



IOTEN PUBLISHING PRESENTS

LENNON & McCARTNEY

THE BROTHERHOOD BIGGER THAN THE BEATLES




ICONS OF MUSIC





Lennon &
McCartney



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The Beatles tape an appearance for *The Ed Sullivan Show* in 1965.





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Paul McCartney closes his eyes as he meditates on August 25, 1967.

Lennon & McCartney

My Old Friend

When you're very close to someone,
it's hard to express what they mean to you





HAPPY HOLIDAYS

Paul and John are seen backstage before filming a Christmas show in 1963.

FEBRUARY 1981

Carl Perkins first sang “My Old Friend” for an audience of one: Paul McCartney. Perkins was considered the “King of Rockabilly,” a pioneer who wrote and recorded “Blue Suede Shoes” before Elvis Presley. By February 1981, 25 years had passed since that single climbed the charts. Perkins was now 48 years old, an active performer but no longer hip or cutting edge.

This didn’t matter to Paul. He revered Perkins. So did John Lennon, George Harrison and Ringo Starr. They all bonded over their love of American rock music from the 1950s. Songs like “Blue Suede Shoes,” “That’ll Be the Day” and “Heartbreak Hotel”—as well as the artists who sang them: Perkins, Buddy Holly and, of course, Elvis—brought hope to the four lads raised in Northern England in the wake of World War II. ▶

LIVERPOOL LADS

The Beatles perform onstage at the Cavern Club in August 1962.



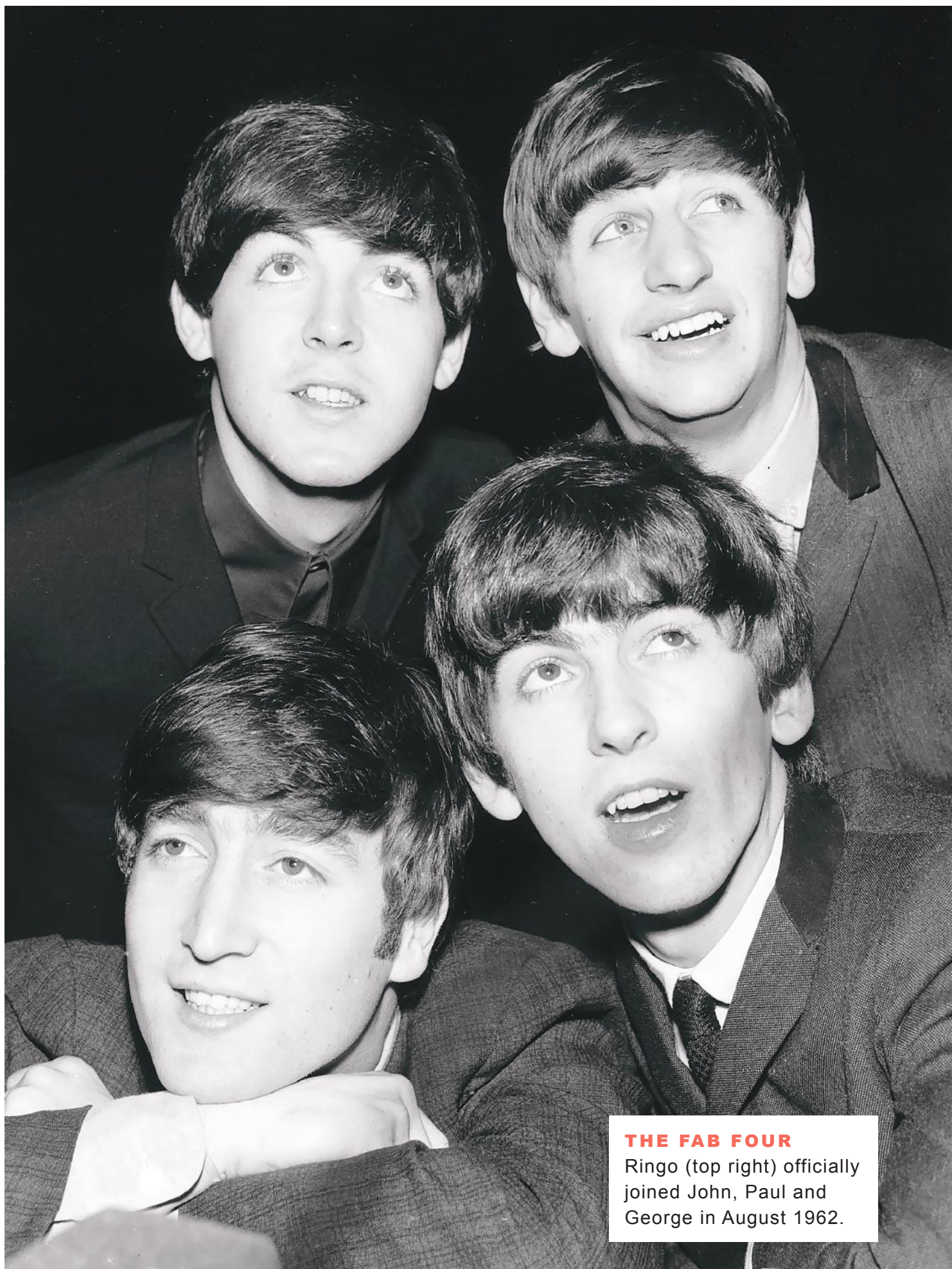


INTRODUCTION

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Even after they eventually emerged as the Beatles, they never forgot the rock idols they once worshiped.

”



THE FAB FOUR

Ringo (top right) officially joined John, Paul and George in August 1962.

My Old Friend

Even after they eventually emerged as the Beatles, they never forgot the rock idols they once worshiped. It's not surprising then that McCartney invited Perkins to join him for a working winter getaway on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. McCartney was 38 years old and recording an album, *Tug of War*, that involved Starr and former Beatles producer George Martin. Paul also crossed paths with Harrison while recording. But no Lennon. That wasn't possible.

Less than three months earlier, on December 8, 1980, John Lennon was fatally shot outside his home, the Dakota building on the Upper West Side neighborhood of Manhattan. He had just turned 40 and returned to recording after a five-year break.

The murder was shocking. For everyone who came of age in the '60s, it was another jolt—like the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. Yes, the news was sad if you were a Beatles

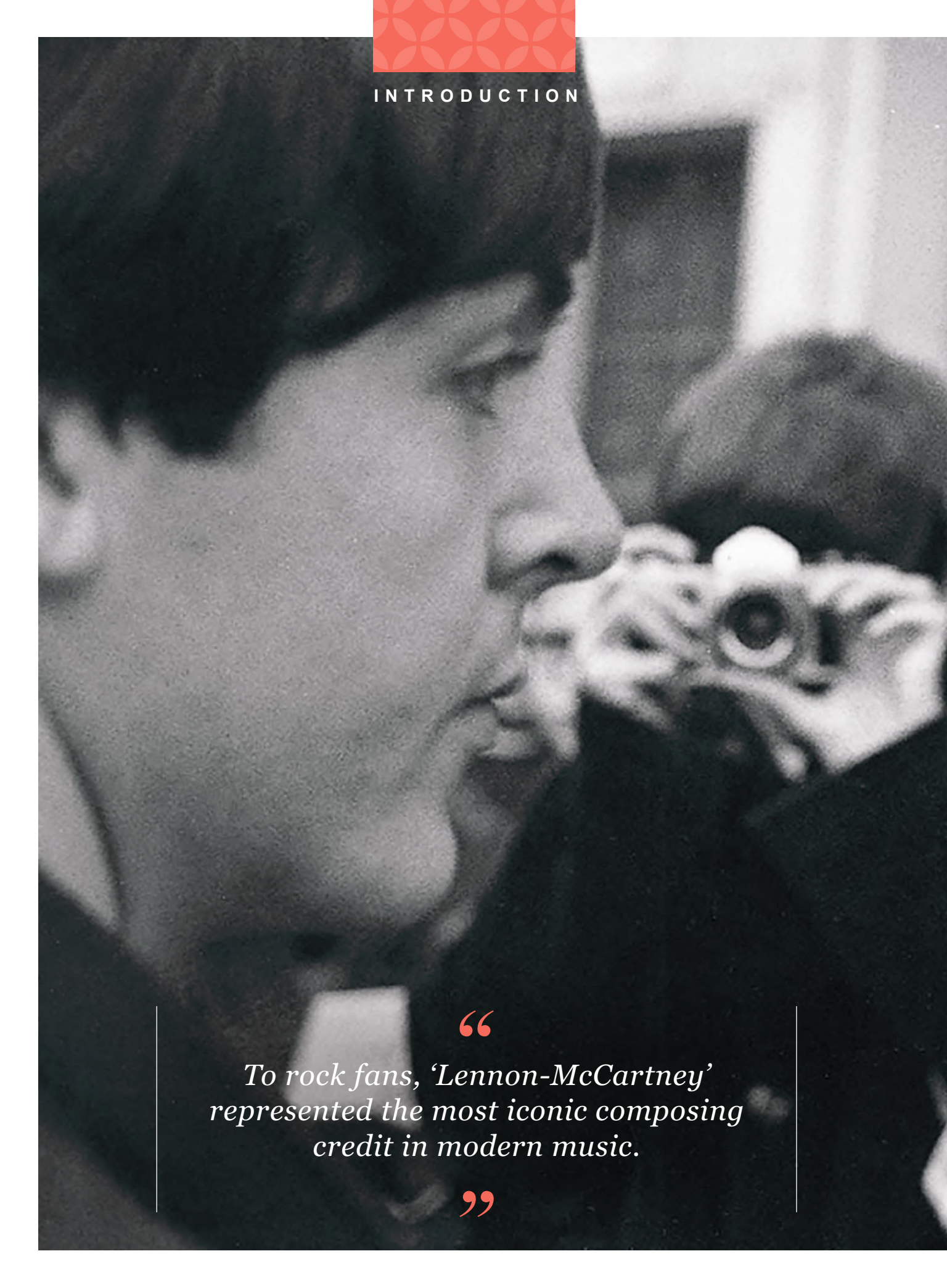
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*McCartney
wasn't ready to lose
Lennon, nor to
process what the loss
meant to him.*

”

fan. It was also a stark reminder that idealism could vanish like a bullet cutting through the air on a dark New York City night.

