

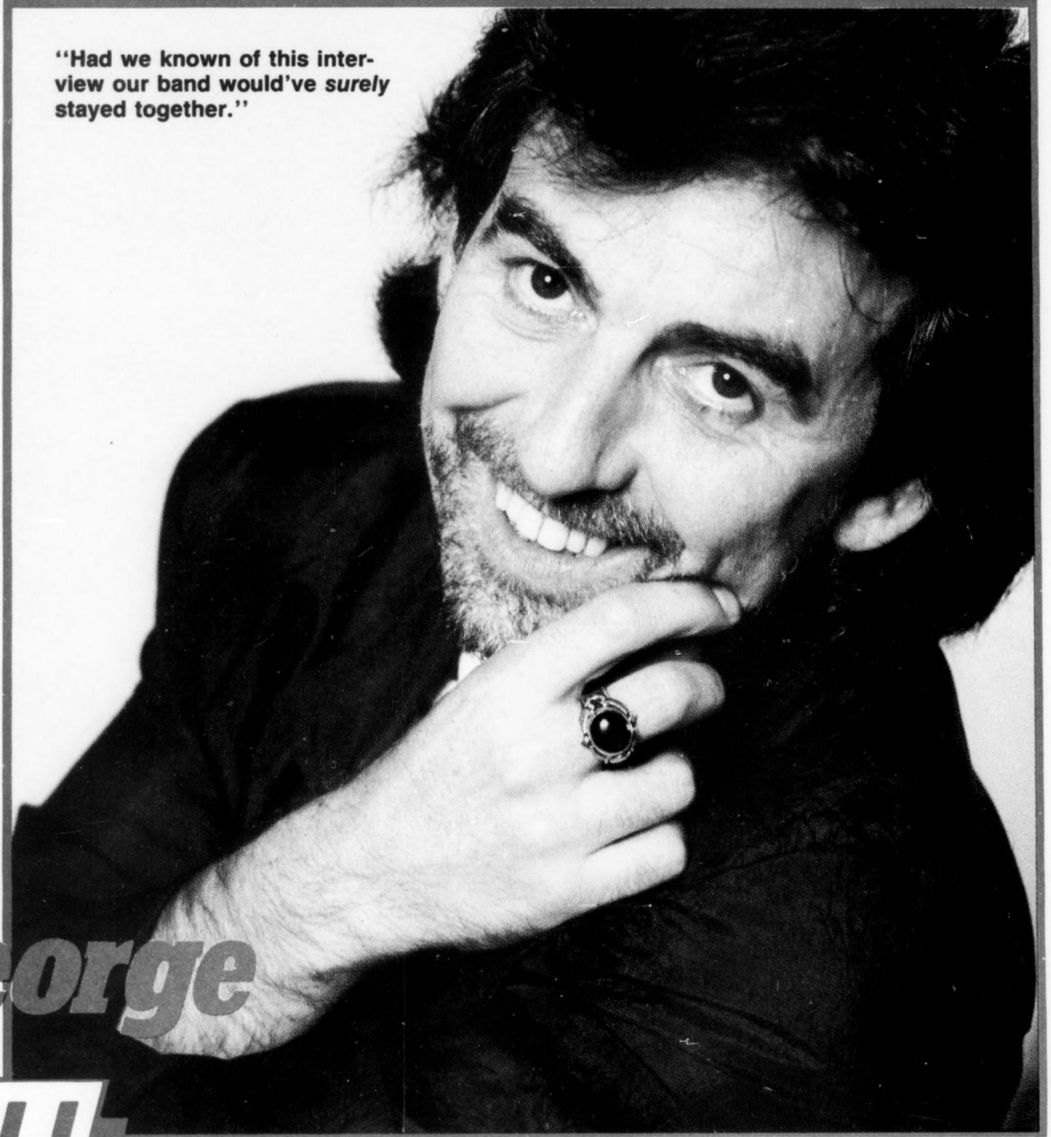
# FAB!

# GEAR!

## The **G**eorge

# **H**arrison Interview

"Had we known of this interview our band would've surely stayed together."



by J. Kordosh

In a plush Warner Bros. office, Bill Holdship and I listened to George Harrison's first album in over five years, *Cloud Nine*. "I wracked my brains for a title, trying to think of something that didn't have one of the song titles in it," Harrison said later. (He didn't succeed; the title song kicks off the album.) "It was called *Fab* for about half an hour," he added. Since the record was still being mastered, there were only a few cassette copies available, and those strictly for listening within the confines of Warner Bros., who distribute Harrison's Dark Horse label.

*Cloud Nine* may well be Harrison's best album since 1971's *All Things Must Pass*, his first and most successful post-Beatles offering. It's peppered with uptempo rockers ("Devil's Radio," with a vocal line

made for Bob Dylan, "Fish On The Sand," and what appears to be the album's first single, "Got My Mind Set On You") and some pretty funny lyrics ("When We Was Fab" recalls a time "when income tax was all we had" as voices in the background chant "fab!" and "gear!"). In general, it's not the kind of thing you might expect from George Harrison.

