was not imagined in the original blueprint, a stage full of actors replacing the sequential overdubbing that took place during the compositional endeavour that acted as an agent for choosing arrangements and instruments. In addition, the need to stick to concert pitch rather than varying the speed, and then the need to find workarounds to reconstruct the tonality of the instruments and voices that rely on studio manipulation, raises a growing list of musicological questions that re-enactment poses while performing the music. For example, since recorded music is a reconstruction of sound waves emitted from loudspeakers:

- What can we learn from the addition of seeing actors perform the music?
- Does the presence of musicians change the understanding?
- Does it take away from the imagined experimentalism in the studio?
- Is there a tension of getting it right, sounding authentic?
- What is authentic since it was never performed?
- What are the effects of adding visual influences of stage, acoustics, architecture and location on the recorded script?
- Does the choice of authentic instruments confer totemic status on the player and performance, or imply a pastiche?
- Does the live performed music still convey the aura of other worldly consciousness gained by hearing the record with the additional studio-evoked temporal manipulations, or would

we be better off just playing the record and collectively listening, like "Classic Album Sundays"?
- What is the difference between the group enjoyment versus individual? On stage, we are realising The Beatles collective imagination, whereas the record is designed to take you away to an imaginary space, the reality of performance grounds you in a different reality.

Song-by-song performances

Some of these arguments are considered in the following descriptions that focus on the unique "on-stage" impressions and perspectives of the performer as the concerts took place. Various critiques and analyses from Moore, Riley, MacDonald, and Whiteley et al. already cover deeper musicological considerations, so only points enlightened by participation are considered. The Videography contains links to example rehearsal and performance videos.

Sgt. Pepper Lonely Hearts Club Band

The album starts with an audience and orchestra warming up (sampled from a Dudley Moore "Beyond The Fringe" programme). This sample and other subsequent sounds become associated with the various songs, and this particular sound heralds the start of the concert. It provides the ultimate countdown, a "this is it" moment. At the moment, it is hard to discern whether it is the sound of the actual record sampled starting the concert, or the buzz of the excited audience and nervous musicians, but as the first note is struck, three things immediately become evident:

1. It is a suite of songs. The audience and musicians know what is coming, heightening anticipation.

2. The guitar timbres were easy to achieve giving the performance an authentic sound.

Engineer Geoff Emerick complained of spending ages getting a good tone from the very loud transistor Vox amps the Beatles were using (Emerick, 2012). They were specifically designed by Vox to be played on stage at stage volume, but The Beatles also employed them in the studio often at full stage volume, giving the recordings a vital energy. In a live situation, therefore, this energy is easy to replicate. The timbre is also thin and weedy, which leaves space for other instruments.

3. The overall live sound is closer to the mono record than the subsequent stereo mix. The interplay and syncopation are key to understanding the dynamic in the rhythm section and what is driving the songs. The Beatles were still a band playing a backing track in the studio before overdubbing.

Whereas on record, the stereo and surreal staging enhances the psychedelic atmosphere, especially on headphones, the mono makes it more rock and brings out the rhythmic interplay of the guitars and drums, rather than the melodic counterpoint. So stereo panning and staging, such as McCartney's voice hard right, and chorus voices hard left before slowly panning to the centre for the final verse, are of lesser importance and do not affect the overall impression of staying faithful to the song, lyrics and overall timbre.

Lennon is credited with exclaiming, "If you haven't heard Pepper in mono, you haven't heard Pepper" (Sommer, 2016) and indeed the mono recording sounds more like "The Who play Pepper", and this dynamic is evident in the on-stage vibrancy.

The first two songs Sgt. Pepper and With A Little Help From My Friends demonstrate George Martin's creative input is clear. He is providing orchestration and arranging vocal harmonies. They

are not "busked" by the musicians finding their own parts but are often arranged in two or three parts, answering or supporting the main melody.

