

# John Lennon and Yoko Ono Interview

## Surrey, England

### Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1968

From Maurice Hindle's notes:

*The following interview was conducted in December 1968 by myself, Maurice Hindle, then a student at Keele University, England, and a fellow student, Daniel Wiles. We talked all afternoon and into the evening. This interview offers a condensed version of that compelling John Lennon outlook by which so many people have been and will continue to be affected. Such a mind cuts across frontiers, ideologies, religions and histories. What he says cannot be filed away under '1960s hippy rhetoric', much as many would want to do that. The issue over personal politics is as relevant - probably more relevant - now as it was then, or at any other time in history.*

*As a stimulus to discussion, I showed him 'An open letter to John Lennon' from someone called John Hoyland, a writer for Tariq Ali's radical left socialist paper Black Dwarf. He accused Lennon and the Beatles of 'selling out' to capitalism instead of being what the author of the letter wanted him to be - a socialist revolutionary. I guessed that the condescending tone of the attack would incite Lennon into some interesting comments - and I was right. As well as being interested to learn more about John's political and personal beliefs, his values and attitudes, since he was now in close partnership with Yoko, I wanted to draw out his view of the arts and the creative process.*

- Maurice Hindle

## Transcript [part one]

Interviewer: *So what's your angle? Do you take any angle?*

JL: **My angle is what I am, y'know? It's my angle there. And all the statements I make in the songs or in the things I do.**

Interviewer: *Now, how can people be changed, to make your point?*

JL: **Well, you can change people, change their heads.**

Interviewer: *Can you?*

JL: **Yeah I've changed a lot of people's heads. A lot of people have changed my head, just with their records. It's apart from anything**

**else they do.**

Interviewer: *They just change over time.*

**JL: Yeah, but... y'know. I believe you can change. that's what Yoko and my singing is, to change it like that.**

Interviewer: *But aren't you sort of preaching to the converted, the young people that are going to be influenced by you are people that are already your fans.*

**JL: Well, a lot of our fans are fascists, y'know?**

Interviewer: *Yeah, worse than the fascists are the sort of everyday commuters...*

**JL: Yeah, but y'see, you can't just, you can't, look, put them in bags you know. There are some alright people everywhere. And you're not preaching it. Well what are they doing? Y'know? What can they do? All I'm saying is I think you should do it by changing people's heads and they're saying, "Well we should smash the system." Now, the system smashing scene's been going on forever, y'know?**

**JL: What's it done? The Irish did it, and the Russians did it and, the French did it and where's in gone? It's gone nowhere, y'know?**

Interviewer: *But don't you see this age as something different than any other?*

**JL: Yeah, I think the combination of what he's trying to say and do and what we're trying to say and do might do it, y'know?**

**JL: I believe it is different this time. That's why I don't believe that will be it. Because that's the same old game, y'know? I mean, you smash it up but who's gonna run it? Who's gonna take over? The ones who are the biggest smashers. They'll be the ones that get in first and they'll be the ones like in Russia that take over again, y'know?**

Interviewer: *They'll just substitute another system for the one we've already got....*

**JL: I don't know what the answer is. I think it's just down to people here. And he wants to practice just communicating with somebody he knows and see how well he does that before he smashes up the fella's house and then tries to communicate with him.**

*Interviewer: I think what they think is, y'know the capitalist system, advertising all this business is that you don't get so much in communist countries. It's makes people competitive and thus alienated with each other because they're always competing.*

**JL: But they're... Y'know, who says they're not competitive in Russia or anywhere? The whole bloody scene is, I mean it's actually alternative. Y'know, I mean their communist Christian principles are the ones I like. But I mean, not Russia. I mean, where's that? Nowhere. And what are they doing? They're... Okay, so they don't call it Capitalism, but they're competing 'round the Moon, they're competing 'round everything, they're competing at the Olympic Games, they compete with the whole... so it's called Communism. So it doesn't mean a thing.**

**JL: And I don't make the... it's all that competition that's just there anyway. Nobody instills it into you.**

*Interviewer: Do you think so? I mean when you've been told on television to get a better car or a something like this, you're always working...*

**JL: Well yeah, if people's whole thing was changed, but that wouldn't work, y'know. The same as any indoctrination wouldn't work if people's heads were changed. I mean, how does it affect you about the cars, y'know?**