Since the mid-1970s, Harrison's released only three albums, none of which sold particularly well or met with much critical praise. Harrison got involved with race car driving, gardening and film-making—his movie company, Handmade Films, has produced *Withnail And I*, *Shanghai Surprise*, *Monty Python At The Hollywood Bowl* and others—and Harrison may have easily been perceived as a dropout from the music business. But the new album—prompted, Harrison says,

by being in the right mood for material he's been demoing all along, and by linking up with co-producer Jeff Lynne (of ELO fame)—should change that.

Throughout the interview, Harrison was very relaxed and good-humored, smoking French Gitanes cigarettes and drinking tea. Although much of what he says here—particularly about the Beatles being ripped off—might sound vindictive, it was delivered with a casual good-naturedness. In this month's installment, Harrison talks about his new album and some of his overlooked work of the latter years, as well as the selling of the Beatles circa 1987. . . in particular, the Beatles' suit against Capitol-EMI over the commercial use of original Beatles' masters. In next month's conclusion, he talks about the Beatles' meeting with Elvis Presley (and his own second meeting, years later),

the Beatles' LSD experiences, impressions of Sean Penn and Madonna and life after death.

"So what kind of readers does CREEM have?" asked George Harrison. "It's not just Ginger Baker, Jack Bruce and Eric Clapton, is it?" We hope not, but one never really knows.

\* \* \*

### Who are some of the players on the new album?

Well, on drums we've got Ringo and Jim Keltner, and Ray Cooper plays on one track—Ray being the percussion player who used to be with Elton John. He works for our company, Handmade Films. Ringo plays on about four tracks. Does he play on "When We Was Fab"?

Oh, yeah. I mean, before I wrote the song, or when I sat down to write it, I thought, "This one's gonna start with Ringo going, 'One, two, DUHtabump, DUHtabump.'" That was the intro in my head; that was the tempo it was always going to be.

Did you ever think of adding laughter at the end of the song (which vaguely reprises the end of "Within You Without You")?

No, but we had the little thing from the radio and the sitars (laughs). Isn't that enough?

### Who else is playing?

All the horn parts were played by Jim Horn. That's his real name, Jim Horn. He played on all those old Duane Eddy things, and he actually did two with me in 1974 (*Dark Horse* and *Extra Texture*). He's very well-known, one of the top sax players in the country. He's brilliant. He made a few solo albums on Shelter Records back in the early '70s and now he's moved from L.A. to Nashville. A lot of musicians seem to have gone down there because there's so much work.

Eric Clapton plays on four tracks; I'm sure you could hear him. Eric has the end solo on "That's What It Takes," he plays on "Devil's Radio," "Wreck Of The Hesperus," and on the title track. And then Elton John plays electric piano on "Cloud Nine"—and he plays piano on "Devil's Radio" and, I believe, "Wreck Of The Hesperus," also. Just to complete the list of people who's on it, Gary Wright plays keyboard, the piano, on a song called "Just For Today," which is a song I wrote from an Alcoholics Anonymous brochure. You know that little leaflet they give out to drunkards, to say to try to live through this day, for today only? And he also plays on "When We Was Fab." All the remaining stuff: bass is Jeff, keyboards, Oberheim, is Jeff, and guitars are me and

Jeff. All the little twiddly parts that just crop up, like autoharps, is just me and Jeff, and we also do all the backing voices.

### What prompted "Devil's Radio"?

I have to go past this little church to take my boy to school and they have a little billboard—just a little board outside the church—saying, "Gossip: The Devil's Radio... Don't Be A Broadcaster." That's all. So I thought, that's good, that's a song, and I wrote it going to one of the Eurythmics concerts. I sort of spent a bit of time with Dave Stewart, checking out his live show on—what was that tour called?—Revenge. The Revenge Tour was coming around England and I went to a couple of shows and I thought, "Yeah, I can do this. I can write these." So I wrote a couple of rockers.

### How come we heard Paul McCartney and Julian Lennon were also going to be on this album?

You know what was happening? Ringo made an album, or was making an album,

Paul was going in the studio and started making an album, but then he decided he didn't want to do it—and I think that was going around, saying that we were all making an album. People thought that it meant we were all making an album together, but we were all making separate ones, although Ringo did play on mine. Do you think this album's going to sell?

I hope so; I don't know. Warner's seemed really happy with it and, so far, the people I've met in interviews all seem to like it. Warner's, I think, are just going to do the best sales thing that they normally do for an album they consider worthy of it. All I can do is my bit and hope they play it on the radio.

### Do you think this 20th anniversary stuff...

I think that might help. It might help a lot, actually, inasmuch as radio stations might be interested, after all that stuff going on, to hear what's happening now. Plus the fact that I've not made an album for a number of years. They do say absence makes the heart grow fonder; I don't know if that's true (laughs).

Did you go through a period where you were getting kind of bored or bitter? On "Blood From A Clone" (off 1981's *Somewhere In England* album)...

Yeah, fed up. I love "Blood From A Clone."