Again, recording engineer Emerick states that the hours Martin spent rehearsing and coaching The Beatles through complex harmonies in the live room also allowed him to explore the possibilities in the control room and find interesting sounds. In addition, this record is the sound of McCartney in a creative roll. Taking the bass out of the backing track allowed him to compose melodic bass lines in his own time and gives the album an additional signature sound.

With a little help from my friends

The song is introduced without a break, mimicking the unusual album segue and the audience have already been invited to sing along in the last lines of the Sgt. Pepper "the singers going to sing a song, and he wants you all to sing along", hence the opening nervousness and sonic surprise of the concert, electric and supported with an authentic overture of live horns, gives way to a music hall setting of audience participation, which makes the live concert entertaining as well as serious.

The simplicity of the song belies the carefully arranged answering harmonies and jaunty bass line that echo the joyful music hall nature of the song. "Friends" follows The Beatles thematic custom of allowing Ringo to sing a song on each album, and this song was the last to be written and recorded for the album, yet its potential is only revealed on the subsequent Joe Cocker version, performed later in the program.

Lucy in the sky with diamonds

"Lucy in The Sky" starts as a 12/8 acoustic ballad, and the verse is gentle and reflective before hitting the 4/4 chorus. The concern here is the momentum of the live performance may falter and lose the audience's attention.

On record, the lyrics are supported by the texture of phasing which, as Moore states, provides meaning beyond the whimsical content (Moore, 2012). But live, this key signifier is missing, leaving the lyrics to be taken at face value. It is the phasing along with the lyric that makes the song psychedelic (although we are used to hearing the stereo version which dilutes the impact of the phasing effect, the phasing is loud on the mono release version and a highlight of the soundscape).

However, the live performance reveals that the simple repetitive chorus becomes the song. The audience does not sway trance like through the verses but anticipates the chorus, and the song finds new meaning in the live concert setting. Indeed, for want of a better musicological description, the song reveals itself to be a "pop banger". The song exhibits many similarities to their highest UK-selling single, 1964's "She Loves You" which also has a falling chorus refrain, repeated three times, in the key of G, and the first three numbers on Side One of Sgt Pepper share similar traits:

- "We're Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band" – falling refrain
- "Do you need anybody" – falling refrain
- "Lucy in the sky with diamonds" – falling refrain

This indicates that the first three songs on the album retain The Beatles' pop sensibility. So the phasing is not missed, and the song translates into a concert-type singalong, continuing the music hall atmosphere.

Getting better

Compared to the previous song, the song key and vocal range stretch a lot higher than anticipated, to borrow a lyric from the previous song, "so incredibly high". What is evident is not only that McCartney sings in a higher register than Lennon but also that McCartney likes to throw his voice to the top of his range, typically his "Little Richard" zone, and often arranges songs into a high key to capture this "trick", and often varispeeds his voice even higher with the effect of sounding younger. In addition, McCartney melodies typically rise and fall quickly, leaping beyond the octave, while staying static in the accompaniment. Hence, McCartney songs are challenging yet fun to sing.

In contrast, Lennon songs are pitched in a comfortable register, often following an interesting or unusual chord progression, which creates simple chromatic verses (like "Lucy In The Sky"), only stretching for high notes in the choruses. Indeed, Lennon's home demos reveal he tends to mumble his ideas into a tape machine in a comfortable key (as evidenced later when considering "Good Morning").

It is Lennon's impromptu acerbic wit on hearing the refrain "Getting Better" that provided inspiration for the answering phrases "It couldn't get much worse" and "I can't complain", and the song translates well on stage with this sweet and sour dynamic. In particular, the song arrangement demonstrates how the reproduction of the harmonies is vital to The Beatles sound.

The opening guitar part, heard as two separate parts panned left/right in stereo, combines on stage to mimic the mono-biting superimposed solid single guitar part that drives the song, leaving the bass and harmonies to add a counterpoint to the melody without distraction.

