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Preface

The present monograph is something we owed to ourselves since the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Back in 2002, we conducted an inquiry about the "Beatles style" with students of the Department of Musicology, at the University of Helsinki. The purpose was to identify the most typical elements in the Beatles' music and to focus on the concept of "Beatlesque" – that particular set of stylistic features that qualifies a song (or a part of it, or a whole repertoire or act) as intrinsically recalling The Beatles. These issues were initially discussed during Dario Martinelli's course on popular music and in a workshop in which Paolo Bucciarelli took part as a guest lecturer. Bucciarelli had been a member of Giuliodorme, a then-popular Italian rock band which had risen to fame thanks to a song titled "Goodbye"; which happened to possess those "Beatlesque" qualities and which was mainly written by Bucciarelli himself. He was invited by Martinelli to talk about his experience in writing and recording that song and others. While not always as clear as it was on "Goodbye", the influence exercised by the Fab Four on Giuliodorme has been intelligible in several moments of their career, which not incidentally reached its peak in the late 1990s, in full Britpop craze.

Our collaboration eventually led to an article (Bucciarelli and Martinelli 2004) aimed at exploring the stylistic models that characterize The Beatles' work and that are detectable in songs and pop acts that bear the Beatlesque label (e.g., XTC, Oasis, Tears for Fears, Utopia…). The study represented the first step in the process of tracing a map of semio-musical traits applicable to the band from Liverpool. Its primary aim consisted of understanding whether the idea itself of a "Beatles style" in a song could have any meaning in principle, considering the well-known variety of stylistic ventures that Lennon, McCartney, Harrison and Starr engaged into, from beat to psychedelia, from vaudeville to musique concrete, from music for children to proto-heavy metal. The research was also integrated by an empirical part, in which the course students were surveyed on their perceptions of this style in both actual Beatles songs and Beatlesque ones from other bands.

Since then, we began entertaining the idea of expanding the format of our research and to engage into a full monograph. While we obviously shall elaborate

on the findings of that research in the course of these pages, we may rather unsurprisingly anticipate here that despite a heterogeneous repertoire (the album *The Beatles*, universally known as the *White Album*[1] being the obvious example, due to its almost anthological variety of styles explored), it was still possible to identify recognizable elements and typical features in their music. Interestingly, it also turned out that the "Beatles-like" songs by other artists are generally easy to recognize, when not mistaken for Beatles songs *tout court*, and seem to exhibit several traits in common. If on the one hand these considerations made it legitimate to consider the concept of a Beatles style, on the other hand they made it clear that a careful elaboration was needed of what the main stylistic models in the Beatles repertoire are, how they operate and within the framework of what more general models in popular (as well as folk, art and experimental) music. In addition to this, such models must be interfaced with each member's songwriting abilities, in ways that go beyond the general characteristics, or often clichés, applied to them (e.g., the *acerbic* Lennon, the *balladeer* McCartney, the *mystic* Harrison, the *happy-go-lucky* Starr…), and also in a manner that does not disregard the enormous role played by the recording studio personnel at their disposal, starting obviously from producer George Martin and continuing with remarkable and inventive figures like Glyn Johns, Geoff Emerick, Ken Townsend, Norman Smith and others, not forgetting the controversial episode involving Phil Spector. Most of the investigative work in this book is centered around these basic, almost intuitive reflections, and we hope that in the course of each chapter, we will make enough sense to corroborate them.

Whenever possible, we decided to employ first-hand comments and remarks from musicians and technicians involved in the production of the songs we write about – as opposed to the more traditionally-academic endeavor of scholarly quotations – unless the former were too approximate and simplistic, and the latter ensured more information. We did so not only to reduce the amount of "mediations" in the description of creative processes and recording solutions (after all, as authors of this book, we are *already* mediators), but also to achieve a text that would combine academic research with a more practice-based approach, in line with who the two authors of this book are, professionally speaking: a musician and record producer with occasional incursions in musicology (Bucciarelli) and a musicologist with occasional incursions in musicianship and production (Martinelli). In general, a genuine attempt was made to keep the discussion lively and not necessarily formal, at least not always. References and sources were also selected and employed with this spirit. Also, while we are at it: the readers, especially those from anglophone environments, may be surprised, perhaps even disappointed, to see how some of the scholars prominently discussed in this book (one name for all: Gino Stefani, whose theory is central all over Chap. 2) belong to academic traditions that are outside the "sacred" (at least for popular music studies) Anglo-American circle, and thus, possibly, less familiar. We actually make no apology for this, and in fact we are

