

"But as for me, I still remember how it was before/And I am holding back these tears no more"

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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW!

'I'm in competition with everyone'

MCCARTNEY

Sir Paul on **Lennon**, **self-loathing** and **gunmen** in the bushes

KEITH RICHARDS

'I'll tell you this, I ain't retiring'

JOHN LYDON

'You can't expect me to be angry forever!'

SQUEEZE

Carry on up the junction

DAN AUERBACH

Life beyond The Black Keys

...AND INTRODUCING

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UNCLE ACID & THE DEADBEATS

“THE STORY OF ME AND JOHN”

Machine guns in the bushes.
The genius of George Martin.
“Late blooming” George Harrison.
“Allen fucking Klein”, and how
he learned to “block the shit”.
The re-release of his *Tug Of War*
and *Pipes Of Peace* albums prompts
Paul McCartney to talk unguardedly
to *Uncut* about working with and
without John Lennon — and to
discuss extensively the relationship
that revolutionised music.
“When I think of John, I think of us
writing together,” says McCartney.
“A Day In The Life’... stuff like that.”

Story: Michael Bonner
Portrait: © 1982 Paul McCartney/
Photographer: Linda McCartney



McCartney at AIR London,
during the video shoot for
"Tug Of War", 1982



McCartney with George Martin and Stevie Wonder, recording *Tug Of War* at AIR Montserrat, February 1981

“I’M TERRIBLE ON history,” Paul McCartney admits conspiratorially. “I am! What makes it even worse is that people know my history way better than I’m ever going to know it. I’m not paying that much attention.” In the first-floor office above his Sussex recording studio, Paul McCartney is gamely attempting to distance himself from the weight of his legend. But despite McCartney’s protestations that he isn’t quite up to speed with his own inimitable *McCartneyness*, there is evidence of his past everywhere around us. Awards line the shelves; framed discs hang from the walls; bags bulging with CDs and DVDs are shoved into corners. It is McCartney’s life measured out in memorabilia. At one end of the room sits his wooden school desk from the Liverpool Institute For Boys, where he and George Harrison were pupils during the mid-’50s. Propped up in the corner next to it is an upright bass with white trim around its edges. McCartney walks briskly over to it. “It belonged to Bill Black, Elvis’ bass player,” he explains, crouching down to run a finger along four letters – B - I - L - L – that have been fixed next to the tailpiece. “Linda bought it for me for my birthday. This is his bass, man. That is *the thing*.”



Do you ever use it?
“I do use it, yeah,” he nods. “I use it occasionally. But I’m not good on that. I’m better on...” he pauses.

The conventional bass?

“That is the conventional bass,” he laughs. “You mean the devilish, modern, electric bass.”

Today, McCartney meets *Uncut* wearing a pale blue polo shirt, navy trousers and a pair of light brown casual shoe/trainer hybrids. His hair is a nutty brown colour while his skin has the light tan of the well-heeled international traveller. His voice is a little husky, the Scouse accent more pronounced than you might expect.

It is a busy period for McCartney – he has only been back in the UK for a few days and tomorrow he flies to the States to play Lollapalooza. To make best use of his limited time, McCartney’s day here at Hog Mill Hill studios is taken up with meetings to discuss various projects – archival and new, solo as well as Beatles. A few hours earlier, *Uncut* had arrived by train in

nearby Rye. Walking up the town’s cobbled High Street, we bumped into Mary McCartney, who reassured us that despite his active schedule, “Dad is in a good mood today.”



The journey from Rye to Hog Mill Hill in Icklesham takes around 10 minutes by car. The route passes signs advertising target sports, summer fêtes and marker posts for the 1066 Country Walk; at Winchelsea, we skirt by the churchyard of St Thomas the Martyr, where Spike Milligan is buried. Take a sharp turn off a winding country lane and Hog Mill Hill appears suddenly on the skyline. The body of the mill is painted black, while a weather-beaten red telephone box stands incongruously beside it. McCartney – who lives a 25 minute drive away, in Peasmarsch – converted the mill into a rehearsal space shortly after he bought the property, but it's currently empty save for a dusty-looking mandolin sitting forlornly on top of a pile of cardboard boxes. A few yards along from the mill – past McCartney's maroon-coloured Lexus – is the studio itself, housed in a two-storey white building. In the kitchen, John Hammel – McCartney's long-serving right-hand man – sits at a table sifting through receipts from the latest leg of the Out There Tour. When McCartney finally appears, he apologises for running late and, as we walk upstairs to his office, he talks enthusiastically about recent live shows at London's O2 Arena in May and at the Roskilde festival.

McCartney's office runs the length of the building's top floor. Two cheery yellow sofas sit on a red rug in the middle of the room. Walking over to the window, he points to a beach where, he explains, he was out walking one day when he first saw the mill in the distance. What first caught his eye, he explains as he ushers *Uncut* towards one of the sofas, was how remote and hard to reach the mill seemed.

TAKE IT AWAY...

