

# Here comes the sun, the beatles: pop icons and historic champions of change

[Business](#)



On the morning of February 7, 1964, the Beatles stepped off their Pan Am flight to a legendary reception of five thousand fans and two hundred reporters clamoring to see the group of boys from Liverpool who sang about the things that truly mattered in life. The rise of the Beatles is a clear representation of the major changes in public awareness, global empathy, and the massive desire in the United States to move towards a future where war and political dishonesty had no place in a transparent society. (1) The Beatles are, to this day, a manifestation of love, compassion and simplicity indicative of western society's recovery from one of the darkest chapters of humanity's history. The band's music ushered social changes which shook the world. This leads me to allege that the Beatles are an exemplary icon of a historical turning point. The unprecedented, hysterical popularity of the Beatles was representative of the public's readiness to move away from the past of bloodshed and global war.

The world was prepared to focus on cultural matters and look beyond the almost smothering presence of death, lies, and misdirection which plagued the world after a century which hosted two World Wars as well as aggressive military actions decades later in Vietnam. The four young boys from Liverpool sang about the importance of love, compassion, and of openness unfamiliar to but keenly desired by the American public. The world's willingness to accept a cultural phenomenon such as the Beatles is evident in their groundbreaking sales figures. While the Beatles had become "teen idols" in their home country of Britain by 1963, Beatlemania became a "transatlantic phenomenon" by February 7, 1964 as the band was accompanied across the Atlantic with numerous photographers and

reporters. While the teenagers of the country were already “ firmly in the grip of Beatlemania; “ the expanse of their success in the American marketplace was only evident in the first week of April 1964 when their singles filled the top five slots of the Billboard singles chart. (2)

Consequently, the opening night of their first-ever concert tour of North America familiarized the band to the pandemonium they would see as they continued on their tour in the months ahead.

In a “ laughable underestimation of their drawing power in America,” Brian Epstein, the Beatles’ manager, decided on venues like the 17, 000 seat Cow Palace for the 1964 tour in fear that the Beatles would not be able to sell out larger sports stadiums. On the contrary, the Beatles had no problem filling the theater beyond its maximum capacity with screaming fans as they took the stage. (3) The Beatles provided a much needed relief from the tension of the political world in their earlier years as members of the American public found themselves letting go and singing “ yeah yeah yeah ” along with this “ funny, charming and different” British band. (4) The hype got to the extent that police intervention was necessary by the first performance of their first tour to prevent both band and audience injuries. (3) The United States of America was lost and “ healing from its wounds,” in the words of President GeraldFord.

(5) The citizens of America needed direction. Enter the Beatles, with their emphasis on the general theme of love and happiness as in 1967’s hit single “ All You Need Is Love,” in which they call attention to how; “ There’s nothing you can know that isn’t known. Nothing you can see that isn’t shown.

Nowhere you can be that isn't where you're meant to be. It's easy. All you need is love.

It's easy." The lyrics herald a shift in consciousness and focus the public on the simple joys that were absent in recent history. When atomic bombs and war threaten to leave the world a husk full of radioactive skeletons, a song about love offers a crucial, rejuvenating effect to help keep events in perspective. It is no mere coincidence that the Beatles reached the peak of their popularity during the 1960s– when the biggest postwar baby boom in American history was taking place. (6) The opposite of the mindsets of the American people both before and during the war, people of the postwar era actually anticipated having children.

This was namely because they were confident that their future would bring the comfort, happiness, and prosperity the Beatles sang about in their music. (7) The impact they had on the American public is further chronicled in their song "Here Comes the Sun," which speaks of the untroubled times that are sure to come after a "long, cold lonely winter." The Beatles, in this scenario, acted as the metaphoric "sun;" a cultural phenomenon which mirrored the shift in the public's priorities from a brutal struggle for dominance to proactively moving on and "returning the smiles to the faces" to the world. The children of the baby boom era subsequently were against the notion of the United States returning to war and violently rallied involvement in the Vietnam War and Cold War. (8) Having been able to "begin maturing in complacency" the students at the collegiate level were the most influenced by the "penetration of their comfort by events too disturbing to dismiss," as

expressed in the Port Huron Statement. (9) By the late 1960s, rock and roll music had already reached most colleges and served as a voice of revolution throughout various campuses.

