

Hot Beatles Songwriting Quotes (Part I)

By Billy Byron

Wow! Beatles radio shows are a songwriter's treasure trove! I have been copying Boston and national Beatles radio programs for some years and I'd like to share some helpful Fab Four quotes and info, I've discovered. My purpose in taping was to study the Beatles, their history, music arranging, songwriting, musicianship, production, recording, promotion and band member social interactions. In looking at their songs with a microscope and hearing their quotes with a stethoscope, I have garnered very good tips and, of course, gathered some great trivia for on-stage patter. All quotes are from Joe Johnson's Beatle Brunch show. * (For radio stations and event, see below)

1. Revolution- ary Lyric & 3 Music Versions (John Lennon talks about tempo, lyrics, and subject matter. This was in a show discussing B-Sides of Beatles singles. Of course, here, Lennon is discussing his powerful B-Side song of the greatest Beatles #1 hit of all time, "Hey Jude!")

"In the song "Revolution" there are three versions. #1, #2 and #9. #9 is an abstract picture of "Revolution." Then, #2 is the single because the other boys didn't like #1 ... they said it wasn't fast enough so I made it fast...and sometimes I said "Count me in, count me out..." The thing I regret was making a reference to chairman Mao which might spoil any chances I have of going to visit China...but I wrote the chairman Mao line in the studio because I didn't have any words. What I was trying to say to the Maoists or anybody who wanted to change the world was, why go and stand in front of a

policeman, with a red communist flag in your hand, and a big suit, and all like that...and then get hit! I thought it was un-subtle...though in the song, I wasn't putting down revolution, I was saying isn't that a bit unsubtle. So if you want to really change the thing, do it subtly, in a way the establishment can't attack, therefore they can't kill it!"

2. Rapid Beatle Studio Arrangements (Paul McCartney talks of impromptu situations in early recordings...)

"When John and I were writing...we often would have written the stuff just the week before. So when the producer George Martin...the engineer, would say "Alright what are we doing?"...John and I would say: "Well it goes like this..." We'd pull our guitars out...and we show 'em the song...often Ringo and George also didn't know what was coming up..they weren't with us when we wrote them...so..it was REALLY fresh. It meant that everything we were recording, people had just heard for the first time. So, you really had to think "What do I want to do on this?!" Make instant decisions; nothing could be left for later. You just had to go and do it!"

3. Paul's Secret Of Songwriting (Mac talks about writing, re-writing, throw-away or not, number of song-write trials, and other people's opinions, etc.)

"I think the thing is with songs...It's like anything...you kind of...to use kind of a fishing analogy, you cast your rod in there, and uhhh, 90 times out of 100 you'll get something, but it might be an old boot. It might not be much, you know,

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but occasionally you'll get something you really want. Of course, then you you're gonna have to put it back in...hah hah...speaking of fish anyway...you know, but then, like I say...ummm, I think that's the trick you know, that out of 10 songs you'll find 2 or 3 you really like, the others may be OK, you know, you may not like them so much, you might do them to see if they'll work. You might get a recording that works. You know, when a song doesn't appear to work, a recording can work. You can get...somebody else likes it, maybe you don't like it, but somebody else will persuade you to really keep it....because they really love it!"

4. Harrison On The Most Popular Songwriting Topic: Love! (The various philosophies of love illustrated in Beatle love songs seemed on a very different level when George's thinking grew and his song content moved towards the spiritual meaning of the word "Love.")

"When the 60's thing happened...the main thing that I felt was the realization that all the goodness and all the strength, and the things that can support life, are, all coming out of love. Not, just as simple as one guy saying to a chick: "I love you!" but, the love of just real love which is like unconditional love. Because, so often we say now "I love you if..." and that's not real love. Love is I love you even if you kick me in the...head and, stab me in the back...I love you. Or, I love you... just unconditionally and, that goes beyond everything and that is a pretty far out love to try and conceive and when I, realized a little bit of love, I realized how shallow it was. You know, I don't want to just hear the word, I want to feel it, see it, and be it!"

5. When We're Sixty-Four (Paul on society's perception and his age. He'll be 64 in 2007 and, it's now known he will not tour. By the way, he was born June 18, 1942.)

"I wrote that song when I was about sixteen. Yea - ummm - soooo, sixty-four was a long way off then! Right now...ummm... it's not so far off. (laughter)

Ummm - I think - I'll just be happy (on my birthday) - Ill have a great birthday... "birthday greetings, bottle of wine." On touring

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or not touring next year: " I may be sixty-fouring on a Hawaiian island!" On aging: "Obviously I don't think there's many people who are gonna like getting older...it's like..you know...it's not that groovy." And on rock and roll yesterday and today: "I think there was a time when you thought ...music equals youth. I don't think it applies anymore."

6. Billy Preston Uses Creation In Chaos In The Beatle-Yard (Mac explains how Preston's presence kept politeness and civility afloat even as the Beatles were at loggerheads and, a certain woman in the "Let It Be" studio, added tension. Also, Ringo mentions how Billy's musicianship and style complimented, rather than cluttered.)

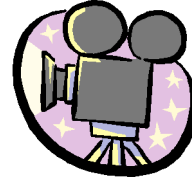
Paul says that when the Beatles were in the public eye..."It made me realize we were quite sort of civilized people really....(but) in our own intimacy, we weren't! Just like a sort of marriage...you can let anything go. You know: " I hate that about you!!" You wouldn't normally say that to a friend, or a family member, or somebody just on the street... and, when Billy came on board, he really helped the whole project a lot." About Billy's work, Ringo says: "It really enhances the track, what he does. It's not only great, it's not busy! I mean, you got to watch organ players. They like to wahhh! wahhhh! ...thank you Billy for all your help!"

* Boston Area Beatle Radio Shows:

(1) Sat 7AM 100.7 WZLX The Beatle Years (national) (2) Sat 8AM 100.7 WZLX Breakfast With The Beatles (Boston DJ Chachi) (3) Sun 9AM Oldies 103.3 WODS Joe Johnson's Beatle Brunch (national) (4) Sun 10AM WBOQ 104.9 Beatle Brunch

* Beatle "Live" Shows & Events:

To hear "live" Beatle music and their fans go to a visiting Beatlemania show, (e.g. just at Newport's Winterfest) Or, vacation at the event "The Festival For Beatle Fans" (this mo. in N.J.), or, support our local fab four Boston boys in the incredible "Beatlejuice" band with Brad Delp, lead singer with the band "Boston." (They' were at Mosley's On The Charles, St. Paddy's Day), and, often at Johnny D's, Somerville.)



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