McCartney wasn't ready to lose Lennon, nor to process what the loss meant to him. To rock fans, “Lennon-McCartney” represented the most iconic composing credit in modern music. To McCartney, it was shorthand for what he ▶



INTRODUCTION

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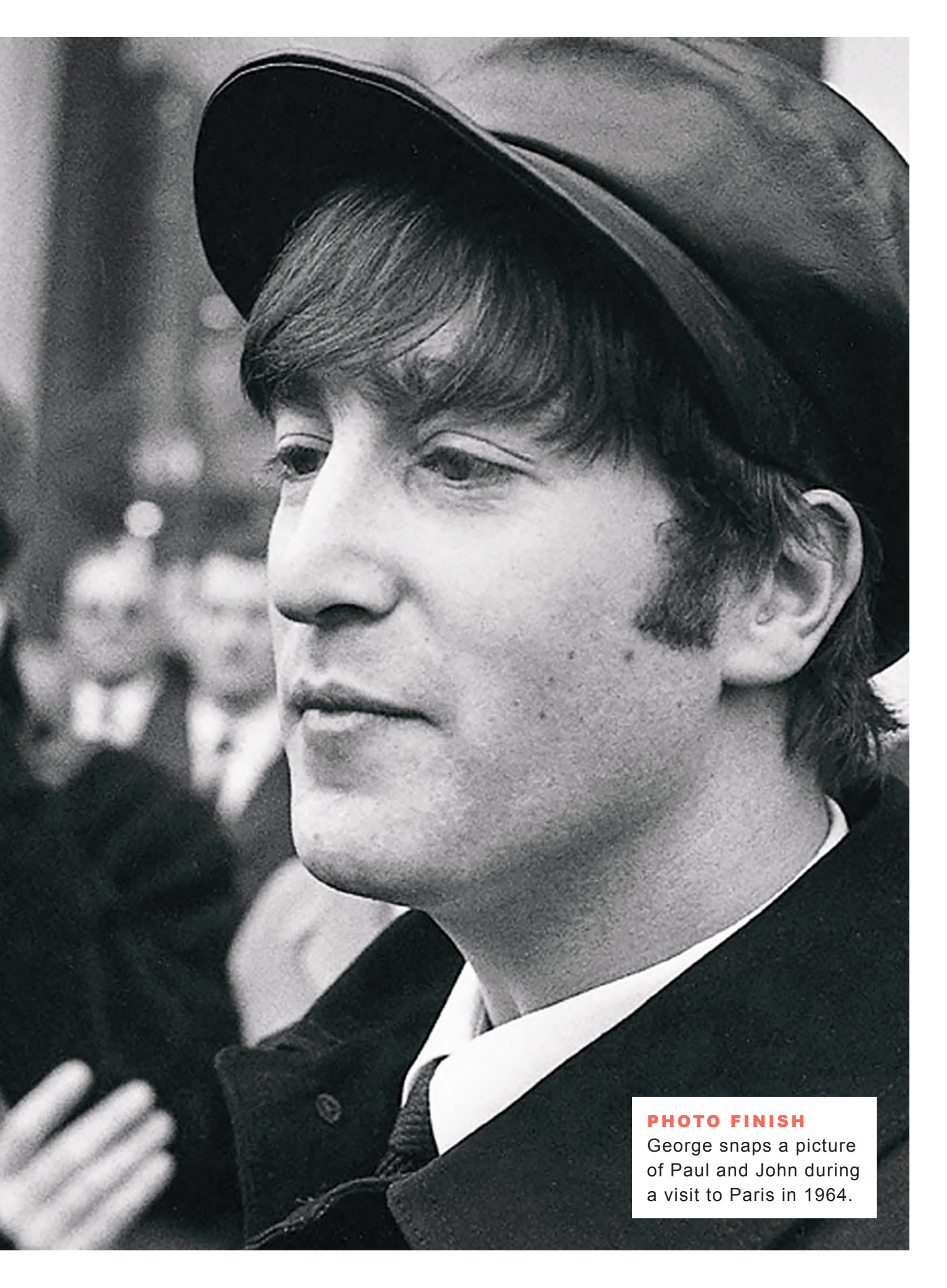


PHOTO FINISH

George snaps a picture of Paul and John during a visit to Paris in 1964.

My Old Friend

accomplished with his best friend.

In this swirl of emotions, the trip to Montserrat was nostalgic. Carl Perkins was touched just to be included. He wrote “My Old Friend” the night before he was scheduled to leave as a thank you to McCartney.

*My old friend,
Thanks for inviting me in
My old friend,
May this goodbye never mean
the end
If we never meet again this side
of life
In a little while, over yonder,
Where it's peace and quiet
My old friend,
Won't you think about me every
now and then*

To Perkins, the message was a personal way to mark the moment. Nothing more. “I sang it [to Paul],” he told *Goldmine* magazine in 1995. “[He] said, ‘Carl, it’s beautiful.... Would you sing it again?’”

Perkins gladly obliged and

Paul asked his wife, Linda, to join him for the second listen. Then McCartney started to cry. Eventually, he left the room. Linda assured Perkins that he had done nothing wrong. “He’s crying and he needed to,” she explained. “He hasn’t been able to really break down since what happened to John.”

Then Linda hugged Perkins and asked, “How did you know?”

“She said the last words that John Lennon said to Paul in the hallway of the Dakota building,” Perkins told *Goldmine*. “He patted him on the shoulder, and said, ‘Think about me every now and then, old friend.’”

When McCartney heard those words in Perkins’ song, it felt like a message. And receiving such a message was like a dream that you dare not expect to come true. For both John Lennon and Paul McCartney, the same could be said about the times they shared and the things that they accomplished together. ■

“

*He patted him on the shoulder,
and said, ‘Think about me every now
and then, old friend.’*

”



OLD FRIENDS

The foursome pose for a photograph in 1967, a year after they stopped touring.

Lennon & McCartney

John, Before Paul

Growing up, Lennon was not understood
by very many people



BACK IN THE DAY

A young John Lennon at home in Liverpool during his school days.

WARM EMBRACE

A 9-year-old John sits with his mother, Julia, in his cousin's garden, circa 1949.





JUNE 1955

After returning home from a trip, John Lennon was given devastating news: His uncle, George Smith, had passed away from a liver hemorrhage while John was away. Smith was 52 years old. John was 14.

Smith was both a father figure and friend to John. By contrast, his Aunt Mimi—Smith’s wife and the oldest sister of John’s mother, Julia—was strict and no-nonsense. Aunt Mimi and Uncle George took John into their home at 251 Menlove Avenue after Julia split from her husband and John’s father, Alfred “Alf” Lennon, when John was 6 years old. ▶

John, Before Paul

Uncle George had an enormous influence on Lennon during his childhood. He taught John how to read. He introduced him to poetry, drawing, and painting. He made John laugh with puns and wordplay. Smith is even said to have bought John his first harmonica.

**ABSENTEE DAD**

Alfred Lennon (here in 1966), John's estranged father, was largely absent during his son's childhood.

There isn't a clear consensus on how John reacted when he was told of Uncle George's death. Aunt Mimi is quoted in Philip Norman's book *John Lennon: The Life* as remembering, "[John] just went very quiet... He just went up to his room." Some Beatles histories describe a different reaction: unexplainably breaking out in laughter. Either possibility might be true. John was, after all, only 14. And he already showed a tendency to protect his emotions with sarcasm and jokes. Being quick-witted and well-read, his sense of life's absurdities was sharp.

To the outside world John could be cheeky, which did not entirely please Aunt Mimi. But his mother, Julia, approved. She was high-spirited and freethinking herself. With Julia, John felt seen. But Julia wasn't accepted by her family as John's full-time caregiver. For one thing, she never officially ►



AUNT MIMI

Mary Elizabeth Stanley Smith (here in 1981) was John's primary guardian.



251 MENLOVE AVENUE

John's childhood home is now open to the public through guided tours.

John, Before Paul

divorced Alf Lennon, yet she also had children with a Liverpool hotel worker named Bobby Dykins. This was considered shameful at the time. And anyone who wanted to take a cheap shot at John simply had to mention that his mother had a family with another man.