It's a great song, but I can never make out the lyrics after the "oom-pah-pah/Frank Zappa" line.

"They say you like it, but knowing the market, it may not go well, it's too laid back... You need some oom-pah-pah, nothing like Frank Zappa, and not new wave, they don't play that crap... Try beating your head on a brick wall, hard like a stone... Don't have time for the music, they want blood from a clone." "Save The World" (from the same album) is, I think, a very funny song.

It is, isn't it? I mean, it's serious and funny at the same time.

Well, with that line in there where you've gotta save the whales.

Yeah, Greenpeace got their due. But "Blood From A Clone," being the first song on the album, just kind of jumped out at you.

Yeah, 'cause that was all this stuff they were telling me: "Well, we like it, but we don't really hear a single." And then other people were saying, "Now, look, radio stations are having all these polls done in the street to find out what constitutes a hit single and they've decided a hit single is a song of love gained or lost directed at 14-to-20-year-olds." And I said, "Shit, what chance does that give

*"EMI has a contract to put out and promote our records. They don't have a contract saying 'We can sell you to shoe manufacturers or sausage manufacturers.'"*



me?" So anyway, I went in and wrote that song just to shed some of the frustrations. And there's things in there like "There is no sense to it, pure pounds and pence to it. . . They're so intense, too, makes me amazed."

**What about the line that seems to refer to the Beatles?**

Yeah, I remember the line after it (*pauses*). Oh! "Where will it all lead us, I thought we had freed us from the mundane, seems I'm wrong again."

**So that was a reference to the Beatles?**

No, just we generally, had freed ourselves from all this bullshit music and all bullshit, period. But I see I'm wrong again.

**Even more so today.**

You said that (*laughs*).

**Do you think that's true?**

There's a big swatch of rubbish that's very popular and then, within that, there's always been some good stuff. But I don't really listen much anymore; I never have. I've never had time—you're either making your own music or you're out listening to everybody else's. But I catch it when I come through L.A. and I look at MTV (*laughs*) and it sounds like—I've just done this on an HBO interview and I don't want to step out of line because, basically, I'm quite happy about everything and we all have our rights to be what we want to be. Gandhi said "Create and preserve the image of your choice," so if you want to be Spinal Tap, then best of luck to you. But there's a lot of Spinal Taps out there who obviously didn't see the movie, and whoever he is, there's this big, phantom guitar player with this big guitar who plays the guitar solo on every one of them records.

**But I wonder if I were in the Beatles if I wouldn't feel guilty for. . .**

Having created that? We never created that. Elvis and Chuck Berry and Eddie Cochran never felt guilty about creating Beatles. No, it's OK, it's just that the problem isn't in the music, it's in our consciousness. That's the fault, because whatever is out there is a reflection of our own consciousness. And it just means that the money-making side of things seems to have its consciousness aimed at a market of 10-to-18-year-olds.

**Don't you think that, in America, it's getting to be a chilling thing?**

I think it's the same all over. It's just that there's more of it in America because it's a bigger country.

**I was watching that movie about the birth of the Beatles, that Dick Clark movie. . .**

Dick Clark? Not him again. I'll tell you, I don't know what Americans think of him, but from the Beatles' point of view, Dick



**"If you want to be Spinal Tap, then best of luck to you. But there's a lot of Spinal Taps out there."**

Clark—I don't know what he ever did with his own talent. Y'know, all he does is send you letters: "Can I have a clip of you doing this? Can I have a clip of you doing that? I'm making another movie about you and the history of this and that, and you're in it and I'll give you two dollars if you'll let me have it in." You get to the point of saying, "Fuck off, Dick, think of your own ideas, you're not getting any more of our shit. Just make your own films and rip off other people." Y'know, he's a twat.

**It would appear rock 'n' roll's done more for him than he's done for rock 'n' roll.**

Absolutely. I mean, who *is* he? And you see these albums coming out with all these great rock 'n' roll hits on them and his face on the sleeve? I'd be embarrassed if I was him.

**He's sort of a conglomerate unto himself.**

Him and Ed Sullivan. Ed Sullivan's been dead about 19 years but he's still out there making Ed Sullivan Productions. "Please, can we have another clip of you doing this? We'll pay you two dollars." You know, piss off.

**Don't you guys have control. . .**

We do. We have control over it, and sometimes you'll get a decent program. The BBC in England put out a program called *Rock 'N' Roll Years*, a weekly thing of 30 minutes, and it was done very tastefully. They take old newsreel footage, some performances—one week it's 1957, then the next week's '58, '59, right through the '60s. They're up into the '70s now, but it's done really neat. You see all the things that happened in a nutshell; it's all compressed. . . lots of historical things and newsreel footage, and there's no commentary on it. There's some talk if it's a newsreel bit—it's just snippets of these things and, in 30 minutes, it gives you a real feel for what happened in that year.

Now that's a nice, intelligent thing, and when they ask "Can we have a clip of you doing such-and-such?" you're inclined to say yes. But when you get all these other people who are just like vultures, who amass video clips of all these other people and sell them around the world, it's greed and it's not artistic. It's just big business. But we get requests all the time; it's non-stop.