Fixing a hole

This interesting arrangement with baroque harpsichord suggests another deliberate move away from The Beatles previous ensemble sound. Yet the mono version again highlights the probable reason for this choice, as the hi-hat pattern driving the song is the loudest and most characterful performance on the track, whereas it appears a less consequential percussion part, panned on the side of the stereo mix. The Beatles engineer, Emerick describes how creative decisions in the process presented themselves:

If it was the intention to overdub a piano in certain parts, in the planned production of it you'd realise once you'd cut your rhythm track that the piano didn't fit, because of the equalisation you'd put on the basic rhythm track, you'd use harpsichord instead. So gradually you'd build up the finished sounds, and we made decisions, and once the decision was made it was great whatever we'd done. (GRAMMY Pro, 2015)

Motown Records recording engineer Bob Olhsson concurs, "Sgt. Pepper's is not a recording, Sgt. Pepper's was the solution to the various problems they came up with in the process of producing the record" (Tape Op, Issue 30, 2001 p14).

Hence, analysing the track for parts and performing them lead to understanding the serendipitous creative process underscoring the arrangement.

She's leaving home

The band walking off the stage and the string quartet entering and taking up position provide a clear visual clue that the momentum is changing and things have got serious.

Whereas up to now the band has been playing completely live, this song is arranged for a harp and a 10-piece string section. Since there is only a quartet, this is the first instance of having to employ a

sequence to provide the vital harp sound. The strings play with and around a recorded supporting backing track. However, the recognisable sound and gestural support from the on-stage classical musicians provide an authentic recreation of the recording and underscore the acceptance of unseen musical embellishment within live performance settings.

The performance copies the original stereo version and recording key of E major. The mono version was deliberately sped up to be faster and a semi-tone higher at F major (again to make McCartney sound younger), and the 2019 stereo remaster matches this original mono key.

For the benefit of Mr. Kite

Martin describes how the complex backing was created from random cut-ups of fairground organ sounds, borrowing from similar tape manipulation techniques performed on comedy records such as Bernard Cribbins "Right Said Fred" or The Beatles "Yellow Submarine" on the previous album Revolver. But these sounds have to be reproduced to make the song authentic, so this is the second song that is performed to a sequence, illustrating how reproducing the record has entered a yet more complex phase.

The outdoor Folestival concert provides an interesting contrast to the original formal hall setting where the band was playing to a seated audience, altering the meaning and reception of the song. The laid-back open-air concert setting, mid-afternoon in 30 degrees of heat, provides a different atmosphere and is reflected by the relaxed performance, illustrating how the environment can influence the reading of the song. The open-air festival also highlights the carnival atmosphere of the circus organ soundscape, and though the event mimics a communal "Summer of Love" atmosphere, the environment and fairground sounds combine to focus away from the psychedelic overtones that the recording carries.

Within You, Without You

Within You, Without you is perhaps the most difficult song to attempt live but emerges as the psychedelic centrepiece. The arrangement follows the 2006 Cirque de Soleil Beatles Love album interpretation, which underscores the song with signifiers and distinctive rhythms borrowed from "Tomorrow Never Knows" from the Revolver album, and along with sitar and glissando strings provides the first evidence of a psychedelic soundscape at an otherwise awkward moment in the set, a serious and long song on the album. It is actually a creative high point in the set, and the audience is entranced and entertained, so the artistic license to rework the song is a good decision.

