



The Dark Side of the Moon

By Pink Floyd

Released March 1, 1973

Background



Some rare photos (taken around Jan 1968) featuring all 5 members of the band.
Pictured on left: (clockwise from far left) Nick Mason, Syd Barrett, Roger Waters, Richard Wright, and David Gilmour
Pictured on right: (clockwise from top left) David Gilmour, Syd Barrett, Richard Wright, Roger Waters, and Nick Mason

Pink Floyd was an English progressive rock band, founded in 1965 by students Syd Barrett (guitar, lead vocals), Nick Mason (drums), Roger Waters (bass guitar, vocals), and Richard Wright (keyboards, vocals). Today, many believe that Syd Barrett suffered from schizophrenia, and this, combined with heavy use of hallucinogenic drugs, led to catastrophic mental deterioration, forcing him to leave the band in 1968. David Gilmour joined the band in 1967 amidst Barrett's decline to support (and eventually replace) him on guitar, and Roger Waters took over as the primary lyricist of the group, devising most (if not all) of the concepts and lyrics of Pink Floyd's subsequent albums. Barrett's tragic decline inspired many of Pink Floyd's future works, and themes surrounding madness, mental health, and the nature of the music industry (whom the band blamed in part for Barrett's downfall) became extremely prevalent in later Floyd albums.

The Dark Side of the Moon is the eighth studio album by the band and was released on March 1st, 1973. The concept album takes listeners across various stages of human life, beginning and ending with a heartbeat. This beat can also be heard throughout the album, interspersed within the songs. Themes explored include: morality, greed, time, and mental illness.

The Band (1973)

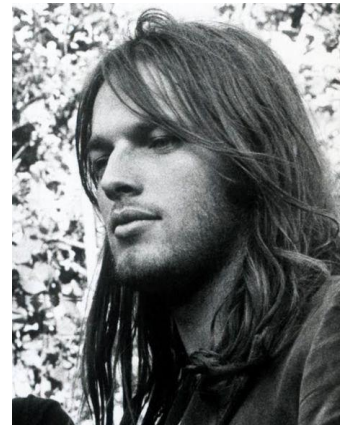
Roger Waters - Bass Guitar, Lead Vocals, Lyrics



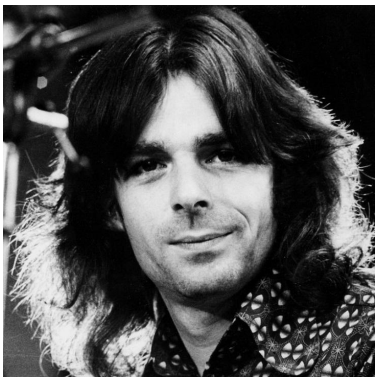
Roger Waters (1943 -) was one of the co-founders Pink Floyd, a member of the band since 1965. After the departure of founding member Syd Barrett, he also became the band's lyricist and conceptual leader. This man right here is the embodiment of "I hate myself, but I still think I'm better than everyone else." He's a genius behind some of greatest music of all time, it's just a shame he was a bit of an ass. Overall, great artist, fantastic musician, questionable ego, iconic nonetheless.

David Gilmour - Lead Vocals, Guitar

David Gilmour (1946 -) was recruited to Pink Floyd in 1967 after the departure of founding member Syd Barrett. His rich vocal quality and unique guitar sound characterized the essence of Pink Floyd's music during the 1970s. While his playing style may not be the most technically intricate, Gilmour has crafted some of the most powerful, heart-wrenching, and memorable guitar solos of all time.



Richard Wright - Vocals, Keyboards



Richard Wright (1943-2008) is *heavily* underrated. Pink Floyd's sound wouldn't be quite the same without Wright -- whether it's a haunting ambience pulled from a synthesizer or a melodic tune from a grand piano, Wright's subtle nuances crafted the atmosphere around every song he was featured on. While he didn't quite get the recognition and respect he deserved, not even from his fellow bandmates at times (*ahem* Roger), Pink Floyd would not have the same legacy that it has without the work of Richard Wright.

Nick Mason - Drums

Nick Mason (1944 -) was a founding member of the band. Mason is the only Pink Floyd member to have been featured on all of their studio albums, and the only constant member of the band since its formation in 1965. Mason knew exactly what to lend each song, whether it be a loose, psychedelic 60s groove à la *Saucerful of Secrets* or a driving disco beat as in "Another Brick in the Wall, Pt.2". Plus, he rocked a *fantastic* mustache back in the day.



