

## SIR GEORGE MARTIN Biography

Sir George Martin is the most successful and most influential record producer of all time. This statement of fact is supported by the unparalleled worldwide success of the recordings he produced between 1950 and 1998 - and the universal regard for the artistic breakthroughs he achieved in his career - especially in his recording of The Beatles between 1962 and 1970.

In October 1998, Universal Music released his final recording as a producer – “In My Life” - an album of Beatles songs arranged and produced by Sir George and performed by an all-star ensemble of some of the world’s greatest entertainers.

The breadth of musical styles on the album - and the eclectic mixture of stars who came together to honour him and perform his favorite compositions by the Beatles - is a very apt finale to his career and underscores the creative diversity which has been both a hallmark of his professional life and the secret of his artistic success.

While he is understandably best-known for his monumental work with the Beatles - and rightly celebrated for that canon of work, Sir George Martin retired from producing after a 48-year career in which he made over 700 recordings.

These encompass every conceivable genre from pop, rock, jazz, country, folk, blues, metal, avant-garde, classical, baroque, movie soundtracks and stage cast recordings to comedy.

Like the most famous of his artists, the Beatles, he has enjoyed the exceptionally rare accolade of receiving both critical and commercial success. His productions have registered a staggering 30 Number One singles and 16 Number One albums in his homeland - and an equally astonishing 22 Number One singles and 19 Number One albums in North America.

These figures are duplicated in practically every country in the world. No other producer in history has a track record even remotely as successful.

Much has been made of the apparent social differences between Sir George and his most famous signing group - the Beatles: Sir George for example is known for his beautifully modulated speaking voice which evokes the British upper classes. However, there are actually numerous parallels between his background and that of the Beatles - including his working class roots and his musical beginnings - such as creating his own band at the age of 15 - exactly as the Beatles did.

He was born in Highbury, North London in 1926 - the elder of two children born to working-class parents. His father was a carpenter. He developed an early love for music - which manifested itself at the age of 15 with the formation of his own dance band - The Four Tune Tellers.

In 1943 he joined Britain’s Fleet Air Arm (the aviation wing of the British Navy) - subsequently being commissioned as an officer. In 1947 he left military service to pursue his love of music. After studying classical composition at London’s Guildhall School of Music and playing the oboe as a professional musician - in 1950 he entered the British recording industry.

He was engaged as the assistant to the head of Parlophone Records - then a small label within Britain’s EMI Music group. His position entailed working as a combination of A&R executive and record producer - then a very rare breed in the British industry.

His principal task was recording classical and baroque music. However, he also showed a keen aptitude for jazz and pop music - and when his boss retired in 1955, he was appointed head of the label. He was paid the princely sum of \$3,000 per year - with no royalties on his productions or bonuses based on the performance of his work or signings. (An arrangement that prevailed through the first three years of the Beatles’ colossal success.)

Between 1955 and 1962, Sir George carved out a niche for himself and the Parlophone label in two comparatively neglected areas of the British record industry. Unable to compete with rival labels which boasted top American stars or Britain's few home-grown pop artists - Sir George recorded top jazz acts such as Cleo Laine, Johnny Dankworth, Humphrey Lyttelton and Stan Getz.

His other area of expertise provided the surprising bond that cemented the improbable relationship between the young Beatles and the comparatively older producer when they met.

Sir George became the preeminent producer of comedy recordings in Britain. His credits included recordings with Peter Ustinov, Peter Sellers, Britain's new satirical heroes "Beyond The Fringe" (which featured the young Peter Cook, Dudley Moore, Alan Bennett and Jonathan Miller); and several other British comedic pioneers who were to influence Monty Python - including comic genius Spike Milligan, Britain's legendary Goon Show comedy troupe, musical satirists Flanders & Swann and "Carry On..." movie star Bernard Cribbins.

In May 1962, Sir George met Brian Epstein, the Beatles manager. Epstein had been turned down by every other British label. Sir George sensed a potential in the tapes that Epstein played him and agreed to give the group a recording test. He was 36 years old and the oldest Beatle was then 22. 14 years was a sizable age gap in those days and usually a barrier to an intimate working relationship.

However, the Beatles were immediately deeply impressed by Sir George's comedy producing background - and a warm rapport and creative bond was forged that would change the world.

Between 1962 and 1970, under Sir George's enlightened nurturing, The Beatles blossomed from promising but derivative provincial pop group to becoming the architects and practitioners of a new culture. Together they transformed all notions of popular music and the way it was recorded.