Despite this tension, John never gave up on his mother. After the loss of Uncle George, Julia became John's closest ally. She taught John the banjo and ukulele. They listened to records together, including emerging American rockers like Elvis.

“

John never gave up on his mother. After the loss of Uncle George, Julia became John's closest ally.

”

Julia made John feel like it was OK to be himself.

Now that he was getting older, he no longer needed Julia to be a traditional mother. He enjoyed her company as a like-minded friend. John was still a teenager, but he saw a path forward. He could build a life around art, Julia and rock 'n' roll. ■



HOME SWEET HOME

An exterior view of the Liverpool home where John grew up with his Aunt Mimi and his Uncle George.



BABY FACE

Paul McCartney first met John Lennon when he was 15 years old.

Lennon & McCartney

The Day They Met

Lennon and McCartney first came
together at a church fête



TEDDY BOY

Paul considered John (17, in 1958) “the local Ted” before they met.

JULY 6, 1957

Paul McCartney often shares two details about the day he met John Lennon: The first was that John didn't know the lyrics to the Del-Vikings' "Come Go With Me," and the second was that his breath smelled of beer. McCartney was 15, his face still round with baby fat. Lennon was 16 going on 17, leaner and meaner with his hair piled into a wavy pompadour.

McCartney had already seen Lennon around town before that fateful day, but he'd never talked to him, mainly because John didn't look approachable. In fact, there was a nickname for lads like Lennon: Teddy Boys or Teds. The most extreme Teds were gang members. But many teenaged boys of the era, including John, were considered Teddy Boys simply for dressing in drainpipe trousers and projecting a well-practiced air of disdain. "John was the local Ted," McCartney recalled. ▶



TEEN SPIRIT

A school photograph from the 1950s shows Paul McCartney, circled.

The Day They Met

“This Ted would get on the bus and I wouldn’t look at him too hard in case he hit me.”

The occasion of Lennon and McCartney’s first meeting was the garden fête of St. Peter’s Church in Woolton. John and his band, the Quarry Men (styled as two words at the time), were scheduled to play—which was a big deal. Lennon’s mother, Julia, attended with pride. Even Aunt Mimi came out to support her nephew—even though she didn’t

“

McCartney had already seen Lennon around town before that fateful day, but he’d never talked to him.

”

think music would take John anywhere worth going.

The Quarry Men were billed as a skiffle group, which meant their repertoire was based on traditional folk songs like “Cumberland Gap,” “Maggie May” and “Railroad Bill”—played as fast as possible to sound like American rock ’n’ roll. John made it a point to sneak in Elvis’ “Baby, Let’s Play House.” He also sang “Come Go With Me,” the song that caught Paul’s attention because it sounded wrong. “He’d heard it on the radio,” McCartney remembered. “He didn’t really know the verses, but he knew the chorus. The rest he just made up himself.”

Paul attended the fête on the invitation of his friend, Ivan Vaughan, who was also friends with John. Between the Quarry Men’s afternoon and evening set, Vaughan introduced Lennon to McCartney. For a few awkward ▶

The Day They Met



RISE OF THE BEATLES

A plaque marks the spot where the Quarrymen (who became the Beatles) recorded their first record in 1958.

moments not much was said. Then Paul borrowed a guitar and launched into Eddie Cochran’s “Twenty Flight Rock,” a song he taught himself by listening to the record.

According to McCartney, he impressed John. “I also knocked around on the backstage piano and that would have been ‘A Whole Lot of Shakin’ [Goin’ On]’ by Jerry Lee [Lewis]. That’s when I remember John leaning over, contributing a deft right hand in the upper octaves and surprising me with his beery breath.”

“I saw he had talent,” John would later recall. “I turned around to him right then on first meeting and said, ‘Do you want to join the group?’” John also remembered how he felt about Paul on that historic day. “I’d been kingpin up to then,” Lennon said. “The decision was whether to keep me strong or make the group stronger... But he was good. He was worth having. He also looked like Elvis. I dug him.” ■



“

The decision was whether to keep me strong or make the group stronger... But he was good. He was worth having. He also looked like Elvis. I dug him.

”

FAMILY TIES

Paul with his dad and brother (circa 1960). His mom died when he was 14.

Lennon & McCartney

Becoming

Lennon -



MOP TOPS

John and Paul (circa 1962) bonded over music and the loss of their mothers.

John and Paul's bond was about
more than music

— McCartney

FORMATIVE YEARS

John (circa 1959) said his mom's death was the worst thing to happen to him.



JULY 1958

It was a summer day. Julia Lennon visited her sister Mimi, which was not unusual. Then, tragedy. As she left 251 Menlove Avenue to catch the bus home, Julia was struck by a car. She suffered brain injuries and died instantly. She was 44 years old.

John Lennon was not at his Aunt Mimi's house when the accident happened. He was at his mother's house, waiting for her to return. "It was the worst thing that ever happened to me," John would later say. "I thought, 'Fuck it, fuck it, fuck it. That's really fucked everything.'" ▶

Becoming Lennon-McCartney

John was 17 years old and a student at the Liverpool College of Art. He had talent, but some instructors considered him unteachable. Loud and prone to disruption, John didn't seem to take education seriously nor respect those who did.



GUITAR VIRTUOSO

A young George Harrison rocks out on his guitar (circa 1954). George joined the Quarry Men at 14 years old.

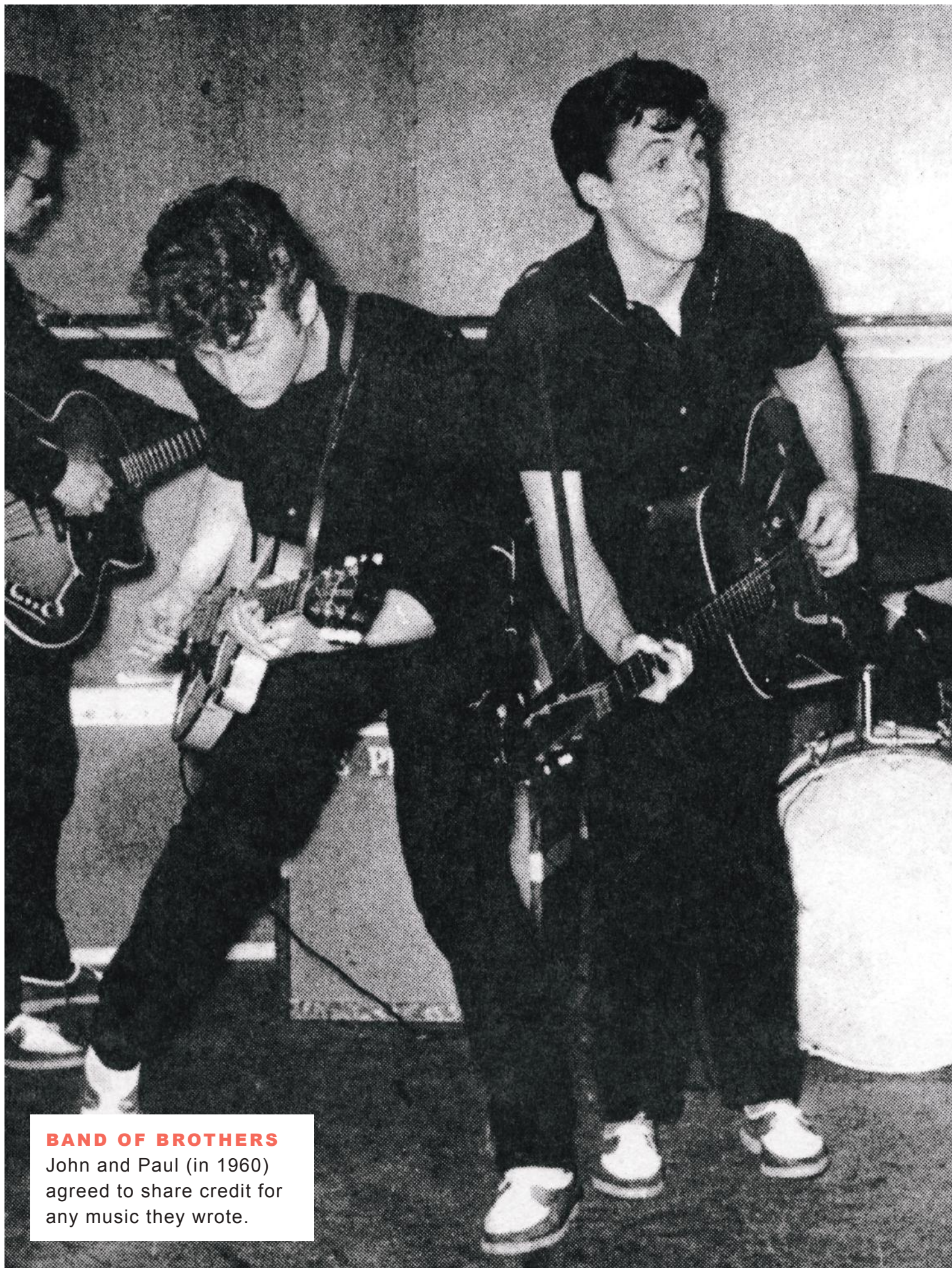
His most constructive time was spent with the Quarrymen, the name of his band having evolved from two words to one. Paul McCartney had been a member for almost a year, and his influence was growing. In early '58, he persuaded John to add another guitar player—one skilled enough to play solos. The person Paul had in mind was his friend from the bus, George Harrison. George was 14, two and a half years younger than John. The age gap was a problem, but George aced his audition by playing the guitar instrumental “Raunchy” by Bill Justis. Harrison was in.