Questions for Assorted Lunatics

Throughout the album, several spoken snippets can be heard -- some faint, some more audible. I could explain their origins myself, but I'll let the man behind them do the talking. On the 2011 Immersion Edition of Dark Side of the Moon, one of the bonuses is this handwritten note by Roger Waters called "Questions for Assorted Lunatics", where he explains the meaning behind the spoken tidbits featured on the album.

"People often ask me about the voices on Dark Side. I was trying to gather audio snippets to mix into segues on Dark Side. Rather than interviewing people I came up with the idea of writing a series of questions on cards. The cards would be in a stack on a conductor's stand in front of a mike. We would scour Abbey Road Studios for willing guinea pigs, bring them to the studio, sit them down, roll tape and then ask them to respond to each card in order.

As I recall the first card was something irrelevant and innocuous, like "What's your favourite colour?" and the last was the more enigmatic "What do you think of The Dark Side Of The Moon?"

I can't remember the ones in between, except for:

Are you afraid of dying?

When were you last violent?

Were you in the right?

Do you ever think you're going mad?

If so why?

End of Story."

SIDE ONE

Speak to Me

[Intro]

Heartbeat

This simple addition gets to the humanity at the core of *The Dark Side of the Moon* -- a heartbeat is the universal starting point that connects all of humanity (and will eventually make the album come full circle at its finale). Out of this heartbeat grows an overture of sorts, which foreshadows the rest of the album and contains small sound bites that hint at what's to come.

[Spoken: Chris Adamson, Gerry O'Driscoll]

Pink Floyd's production manager and the Abbey Road Studios doorman, respectively.

I've been mad for fucking years

Absolutely years, been over the edge for yonks

Been working with bands so long, I think, crikey

These two quotes center on the theme of "madness", Mental illness was a theme which really captivated Pink Floyd and was present in many of their works, in large part due to Syd Barrett and his mental decline. Barrett's presence can be felt in *The Dark Side of the Moon* in the musings throughout the album-- ex. How the chaos of modern life can bring about madness.

I've always been mad, I know I've been mad

Like the most of us have

Very hard to explain why you're mad

Even if you're not mad

Laughter

In the broadest sense, *The Dark Side of the Moon* is an album about *life* -- all of the noise and bustle we're surrounded by, and the struggle of trying to cut through that noise to find a glimmer of truth and beauty. But before all that happens, we introduce ourselves to the world with a heartbeat and a breath. In a minute long swell, "Speak to Me"/"Breathe" sends us into the album just as birth sends us into the chaotic throws of life.

Breathe (In the Air)

[INTRO]

[Gilmour]

Breathe, breathe in the air

Don't be afraid to care

Leave but don't leave me

Look around, choose your own ground

For long you live and high you fly

And smiles you'll give and tears you'll cry

And all you touch and all you see

Is all your life will ever be

Run, rabbit run

Dig that hole, forget the sun

And when at last the work is done

Don't sit down, it's time to dig another one

For long you live and high you fly

But only if you ride the tide

And balanced on the biggest wave

You race towards an early grave

"Speak to Me" erupts seamlessly into "Breathe". From the chaos, we emerge into a mellow composition brought to life by Gilmour's swirling, soaring guitar and Wright's delicate Miles Davis-inspired keyboards. This song just kind of envelops you, encapsulates you in a warm hug and symbolizes you being sent out into the world. This song is a sweet but somber sort of introduction, and almost seems like advice being given from a parent to a young child.

To create the soaring melody lines in "Breathe", David Gilmour used a **lap steel guitar**.

From Jane Chai: "There's this idea about people being thrust into the world without their consent. They are suddenly something from nothing and that's stressful as hell and this song is stressful but still relatively peaceful (compared to the rest of the album) so it captures the anger of being born, but you just have to accept it."