[1] And so we shall call it throughout this monograph for an easier identification, especially when compared to the numerous early albums containing the word "Beatles" (*With The Beatles*, *Beatles for Sale*, the American release *Meet The Beatles!*, etc.).

convinced that offering the perspective of less frequented authors, including some that have not been amply translated in English, is an added value, especially in a field like popular music studies (and more specifically Beatles studies), that are unashamedly dominated by Anglo-American scholars who happily quote each other, with little or no attention at all for approaches and schools emerging from other cultures. George Harrison, promoter of Indian music in a landscape dominated by Anglo-American repertoires, would agree with us.

Maybe it would be also convenient to offer a little clarification on the article "the", in the formulation "The Beatles". Readers may be confused by the fact that the "T" is sometimes lowercase and sometimes capital. The reason is actually quite simple: as a band, The Beatles were a registered trademark with the article included (unlike, say, Eagles, which were registered without article, even though they are often referred to as "the Eagles"), so whenever we employ the full name of the band, the "T" will be capitalized: e.g., "When The Beatles released *Abbey Road*…". If instead the name "Beatles" is associated to another noun, or to any other syntactic construction where the article "the" may be referring to something else than the band, then we will have a small "t". If we say "When the Beatles album *Abbey Road* was released…", the article is now referring to the noun "album", so it does not need to be capitalized.

And now: can any preface be complete without the infamous "fair use notice"? This monograph contains copyrighted material (excerpts from song lyrics), the use of which has not been specifically authorized by the copyright owners. We are making such material available exclusively in our efforts to advance understanding of issues of scholarly significance. Dear members of The Beatles estate, you are all embarrassingly rich already, and if this book has a vague commercial outcome, that will only help to sell even more of the band's records. Please, let us have the opportunity to better illustrate our thesis by shortly citing crucial sources like lyrics and scores. We shall not be using the full lyrics of any particular song, but exclusively only fragments.

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to a number of people without whom this work would have not been the same. We both wish to thank the ever professional and friendly Springer team, and to the two anonymous reviewers who helped us improving this text. Thanks to the students in that popular music studies course in Helsinki University for having implemented our empirical data, but also for their feedback and discussions back then. Paolo would like to thank his parents Laura and Piergiacomo, for their constant and continuous support over the years. Also, he would like to express his gratitude to the other members of his former band, Giuliodorme. Dario would like to thank his son Elmis, a Beatlemaniac himself (not that he was given any choice, poor thing), who was able to notice details in the band's production that Dario had missed for decades. For instance: the sharp snare hit in "Rocky Raccoon" right after the verse "But Danny was hot, and he drew first that *shot*", as being a representation of the gunshot itself. Clear as day, right? And yet Dario had never realized that, and he clearly remembers his sense of personal embarrassment, mixed with immense father's pride as his then-6-year-old child

humiliated him with the matter-of-factly effortlessness of his remark, one bitter-sweet morning of 2016.

Oh, and we also would like to thank each other. The opportunity to collaborate on that research on the concept of Beatlesque inaugurated a solid friendship that continues nowadays after twenty years, threatened only by Paolo's support for AS Roma and Dario's for Juventus FC.

Kaunas, Lithuania — Dario Martinelli
Helsinki, Finland — Paolo Bucciarelli
22 December 2021

Introduction

Ideally, this monograph could be considered a portion of a larger project investigating The Beatles style in an over-encompassing manner, including the band's thematic and formal work on the lyrics, and the social and ideological aspects involved. Instead, we chose to focus on a more eminently musical side, particularly on the notion of "sound" (defined in Chap. 2). We will first focus on some technical aspects, mostly drawing on and summarizing the important work of the likes of Lewisohn 1988, Everett 1999 and the monumental Hammack 2017–2020, or accounts from insiders such as Hornsby-Martin 1994 and Emerick-Massey 2006. From here we will proceed in a more theoretical, crossdisciplinary[1] fashion, attempting to describe the models pertinent to an idea of sound, including their roots and development, their influence on subsequent artists, the conceptual approach to production methods, and ultimately the idea of an organic continuity between songwriting and studio work.

What we primarily aim at, in other words, is to emphasize the importance of record production in the band's music in a way that does justice not only to the final artifact (the released produced and post-produced song/s) but also to the creative process itself (i.e., the song/s in the making, something that is relevant in general, but which has a specific importance for The Beatles, as they famously developed the habit of finalizing – or even writing from scratch – their compositions while *already* in the studio).