A Macca timeline

1980

January 16: Arrives at Tokyo's Narita Airport ahead of Wings' tour of Japan; is arrested for possession of 219g of marijuana; imprisoned for 10 days

May 16: McCartney *II* released in the UK

July: Wings begin early rehearsals on new material at Finchden Manor in Kent

July 11: Paul and Linda work on Ringo's *Stop And Smell The Roses* at Super Bear studios, Berre-les-Alpes, France



January 28, 1980: back home in Sussex after being deported from Japan days earlier for marijuana possession

October 30:

Additional Wings rehearsals at Parkgate Studios, Sussex and Pugins Hall, Kent are unproductive; soon after, McCartney disbands Wings but continues to collaborate with Denny Laine

November:

Works with George Martin on "We All Stand Together"

December 7:

Recording officially begins on *Tug Of War* at AIR Studios, London

December 8:

John Lennon is assassinated

1981

February 2: Work resumes on *Tug Of War* at AIR Montserrat

February 15:

Ringo arrives in Montserrat; six days later Carl Perkins arrives, with Stevie Wonder following on the 26th

April 27: Following Denny Laine's departure in March, McCartney officially announces the end of Wings

May 11: George releases Lennon tribute "All Those Years Ago", the first time Harrison, McCartney and Starr have appeared on the same recording since 1970

Summer: McCartney writes "Here Today" at The Mill; later renamed Hog Mill Hill studio

1982

March 29: "Ebony And Ivory" released as a single; reaches No 1 in nine countries

April 26: *Tug Of War* released; it enters the UK album charts at No 1





With George Martin - "the grown-up in the room" - at AIR London, 1982

➔ This was 1981. No wonder he wanted to get away from it all – the new decade had started badly for McCartney. Within the first 16 months, he suffered a series of heavy upsets. He was jailed in Japan for possession of marijuana, *McCartney II* received a polarising response, Wings broke up, and John Lennon was murdered in New York.

After Lennon's death, he didn't tour for eight years. *Tug Of War*, the album he released in April 1982, contained a moving tribute to Lennon, "Here Today"; as a whole, the album found McCartney defiantly confident in his song-

writing abilities. Working with George Martin for the first time since 1973, McCartney's sessions for *Tug Of War* and its sister album, *Pipes Of Peace* (both re-released this October), yielded gleaming pop gems, warmly sentimental ballads, a plea for social equality, and even a Christmas hit.

Among the many guest musicians invited to attend the sessions (at Martin's AIR studios in London and later Montserrat) were Ringo Starr, childhood hero Carl Perkins, American jazz fusioneer Stanley Clarke, 10CC's Eric Stewart and Stevie Wonder. *Tug Of War* signalled a new start for McCartney. He had no intention of ever forming a band again, and the album essentially launched his career as a bona fide solo artist. "It was the first time I had a chance to do an album, on my own," he explains. "Rather than just *McCartney I* or *McCartney II*, which were slightly more experimental. This was the first one I got into with George Martin, so I think that probably made it feel like the first proper album. But there's no such thing as 'proper' in my head. If it works, it's proper."

UNCUT: On *Tug Of War*, you were reunited with George Martin for the first time since 1973. What made you want to work with him again?

MCCARTNEY: He's just the best. I'd always admired him and loved what we'd done together with The Beatles. I felt a bit sorry for him. It wasn't why I worked with him. Incidentally, I felt a bit sorry for him. He got slagged off. John was in one of

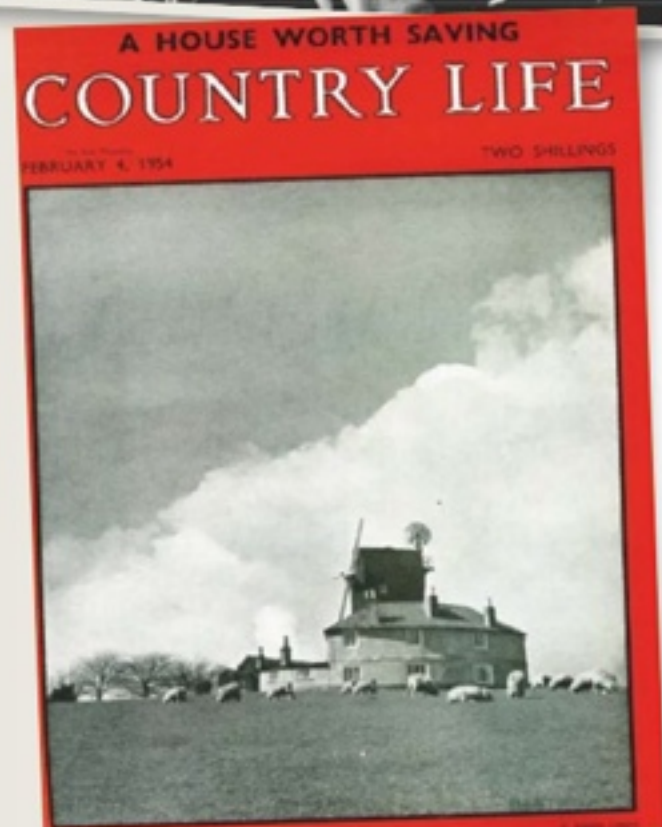


John Lennon onstage at Madison Square Garden, August 1972

JAM ON!