**How can you possibly oversee all that?**

That's what Apple is still in the business of: dealing with lawyers and trying to stop people from doing this, doing that and doing the other—or trying to license people to do it properly if they've got the decency to ask.

**What about the "Revolution" commercial?**

Well, that—that's something that is a problem, inasmuch as they, whoever wanted it. . . see, you've got these people who own copyrights of things. How they obtained them is a different business. Talking personally about the songs I wrote when I was very young, this guy came up to me and said, "Well, you've got to have your music published." I go, "What's that?" "So that when it goes out you can get some money for it. So, here, why don't you sign this form and I'll publish your music for you." They forget to say, "And, incidentally, I'm gonna steal your song and I will own it for the rest of my life, and you don't own that song even though you just wrote it."

I was more fortunate than John and Paul because I only wrote a few songs in the early days, compared to them. Did you ever see the Rutles? Well, there was a thing in there where it says, "Dick Jaws, an out-of-work publisher of no fixed ability, signed them up for the rest of their lives." And it cuts to him saying, "Lucky, really." So that's what happened. Fortunately, when that first agreement expired with me, Neil Aspinall, who was our

friend and went to school with Paul and I, and who still runs Apple, said, "Hey, I don't think you should sign with these people." I was in the Himalayas at the time and I thought, OK, and I just formed my own publishing company. So since then I own my own songs, whereas John and Paul's went on, and this guy Dick Jaws sold them to Lew Greed and Lew Greed sold them to someone else, and then Paul was trying to get 'em back, and then Paul's good friend Michael Jackson went and bought them.

So these people who think they own the rights never had anything to do with the promotion of them or the writing of them or the recording of them, but obtained them because of all this devious stuff that happened in the past. (*Here Harrison makes what is sometimes termed "a familiar gesture."*) That's what happened, so they think they own all our songs. EMI and Capitol thinks they own all our songs on record and, according to contracts, maybe they do. But they have a contract to put out our records and promote our records—they don't have a contract saying "We can sell you to shoe manufacturers or we can sell you to sausage manufacturers." And if we don't do anything about it, every Beatles song in the world is going to be a TV commercial. **A lot of people, I think, are offended by that.**

They are! Even *Time* magazine said it took some schmuck five minutes to turn him into a jingle writer.

Through the years, it seems, all this stuff has seeped into society and they tend to look upon it as public domain. It's the same with that *Beatlemania* stuff—we had to try and stop people from doing these things in order to establish, "Look, we're here, we're humans, we exist, and there's laws of names and likeness." They're doing it all over the place: I see adverts in England now, it's for a bank—Westminster Bank—and they've got a big photograph of James Dean. Even David Putnam, the English film producer—he heads up Columbia Films now, in the States—even he said to his secretary, "Hey, find out who the James Dean lookalike is." It's, like, take a picture of James Dean because he's dead and he can't answer, but there's James Dean's family, his estate—they should own the rights to how he looks. Same with Marilyn Monroe, or whoever, it doesn't matter that they're dead. But they're doing it to us and we're not even *dead* yet. It's like the Beatles were the most ripped-off people of all time, and, as for the record company, they should be ashamed of themselves—it's one thing to treat

some artist who's here today and gone tomorrow with your crummy little royalty rate and treat 'em like trash, but a band like us who survived twenty-some odd years, sold a billion records for them at the lowest royalty rate you've ever heard of, and then *still* steal from you?! I'd be ashamed, I couldn't do it. And to have to argue and fight with them and say, give us a break, man, you're lucky to have anything. But if this thing with Capitol comes to court they'll be lucky to end up owning the masters. There's a good chance we'll get back all our masters and everything. And the Beatles have never been greedy; we've never received huge royalties like some people now. You know, you get over a dollar fifty, at least, for an album. We get one old penny. One old English penny per album.

#### **Right now?**

Right now. And even with that, there's hundreds of thousands of albums mysteriously missing that they gave to pension funds run by the Mafia. It's very dirty. So that's what it's all about, that suit against Capitol. It's like, give us a break, we're humans too. We created all this stuff and they were very fortunate to be a part of it inasmuch as distributing our records and making a profit on it.

#### **It's hard to imagine a band giving more to music than the Beatles did.**

I know. It's disgusting, it's immoral—and if that's how they treat people they're supposed to be in business with, that must be how they treat everybody. It's immoral, that's all there is to it, and ultimately they'll all get it. I don't mean from us, now, but somewhere down the line, in this

life or the next life.

#### **Do you believe in reincarnation?**

Absolutely. And half of those people are going to reincarnate getting one cent out of every CD they sell and sell more records than everybody and not receive any of the money. Be treated like lice.