It must be noted that, while The Beatles and the people who worked with them were certainly instrumental, and often pioneers, in making the recording studio central in the whole process of music-making, there was an epochal change going on anyway. Generalizing a bit, we could say that until a certain point (late

[1] Incidentally, when we say "crossdisciplinary" we mean "crossdisciplinary". There is an increasing tendency, in the academic world, to use words like "interdisciplinary", "multidisciplinary", "crossdisciplinary" and others as mere synonyms. They are not: what we did, as it will be elaborated in the course of the book, was to approach our fields of inquiry (musicology and semiotics, primarily) from the perspective of other fields (multimodality studies, audiovisual studies, narratology and others), which is the exact definition of "crossdisciplinarity".

1950s–early 1960s), the studio was the place that allowed to capture professionally what musicians were capable to do. Depending on the premises and the tools at their disposal, studios would develop their own sonic aesthetics, more or less regardless of the songs that were being performed, if not for tiny details. So to speak, recordings were studio-based rather than song-based. The recordings made in the legendary Sun Records studios in Memphis were all quite recognizable exactly because Sam Phillips and his associates' approach to production was aimed at recording the songs in the best technologically possible way, and conforming to the taste of the time, regardless whether it was a regular rock and roll love song like Elvis Presley's "Baby, Let's Play House", or it had a controversial theme like Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues". The change that occurred in the 1960s went decidedly in the direction of the composition: the studio became the place where the songs could be sonically profiled *in relation to* what they meant, what specific mood they emanated, and it was only after this step that producers and engineers would concert their effort to see how those features could technologically materialize. By no coincidence, the 1960s are also the decade when the studio work ceased to occur in one single room. Specific studio rooms were chosen depending on the song (The Beatles themselves often fluctuated among their regular Studio 2, the bigger Studio 1, suited for orchestral recording, and the more intimate Studio 3), unusual spots were used to diversify the acoustics, instruments could be recorded straight away in the control room, sound archives were visited more and more often in search of effects, and so forth (for more on the artistic nature of recording in rock culture, see López-Cano 2018).

Through an investigation of the work of George Martin and his staff, but also of the inputs given by The Beatles themselves, we shall try to shed light on the role of studio activity in shaping the group's sound. The leading questions therefore are the following: "what are the elements that make a song Beatlesque?" and "to what extent are production choices responsible in the establishment of an eclectic yet distinctive sound?". In addition: "can we understand production not solely as a mere – albeit fascinating – set of technicalities, who did what, how and with what devices, but also in a more conceptual way?". Put simply: "what were the aesthetics, the semiotics and the philosophy that animated the Beatles' studio activity?".

We undertake these questions in five main steps. After this introduction, Chap. 1, A Short History of The Beatles in the Studio, will offer an overview of the band's activity in the studio: the premises, the instruments, the staff, the techniques, and the technologies. In Chap. 2, Style and Sound, as anticipated, we attempt to define the notion of "sound" as the main operating concept of this book and in relation to the slightly-less-vague idea of "style". The chapter will be also an opportunity for a diachronic summary of the various sources that forged the style of The Beatles, from their early pre-fame steps through the contemporary influences they drew from during their career. In Chap. 3 (The Difficulty of) Defining the Beatles Style, we classify the main stylistic elements of the band's music, from the most recurrent to the most defining ones. Six areas of investigation were singled out for the occasion: vocals, harmony, melody, rhythm, structure, and lyrics. Chapter 4, Crossdisciplinary Reflections: Production vs. Multimodality Studies, Narratology, and Film Studies,

goes into full analytical mode, as it scrutinizes the band's songwriting and production through the lenses of semiotics, multimodality studies, and even film and media studies, within a crossdisciplinary interface that, possibly, results in the most innovative section of the monograph. Finally, Chap. 5, Birth and Fortune of the "Beatlesque": Transmission of Creativity and Legacy, elaborates on how the Beatles' influence on western popular music became manifest in countless songs and repertoires that carried a distinctive Beatlesque flavor. We implement that part with an appendix containing a list of 500 Beatlesque songs written/performed by other acts, plus 25 written by The Beatles themselves during their solo years.

