



THE WHITE ALBUM 50 YEARS YOUNG

I wasn't allowed to buy the *White Album* when it was released in November 1968. I was 10 years old and an album was extremely expensive for my parents to buy in those days. I started my album collection in the early 1970s while at secondary school. *The Beatles* was one of the last albums I bought to complete my set of the 13 original studio albums in the UK. Some of my school friends who were Beatle fans thought it was one of their worst albums. The follow up to the fantastic *Sgt. Pepper* seemed to be rather a disappointment.

During their visit to India in February 1968, John, Paul and George wrote many songs for the album. It was there that the album was born. But when the album emerged some fans were disappointed, as I was initially. Don't get me wrong, it was a decent album, but having seen what had gone before it seemed The Beatles were in decline. What we ended up with was a set of individual songs. George Martin was quoted that it would have been better as a single album rather than a two-disc set.

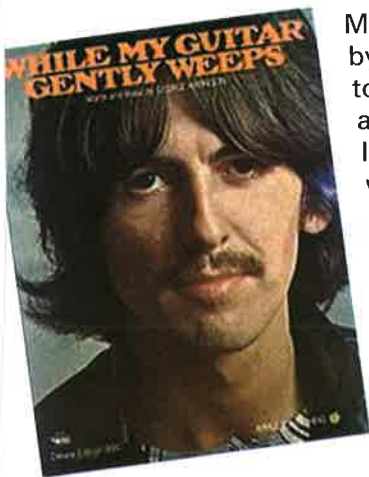
As the years have passed, the album has grown in stature and today it is seen as one of the best Beatles albums. Why this sudden change in its popularity? Maybe people have caught up at last? My own opinion is that newer generations of fans find The Beatles' later work far more interesting than the early mop top albums. The Beatles saw the band at their basic best, no frills, just raw Beatles.

'Mother Nature's Son', 'Blackbird' and 'Julia' are just acoustic songs with Paul and John respectively taking the lead vocals. 'Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except for Me and My Monkey', 'Birthday' and 'Back in the USSR' have

The Beatles going into heavy rock. The variety of songs is fantastic. Of course, we mustn't forget 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps', one of George Harrison's finest compositions. On *Anthology Three* we were treated to the acoustic version as well as another George composition 'Not Guilty'. For me 'Not Guilty' should have been on the album and not left in the vaults for nearly 30 years. George was developing rapidly as a song writer and had four songs on the album. 'Piggies' is just wonderful with a harpsichord played by Chris Thomas and 'Savoy Truffle' is a very underrated George song and is one of my favourites on the album.

'Glass Onion' is one of Lennon's best on the album and 'Dear Prudence' was written about Mia Farrow's sister who 'over-embraced' meditation when in Rishikesh. 'Ob La Di Ob La Da' has become a regular in Paul's live shows. John didn't like the song and was particularly critical of it in later interviews. The more personal songs are 'Martha My Dear' (about Paul's sheepdog!) and 'Julia' a wonderful ballad written by John about his mother. 'Sexy Sadie' was John's song about the Maharishi. 'Happiness is a Warm Gun' has some wonderful vocals by John and harmonies by Paul and George. Ringo's drumming as ever is impeccable, and he even managed to get three vocals on the album, 'The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill', the closing track 'Goodnight' and the self-penned 'Don't Pass Me By'.

Fans were particularly upset about the inclusion of the song 'Revolution 9'. This was one of John and Yoko's earliest political works and the other Beatles tried to stop it getting on the album without success. Did we really need this on the album? Could we have done without 'Why Don't We Do It in The Road'?



My initial impression was that I thought side one was by far the best of the four sides, and I still feel that today. The album has grown on me over the years and whilst I don't think it is on a par with albums like *Revolver* and *Rubber Soul* it is still up there. It was recorded at a time of tension in the band, with The Beatles writing as individuals and slowly drifting apart. This adds to the album's legacy and intrigue.