*Interviewer: Well, I think it does, I think I can't help it...*

**JL: I mean, but, I think you're grown up enough to see through advertising.**

*Interviewer: Yeah, but the thing is, it's not only advertising, it's all sorts of insidious ways that they get you to join in the system. And the, y'know, university there's a, I mean it's the closest to a liberal education, but really it's just, y'know it's just basically getting into the system and making you competitive with each other to get these sort of top jobs.*

**JL: Yeah, well I think it's to leave university, isn't it?**

YO: <laughs> **Have you thought about that?**

JL: **I mean, I was lucky I was thrown out. So, they did it for me.**

JL: **And that guy saying in his letter about the "mop tops" and that. Okay, so we "mop topped" it, y'know to get where I am. I'm here so's to do what I'm doing. But, what's he doing? That's the point.**

Interviewer: *That bring us to a point of, you're getting down to like people's potential. Obviously people's potential is pretty different. The fact that you could... <unintelligible>*

JL: **I was doing it anyway, y'know? I never stopped it. I've been doing the same thing all me life. I've never done anything different. And he's always been there moaning and so is the other faction. I've never changed that much. During my whole life I've been rocking since I've had the guitar, which is fourteen. And I'm still rocking, y'know. And that's what I'm doing.**

Interviewer: *It's all the same, y'know. The fact that you haven't changed or nothing hasn't really changed...*

JL: **I mean all the thing... there's been millions of changes. But, y'know, I'm still doing exactly the same thing I was doing at school, or at art school, and as a Beatle. And the mop top image is when you were, the kinda thing you did when you're finally cornered in school and you have to just, either get smashed completely. And I'm not going to get meself crucified if I can help it. And, uh, so I've compromised, but I wanna see someone who hasn't who's alive.**

JL: **I don't know, y'know?. She's the less compromised, most least compromised person I've met.**

Interviewer: *Yeah, I would say that...*

JL: **But she's still here! Y'know, so... yeah.**

Interviewer: *But have you ever been to, y'know, in India or anything, have you ever met people who haven't compromised, sort of a in a sense sort of Buddhist setup, monastery theme, where people just...*

JL: **Well, y'know, so they haven't compromised all the things we've compromised, but where are they, y'know? Y'know, so there are**

millions of guys in monasteries all over the place, but most of them are nowhere y'know. They're just, they are nowhere y'know.

Interviewer: *Yeah, there are little cells...*

JL: Well, so there's... Well so they might be, but you can do it here. That's what I found out about India. Well I mean, I knew it anyway, intellectually, but finding out is something... you can, where ever you are is it, y'know in it. You can do it anywhere, it's all down to your head. Y'know, whatever system you're in or whatever is going on, all works of a great artist of the past, all of them, they all came through these shitty systems anyway. And they've still left their message, left an impression. But I still want to change it, but I mean if you're going to get through, you get through.

Interviewer: *I think the system's too powerful for most people.*

JL: Well, I mean it's like, uh, everybody's already certainly noticed the system. Just lately, the last few years. But all those greats in the past, I don't have any names but they were there...

Interviewer: *Kafka...*

JL: Yeah, even Shaw and Joyce and all them are the same, they knew where it was at. They just did their work, y'know, and they changed it by doing their work. And none of them are out hustling and wrestling and, uh...

Interviewer: *Smashing.*

JL: ...attacking people. There's no point in sort of attacking the ill-advised. Y'know, he should do what he's doing if he believes in it and consider me an ally rather than someone that needs ticking off, from his point of view.

Interviewer: [paraphrased from Hindle's notes] *But what about people who have nothing to believe in? Those who can't break out of themselves to do what they want to do?*

JL: Well, y'know, there's no hope for them unless people's heads were changed all down the line. I mean, what are we doing about those people? We've got enough to do to survive ourselves and then to influence the people nearest to us and then the people next to us and so on and so on. And then, y'know, all go through it a bit, "How are we going to do everything?" And you can't do everything, you've

just go to specialize, y'know and just, and you've got to be selfish in that respect. Y'know, cause, when we were with the Maharishi and that bit, we were going through that, y'know, cause we thought, "Right, this could do it and this will do for everyone", y'know. But there's no sort of overall cure, cause you know it's going to be them people. But if the whole scene was different, well at least they'd be happy y'know, or relatively happy. Cause there's no complete happiness.

