

RISING STARS

Frankly Speaking.....

by Sonia N Ahmad

It was a hot, sticky Friday afternoon and I was not exactly wholeheartedly being taken to my destination. When I reached the place, I found myself sitting in a room, of moderate size, filled with people dressed up in the most alarming manner. Ladies clad in saris of sickly green, jaundiced yellow, fluorescent orange and pink, they were decked in jewellery.

I bet you know the place I'm talking about — yes, a *milad* in old Dhaka. I had been to such occasions before and I wasn't exactly bubbling with joy at the prospect of seeing another ostentatious built house and people showing off their wealth. Yet my mother made it a point that for the sake of courtesy we had to go since the people had repeatedly cooed to my parents and said: "Do bring the children!"

Let me tell you a bit about myself so that you'll understand how I found myself in such a situation. I actually come from Dhaka — yep, in the real sense of the word I'm a "*Khatti Dhakaia*!" My father's a doctor and his clinic is set up in old Dhaka. Being a man of Dhaka, my father has relatives popping up from here and there. Apart from my parents brothers and sisters and their offsprings, I hardly know the rest of my relatives.

When I first came from abroad in '88, I was quite appalled to find the number of relatives I had. When I would go to the clinic my father would introduce me to a lady and a man as my aunt and uncle. When I'd ask them how they were related to me they would launch off into such a lengthy explanation that I gradually came to accept the whole of the old town people as my relatives — it was a case of "*total-patali shomporko*"! If you know what I mean.

When I was first taken to such a *milad*, I was about twelve years old and had just come from England. It was, I must say, quite a startling experience. I had no idea of my cultural roots or heritage. The short holidays I spent in Bangladesh previously were filled with parties at my parents' friends and relatives' houses in Elephant Road, Dhanmondi and Banani — probably one or two in old town but I was too young to remember. Always being surrounded by people who had, if not always the best, at least a pleasant taste and sense in fashion, I was quite horrified with what met my sore eyes when I was twelve at the *milad*!

Time has changed, the knowledge of fashion has not changed for the Dhaka people. Now that I am no longer twelve but a lot older, I'm trying to understand my culture. Yet that does not stop me from being outspoken or ironic about the way I feel. Let's get back to the point, shall we? Well, here I was sitting with my mother at this house warming *milad*. You won't believe the huge houses that pop out of nowhere in the midst of narrow roads, squalor and poor drainage systems. They are definitely quite an extra ordinary sight. What with being equipped with the latest in built stereo systems, marbled spiralling staircases and central air conditioning it makes you wonder why the owner didn't have his house constructed at a more breathtaking site.

Well, there we were sitting when the mistress of the house came to greet us. If I were still twelve my eyes would have goggled at the brilliance of the sparkles she happened to glitter wherever she went. Just for the record, let me describe her attire to you. There she was in the most gorgeous material I had ever set my eyes upon — something between silk and *kathun* — the colour, however, was not so gorgeous — loud, let me emphasise, LOUD red. And on it were brocades of the most glittering of golds. At first I thought I was

grossly underdressed since I wore colourful but soft cotton outfit. But later seeing the ladies sweating and fanning themselves at super high mega speed, I was glad I was sensibly dressed.

To make matters worse, layers and layers of pure gold Mughal-styled jewellery decked her arms, neck and ears. With much effort I dragged my eyes away from the display of great splendour to find something soothing I could rest my eyes upon. Ah — at last found it — a nice white cotton *panjabi*. However, my happiness at finding something soothing was fast slipping away when the man wearing the white *panjabi* turned in my direction. The *panjabi* was stretched over a potbelly of the ghastliest of sizes, a thick gold chain hung loosely from the man's thick neck, an equally thick gold wristlet hung from his wrist and also the never ending trademark was to be seen — a thick gold ring with a sparkling stone was set on his finger.

There was also the food table that caught my attention. I really do not want to go into detail and describe the harrowing experience I



went through but I really have to mention this. There are times I wish the people would use knives and forks, since they obviously do not know how to use their hands. I had the misfortune of having a first hand experience. I saw the men seizing *biryani* and pieces of meat off the plates — stuffing the food into their mouths with one hand while simultaneously using their other hand to pour water into their glasses (they sure are ambidextrous) and gulping it down as well. It may sound a bit unnatural, but you have to see it to believe it.