The secrets of Sir Paul's long shelf-life...

THE KITCHEN AT Hog Mill Hill offers some fascinating titbits for the ardent Macca spotter. On the wall just inside the door is a framed poster for McCartney's Liverpool Oratorio. A small shelf stacked with books hangs behind the door. There are volumes of vegetarian recipes – including several by Linda – mixed in with *The Oxford Book Of Ballads*, *Shamanism And The Mystery Lines*, *The Social Biology Of Ants*, two large box files marked "Studio Manuals" and a well-thumbed copy of *Without You: The Tragic Story Of Badfinger*. Perched on the edge of the shelf, a PG Tips monkey faces out into the kitchen. Two identical magnets are attached to the door of a fridge – both bearing the familiar image of the studio's owner. A window in the centre of the furthest wall looks out to sea, while to its right hangs a framed cover of *Country Life* from Feb 4, 1954 featuring a black-and-white photo of the mill below the inscription "A house worth saving". To the left, another shelf hosts jars of jam, Marmite, Branston pickle and organic peanut butter. The most eye-catching item, though, is a Lennon calendar hanging on the wall; the image for 'July' showing Paul's former bandmate during his August, 1972 Madison Square Garden show.

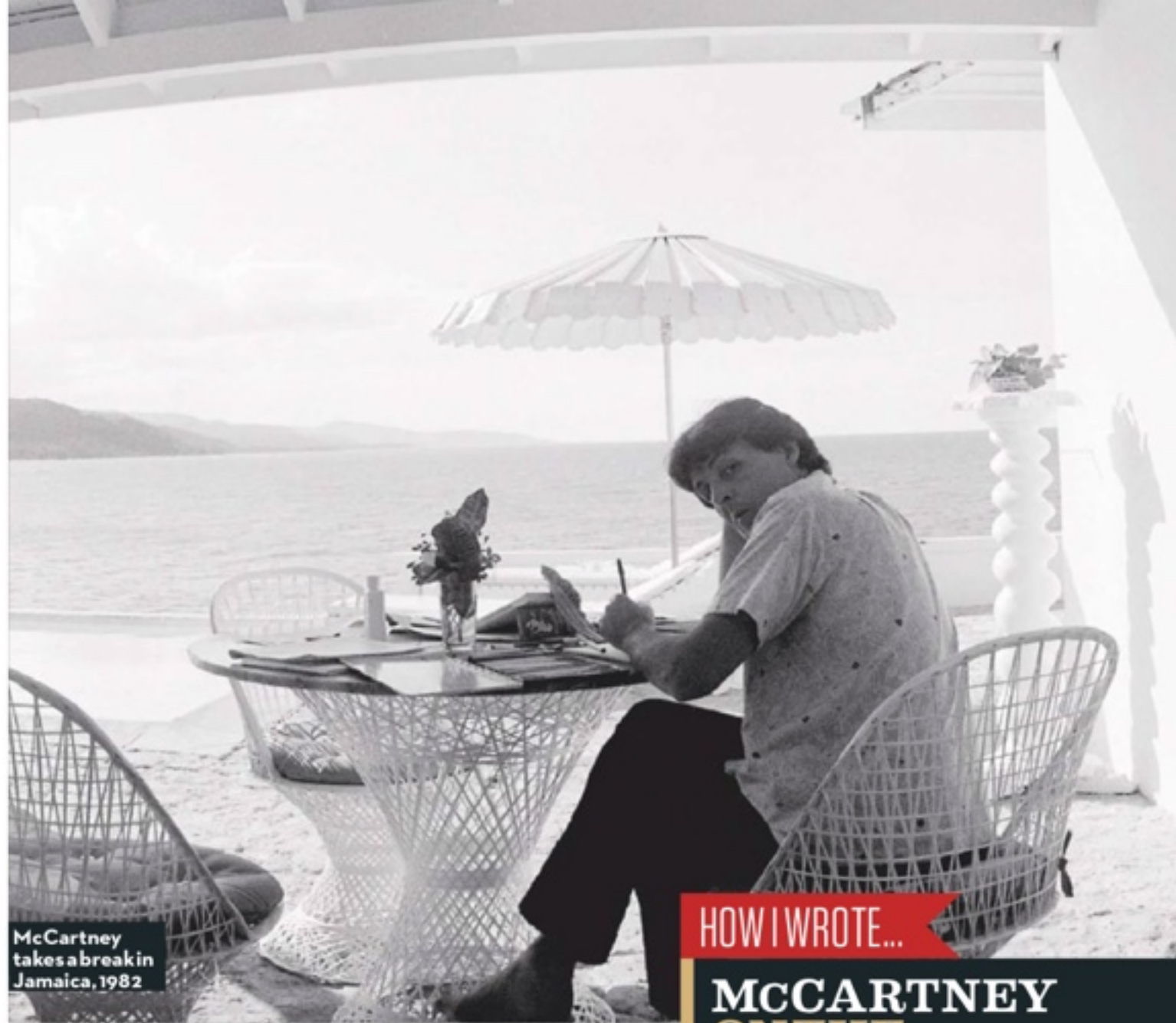


© 1982 PAUL MCCARTNEY/PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA MCCARTNEY; THOMAS MONASTER/NY DAILY NEWS ARCHIVE VIA GETTY IMAGES

