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Bridge Project 3 Analysis

Recently, I listened to an episode of the podcast *99% Invisible* by Roman Mars. The episode was about the creation of the Devo cover, *Question: are we not men? Answer: no we are Devo*, which features an image of golfer Chi-Chi Rodriguez created from a composite image of features taken from the faces of different United States presidents. Fascinated by the strange and convoluted story behind the cover art, I began researching the histories of some of the most influential album covers of all time. Naturally, I thought of one of my favorite albums: the Beatles' *Revolver*. When I began my research I was shocked to notice that *Revolver* has been left off of many lists of "greatest album artwork" in favor of other Beatles records such as Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, *Abbey Road*, and *The White Album*. Klaus Voormann is the artist who created the cover art for *Revolver*, but he was also a bassist, performing with the band Manfred Mann: the band whose style inspired the classic Beatles "mop top" haircuts. Evidently, Voormann's impact on visual culture transcends the work he did for *Revolver*.

Much of the research I performed for this assignment involved learning anecdotal information about the creation of the songs *Yellow Submarine* and *Eleanor Rigby*. For example, the sound effects created for *Yellow Submarine* involved John Lennon and Paul McCartney talking and singing into tin cans, as well as Ringo Starr shouting from outside the recording booth. (The Paul McCartney Project) For this reason, it was difficult to find reliable sources. For example, I found many articles speculating about the meaning behind *Yellow Submarine*, many of which point to references to drugs. McCartney, however, continues to deny these claims. Therefore, it was imperative for me to consult as many sources as possible before choosing those

that I would rely on for the narrative elements I included in my final piece. Because so many of the stories are documented through oral histories, watching videos of interviews with the Beatles was an integral part of my research.

In many ways, one of the most striking parts of this project was the influence it had over my own personal life. Everyone around me knew I was working on a Beatles project because I couldn't help myself from reciting any Beatles trivia I knew at the drop of a hat. Over the course of this project, I listened to almost exclusively the Beatles, and to *Revolver* specifically about fifty times. I ate, slept, and breathed those boys from Liverpool. When a friend added Eleanor Rigby to a playlist at a party, I couldn't help myself from rambling on about the grave at St. Peter's Church and how this may or may not have subconsciously influenced Paul McCartney's songwriting. The truth is, this project was incredibly self-indulgent. I relish in these types of "behind the scenes" stories because they create this intimate air around one of the most famous bands of all time. I still don't understand exactly where this urge to share these stories with other people comes from; perhaps I want everyone to feel "in on it," too.

Bibliography:

“Eleanor Rigby (Song).” *The Paul McCartney Project*, The Paul McCartney Project,

www.the-paulmccartney-project.com/song/eleanor-rigby/.

This article about the song *Eleanor Rigby* published by the Paul McCartney Project is an incredibly important source regarding the song’s authorship, meaning, and history. Although John Lennon took credit for half of the songwriting work and the piece is attributed to both Lennon and McCartney, both Paul and a childhood friend of John’s who was helping with songwriting claim that John made little to no contributions to the song. Similarly, this article clarifies the origin of the name of the titular character, Eleanor Rigby. Originally written as “Daisy Hawkins” by McCartney, the first name Eleanor was chosen after the actress Eleanor Bron whom the Beatles worked with in their film, *Help!* The surname, Rigby, McCartney chose after seeing it on a shop sign in Bristol. Coincidentally, a gravestone was later discovered at St. Peter’s Church in Liverpool, the church where John Lennon and Paul McCartney met in 1957, that bears the name “Eleanor Rigby.” Some theorize that the name was chosen subconsciously by McCartney, influenced by seeing the gravestone in his childhood. McCartney, however, denies any subconscious inspiration from the grave. The deeds to the gravesite were even auctioned off because of the name’s association with the Beatles’ song.

Fear, David. “Yellow Submarine’ at 50: Why the Psychedelic Animated Beatles Movie Is

Timeless.” *Rolling Stone*, Rolling Stone Magazine, 17 July 2018,

www.rollingstone.com/movies/movie-features/yellow-submarine-at-50-why-the-psychedelic-animated-beatles-movie-is-timeless-696384/.