I hope that in writing this article I have not offended my kith and kin (although something tells me I have) — I'm always willing to admit though that the people of old Dhaka are the kindest, the most benevolent and the most generous of Bangladeshis. No matter how rich or how poor they are, they always have something to give — let it be materialistic or let it be love. That's a fact one cannot deny. The friendship trust and brotherly — lets make it sisterly feeling I have towards them does not, however, prevent me from noting their appearance or manners. I do not mean to be sarcastic; I only have this sincere feeling that if we could just tone down our appearance and vastly improve our table manners, we would probably cope a little better with the world. If it makes any difference, I hope this message reaches those of you who are a bit put out at the moment, remember, improvement in manners and style does not change your culture or heritage; it just helps in enriching them.

Beatles: A Short Dissection

by Asrarul Islam Chowdhury

WHEN one is asked, which Football Team is the all-time best, many will answer in favour of Brazil. Again, if one is asked who is the best all-time Tennis player — Bjorn Borg, the best Cricket Team ever, The West Indies; the best living scientist, Stephen Hawking and so on. Similarly, if one is asked which is the best entertaining group ever, unquestionably the answer will go in favour of The Beatles. They are simply what rock music is all about. Who are they? What are they? Why is it that they are still irreplaceable? These are the questions that I will pursue to answer.

The Beatles came from Liverpool, Great Britain. They are equal to John Lennon (b. 9 Oct. 1940, d. 8 Dec. 1980), Paul McCartney (b. 18 Jun. 1942), George Harrison (b. 25 Feb 1943) and Ringo Starr (b. 7 Jul. 1940).

John Lennon is the creator of the group and everything seemed to evolve round his genius. Among the four, his is the most distorted childhood. His Father, Fred Lennon, deserted his Mother, Julia Lennon before his birth. Later Fred and Julia separated and his Mother got involved with another man. At this time, John's Aunt Mimi brought him up from the age of 3. Julia died from a tragic road accident when John was 18. He was deeply bonded to Julia and this has always been reflected throughout his life. His first son, the child of Cynthia Lennon was named Julian after Julia. In his career as a Beatle, he wrote "Julia" in "The White Album" (1968) and later as a solo, "Mother" in "Shaved Fish" (1975).

The Beatles were a product of the events of their generation. Three pioneers of Rock 'n' Roll were to imprint upon them a deep image. These were, chronologically, Bill Haley and his Comets, Chuck Berry and Elvis Presley. In this environment, in 1955, John formed the band, "John and the Quarrymen" after Quarry Bank High School where John had read from 1952. It was formed by John, Eric Griffiths, Pete Shotton, Len Garry and Collin Hanson. On 15 June 1956, Ivan Vaughan, a close friend of John, brought Paul McCartney and Paul brought along George later on. By the end of 1959, they named themselves, "The Moondogs", but did not have a regular drummer. In 1960, they named themselves, "The Silver Beatles". Stu Sutcliffe joined on the Bass and Pete Best on the Drums. The Silver Beatles after playing at a local night club, The Cavern, went off to Hamburg, Germany, where they played from 1960-63.

Brian Epstein became their Manager in December 1961 and in May 1962 George Martin their Producer. When Stu and Pete left the Band, Ringo entered and they finally became "The Beatles" (derived from "Beat") and waited eagerly for recording their First Record, "Love Me Do", which was released on 4 October 1962 and instantaneously became a success. So, with this I have answered, who are The Beatles.

At the beginning of 1963, The Beatles released their 1st 33 $\frac{1}{2}$ RPM Album, "Please Please Me". It featured the title-cut, Love Me Do, PSI Love You, Till I Saw Her Standing There, Rock 'n' Roll Music and others. The last number was a remake of Berry's original version eloquently sung by John.