Two disclaimers, before proceeding. First, a terminological one. We shall accurately explain what we mean by "sound" in Chap. 2, so there is no need to anticipate that here. However, when it comes to "production", one needs to point out that we use it as an umbrella term that comprises several creative studio activities, including production itself, engineering, post-production, several aspects of arranging, and even some of composing. This is due partly to the general acknowledgment that music production does indeed tend to encompass all such activities, at least on occasion. For instance, most contemporary electronic musicians gather them all in a single endeavor – that of sitting at their computer, working with Ableton Live, Reason, Pro Tools, or similar. More significantly, however, we do this because The Beatles themselves have been among the initiators of this synthesis, especially when the EMI studios became a sort of second home for them, and the recording schedules of the albums turned from the single day of *Please Please Me* to the six months of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. By using the single term "production", we thus aim at covering the multitude of activities that the band performed in the studio, except consuming tea (or other substances) and toilet breaks. Having said that, there will be passages, in this book, where we will separate the concepts in order to delve into more specific details. Hopefully, no confusion will be generated by this decision.

Second: there is a certain disagreement among scholars (and musicians themselves) on how to call the different parts of a song. Sometimes there is more than one word for the same part, sometimes the same word may designate different parts (e.g., "bridge"). In particular, we feel, there is a discrepancy between what we may call a semantically-based terminology and a practice based one. The most significant example is the dualism between "verse" and "strophe" to designate an "A" part in a song. E.g.: "When I find myself in times of trouble, Mother Mary comes to me, speaking words of wisdom, let it be." Most musicians, or anyway insiders of the music industry, may probably use the word "verse" to qualify this entire passage, while we opted for the word "strophe". Reading from most vocabularies, we have definitions like the following ones for the two terms:

Strophe: (in modern poetry) any separate section or extended movement in a poem, distinguished from a stanza in that it does not follow a regularly repeated pattern.
Verse: a succession of metrical feet written, printed, or orally composed as one line; one of the lines of a poem.

So, within a semantically accurate discussion, the correct word for the song part we mentioned is "strophe", while "verse" is just one line of a strophe. Having said that, the fact that the employment of the term "verse" is a common practice in the music industry is something that cannot be disregarded, because common practice as a whole is something that cannot be snubbed away by waving a vocabulary and a certificate of philological authenticity. Fact is, people do use "verse" to signify a number of verses grouped together: whether we like it or not, it is something we need to take into account, if the goal is, as it is, to understand each other when we talk about song parts.

With this in mind, a choice had to be made, in order to provide this book with terminological consistency, and so we hereby list our own chosen glossary, asking the reader to refer to these lines whenever in doubt:

1. *Intro*: The initial part of a song that, literally, introduces it, either through a brief phrase (e.g., the legendary opening chord in "A Hard Day's Night"), or in a more elaborate form, almost as a "prologue" (e.g., the "If I fell in love with you, would you promise to be true" part in "If I Fell").
2. *Riff*: An ostinato instrumental phrase repeated several times during the song, that often opens it, but it is *not* an intro, even if it may serve as such (e.g., the guitar ostinato on "Day Tripper").
3. *Strophe*: Usually the "A" part of the song format we shall call "Strophe-Refrain" (see Sect. 3.5.1). It has a storytelling nature that develops the (both lyrical and musical) themes of the song, leading naturally to a refrain (e.g., as we have seen, the "When I find myself in times of trouble…" part in "Let It Be").
4. *Refrain*: The "B" part that naturally follows the strophe in the "Strophe-Refrain" format. It has normally a catchy but less narrative quality. In this case, instead of "developing", the themes reach a culmination/catharsis and the lyrics have more of a slogan/tagline quality (e.g., the "Let it be, let it be, let it be, let it be, there will be an answer, let it be" part in "Let It Be"). Not to be confused with the chorus – at least not in this book, though in others you will often find the two words as synonyms.
5. *Chorus*: A catchy but more elaborate melody/lyric that serves as the "A" part in another format, the "Chorus-Bridge". Unlike the Strophe-Refrain format, where the catchy part (the refrain) is placed as a consequence of the strophe, the Chorus-Bridge places the catchy part at the start and is then followed by a more meditative, narrative section (the bridge). An example is "The Long and Winding Road" where the "The long and winding road that leads to your door…" part, placed at the start of the song, is a chorus and not a refrain (or a strophe).
6. *Bridge*: As the word itself suggests, it is a transitional part that connects two sections. It can be used both in the Chorus-Bridge format (evidently) and in the Strophe-Refrain one. In the former case, it has the more prominent role of "B" part, interacting with the chorus and connecting one chorus with the next (e.g., the "Many times I've been alone…" part in "The Long and Winding Road"). In the Strophe-Refrain format, the role is more secondary, but the transitional