his 'hate the world' periods. He said some very bitter things about George Martin that I know he later withdrew. So in a way George wasn't getting the credit that he deserved. But he had really done an awful lot with us. He was brilliant to work with. He was the grown-up in the room. We would all be the naughty little kids. When he would go out, we'd even try and sneak a take in. "We can do it without you!" It was all that, you know. When The Beatles broke up, he got the short end of the stick. But we all knew he was the best. I used to say he had a great bedside manner. He was very clever, like a doctor when you're ill. They have a way of not getting you angry. "Sure, let me just take your temperature." George was like that. I'd disagree with one of his ideas, and they were often very good ideas, and instead of having a barney about it, he'd say, "Maybe we could just try it and if you don't like it, we'll lose it." Then I'd go, "Oh, OK." He was clever that way. He'd get you to try things.

Do you have a specific example? "Please Please Me". Originally, we brought it to him as a very slow Orbison-esque ballad. [*Mimics Orbison*] "Last night I said these words... Come on - doo-doo - come on - doo-doo..." But George said, "It might be good a bit faster." We'd reply, "No." But he'd persuade us. "Oh, go on then, we'll try it." So we did. [*Starts singing*] "Last night I said..." He said, "There's your first No 1." So that, and a million times more, that happened, that thing. I just knew he was very good. If you were going to do an album, he'll give you good strong decisions; he'll put it together well. You're going to get a great sound quality. He's a swot like that. He's good at maths. He would know why something wasn't working. Whereas I'd say, "It doesn't sound good," he'd say, "It's overloading because we put too much bass there and we need to just do this." So that was one of the reasons I wanted to work with him again. And I like him is the other. That's probably the biggest reason.

You were working on the album that became *Tug Of War* when John was killed. When was the last time you saw him? Good question. When he went with May Pang. I saw him and May at their apartment, which was quite nice actually. He'd mellowed out quite a bit. He was being himself more. Then I saw him - among the last times - when he was out in LA doing Nilsson's album [*Pussy Cats*] and they were all crazy. I'd been sent by Yoko to be a go-between and to give John a message from her. Which was, "If you go back to New York and court her again, she might accept you." So he did that. Birth of Sean, I saw him. I think that's after *Pussy Cats*. I think the last time would have been in New York - because he didn't come out of New York - at his apartment, the Dakota. I always think of *Rosemary's Baby*. It was round about the time that we got the offer to appear on *Saturday Night Live*. Lorne Michaels came on television holding up a cheque for \$2,000, or something. He really had gone to the NBC people and said, "I want this group." They said, "You can pay them scale." I was in John's apartment.



McCartney takes a break in Jamaica, 1982

Where were you when you heard he'd been shot? I was in my house about 20 minutes away from here. I got a call off my then manager. He said, "I've got some terrible news." "Oh, what?" It was the ultimate shocker. It was like Linda. "I've got some terrible news." I had to

make a decision whether I'd go into work or not. I had a session booked with The Chieftains. Part of me said, "No." But in answer to that it was, "Well, you're going to be sitting here all day, then. Are you sure you want that? Out in the countryside, quite isolated?" I thought, "Wouldn't it be better to be with George Martin and go in and try and do something?" Obviously, we were going to be thinking about John all day, but you're always advised to work through your grief. So I did. I went in and recorded with them. Then I came out and was still in shock. I didn't want to see any paparazzi but they were there. There was a guy with a mic. He said, "What do you think of

John..." We were driving past, so it wasn't like I was standing doing a big interview. I just couldn't think of anything. I said, "It's a drag." And I meant, "An unholy fucking bastard worst drag ever." But the words that came out - "It's a drag" - sounded so casual. It certainly didn't sum up what I was feeling. Anyway, there you go. Too bad. That's what happened. Then I came home and just cried. I watched the news to try to find out some more details and saw pundits coming on and doing what people had wanted me to do. Which was to be sensible about his death and what a tragedy it was duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh and he was a great man and duh-duh-duh-duh-duh-duh. But I couldn't. I couldn't

"JOHN'S DEATH? I WAS IN SHOCK. I JUST COULDN'T THINK OF WHAT TO SAY"



McCartney leaving the studio after Lennon's murder, December 1980: "The words that came out sounded so casual"

HOW I WROTE...