YO: **Is it alright if I...**

Interviewer: *Do you think people are sort of important, y'know? Others... y'know these millions of people, 'Coronation Street' and all that. Do you think that they're important?*

JL: **I think they're as important as anyone else.**

Interviewer: *Yeah, the one thing is. Do you think that people as a whole, humanity is sort of mold on the skin of an orange?*

JL: **No, no I believe in humanity, y'know? I think we're with the greatest. We've just got to find it out, that's all. And if this is the time where we're going to find it out it seems like the beginning of it.**

Interviewer: *Yeah*

JL: **Just to realize that, y'know, some guy on TV last night, "Now this is Venus and this is the Moon", y'know?**

JL: **Yeah, y'know, this is how it looks and Russians landed one there. And, ok that spent all that time getting to the Moon and they can't get, you don't know what's going on in their head. And that's all it is, y'know? This is the time of people discovering that it's all in your head and Venus is in your bloody head and so is the Moon and you don't need a rocket to get there. You can, and Man can do anything. And Jesus never came down as a, in disguise as God any more than any of us did. We're all Jesus and we're all God, y'know and he's inside all of us. And that's what it's all about. And soon you start to realize that potential in everyone, well then you can change it, y'know? And the person themselves can change it. And that's the whole bit. Jesus wasn't God come down on earth any more than anyone else was. He was just a good or better example. Of a good y'know, of a good guy.**

Interviewer: *Are you optimistic?*

JL: **I vary, y'know... I'm still a cynic. I believe, y'know, I will it and want it to be the age and the talk, y'know, all the student bit and everything that's going on and we do have more chance now just because we can communicate with Czechoslovakia and everywhere, y'know, and just even touch them a bit. Even if it's from a record or a post or whatever. So I can't believe that we can all get beaten down again with that much communication between us.**

Interviewer: *It can only get better.*

JL: **It can, I believe it gets better. All the Buddhist and all the Christian bit is all the same, "Yeah, it gets better". But it was always sort of late, y'know. When you're dead. Well I believe that too, y'know.**

Interviewer: *Do you, now?*

JL: **Yeah, I believe in reincarnation and I believe that each time it's better. Y'know, even if you have a shit time this time, the next time will be a little less shit if you've worked up, it's like it's one bloody big exam. And that's the drag, really, because it goes on and on and on. It's just the, there's no quick way out, like suicide or anything. You've got to go through it. You can't forget it, which is... I've tried that one.**

YO: <laughs>

JL: **And, uh, you can't just do it all in a sort of holy buzz. I've tried that one. And I tried the other one when I was younger, just complete like that. Let's smash it, yeah? And it's just... it's the only way; just kick it down and see what happens.**

Interviewer: *Have you read any Samuel Beckett?*

JL: **I've only read 'Krapp's Last Tape' and something else.**

Interviewer: *I believe... That's what I think. I think people are pretty unimportant in a universal sense. They're important to each other...*

JL: **I believe the universe is in your head. I mean, literally, in your head. So, ok, physically we're insignificant and you look around to**

the size of it, y'know. The physical bit is a load of crap, y'know? It's just like you're talking about, you're worrying about your car and talking about it as if there's no driver. Y'know the driver's the bit and the car is nothing, y'know? The car just happens to be the thing you drive in. But the driver's the bit and the driver's your soul, or whatever. And that's universal and that's omnipresent and all the rest of it. And it is. And you can realize it. If you realized it once you remember when you've realized it before as a child or any time in your life and it's there.

Interviewer: *But is there any way you can do this? Any way you can say?*

JL: Well, I was hundred percent saying mediation could do it. I still believe it, y'know. People can become aware of this with acid meditation and macrobiotic diet. So that what I'm doing now, I'm a combination of everything. It's the best thing I've come across so far.

Interviewer: *Have you changed a lot as a result of it?*

JL: I haven't changed but, look, it's just like this. You know the day you're ok and you are at a hundred percent potential. And you can handle whatever the situation is. Now those days are rare, when you just... y'know when I was just a student or whenever. Whatever I was doing before I was a mop top. The days were rare when I... 'Everything's okay and I can handle it'. But when I got onto acid, right, it's "Aha!" It is ok and I can handle it, but handle it with acid, y'know. Or just after acid, or y'know but still the percent of good days as opposed to bad days was just a bit better. But still a lot of hassling. So then meditation came along. And that worked alright, y'know. And it made, I could handle each day better than I could handle it before. But then the India thing came and I had some great experience over there cause I was meditating eight hours a day and things like that. And it was really some trip because acid was nowhere, y'know?