quality emerges more prominently. It is neither an A or a B part, but a kind of C that can be placed either between strophe and refrain ("pre-refrain" bridge) or between refrain and strophe ("post-refrain" bridge). An example of pre-refrain bridge is the "Bom bom bom bompa bom, sail the ship..." part in "All Together Now", placed between the strophe ("One, two, three, four, can I have a little more?...") and the refrain ("All together now, all together now…"). A post-refrain bridge can be found in "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da": "In couple of years they have built a home sweet home…", placed indeed after the first refrain ("Ob-la-dì Ob-la-dà, life goes on…") and allowing the return to the strophe ("Happy ever after in the marketplace…").

7. *Special*: A particular (special!) case of bridge, the special is a "C" (or even "D") theme that occurs only once in the whole song, as a moment of particular emphasis/pathos. A quintessential Beatles (and not only Beatles) special is the "You're asking me will my love grow…" part in "Something".
8. *Turnaround*: A short segment (usually, one phrase) that connects a "B" part (refrain or bridge) to an "A" (strophe or chorus). For example, the "See how they run" part in "Lady Madonna".
9. *Solo*: An instrumental part that could either be based on a chord progression already exhibited in the song (as in most cases), or on a different one (e.g., "Octopus's Garden"). It normally appears just once in the song, but on occasions there can be more solos (e.g., "While My Guitar Gently Weeps").
10. *Outro*: The concluding part of a song. Traditionally it can be a fade out (a part is repeated several times while the volume slowly decreases, as on "Yellow Submarine"), a cadence (a sequence of chords that wrap up the song, as in the vi-II-IV-I sequence that concludes "She's Leaving Home"), or a hard out (a more sudden stop than the cadence, usually on one chord only, that coincides with the natural conclusion of a phrase already contained in the song, as in "Eleanor Rigby"). In Sect. 3.5.3, however, we shall see how The Beatles got more inventive in their outros than just these three templates.
11. Other parts not included in this list will be simply named alphabetically, depending on their position in the song: A, B, C, D, etc. For instance, if the song has a "suite" structure, like "Happiness Is a Warm Gun", we shall name A the first theme ("She's not a girl who misses much…"), B the second ("She's well-acquainted with the touch…"), C the third ("I need a fix 'cause I'm going down…"), and so forth.

Contents

Chapter 1
A Short History of the Beatles in the Studio

It is rather difficult to underestimate the importance of the impact that recording studios and technology had on the Beatles' artistic development and career. In fact, it is pretty difficult to underestimate the very connection, to begin with. No band before The Beatles, and hardly any afterwards, created and exposed their audience to such a close relationship with the "behind the scenes" of their songs.

Take Abbey Road Studios, for instance: it will be forever tied to the fact that The Beatles recorded there: never mind that it is one of the most frequently used recording premises even today, and has hosted the recording sessions of other milestones of popular music like Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*. More importantly, no other recording studio is so closely associated to one specific band – not to mention that most fans tend to ignore where their favorite bands are recording, anyway. Even more importantly, the premises were not called "Abbey Road Studios" at all, but simply EMI Recording Studios (Fig. 1.1), and the change occurred only after the release of the *Abbey Road* album (which also contributed to another connection: no adjacent street of any recording studio has been photographed so often by tourists).

Or: take George Martin. With the exception only of Phil Spector, no other artistic producer has become so much a "public persona" as Martin has. The most credible of the many "Fifth Beatle" candidates, Martin was crucial in the musical development of The Beatles at all levels: as composers, as performers, and eventually as producers themselves. As with Abbey Road Studios, George Martin is a very well-known name in the category of artistic producers; a category the average listener tends to generally be unaware of.

Even recording techniques and technologies became part of the Beatles' myth. People, who would otherwise be completely uninterested in the issue learned about the existence of such things as the mellotron (after "Strawberry Fields Forever"), about the fact that tapes could also be played backwards (after *Revolver*), or about the existence of a German manufacturer of musical instruments that produced

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Fig. 1.1 On the left, Ringo Starr and George Harrison enter the EMI studios. (Photo attribution: Dr. Ronald Kunze, CC BY-SA 3.0). On the right, the same entrance after the studios were renamed after the Beatles' album *Abbey Road*. (Photo attribution: Carlos Leiva, CC BY-SA 4.0)

violin-shaped bass guitars (Höfner). Topics like these were part of the "discourse" built around and by The Beatles: they would not mind discussing their recording sessions during their interviews, and in general they enjoyed and encouraged their image of "committed musicians". A far cry from an equally legendary figure like Elvis Presley who could never be bothered debating the benefits of slapback echo on his voice, or the facilities available at Sun Studios in Memphis, Tennessee (although, at least, Sun Studios achieved a similar iconic status as the Abbey Road premises, having been instrumental in the very birth of rock and roll, not just because of Presley).