MCCARTNEY ON THE ORIGINS OF "AVERAGE PERSON"

"When I was growing up, there was a tradition in the musical hall to have a stage act with a song that involved various people. 'If I Were Not Upon The Stage', I think it's called. It appealed to me as a kid. 'If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a window cleaner me/You'd see me all day long singing out this song/Running up ladders, running up ladders...' And that'd be one person's song. Then another person would come on. 'If I were not upon the stage, someone else I'd like to be/If I were not upon the stage, a midwife I would be/Delivering babies, delivering babies...' And that 'delivering babies' fitted with the first guy's 'running up ladders'. It was a craft song, which is what 'Average Person' is supposed to be. It was like a music hall thing. In the end, you've got five people all doing mimes and bits of songs, and it all fitted. Then at the end, as everyone was so busy, there'd just be someone, 'If I were not upon the stage/An opera singer me/La la la la', so that fitted with 'running up ladders'. Musically, it all fitted."

© 1982 PAUL MCCARTNEY/PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA MCCARTNEY; PAUL FIEVEZ/ANL/REX SHUTTERSTOCK



The Beatles and George Martin during the Sgt. Pepper sessions, 1967

● get any of that together. In fact, I rather despised the pundits who did. I can't blame them now, but they were old friends or casual acquaintances and they'd been hauled in to say something. Yeah, but it was a hell of a shock for months at least, on an immediate level, and then there were all sorts of repercussions and stuff.

Like what? Everyone I knew suddenly got armies of security. You'd hear, "Sylvester Stallone's got six guys now." Everyone figured if it could happen to John, it could happen to them. It was weird because in the days that followed it, I was sitting in the house. We had a little perimeter fence, mainly to keep foxes out, because we had some chickens. I'm aware of security threats, so I'm on high alert and I look out and I see someone with a fucking gun, like a machine gun, an assault rifle – "Wha?!" He's in full military gear, and then I see there's a whole patrol of them. I'm going, "Holy shit, what's going on?!" I don't know what I did. I think I rang the police. It turned out to be army manoeuvres. "Oh, sorry. Are these your woods?" I'd put two and two together and made a thousand. God, I don't know how I lived through it.

FRANK HERRMANN/CAMERA PRESS

"ME AND JOHN WOULD COMPETE WITH EACH OTHER TO WRITE"

You think you'd just faint dead on the ground. But they were all there, coming through these woods.

You appeared on "All Those Years Ago", George's tribute to John. But did you think that people expected you to write a song about John? If you're not stupid, that does cross your mind. The same thing happened after Linda died. I thought, 'I just want to make the greatest...' But you're not always capable of responding to that stimulus. I don't know why. Maybe it's too big a thing to deliver. I was probably waiting to see if something came, but I couldn't just sit down and write a response song. Funnily enough, "Here Today" was written on this spot. When I first got this building, this used to be a series of little rooms, which I cleared out to make this big office. There was a little room here and I came up, just checking it out. I sat on the bare floor – probably exactly here, it was this end of the room. The bareness of the room was very conducive to focusing my thoughts. I had nothing to look at. So I remember just getting the idea of, 'If you were here today in this very bare room, what would we say, what would we talk about, what would



“NOW WE’RE LEFT COLD AND SAD...”

PAUL McCARTNEY wasn't the only ex-Beatle to record a tribute to John Lennon following his death. George Harrison was working on a song while Lennon was still alive. He originally wrote "All Those Years Ago" with different lyrics for Ringo to sing. A recording was made at Friar Park in late 1980, although Ringo was unhappy with the result and it was shelved. After Lennon's death, Harrison rewrote the lyrics, including a line to "the



you do?' I announce it in shows as a conversation we never got to have. Which, to some degree, is true. Though it's a song, not a psychiatric report. There's one bit that I kinda disagree with when I sing it. "And you said, I really knew you well what would your answer be?/Well knowing you, you'd probably laugh and say that we were worlds apart". He wouldn't have said "We were worlds apart." But anyway. It works in the song.

The song specifically references your early relationship with John. Was that how you tended to think about him in the aftermath of his death, as the young man you first knew? I think so. Often when you think about anyone, you go back to your formative years. They are core memories, your big movies. On my last album I wrote a song, "Early Days" – "There's the two of us dressed in black from head to toe..." – because I've got those images burned into my brain. The other thing is, some of the times in the years before he died were painful, particularly around the breakup of The Beatles. Like anyone – sometimes unwittingly, sometimes wittingly – I block the shit. I don't

devil's best friend": presumably, Lennon's killer, Mark Chapman. Harrison retained the original backing track – with Starr on drums – and overlaid his revised lyrics. He recruited Paul & Linda, and Denny Laine to add backing. Released in May 1981, the song hit No 2 on Billboard and No 13 in the UK and appeared on Harrison's *Somewhere In England*. Paul and George weren't the only artists to pay tribute to Lennon. Elton John released "Empty Garden (Hey, Hey Johnny)" in 1982, and Freddie Mercury penned "Life Is Real (Song For Lennon)" for Queen's *Hot Space* album the same year.