If you put this in the interview, you can say I'm smiling about it, I'm not letting it depress me. But all this stuff that you read in the papers about Nike and Capitol, that's what's been going on for years. They've all taken advantage of it because after the Beatles split up everybody was sort of not talking to each other, so they all came in, grabbing and plundering as much as they could. But now this is going to be pursued to the end, and even if we all die in the process, our children and our children's children will be after Bhaskar Menon (*Chairman and CEO of EMI Music Worldwide*) and Capitol until he realizes he's just being a dong.

#### **Do you think you'll win?**

There's no way we can lose. Because if you just put all the cards on the table and see what we've got and what they've got, I think a blind man on a galloping horse would say that Capitol isn't being fair. It's just the balance: the law of nature demands that all things be equal, and this isn't equal.

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(*"I saved you the big attack on everybody," Harrison went on to note, and indeed he did. Next month—in addition to the topics mentioned in the intro—he talks of Bob Dylan, his own bass playing and how the Beatles saved themselves from nervous breakdowns. See you then.*) □

**"The Beatles were the most ripped-off people of all time..."**



Photo by Robert Matheu

# Fabber Than Before... The



## George Harrison

### Interview, Part Two

by J. Kordosh

*As promised last month, we continue the George Harrison interview, which was prompted by the release of Cloud Nine, his first album in over five years. This continuation finds a relaxed Harrison talking about everything from Madonna to Elvis to LSD to life after the Beatles to life after death. All in all, quite a romp...*

**Did you ever see that show in London: John, Paul, George, Ringo & Bert?**

I saw it up until the intermission and then—I saw it with my friend Derek Taylor, who's a writer who used to work for Warner Bros. and Apple—I said to him we

either have to leave now or I'm gonna jump on that stage and throttle those people. It was awful stuff. All these idiots acting out people—it's like I say in "The Devil's Radio," talking about what they don't know. It's like a rumor. It's like those Beatles cartoons, and it was so inaccurate it was nauseating, having been one.

**How about the screenplay Joe Orton worked up for the Beatles? Was there anything to that?**

There wasn't anything to it. Somebody said—maybe because we had a homosexual manager—he's a good playwright, and phoned him up to see if he could get a screenplay, and that was probably the extent of it. Now, years down the line, there's *Prick Up Your Ears*, or prick up whatever they really mean.

**Is there anything else that annoys you about your post-Beatles career?**

A lot of the things to do with the Beatles is as if it was a previous life. It's as if it happened in this dream. I don't go around thinking I'm a Beatle or feeling like anything; I tend to live now, here, this day.

**You seem very comfortable with having been a Beatle.**

Well, I've had a lot of years. It was terrible around '69, and in that period: everybody'd seen the movie *Let It Be* and it was really tense and nasty. And the years that

followed that were hard because we were all sort of shell-shocked from the '60s. But as things have settled down I've come to terms with it and it's sunk into the past. We've gotten older and new generations have come along—y'know, I spent years avoiding interviews and going on TV to get to a point where I could go out, walk down the street and go in a shop and just do regular little things that ordinary people do. Everything's cool and it's quite enjoyable. And now, if somebody comes up and says, "Alright, George," and they just congratulate you and thank you for all the music you did in the past and what you've been doing—that's nice. It's the concentrated mania that would make anybody go crazy. It had its low point around the end of the '60s and it did have a hangover period into the '70s, but I'm cool now.

**That the Beatles went out with such class without going crazy, doing stuff like "You Know My Name..."**

Yeah! We always had a sense of humor. When we were left alone, the four Beatles, we had fun and we had a good sense of humor. We took the ups and the downs together and, I think because we had each other, we helped each other from going crazy or having nervous breakdowns. Unlike poor old Elvis, who, although he had 59 friends with him, was not the same. He was the only one who

experienced what it was like being Elvis, whereas four of us experienced what it was like being fab.

**Is it true that you guys visited Elvis at Graceland?**

Not Graceland, no. We visited him when he had a house in Bel Air in about 1965; we went over to his house and spent the evening with him.

**Did you jam?**

No. When we arrived at his house, he was sitting on a couch, watching TV, playing a Fender bass. And it was set up pretty good, 'cause it would be a difficult thing—the Beatles meeting Elvis—but it was set up nicely. He had a few of his mates around, and we had our roadies and our manager, and Colonel Tom was there, and the drinks and the pool table . . . it was just like wandering around, saying “Hello, how are you doing?” having a drink. He was really nice and he was charming, and it was a big thrill for us, meeting him—especially because . . . well, we looked forward to it, but it was probably up on Mullholland Drive, which goes around and around and around, and we were in the dark, in the back of this limo. We used to smoke these herbal cigarettes in those days, and we had a couple of those and we had the giggles, going into hysterics, and then we totally forgot where we were going or what we were doing. And suddenly, we pulled up at this big gate and we said, “What is it? Where are we? What’s going on?” And then somebody said, “It’s Elvis!” “We’ve come to see Elvis!” Somebody opened the door and we all fell out of this limo, just like the Rutles, all giggling, and we ran in the house and there was Elvis sitting there playing this bass.