"MOM! Where are my socks?" Saif was flustered so much that Mrs Islam didn't know what to do with him. He stood in front of the mirror critically examining himself. As he leaned closer to get a closer look of his face, he let out a cry that brought his mom rushing to his room. "What's wrong?" She asked anxiously. "Look at that thing! He answered pointing at his nose." "It's nothing. Nobody will notice it." "Only if I cover myself will they not notice it!" "Oh, Saif You are making a mountain out of mole." "Mole?! Mom, if it were a mole I'd care less, but it's one of those mega conspicuous pimples!" He peered miserably into the mirror. "It shines like a ripe tomato to me," he muttered. "It's only a tinsy, winsy, tiny spot honey," his mother said reassuringly. Saif had gone through a lot to make himself a dream guy. He had even bought an expensive mousse. He brushed his hair furiously, but it still

The first song of the Album, Till I Saw Her Standing There, broke all traditional styles as it starts with Paul shouting, "1. 2. 3." Please Please Me was an instantaneous national success and with it, they started their invincible journey to super stardom which was not to be stopped before 1970.

There was something different about The Beatles. Before them, Rock was dominated mainly by individuals such as Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Elvis Presley, Cliff Richard et. al. Groups did exist before them, but not a single group managed to give the world that extra tip that makes something path-breaking. Epstein had them redressed and brought a change in their hair dos, to distinct them from the Teddy Bear Generation.



The result was again, instant success. Imitating The Beatles, speaking, walking, even living like them had become the order of the day in Britain and gradually Europe. Manufacturers throughout Europe were competing among themselves to add the word Beatles to their products. Beatlemania had started in Europe. Their next target was the US, which was and still is the largest market for Rock in the world. In January 1964, "I Want To Hold Your Hand" entered the US Charts at number 83 and gradually climbed to number 1. This number was to win them access to the "Ed Sullivan Show," at that time the largest celebrity show in the US.

The Beatles left Heathrow on 7 February 1964 and

reached US at 6.30 am the next morning. Ironic as it may seem, their landing on US soil was to mark the British re-venge of 1776! 50,000 people applied for 728 seats on the Ed Sullivan Show! Even Mrs. Nelson Rockefeller could not buy a Ticket!

The rest of the story is history. With this invasion the Beatlemania had reached the other side of the Atlantic. After that, The Beatles kept on touring city after city. They were the first to play in football stadiums which gathered thousands of people and needless to say that many like Mrs. Rockefeller failed to get tickets. "A Hard Day's Night", 1965 saw the release of, "Help" which was followed by, "Revolver" and "Rubber Soul" the next year.

answer the final question. Why are The Beatles path-breaking? They were different. Their hair dos, type of speaking — simply everything was different from others. They wrote songs on topics whose nucleus was love. Their songs were simple and yet at the same time, deep, like those of Tagore. And I Love Her, Yesterday, Michelle, In My Life, Nowhere Man etc. songs are legends even today. Yesterday still remains as one of the best love ballads ever written and also the most recorded song in history!

In 1966, The Beatles went to India where they came in connection with Pandit Ravi Shankar and the Maharishi. Indian Myths and the sitar were then introduced by them to Western Rock in their Sgt.

(1970) alone are enough to speak of his genius.

George was also like John. Indeed, his and Shankar's "Concert For Bangladesh" (Madison Square Garden, New York, Sunday, 1 August 1971) is the first Concert that was used on such a massive scale to save lives and speak out against atrocities. It is really ironic that MTV has never telecasted this great Concert ever!

Today The Beatles are no more. They split in 1970, 23 years ago. Other than Ringo, the remaining three stayed in the line of music. Paul still sings today. Every era has to come to an end and so did that of the Beatles. Like "Alexander The Great," The Beatles came, they saw, they conquered.

Today's Rock Music owes a lot to them. After John Lennon was murdered in 8 Decem-

Expression of Life

by Nabeel A Chowdhury

Gogh, Vincent (Willem) van (b March 30, 1863, Zundert, Neth.—d. July 29, 1890, Auvers-sur-Oise, near Paris), generally considered the greatest Dutch painter after Rembrandt; he powerfully influenced the current of expressionism in modern art.

Of the more than 800 oil paintings and 700 drawings that constitute his life's work, he sold only one in his life time. He was always desperately poor. The name of van Gogh was virtually unknown when he took his life.