particularly want to stay with it and wallow in it. So even now when I think of John I often think of us writing together. "A Day In A Life". Stuff like that. "... Mr Kite!". Whatever. Actually, I was just shown the old original scribbled manuscripted lyrics for "I've Got A Feeling" [McCartney is referring to his previous meeting that day]. On my side it's, "I've got a feeling, feeling deep inside/Oh yeah." His lyrics are to the side of mine. "Everybody had a hard time, everybody had a wet dream." Those moments are the most precious for me. I can go to the others easily, if I'm required to, if we're taking about the shit. Fucking Allen Klein, all that. But I prefer to stay with the good stuff. So "Here Today" and songs like that hark back to the better memories.

Talking about those early days, Carl Perkins plays on "Get It". You once said, "If there were no Carl Perkins, there would be no Beatles." How important was he in shaping The Beatles' early sound? There were a few people in the beginning who were really influential, like Elvis. He was great, good looking, sang brilliant, had brilliant songs. "Heartbreak Hotel", "Don't Be Cruel", "All Shook Up". Then you had people like Jerry Lee Lewis. Buddy Holly was a very big influence because he wrote and sang his own stuff, which is what we were doing. And he played his own solos. So it gave us clues. When we do it, we'll play a guitar ourselves, not have a guitarist, and we'll stand with a mic-stand. We'll do the solos, we'll sing the songs and we'll write them. When you think about it, that's all The Beatles did. That was the revolution. Even the Stones and those guys didn't do that. We took all that from Buddy, really. There was a secondary group, and the top man was Carl, just because his stuff was brilliant. He'd written "Blue Suede Shoes". That interfaced with Elvis, as well. We loved Carl.

His songs were staples of your early sets. Ringo told me recently that the repertoire of every band in Liverpool in 1961, '62 was the same. We were all turned on to the same stuff. There were a certain amount of records people had and heard and those were all the songs we did, because we were basically cover bands. In the end, I don't know if it was me or John or the both of us, suddenly said, "The thing you've got to do is write some songs, and that will be stuff they can't get to. So we won't hear them singing it just as we're waiting backstage to go on." The other trouble was, even though we introduced "Twist And Shout" and "If You Gotta Make A Fool Of Somebody", the other bands would nick it off us. They'd cover our covers. So there was no way out of it, unless you wrote your own songs. I like that, it demystifies the Lennon/McCartney thing. Instead of "The great muse descended upon us", it was more like necessity. We had to write songs. It was pretty lame at first. I wrote one called "The Pinwheel Twist", which was pretty bad.

Do you remember how it went? No. I remember fireworks, the pinwheel and the twist. "Doing the pinwheel twist". Those were only so the other bands couldn't access them. They weren't good songs. So Carl was a huge influence. There were strange little things that we really loved about Carl. We thought he was being really quite raunchy in one of his songs, "Lend Me Your Comb". [sings] "Lend me your comb/It's time to go home/I gotta confess/My hair is a mess". Anyway, a little later, he sings, "Sugar bugga it's getting' late". We thought it was 'b-u-g-g-e-r'. "Sugar bugger! Fucking hell, this is our hero!" Later, when we met him, he told us it was sugar bugga. It's alliteration, rhyme. Bugga wooga. Sugga bugga, boogie... it was harmless, anyway. But we thought it was red hot because of that. So silly little teenage things attracted us to him. But he was great. We did a lot of his songs. "Matchbox", "Honey, Don't!", "Lend Me Your Comb".



Perfect harmony: McCartney and Wonder work on *Tug Of War* at AIR Montserrat, February 1981

Was getting Carl to play on *Tug Of War* after John's death an attempt to reconnect with a simpler, more innocent time? It probably was, yeah. That's always the case with things like that. I never remember my exact thinking but, for instance, round about the time it was to get away to record somewhere, because a lot of people were doing that. I'd already done it. We'd done *Band On The Run* in Lagos. *Tug Of War* in... London? What am I taking about? No, Montserrat. Montserrat and London. That was one of the things: where will I go to record it? Montserrat. That'll be great, with George. Then the next thing is: who will I record it with? I'd written "Ebony And Ivory". I knew I wanted to sing this with a black guy who I admired, so Stevie was the obvious choice. Then it was: Who else? Oh, Carl Perkins. It was what you were saying, yeah. He was brilliant, from our youth. He's still good.

Ringo's on it, too. Ringo, yeah.

You were in the studio with Ringo and George Martin two months after John's death. Did that overshadow the recording sessions? It was all a bit healing around this time. It was, "Let's try and do an album that I like, try and have some fun doing it." So, the people involved were a large part of that. And, yeah, just reconnecting. There's Carl with my rock'n'roll past. There's Ringo with my Beatles past. I rang him up and said, "Do you fancy doing it?" "Yeah, OK."