**There’ve been rumors that you guys jammed together—I guess it was just a rumor.**

I think so. But I can’t tell you. I’ve had a lot of brain fades since that period; I dunno, maybe Paul or Ringo would remember. But it was a good night, and certainly a great thrill and an honor to meet him. I met him later at Madison Square Garden—it must have been in 1972, something like that. And at that time, I had my uniform: the worn-out denim jacket and jeans—looked like a rag-man—and I had a big beard and moustache, and long hair down to my waist. They took me back in the intermission to meet Elvis again and he was in the back of the dressing room—the big rooms with the showers for the footballers and stuff—and I was in the front part just talking to some of the guys. And I’m sitting there, thinking “Well, where’s Elvis, then?” And finally he came out of the back and he

was . . . *immaculate*. I felt like this real grubby little slug and he looked like Lord Siva or something. He seemed to be about eight feet tall and his hair was black and his tan was perfect and he had this big white suit, a gold belt about four feet wide and he was towering above me and I just put a hand out (*cowers*) and said “Hello, Elvis, how are you?”—just cowering like this little rag-man. I wanted to say to him, “Why don’t you just come out in your jeans and your black shirt—get rid of all them horrible women singers in your band, all them horrible trumpet players and just have James Burton and the drummer and the bass player and the piano player? Just come out and do ‘That’s All Right, Mama.’ ” But instead he came out and did (*sings*) “I did it myyy wayyyyy.” Oh, Jesus. But we all loved Elvis and it was sad to see what happened to him. We still love him and he’s still there in his spirit and in his music and best of luck to him, that’s what I say.

**What do you think happens to people after they die?**

Well, what do you think happens to people when they go home and they take their suit off? That’s what I think—your body falls off, but you’ve still got two other bodies, fortunately. This is how I see it; this thing they call the soul. In the Bible, I think Jesus said there are three cages for the Bird of Paradise. And the Bird of Paradise is this soul, this perfect thing that has its own identity, and then

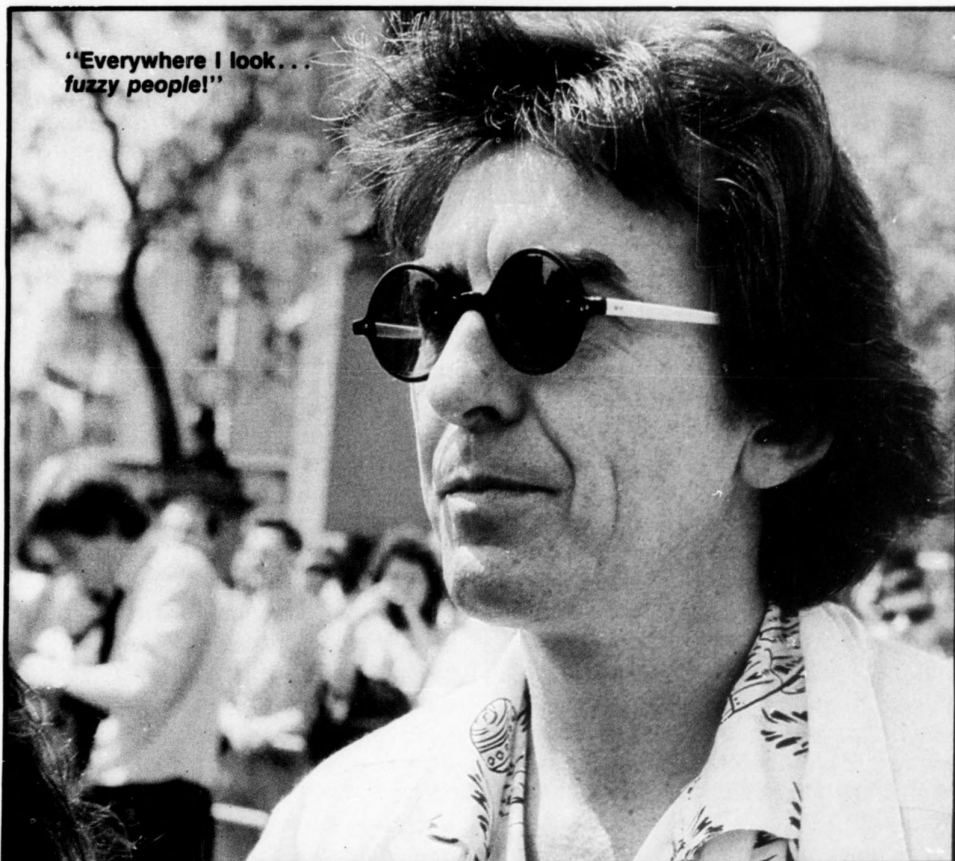
the three cages are these three bodies. One body is called the causal body, the next body is called the astral body and the third is called the gross physical body. So death is only relative to birth—if you don’t wanna die, you don’t get born. But as long as you’re born, you’ve got to die, because just as sure as nighttime is gonna follow daytime, death is gonna follow birth. Like Bob Dylan said, “Look out kid, it’s something you did. God knows when, but you’re doing it again.” So what happens is your body falls off. Gets tired or for whatever reason, and you’re now in your astral body, which is much more subtle and is made of light. Then, just like on your radio, where you can change the frequency without turning the dial, there’s a whole ‘nother thing happening there. And that’s what it’s like: all these different levels are all right here, but they’re all vibrating on different frequencies. So death is just where your suit falls off and now you’re in your other suit. But you can’t see it on this level, so it’s all right. Don’t worry.