Ah, yes -- the bustle of modern life. Never stop, never rest, only work and work and never ask what it's all for. You finish a day's work to earn your sleep but then when you wake up in the morning, you realize you have to do the same thing again every day for the rest of your life, until it's eventually all over. This could also be a reference to the loony White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland* - "I'm late, I'm late for a very important date" (Thank you Jane for bringing this detail to my attention)

But the miserable life outlined in the previous lines isn't the only way of living -- that would only be your fate if you choose the easy way of living and **ride the tide**. You can seek thrills, glory, and individuality and **ride the biggest wave**, but by doing this, you risk burning out suddenly and ending your life early, just like Syd Barrett. Many great minds have broken the mold and ridden this wave to bring beauty and clarity into the world, only to become extinguished as they crashed onto the shore. Greatness -- *enlightenment*-- comes at a steep cost.

On the Run

[Instrumental]

This chaotic instrumental is an auidial representation of anxiety, the frantic pace of the modern world, and the confusion of trying to figure out what it means to be human. This song was mainly inspired by the band's experiences travelling while on tour, constantly rushing between venues and hotels and airports. The fast-paced track is interspersed with sound effects such as footsteps, airplanes taking off, and various sounds emulating the "Doppler Effect" to accentuate the feeling of urgency. The abrupt shift into "On the Run" from "Breathe" signifies how quickly be are thrust from birth directly into the hectic throws of modern life.

[00:27]

"Have your baggage and your passports ready and then follow the green line to customs and immigration. BA flight 215 to Rome, Cairo and Lagos..."

Richard Wright in particular was afraid of flying, as it instilled a fear of death in him -- especially the fact that all control over his life or his death was placed in the hands of someone else. This symbol of the airport perfectly symbolizes the feeling of anxiety brought on by the modern world -- it's a man-made creation where people are constantly arriving and departing, never stopping and never slowing, always on the move. It's a place where your life is placed into the hands of a complete stranger, and your fate lies completely out of your control.

[01:54: Roger Manifold]

Live for today, gone tomorrow. That's me

Laughs

Sounds of a plane crashing

This line, uttered by Pink Floyd road manager Roger "The Hat" Manifold, speaks to the futility of life. You get lost in the constant bustle of the modern world, and you could look around one day and realize you've been so caught up that your whole life has passed you by. Blink, and you and your life are gone and forgotten, and your one moment of existence was wasted by constantly rushing and worrying and never stopping to look around for once. Also, this line pans quickly from the right channel to the left, almost like the speaker is flitting back and forth and only has enough time to utter this line, only to vanish immediately afterward. These subtle touches are so utterly fantastic and show just how much care was put into crafting the album.

I really love the touch of the heartbeats pulsing throughout the song... and then at the end, the sounds of frantic footsteps and panting lead us directly into... →

Time

[Intro]

This intro is long! No doubt about it -- but it's for a reason: This track focuses on the idea that we waste so much time worrying or working or floating through life that all of a sudden we wake up and realize just how much has passed us by without us realizing. The loose drums seem so emulate the feeling of playing around nonsensically in your youth and not really taking life seriously. Then -- we cut directly into an abrupt awakening, the realization that there's nothing to prepare for or wait for anymore -- *this is what life is. This is what you've been waiting for, and it started long before you woke up and realized it.*

[Verse 1: David Gilmour & Richard Wright]

Ticking away the moments that make up the dull day

Fritter and waste the hours in an offhand way

Kicking around on a piece of ground in your hometown

Waiting for someone or something to show you the way

Tired of lying in the sunshine, staying home to watch the rain

You are young and life is long and there is time to kill today

And then, one day, you find, ten years have got behind you

No one told you when to run, you missed the starting gun

We think we have so much more time than we actually do. We think that we're young and have so much time to waste, but no one actually told us when to start living and all of a sudden, everything has passed us by. We only have so many days, and yet, we waste our most precious ones just doing morose things to pass the time. In a way, we're just filling the areas between birth and death with meaningless nonsense to kill the hours. Are we really waiting for life to start, or are we just waiting around for it to end?

[Guitar Solo]

Fantastic solo by Gilmour here! This one's one of the most memorable off of the album -- and the fact that it occurs only briefly after the first verse reinforces the theme of the song: so much time was wasted on the intro that now, we're trying to pack as much as possible into the song with the little time we have left.

[Verse 2: David Gilmour & Richard Wright]

And you run, and you run to catch up with the sun, but it's sinking

Racing around to come up behind you again

The sun is the same in a relative way, but you're older

Shorter of breath, and one day closer to death

Every year is getting shorter, never seem to find the time

Plans that either come to naught or half a page of scribbled lines

Hanging on in quiet desperation is the English way

The time is gone, the song is over, thought I'd something more to say...