Meanwhile, Lennon's friendship with McCartney was growing tighter. They hung out together often, passing the time by writing songs. Beatles historian Mark Lewisohn believes the first song written by John and Paul together was called “Too Bad About Sorrows,” in early 1958. On the ►



BAND BEGINNINGS

George, John and Paul stand outside Paul's home in Liverpool (circa 1960).



BAND OF BROTHERS

John and Paul (in 1960) agreed to share credit for any music they wrote.

Becoming Lennon-McCartney

surface it was a teenage breakup ballad, yet the lyrics reflected the perspective of two young men who understood what loss felt like. Paul’s mother, Mary, died of cancer when he was 14. John carried a sense of abandonment having grown up without his mother and father as a small child.

*Too bad about sorrows
Too bad about love
There’ll be no tomorrow
For all of your love*

Around the time this song came together, John and Paul agreed to share credit for any music that they wrote—together or apart. Now everything was “Lennon-McCartney,” literally and symbolically.

For a young man who didn’t allow many people to get too close, this was an act of trust for John. Paul may have had a different motivation. By nature, McCartney was eager to please everyone, and approval from John—who didn’t

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McCartney was eager to please everyone, and approval from John meant more.

”

give such nods easily—meant more. If Lennon thought he was a worthy writing partner, then perhaps what they were writing was worth listening to. The idea that this might be true boosted Paul’s confidence.

John and Paul’s partnership means so much to the world now. But in 1958, it only meant something to John and Paul. Their life was otherwise unchanged: Mundane routines at school. Obligations. Bad days and good ones. The only difference was a reason to dream—and someone to share it with. ■

Lennon & McCartney

Meet The Beatles

Being one of the Fab Four often required
pleasing others more than yourself



SEEING QUADRUPLE

Paul, John, George and Ringo wear matching suits for a promo shoot in 1963.





BEATLEMANIA!

The band meets with host Ed Sullivan before the big show on February 9, 1964.



AUGUST 14, 1962

Ringo Starr was asked to join John, Paul and George as a replacement for drummer Pete Best in the summer of '62. Eighteen months after Ringo said “yes,” the Beatles landed at New York’s John F. Kennedy International Airport.

We all know what happened next: full-blown, exhilarating chaos. Suddenly, the Beatles were everywhere. And memories of this time are still vivid. What was it like to be one of 73 million watching “the Fabs” for the first time on *The Ed Sullivan Show*? Where were you when you first heard “I Want to Hold Your Hand,” “She Loves You” or “Please Please Me”? And, of course, which Beatle was your favorite? ►

THE CALM

John often contradicted himself on how he felt about Beatlemania.



Meet The Beatles

In a word, this was Beatlemania—the moment when the band became more than a band. The excitement and euphoria of this phenomenon is accepted as a shared experience. But who owns those feelings more—the Beatles, or the rest of us? No one really knows what Beatlemania was like

for John, Paul, George and Ringo.

Even the Beatles themselves didn't always agree. Lennon often contradicted himself when describing how he felt about the years between 1962 and the group's eventual breakup in 1970. In interviews, John would sometimes say that he ▶



THE STORM

Fans in Toronto scream for the Beatles during their visit in September 1964.

Meet The Beatles

was “amazed.” Other times, he characterized their success as being “a cage.”

Of all the Beatles, John was most inclined to be the contrarian—even if it meant rejecting his own popularity. The trap was living up to expectations. Musically, the Beatles almost never failed. But it was much harder for John, Paul, George and Ringo to be the individuals fans wanted them to be without sacrificing personal identity. “We can’t be everything to everybody,” Lennon summarized in a 1964 TV interview.

McCartney, on the other hand, was quite eager to please.

“Who are you trying to impress?” Paul was asked during an interview with *60 Minutes*. “Everyone,” he replied. That was in 2019, after he was already a legend. In the early days, Paul worked exceptionally hard to

make the Beatles everything their fans wanted them to be. He smiled. He flirted. He wrote hits like his life depended on it—and, maybe, it did.

Paul was grateful to be a Beatle. He has described it as “the greatest fantasy ever.” McCartney’s world expanded—personally, professionally and creatively—all because of the band.

John experienced the same success, but once he achieved it he felt emptiness as much as fulfillment. “The whole Beatle thing was just beyond comprehension,” Lennon said in a 1980 interview with *Playboy*. “I was eating and drinking... dissatisfied with myself... crying out for help.”

It would have been rude to complain about being a Beatle. But at the lowest moments, far from the comforts of home and isolated in hotel rooms because it was too crazy outside, the Beatles turned to the only people who understood: Each other. ■

“

In the early days, Paul worked exceptionally hard to make the Beatles everything their fans wanted them to be.

”



FRONT-PAGE NEWS

John and Paul hold up a copy of the *Daily Mirror* on November 13, 1963.

Lennon & McCartney



Their
Broth

BACKSTAGE PREP

Paul and John get ready for the Beatles' Christmas show on December 30, 1963.

John and Paul shared respect, understanding and love—usually unspoken

er hood

BEACH DAY

The band splashes around with fans in Miami during a trip in February 1964.





SEPTEMBER 1964

The Beatles performed 32 shows over 33 days during their first tour of North America in '64. They stopped in 24 different cities. There was rarely any down time. Then came Florida—and a hurricane.

“We had to spend a night or two,” Paul McCartney told interviewer Terry Gross in 2001. “And at that age, with that much time on our hands, we really didn’t know what to do with it except get drunk.” ▶

Their Brotherhood

“
*You didn't talk about
 that kind of thing
 where we came from.*
 ”

Paul remembers staying up all night talking with John. “At some point early in the morning, I think we must have touched on some points that were really emotional, and we ended up crying, which was very unusual for us, because... we didn't do that kind of thing. So I always remembered it as a sort of important emotional landmark.”

When asked what they talked about, McCartney said: “Probably our mothers dying, because John and I shared that experience. My mother died when I was about fourteen, and his died shortly after—about a year or so after, I think. So this was a great bond

John and I always had. We both knew the pain of it, and we both knew that we had to put on a brave face because we were sort of teenage guys, and you didn't talk about that kind of thing where we came from.”

McCartney said he and John were so drunk they exchanged compliments—another rarity. “Let me tell you, man, you're fucking great'.... I do think of that.”

One night. One lasting memory. Paul wrote a song about it called “Here Today.”

*What about the night we cried?
 Because there wasn't any
 reason left to keep it all inside?
 Never understood a word
 But you were always there
 with a smile*

Despite all their years as friends, Lennon and McCartney seldom expressed the appreciation they had for one another to each other. But it would occasionally show, ▶

MAKING MOVIES

Paul plays the piano while John reads on the set of *A Hard Day's Night* in 1964.



MISCHIEF MANAGED

The lads film their second movie, *Help!*, in Austria in March 1965.



Their Brotherhood

in small ways. During the recording of *Revolver*, in 1966, John remarked on “Here, There and Everywhere,” which was written almost entirely by Paul: “That’s a really good song, lad. I love that song.”

Usually the feelings that John and Paul shared showed up when they were making music together. In 1965, while the Beatles were in Austria filming *Help!*, Lennon and McCartney joined Jacky and the Strangers for a loud, free-form jam at the Marietta Hotel. There are photos of the occasion. John and Paul look to be having the time of their lives.

Similar moments were also caught on camera. Glances. Knowing looks. Eyes that flashed at inside jokes. Those were the good times, the unguarded times. But, as with any long-term friendship, closeness also took on other forms: competition, disagreements and bruised egos. That could be ugly, even if it was rooted in love. ■

“
*Usually the feelings
that John and
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up when they
were making music.*

**STOP AND SMILE**

Lennon grins in front of the snowy ski slopes while filming *Help!* with his bandmates in Austria in 1965.



FRESH MUSIC

The Beatles launch *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* in May 1967.

Lennon & McCartney

Conflicts & Creativity

The Beatles battled but still
gave the world music



PSYCHEDELIC ERA

The Beatles film the video for their song "Strawberry Fields Forever" in 1967.



AUGUST 13, 1967

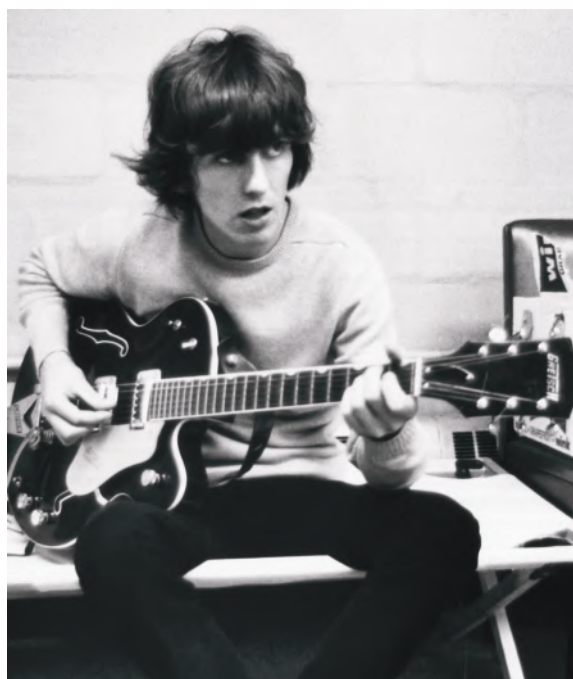
When the Beatles released the “double A-side” of “Strawberry Fields Forever/Penny Lane,” it marked an artistic revolution. It peaked at No. 2 on the U.K. charts, the first Beatles single that didn’t hit No. 1 since 1963, but it is now widely considered the greatest one-two punch in music history.