When they started recording in 1962, records were still essentially snapshots of a live performance recreated in the studio. By 1970, they had turned recording into a high art form emulated (though never surpassed) by every major contemporary act that followed them.

In 1967, their creative aspirations caused them to quite independently 'invent' contemporary multi-track recording. (Unable to otherwise create the complexities of the "Sgt. Pepper" album they envisaged - Sir George linked two 4-track tape recorders together to create the first 8-track recorder.)

The quantum leaps and paradigm shifts would have been easier to comprehend had they been created in a vacuum of unlimited time and budget. But it was quite the reverse. The Beatles were making two 14-track albums a year (plus four singles of non-album material), constantly touring the world, making feature films and writing songs for other artists. Sir George Martin was equally busy - running the Parlophone label, signing and recording other artists and composing film scores.

Despite (or perhaps because of) the intense pressures, Sir George Martin and the Beatles reinvented the wheel of popular music in the maelstrom of a frenetic seven year renaissance which impacted popular culture throughout the world and has left a lasting impression.

Sir George continued until 1965 as Head of Parlophone - signing and producing a slew of other artists, principally those discovered and managed by his new friend Brian Epstein. These performers included many who - like the Beatles - duplicated their British success in America and around the world. Artists such as Gerry & The Pacemakers, Billy J. Kramer & The Dakotas, The Fourmost and Cilla Black.

In a run of success that is unlikely ever to be rivaled, records that Sir George Martin produced held the Number One position in Britain's singles charts for 37 out of the 52 weeks of 1963! Since the first Number One did not occur until mid-February - the tally was actually 37 weeks in a 45 week period!

Sir George provided even greater success for EMI in 1964 and 1965 - when the Beatles and most of his other artists conquered America and the rest of the world - and yet he was still receiving absolutely no royalties and earning a paltry annual salary of less than \$8,000.

In 1965, Sir George took a revolutionary step. He left EMI - and with three fellow producers founded an independent production company - AIR (Associated Independent Recording). It was a record producers' equivalent to the original United Artists founded by Charlie Chaplin, Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford and D.W. Griffith. British record companies reluctantly agreed to pay royalties to producers for the first time - rewarding Sir George's contributions to the Beatles success with an entire one-fifth of one percent! (Top record producers these days earn a 4-5% royalty.)

Sir George continued his ground-breaking work with the Beatles - and in one eighteen month period produced the triumvirate of *Rubber Soul*, *Revolver* and *Sgt. Pepper*. In 1969 he produced the Beatles' finale album *Abbey Road* (which was recorded after the *Let It Be* sessions though released before that album.)

After the Beatles' break-up in 1970 he continued his illustrious career as a record producer - and simultaneously became involved in a variety of other projects.

His AIR company opened several recording studios - firstly in London, and then in 1979 on the Caribbean island of Montserrat. These studios have been regarded as among the premier studios in the world - attracting practically every major artist from the Rolling Stones and The Police to Stevie Wonder and Paul McCartney. (The Montserrat studios were sadly destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in 1989.)

The latest incarnation of AIR Studios in London was opened in 1993 in a converted Victorian church in Hampstead, North-West London. Sir George was intimately involved in the design and building of the new complex. It is now one of the busiest, most desirable studios in the world.

As a record producer in the 1970's and 1980's, he worked with great success with an astonishingly diverse array of artists - lending his production talents to artists such as Jeff Beck, America, Kenny Rogers, The Mahavishnu Orchestra, The Bee Gees, Dire Straits, The Little River Band, Cheap Trick, Neil Sedaka, Jimmy Webb and Ultravox. Many of these artists enjoyed enormous success with Sir George's productions.

In the 1990's he worked on several multi-artist projects - allowing him to produce an even greater array of contemporary talent - ranging from: Peter Gabriel, Kate Bush, Sting, Sinéad O'Connor, Lisa Stansfield, Elton John and Elvis Costello to Jon Bon Jovi, Cher, Meat Loaf, Carly Simon and Carl Perkins. Continuing his earlier work with comedic performers - he also worked with a number of comedians and actors including: George Burns, Steve Martin, Sir Anthony Hopkins and Jonathan Pryce.

He occasionally revisited his producing relationship with the former Beatles - producing two hugely successful albums with Paul McCartney (*Tug Of War* and *Pipes of Peace*) - including McCartney's chart-topping collaborations with Stevie Wonder and Michael Jackson; he also produced and/or arranged several tracks on McCartney's Grammy-nominated 1997 album *Flaming Pie*; he produced an album for Ringo Starr and a recording with George Harrison. He also acted as music supervisor for the feature documentary *Imagine: John Lennon*.