In sum, to analyze the impact of musical and recording technologies in the Beatles' repertoire means first and foremost to discuss an essential part of their story and their myth. It is also our intention to emphasize the specific role assumed by the recording process (and its places, times, and people) in shaping the artistic/creative identity of the band, particularly their "sound", a notion we shall extensively discuss in Chap. 2. Although the traditional, chronologically accurate, order of this process implies firstly the "creation of an opus" (possibly at home, or anyway outside the studio), and eventually its materialization on record, via the steps of arrangement and performance, what happened in the Beatles' case, particularly in the second half of their career, was that this sequence could also be inverted, or anyway messed up.

A song could be written in the studio, an arrangement idea could precede the composition of a song (which would then be created *starting from* that idea), and so forth. In other words recording techniques and technologies were, for The Beatles, actual "artistic" devices, and as such we intend to analyze them here.

The Beatles' first experience in a professional recording facility was on the 1st of January 1962 at the Decca Studios in London. The session, a mere audition arranged by the group's manager Brian Epstein, produced 15 songs, but did not earn the band a record contract. Ironically, Decca executives told Epstein that guitar groups were "soon to go out of fashion" and that The Beatles had "no future in show business". In the following eight years, not only did the group ensure its own immortality, but in fact outlined the "future" of popular music in ways that are still being discovered today.

The great majority of the Beatles' music was recorded in Studio 2 of the EMI Studios (later Abbey Road Studios). Further locations include the Studios number 1 and 3 in the same building, Apple Studios, Trident Studios, and the Olympic Sound Studio, among others.

In 1963, at the time of the group's first album *Please Please Me*, the main focus during the making of a record was fidelity. Recording was a fairly standard process. The producer's task was to organize and coordinate the session, while the engineers and technicians' responsibility was to ensure a good reproduction of the music, as it was played by the band in the studio. In other words, the aim was to capture the best performance possible from the musicians. In the case of *Please Please Me*, The Beatles basically recorded a 14-song sample of the vast material they had assembled during their pre-fame days, when they used to play twice a day, virtually every day, in the clubs of Hamburg and Liverpool. Not more than seven songs on the album were original Lennon-McCartney compositions (or McCartney-Lennon, as they appeared only on that occasion): the rest was a faithful portrait of their rather eclectic musical tastes (R&B numbers, songs from musicals, authorial pop like Burt Bacharach's "Baby It's You", etc.). The whole album, notably, was recorded in one single day, or – to be more exact – in 9 hours and 45 minutes (Lewisohn 1988: 24). And yet, through all that rush, that artistic neutrality from the producers' part, and that "concert routine" attitude in the performances, a first, meaningful creative input was provided by George Martin himself. The song "Please Please Me", he had noticed, was far too slow for being a serious candidate for a single: by considerably speeding it up, the band had their first "Number One" single with their second release; a chart position famously anticipated by an enthusiastic Martin right after the end of the recording session.

Much more than a simple, albeit dramatic, change in one song's arrangement would be produced in the following years. With technological progress, the concept and the idea of "sound" became more and more central. Recording was no longer a strictly technical affair; it became an artistic matter. The Beatles were soon aware of the potential of the recording studio and gradually more interested in the possibilities that it offered. Music started to be artificially constructed in elaborate recording sessions and a new way of making records emerged.

1.1 George Martin and His Staff

In all this, evidently, the role of George Martin (Fig. 1.2) and his various collaborators (sound engineers particularly, who were often assistant producers or even co-producers) will never receive enough credit. Martin can be considered largely responsible for shaping the modern concept of the "record producer". His role through the years expanded, from mere coordinator to a sheer creative force in the studio.

