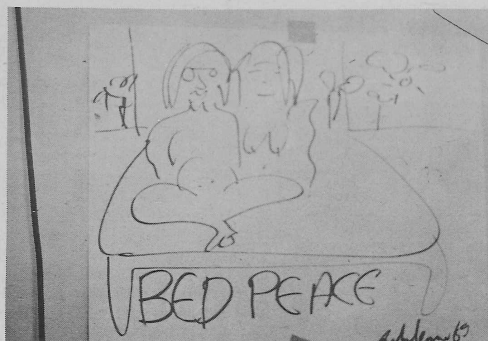




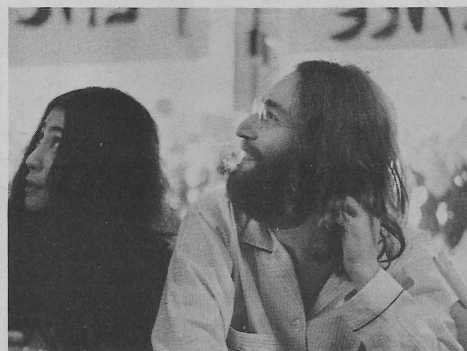
John




Lennon



Impressions



by Michel Celemenski

Last June Montreal was visited by John Lennon. His bed-in at the Queen Elizabeth was widely carried by most of the major American publications, including the Rostrum.

Early one Saturday morning, I decided I wanted to see John Lennon. I knew he was staying at the Queen Elizabeth, but fortunately, I also knew the room number. I phoned the switchboard, and was promptly connected. I talked to one of the people who had a part in Lennon's bureaucracy. Luckily enough Lennon heard our conversation and upon the realization that I was with some type of youth press, I was told to come up. Once up there I waited for a while. During the time that passed, a reporter from the McGill Daily, a woman from The Montrealer, and some other people from some American pop magazine were told that Lennon was not seeing anyone. At approximately 11:30 the door opened and I heard a voice, Yoko's, inviting me in.

For those of you who were not up to see Lennon, it must now be revealed that he had two beds, one in a centre room where proper lighting was set up for the press, and another where Lennon spent his nights and relaxed between press interviews. Since it was relatively early, Lennon was still in the latter, and was very much relaxed, and at peace. I was greeted very warmly by a smiling, bearded Lennon, who asked me to hop into bed. For the next hour and a half, I found myself conversing with a man, whom I knew only from what I had read, as though we were old friends.

Since Lennon's interviews have been published in many publications, I feel it would be useless to reprint our conversation, but rather to explore the man as he appeared on that day and his impact on our generation. Before doing that we must establish Lennon's position in pop culture. As far as his musical talents are concerned, he is generally considered a genius, an innovator and a leader. His greatest fault in this realm is that he has tried to establish himself as the philosophical head of the culture. Unlike Bob Dylan, whose main purpose was to be a folk singer, but who became an idol and hero because of his intelligence and work, Lennon is trying to impose himself on the movement. Since he was never considered an important protest singer, he is trying to become a leader by getting involved, rather than allowing people to judge him on his credits of his artistic work. However, I do believe that he is sincere, and it should be understood that Lennon is not doing this for publicity, but truly believes that he had been chosen to lead, a reason why his critics call him a pseudo-Jesus. However, this is not entirely true, because when asked who his greatest influence was (choices given Christ, Buddha, the Maharishi, etc.) his simple answer was Yoko, a sad disappointment, but at least a simple truth.

Lennon, unfortunately it seems, does not really understand the New Left, but is only thrilled by some of the people involved in it. For example, he believed that Timothy Leary would make a good governor of California; that is like saying Jerry Rubin or Abbie Hoffman would make a good president—

not that these people are not important in attracting public attention, but that they could never realistically handle such portfolios. Lennon supported Norman Mailer for Mayor of New York. Mailer's campaign for mayor was extremely well organized and offered a fresh, new approach to urban problems in America. As a man Mailer would have been very capable of handling the position; however, during the conversation, Lennon never quite seemed to understand the implications of Mailer's crusade.

Lennon gives the impression of being largely apolitical. One question which I asked him: "Since Marxism, to exist politically, must use violent revolution; and capitalism, economically, must use imperialistic wars, do you condone either system even though the former seeks social equality?" Answer: "No. Violence is not necessary. Changing the political system does not accomplish inner peace." That's easy to say when you're a multi-millionaire.

However, Lennon as a human being far outshines Lennon the intellectual. He is warm, extremely friendly, and does not try to impose his fame on anyone. A little incident which was very touching occurred when I introduced myself to him. He said "Hello, my name is John." This was said in total seriousness. One noticeable part of Lennon is that he is impeccably clean. He was wearing striped pajamas, and his feet, hands, face, and hair are immaculately well kept. The people around him seemed to be very disorganized, but he didn't seem to share in their confusion.

Yoko is a very beautiful woman. Her pictures do not do her justice at all, because her face is very mysterious behind her long, flowing hair. She, unfortunately, does not have the Chaisma that Lennon very definitely possesses. She never really overshadowed Lennon at any time, but rather served as a foil to him.

During the interview, Lennon did make some very poignant statements. Here is a list of a few of them:

On:

War: War is just a business. People who go to war to bring about peace are fooling themselves.

His Music: I reflect what I am.

Religion (East and West): Versions of the same thing dressed up differently.

Realization: People should use whatever means to discover themselves; drugs, meditation, religion, or anything else.

Racism: Racism is just a game.

Mixed Marriages: Yoko and I both married foreigners.

Hunger: Give the money they spend on armaments to people. Cash in the arms.

Unfortunately, Lennon himself falls into a trap with such a statement. He himself could easily cash in on fame. Had he given concerts in Montreal rather than just do his lie-in, he could have raised many hundreds of thousands of dollars for starving people.