The seriousness of the song is represented by the sitar player sitting cross-legged centre stage, which also supports the mystic overtones of the lyric. Harrison introduced the influence of Indian exoticism to The Beatles and was the only Beatle involved or performing on the recording. MacDonald (2005) refers to the song as the album's conscience, "a necessary sermon within the albums Community singing". Whereas Harrison was normally granted two songs per Beatle album, his second song recorded during the session, "It's Only A Northern Song", was rejected and held over for later release, so this is Harrison's sole contribution to Sgt. Pepper. On the LP record, the song opens Side Two, and Martin chose to lighten the mood by closing the song with sampled audience laughter, whereas on stage, the performance is a triumph, combining the art music of "Tomorrow Never Knows" from The Revolver album, with the arrangements non-European raga stylings, and finally the psychedelic reputation of Pepper has emerged. The combination of sitar played against rhythms and tape loops creates an unmistakable reminder of the experimentalism that added to the character of Revolver and Sgt. Pepper. Both songs represented the furthest points from The Beatles ensemble sound on their respective albums and combined together create a

collage of signature key signifiers, recognisable as psychedelic and evident visually and tonally on stage.

When I'm Sixty-Four

When I'm Sixty-Four, and the subsequent song "Lovely Rita", includes some of the most complex to perform vocal harmonies on the album. The two-part harmonies coming before the vocals on the first bridge interject after the vocal with answering phrases on the second and combine with the clarinet and piano played on stage. Performing these live highlights how Martin's whole arrangement is skilfully built around the vocal rather than embellishing it unnecessarily.

Again, this is a singalong music hall-inspired vaudeville-style song and evidence of McCartney's formative musical influence from his father (who the song was written for). The first concert coincides with Alain's 64th birthday, so the performance is particularly poignant, and the audience enjoys the coincidence. The moment reminds everyone that we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the record's release, rather than being transported back to 1967.

Lovely Rita

Hertsgaard (1995) reports Martin would have dropped "When I'm Sixty-Four" and "Lovely Rita", had "Penny Lane" and "Strawberry Fields Forever" been included on the album, and Moore (2008) also regards "Lovely Rita" as a "throwaway". Indeed, the stereo arrangement sounds insipid, centring the harmony vocals and lead vocal and losing the rhythm support to far left and right, creating an unbalanced soundscape. However, the live performance refocuses the drive of the song, evident in the lead acoustic guitar that opens the mono version, and recaptures the original energy. The foregrounded acoustic and driving drums are crucial to understanding the song, while the uneven phrases in the harmony vocal rising out of the second line into the barrelhouse piano solo are classic "Yes It Is" style Beatles close three-part harmony. This is the first "rock-pop" song since the opening Sgt. Pepper track, which was followed by a progression of music hall-pop, ballad-pop and Indian-pop synthesis.

Good Morning, Good Morning

Research into the performance parts reveals much of how the song was written and arranged in the studio. I played Lennon's guitar part and subsequently sang the song so I got to know it well. Discovering the almost inaudible staccato-stabbing guitar part, which actually drives the song, was a revelation. It provides the original foundation rhythm that the song was built on, rather than a subsequent overdub as suggested by its low level in the mix. It appears behind the drums on the left stereo channel, and at full volume on the right channel on the Anthology 2 version. Lennon's original demo is mumbled into a tape machine against a metronomic beat; the timing is difficult since he sings phrases of different lengths, separated by different lengths of momentary pauses.

The drums are unusual and yet as you hear the faint guitar behind the drums in the left channel and isolated in the Anthology 2 outtake, you can understand the inspiration. The guitar reveals the energy and arrangement behind the song. This is what influences the drum pattern and the vocal phrasing, and subsequent horn arrangements.

The recording is dominated by the heavy use of compression on the voice and overall track, with horns closely miked and affected with phasing to create a distorted unnatural sound as if employing a fuzz pedal, so the overall sound is aggressive, most noticeable on the mono recording which highlights the syncopation through the dense soundscape, whereas the spreading of instruments in

stereo dilutes the impact. Only the animal noises escape the sonic pounding. This distortion is part of an overall live stage sound, and so the original intended aggression that signifies frustration re-emerges in the performance, matched by McCartney's "Taxman" style guitar solo.

Because of the vital animal sounds on the record, painstakingly assembled by Martin from sound effects records, the song is performed on stage against a sequence that only the drummer hears, to allow these sound effects to play in time. Difficulty seeing or hearing horn or drum performances for cues while standing and singing centre stage emphasised the complicated timing within the varying meter and suggests that the arrangement was improvised in the studio rather than bought into the session as a completed song.