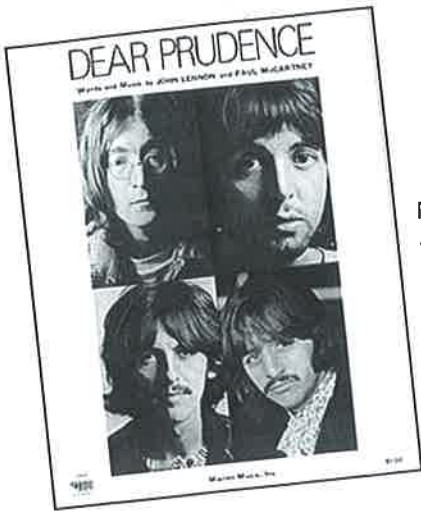
Ernie Sutton, BBFC magazine co-editor and treasurer

**IT'S HERE!
BRAND NEW FROM
THE BEATLES.**

The astonishingly great two-record album, simply called
THE BEATLES.
30 new mind-bending songs... individual color photos of The Beatles... and a giant photo collage poster... all in the plain white cover with the quietly embossed title...
THE BEATLES.
GET YOURSELF THIS ALBUM or get the double 8-track cartridge and turn your car on as well.

My 50 year "Love/Hate" relationship with The *White Album*

BBFC Publisher Craig Smith's memories of the big double album...



My Beatles-obsessed older brother played this album as soon as he could coax my folks into buying it for him; this is where my first memories of it are formed. At the time, my young 5 year old ears were perplexed by all the differing styles flowing from our family stereo system. I think I pretty much did not like it; it was in hindsight a very 'adult' listen in my view. Other Beatles albums were of course way more accessible and sounded like joyfulness in record form. This was something else entirely to me.

However, I did love the colour photos inside which were soon adorning my brother's bedroom walls and that bizarre poster with a naked Beatle, well that stayed folded inside the sleeve of course. My brother loved the album and always played it around the house, even 'Revolution 9' which he said: "makes sense to me", but that was probably the pot talking!

As I got older it developed into my favourite Beatles album as it contained my all-time fave Beatles song 'Dear Prudence', which still is my favourite. The sound of that one song is perfect - the drums, guitar riff, bass, John's voice - the production to me is just flawless, I never get tired of hearing it even now. Obviously McCartney loves his contributions to this album too as some of his *White Album* songs such as 'Back In The USSR', 'Blackbird', and 'Ob,La,Di, Ob,La,Da', 'Birthday' and 'Helter Skelter' are played in concert even today. Sure, The Beatles has some wacky moments that are hard on the ears sometimes, but overall at 50 years old it still stands the test of time and will always hold pleasurable memories to me. I'm off to play 'Dear Prudence' now, as it's been 5 minutes since I played it last!



The *White Album* Anniversary and Me

I didn't discover the Beatles until after the break up. My parents were not big music fans and when I turned 13 in 1974 and asked for a turntable for my birthday, I did get one along with two LPs but neither was a Beatles album! However, I was soon using my pocket money to buy my own music and the Beatles figured prominently. Unlike Ernie's story, I didn't get my albums in the order they were released so I wasn't disappointed by the *White Album*. In fact, I probably got it before *Sgt Pepper* because it had more songs on it and I was hungry for more Beatles music.

At the time, I was just happy to be able to buy the albums. I wasn't concerned with getting original releases, so my *White Album* is not numbered but was treasured all the same. I was also ignorant of the behind-the-scenes struggles that had been going on in their lives during the period they made the album. I just loved the music and I played it over and over and over, never tiring of it.

As I got older and started reading about the Beatles' history, I would often play the albums discussed in the books as I read them. I did eventually start comparing the albums and examining how their sound developed and evolved and, on an intellectual level, I can see why so many felt let down by the *White Album* when it first debuted, but I just view it as different. The Beatles had so many different styles over time, that I treat each album like a friend – each one has a different personality, but I like them all.

Michele Copp, BBFC website and social media master



I've been a Beatles fan ever since I can remember anything. I am blessed to have three older siblings, one of whom is a musician, so I gobbled up all the sophisticated music they were listening to. Of course, that music was dominated by The Beatles. My early Beatles music listening most likely consisted of what was currently playing on my siblings' turntables, what was on the radio or what a friend happened to be 'grooving to'. So, I probably did not have a sense then of the chronology of their musical development, but I knew what 'turned me on'. The *White Album* is full of interesting stories that can be enjoyed on different levels at different ages. As I grew and matured, songs like 'Sexy Sadie' and 'Happiness is a Warm Gun' took on a new slant. I will never grow tired of learning about the world through the lyrics of the best mentors I have ever had. I just love The Beatles so whatever song they presented to me I loved and cherished as something unique and special. 'While My Guitar Gently Weeps' is a beautiful, classy, song that touched me deeply as a child. In fact, I would say that I experience all of George's songs on a deep emotional level. John intrigues me, Paul amuses me and Ringo, well, you can't help but want to cuddle him. The *White Album* is probably the album in which all their true personalities shine through. I know so much more now about the stories behind the songs, but I will never forget the sheer simple emotion I felt when I first heard it. Gosh they are good!