"A huge influence": Carl Perkins at the controls, AIR Montserrat, 1981

You worked on Ringo's *Stop And Smell The Roses* album around then, didn't you? He asked me to write a song or two for it. They weren't very successful. I wish that I'd written a better song for him. You can't always do it. But anyway, we had a laugh. We went down to Super Bear in the South of France to do it. He was in a particularly crazy stimulant-laden time and he had decided he wanted to do this song called "You Can't Fight Lightning". It goes on for about 15 minutes. The lyrics are, "You can't fight lightning." It was something to do with freebasing. Lightning, lighting, drugs. So anyway, that was that. It was just a trifle boring, that take. But I didn't have the guts to say, "We should fix this up."

"Average Person" is another of your story songs, like "Eleanor Rigby" and "Penny Lane". What prompted you to start writing that kind of song in the first place? I think a lot of them, besides "Eleanor Rigby", tend to be comedy. It's me doing the tongue-in-cheek thing, whereas "Eleanor Rigby" was more serious. I think that's why it was more successful. I've still got a few that I haven't released because I don't think they're that good. It's quite a fun thing to do, to just dream up a name of a character and just try and write the story of that character and then make it fit with another character. "Eleanor Rigby", I did it with Father McKenzie and Eleanor. With some of these, I try and make too many fit. They're not always the most successful.

You recorded two tracks on *Tug Of War* with Stevie Wonder. Did you ever feel in friendly competition with Motown in the '60s? More



admiration, really. I remember us all getting "Fingertips". "What? This kid's 13? I can't believe it!" It was a very hot period for him. But really, you could say I'm in competition with everyone because you're trying to get in the charts. That sounds like a very big statement, that. But it is true, really. It may apply to you. There are a lot of journalists out there and you would like, presumably, to be better than them all and get the Pulitzer Prize. Having said that, though, that doesn't govern what you do. I think with Stevie, Carl, Stanley Clarke and Ringo on this album, it's more admiration, really. But if we were in the charts together, I'd rather do better. I have a competitive instinct. The great thing about me and John writing together was we competed with each other, which was very healthy. "Fucking hell, he's just written 'Strawberry Fields', I better write 'Penny Lane'."

George was no slouch, either.

No, but George was a late bloomer. He didn't really write until later on. Then he really started to come through seriously with his big songs. But it took him a while.

Do you think it was intimidating for him, presenting songs to you and John?

At first, we wrote his songs for him because he didn't write. The story of me and John. I'd written a couple of songs, he'd written a couple of songs. I'd never met anyone who'd written a couple of songs. I'd say to people at a party, just in conversation, school friends, "I've written a couple of songs." They'd go, "Oh, yeah?" That would be the end of it. With John, I said, "I'd written a couple of songs." He went, "So have I." Ding! Light bulbs all round. "Wha? Oh, well. Come on then. Come over to my house. I'll play you mine, you play me yours." That's what started us. So then we were writers. So in The Beatles when we needed anything, we were the writers. We wrote "Do You Want To Know A Secret" for George. We'd write something for Ringo, "I Wanna Be Your Man". We'd write for the other two guys. But then George first of all came up with one called "Don't Bother Me". We thought it was OK. But I suppose we were being a bit patronising, as it was good that he'd written one, but it wasn't quite as good as the ones we were writing for him.

Ringo Starr, Linda, Paul and Eric Stewart during the video shoot for "So Bad", London, 1983

Paul and Linda campaign against the closure of a casualty unit at Rye Hospital, 1990



A LITTLE HELP...

FLAMING RYE!



ABOUT FIVE MILES north-east of Hog Mill Hill studios lies Rye. McCartney has a long connection with the medieval town. In 1990, he led a four-year campaign against NHS plans to close Rye Memorial Hospital. "My mother

was a nurse," he told *The Independent*. "I've got a lot of time for nurses and doctors 'cos of what I saw her go through. The NHS is something our tax money buys."

Meanwhile, McCartney has often hosted Christmas parties for his staff at The George In Rye, a boutique hotel on the High Street. Across the road, you'll find Grammar School Records, a regular haunt of Mary McCartney during her childhood. Inside, you'll find a copy of *The Hollyridge Strings Play The Beatles Songbook* or *Marching With The Beatles* by the Band Of The Irish Guards alongside less arcane pressings such as *Tug Of War* (£8; G) and *With The Beatles* (£75; VG+).

But he wanted to write and he just got steadily better and better. "If I Needed Someone", "Here Comes The Sun", "Something". He was coming up with serious stuff. "Something" became Frank Sinatra's favourite Lennon and McCartney song. We didn't mind at all, no. It was good to see him progressing. We were chuffed.



© 1983 PAUL MCCARTNEY/PHOTOGRAPHER: LINDA MCCARTNEY; JOHN ENGLAND/REX SHUTTERSTOCK



Point of view: The Fab Four plus Yoko at the *Let It Be* sessions, Abbey Road, 1969

know it happened with him, because people who were working with him said when he heard "Coming Up", he said, "Oh, shit, Paul's written a good one, I'll have to write a good one." It then forced him to write something good. So, yeah. We were aware of each other's work.

