

Strawberry Field Forever

Written by bluesever

Saturday, 13 August 2011 20:52 - Last Updated Saturday, 14 March 2015 13:34

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"Strawberry Fields Forever" is a song by **The Beatles**, written by **John Lennon** and attributed to the Lennon/McCartney songwriting partnership.

Strawberry Field was a Salvation Army home in Liverpool where John Lennon used to go. One of Lennon's childhood treats was the garden party held each summer in Calderstones Park near the Salvation Army Home every year, where a Salvation Army band played.

Lennon's aunt Mimi Smith recalled: *"As soon as we could hear the Salvation Army band starting, John would jump up and down shouting, 'Mimi, come on. We're going to be late'"*

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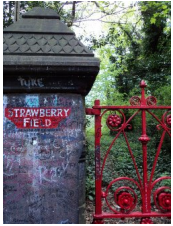
Lennon (from his 1980 interview with Playboy magazine): *"Strawberry Fields is a real place. After I stopped living at Penny Lane, I moved in with my auntie who lived in the suburbs in a nice semidetached place with a small garden and doctors and lawyers and that ilk living around... not the poor slummy kind of image that was projected in all the Beatles stories. In the*

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class system, it was about half a class higher than Paul, George and Ringo, who lived in BEgovernment-subsidized housing. We owned our house and had a garden. They didn't have anything like that. Near that home was Strawberry Fields, a house near a boys' reformatory where I used to go to garden parties as a kid with my friends Nigel and Pete we would go there and hang out and sell lemonade bottles for a penny. We always had fun at Strawberry Fields. So that's where I got the name. But I used it as an image. Strawberry Fields forever."



Strawberry Fields, August 2007

Lennon began writing the song in Almería, Spain, during the filming of Richard Lester's *How I Won the War* in September–October 1966. The earliest demo of the song, recorded in Almería, had no refrain and only one verse. He revised the words to this verse to make them more obscure, then wrote the melody and part of the lyrics to the refrain. He then added another verse and the mention of Strawberry Fields. For the refrain, Lennon was again inspired by his childhood memories. The first verse on the released version was the last to be written, close to the time of the song's recording.



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John Lennon

The introduction was played by McCartney on a Mellotron, and the vocals begin with the refrain instead of a verse. The Mellotron is a keyboard that triggers loops of recorded taped instruments at different pitches. It is not a synthesized sound at all, but recordings of actual instruments. This song used flutes as the tape loops.

The released versions are edits of three sections taken from two different takes. 0:00 to 0:55 is take 7, 0:55 to 1:00 is another section of take 7, and 1:00 to end is take 26. It is fairly well known that take 26 was really faster and in a higher key, and that slowing it down to match the tempo also brought into the same key.

Two versions were recorded with different instruments and spliced together to make one song. Where Lennon's vocal wanders during "going to;" after that point, the second take is slowed down, which causes the vocal to have more of a nasal sound.



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Strawberry Fields Forever, notes

The story goes that John Lennon couldn't decide on which of the two versions to release, so he left George Martin with the instruction to try and put them together. Martin was flabbergasted - they were in different keys and different tempos! But he found that by speeding up the first part and slowing down the second, he could make the two roughly match.

A distorted voice at the end sounds like *"I buried Paul,"* which fueled rumors that Paul McCartney was dead. The voice is actually Lennon saying, *"Cranberry sauce."*

"Strawberry Fields Forever" was intended for the album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), as it was the first song recorded for it, but was instead released in February 1967 as a double A-side single with Paul McCartney's *"Penny Lane"*.



Strawberry Fields Forever, The Beatles

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Although both referred to actual locations, the two songs also had strong surrealistic and psychedelic overtones. George Martin said that when he first heard "*Strawberry Fields Forever*" he thought it conjured up a "*hazy, impressionistic dreamworld*".



Strawberry Fields Forever, single

On January 30, 1967, The Beatles shot a promo film for this song, which was one of the first and most successful music videos, featuring stop motion animation and other special effects. It was filmed in and around Knole Park, an estate owned by the National Trust, near Sevenoaks in Kent. The following day the Beatles filmed a promo film for "*Penny Lane*" also at Knole Park.



Strawberry Fields Forever, making video

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"Strawberry Fields Forever" was well-received by critics, and is still considered a classic. In 2004, this song was ranked number 76 on Rolling Stone's list of *"The 500 Greatest Songs of All Time"*. In 2010, Rolling Stone placed it at number three on the 100 Greatest Beatles Songs.

Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys first heard the song on his car radio whilst driving, and was so affected that he had to stop and listen to it all the way through. He then remarked to his passenger that The Beatles had already reached the sound the Beach Boys had wanted to achieve.



Strawberry Fields Forever, John Lennon

Mark Lindsay (singer and saxophonist) heard the song on the radio, bought it, and then listened to it at home with his producer at the time, Terry Melcher. When the song ended Lindsay said, *"Now what the fuck are we gonna do?"* later saying, *"With that single, The Beatles raised the ante as to what a pop record should be".*

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It turns out Strawberry Fields is not forever. In 2005, Britain's Salvation Army closed the Strawberry Field children's home in Liverpool, stating that it's preferable for children to be raised in a foster or small group home instead of a large orphanage. The home opened in 1936, and Lennon left money to Strawberry Field in his will. His widow, Yoko Ono, donated the equivalent of \$70,000 in 1984 to keep the home open. Only 3 children remained in the home in January 2005, when the Salvation Army announced it would close.



Strawberry Fields, August 2007

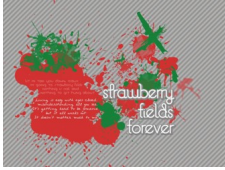
Lyrics:

Let me take you down cause I'm going to strawberry fields Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about Strawberry fields forever Living is easy with eyes closed Misunderstanding all you see It's getting hard to be someone but it all works out It doesn't matter much to me
Let me take you down cause I'm going to strawberry fields Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about Strawberry fields forever No one I think is in my tree I mean it must be high or low That is you can't, you know, tune in but it's all right That is I think it's not too bad
Let me take you down cause I'm going to strawberry fields Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about Strawberry fields forever Always know sometimes think it's me But you know I know when it's a dream I think I know I mean, ah yes but it's all wrong that is I think I disagree
Let me take you down cause I'm going to strawberry fields Nothing is real and nothing to get hung about Strawberry fields forever Strawberry fields forever strawberry fields forever

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