Interviewer: *Is that a fact?*

JL: Just, it... just sitting there muttering some word in a room and it was the biggest trip I've had in me life, y'know. But still when I got home with all the hassle that went out there and we came rushing home and I still haven't gotten back into it regularly. And then Yoko's trying to turn me onto this macrobiotic scene. And I say, ok again... something we talked about last year. And I've eaten a bit of

it.

JL: Y'know, but it was the same as meditation. It was two years reading about it, and then I tried it. And macro was one and a half years reading about it and then I tried it. So, I tried it about two or three months ago. And I can tell you, folks, that the effect on you is... in three days time you're completely different. See, and every day is a better day. And you're more... see the thing about the macro thing is the yin yang principal. Just cleaning out your system, mentally and physically. And it works. We did ten days rice diet, pure, and you think 'you can't do that, you can't do that'. But it's not like giving up cigarettes or anything that you're hooked on. You're not really hooked on that slush you're eating. And so after three days and both our... she'd done it before, but I kind of coaxed her back into crumpets and sugar and all the, yeah all the sort of... And once you start looking into what you're eating, just when you get back there or when you get in a café, just look at your Typhoo tea and look at everything and say with government allowed, sponsored chemicals, y'know? And tell that guy there to stop moaning about the system and revolt by stop eating... the system, what the system's feeding him. Which is keeping him in a state that makes him think that's all that's going on, y'know. Cause that's where it's at. If he was eating, if his mind was open and clear enough to see what was really going on, he'd stop eating the shit he's eating. Because it is shit, government sponsored shit is what they're feeding you. And all the adverts telling you eat this, eat this, all the time, there's not a bit of good in any of it. And once you start looking at your diet and you realize that you are what you eat. It's true, y'know, what else can you be. You're born, right, with a few bones and from then on your fed propaganda mentally and propaganda food-wise, physically. And that's all you get and the only change, really, will come when this generation turns on to sort of a decent way of eating and realizing what they're eating, just to check what you're eating is astonishing. And you just start looking at every bloody thing you shove in your mouth has got some kind of crap in it. And even the things that you think have got no crap in it, the hens are fed crap. It's all completely unnatural. And if you come to think that you are what you eat, which I believe in, then you know the result of everything that happens to you is karma or whatever, anyway. But if you're shoving all this crap into you, how can you expect your system to work, y'know? If you're shoving crap petrol into your car and it just so happens to be the one you've heard about and your dad told you about and you always et it, and you just shove it in the car regardless, y'know. And the car keeps conking down, but

sometimes it goes great, y'know on a sunny day you have a great time and it, in the winter it won't move at all.

Interviewer: *Right, yeah.*

JL: Y'know and that's what it's like. This... the diet really did it, y'know? It was like a complete overhaul. Just a complete overhaul, of body and mind. On the third day you get headaches and it's just all the shit coming out. And then the food bloody tastes marvelous cause you re-adjust your whole system and your taste and everything. And I think things like that can do it, just simp-... basic things like changing what you eat. Cause they're all on about the propaganda mental so we're all aware of that but they want to get hip to the propaganda that's going on inside your body.

Interviewer: *I suppose these people would say that under their system, y'know, presumably all these horrible chemicals and things are added just to make people buy the stuff in preference to other things.*

JL: It isn't that, it's just that it's convenient for the government and the people that produce it to get it out in that kind of quantity. But they don't need to cause they're burning it and throwing it away all the time.

Interviewer: *So you don't think people would start dying if...*

JL: Well, I mean there's no communist country or so called communist country that is feeding their people any better. The best fed people are the peasants in different countries whose food hasn't been tampered with so much – even Ireland; you stand a better chance over there than you do here. Y'know, and the sooner they get into mass production in Russia or anywhere, they have to do it like that. There's no reason to do it. There is enough food... There's enough of everything to go around.

Interviewer: *How does the macrobiotic business differ from normal health food?*

JL: Because the health food people just give up meat vaguely on principle. I was a vegetarian for about two years before I started the macro bit. But I just didn't want to eat meat for the animal reason and because I just didn't want meat, y'know. Didn't want it. If you are what you eat I don't want to be a pig or a cow, y'know. Simple as that. I believe in the vibrations of the animal coming off on you.

