



THE BEATLES

Handout 2 - 1967

The children born in the years immediately following World War II, a generation known as “Baby Boomers,” represented a spike in the American birth rate so large that by 1965 more than 40% of the population was teenagers. As these teenagers became young adults, their collective responses to major events began to enact change on a grand scale. Such was their power that *Life* magazine’s “Man of the Year” award of 1966 went to “a generation: the man – and woman of 25 and under,” who, they suggest, are, “well-educated, affluent, rebellious, responsible, pragmatic, idealistic, brave, alienated, and hopeful.”

Life suggests that the Baby Boomers were “alienated,” meaning they felt in some way isolated or estranged. This was evident in the Boomers’ response to expectations and demands of them made by the government, which was run largely by their parents’ generation. So sweeping were the changes desired by many in the Boomers’ generation--reforms in civil rights for women and minorities, war policy, drug laws and more--that activists began to speak of an entirely new “political consciousness.”

Though The Beatles February 1964 American debut was only three years previous, it must have seemed a distant past to many in 1967. Especially, for instance, to young men eligible for the draft. In 1964 the U.S. had 23,000 “advisers” in Vietnam, but by 1965 35,000 men were being drafted into service monthly. In 1966, more than 385,000 troops had shipped out, 6,143 of those soldiers died in action. The numbers only increased in 1967: 485,600 U.S. troops were stationed in Vietnam, 11,153 were killed in action. At the time, the voting age was 21 but the draft age was 18.

In January 1967 a single event, The “Human Be-In,” a sit-in protest of 20,000 to 30,000 people held at Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, CA, garnered national press and inspired other protests in several forms throughout the country. During the summer of 1967 hundreds of thousands of Americans, mostly in their late teenage years or early 20s, flocked to San Francisco, New York and other cities and lived together in a statement of unity and protest that was expressed through art, music, demonstration and civil disobedience. The “Summer of Love,” as it has come to be called, began technically on June 21, 1967. *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band* was released on June 2, 1967. To many people, *Sgt. Pepper’s* was the soundtrack to the Summer of Love.

