

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

Level 2: Intermediate / Upper-Intermediate

1 Warmer

a. Discuss these questions.

1. What Beatles songs do you know?
2. Why do you think the Beatles are so popular?
3. How would their music have evolved if they were still alive and together today?
4. Would you appreciate a "Beatles" song that AI created?

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.

cassette	chorus	demo	extract	fake	lyrics
reconstruct	release	reunion	rubbish	stream	verse

1. To _____ is to remove something from something else.
He used a machine to _____ the juice from the oranges.
2. A _____ is a recording of an example of someone's music, not a finished song.
We've uploaded three new _____, so please listen to them.
3. To _____ a song or album is to make it available for people to listen to or buy.
The band will _____ their latest album on 12 October.
4. A _____ is a small flat plastic case containing audiotape used to play and record music.
We found some old _____ tapes in the loft, but we don't have a player to listen to them on.
5. _____ are the words of a song.
She writes the best songs; her _____ are so poetic.
6. To _____ is to build something again or make a copy of something that existed in the past.
They used technology to _____ the 1920s black-and-white film and add colour to it.

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7. A _____ is a situation in which people meet each other again after being separated for some time.

Do you want to go to your ten-year school _____?

8. A _____ is the part of a song that does not change and is repeated several times.

It is such a famous song that most people can sing along to the _____.

9. A _____ is a group of words or sentences that form one section of a poem or song.

Every _____ of the song starts with "Where are you now?" and then the rest of the lines are different.

10. If something is _____, it is no good.

We were very disappointed with their second album – it was _____!

11. If something is _____, it is made to look like something real to trick people.

Ollie paid a lot of money for a signed photograph and then found out it was a _____ reproduction.

12. A _____ is when sound or video is broadcast directly over the internet.

The film trailer got thousands of online _____ on the first day.

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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 has used new technology to “extract” John Lennon’s voice from an old demo and complete an old song. He said it will be released in 2023.
- 3 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.
- 4 It was largely recorded 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 love songs Lennon wrote later in his career.
- 5 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 AI to recognise the Beatles’ voices and separate them from background noise.
- 6 It was this process that allowed McCartney to “duet” with Lennon on his recent tour. McCartney said, “We had John’s voice and a piano, and Jackson could separate them with AI. They tell the machine: ‘That’s the voice. This is a guitar. Lose the guitar.’ So when we made 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.”
- 7 ‘Now and Then’ was considered a possible reunion song for the Beatles in 1995. 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.
- 8 Though they also attempted to record ‘Now and Then’, they soon decided not to. Producer Jeff Lynne, who cleaned up the reunion songs, said that the song had a chorus but was almost totally lacking in verses.
- 9 McCartney later said George Harrison had called it “rubbish” and refused to work on it.
- 10 “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 is a democracy, so we didn’t do it.” Another factor was that the original recording had a buzzing noise from the electricity circuits in Lennon’s flat.
- 11 In 2009, a new version of the demo without the background noise was released on a fake CD, leading some people to think that it was a different recording that had been stolen from Lennon’s flat after his death.
- 12 There have been reports that McCartney would release a complete version of the song, and the musician has often spoken of his desire to finish it.
- 13 The news comes as disagreement over the use of AI music continues to increase, with high-profile fakes of Drake, the Weeknd and Kanye West receiving hundreds of thousands of streams before being removed.
- 14 McCartney said some applications of AI did worry him.
- 15 “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. Are these statements True (T) or False (F) according to the article? Correct any that are false.

1. Sir Paul McCartney is still working on the final Beatles song.
2. The song, 'Now and Then', was written in 1990.
3. Lennon's later love songs were mostly happy.
4. McCartney got the idea to use AI from a documentary about technology.
5. In 1995, they released the first new Beatles material in over two decades.
6. When they tried to record it, 'Now and Then' had verses, but the chorus wasn't very good.
7. The first recording of the song 'Now and Then' was good quality, but Harrison didn't like it.
8. Fake songs by famous musicians are now streamed hundreds of thousands of times before being removed.
9. McCartney is both excited and worried about the applications of AI.

4 Key language

a. Match the nouns to form compound nouns from the text.

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1. artificial | flat |
| 2. New York | circuit |
| 3. love | editor |
| 4. dialogue | intelligence |
| 5. background | member |
| 6. reunion | noise |
| 7. band | song |
| 8. electricity | song |

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b. Now complete the sentences with each of the compound nouns.

1. This _____ needs to be fixed – look at how the lights flicker.
2. She's gone to stay with him in his _____.
3. I recorded my presentation in a café so there was a lot of _____.
4. After ten years apart, my favourite band is going to record a _____.
5. Many artists and musicians are using _____ in their creative processes.
6. The _____'s job is to put all the dialogue audio into the film.
7. She sometimes performs with them and plays the drums, but she is not an official _____.
8. I can't stand _____. I guess I'm just not sentimental.

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- "AI will improve the quality of music."
- "AI should not be used to create content with someone's voice who hasn't given consent – dead or alive."
- "AI is just another tool like an electric guitar."
- "AI music is still music."

6 In your own words

a. Look for a short video of an AI-generated song online. Research how it was made and make notes on the following:

- 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?
- How do you feel about it? Why?

b. Present your findings and opinions to the class.