Yeah, sure. Look, it's just... if you think that when you talk that that's the end of that sound vibration you make, well that's what you say when you say "Really?" I believe that when you talk it sets up a vibration that which goes on infinitely. It just goes on and on and on. So every thought wave you have just goes on and on and on, there's no... it just doesn't end here just because we can't hear it or see it or smell it. So everything is, I forgotten what my train of thought was from before there. Oh about the animal! So any vibrations an animal has dying in fear, pain or whatever situation it died in, I believe it'll rub off on you. Y'know so it's a lot of hokey pokey and magic, but I believe in that, too. I believe in everything until it's disproved, y'know?

Interviewer: *So you believe everything is more or less a flux, where comings and goings go into each other and in actual fact there's no dichotomy anywhere?*

JL: **Oh, I don't know what dichotomy means.**

Interviewer: *Or that there's no split between anything that you can think of?*

JL: **I'm not... you mean everything's joined?**

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

JL: **Is that what you're saying?**

Interviewer: *Essentially, yeah.*

JL: **Yeah. Yeah I believe that, y'know cause I believe that thing which joins together the thing they call God. Like electricity is the power and it's no one guy or two guys or anything like that. I believe there's people nearer and further away to the power source, but I believe God is the omnipresent thing that does join everything together. But it's just a powerhouse like electricity and we're all a set of light bulbs.**

JL: **You know, I believe in electricity even though I can't see it, y'know? I can see the light bulbs, I've seen a few people that you feel... are a bit nearer to whatever's going on. So it's hard to describe, y'know? They've all said it in the past and they're still saying it. It's just getting a language that you can relate to.**

Interviewer: *What do you think about language?*

JL: **I think it's a bit crummy, y'know? It is a drag form of communication, really. We'll get telepathy. I believe that.**

Interviewer: *You believe that?*

JL: **Yes, sure. Sure. Sure as anything I believe. Because now we need it so much. Just for me to communicate with that guy and he's written a letter to a paper to tell me to tell me and I'm talking to a tape to you that he might never see. Where's that, y'know? But if he was really wanting to communicate with me, y'know, even to come and see me, to talk, is hard. What I'm saying to you, you're translating it all the time even though it's English into what you think I'm saying... I am only saying what I'm trying to say from way back there which is coming out in the limited amount of vocabulary I have anyway, and the way I'm trying to describe all that or all this. Y'know? It's nowhere.**

Interviewer: *What we say is limited by our upbringing and what one's allowed to say. Have you escaped from this? You know, inhibitions... saying what you want to say?*

JL: **I don't know, it's hard to judge myself.**

Interviewer: *But do you always speak your mind?*

JL: **To a degree, yeah. I mean, that's why I was thrown out of college, that's why I was always getting expelled and all that. I've been me all the time. Then and now. I've been Lennon all down the line. I'm not saying I haven't compromised, but I've been me all down the line. You know, like...**

YO: <unintelligible>

JL: **But I mean the system had a pretty good go. The art school for being artists and they wanted me to, or anybody that was there to be an art teacher or to go into this section or to that section to suit the balance of the system rather than what I could do and it's the same at school. And I don't forgive them for that. It's wasn't each teacher's fault, it was the system's. So, I'm against the system and the education, period. You know, it's no good just smashing down the school. I agree with all this taking the schools over, even if you take them over for a whole year and never let any tutors in – you**

don't need them. If you want to learn all that crap, you can get it out of books if you really want to learn it. So that kind of smash it up, I agree with it. You might as well keep the building and keep the books because otherwise you're going to have to learn it from some old guy one way or the other. Might as well keep what they've got and just change it. I mean, I've always said don't drop out. Just stay in and subterfuge, whatever. Subvert it. I mean that's what we did as Beatles was subvert. Even if we nearly got submerged while we were doing it. We got an MBE, which one of the biggest jokes in the history of this island, probably. That's subversion and that's revolution.

YO: Yeah, I agree with that. I don't think that anything I do is compromise, really; but if you're... a monk... just sitting there...

JL: Yeah, that's easy.

YO: That's an easy way out.

JL: It's easier to monk than to stay out here in this. You think it's harder and that to be alone, but what you get is a little cozy community of guys and a lot of them in India have guys and girls, so it's a cinch.