His work, all of it produced during a period of only 10 years, hauntingly conveys through its striking colour, coarse brushwork, and contoured forms the anguish of a mental illness that eventually resulted in suicide.

overwhelmed by a strange sensation. I felt as if the painting was talking to me. It was as if the flowers were yelling out a message of life. That first glance at the painting seemed to bring the sun flowers to life. It gave a touch of humanism to the sun flower — something which to many, might seem rather inane. Greatness like that found in Van Gogh is rare. It was a tragedy that Van Gogh's greatness was not acknowledged during his lifetime, for Van Gogh and his works left humanity truly enriched.



Self portrait with Pipe and Bandaged ear, oil painting by Vincent van Gogh, 1889, in the Leigh B Block Collection Chicago. Courtesy — Britannica

HOW DO I LOOK?

by Nishat Hussain

looked like bedragge than the Tom Cruise style of his dream. "What am I gonna do?" He asked his reflection. "The girls would hardly give me a second glance. Second glance? I'd be lucky if they ever notice me at all!" He flashed his teeth and his reflection did the same. His two front teeth used to stick out obstinately, but now, after years of wearing braces it had been brought to perfection. This was Saif's first High school prom and he didn't have a date. For his sake, his friend was also going without a date. Sharier was an amicable and an exuberant young lad, who was very popular with the girls. But Saif knew none. He didn't even have any cousins who were girls of his age. His shyness only added to his problems. If a girl as much as spoke to him, he would blush to the tips of his hair and

mumble something quite silly and unintelligible; he walked off clumsily, usually tripping over his own feet. (what a cultz!) His friends behaved more confidently, spoke more freely with girls, and dressed more fashionably. But his parents still choose his clothes for him. Just then the phone rang. Saif ran to answer the extension in his room. In the process he tripped and fell headlong into the pile of junk heaped on the floor. Getting up, he rushed to grab the receiver. "Hello." "Hi, Saif! Are you ready yet?" It was Shahrier. "Ready? I haven't even started." "What are your going to wear?" "I wanted to wear my 'Guns 'N Roses' T-shirt but mom insisted that I wear the

new plaid shirt she bought." "Isn't it cool?" "Cool?!" If it were so I wouldn't be complaining right now." "You were complaining?" "What did you think? Complimenting." "Anyway, it can't be that bad." "Bad doesn't begin to describe it, it makes me look..." "More mature." His mother stood at the doorway, her arms folded in front of her. "Yeah ma. A hundred years older!" His confidence was at rock bottom. Mrs Islam threw up her hands in the air admitting defeat. "He is just impossible," she thought. "Hey, lighten up buddy. I'll be by to pick you up in ten minutes. See you then," Shahrier said. "OK" Saif put the receiver back on its cradle.

1980. Bruce Springsteen, in a Concert, a few days, later fell to tears and said, "A lot of us would not be here tonight had it not been for John Lennon" (and thus The Beatles). Maybe John himself understood this immortality of The Beatles and he himself professed this openly, as was so much characteristic of John, in "Across The Universe", the first song of their last album, "Let It Be". There we hear him sing the line, "Nothing's gonna change my world", again and again. The Beatles loved dreams and we all know that dreams never die.

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Saif checked his appearance again and his shoulders slumped. His complexion was marked by acne spots. He had used a cream called "Vanishing Act" that left his pockets empty. The cream was said to work wonders, but nothing had vanished. It was just the opposite. He had even used 'Fair and Lovely' — fairness lotion, that only darkened his complexion. "Saif! What have you done to your hair?" Asked his mother shocked. She had noticed his unruly hair for the first time then. "I've only been brushing it, mom. Please help me. I can't face Shahrier like this!" "All right." As she helped she said, "Now remember to choose carefully the girls you talk to. They should be girls from good homes. If..." "Mom, I don't think they'll want anything to do with me," Saif cut in. "Nonsense! There. Now your look much better." "Mom, I look like a geek!" At that precise moment, his best friend burst in. "Hi Saif! You look great!"

Our regular cartoon column 'The Machine' has been dropped from this issue due to unavoidable circumstances. We regret the inconvenience. Rs Editor