

TWO BANDS, TWO LEGENDS

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The 'sixties was a time of cultural, sexual, and musical revolution. The music scene was bombarded with folk and rock groups not only from the United States, but also from England. Two groups that captured the minds and hearts of millions were The Beatles and Simon and Garfunkel. The Beatles (earlier in their career) were thought of as sex symbols and teen-idols. They energetically sang about love and being young with a rock and roll style. Simon and Garfunkel, on the other, singing their insightful folk tunes, appealed to a more mature, reflective audience. Even though both The Beatles and Simon and Garfunkel became popular in the same time period, the groups themselves had specific qualities which gave each a distinct style.

Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Starr, and John Lennon, with their boyish charm and jazz-pop style, were The Beatles. They took control of the music review charts in England and the United States with hits such as "Can't Buy Me Love," "Hard Day's Night," "Hey, Jude," and the first song that they released which sent them on their way to fame, "I Want To Hold Your Hand." Their songs could be humorous or satirical, without being offensive or crude, showing the good taste of the group. Paul McCartney and John Lennon, who wrote most of the lyrics, proved to be genuine poets with romantic tendencies, writing about love, life, and the world. For this reason, one would be hard-pressed to find a female who was not smitten with the Fab-Four (a nick-name given to them by their home town of Liverpool, England). During their three appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, barely a lyric could be heard over the screaming of the predominantly female audience.

The Beatles became icons of the sixties. They were part of the rock-and-roll, boys-with-long-hair era that parents detested and teens idolized. In addition to their musical success, they even made two movies, *A Hard Day's Night* and the animated *Yellow Submarine*. Lurking beneath their immense success, the group had some problems. Like most music groups of the time, the members of The Beatles were involved in alcohol and drug use, including mind-altering drugs such as L.S.D. One of their hit songs, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," is a musical interpretation of an "acid trip" (L.S.D. is even part of the title--Lucy, Sky, Diamonds).

Their involvement with substance abuse did not seem to affect their popularity and musical output. They continued to produce genius works such as *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (an eclectic musical endeavor, combining sounds from several parts of the world, made into a rich rhythmic piece using over-dubbing and mixing).

The personal lives of The Beatles, on the other hand, were changed because of drug use. Ringo Starr was particularly known for his alcohol dependence. All of the members smoked an unbelievable amount of marijuana, which sometimes led to public mischief. On one occasion, a stoned John Lennon urinated from a rooftop onto a passing group of nuns. The surviving members of the group (John Lennon was murdered in 1982) overcame their drug problems later in life and, because the group broke up, pursued their own independent music careers.

Although Paul McCartney was the most successful on his own, they all had prosperous lives after The Beatles. The group has not made anymore music or appeared together since the break-up.

A similar existence with points of comparison was lived by folk-rock musicians Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel of Simon and Garfunkel. Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel grew up in Queens, New York, where they listened to, and modeled themselves after, musical greats such as Elvis Presley and The Everley Brothers. While they were in high school, Simon and Garfunkel called their group Tom and Jerry. With a little maturation and the release of their first album, *Wednesday Morning at 3 a.m.*, they changed their name to Simon and Garfunkel, which lasted until their break-up.

Wednesday Morning at 3 a.m. was a folk-gospel album that was not particularly successful for the pair. Subsequently, they changed their style somewhat, and, with magnificent hits such as "Sounds of Silence," "The Boxer," and "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," the profound musical talent of the duo was discovered and they became an enormous success. Several of their songs made it to the top of the charts not only in the United States but also in England. Paul Simon proved to be an exceptionally gifted lyricist and wrote almost all of their songs. He was known for his masterful use of imagery and beautiful melodic undertones. He used those skills to convey a message of melancholic insight and uncertainty about the world in which we live to an enormous gathering of devoted fans.

With the powerful, angelic voice of Art Garfunkel, Simon and Garfunkel were a folk-rock sensation. Fans sat in muted darkness at concerts absorbing the meaning found in lyrics such as "Hello darkness, my old friend/ I've come to talk to you again/ Because a vision softly creeping/left its seeds while I was sleeping/ and the vision that was planted in my brain/still remains in the sound of silence."

Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel each tried their hand at movie-making. Paul Simon wrote and starred in *One Trick Pony*, and Art Garfunkel appeared in a few films including *Catch 22*. Each was unsuccessful in the movie industry, unlike The Beatles.

Both Simon and Garfunkel were involved in drug use in the 'sixties and 'seventies also. While Art Garfunkel was able to leave the drugs behind, Paul Simon had to seek professional help to overcome his drug use. He did overcome his addiction, and now they both lead healthy, drug-free lives.

Simon and Garfunkel was dissolved in 1971, and each went on to a solo career. Art Garfunkel published a few books of poems and released some of his own albums, but he never again enjoyed the success he found in Simon and Garfunkel. Paul Simon, after releasing the unpopular *Hearts and Bones*, rediscovered the pop-African beat he heard in his childhood from groups of the 'fifties.

Drawing on that resource, he made the fantastically successful *Graceland* album. His newer music is labeled "world-beat" because he incorporates musical styles from several parts of the world in his work--predominately African and South American rhythms. Though Simon and Garfunkel have not made any new music together since their break-up, they did

appear together in concert in 1981 at Central Park, New York. Their reunion concert was one of the largest gatherings in the history of Central Park.

The Beatles and Simon and Garfunkel were both popular musical groups of the 'sixties that left impressions on the lives of millions of fans. They were both leaders in their genres of music (pop-rock for The Beatles, and folk-rock for Simon and Garfunkel). Both groups were masters at writing poetic and rhythmic tunes, although the tunes were different for each. Simon and Garfunkel and The Beatles embodied the spirit of the 'sixties and brought it to life through their music.