



# Love Me Do: Sixty years ago, the Beatles began to play

**The first Lennon-McCartney original that would see daylight would be a song John and Paul started in 1958 at Paul's house in Forthlin Road. In 1962, the song re-surfaced. 'With a little help from (some) friends', it started what later would be coined as Beatlemania. The song was Love Me Do.**

ASRAR CHOWDHURY

## I: A TICKET TO RIDE

Sixty years ago, John, Paul, George, and Ringo released their first single, Love Me Do, on October 5, 1962. It was a Parlophone 7-inch 45rpm with the seal 45-R 4949. Side A included Love Me Do. Side B included PS I Love You. Both were Lennon-McCartney compositions. The face of popular music changed forever that day.

When George heard Love Me Do on Radio Luxembourg, the first radio station to broadcast the song he screamed so loud that his father, Harold, thought there was an accident in the house. Ringo was happy. A late recruit to the band, he went through so much that he was disillusioned and disenchanted with the music industry. John and Paul had a sigh of relief. Love Me Do was an original Lennon-McCartney composition. The Beatles saved their face. They could show something to their fans back in Liverpool.

Love Me Do wasn't spectacular but it was a beginning. What made it special is that there was a lot of drama in getting the song published as the first Beatles single on Side A of a 7-inch 45 rpm. Sixty years later, knowing how 'Sgt Pepper taught the band to play' would narrate an old story again to those who lived and grew up with the Beatles through 1962 to 1970. It would also narrate to those who lived and grew up with the resonance of the Beatles since 1970.

## II: WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM (SOME) FRIENDS

John and Paul lived no more than a mile away from each other in Liverpool. Yet they never met. Paul recalls seeing a 'teddy bear boy' catching his bus a few times. Whether it was serendipity or not, Paul saw the same boy in a fish and chip shop some days later.

They finally did meet through a common friend, Ivan Vaughan, on Saturday, July 6, 1957. The venue was St Peter's Church. John was yet to turn 17. Paul had just passed 15.

John and Paul formed a natural bond through song writing. Both had started to play the guitar and were trying to write songs. Each also lacked something they found in the other, the perfect recipe for collaboration. And that was it. Soon after that first meeting, Paul became a member of John's group, the Quarrymen, which later evolved into the Beatles.

John and Paul would frequently meet at Paul's house at 20 Forthlin Road, which is now a National Trust heritage property. They skipped school to write songs. They both maintained an exercise songbook. Each page had a header, 'Another Lennon-McCartney Original'. Paul has preserved his exercise songbook but has safe-guarded its contents to the outside world. In a Rolling Stone interview from 2016, 'Paul McCartney looks back' Paul mentioned that the



Love Me Do- EP- UK- Front Sleeve- Later Version- 1962

first 'Lennon-McCartney original' was a song called 'Just Fun'. The lyrics were indeed very innocent.

"They said our love was just fun  
The day that our friendship begun  
There's no blue moon that I can see  
There's never been in history  
Because our love was just fun."

The first Lennon-McCartney original that would see daylight would be a song John and Paul started in 1958 at Paul's house in Forthlin Road. In 1962, the song re-surfaced. 'With a little help from (some) friends', it started what later would be coined as Beatlemania. The song was Love Me Do.

## III: DO YOU WANT TO KNOW A SECRET?

Brian Epstein, their manager, sent a telegram on May 9, 1962, to the Beatles who were performing in clubs in Hamburg, (West) Germany. Epstein had secured a recording contract for the Beatles with EMI. Love Me Do was the only song the lads thought worthy of a single with a Lennon-McCartney seal. The song needed to be re-done. It was 1962. The world had changed, and so did the Beatles in four years since 1958.

The lyrics of Love Me Do were simple. The word love appeared twenty-two times. The lyrics are said to have been influenced by Lewis Carroll's 'Alice, stop daydreaming do'. In the 1962 re-composition, John added the bridge, 'someone to love, somebody new'. This line was sung twice. Thus, love appeared twenty-four times. The original composition was in the A Key. The rhythm was like Buddy Holly's 'Maybe Baby'. John and Paul decided to give the song a blues touch. They re-did the song in a G Key and slowed down the tempo a bit.

Pete Best, their drummer at the time, suggested to make the middle-

eight different from the rest of the song by injecting a skip beat. This speeded up the tempo and brought it back to normal in the middle of the song.

John had a different idea. He wanted the Beatles to be the first British band to include the harmonica in a song. As the story now goes, John used a chromatic Hohner harmonica that he shoplifted from Arnham, Holland during the first tour of the Beatles to Hamburg.

The ball was now set into motion. The recording at EMI was scheduled for Wednesday June 6, 1962. An adventure was just about to start. They would soon find out, 'home is behind, the world ahead'.

