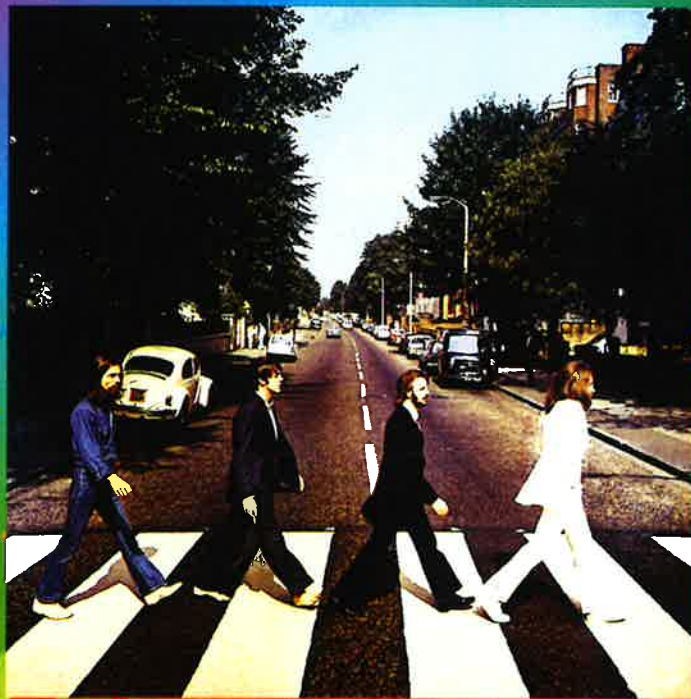


John Lennon

John Lennon was one of the Beatles, the most successful band so far in the history of pop music. Things happened to him that most people can only dream about: he became a pop star in his twenties, he played guitar, wrote songs and sang to vast audiences – and he became very rich. Yet, success and fame did not always make him happy. John always seemed to be searching for something more.

Hero or villain?

To many young people, Lennon was a hero. They admired him for his music, for being rebellious and for his campaigns for peace and other causes. However he also behaved foolishly at times, took harmful drugs, broke the law and upset his friends. Few of his fans knew much about the private side of this famous man. To them, he was just John, one of the 'Fab Four' – the Beatles.



Beatlemania

While at art college in the late 1950s, John had formed a band called the Quarrymen, with some of his friends. In 1960, he gave up his college course and concentrated on becoming a musician. The band changed its name to the Beatles, and they set out hopefully on their musical career. In 1962, they released their first single, 'Love Me Do'. It got to number 17 in the charts. The Beatles were on their way!

In June 1963 the band appeared on television in their own series. By November they were on stage in

London, singing in front of the royal family. John and fellow Beatle Paul McCartney were compared favourably with great music composers of the past. Fans mobbed them whenever they appeared. A new word was invented to describe the craziness: 'Beatlemania'. For the next two years, every record the Beatles made was a hit.

A hard day's night

In 1964 the Beatles started work on their first film, *A Hard Day's Night*, which was hugely successful. John and the others were working so hard they scarcely knew what time it was – the title of the film probably summed up what it felt like! In 1964 John also wrote and illustrated a book of humorous poetry and stories, *In His Own Write*, followed in 1965 by another called *A Spaniard in the Works*. Both were best-sellers.

Help!

But being so famous and popular brought its own troubles, and John was having problems with his marriage and with the band. The concerts in front of thousands of screaming fans felt like freak shows. No one could hear the music, so what was the point? "The only reason to be Beatles is to make music, not just to be in a circus," John explained sadly. Their last public concert was in America in August 1966, and the band finally broke up in 1970.

Back to work

In 1969 John had started making records on his own. One of his first was 'Give Peace a Chance'. He spoke out for peace and for civil rights, with his new wife, Yoko Ono. Over the next ten years he spent much of his time in the USA, living far more quietly than he had when he was one of the Beatles. Then, tragically, on 8 December 1980, he was shot dead in a New York street by a man claiming to be one of his fans.

Key dates

- 1940** John Lennon is born in Liverpool.
- 1960** The 'Beatles' are formed and play in Hamburg.
- 1962** The Beatles have their first chart success.
- 1968** John marries Yoko Ono.
- 1970** The Beatles break up.
- 1980** John Lennon is murdered in New York.