This source, an article published by Rolling Stone magazine, describes the impact of the Yellow Submarine film. One aspect of this article that is especially valuable is the way that the author breaks down the introductions of each of the Beatles and how that contributes to their image as well as the way it reinforced their public personas. This source is centered specifically around the cultural impact of the film and carries an incredibly nostalgic tone. This was the source that I consulted that relied the most on more subjective information. Introducing the film as a “pop-art animated masterpiece,” it was clear the author was tapping into his own sentimental childhood memories of seeing the film.

Stummer, Robin. “How I Drew a Pop Art Masterpiece for the Beatles – a Snip at Just £50.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 23 July 2016, www.theguardian.com/music/2016/jul/23/beatles-revolver-cover-klaus-voormann.

This resource, an interview published by The Guardian between Robin Stummer and Klaus Voorman. I believe this is one of the most important resources I have been able to find pertaining to my topic. Because it is a direct interview with Voormann, it’s incredibly valuable as a primary resource not only on the creation of the cover itself, but on the impact and significance of the Beatles and the Revolver album, specifically. Voormann, an accomplished bassist in addition to his work as an artist and graphic designer, details parts of his experience working with the Beatles for the creation of this album cover. He describes the challenge that was presented to him by this new album because of how innovative, experimental, and varied the tracks were; not just from music previously released by the band, but also within the album itself. Voormann also paid special attention, in this interview, to describe his process of creating the cover. He created the

four main line drawings of the band members from memory and pieced together other black and white photographs. He described his choice of using stark black and white in order for the album to “stand out in a muddle of colour.” Voormann also discloses other details about the image’s creation, including the 50-pound compensation he received as well as the three weeks it took in his attic apartment to assemble the image. Overall, this source provided key information regarding Voormann’s creative process and the ideas that inspired the image he created.

“The Beatles VH1 Special Yellow Submarine Interviews, 9/19/1999.”

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECpUhX9wKIM. Accessed 12 May 2019.

This video, released by VH1 to promote the re-release of the restored *Yellow Submarine* film, provided interviews with George, Paul, and Ringo. Although the original *Yellow Submarine* film was not a great example of a creative project driven by the Beatles themselves. As George Harrison says in the interview, “the best thing about the film is that we didn’t have to do anything to it.” However, the interviews in this video do reveal enthusiasm about the film’s soundtrack and animation. Still, the most valuable aspects of this source were not the interviews with the Beatles. This video also interviewed the Heinz Edelman, the creative director for the film. Not only did he provide valuable information on subjects such as how the team of animators used hand-drawn rotoscoping techniques, but also including interesting trivia and facts about the film, such as the appearance of images of people who worked on the film as the characters in the *Eleanor Rigby* sequence and John Lennon’s 3 am phone call suggestion of a scene where Ringo is followed by a yellow submarine. Although perhaps the Beatles’ non-involvement in this film is

evident in this interview, the video still provides incredibly valuable insight into the creation of the *Yellow Submarine* film.

“Yellow Submarine (Song).” *The Paul McCartney Project*, The Paul McCartney Project,
www.the-paulmccartney-project.com/song/yellow-submarine/.

This source, part of a catalogue of all the songs written and co-written by Paul McCartney, provides valuable details regarding the song’s recording, especially because so many interesting and unconventional techniques were used to create the sound effects. For example, John and Paul talked into tin cans and John blew bubbles into a tin tray of water. This source also debunks allegations of deeper meanings to the song’s lyrics. Many people believe that the “yellow submarine” referenced in the song is really a reference to Nembutal, a party that was popular in New York City the summer of 1966. This source goes into other theorized meanings of the song, describing it almost as a type of “Rorschach test for radical minds.” At the same time, this source does include a testimonial from McCartney in which he describes coming up with the concept and the tune as he was falling asleep: and his intention for the piece to simply be an upbeat children’s’ song.