You were all quite insecure towards the end, though? It's a common artistic fault. I spoke to Lady Gaga the other day. She was talking about self-loathing. I said, "No! I don't want you to say that! You sing like a bitch, you know!" I didn't say that to her, of course; I'm trying to be evocative. "You sing like an angel, you're amazing, you write stuff, you perform. Please don't have any self-loathing." But everyone

has it. I don't think it just exists in artists. But we were going through quite a bit of it at that time. Everyone was insecure, so we needed to bolster each other up, instead of what happened, which was split up. But, you know. A great band, while it lasted.

Then McCartney looks at his watch. We're some way over our allotted time. "I could talk for ages," he says, tantalisingly. But he has other projects to tend. He walks *Uncut* back downstairs, where he stops

by the front door. He chats unhurriedly for another five minutes about seeing U2 play recently at Madison Square Garden, the proposed running time of his Lollapalooza set and the critical rehabilitation of *McCartney II*. He talks enthusiastically about his desire to perform a show where he is unshackled from playing "Hey Jude" and the big hits, and can instead focus on the lesser-known tracks from his catalogue. As he finally opens the front door to show *Uncut* out, he asks how we're getting back to Rye station. One of his studio staff is kindly providing a lift. He nods, then stops us on the doorstep. "Have you got anything to eat on the journey?" he asks. Without waiting for an answer, he ducks back into the kitchen and returns with some fruit. "Here you go," he says. "A banana and an orange for the train." And then, with a wink, he shuts the front door. ☺

Tug Of War and *Pipes Of Peace* are released October 2 by MPL and Concord Music Group

☺ **There's a lot of cross-pollination on The Beatles' solo albums after the split. Did you keep up with what the others were doing?** Yeah, I think we all listened to each other's records. There was bitterness at the end of The Beatles, and it was three against one, as I'd had to do my thing for us all to get out of Allen Klein's grip. It was successful but it was very unpopular with them as they thought I was being a big head. For me, I just saw it as, "I'm saving our fortune or this guy's going to run away with it." So I was very focused, knowing that if I saved mine I would save theirs. Many, many years later, they all acknowledged that. Now you'll get Yoko and Olivia saying, "Wow, good job you did that, Paul." Because they could see the value of it. Beatles going to iTunes wouldn't have happened. It would have been Allen Klein going to iTunes. So consequentially, we didn't really speak to each other much.

Then it got better? Yeah. Then if I was in New York, I'd ring John. It got better with all of them. I think we all just realised it was a bunch of bullshit. A breakup is like a divorce – very painful. So then we'd see each other. So, yeah, I did listen to their stuff, listened to George's *All Things Must Pass* and everyone's. If I was asked to write a song for Ringo, we all chipped in and wrote something. I would listen to John's and think, 'Ooh...' That same old competitive thing would come back in. I

"THE BEATLES WAS A GREAT BAND, YOU KNOW. WHILE IT LASTED"

COME BACK TOGETHER!

The Beatles on each other's records...



	JOHN	PAUL	GEORGE	RINGO
GEORGE HARRISON WONDERWALL MUSIC, 1968				●
PLASTIC ONO BAND "COLD TURKEY" SINGLE, 1969 "INSTANT KARMA!" SINGLE, 1970			●	●
GEORGE HARRISON ALL THINGS MUST PASS, 1970				●
JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND JOHN LENNON/PLASTIC ONO BAND, 1970				●
RINGO STARR "IT DON'T COME EASY" SINGLE, 1971			●	
JOHN LENNON IMAGINE, 1971			●	
RINGO STARR "BACK OFF, BOOGALOO" SINGLE, 1972			●	
JOHN LENNON & YOKO ONO SOME TIME IN NEW YORK CITY, 1972			●	
GEORGE HARRISON LIVING IN THE MATERIAL WORLD, 1973				●
RINGO STARR RINGO, 1973	●	●	●	
RINGO STARR GOODNIGHT VIENNA, 1974	●			
GEORGE HARRISON DARK HORSE, 1974				●
RINGO STARR RINGO'S ROTOGRAVURE, 1976	●	●	●	
GEORGE HARRISON SOMEWHERE IN ENGLAND, 1981		●	●	
RINGO STARR STOP AND SMELL THE ROSES, 1981		●	●	
PAUL McCARTNEY TUG OF WAR, 1982				●
PAUL McCARTNEY PIPES OF PEACE, 1983				●
PAUL McCARTNEY GIVE MY REGARDS TO BROAD ST., 1984				●
GEORGE HARRISON CLOUD NINE, 1987				●
PAUL McCARTNEY FLAMING PIE, 1997				●
RINGO STARR VERTICAL MAN, 1998		●	●	
RINGO STARR Y NOT, 2010		●		