Interviewer: *It's a vacuum.*

JL: Yeah, and it's a little cozy school life, y'know? Which is secure and you think you know where you're going and you're probably praying and getting a few buzzes from most of it just going to the same little petty grocers, hassles, shopkeeper scenes that everyone is everywhere else.

Interviewer: *The trouble is that...*

JL: And they seem good, cause they've broken off from all this but it's a damn sight harder out here than it is in the monastery.

Interviewer: *Yeah, but unless you're going to be a drop out, you've got to compromise haven't you?*

JL: Well, you have to bit but it's not a great sin. You're compromising by not fucking every woman you fancy as you walk down the street. You're compromising by not smashing everything you don't like when you feel like smashing it. The compromise is within yourself,

**you know. We're all good and bad. You've got to compromise one thing or the other to just take a step forward. You've got to compromise whether you're going to fall over when you walk up a set of stairs or anything, really. It's the degree of how much you compromise.**

Interviewer: *It's where your value is... when you compromise.*

JL: *Yeah yeah, you know.*

Interviewer: *What one person values as compromise another doesn't.*

**JL: Yeah and the point is that a lot of us probably all agree, we all really know the compromise we're talking about, it's that one where you sell out, yeah? And everybody thinks everybody else has sold out. But there's even guys just in business, y'know, that don't think they've compromised and they haven't really, and they're secretly trying to do what everybody else is trying to do but they don't know it half the time or they don't realize. Cause even just, I was talking to that guy Lord Beeching [British physicist, engineer and railway chairman. The Beatles consulted with him to help with the business affairs of Apple Corps], I said, "we want help with this Apple, but we don't want any of them, y'know, this that and the other... We're idealists and I was giving it to him st[raight], y'know that's what we're trying to do and we want a happy office and all that. And he, rightly sort of said, "listen man, there's a few idealists; they're not complete set of fascists, there's one or two human beings in the city, which I haven't allowed for in my great open minded awareness and all that. I just haven't allowed for any human being in the banks or anywhere. But there are some human beings there, there's probably some in the government, y'know? I still sort of find it hard to believe, but somewhere in that pile of slush there might be some human beings. But it's hard... it's that bit, y'know. There are, y'know, there's people everywhere of the same mind and... it's just even amongst ourselves we can't communicate. Which is the hard bit, y'know.**

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

**JL: Amongst the people that sort of really agree.**

Interviewer: *Just cause of words.*

**JL: Just cause of words, and upbringing, and attitude, and how you express your...**

**JL: Well it's, it's just some... you got to find a mutual sort of language to express yourself, y'know? And my language is...**

*Interviewer: Unless you fall in love it's impossible to communicate like that*

**JL: I mean, I wasn't in love last year, but I was communicating quite well with people. Not as well, maybe not as powerfully. It's not... there's two of us, doing that, whatever it is. Sending out a vibration or whatever. But before it was me and... or me and George, alright or whatever it was; we weren't in love. But, y'know, there's enough in you to shove it out. It is just that bit. If you... if somebody comes in a room and he's uptight and that, he can make the whole room uptight.**

*Interviewer: Yeah.*

**JL: But if you're all sitting there uptight and some guy, the last guy comes in, he can just change it all. Just without saying or doing anything, yeah? And that's what I mean about changing the world by changing their heads and setting up vibrations. Hippie, inverted converse... love talk, y'know. But it works on that basis. Yoko's 'Smile' film is in Chicago and it's just that one of me for an hour and then it smiles now. It's a great portrait and it's a great film and it's all that. It's also a great vibration. And my bit I put on it, music, make your own, bring your own instruments. So they did. And that's in Chicago when all that shit was going, and it still is. But I believe a lot of artists and people pulled out their stuff from Chicago as a protest. I think that... so, they just leave it to the wolves, y'know? To just create the whole atmosphere and keep it so's it... you couldn't even go within a hundred miles of the place without getting uptight, or paranoid, or frightened. I believe if you just keep sending the gear at them, y'know. You gotta... it's got to be yin yang. If it's all bad in Chicago and all the good guys pull out everything they've got and move away from it, that place would just be completely bad and would be a stronghold for all the baddies, y'know?**

