

The Beatles in India...

Question

For music home work I've been asked...

Who did the Beatles study with in India

Why did they leave India

What instruments each member plays

Why their style of music changed

All about their fashion and hair styles

What happened in America (Why did they stop live shows)

Answers

The Beatles went to India to study Transcendental Meditation with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi whom they had met in London previously.

Having stopped touring and achieving worldwide fame and wealth, each individual Beatle was attempting to explore their inner selves, their souls and their place in the Universe.

Like so many other things in life, there were good aspects to Maharishi's training and methods and there were some bad things that go along with that kind of mass movement. After several weeks at the Maharishi's ashram in India with other superstars of the day (Donovan, Mia Farrow, amongst others) the Beatles began to feel that Maharishi's organization was taking advantage of them, the popularity and their wealth.

Maharishi himself seemed somewhat disingenuous and affected by the fame and wealth that surrounded him. The Beatles, John Lennon in particular, began to expect that the Maharishi may have had an eye for the ladies of the entourage. Based on rumors coming from a Beatle intimate, Lennon confronted the Maharishi on the subject and believed that his suspicions were confirmed. Ringo having left India earlier because of the spicy food, the rest of the Beatles then left and returned to England.

Each individual Beatle took something with them from their TM experience and each continued to meditate thereafter. Lennon especially broadened his spiritual horizons and found real peace of mind with the techniques he learned from Maharishi. George continued his studies and embraced the Hindu philosophy completely as time went on.

Much of the music on the Beatles (White Album) are compositions that were conceived while in India with Maharishi. John Lennon confirmed his affection and attraction to artist Yoko Ono while there and, in fact on the plane trip home told his wife Cynthia of his intentions.

In answer to the question regarding instruments, each individual Beatle is identified with the original instruments which they played while touring the world - John, rhythm guitar, Paul, bass guitar, George lead

guitar and Ringo, of course on drums. In actuality, each of the Beatles are multi-instrumental, especially John and Paul who often composed and played their songs on piano. Even Ringo is able to play guitar and Paul is himself quite a talented drummer. In the early days John played harp (harmonica) and banjo. George attempted to master the Indian sitar, bringing a completely new sound (hear 'Norwegian Wood' and 'Inner Light') to rock & roll. George decided that the sitar required years of disciplined training and practice to master - time he was unable to devote, so he made the decision to abandon the instrument but not the Indian music itself.

As the sixties changed and young people grew up into adults, the entire music scene changed along with them. The use of drugs no doubt fuelled much of the change and the hallucinogenic effects pushed the limits of music and the sound the comprise it. The Beatles music changed along with the times and in fact may have set the pace for those changes. The decision to stop touring and to dedicate themselves to composing and to studio recording is perhaps the biggest thing that affected their sound. They were able to take their time and actually construct musical forms and write deep, literate lyrics the now comprise the classics of the Beatle library. With no small contribution from producer George Martin, they began to used orchestral sounds and tape loops and backwards masking to create sounds on record that had never been heard before. The Beatles proved that music -good music - could be made from a wide combination of sounds, styles and rhythms. Each individual piece though, is infused with a unique something; something that makes their songs unmistakably a Beatles tune.

Beatle hair is perhaps the most identifiable Beatles feature, and from the their earliest days, the hair was a major part of their presentation. The 'mop-top' haircut that is the classic Beatle style of the early sixties was conceived while the band played in Hamburg, Germany. Their German friends were artists and very avant gard for that era. Experimenting with hair, clothes and style in general was completely normal to them.

There are a lot of stories about how the Beatles haircut was born, many just made up on the spot during interviews, but in reality two influential German friends, Astrid Kirchner and Jurgen Volmer convinced them to change their hairstyles, starting with then bassist Stu Sutcliffe.

As styles changed through the sixties so did Beatle hairstyle. The most dramatic change came after touring ended. John Lennon was the first to cut his hair for the movie role, 'How I Won The War', in 1966. As his hair grew out after production ceased he had it cut by one of the up and coming stylists that were now taking the place of ordinary barbers. Each of the Beatles grew mustaches as well. This dramatic change of style can be seen on the 'Sergeant Pepper' album and the later 'Magical Mystery Tour' album from 1967.

As the sixties came to a close it seems Beatle hair had no limits as John Lennon grew his longer and longer with a part down the middle. George

too just continued to grow his hair to extreme length as witnessed on his 'All Things Must Pass' LP. Oddly enough within months of the dawning of the 70's, both Ringo and John would actually shave their heads completely!

Finally, the question of America requires a very broad and detailed answer, as America had such an impact on their careers. Firstly, America being a former British colony, had a certain amount of resistance to any music from England making it onto the airwaves. The Beatles had in fact been turned down the American record company twice before they finally had to admit that they were a phenomenon to be reckoned with. When they finally broke through in February 1964, they started what came to be known as the "British Invasion". Many other British bands found fame on the Beatles coattails.

Problems erupted in 1966 when an interview that John Lennon had given in England was reprinted here in America and presented out of context to the original article. Lennon's remarks and opinions about religion generally and Christianity specifically provoked an outrage in the American bible belt of the South. Radio stations boycotted Beatles songs and fans burnt Beatles records. The KKK made threats and the specter of assassination took the fun out of the tour and the music. It was during this tour that each Beatle agreed with each other that this would be the final tour and that the last show in San Francisco would be the last live show. The end of the Beatles road show came in August, 1966.

That end was really the beginning of the rebirth of the Beatles as recording artists and paved the way for their recorded masterwork, 'Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band'. The truth being that much of the Beatles repertoire was nearly impossible to play live on stage.

Many of the sounds on their next records could only be achieved through the meticulous layering of sounds in the recording studio and the masterful production coordination of George Martin - the real fifth Beatle.

One door closed as another flew wide open, and what came through was the real message of Beatles music; "All You Need Is Love" and, in the end "The Love you take is equal to the Love you make".