Sgt. Pepper reprise

While this appears as a reprise of the opening track, it is a tone lower and much faster than the original, the "detuned" song creating a heavier rock version, before "shifting gear" up to the original key therefore adding excitement (via a cliched Tin Pan Alley pop songwriters trick – last used on "Penny Lane", and once earlier, on "And I Love Her"). This song arrives sooner than expected and signals the end of the set since it bookends and unifies the previous songs. It is the song that is perhaps the most "honest" of all, counted in 1-2-3-4 on record, as if live on stage, and featuring the two guitars, bass and drums of The Beatles classic ensemble line-up (there is overdubbed organ on the recording). What it does is set up the next song as separate from the album, as the final song of the set, and as the song everyone has come to hear.

A Day in the Life

The reputation of Sgt. Pepper rests on this song and is based on 24 bars of the rising 40-piece orchestra, taped five times to create an ensemble force of 200 musicians. The associated anticipation of "Day In The Life" is: can the musicians pull it off?

For such a complex song, the stage appears empty: string quartet and horns at the back left and right, and no backing harmonies. So, the front stage is solo voice, with acoustic guitar, piano, bass and drums. The orchestral parts are supported by pre-recorded sequenced samples. The effect of the song and subsequent rising orchestral motif is startling. The abstract live horn parts and visual gestures of the string players against the dense centre of the programmed overdubs create the slow, bombastic rise which is a tremendous success and the record is complete. This moment is the psychedelic triumph of the album, swiftly followed by a climatic applause and standing ovation.

Finale

The musicians return to the stage for a finale of four songs.

Penny Lane

Practice as research often reveals the unexpected and this re-arrangement of the song, substituting the original woodwind for the string quartet, creates a baroque interpretation, taking the lead from the "Brandenburg"-inspired piccolo horn solo. The music hall "singalong" trope is again highlighted in the audience's participation.

Strawberry Fields Forever

Strawberry Fields is a dense arrangement of overdubs and manipulation such as backward drums and is created on record by editing together two entirely separate performances, resulting in an amalgam of sonic contradictions. Hence, it is difficult to reproduce the weight of the accompaniment on stage and somehow balance that against the delicate vocal. The result comes across as a progressive rock arrangement and provides a clue to the subsequent musical genre in the 1970s.

All You Need Is Love

The Beatles single was recorded a month after Sgt. Pepper was released and is comparatively straightforward to perform, being the "live in the studio" recording of a television broadcast, and was Sgt. Pepper come to life, as The Beatles were finally revealed in psychedelic costume, surrounded by strings, horns and representatives of the counterculture elite. Again, the audience participation underscored the familiarity and love of the repertoire.

With a Little Help From my Friends 2

Joe Cocker's version of "A Little Help from my Friends" illustrates how far music had moved on since the mid-1967 release of Sgt Pepper. Recorded less than a year later, in March 1968 by Denny Cordell (who had previously produced records such as "A Whiter Shade of Pale" by Procol Harum and tracks by The Move etc.), the New York Times commented:

His transformation of "A Little Help From My Friends" from light-hearted ditty into wails of human need succeeds perfectly; . . . He is the best of the male rock interpreters, as good in his way as Janis Joplin is in hers. (Christgau, 1969)

Cocker created a "supergroup", an emerging trend at the time, of British musicians such as Jimmy Page on guitar, B J Wilson on drums, with American Carole Kaye on bass, soul singers Brenda Holloway and Merry Clayton, and the subsequent recording exemplified how a new rock aristocracy had emerged, how performance authenticity had usurped studio creativity and the recordings live atmosphere and transparent production also highlighted a reaction against Sgt. Pepper and the artification of rock, with Lennon "later renouncing the studio excesses of psychedelia in favour of a studied primitivism" (Reynolds, 2012), while psychedelic signifiers became banal clichés used on bubblegum hits such as The Lemon Pipers "My Green Tambourine".