**Did you start writing “All Those Years Ago” before John was killed?**

Yeah, I did.

**The lyric—where you jump from Lennon being “weird” to God and the reason we exist—always puzzled me.**

It *is* a strange choice of words. The way I saw it was, I’m talking all about God and he’s the only reason we exist—now that’s something I believe to be true.



**Were you saying you were weirder than John?**

No, no, no. What I was saying is there's all these weird people who don't actually believe in God and who go around murdering everybody, and yet, in the broad sweep, it's like they were the ones pointing fingers at Lennon, saying *he's a weirdo*. Sometimes my lyrics get a bit abstract in place—I get so many thoughts coming from different angles, I'm not sure if they come across right. But I think that's what I was trying to say.

**You also told me you played bass on "Old Brown Shoe."**

And on "Bungalow Bill" and on a few things.

**Do you like playing bass?**

Yeah, I do, but for this album I didn't get to play 'cause Jeff (Lynne) likes to play bass, too. But I do: I think bass is a good instrument because, even without being clever, the part of the bass is really important in the way it holds it all down with the bass drum. I like a bass when it doesn't get in the way of anything. I also like really clever bass, like Willie Weeks, who is very clever and funky and versatile, but at the same time is very melodic, too. So I do like that kind of bass playing—but for my kind of music, bass really just needs to hit the right notes at the right time.

**I guess that's what threw me about "Old Brown Shoe."**

It's like a lunatic playing.

**It sounds like McCartney was going nuts again.**

That was me going nuts. I'm doing exactly what I do on the guitar.

**Did you play bass on "For You Blue," too?**

I don't even remember that song. No, wait a minute—"For You Blue" was Paul, Paul was on that. Unless you're talking about the live version which nobody's heard, but that's Willie Weeks.

**Are you going to tour?**

Oh, I hope not (*laughs*). No, I wouldn't mind doing a few shows here and there, but people keep asking me this, and the only way I can see it is to even to do one concert is so much work: to get a band, rehearse them, not just the band, the lighting and the sound... these days, you can't just go out like the Beatles did, where we had a little amp each and a microphone. You have to get such an entourage together and work so much that it's hardly worth doing all that to just do one or two shows. And then it means you're gonna tour for six months, and I don't know if I can last six months on the road.

**Are you a good friend of Dylan's? Do**



**you guys hang out?**

I don't know how good a friend I am; he's my good friend, but I don't know how good I am to him. But I love him, I really do, and I think he's funny...

**You're funny, too—and that's funny, 'cause for all those years you were thought of as being so serious...**

'Cause I did them religious songs three or four times.

**It seems like it would be hard to be Bob Dylan or Elvis—being just one guy.**

I heard a funny story from somebody who once toured with Bob. He said, "Well, it took four of them, it only took one of me." But that's true, too—just imagine four Bob Dylans! That'd be tough! I'm sure we've all enjoyed and influenced each other. I don't want to embarrass him because I'd like to meet him again someday, but he's special. And there's not a lot of people I'd say that about.

**How'd you get along with Sean and Madonna during Shanghai Surprise?**

Oh, yeah, they're great, they were really helpful on that movie (*laughs*).

No, I like Sean, if you're seriously asking me about Sean. I know he's a naughty boy and I know he didn't try as hard as he could've to make that film better. I think that when he's in a good mood you see his performances are really good: there's a lot of scenes in it where he's excellent. *And* a lot of scenes where you can see he's pissed off. He may have had a lot of reasons to be pissed off, but we all do—we have to perform, that's what professionalism is. So it was disappointing because—I think she was trying to be a little bit nice, but she doesn't have a

sense of humor, which is unfortunate. 'Cause it was a comedy. And, Sean, I spent a lot of time with him and I really liked him a lot—I had some really good laughs with him. When he's up, he's a sweetheart, he's a good actor and he's a very nice person. When he gets out of the pen, I just wish him well and I hope he'll be able to keep cool.

**It always seemed ironic that you had to go do that press conference for them—hell, nobody had their picture taken more than the Beatles.**

The thing is, you see, people get famous for a bit and this is why the Beatles were good. We had the four of us—if one of us would start getting snooty or big-headed we'd just broadside him. We weren't having any of that and we always kept our sense of humor, and if one of us was a bit depressed, there'd always be someone there to jolly them and bring them out a bit. Then you get these other people who get famous and they suddenly start thinking they're God's gift to mankind, when really all they are is silly pop stars. There's much more to life than just being a famous pop star. Unfortunately, a lot of them fall into the trap. They get surrounded by people saying how great they are, all these sycophants who surround them. And unfortunately, she has got all that going and she's fallen for it. But I think she has the ability to be a really nice person—you have to see it from the other side, which I can see too, which is that the pressure you're under when you are fab is tremendous. It sometimes does get you crazy when you can't write and can't do this when everybody's bugging you and shooting cameras in your face. So I

sympathize from that point of view, too. But what she needs is just 500 milligrams of LSD (*laughs*).

