

## **George Martin - Studio Production Techniques**

*(The following is a summary of the Independent's article 'Strawberry Fields Forever': The making of a masterpiece, November 29th 2006)*

- > Forty years ago to the month The Beatles recorded possibly their most complex track. Robert Webb reveals how "Strawberry Fields Forever" was laid down in the studio
- > November 1966, The Beatles are at Abbey Road studios to record their eighth album. Enthralled by their experiments on the Revolver album, the new record would be comprised of songs that could only be performed in the studio.
- > The project would develop into Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band
- > 19 Year Old Geoff Emerick, the Beatles sound engineer, who had spliced tape and nudged faders with George Martin on the Revolver album and subsequent records recalls the legendary sessions...
- > There was just one hitch he said "*John had been listening to his acetate of Strawberry Fields..and he decided he didn't like it*". It needed to be "*Heavier*".
- > As a result Emerick experimented with backwards tape to try and meet Lennon's demands for the song.
- > With the final mix completed, and the recordings now incomprehensible from their acoustic beginnings, Lennon was still not satisfied.
- > He had listened to the early acetate again and preferred the original opening bars.
- > Lennon then told his recording team that he wanted the two different versions joined together.
- > Martin then explained to Lennon that this was not possible as the two versions had been played in different keys, at different tempos and the arrangements for both versions were very different.
- > Emerick recalls that "*John appeared nonplussed*" and "*I'm not sure he even understood why that presented a problem*". Emerick, with the approval of Martin and the help of Lennon and McCartney then worked late into the evening, with only a pair of editing scissors, two tape machines and a varispeed control to control the pace of the recording.
- > What Emerick discovered was that by speeding up the playback of the first acetate and slowing down the playback speed of the second, he was able to match the two takes in both pitch and tempo.
- > Martin and Emerick allowed the second half to play all the way through at the slower speed.
- > According to Emerick "*Doing so gave John's voice a smoky, thick quality that complemented the psychedelic lyric and swirling instrumentation*"...the rest is history so they say.