Terry Bloxham, BBFC magazine co-editor and secretary

WHAT'S'S IN A NUMBER?

Many vinyl pressings from across the globe of the *White Album* featured a unique serial number on the bottom right corner. Each country featured it's own system of numbering, but the most interesting of course are the original UK versions. For example, there were three separate pressings of the numbered UK stereo White Album:

1968: original top-loader with 7-digit serial number (same as original mono)

Late 1969: first reissue, side-opening with 7-digit serial number.

1970/71: second reissue, side-opening with 6-digit serial number.

From 1972 onwards, the albums were pressed without serial numbers, however later reissues did feature numbers. Also the "Sold In UK..." text was withdrawn mid-1969.

So as you can see there are a bunch of differing varieties of album sleeves that could feature a serial number. We have decided to feature a collage of photo's supplied by BBFC members showing their own *White Album* number. So, what number have you got?

Alison Evans of Liverpool.

"I found this White Album, numbered 0389126 in the summer of 1982 in a flea market in Paris."



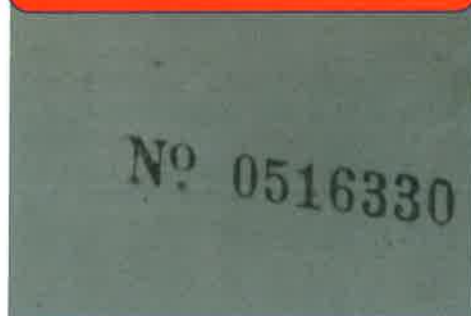
Phill Boylett

"I bought the cd in HMV in 1999. I love the way it reproduces the 12" album with the photos and poster as well as being numbered"



Ernie Sutton

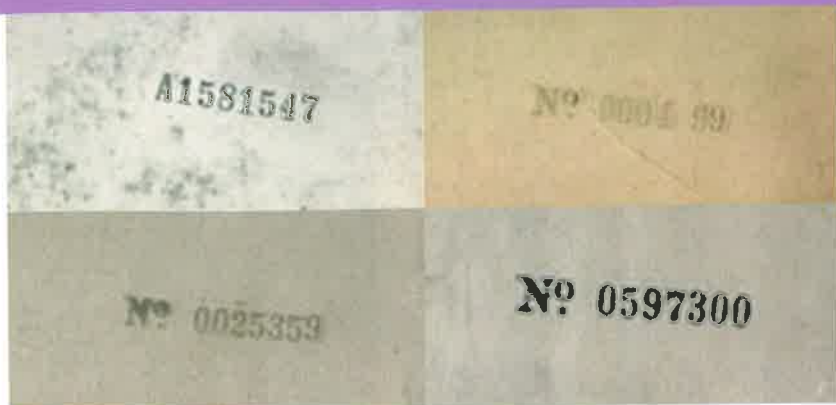
"This is my MONO version. I picked this up in a wonderful second-hand store called BEANOS in Croydon in the late 1970s. I had a stereo version that I got in 1974, but the number was only partially stamped, so isn't fully readable."



Paul Smith



Andy Brooks from Essex.....has a nice selection of UK numbers



US fan Dave Rubin.....collects serial numbers from around the world

N° 0025359

UK export

A 03473

Australia

N° 1005596

Germany

N° 50669

Argentina

Jimmy Copeland

"Bought by my brother Alfie in Harrison's record shop Castle St Belfast on the day of release in Nov 1968."

The BEATLES

Jim Collison

"I bought it at the A1 Lighting Store, which also sold records, in Tottenham High Road sometime in late November or early December 1968."