Once we realize how little time we actually have in our lives, we run and run to make up for the days we wasted, but in the end it makes no difference at all -- we waste our lives doing meaningless garbage, then we waste it trying to make up for the time we lost as the sands are slipping away out of our grasp. We only get one chance on this Earth, and yet, we take it for granted.

Time (cont.) / Breathe Reprise

[Outro: David Gilmour]

Home, home again

I like to be here when I can

And when I come home cold and tired

It's good to warm my bones beside the fire

Far away across the field

The tolling of the iron bell

Calls the faithful to their knees

To hear the softly spoken **magic spells**

I think this section serves as sort of the antithesis of "On the Run" -- it represents those magical little moments far away from the constant stress of life where you can finally rest for a brief moment, catch your breath, and feel safe and warm.

The song ends with the **tolling of the iron bell**, almost like a funeral. This is where the song mellows out and slows down. It almost seems to imply that in reality, the only peace we can truly find in our lives is in death, or in accepting the fact that change is an inevitable thing. Maybe this is something we only realize at the end of it all, a regret that haunts us in our final hours. This section may also serve as a thinly veiled criticism of **religion**, as Waters is a known atheist (surprise surprise). Or maybe it's musing on those things in life that we turn to for comfort, the things we let ourselves be enchanted by which briefly whisk us away from pain and fear. (This kind of solace also doesn't have to necessarily stem from faith or God.)

The Great Gig in the Sky

[Intro: Gerry O'Driscoll]

"I am not frightened of dying

Any time will do, I don't mind

Why should I be frightened of dying?

There's no reason for it, you've gotta go sometime."

[Vocal Improvisation: Clare Torry]

[Patricia Watts]

"I never said I was afraid of dying..."

Richard Wright, who wrote the song, has mentioned that this song is about life gradually descending into death. The powerful, earth-shattering vocals by Clare Torry wordlessly communicate frustration, anguish, and eventually, acceptance. Durga McBroom and Lorelei McBroom, background singers for Pink Floyd, always thought of this song as a woman who realizes she has cancer, and goes through different stages of grief before coming to terms with this fact and eventually accepting death.

At some point in this song, some people have heard the line "If you can hear this whispering, you're dying." Many people believe that's what is actually said at this moment, *not* what's written here, and some people say that the two are actually separate lines, with the "you're dying" line occurring sometime later on in the song. Either way, the fact that people have heard the spoken snippets of the song completely differently is still pretty fascinating.

SIDE TWO

Money

[INTRO] (7/4)

[Verse 1: David Gilmour]

Money, get away

This song is sort of unintentionally ironic, because it denounces money as a sin and the root of all evil, however, this song (and the whole album in general) made the band *a lot* of money. Like A LOT. Like "45 million copies sold" a lot. The richest member of the band, Roger Waters, has a current estimated net worth of 310 million dollars, and no album has even come *close* to Dark Side's record of consecutive time spent on the charts (741 weeks. That is 14 ¼ YEARS).

Get a good job with good pay and you're okay

Money, it's a gas

"Gas" could be used here to mean a good time, or a fuel which drives society (get a load of this capitalism am I right)

Grab that cash with both hands and make a stash

New car, caviar, four star daydream

Think I'll buy me a football team

This might be a stretch, but I always mentally linked that warbly-wobbly sounding guitar noise and the main riff in this song to the soundtracks of western movies. It just makes sense to me in the way that money, greed, and capitalism have sort of made society into an every-man-for-himself wild west sort of situation.

[Verse 2: David Gilmour]

Money, get back

"Alright Jack" is a slang term in the UK which refers to selfish people who refuse to help others.

I'm all right, Jack keep your hands off of my stack

Money, it's a hit

Don't give me that do goody good bullshit

I'm in the high-fidelity first class traveling set

And I think I need a Lear jet

I *KNOW* I always go on about the odd time signature in this song, but I find it really cool how it can be set on a foundation that's so unconventional, and yet your ears don't even notice it! And the transition between 7/4 and 4/4 is so seamless and masterfully done.

[Saxophone solo (Dick Parry) (7/4) & Guitar solo (4/4)]

Money (cont.)