Lost to Beatles mythology is the fact that these two iconic songs were also the byproduct of the rivalry between Lennon and McCartney.

“We later admitted [it],” McCartney told *60 Minutes* in 2018. “[John would think] ‘Paul’s written a good one, I better get going.’ And I would similarly [think,] ‘Hmmm. That’s a bit good, right. Here we go.’ He would write ‘Strawberry Fields,’ I would write ‘Penny Lane.’” ▶



This tug of war gave the world amazing music. It also strained the Beatles. For one thing, it marginalized George Harrison, who wanted to contribute more because his gifts as a songwriter had started to blossom. “It was not so much that Lennon and



FEELING FRUSTRATED

George (rehearsing, circa 1967) quit the Beatles in January 1969 after years of not feeling respected.

McCartney did not believe in Harrison; more that their overwhelming belief in themselves left very little room for anything—or anybody—else,” explained Beatles producer George Martin in 1994.

Martin and manager Brian Epstein successfully kept the band’s chemistry in balance during their rise to stardom. Now it was harder. The Beatles no longer looked to Martin as the “grown up” in the studio; he was more a facilitator of their creativity. Then, on August 27, 1967, Epstein died of an accidental overdose of sleeping pills and alcohol.

The last thing the band needed was the responsibility of agreeing on business decisions. Still, the Beatles carried on for almost three years despite tensions that would flare up without an outside mediator. The feeling that surrounded the band had always been a sense of camaraderie. Gradually, this started to splinter.

Conflicts & Creativity

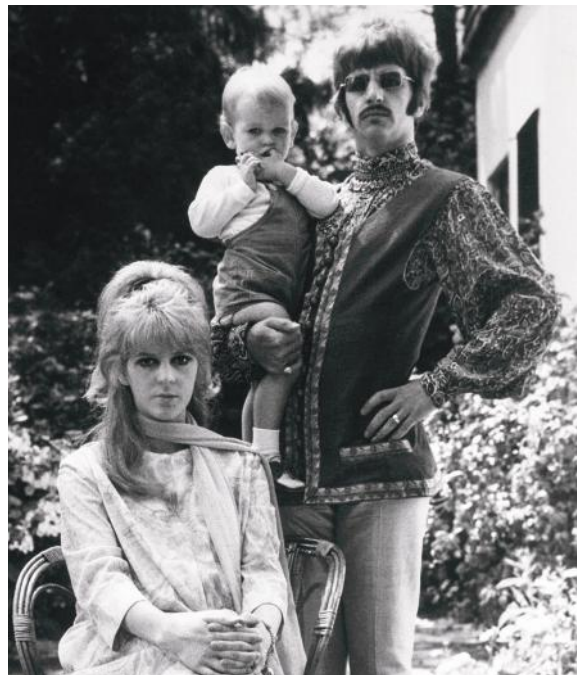
The first Beatle to leave was Ringo Starr. On August 22, 1968, Ringo quit during recording sessions for *The White Album*. “I went to see John,” Starr said during an interview for the *Anthology* retrospective. “I said, ‘I’m leaving the group because I’m not playing well and I feel unloved and out of it, and you three are really close.’ And John said, ‘I thought it was you three!’”

“Then I went over to Paul’s and knocked on his door. I said the same thing: ‘I’m leaving the band. I feel you three guys are really close and I’m out of it.’ And Paul said, ‘I thought it was you three!’”

Starr took a family vacation to clear his mind while the Beatles showered him with reassurances that he was appreciated. Ringo returned to the band on September 3, greeted by flowers surrounding his drum kit. Crisis averted.

Then, less than four months later, Harrison quit the Beatles on January 10, 1969. Frustrated by years of not feeling respected and ►

“
The Beatles showered Starr with reassurances that he was appreciated.
”



FAMILY OF THREE

Ringo Starr and his wife, Maureen, sit for a portrait with their firstborn son, Zak, in 1967.

Conflicts & Creativity

recognized, George was eventually persuaded to return after five days.

During both of these tensions, Lennon and McCartney united to hold the band together. But they too were starting to see things in different ways. Paul wanted to stay unified. To that end, he continued to write songs, often alone. He pushed the others to innovate, sometimes to the point of perceived bossiness. And he dreamed up projects that he believed might spark creative interest. This was the impetus behind the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* concept album, the TV movie *Magical Mystery Tour*, and the back-to-basics sessions that ultimately became *Let It Be*.

While Paul worked—sometimes desperately—to make the others excited about being Beatles, John turned his attention inward. Unlike Paul, his actions were not meant for

public consumption. He began his relationship with Yoko Ono. He started using heroin. And, influenced by both of these happenings, he became less of a contributing force for the band.

In January 1969, Paul's frustrations bubbled over. "Why are you here?" McCartney asked them. "I'm here because I want to do a show, but I don't see an awful lot of support." Paul was resentful. If no one else cared about the future of the Beatles, why should he?

Privately, Lennon spoke about "divorcing" the band. It started as talk, John's way of venting. Then, on April 10, 1970, McCartney told the world that he was leaving the Beatles—in a press release that also announced his debut solo album. Presented as a Q&A interview with himself, one exchange focused on Paul's future with John.

Q: "Do you foresee a time when Lennon-McCartney becomes an active songwriting partnership again?"

PAUL: "No." ■



BEATLES BUS

The Fab Four travel on location for their *Magical Mystery Tour* film in 1967.



START OF THE END

Yoko Ono, John and Paul attend the premiere of *Yellow Submarine* in 1968.

Lennon & McCartney



Crossing



FRIENDS AT ODDS

By April 1970, John, Paul and the Beatles had gone their separate ways.

At the lowest point, Lennon and McCartney pushed each other to the brink

the Line

SCOTTISH GETAWAY

Paul and wife Linda get fresh air near their farm in Scotland, circa 1971.





MAY 17, 1971

Credited to Paul and Linda McCartney, *Ram* was the second full-length album from Paul after leaving the Beatles. The lead track, “Too Many People,” was instantly recognized by fans—many of whom held out hope for a Fab Four reconciliation—as a direct attack on John Lennon.

*That was your first mistake
You took your lucky break and broke it in two
Now what can be done for you?
You broke it in two*

Four months later, Lennon released *Imagine*. Buried on Side 2 was his musical answer to Paul—“How Do You Sleep?” The target of the lyrics was obvious and John hit his bull’s eye with jackhammer force. ▶



TWO'S A CROWD?

Fans believed John (with Yoko, circa 1970) inspired Paul's "Too Many People."

Crossing the Line

*So Sgt. Pepper took you by
surprise
You better see right through
that mother's eyes
Those freaks was right when
they said you was dead
The one mistake you made
was in your head*

For added potency, George Harrison played a slide-guitar solo on “How Do You Sleep?” Ringo Starr was reportedly in the studio when the song was recorded, but he found the attack distasteful. “That’s enough, John,” he said.

The moment had been building since the end of 1970, when McCartney filed a lawsuit against Lennon, Harrison and Starr to officially disassociate himself from the Beatles and their chosen manager, Allen Klein. Paul vocally opposed working with Klein in the waning days of the band—he didn’t trust him—but McCartney was outvoted by the other three Beatles. The lawsuit was an action of final resort for Paul,

“
*The decision drove
a wedge between all four
that lasted years.*

a case of business taking priority over personal relationships. The decision drove a wedge between all four that lasted years.

Not that the former bandmates refused to interact. On multiple occasions they spoke, contributed to one another’s solo projects, or spent social time together in various combinations—all around the world.

On December 29, 1974, the lawsuit was officially resolved. John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr each signed a document dissolving the Beatles. ▶

Crossing the Line

With the passage of time, Lennon came to realize that McCartney’s instincts about Klein had been valid. “Possibly Paul’s suspicions were right,” Lennon admitted in a TV interview.

Still, the wounds needed time to heal. Lennon and McCartney were



GROWING WEDGE

McCartney took issue with Allen Klein (in 1971) being the Beatles’ manager after Brian Epstein passed away.