(10) For instance, a class in East Asian political science was postponed at Swarthmore College so the “scholars could attend a private screening viewing of the Beatles film, *A Hard Day’s Night*. (11) With lyrics which attempted to “convey the feel of today’s world, or at least the part of it that affects young people,” the Beatles “catalyzed anti-war movements” and stimulated students to initiate a social revolution based upon “peace, love, and happiness.” (12) With the spectral reflection of the Second World War and the invention of the world’s deadliest weapon in humanity’s extensive history of warfare haunting in the world’s collective subconscious, the Beatles and their lyrics promoted an epidemic of social change. Only 20 years before, the world had been shrouded by a grimy barrier between the desires of the global community and the dealings and secretive transgressions of superpower governments. The mass genocide during the holocaust shocked and tormented the world; demonstrating with cold efficiency how evil unchecked government power could be.

Widely regarded as one of the most diabolical and dispassionate events in history, Hitler and his fanatical Nazi party’s purgation can be satirically observed in the Beatles’ 1966 hit “Yellow Submarine.” While Paul McCartney penned it as a “happy song” for the band’s drummer—Ringo Starr—the widespread confusion and unjustified imprisonment inversely correlates with the lyrics: “We all live in a yellow submarine, yellow submarine, yellow

submarine. And our friends are all aboard. Many more of them live next door.” (13) While the immediate image evoked by the lyrics is of happy days on board a submarine with companions, it could be warped to represent how the Jewish were held captive train cars and in concentration camps; shut off to the rest of the world as though in a submarine deep beneath the surface of global awareness.

The global public needed an uplifting cultural change to recover from history’s grim recent track. In this case, their change was championed by five boy celebrities from Liverpool who called themselves the Beatles. Yet, the Beatles transcended the function of celebrity stardom. They used their music and influence to promote messages of compassion—something that seemed to have been drained out of the world, lying buried deep within the mass graves of Auschwitz. (14) While their lyrics seemed simple, the Beatles offered both “ social commentary and satire” and frequently lent their significant participation to global causes. (15) One example of the Beatles members’ dedication to advancing social awareness and support was guitarist George Harrison’s organization of one of the world’s first major benefit concerts.

In doing so, he raised nearly \$250, 000 for relief efforts in Bangladesh following natural disasters, civil war, and inhumane acts by the local government. Harrison’s efforts with this concert inspired other joint musical-political collaborations and events including Mick Jagger’s 1972 benefit concert for the earthquake victims of Nicaragua. (16) John Lennon and his wife Yoko Ono also gained media attention for hosting a week long bed-in

during their honeymoon in Amsterdam. (17) Every day the newlyweds promised reporters that people would “ get peace if we really want it” and discussed the importance of making peace a global priority. (18) Sung by almost half a million demonstrators in the nation’s capital on Vietnam Moratorium Day, October 15th, 1969, Lennon’s first solo, “ Give Peace a Chance” soon became an anthem of the American anti-war movement during the 1970’s.

(19) Meanwhile, the Beatles continued to express their advocacy of awareness, empathy, and peaceful rebellion against oppressive and secretive governments both through their music and by way of personal interviews. (20) Harrison’s timeless legacy and presence can be seen from how the 2011 U. S. Fund for UNICEF has “ called on a whole new generation of compassionate music lovers to bring much needed attention to a devastating crisis in the Horn of Africa” to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the “ groundbreaking” Concert for Bangladesh. (21) Perhaps it was their social awareness that allowed them to “ express pain, or neediness, and have it not just be the same old “ you did me wrong” kind of thing. The Beatles seemed to have more compassion for people other than themselves.