**Don't you ever feel guilty about being the one who turned the Beatles on to LSD?**

It wasn't really me. Let me tell you what happened: I had a dentist who invited me and John and our ex-wives to dinner, and he had this acid he'd got off the guy who ran *Playboy* in London. And the *Playboy* guy had gotten it off, you know, the people who had it in America. What's his name, Tim Leary. And this guy had never had it himself, didn't know anything about it, but he thought it was an aphrodisiac and he had this girlfriend with huge breasts. He invited us down there with our blonde wives and I think he thought he was gonna have a scene. And he put it in our coffee without telling us—he didn't take any himself. We didn't know we had it, and we'd made an arrangement earlier—after we had dinner we were gonna go to this nightclub to see some friends of ours who were playing in a band. And I was saying, "OK, let's go, we've got to go," and this guy kept saying, "No, don't go, finish your coffee. Then, 20 minutes later or something, I'm saying, "C'mon John, we'd better go now. We're gonna miss the show." And he says we shouldn't go 'cause we've had LSD. I'd heard about LSD, but it was before all the panic, everybody saying heaven and hell and all this stuff. So, fortunately, I didn't care. And I could sense there was something weird going on. Then he said, "Well, OK then, we'll come with you—I'll drive you there, leave your car here." And

I said, "No, no, wait a minute. I'm taking my car." We went and he followed.

So we got to this place and we just sat down and I think ordered a drink and then suddenly something happened. I just got this overwhelming feeling, I couldn't put my finger on why it was happening, but it was just like I was so in love with everything. I just felt so great I wanted to hug everybody and tell 'em how much I loved them. And then suddenly the room started moving a bit and stuff like that, and the next thing I remember it was like World War III was happening. Bombs were dropping, all kinds of things, and I finally gathered my senses together and realized the club had closed. They'd put all the lights on and the waiters were going around putting all the chairs on top of the tables and sweeping the floors. We somehow got out of there and walked to this next club—the Ad Lib Club—it just went on forever. So John and I had it together. We'd heard of it, but we never knew what it was about and it was put in our coffee maliciously. So it really wasn't us turning each other or the world or anything—we were the victims of silly people.

**How many times did you take LSD?**

Well, after that time, John and I started thinking, "Hey, how the heck are we gonna tell the others?" 'Cause, you know, there's no way back after that. It's like you can never return to being who you were before, thankfully. I think if you come out of it in one piece, then—well, it's individual reactions—but what I gained was certainly worth the hardship it put me through. It scrambled my brain for a year—it seems like years, but you know

how it stretches time. It was actually a few months of trying to piece it back together: what do I do now, what do we do now, who am I, what is all this?

Then we thought—since there's no way you can describe it—how are we ever gonna tell Paul and Ringo and the rest of our direct entourage? We've got to get some more and give it to 'em. So we got some more in New York, when we were on tour, and we got to Los Angeles, and we said, "OK, lads (*laughs*), you're gonna have to have this thing." And one of them had to stay straight. Mal stayed straight and Neil and Ringo had it with us, but Paul didn't wanna know. And then there was Jim McGuinn and David Crosby—that was our second time. There was also this guy, what's his name?—Peter Fonda—who suddenly showed up. I don't think he was on it, but he should've been. Anyway, the third time I did it with a guy in England, and I thought "Ooh, I can't do this anymore, this is too much." I had a slight fear of it, as well. Then I was into India and meditating and all that, and after that I realized so many things, and one of the things I'd heard about was fear. They said, "Look fear in the face and it won't bother you anymore." So I thought, well, I really do have a bit of a fear left over from this acid stuff, and I can't go through the rest of my life fearing it, so I'd better take it again (*laughs*). So I just took it and in that period of time—1967—we just seemed to be taking it all year, down at John's house, 'round at Ringo's house, and I got to the point where I could drive this Ferrari around Hyde Park in peak hour traffic on acid and it wasn't working anymore. All it did was give me a pain in the neck. I looked at some under a microscope and it looked like all this old rope. I thought, well, I'm not putting that in my brain anymore, and I just packed it in. The good stuff—the carpet flying up in the room and the chairs getting bigger and smaller, all that Roman Polanski movie stuff—stopped happening after I started to understand more about relativity and time and space. The fun had gone out of it, so I stopped doing it. I can't imagine, if I hadn't had it, how many years of normal life it would have taken to get me to the realizations: I might've never got them in this life. It just opened the door and I experienced really good things. I mean, I never doubted God after that. Before, I was a cynic. I didn't even say the word God; I thought "bullshit to all that stuff." But after that, I *knew*. It was not even a question of "Is there possibly a God?"—I knew absolutely. It's just that big light that goes off in your head. □

"A Stones reunion? Count me in!"