Sgt. Pepper was released in May 1967, and the Monterey Pop Festival featuring The Who and Jimi Hendrix (The Beatles and Beach Boys turned down invitations to play) took place in July 1967. Monterey symbolised a moment when rock performance authenticity replaced a show business model with screams for pop stars. Within a year, record companies would stop manufacturing mono records, and the album would become the main carrier of recorded creativity.

Alain uses Hendrix and Townshend stylings to underscore the rock element of the performance, accentuating the virtuosity and operatic grandeur, passion and gravitas replacing the perception of pop pretentiousness.

Revelations

The concerts coincided with the 50th Anniversary of the original album release, which was marked by televised documentaries and reissue editions and accompanied by heightened media interest, and the project provided a vehicle for wider collective involvement and celebration as well as individual participation. The live show focused on sounding authentic, rather than presenting a pastiche of

costumes and totemic instruments. Any roughness in production became lost in the distortion, concert hall reverberation, staging volume and visual representation. The concert environment conjured up a parallel world where The Beatles had continued performing live and joined the Woodstock generation; hence, the acid rock sound of the American version of psychedelia that underscored the live arrangements was plausible. The music still conveys the aura of other worldly consciousness because the overall concept evokes the spirit of psychedelia rather than relying on any particular studio-produced temporal manipulation that may have been missing from the live staging.

Sgt. Pepper is a record that represents a fictitious concept. The Beatles assume a disguise that allows them to step into an imagined world, and the record is designed to take you away to an imaginary space. On stage, we are realising The Beatles collective imagination and the presence of performing musicians does not detract from the imagined experimentalism of the studio sessions and change this understanding. The reality of performance grounds you in a different type of authenticity: the audience enjoys the concert for what is presented and is entertained by the spectacle, and removing sonic signifiers that could not be reproduced live, such as phasing, temporal and spacial manipulation and reverberation from the songs, does not remove the collective aura of the songs.

Re-enactment forces you to investigate the parts, the syncopation revealing hidden aspects of composition, arranging and performance in the studio not described in musicological or otherwise expert testimony. Dividing the parts across so many players in real-time synchronous performance, rather than as a pastiche, brought the mix to life and steered the research towards identifying the performative input of the players versus the mediated input of the electronics resulting in the following key observations:

1. The recorded manipulation of tempo alterations, ADT, phasing, compression, distortion and panning are inessential embellishments in the live setting, since the sheer volume and inherent distortion mask such subtleties. In addition, sonic signifiers, such as phasing, have lost their original association with psychedelia. Whereas conventions of use ensured a certain swirly filtering effect, specified "psychedelia" to suitably attuned listeners (Clarke, 2011), with the passing of time phasing has become a signifier of the 1960s.

2. The live performance reveals the original mono intentions. The syncopation between the players drives the songs.

3. The record relies more on orchestral than manipulative embellishments to create the character. It is an amalgam of Revolver and Pet Sounds. The psychedelic manipulation is less important than the orchestral embellishments. Martin earned his position as the fifth Beatle on this record.

4. Stripping away the studio effects in the live setting creates an acid rock interpretation of the songs and reveals the difference between the British art-based collage approach of psychedelia and the performative American-based version, which employs distortion and reverb to sculpt an abstract soundscape.

Conclusion

Although Sgt. Pepper coincided with the growth of stereo, it is important to appreciate how the legacy of stereo recordings skews our understanding of the original intentions and also how the overuse of certain signifiers has transformed their original meanings, that is phasing now signifies 1960s novelty sound effects rather than its original connection to psychedelia. Whereas monophonic reproduction with limited bandwidth, depth and missing detail is often ignored over the realism of

stereo, in fact, it was the mono pop medium that was the chief carrier of these recordings and played a large part in influencing the construction and production of the musical soundscapes. The mono recording is key to understanding Sgt. Pepper, and the live performance urges you to rediscover the original intention and how the effects and orchestration impacted the arrangements, stretching the one-dimensional mono format beyond its potential.