” (22) If their earlier songs told of passionate romance between lovers, their latter songs centered around philanthropy and their love for humanity. The Beatles knew that their music had great political force and chose to serve as avatars of change and progress rather than egocentric hoarders of stardom. In a country where the dark visages of war continued to loom ominously over its citizens, the palliative nature of Beatles’ music served as a chrysalis of

change for the American public. In the light of political fiascos like the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and President Nixon's Watergate Scandal of 1972, a surge of public cynicism focused, and elucidated the American people's desire of openness between the voters and their supposedly democratic process of government. Fred Bronson, author of "the Billboard Book of No.

1 Hits" recalls the nation as "depressed" and remembers thinking "the nation needed something to lift it up." (23) As they did in Liverpool, the Beatles brought their witty charm, non-conformist style, and rebellious nature to a nation in need of a voice of dissent and opposition to the status quo. (24) Despite the band's dissolution in 1970, the ongoing popularity of their albums throughout the 1970's demonstrates the American public's need for a sort of pressure valve during a time resonant of corruption, espionage, and scandal. (25) One of the most scandalous events in American history, Nixon's notorious Watergate incident is often seen as the climax in terms of the public's mistrust of the government. Having witnessed a presidency fall apart as the result of criminal conspiracy, only 36% of Americans said they still trusted the government.

This constitutes a drop from polls taken in 1964, which showed nearly 75% of Americans saying they believed their government could be trusted to do what was right. (26) It is interesting to note at this point that FBI files have been released proving that Nixon had tracked John Lennon, who had released "Give Peace a Chance" and was using his music to urge voters to vote against war and therefore against Nixon. (27) While their music might



not have solved problems, the Beatles brought clarity into the lives of many Americans by offering a widely available medium through which the people could hear their own dissatisfaction and desire for change. Their vision of the world was reflected in the simplicity and frank sincerity of the Beatles' lyrics. Their lyrics attempted to "deal with complexity instead of merely capturing it" and their songs marked a "return to the basics." (15) Martin Goldsmith, author of the recent "The Beatles Come to America" said: "The structure [of the song] underpins the message.

It is very simple and very profound at the same time." (22) Similarly, when asked about his lyrics to "Love Me Do," Paul McCartney replied; "That's what we want to get back to—simplicity. You can't have anything simpler, yet more meaningful than love, love me-do." (28) Perhaps the most outspoken celebrity adversary of war, John Lennon has frequently asserted that war could easily be eradicated if all around the world, people opened their eyes and hearts to the world around them. Taking a look back at the Beatles' accomplishments, it is a deplorable understatement to say that the Beatles merely "defined pop culture.

" (29) The Beatles transcended pop culture and were icons of their time's changing priorities. People were no longer wallowing in the depression of the times but rather exorcising the greed, slander, and crime from their societies with the Beatles' music serving as a soundtrack in the pursuit of a better world through social revolution. (30) The public were battling the festering evils from the past decades with the love, compassion, and simplicity that emanated from the Beatles' actions and from within their music. While some

albums gather dust in the corner of garages and today's parents are ridiculed for their "lame" taste in music by their children, the Beatles' fame and popularity remain appreciated and are undoubtedly still among the most pervasive tunes in the world. Largely anticipated as one of the highlights of the Olympics opening ceremony was Paul McCartney's rendition of "Hey Jude," a song that defined the Beatles' musical career and exemplified the message they were trying to advocate through their songs- "Hey Jude, don't make it bad. Take a sad song and make it better.

. . Don't carry the world upon your shoulders." While our world may not be in pristine shape with war in the Middle East, aggressive negotiations and continued threats in Asia, and the relentless development of weapons of mass destruction, it is comforting to know that our world continues to recognize defenders of love and change like the Beatles. Described as the "first musicians to sublimate music into art" by Hyung Kwan Shin, General Manager of CJ Entertainment & Music for "letting their imagination run wild and naturally coming across their creations," the Beatles were more than mere distractions from the gloom of the times. They were active leaders in the creation of "a style that tries to embody a new, and therefore unique vision of life through its medium.

"Thanks to the Beatles, the prioritization of the "real issues of life by refusing to participate in the kinds of activities (polemics) which have always led to bitterness and bloodshed" will always find supporters so long as their lyrics echo through time and history as a chorus of peace, awareness, and

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