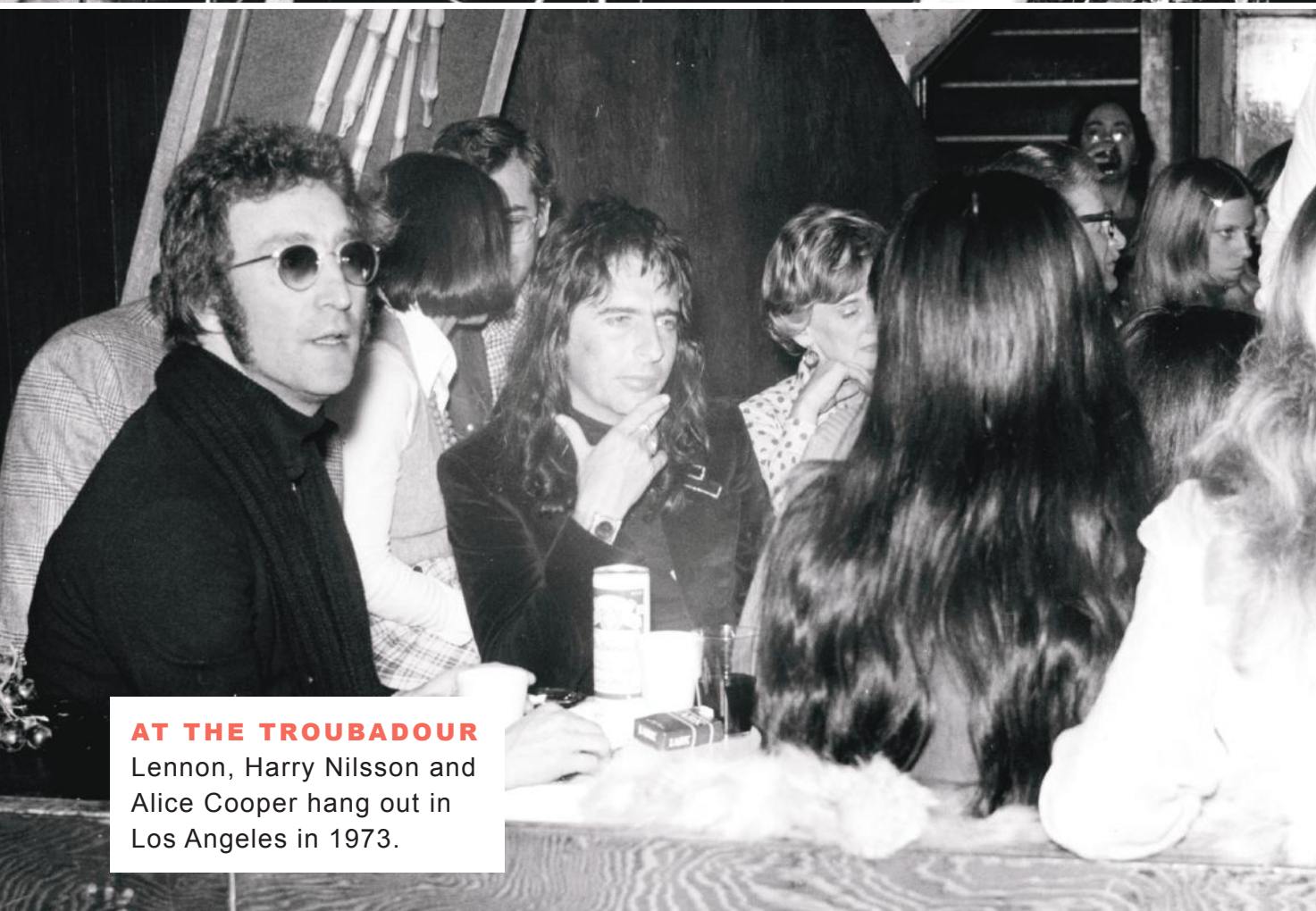
civil and often warm towards one another through the early 1970s. But they didn’t work together, despite each having moments when they wondered what that might be like. When talk was kept to safe subjects like children and mutual acquaintances—everything was fine. But the inseparable closeness that once defined their friendship seemed a thing of the past.

Singer Alice Cooper often hung out with Lennon in Los Angeles in 1974. Their social group—which also included Harry Nilsson, Mickey Dolenz of the Monkees and Keith Moon of the Who—called themselves the Hollywood Vampires. Cooper saw evidence of how Lennon really felt about McCartney, even if he wasn’t ready to tell him directly.

“If anybody said anything bad about Paul, John would take a swing at you,” Cooper recalled in an interview with iHeartRadio in 2025, “because that was his best friend.” ■

BAND ON THE RUN

Henry McCullough, Denny Laine and Paul McCartney perform as Wings in 1972.



AT THE TROUBADOUR

Lennon, Harry Nilsson and Alice Cooper hang out in Los Angeles in 1973.



LOOK OF LOVE

Yoko and John give each other knowing glances at the Grammys in 1975.

Lennon & McCartney

Building a Bridge

Beatles fans always wonder how close the band ever came to reuniting

ON THE ROCKS

John Lennon and girlfriend May Pang attend an AFI tribute in 1974.





MARCH 1974

Yoko Ono visited the McCartney family at their home in London. At the time, she was separated from John Lennon, who was living in Los Angeles with his girlfriend, May Pang. That situation—which had been going on for 18 months—was suggested by Yoko and accepted by John.

Sitting at the McCartney kitchen table, Yoko asked Paul for a favor: To visit John in L.A. and deliver the message that it was time to come home. McCartney obliged. ▶

Building a Bridge

“
*Lennon knew Paul
 wanted to try
 writing together
 again.*
 ”

“I sat him down and said, ‘I feel like a matchmaker here, but Yoko still loves you. Do you still love her?’” Paul recalled in the book *Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run*. “And his guard came down and [he] said, ‘Yes. But I don’t know what to do.’ So I said, ‘Well, Yoko came to see us in London. So, we’ve talked to her and she does still love you, but you’re going to have to work your arse off to win her back.’”

Lennon returned to Ono by early 1975. That October, John and Yoko welcomed their son, Sean, on the same day John turned 35.

Over the next five years, John and Paul shared social visits—

usually in New York—and telephone calls. Many fans dissect these interactions for clues that a Beatles reunion may have been close to happening.

On the night of the 1975 Grammy Awards, Lennon asked Art Garfunkel for advice following his recent reunion with partner Paul Simon. John intimated that McCartney had invited him to join him in New Orleans for the recording of his album *Venus and Mars*. Lennon knew Paul wanted to try writing together again, but didn’t know if he should.

“Do it,” Garfunkel recalled in the documentary *The Beatles Stories*. “Remember that there was a music blend that was a great kick. If you can, return to the fun of that sound and the musical happenings with your old buddy and ignore the strands of the complications and history.”

John never made the trip. ►

FAMILY MAN

John and Yoko (in 1977) had son Sean in 1975, months after reconciling.





PARTY OF FIVE

The McCartney family leaves London for a NYC holiday in June 1975.

Building a Bridge

A year later, on April 24, 1976, *Saturday Night Live* producer Lorne Michaels appeared on live TV and offered the Beatles \$3,000 to play three songs on the show. The bit was a spoof on actual offers—some as lucrative as \$230 million—being made by promoters to lure the band back together.

“Paul and I were together watching that show,” Lennon revealed in the David Sheff book *All We Are Saying*. “He was visiting us at our place in the Dakota. We were watching it and almost went down to the studio, just as a gag. We nearly got into a cab, but we were actually too tired.”

It would have taken all four former Beatles to agree to be together at the same place, at the same time, for a true reunion to materialize. But by the late 1970s, it appeared that the two most open to it were John and Paul—not always at the exact same moment, but in spirit.

“

It appeared that the two most open to reuniting the band were John and Paul.

”

“If it happens, it happens,” John told an interviewer.

“There were some bad moments,” Paul said in an interview after the *Anthology* retrospective. “But even after all the crap we went through and all the stuff John laid on me. All that ‘how do you sleep at night?’ And the real bitter stuff that he came out with in the press, we were able to end up—thank God—chatting about putting the cat out and baking bread and raising Sean. It says something about our relationship that we were able to go through all that and yet come back and still be friends.” ■

Lennon & McCartney

The Tragedy

The night John was murdered marked
the end of a busy day

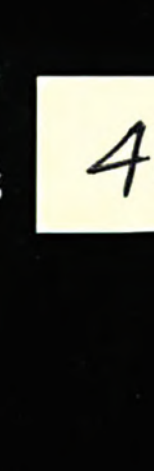
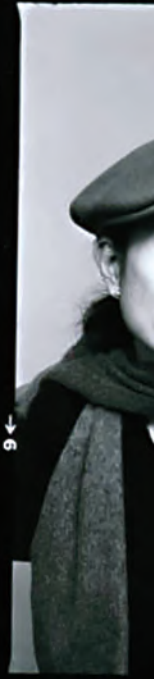


TRAGIC ANNIVERSARY

Yoko Ono in the home she and John Lennon shared, a year after his death.

PICTURE PERFECT

John and Yoko sit for professional photos on November 2, 1980.



