

Yellow Submarine

LANGUAGE LEVEL
INTERMEDIATE

Track

7

Speaker:
Justin Ratcliffe
(Standard British accent)

Ringo Starr's best known vocal performance is undoubtedly "Yellow Submarine." Paul McCartney was the main songwriter (although most Beatles' songs were credited to Lennon-McCartney) and explained in a 1984 interview: "I wrote that in bed one night as a kid's story. And then we thought it would be good for Ringo to do."

The first lines of the song are about a sailor¹ (a man who *sailed to sea*) from Liverpool, talking about his life in the deep seas (*in the land of submarines*). The band decide to sail away² to the *sea of green*, living underwater (beneath the waves) in a *yellow submarine*.

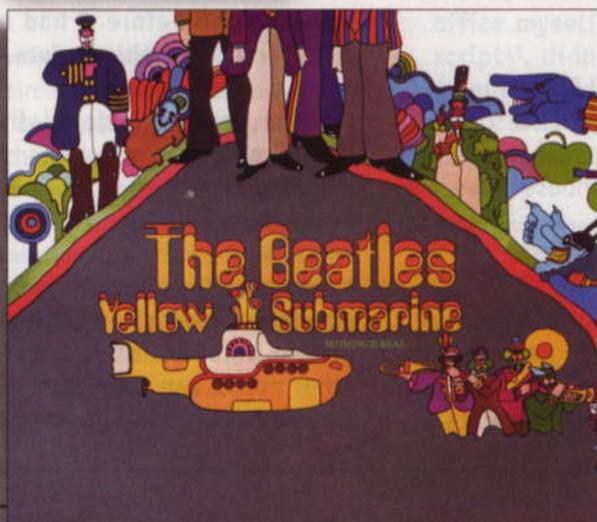
There is a party atmosphere (*our friends are all aboard*), with even their good friends being neighbours³. At the time Paul McCartney lived next door to folk singer Donovan, whose hits included "Colours." It is there-

fore appropriate that Donovan contributed the line "*sky of blue, sea of green*" to "Yellow Submarine." The final verse tells us that life is not difficult (*we live a life of ease*⁴), and everyone is happy (*has all we need*) – you can hear how much fun the Beatles had recording this song, and in fact the session concluded with everyone dancing around the Abbey Road studios, conga-style, singing "*we all live in a Yellow Submarine*." The song became the inspiration for and title of the 1967 film, a cartoon with actors' voices portraying the Beatles travelling to Pepperland to stop the Blue Meanies⁵ from destroying music. Various theories suggest the lyrics of the song are about drugs, death or just a reflection of the Beatles' lifestyle at the time, but in a 1966 interview Paul McCartney discounted this⁶: "It's a happy place, that's all. We were trying to write a children's song. That was the basic idea. And there's nothing more to be read into it than there is in the lyrics of any children's song." □

This recording features a brief excerpt from The Beatles' 1966 song, "Yellow Submarine" (Lennon-McCartney).

Glossary

- 1 sailor - marinheiro.
- 2 to sail away - "içar velas", zarpar.
- 3 neighbours - vizinhos.
- 4 ease - tranquilidade, sossego.
- 5 Blue Meanies - criaturas de fantasia que no filme procuram destruir a música.
- 6 discounted this - negou tudo isso.



English Through Music...

Fergal Kavanagh, the author of this article, runs the website www.tuneintoenglish.com. The Students' Area features activities for learning English through pop music.

