



Handout 1B - George Martin and The Beatles Excerpts

Excerpt of “The Beatles: Produced By George Martin,” Richard Williams, *Melody Maker*, 21 August 1971

George Martin is probably the most shadowy character in rock and roll history. His influence has been immense, yet few people outside the immediate circle of the Beatles truly understand how much of a part he played in the early years of the greatest group the world has ever known...It's impossible to assess his true contribution, particularly as he's a modest man.

George Martin: [The Beatles' manager] Brian Epstein brought them to me...I liked them as people apart from anything else, and I was convinced that we had the makings of a hit group but I didn't know what to do with them in terms of material...they seemed to have that kind of raw sound that people hadn't heard about yet.

I found them this song by Mitch Murray which I thought was just ideal for them...When they turned up on the session they said they didn't like it...They actually recorded it but said they'd rather do one of their own numbers...John sang the solo, quite well actually, but he came to me and...said, "look, I think we can do better than this"...They quickly came back with 'Please Please Me', and I must confess it knocked me out.

It all happened so fast then...They'd come to me and say 'what do you think of this?' and that's how 'From Me To You' happened. It needed a bit of polishing here and there...I decided to make an album very quickly, and I brought them down for just one day.

Even though they'd written their own songs, they had them as songs rather than as record[ings]...I'd organise their beginnings and endings and their solos...It was all dead simple, and gradually the collaboration grew. It was just the four of them and if there was any keyboard stuff I'd put it in...It would have been silly to [try and] change them, because that would have destroyed their spirit. I don't think I ever quarrelled with them musically at all.



Excerpt from “Lennon and McCartney: Songwriters - A Portrait,” Michael Lydon, Unpublished, 1966

Both [Paul McCartney and John Lennon] stress that since they do not write their songs down, the finished record is really the song they write. In the studio they do most of the arranging, but are aided by George Martin, who has recorded everything they have done. "George Martin is important because he knows what we want," John told me. "He acts as a translator between us and Norman Smith, the engineer who actually runs the recording machines."

Excerpt from “The Beatles: Four Smiling, Tired Guys Talk About Their Music,” Loraine Alterman, *Detroit Free Press*, 19 August 1966

THEY'RE REAL. The Beatles, that is. I had never seen them in the flesh before, so I expected some kind of supermen to step out of the plane at Metropolitan Airport last Saturday morning. After all, aren't they the group who changed the whole face of pop music over the past four years? They showed people that pop music can have meaning and its creators can be intelligent, talented artists.

Paul McCartney, 23, George Harrison, 23, Ringo Starr, 25, and John Lennon, 25, were stashed away in a private office near the stage area at Olympia Stadium. Right away they were friendly. [They] completely charmed me with their intelligence.

What does Paul think the Beatles have done to pop Music? "Given it a bit of common sense... A lot of it was just a bit insincere I think. Five years ago you'd find men of 40 recording things without meaning it just to make a hit. Most recording artists today really like what they're doing and I think you can feel it on the records."

It is evident that John, Paul, George and Ringo are too bright not to know that you can't stay on top forever as teenage idols. With their talent and their intelligence they'll be around making records, writing songs and books and acting in movies long after the screams have faded away.



Individual Questions:

1. How might you describe George Martin's relationship with The Beatles?
2. Do you think George Martin wanted others to think of him as a "star producer"? Why?
3. Do you think that the musicians and singers with whom Martin worked were involved in the decision making processes about the recording?

Group Discussion Questions:

1. What are some of the differences in the production styles of George Martin and Phil Spector?
2. In what ways do you think these different approaches to recording music affected the musicians with whom each producer worked?
3. How would you describe the goals of each producer?
4. Do you think that the early Beatles would have prospered if Phil Spector was their producer? Why or why not?
5. If you were a songwriter with songs you considered almost "finished," which producer would you rather employ?