DECEMBER 8, 1980

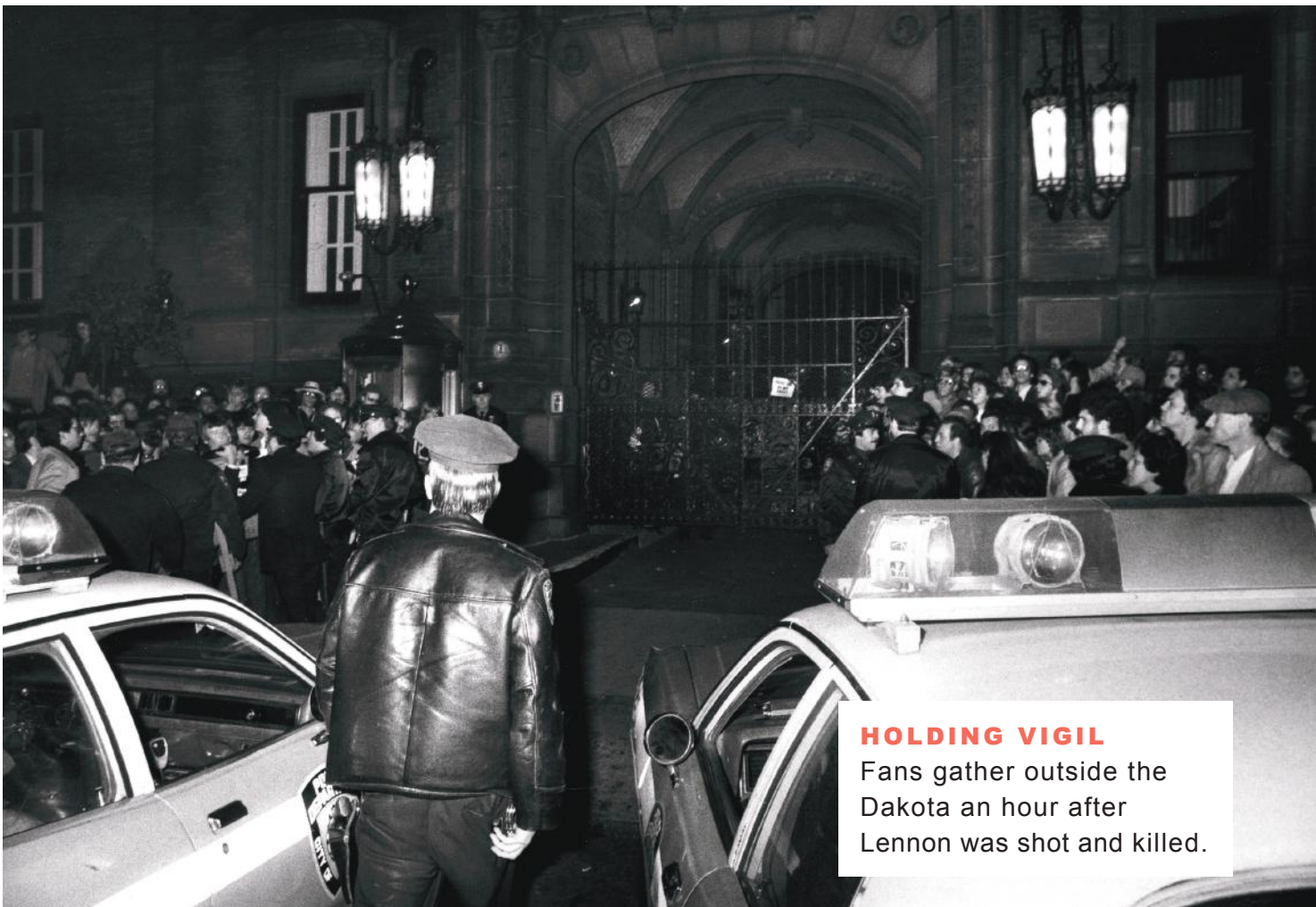
John Lennon was shot four times by a deranged fan named Mark David Chapman at approximately 10:50 at night outside his home in New York City. Lennon was pronounced dead on arrival at Roosevelt Hospital at 11:15 p.m. He was 40 years old.

The murder came at the end of a productive day for Lennon. In the morning, under bright blue skies, he shared breakfast with his wife, Yoko Ono, at Café La Fortuna—one of their favorite spots on the Upper West Side. From there, he went to the salon Viz-à-Viz for a haircut. ▶





SUSPECTED SHOOTER
Heavy security surrounds Mark David Chapman on December 11, 1980.



HOLDING VIGIL
Fans gather outside the Dakota an hour after Lennon was shot and killed.

The Tragedy

Returning home to the Dakota, John and Yoko received famed photographer Annie Leibovitz for a cover shoot for *Rolling Stone*. This was part of Lennon's promotion for *Double Fantasy*, which had just been released on November 17. The album, which included "(Just Like) Starting Over," "Beautiful Boy (Darling Boy)" and "Watching the Wheels," was Lennon's first since 1975's *Shaved Fish*.

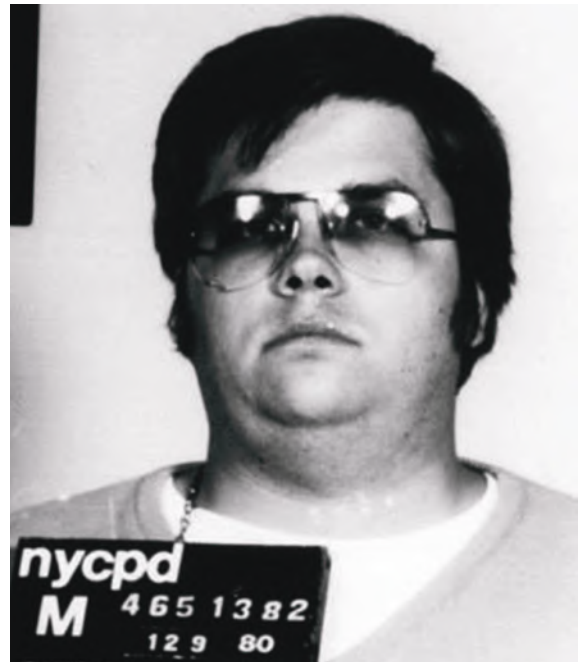
After the photo shoot, Lennon went downstairs to "Studio One"—another apartment in the Dakota that Ono used as an office. There, Lennon was interviewed by RKO Radio's Dave Sholin. Loose and at ease, John talked about his new album, his past and the future.

"I hope I die before Yoko," he said casually, "because if Yoko died I wouldn't know how to survive. I couldn't carry on."

Despite that prophetic statement, Lennon appeared excited and optimistic about the times to come. "I consider that my

work won't be finished until I'm dead and buried," he said. "And I hope that's a long, long time."

When the interview was complete, John and Yoko followed Sholin and his crew out of the Dakota. There, John stopped to autograph a copy of *Double* ▶

**NOTORIOUS M.D.C.**

Chapman, Lennon's assassin, later admitted he murdered the former Beatle because he sought fame.

The Tragedy

Fantasy for a shy “fan” in a wrinkled overcoat—Chapman. John then asked Sholin if he and Yoko could join him for a ride to the Record Plant, the recording studio where they were working on Yoko’s song “Walking On Thin Ice.” John was producing this one.

Sholin said yes and seized the opportunity to continue his conversation with John. When asked about the current state of his relationship with Paul McCartney, John answered without hesitation: “Well, he’s like a brother. I love him. We certainly have our ups and downs and our quarrels. But at the end of the day, when it’s all said and done, I would do anything for him. I think he would do anything for me.”

At the Record Plant, the Lennons worked on “Walking On Thin Ice” into the evening. John was thrilled with playbacks. The lyrics, written and performed by Ono in

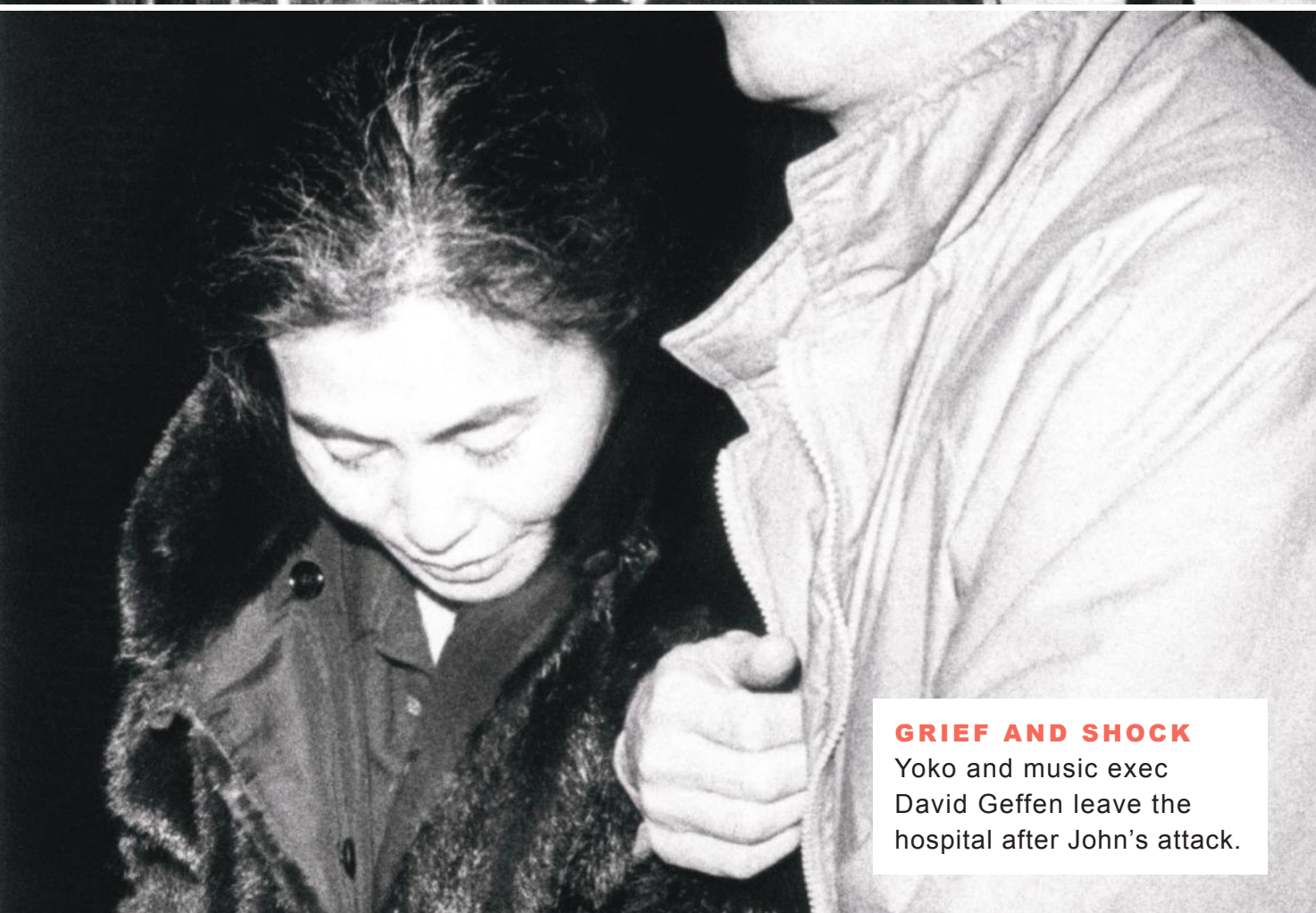
an almost spoken style, were set over a danceable beat. “This is the direction,” John exclaimed. “Let’s put it out before Christmas!”