Martin studied orchestration, harmony, composition, and conduction at the Guildhall School of Music in London, and joined Parlophone Records (a division of EMI) in 1950, working as an assistant in the A&R department. In 1955, when he was only 29, he was appointed manager of this small company, becoming the youngest record label head in Britain. His collaboration with the Beatles started in September 1962, with the recording of "Love Me Do", the band's first single for Parlophone. Despite his resignation from EMI three years later, in order to form his own company AIR, Martin continued to work with the group as a freelance, independent producer, a rather unusual role at the time (and another significant anticipation of times to come). He attended almost every studio session of the band until their break-up in April 1970. Remarkable exceptions occurred during the recordings of the *White Album*, *Let It Be*, and on one famous occasion during the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* session, when an anxious Paul McCartney, faced with Martin's unavailability on the very day, hired the young Mike Leander to

Fig. 1.2 The most credible candidate to the "fifth Beatle" title: producer George Martin. (Photo attribution: David Train, CC BY-SA 2.0)

arrange the orchestra for "She's Leaving Home". Martin, reportedly, was far from pleased about this.

To better understand the function of production in the Beatles records, we should rely on a distinction we discuss in Chap. 3 among early (1962–1965), middle (1965–1967) and late (1968–1970) periods in the band's career and musical development. In the first phase, Martin's duties included the supervision of the band's repertoire and control of the studio activity. Describing his involvement in the working process, he said:

> My role was to make sure that they made a concise, commercial statement. I would make sure that the song ran for approximately two and a half minutes, that it was in the right key for their voices, and that it was tidy, with the right proportion and form. (Martin and Hornsby 1994: 132)

This procedure, also known as "head arrangement", was usually made in a straightforward way:

> I would meet them in the studio to hear a new number. I would perch myself on a high stool, and John and Paul would stand around me with their acoustic guitars and play and sing – usually without Ringo or George, unless George joined in the harmony (…). Then I would make suggestions to improve it, and we'd try it again. (Martin, as quoted in Everett 1999: 162)

This fairly simple procedure was maintained throughout the early years. As the group began to be interested in new sounds and compositions became more elaborate, Martin's role evolved one step further. His work during the middle period was significant for more than one reason: first, he created innovative arrangements, brought in new ideas, and introduced different instruments. His contribution was fundamental to expand the group's timbral palette. He helped give an identity and character to the songs. Second, he acted as an interpreter, providing a "technical translation" to the band's often abstract ideas, and suggesting the best practical options. Martin developed an ability to understand the intentions of the band through an uncanny sixth sense for the right solutions:

> They needed someone to translate for them. I was there, so it worked very well. I had a foot in both camps. I knew what they were trying to get and I knew how to get it, and I became the official interpreter. (Martin, as quoted in Pritchard and Lysaght 1998: 207)

Thanks to his musical background and experience with sound effects, he made the most of The Beatles' increasingly unconventional sonic imagination. Furthermore, Martin also acted as a valuable additional musician, playing piano, organ, harmonium, or harpsichord on several tracks.

In the late period, the group gained more artistic autonomy, and were often in charge of the sessions. Having now turned more like a collaborator, Martin kept on exercising an influence on the music output, but did not direct the band or exert control. At the time of the *White Album*, he acted almost as *executive* producer, with the four Beatles often recording their own songs individually, separately, and in different studios. After the album *Let It Be* – in which he was famously replaced by Phil Spector – George Martin finally regained a prominent role as producer for the

band's last record *Abbey Road*, after a request from the band members themselves, who desired to record one more album "the way they used to".

Personal relationships had a considerable impact on the outcome of the work. Power struggles between Lennon and McCartney and the overall distribution of authority influenced the final artistic results. Over the years, the balance of power between The Beatles and their producer changed rather drastically, with the latter turning from a father figure to a more subordinate role. The producer became a "realizer", following the indications dictated by the artists:

> At the start, I was like a master with his pupils, and they did what I said. They knew nothing about recording, but heaven knows they learned quickly: and by the end, of course, I was to be the servant while they were the masters. They would say, "Right, we're starting tonight at eight o'clock", and I would be there. It was a gradual change of power, and of responsibility in a way, because although at the end I still clung to putting in my two cents' worth, all I could do was influence. I couldn't direct. (Martin, as quoted in Cateforis 2013: 56)

Furthermore, a closer look at the daily routine in the Abbey Road studios reveals a wider and more complex social context, also including other members of the staff such as the engineers. The importance of social relations in a non-solitary creative practice is something that can be already understood through common sense, but it does not hurt that a few studies have specifically emphasized that. Ethnomusicologist Beverley Diamond (2005), for instance, pointed out that a record can be considered a documentation of social processes of many different types other than just an aesthetic object. Similarly, while theorizing a new music ontology, anthropologist Georgina Born (2005) highlighted the crucial role of a complex series of mediations, particularly the power of music to favor associations and facilitate interpersonal relationships. Finally, and on a more general level, in his anthropology of art, Alfred Gell (1998) relies on the concept of collective style to explain the constant interaction between individuals in a creative process: art objects, maintains Gell, condense and embody social relations.