[Verse 3: David Gilmour] (7/4)

Money, it's a crime

Share it fairly but don't take a slice of my pie

Money, so they say

Is the root of all evil today

But if you ask for a rise it's no surprise that they're

Giving none away, away, away

Many people like to think that giving money to the poor is a good idea and everyone should do it, but not many people want it to be their own money (especially not the rich). Similar to how many people are in favour of more government spending in things like health and education but almost nobody thinks their own taxes should be increased.

Pink Floyd roadie, and father of actress Naomi Watts!

[Spoken Outro: Interview excerpts (Peter Watts, Chris Adamson, Gerry O'Driscoll, Patricia Watts, Henry McCullough)*

Member of Paul McCartney & Wings at the time

- Yeah -- (chuckles) -- I was in the right!

- Yes, absolutely in the right!

- I certainly was in the right!

- Yeah, I was definitely in the right; that geezer was cruising for a bruising...

- Yeah

- **Why does anyone do anything?**

- I don't know, I was really drunk at the time...

- I was just telling him it was in, he could get it in to number two. He was asking why it wasn't coming up on fader eleven. After, I was yelling and screaming and telling him *why* it wasn't coming up on fader eleven. It came to a heavy blow, which sorted the matter out

* Responses to the questions: When was the last time you were violent? Were you in the right? Why did you do it? These questions -- and their self-righteous, prideful answers showing people's nonchalance about greed and violence lead perfectly into "Us and Them", a mellow tune musing on the pointlessness of war.

Us and Them

I love how the organ at the start of the song sounds sort of like a church organ, almost like at a funeral service.

[Verse 1: David Gilmour & Richard Wright]

Us and them

And after all we're only ordinary men

Me and you

God only knows it's not what we would choose to do

"Forward" he cried from the rear

And the front rank died

And the general sat and the lines on the map

Moved from side to side

[Verse 2: David Gilmour & Richard Wright]

Black and blue

And who knows which is which and who is who

Up and down

And in the end it's only round and round, and round

"Haven't you heard it's a battle of words?"

The poster bearer cried

"Listen, son," said the man with the gun

"There's room for you inside"

This song is a mellow tune musing on the cyclical, pointless nature of war. Roger Waters' father died in World War II when he was only 4 months old, which lends the songs a personal, melancholic touch.

This line is interesting to me because the majority of the band considered themselves atheists. So maybe this line is almost rhetorical, as in, *nobody* really knows why these things happen. Or maybe it's alluding to how people say wars are just "god's will", and don't actually blame them on the recklessness and cruelty of those who are really responsible for them.

To the people who bark out the orders, a single word can kill hundreds in an instant, permanently sealing their fate. Maps are redrawn, cultures are split and destroyed, families are torn apart, but all of this carries no more weight to them than lines moving around on a map.

When seen in a different (larger?) view, what seemed like a game of ups and downs now appears as a cycle of violence and suffering. This concept is captured well in the Hindu/Buddhist idea of samsara, the endless karmic cycle of suffering and death that characterizes the human condition.

Us and Them (cont.)

[Interlude]

[Spoken: Roger Manifold]

I mean, they're not gonna kill ya

So, like, if you give 'em a quick short, sharp, shock

They don't do it again

Dig it? I mean he got off light

'Cause I could've given him a thrashing

I only hit him once!

It was only a difference of right and wrong, innit?

I mean good manners don't cost nothing do they, eh?

[Saxophone Solo (Dick Parry)]

[Verse 3: David Gilmour & Richard Wright]

Down (Down, down, down, down) and out (Out, out, out, out)

It can't be helped but there's a lot of it about

With (With, with, with, with), without

And who'll deny it's what the fighting's all about?

Out of the way, it's a busy day

I've got things on my mind

For the want of the price of tea and a slice

The old man died

Many wars are fought over strained resources. Nations will go to war when they're down and out, or will find themselves in that situation after the war's over. Money and war are linked together (just like this song and the one before it, both lyrically and through the choice of spoken quotes) -- war causes economic hardship, and economic hardship causes war.

This line (and verse) could refer to how the mistreatment of soldiers continues after they come home: veterans often return from war only to find themselves impoverished and homeless. And everyone else, especially those in power who started the whole mess, are too selfish or unbothered to bat an eye. Veterans end up struggling for the rest of their lives and are left with nothing at the end of the day.