John and Yoko then talked about going out to dinner. Lennon invited Record Plant security guard “Big Bob” Manuel to join them, maybe around the corner at the Stage Deli. Manuel declined the invitation because he was feeling sick. “Don’t worry,” John said graciously. “You go home, feel better, we’ll do it another night.”

For Lennon, there would not be another night. He and Yoko left the studio and went home instead of out. John wanted to tuck in son Sean, then 5, before bedtime.

Exiting their limo at the Dakota, Ono walked into the building a few steps ahead of her husband. Lennon followed holding cassettes, including one of the just completed “Walking On Thin Ice.” That was when Chapman came up behind him and fired.

Lennon’s last words, to the Dakota doorman: “I’m shot.” ■



GRIEF AND SHOCK

Yoko and music exec David Geffen leave the hospital after John's attack.



LADS FOR LIFE

Paul McCartney and John Lennon on the set of a TV special, circa 1965.

Lennon & McCartney

Paul, After John

For more than 45 years, McCartney worked
on overcoming the loss of Lennon





HAPPIER TIMES

Paul and John talk to the press after the Beatles play Portland, Oregon, in 1965.

JANUARY 19, 1994

Paul McCartney stood at the podium of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony to give a speech about John Lennon. Paul was noticeably nervous. This would have amused John.

Lennon used to describe McCartney as a “good PR man.” It was John’s way of acknowledging that Paul was smooth when dealing with fans and reporters. It could also sound dismissive. Some might think John was implying that Paul was good at being fake. In truth, it was Lennon recognizing one of the ways McCartney surpassed him.

But when it came to talking about John, fans wanted everything from Paul: emotion, wisdom and—after the murder—closure. He often fell short. McCartney still couldn’t process it all for himself, let alone live up to the expectations of others. ▶



Fourteen years earlier, Paul received the news of John's death very early in the morning in the U.K. via a phone call. "You couldn't take it in. I still haven't taken it in. I don't want to," McCartney wrote in his 2025 book *Wings: The Story of a Band on the Run*.

Instead of sitting around at home, McCartney decided that the best thing he could do was go to the studio to work. "Just had to keep going," he wrote. While there, a reporter found Paul and asked for a comment. "It's a drag, isn't it?" McCartney said blankly. The public reacted harshly. Paul seemed blasé. Unmoved. Detached.

In truth, Paul was in shock. His daughter, Stella, was in the kitchen with her father when he received the news. She remembers him going absolutely white and needing to leave the house to be alone. "I admit it breaks my heart to this day," Stella told *Us Weekly*

magazine. "I've got that footage in my head for my life.... I've captured in my head the moment Paul McCartney found out that John Lennon had been murdered."

As the years passed, McCartney was asked about losing Lennon over and over. Paul talked about



LOSS FOR WORDS

Paul, visibly shaken, enters a studio on December 9, 1980, after learning of John Lennon's murder in New York.

Paul, After John

visiting with John in his dreams. He admitted to asking Lennon for spiritual approval while writing songs. And he worked to make sure fans always remembered the Beatles as the best versions of themselves, rather than the worst.

In short, Paul McCartney has been expected to summarize John Lennon and his legacy for the rest of us. With *feeling*. Perhaps this is part of being a celebrity or public figure. But as a human being, how heavy must this burden be? Time passes for Paul. He turns 50, 60, 70 and 80, accumulating perspective with each passing milestone. John, however, remains frozen in the past. Forever 40. Paul is expected to speak for him. To give fans what they crave.

Ever the people pleaser, Paul tried to summarize all of that—simply and earnestly—in his induction speech. A lifetime of memories took the form of a letter.

“Dear John,” McCartney said, reading the letter aloud. “I remember when we first met in

“

*You couldn't take it in.
I still haven't taken
it in. I don't want to.*

”

Woolton. The village fête. It was a beautiful summer day. I walked in there and I saw you on the stage. You were singing ‘Come Go With Me’ by the Del Vikings. But you didn’t know the words.... ‘Come go with me, to the penitentiary.’ That’s not in the lyrics.

“I remember writing our first songs together, we used to go to my house... And we used to smoke Typhoo Tea with this pipe that my dad kept in a drawer. Didn’t do much for us, but got us on the road. We wanted to be famous.

“I remember the visits to your mum’s house. Julia.... A very ▶

Paul, After John

“
*Here we are...
 thank you, for
 everything that you
 mean to all of us.*
 ”

beautiful woman. She had long red hair and she played the ukulele. I'd never seen a woman who could do that.

“I remember introducing you to my mate, George... and him getting into the group by playing ‘Raunchy,’ on the top deck of the bus. You were impressed.

“And when we met Ringo... He was a seasoned professional, but the beard had to go. And it did.

“Then came the U.S.A.... New York City... Ed Sullivan... Recording at Abby Road.

“We wanted to be famous. Now we were getting really famous.

“I remember writing ‘Day In the Life,’ and the little look we gave each other as we wrote the line ‘I’d love to turn you on.’ We knew what we were doing, you know. Sneaky little look.

“Oh, boy...

“After that, there were the phone calls to you. The joy for me, after all our business shit that we’d gone through, getting back together and communicating once again. The joy as you told me how you were baking bread now. And how you were playing with your little baby, Sean.

“That was great for me... it gave me something to hold on to.

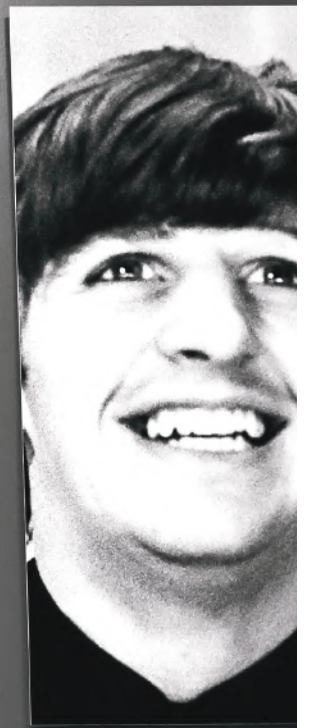
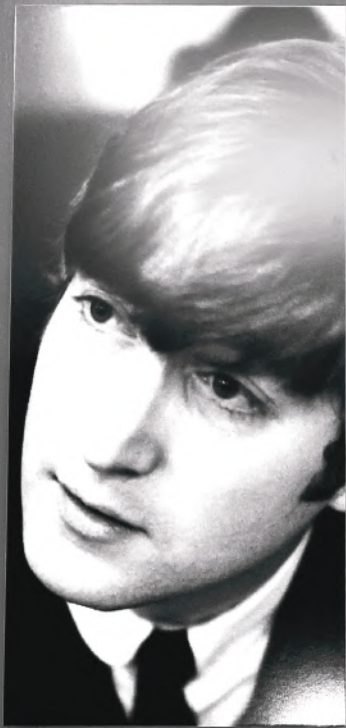
“Here we are... thank you, for everything that you mean to all of us.

“This letter comes—with love—from your friend, Paul.”

Lennon and McCartney accomplished so much together. They meant so much to one another—more than they had the chance to express before it was too late. Sometimes that’s the way it is in life. Perhaps for everyone. ■

EYES OF THE STORM

Paul visits a 2024 exhibit in Brooklyn featuring his personal photographs.



Lennon & McCartney

EDITORIAL DIRECTION:



EDITOR-IN-CHIEF **VICKIE AN**

CREATIVE DIRECTOR **IAN KNOWLES**

MANAGING DIRECTORS **BOB DER, SCOTT GRAMLING**

ART DIRECTOR **CHRISTIAN RODRIGUEZ**

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It says something about our relationship that we were able to go through all that and yet come back and still be friends.

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