

## AI used to create new and final Beatles song, says Paul McCartney

### Level 3: Advanced

#### 1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What Beatles songs do you know?
2. Do you think the hype around the Beatles is merited? Why do you think they are so popular?
3. How would their music have evolved if all the original Beatles were still alive and together today?
4. Would you appreciate an AI-generated Beatles song as much as the originals?

#### 2 Key words

a. Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text. Then complete the example sentences with the same words. You may have to change the form of the word.

boom box

bootleg

chorus

defect

demo

extricate

linger

mount

reunion

ropey

scrap

scrub

shelve

rubbish

1. If you \_\_\_\_\_ something, you remove it with difficulty.  
*It took a day and a half to \_\_\_\_\_ the car from the mud.*
2. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a recording of an example of someone's music, not a finished song.  
*We've uploaded three new \_\_\_\_\_, so please have a listen.*
3. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a radio or other piece of sound equipment that is large enough to play music very loudly but small enough to carry.  
*The \_\_\_\_\_ was a fad in the 1980s, and you could see one on the shoulder of many a young music lover.*
4. \_\_\_\_\_ means *not very good*.  
*I have to admit that their performance was rather \_\_\_\_\_ – we had expected something a bit more inspired.*
5. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a situation in which people meet each other again after being separated for some time.  
*Fans have been waiting years for a \_\_\_\_\_ concert, but the band still insists it is unlikely.*

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6. The \_\_\_\_\_ is the part of a song that does not change and is repeated several times.

*The crowd joined the singer for the \_\_\_\_\_, and thousands of people sang in unison.*

7. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to decide not to use something in the moment although you may use it later.

*After receiving feedback from his editor, the writer decided to \_\_\_\_\_ the manuscript for a few months before returning to it.*

8. If something is \_\_\_\_\_, it is no good.

*Most people thought the film was total \_\_\_\_\_ – it was given only two stars.*

9. To \_\_\_\_\_ something is to get rid of it.

*They say that the first step in being creative should be coming up with as many varied ideas as possible before \_\_\_\_\_ any.*

10. A \_\_\_\_\_ is a fault in someone or something.

*The headphones she ordered had a \_\_\_\_\_; the Bluetooth wasn't working properly.*

11. \_\_\_\_\_ goods are made and sold illegally.

*There were many stands where people were trying to sell \_\_\_\_\_ merchandise.*

12. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to last or continue for a long time.

*After the concert, a ringing sound \_\_\_\_\_ in their ears for two hours.*

13. To \_\_\_\_\_ is to get stronger over a period of time.

*Over the years, creative conflict \_\_\_\_\_ and, eventually, the band split up.*

14. To \_\_\_\_\_ means to remove or clean up.

*Their PR manager is responsible for finding and \_\_\_\_\_ unfavourable images from social media.*

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#### **Musician says he used technology to 'extricate' John Lennon's voice from an old demo and complete a decades-old song**

Nadia Khomami

13 June, 2023

- 1 A new and final Beatles recording using artificial intelligence will be released in 2023, Sir Paul McCartney has announced.
- 2 The musician said he had used new technology to "extricate" John Lennon's voice from an old demo and complete a decades-old song.
- 3 "We just finished it up, and it'll be released this year," he told the Radio 4 *Today* programme in 2023.
- 4 Though McCartney did not name the song, it is likely to be a 1978 Lennon composition called 'Now and Then'. The demo was one of several songs on cassettes labelled "For Paul" that Lennon made shortly before his death in 1980, which were later given to McCartney by Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono.
- 5 It was largely recorded onto a boombox as Lennon sat at a piano in his New York flat. The lyrics, which begin "I know it's true, it's all because of you / And if I make it through, it's all because of you", are typical of the apologetic love songs Lennon wrote in the latter part of his career.
- 6 The idea to use AI to reconstruct the demo came from Peter Jackson's eight-hour epic, *Get Back*. For the documentary, dialogue editor Emile de la Rey used custom-made AI to recognise the Beatles' voices and separate them from background noise.
- 7 It was this process that allowed McCartney to "duet" with Lennon on his recent tour and for new surround-sound mixes of the Beatles' *Revolver* album in 2022.

