

Revolution 9

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"Revolution 9" is an experimental recording which appeared on The Beatles' 1968 self-titled LP release (known as the *White Album*).

The track marked the peak of the band's studio experimentation; the inclusion of such a sound collage or musique concrète on a pop music release was virtually unprecedented. The recording began as an extended ending to the album version of Revolution, to which was added vocal and music sound clips, tape loops, and sound effects influenced by the musique concrete styles of Karlheinz Stockhausen and John Cage, further manipulated with editing and sound modification techniques (stereo panning and fading). As with Revolution itself, the theme was inspired by the contemporary May 1968 riots in Paris, and "Revolution 9" was meant to capture the violence of a revolution in progress. At over eight minutes it was the longest track on the album, as well as the longest Beatles track ever officially released.

The work is credited to Lennon/McCartney (as were all Beatles songs written by either composer), though it was primarily the effort of John Lennon. George Harrison, Ringo Starr, and Yoko Ono made small contributions, while Paul McCartney did not actively participate in the track's creation. Ono's avant garde influence on Lennon's songwriting and composition is clear throughout "Revolution 9." McCartney and producer George Martin fought hard to keep the track off the *White Album*, but Lennon and Ono won out, and the track was included as the second from last song at the end of the album's second disc.

"Revolution 9"

The BEATLES

Song by The Beatles
from the album *The Beatles*

Released 22 November 1968

Recorded May 30, 31; June 4, 6, 10, 11, 21; September 16, 1968

Genre Musique concrète/Avant-garde

Length 8:13

Label Apple Records

Writer(s) Lennon-McCartney

Producer(s) George Martin

***The Beatles* track listing**

Cry Baby Cry (11 of disc 2)	"Revolution 9" (12 of disc 2)	Good Night (13 of disc 2)
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Structure and content

After a brief piano introduction taken from an unreleased Paul McCartney song, a loop of a male repeating the words "number nine" (taken from an EMI examination tape) begins to be heard. This phrase fades in and out throughout the recording as a motif. Then there is chaos: feedback, impromptu screaming, rehearsed overdubs, and more tape loops.

As some portions of "Revolution 9" are recordings of other music (bits of Sibelius and Beethoven, for example), the piece can be seen as an early example of sampling. Other audio elements include various bits of apparently nonsensical dialogue, various found sounds, reversed sounds and recordings of American football chants.

"Paul is Dead" significance

Revolution 9 played an important part in the infamous "Paul is Dead" controversy. If one listens carefully, the "babble", many believe, includes hints left by the band about Paul's alleged death. These include the repeated "Turn me on, dead man", "I buried Paul, dead man, dead man" and "Let me out!" As the "Paul Is Dead" rumours were quickly debunked, these "clues" are creative misinterpretation of "Revolution 9", and are an interesting footnote to the Beatles' history.

Charles Manson

LA District Attorney Vincent Bugliosi and Manson Family member Susan Atkins came up with the theory that Charles Manson believed that "Revolution 9" was a reference to Revelation 9, a book in the Bible that speaks of apocalypse and prophecy. He believed The Beatles were speaking to him through this song, and he drew many odd interpretations from the lyrics.

Popular culture references

Revolution 9 is parodied in Homer's Barbershop Quartet, an episode of the Simpsons in which a number of characters form a Beatles-esque music group. At one point Barney Gumble (accompanied by a woman bearing strong resemblance to Yoko Ono) plays a tape consisting of a loop of a female voice saying "Number Eight" followed by a belch.

Commercials for the Sega Dreamcast featured the "Number 9" line, as the system was released on 9/9/99 (in the U.S.).

Trivia

The song starts with a conversation between George Martin and Alistair Taylor:

Alistair Taylor: Bottle of Claret for you if I'd realized. I'd forgotten all about it George, I'm sorry...
George Martin: Well, do next time
Taylor: Will you forgive me?
Martin: Mmmm...yes...
Taylor: Cheeky bitch.

Although this track is usually known to be the beginning of "Revolution 9", the time tracking from the

CD indicates this conversation as the tail end of the previous track, "Cry Baby Cry", following Paul's short solo.

See also

- Montage of Heck

External links

- A minute-by-minute summary of the piece (<http://users.tinyonline.co.uk/ian.simpson/ian.simpson/rev%209%20minutes.htm>)
- A detailed analysis of Revolution 9 (<http://www.geocities.com/hammodotcom/beethoven/revhome.htm>)
- Certain clips of the song can be played and looped here (<http://www.escape.com/~dario/beatles/number9/>)
- A recording of Revolution 9 played backwards (<http://kingtet.com/number9.htm>)
- Alan W. Pollack's song notes (<http://www.icce.rug.nl/~soundscapes/DATABASES/AWP/r9.shtml>)
- Manson and The Beatles (<http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/rauk/charlie.htm>)

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