In the mid-90's he returned to working with the Beatles and produced four double-albums of previously unreleased treasures from the Beatles' archives - the *Live At The BBC* album and the three volumes of *Anthology* - all of which were multi-platinum sellers. He also supervised all the music included in the TV and home video versions of the *Anthology*.

He has been an active film composer since the 1960's - scoring and producing films such as *A Hard Day's Night* (for which he received an Academy Award nomination), *Live And Let Die* (for which he received a Grammy), *Yellow Submarine*, *The Family Way*, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, *Give My Regards To Broad Street*, *Honky Tonk Freeway* and *Pulp*.

He has produced the original cast album of several shows ranging from the 1960's London production of *Beyond The Fringe* to the 1990's Tony Award-winning Broadway production of *The Who's Tommy* (for which Sir George received his fifth Grammy.) In 1989 he conceived, composed, arranged and produced a musical version of Dylan Thomas' *Under Milk Wood* specially for record - a production that featured Sir Anthony Hopkins, Jonathan Pryce and Tom Jones among many.

He has written three books - his autobiography *All You Need Is Ears* (1979), a guide to the music industry *Making Music* (1983) and his analysis of the *Sgt. Pepper* album - *With A Little Help From My Friends...* (1994).

He has written, hosted and produced several TV shows including *The Making Of Sgt. Pepper* (1994) and *The Rhythm Of Life* (1998) - a three-part TV series in which he explores the wonder of music with fellow musicians such as Brian Wilson, Burt Bacharach, Stevie Wonder, Billy Joel, Dionne Warwick and Paul McCartney.

He has served as producer and consultant for many important charity events - such as the 1993 *Prince's Trust Concert* and UNESCO's 1994 benefit in Japan, *The Great Music Experience*, which featured Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell, Ry Cooder and INXS. He has also organized and produced several benefits - most recently and notably the September 1997 *Music For Montserrat show* for the victims of the 1995 volcanic eruption. This internationally-televised concert featured Paul McCartney, Elton John, Eric Clapton, Sting, Phil Collins, Mark Knopfler and the late Carl Perkins.

In the 1960's he formed The George Martin Orchestra and recorded a series of acclaimed albums of orchestral versions of Beatles music and some of his own compositions - which included the theme music for TV personality Sir David Frost and BBC's then-new Radio One national music station. (After scoring the James Bond movie *Live and Let Die* - Sir George playfully titled one of his orchestral albums - *From The Beatles To Bond And Bach!*) In recent years he has appeared with the major national orchestras of England, Australia, Canada, Sweden and Brazil - conducting programs of his compositions and Beatles arrangements.

(A fascinating footnote is that Sir George's 1960's orchestral records unwittingly played an indirect part in the recent success of the Verve's *Bitter Sweet Symphony*. The riff sampled for that record came from an orchestral version of the Rolling Stones' song *The Last Time* by The Andrew Oldham Orchestra. Stones manager/producer Andrew Loog Oldham openly acknowledges that his albums were his attempts to emulate Sir George's successful orchestral albums.)

Sir George's decision to retire from record producing arose in part from his loss of hearing in recent years. However, Elton John persuaded him to make one final production apart from his own farewell album. This was the moving *Candle In The Wind* 1997 tribute to Princess Diana - which Sir George recorded with Sir Elton just hours after the song was performed at Princess Diana's funeral. The fund-raising record rapidly became the bestselling single of all time.

Sir George, who is a very young 72, lives with his wife of 32 years, Judy, in their English countryside home - a 14<sup>th</sup> century converted rectory nestled in a small village in the county of Wiltshire a few hours from London.

They have two children - Lucie (29) and Giles (27.) Giles has followed in his father's footsteps and become a musician and record producer - assisting his father on several productions - and co-producing *In My Life* with Sir George. Sir George also has two children from his first marriage - Alexis (42) and Greg (39.)

In 1988 Sir George was decorated by Her Majesty The Queen with the title of C.B.E. (Commander of the British Empire) for his services to the music industry. In 1996 he was made a knight of the realm and became Sir George Martin. (He is formally addressed as Sir George - while his wife Judy is formally addressed as Lady Martin.) Away from music Sir George enjoys sailing, snooker and "wrapping myself round a dry martini."