Sgt Pepper claimed the mantle of psychedelic because of great timing, excellent packaging and the preposition and expectation of The Beatles post "Strawberry Fields Forever" as trendsetters with connections to the exploding counterculture. The Beatles didn't set out to make a psychedelic record, they were experimenting in the studio and enrolling the support staff to create sounds beyond what instruments and voices could achieve, and involved Martin's skills as arranger and editor on their own terms to conjure extra musical devices to elaborate the arrangements.

The freedom granted to The Beatles in the studio while renegotiating their EMI recording contract, together with an emboldened Martin who had returned as an independent producer, and new engineer Emerick, allowed them to take part in the "Great Race", whereas other bands were constrained by authority, bad contracts and economic concerns. It coincided with a moment when everything seemed possible, and in the studio, every idea was explored and became possible, creating an aural and visual extravaganza in tune with the zeitgeist. The end result was a grand exotic and expensive statement that was far in front that anyone could achieve or afford to achieve at that point. They had beaten Wilson and Pet Sounds, and the album release coincided with the zenith of the British "Summer of Love". Six months earlier or later would have diluted the impact. The market wasn't ready or was already over-saturated.

The 50th anniversary of the release inspired a collective reflection on the legacy and meaning of Sgt Pepper. The concerts presented an opportunity to add a social dimension to analysis, using practice as research to unpack the original recording and reconstruct it into a unique practical situation to understand how it fits together. The project revealed how submixing, recording innovations and creative abuse of equipment affected the compositional process. Separating the various studio overdubs, embellishments and sonic manipulations allowed a rebalancing of instruments to suit the live setting, which highlighted the interplay and syncopation of the original backing tracks and recreated the character of the monophonic mix. The underlying sound of these exposed backing tracks closely resembles the American acid rock variation of psychedelia. Finally, the semiotic interpretation of once innovative studio techniques, appropriated into a wider genre classification of psychedelia and adopted by the counterculture, has changed over time, and removing these sonic signifiers did not affect the overall impression of staying faithful to the record.

Figures

Figure 1.1 Song order, musicians and mixing desk inputs.