N° 0003950

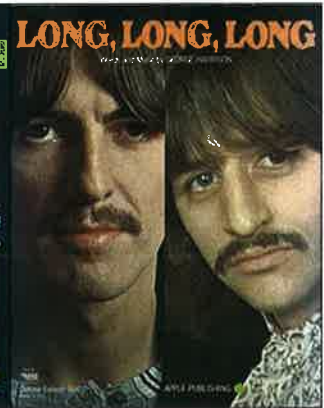
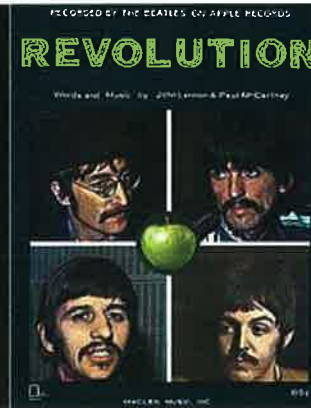
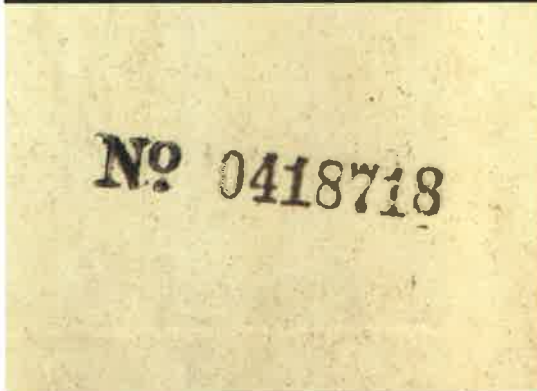
Tom Bertens
From the Netherlands
"I got it one day after the release!"



Martin Atkins
"Purchased through a mail order catalogue of mum's. Had to pay 6p (old money!) a week for goodness knows how long! Still remember unpacking and playing for first time on parents gramophone!"



BBFC publisher Craig Smith has a UK mono, first issue, signed by a certain bass player....



White Album – Lost Track?

Mystery surrounds a George Harrison song, 'Dehra Dun'. On The Beatles *Anthology*, George says he composed it in 1968 in Rishikesh and, at Ringo's request, he performed a brief 'off the cuff' rendition of this song, saying it was one "which I've never recorded to this day." On this occasion however, it was a memory lapse on his part, as there are at least two complete studio versions of him singing this song, plus the 'Dehra Dun Intro' (downloaded from the *Anthology* DVD). These three tracks were released 'exclusively' on a bootleg album *George Harrison: a True Legend* (released by Strawberry Records).



The good quality booklet issued with this album, states that "This wonderful chant like song, the title being derived from the city of Dehra Dun in India, was recorded at Trident Studios during the recording of the Radha Krsna Temple single 'Hare Krsna Mantra' during March – July 1969."

This contradicts the view of Richie Unterberger in his excellent book *The Unreleased Beatles*, in which he claims that 'Dehra Dun' was a studio outtake, recorded at the All Things Must Pass sessions in May 1970, 'somewhere' in London. George did record a number of never completed ATMP demos in May 1970, including 'Mother Devine', 'Nowhere to Go', 'Cosmic Empire' and 'Window Window'. However, 'Dehra Dun' is NOT an uncompleted demo, rather it is a full mix of the song in 2 versions, one complete and one shorter edited mix, allegedly the finalised master.

Some time ago, a contributor named Nat to the now-defunct The Beatles Rarity website, said that this song was recorded during the Spring of 1969 at Trident Studios, a year earlier and before The Beatles broke up. It is well known that George recorded with the Radha Krsna Temple at that time. Harrison himself couldn't recall ever recording the song, either in 1969 or 1970. This wasn't the first time that Harrison recorded a song during the Beatles era without his band mates being present – 'Within You Without You' being one example. However, George is very clear that he composed 'Dehra Dun' in Rishikesh in 1968 and as such it arguably constitutes a lost *White Album* song. It has never been released by George on any of his subsequent solo albums and wasn't included alongside a few other bonus tracks when *All Things Must Pass* was re-released. Nor did it feature in the *Living in The Material World* box set, which did include one CD featuring 10 previously unreleased Harrison recordings from this era.



So, with the release of a *White Album* box set, should 'Dehra Dun' be included as a lost Beatles bonus track alongside other unissued Rishikesh songs? In particular, John's haunting 'Child of Nature', a demo gem and very different from his solo version (re-recorded and renamed 'Jealous Guy'), George's 'Sour Milk Sea' which should have been included in *Anthology 3* and which is better than several songs which were included, and 'Circles' which is weird yet unique, all three of which have been bootlegged from the Esher Demo Tapes. Given the quality of 'Dehra Dun', it certainly deserves an official release. No better time than now.

Robert Britton