Any Colour You Like

Those who argue that each song on the album represents a different pressure in life (time, money, etc.) would say that this track represents drugs. "Any Colour You Like" is the most psychedelic song on the album.

[Instrumental]

The song could also be about the illusion of choice. Henry Ford once said, "You can have a Ford in any color you like, as long as it's black."

The phrase "Any Colour You Like" may also connect back to the album's cover art, which depicts white light being broken into the full colour spectrum.

Brain Damage

[Verse 1: Roger Waters]

The lunatic is on the grass

The lunatic is on the grass

Remembering games and daisy chains and laughs

Got to keep the loonies on the path

The lunatic is in the hall

The lunatics are in my hall

The paper holds their folded faces to the floor

And every day the paperboy brings more

Waters is referring to areas of turf which display signs saying "Please keep off the grass" with the implication that disobeying such signs might indicate insanity. Waters remarked in the 2003 Dark Side documentary that not letting people on such beautiful grass is the real insanity.

As suggested by clips played behind the band in concerts, this refers to the big "lunatic" politicians that we see every day in our newspapers.

[Chorus: Roger Waters]

And if the dam breaks open many years too soon

And if there is no room upon the hill

And if your head explodes with dark forebodings too

I'll see you on the dark side of the moon

The word "lunatic" is derived from the Latin word "lunaticus" which means a person that admires the moon or metaphorically is living on the moon, and therefore is crazy. This can be seen as a clever reference to the album's title.

Brain Damage (cont.)

[Verse 2: Roger Waters & Peter Watts]

The lunatic is in my head (*Laughter*)

The lunatic is in my head

You raise the blade

You make the change

You rearrange me till I'm sane

You lock the door

And throw away the key

And there's someone in my head but it's not me

"Raise the blade and make the change" refers to society changing this person. But the point of this verse is, who decides whether he's a lunatic or not? Is anyone who has a different mentality than society automatically "mad" or a lunatic?

The "someone" referred to in the line "There's someone in my head but it's not me", is the person society implemented in the singer's head to replace their real self so they can fit in with society's ideals. But who is the real lunatic, the speaker, or the "someone" they put in their head? By "the lunatic is in my head", does the singer mean their natural state is lunacy or that society's dictations/the "normalized" version of themselves they were turned into is crazy?

[Chorus: Roger Waters]

And if the cloud bursts, thunder in your ear

You shout and no one seems to hear

And if the band you're in starts playing different tunes

I'll see you on the dark side of the moon

Possibly referencing Barrett's departure from the band

This almost feels to me like Roger saying to his old friend, "we're all crazy, and although society didn't have a place for us, we're gonna meet again someday, somewhere where we're protected from their judgemental eyes -- someplace far away that they'll never see or understand"

[Outro: Peter Watts]

I can't think of anything to say, except...

Laughter

I think it's marvellous!

Chuckles



Eclipse

[Verse: Roger Waters & David Gilmour]

All that you touch and all that you see

All that you taste, all you feel

And all that you love and all that you hate

All you distrust, all you save

And all that you give and all that you deal

And all that you buy, beg, borrow, or steal

And all you create and all you destroy

And all that you do and all that you say

And all that you eat and everyone you meet (Everyone you meet)

And all that you slight and everyone you fight

And all that is now and all that is gone

And all that's to come and everything under the sun is in tune

But the sun is eclipsed by the moon

[Outro: Gerry O'Driscoll]

There is no dark side in the moon really

Matter of fact it's all dark

Heartbeat

As the climactic finale of the album, "Eclipse" highlights simply that the summation of everything you are, every little detail that forms your life, as much as it matters to you/as hard as it is to get it all "in tune" --that is, to reach enlightenment and find true meaning-- eventually it's all "eclipsed by the moon", i.e. not really important at all.

The album ends just as it begins -- with a heartbeat. This lends a cyclical feel to the album, almost like it's actually a loop (The lyrics "All that you touch and all that you see" also link back to "Breathe"). The cycle of life will continue just like this, and we may struggle in different ways with war and greed and the daunting flow of time, but we are all the same -- we are all connected by our beating hearts and our humanity.

Album fun fact! If you turn up the volume on the heartbeats, you can hear an instrumental of the Beatles' "Ticket to Ride" playing faintly in the background because it was playing in the lobby of Abbey Road Studios during the time of recording.