"Jackson was able to extricate John's voice from a ropey little bit of cassette," McCartney said. "We had John's voice and a piano, and he could separate them with AI. They tell the machine: 'That's the voice. This is a guitar. Lose the guitar.'"
- 8 "So when we came to make what will be the last Beatles record, it was a demo that John had, and we were able to take John's voice and get it pure through this AI. Then we can mix the record as you would normally do."
- 9 'Now and Then' was previously considered a possible reunion song for the Beatles in 1995, when they were compiling their career-spanning *Anthology* series. The three surviving band members released two of the songs from Lennon's cassettes – 'Free As A Bird' and 'Real Love' – marking the band's first "new" material in 25 years.
- 10 But though they also attempted to record 'Now and Then', the session was quickly abandoned. Producer Jeff Lynne, who cleaned up the reunion songs, said the band were "messing with it" one afternoon.
- 11 "The song had a chorus but is almost totally lacking in verses. We did the backing track, a rough go that we really didn't finish," Lynne recalled.
- 12 McCartney later revealed the song was shelved because George Harrison had called it "rubbish" and refused to work on it.
- 13 "It didn't have a very good title, it needed a bit of reworking, but it had a beautiful verse, and it had John singing it," he told *Q Magazine*. "But George didn't like it. The Beatles being a democracy, we didn't do it." Another factor behind the scrapping of the song was a technical defect in the original recording, which featured a constant buzz from the electricity circuits in Lennon's flat.
- 14 In 2009, a new version of the demo without the background noise was released on a bootleg CD, leading to speculation that it was a different recording altogether and was stolen from Lennon's flat after his death.
- 15 There have been reports that McCartney would release a complete version of the song, and the musician has often spoken of his desire to do so.
- 16 "And there was another one that we started working on, but George went off it ... that one's still lingering around," he told a BBC Four documentary in 2012. "So I'm going to finish it, one of these days."

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- 17 The news comes as controversy over the use of AI music continues to mount, with high-profile fakes of Drake, the Weeknd and Kanye West receiving hundreds of thousands of streams before being scrubbed from streaming services.
- 18 A UK band even used AI to imagine what Oasis might sound like if they were to re-form and release a new album in 2023.
- 19 McCartney, who was speaking before a book launch and accompanying photography exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery, said some applications of AI did give him cause for concern.
- 20 “I’m not on the internet that much but people will say to me: ‘Oh, yeah, there’s a track where John’s singing one of my songs,’ and it’s just AI ... It’s kind of scary but exciting because it’s the future. We’ll just have to see where that leads.”

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#### 3 Comprehension check

a. Answer the following questions.

1. What announcement has Sir Paul McCartney made?
2. What will it be named?
3. What do we learn about the romantic songs Lennon wrote in later years?
4. Where did McCartney get the idea to use AI from?
5. What happened in 1995?
6. What was missing from 'Now and Then'?
7. Why was the song abandoned?
8. At the time the article was published, what was happening with AI music online?
9. How does McCartney feel about the applications of AI?

#### 4 Key language

a. Read the definition and form a hyphenated adjective + a noun for each one.

*E.g., a song that is decades old > a decades-old song*

1. an epic that is eight hours long
2. AI that is custom made
3. mixes that have sound that surrounds you
4. an anthology that spans a career
5. fakes of people with high profiles
6. a demo that is recorded at home
7. an album that has won awards
8. content that is generated by AI

b. Now come up with three more examples of a hyphenated adjective + a noun. Write a question with each. Take turns to ask and answer your questions.

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#### 5 Discussion

**a. Discuss these statements.**

- “AI will greatly improve the quality of music.”
- “It is immoral for AI to be used to create content with someone’s voice who hasn’t given consent – dead or alive.”
- “Creating is always about borrowing ideas from those who came before us.”
- “AI is just another tool like an electric guitar or synth.”
- “AI-generated music is still music.”

#### 6 In your own words

**a. Look for a short video of an AI-generated song online. Research its origins and make notes on the following:**

- Who does the song claim to be by? Who really made the song?
- What technology was used?
- Whose voice/music/lyrics were used? Did they give consent?
- Is it a good-quality song? Are there clues that it is AI-generated?
- Do you condone its release? Why?
- How can AI-generated fakes be controlled?

**b. Present your findings and opinions to the class.**