The Beatles' tendency to use external musicians who would often come from their circle of friends (e.g., Eric Clapton, Billy Preston, Brian Jones), as well as their preference for a family-like work environment, demonstrates the collaborative nature of their activity. One of their recurrent remarks about the EMI studios was that they looked a bit "sterile", and as soon as their negotiating power increased, they demanded the addition of decorative, cozy elements such as colorful neon lights and incense sticks, up to the (admittedly exaggerate) bed that Yoko Ono brought in during the *Abbey Road* sessions.

Other key-figures contributed to the making of the band's records in the studio besides George Martin; first and foremost, the producer's closest associate, the balance engineer. Trained by EMI, this type of engineer was in charge of the recording and mixing of the songs. This role, which was played by different people through the years, evolved in time, becoming progressively more creative. It is worth noticing that these engineers were not necessarily or particularly involved with technical matters, preferring a more artistic approach, which included acoustics and specific uses of microphones. Sharing the control room with the balance engineer and the producer, there was also a second engineer known as tape operator.

The three figures formed what Mark Lewisohn called the "triumvirate production team" (1988: 137), and were the crew who worked on the Beatles' music on a regular basis. To these, we must add technical engineers – who were often involved in addressing the creative demands of the band and in several cases introduced significant innovations – as well as disc cutters.

With the impossibility of listing every single character involved in recording The Beatles (in some cases, there is no recorded information on who joined a given session), and excluding those who joined just once or twice as replacements for more regular personnel, or those who recorded the band in different studios (e.g., Trident), we provide here a list of the key members of the various "triumvirates", from 1962 onwards. In the early years, and until the *Revolver* sessions, the regular team was composed of producer George Martin, engineer Norman Smith, and a number of rotating second engineers. Stuart Eltham would occasionally take the place of Smith as main engineer. From 1962 onwards, the most recurrent second engineers were Richard Langham, Geoff Emerick and Anthony Bridge (usually indicated in the session records with the alias A. B. Lincoln – for reasons we happily ignore). From 1964, Ken Scott, Ron Pender, Mike Stone, and Tony Clark, and from 1965 Jerry Boys, Phil McDonald, and Richard Lush.

The year 1966 witnessed a considerable change, with Geoff Emerick (Fig. 1.3) becoming the main engineer, occasionally replaced by Dave Harris. The change was crucial in terms of depth, heaviness, and fullness of sound. George Harrison famously said that *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver* are a sort of volume I and II of the same album, and that is true from a songwriting point of view (the band having reached full compositional maturity at that point and having displayed it in both records with equal merits), but there is a significant gap between the two albums when we pay attention to sonic aspects: in particular, guitars, vocals and drums sound like they belong to different technological epochs, despite being just a few months distance between them. In this new venture, the role of second engineers was also relevant, particularly McDonald's, Lush's, and Harris's.

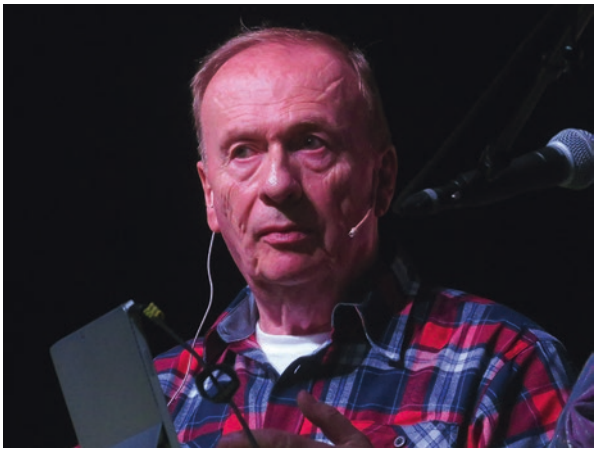

Fig. 1.3 Sound engineer Geoff Emerick is one the key-figures behind the Beatles' advancements in sound and production from 1966 onwards. (Photo attribution: Eddie Janssens, CC BY-SA 4.0)