Sgt Pepper Show - Distribution of Performers

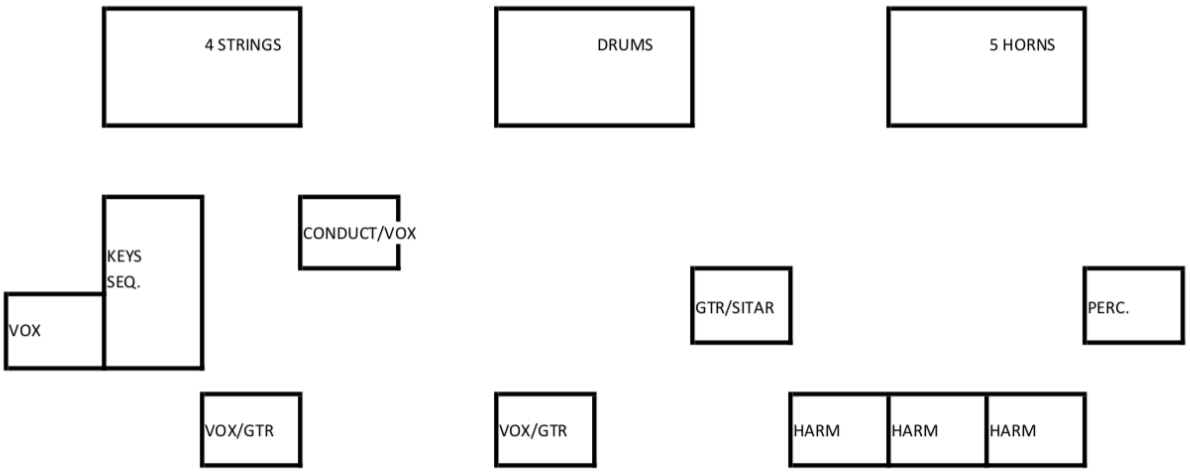
Song Title	Lead Vocal	Harmony 1	Harmony 2	Harmony 3	Harmony 4	Harmony 5	Drums	Bass	Guitar 1
Sergeant Pepper P.1	Hugo		Alain	Eva	Jacky		Yves	James	Alex
With A Little Help	Alain		James	Anthony	Jacky		Yves	James	Alex
Lucy In The Sky	Alain	Anthony	James	Eva	Jacky		Marc	James	Anthony
Getting Better	Anthony	Pierre	Alain	Hugo	James		Yves	James	Anthony
Fixing A Hole	Pierre	Hugo	Alain	Anthony	Jacky		Yves	James	Anthony
She's Leaving Home	Perry		Alain	Pierre			Yves		
For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite	James	Anthony					Yves	Jack	Alex
Within You Without You	Alain						Yves	Jack	
When I'm 64	Alain		Anthony	Pierre	Hugo		Yves	Jack	Alex
Lovely Rita	Pierre		Alain	Anthony	Eva		Sergio	Jack	Alain
Good Morning	Anthony	James	Eva	Alain	Jacky		Yves	Jack	Anthony
Sgt Pepper P.2	Anthony	James	Alain	Jacky			Marc	Jack	Anthony
A Day in the Life	Hugo	Marc Y.		Alain			Yves	Jack	
Penny Lane	Perry		Hugo	Anthony			Jacky	Jack	
Strawberry Fields	Alain		Anthony	James			Jacky	Jack	Anthony
With A Little Help - JC	Alain		Hugo	Eva	Jacky	Marc Y.	Jacky	Jack	Anthony

Figure 1.2 Song order, musicians and mixing desk inputs.

Sgt Pepper Show - Distribution of Performers

Song Title	Guitar 2	Guitar 3	Acoustic Gtr.	Keyboards	Sequencer	Strings	Brass	Percussion	Sitar	No. of Channels
Sergeant Pepper P.1	Alain	Bernard		Chris		No	Yes	Sergio		26
With A Little Help	Alain			Chris		No	No	Sergio		20
Lucy In The Sky	Alain							Sergio		20
Getting Better	Alain	Alex		Chris				Sergio		22
Fixing A Hole	Alain	Alex		Chris				Sergio		22
She's Leaving Home					Chris	Yes		Sergio		13
For The Benefit Of Mr. Kite				Chris	Chris	Yes	Kazoo	Sergio		25
Within You Without You				Chris	Chris	Yes		Sergio	Simon	21
When I'm 64				Marc H	Chris		Clarinet	Sergio		21
Lovely Rita			Pierre	Marc H			Yes	Marc		24
Good Morning	Alain	Alex		Chris	Chris		Yes	Sergio		24
Sgt Pepper P.2	Alain	Alex						Sergio		18
A Day in the Life			Alain	Chris	Chris	Yes	Yes	Sergio		28
Penny Lane				Chris	Chris	Yes	Yes	Sergio		27
Strawberry Fields	Alain			Chris		Yes	Yes	Yves		27
With A Little Help - JC	Alain			Chris				Sergio		20

Figure 1.3 Stage layout.



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Notes

Readers can access audiovisual media to accompany this chapter at the following locations:

- Alain Pires Lonely Hearts Club Band: Film Live at Centre Culturel de Huy, 13 October, 2017. Available at: https://youtu.be/Gl8GelxZEUA (Accessed: 19 August 2021)
- Musedelica: A Splendid Time Is Guaranteed for All Showcase Videos. Available at: https://vimeo.com/showcase/9633699 (Accessed: 19 August 2021)