## IV: HELTER SKELTER

**Session One:** John, Paul, George, and Pete (Best) were scheduled for a two-hour recording session (6-8pm) at EMI. George Martin was the producer and Ron Richards (who discovered the Hollies) was the co-producer.

When the Beatles arrived, Martin was in the canteen. Richards asked them to do Besame Mucho, of the Coasters. (Much to their annoyance), that was the first in a list Brian Epstein sent a few days before. It can't be proved now, if it was intentional or not, the performance wasn't up to the mark. Martin eventually rejected Besame Mucho.

The Beatles then suggested Love Me Do from Epstein's list. Something magical happened. The sound engineer Norman Smith (who would later produce the first two albums of Pink Floyd), told the tape operator Chris Neal to fetch George Martin. John's intro with the stolen chrome Hohner harmonica did the trick. It caught the attention of the studio.

Initially, Martin wasn't impressed. He didn't like the lyrics. Worst of all,

Martin wasn't impressed with Pete Best. His drumming wasn't studio material. This put an end to Best's stint as a Beatle.

John, Paul, and George didn't get on well with Best. They took this as an opportunity to get rid of him. The problem was: who would tell Best? They asked Epstein to do the job. On August 16, Epstein called Best, 'I've got some bad news for you. The boys want you out and Ringo in'. Two days later, Ringo officially performed with the Beatles for the first time. Ringo was with Rory and the Hurricanes. He was already filling in for Best when Best wasn't available or fell ill.

Why did Ringo accept the offer? Maybe because at the time, the Beatles were the only band in Liverpool that had a contract with a major label.

Not all went bad, though. Although Martin wasn't impressed with the performance of the Beatles, he did have an instinctive pulse that they could click. A second recording session was scheduled for Tuesday, September 4, 1962.

**Session Two:** The second session included John, Paul, George, and Ringo. The session was scheduled for

would be included on Side A. Half of the battle was won. Now, what about Side B?

**Session Three:** Ringo was dejected when he saw Andy White as a session drummer. He felt insulted when Ron Richards asked him to play maracas for percussion and not the drums on the recording of PS I Love You. Ringo was shattered when he had to play the tambourine while Andy played the drums on Love Me Do.

In the end, Ringo was happy. Side A would be Love Me Do; and Side B would be PS I Love You with Ringo on both sides playing the drums.

**Initial Presses:** Parlophone printed 250 demonstration copies for radio stations. These copies came in a 'Top Pop' blue sleeve. Sadly, McCartney's name was misspelled as McArtney. The first pressing (Oct 5, 1962) came with a red label and silver print with a silver Parlophone at 12 o'clock and a Parlophone £ logo at 3 o'clock. A second pressing was done in Autumn 1963 in a black label and silver print. There were different sleeves for the first UK and US covers of the single. Over the years more pressings were done. The last was on October 5, 2012, for the fiftieth anniversary.

And thus, '(sixty) years ago today, Sgt Pepper taught the band to play'.

**V: GOT TO GET YOU INTO MY LIFE**  
Three individuals contributed to the rise and lasting impression of the Beatles since Love Me Do.

The first was their (second) manager, Brian Epstein. Epstein had a sharp instinct in spotting an opportunity with immaculate timing. He knew how to manage the lads as individuals and their finances. He was clever in creating myths and visual images. Sadly, he died on August 27, 1967, a few weeks after the Sgt Pepper album. John summed it up: 'I knew that we were in trouble then'.

The next was George Martin. Starting with Love Me Do, Martin produced each of the thirteen original Beatles albums, with an entire Side B, composed and orchestrated by himself in Yellow Submarine. The last was their first sound engineer Norman Smith. From Love Me Do till their sixth studio album, Rubber Soul, Smith stamped the sound signature of the Beatles.

## VI: THE LOVE YOU TAKE, IS EQUAL TO THE LOVE YOU MAKE

Standing at a crossroads of history, the Beatles changed the face of popular music forever with Love Me Do sixty years ago. Through Beatlemania (1962-1966) and then through Sgt Pepper (1967-70), in two distinct phases, the Beatles opened gates and avenues for later bands to explore and take popular music on more 'magical mystery tours'. Over time, The Beatles matured like fine cheese. This cheese will keep on maturing for quite some time.

Asrar Chowdhury is a Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University. He is the author of Echoes in SHOUT of the Daily Star. Email: asrarul@juniv.edu



Love Me Do- First Press- Side A- Oct 5, 1962

## THE BEATLES

The band's logo was designed by Ivor Arbiter.



John Lennon's 'Stolen' Chromatic Hohner Harmonica