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Schrecongost

Research Paper

Argumentative Paper: Yoko Ono Did Not Break the Beatles

Introduction

The Beatles were undoubtedly the most groundbreaking music artists of their era - it has spawned numerous number one hits that has charmed not only the airwaves of their home nation, the United Kingdom (UK), but that of the whole world - Love Me Tender, Can't Buy Me Love and Hey Jude, to name a few. As among the first truly internationally acclaimed music artists, The Beatles - formed by the famous quartet of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr best remembered for their mop-top hairstyle, unmistakable crooning and catchy melodies, owed their success to their knack for being different in music, which only progressed the greater their status grew. However, as with most music artists, The Beatles did not last long in activity. Outsiders would deem that the controversial decision of the Beatles to disband, notwithstanding their eminent cult status worldwide, was down to the influence of Yoko Ono, the second spouse of perhaps their

best-regarded member, Lennon. It is noteworthy that the arrival of Ono coincided with the final years of Lennon, who in turn has exhibited a growing desire to become independent not least evidenced by his growing eccentricity in terms of his artistic expressions. Ono herself was deemed an eccentric - a woman whose art was as phenomenal as it was widely condemned by conservative circles for breaking numerous conventions. Moreover, the growing estrangement between Lennon and McCartney became a prominent theme that caused the disbandment of The Beatles most fans would often associate with Ono - mockingly labelled as the " fifth Beatle." Given the high-profile nature of The Beatles and their disbandment, one would perhaps desire to investigate this query: did Ono really cause them to part ways? This study, taking into account perhaps some of the most crucial details about Lennon and Ono, seeks to explain whether the foregoing question holds enough validity to sustain a theory expounding on the demise of The Beatles. Critics have often focused on the relationship of Lennon and Ono, which many would describe as obsessive at best. However, to claim that such caused The Beatles to cease as a group is perhaps an exaggeration that could qualify as among the most widely-held misconceptions in the history of music, given the rather poorly investigated observation that it caused Lennon to prioritize Ono over McCartney, Harrison and Starr.

The Eccentric John Lennon

Regarded as perhaps among the driving forces of The Beatles alongside McCartney, Lennon has been nothing short of being eccentric - a reputation that grew with him as he spent his final years with Ono. Lennon, in fact, was

no stranger to the genius that was so associated with him, to which he exclaimed rather with hilarity, “ If there is such a thing as a genius, I am one [] If there isn’t, I don’t care” (Inglis 452). With the Lennon-McCartney partnership best praised for remarkable songwriting, The Beatles cultivated their reputation as one of the most well-endearred music artists of the 20th century, given their staunch involvement “ in the ideological narrative of the twentieth century” (Inglis 452) that focused so much on advocacies favoring peace over war, in light of the events that struck at the time they flourished. An “ uncompromising, and uncompromised, public figure” (Inglis 452), Lennon emphasized on his eccentricities not merely as a desire to gain greater publicity – he did not need to do that with his talents alone, but also as a manifestation of his eclectic artistic sense – avant-garde is perhaps the best description, that has inspired and developed his artistry. It is through eccentricity that Lennon, with his relentless desire to shatter conventions, was so captivated with Ono, herself a very eccentric figure, with both having developed their union through their penchant for the avant-garde (Wiener 3).

Lennon, apart from his musical artistry, has cultivated for himself a liking for literature, which he has held since childhood. A series of literary publications Lennon has created – drawings and essays published in works such as *In His Own Write* and *Skywriting by Word of Mouth*, has gained him critical acclaim that can potentially make up for his notoriety had he not pursued music with The Beatles in the first place (Inglis 453). The education Lennon received from the Liverpool College of Art influenced his artistry even further as it leaned towards the avant-garde. Inglis (453) would credit such to the

eventual meeting of Lennon and Ono, during a time when he visited her Unfinished Paintings and Objects exhibition. From there, Lennon became extremely captivated by Ono, much to the disappointment of their respective spouses and children that time, which they respectively left to pursue their relationship (Johnstone 10). The start of the Lennon-Ono love affair alone has resonated to the critical views of the fans of The Beatles – just the fact that Lennon left his family for Ono and vice-versa, would that not serve as good-enough proof that she, indeed, prized him away from The Beatles as well? Perhaps, to the minds of fans who may have thought Lennon has thought of The Beatles as an integral part of himself given their immaculate adoration for the group. But a close reading of who Lennon really is as an artist would vehemently speak in defense of Ono.

McCartney himself indicated, albeit being a controversial figure to the disbandment of The Beatles, that “[Ono] certainly didn’t break the group up [] I don’t think you can blame her for anything [] [Lennon was] definitely going to leave” (Rolling Stone). Ono, speaking about the hurtful allegations she withstood from fans of The Beatles throughout the years, came to defend herself, “ Not being appreciated for 40 years or something It feels like I was accused of something that I didn’t do, which was breaking up The Beatles” (New York Daily News). In an apparent swipe at McCartney, however, Ono explained in her defense that prior to Lennon, Harrison and Starr have already expressed their desires to leave, given that all of them have already grown a sense of independence from one another. McCartney, Ono describe, somewhat served as the glue that so desperately tried to prevent The Beatles from disbanding – one that produced unsavory

consequences in that it turned out that “ they were getting to be like Paul’s band, which they didn’t like” (Grossberg). Thus, notwithstanding the fact that Lennon could not speak for himself anymore, one could infer that the disbandment of The Beatles has attributed more to their growing creative independence from one another, not due to the intervention of Ono.

Enter Yoko Ono

A closer look at the life of Ono reveals that her artistic nous lenient towards the avant-garde proves her enduring influence on Lennon. In both artistic and political terms, Ono has reinvigorated Lennon - a strong reason behind their strong appeal for one another. The politically-charged attitude of Lennon can be credited from the influence of Ono. The prominent background of Ono in the Fluxus avant-garde art movement, education in the arts at Gakushuin Academy in Tokyo, Japan and Sarah Lawrence College in New York, United States (US), and personal experiences during the Second World War, having felt the debilitating effects of anti-Japanese sentiments in the US (Johnstone 8-11), made her a mesmerizing character to Lennon. The genius of Lennon himself would have drawn him to Ono in default, although it was the cult status of The Beatles, not the recognition of his intellectual role (Inglis 453) that led them to spew venom on her reputation as the one who broke the group up.

As Ono thrived in the life of Lennon, his life became even more politically charged, as highlighted by their numerous bed-ins and other works of performance art they have exhibited as forerunners of the anti-war movement of the late 1960s and 1970s. The artistic impeccability of Lennon, in that regard, was highly unmistakable, as seen in an account of him

composing and producing the song *Hard Times Are Over*, which he described as “ the world’s first Japanese gospel song” as he paid full attention to its overall creation (Sheff XVI). Although insinuations that Ono broke The Beatles down as he caught full attention of Lennon, particularly in their days in New York, grew stronger by the day the more he has made apparent his estrangement towards McCartney, to which he candidly replied to asking fans, “ Paul who?” after a production session (Sheff XVIII), one could not simply assert it truthfully. The strong creative agency Lennon has exhibited even prior to his time as a Beatle, further enhanced by Ono, provides greater reason that he left The Beatles on his own accord, out of the independence - his being the most prominent, each member had gained.

Conclusion

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