*Interviewer: Is there anything thing you can do about the baddies, or not?*

**JL: It's just a... if you can't sort of just change them with your articles and your magazines and yeah, you've just got to change it with your attitude. Change the people around you, y'know. Work on the people at college, even. The other students who don't see it and**

**forget about what's going on Alabama for a bit and just work on the people around you. Because between you, you can have more effect on Alabama or Vietnam. But I'm not saying forget about Vietnam and don't bother doing anything about it. Just work on the locals and just see where all the fascists are there.**

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

**JL: Y'know and work on them, y'know. Your auntie, your uncle, your parents, your cousin, your brother and everyone. They're the same people as the cops that are beating up people in Chicago. Exactly the same types up in Keel University. And they're living on this hill, they're all around. They're not just in uniform.**

Interviewer: *...have you read McLuhan before?*

**JL: No, no I've just heard this, read about half a page or something.**

Interviewer: *Looking at this sort of localized thing, where you say yeah I agree with you, basically.*

**JL: It's like...**

Interviewer: *The fact is everything else actually is always coming in on you anyway. So you've got two sets of problems all time. Y'know, there's no question that you localize the other things now.*

**JL: No, no, no. I was just using that as an example.**

Interviewer: *But I mean, every sort of everything is coming at you from all sides now. It's just life has come to a global village, like McLuhan said.*

**JL: Yeah, I believe the village bit. But it's still your street you're living on, y'know.**

Interviewer: *But I suppose now the only difference you can make, was through the inhibitions of material things forcing... trying to force on you all the time as opposed to your... attitude.*

**JL: Yeah, but I'm... I'm anti all, y'know, like you said, material things and doing this and that. But if people were just different, regardless of what material things then, they'd see what material things were anyway. If you go to any village that isn't into material... some African tribe. They've exactly the same psychological troubles,**

everything, that we've got. Maybe a bit less, to a different degree. But they're going through the same little bits, the same uptight, the same, y'know, he's got three fingers and I've got ten. Y'know, they're going through the same bit. We're just going through it on a grander scale because it is a grander village and it's a harder, it's a big tribe. But I think that people are people anywhere and they're going through the same bit. And there's no little... there's no haven that we can create by going back to the soil bit and forgetting about cars and telly. And that'll cure us. It's just down to yourself, y'know? And your relationship to the next person. And it can only work on that scale, y'know? There'll be no mass changing of things by getting rid of all the materialistic goods. And saying "now we're all right, now the government isn't telling us to buy this and buy that". I'm anti this indoctrination and you should have this and you should have that and there should be a perspective put on what you need and not what they think people imagine they need. And I found out by having it. It took me having it, not sort of by any other way to find out that you don't need it, y'know? As that... my goal in life wasn't to succeed and have ten cars and have a house on a stinkin' hill and that. But there was always that, well, I'm going that way and I wouldn't mind, I wouldn't mind. Who doesn't want it? I thought well I'll be miserable in comfort. Y'know, that was one thing I was taught as a kid. I'd sooner be miserable in comfort, one of me aunties used to say. I was all for that, y'know. But the more you get, you either hang on to it like a maniac, like those people do and they spend the rest of their lives and they die with it and we're... all that rubbish. Or you realize where it's at. And it is nowhere. I've got it all, folks. Listening to the advert about cars. And it's nowhere, man. I'm just the same. I'm just the same as I was. I'm just lumbered with a responsibility of having all this material, that the government is hounding me for tax that the accountant never got. The accountant's hounding me for money I gave to relatives, dogs, anybody that came 'round. So because of all this scene I created for myself, I was saying to him, "what can I do?" Can I just get rid of it all? All I want is somewhere to live, a bit of land or something to grow some macrobiotic food up and get this off my back. But even that's bloody hard. Apple, we wanted to set up a charity foundation, you can't just set up a charity foundation like that, me boy. You've gotta get somewhere, and income that comes through here, through Malaya to go through... y'know you can't just... The more you get the more bloody hassle it is.

Interviewer: *The people just won't believe this.*

JL: I know, I never believed it, man. I never believed it, either. That's it - I can only say what happened to me when I got it and you'll take what you can from that, or accept what you can accept about what I say about what it's like to have twelve cars and I'm forty suits or whatever.

<break> [A technical glitch mars approximately 5 seconds of the tape at this point. From Maurice Hindle's personal notes, the missing section is:

**When I read about things like that, my first thought was...** <tape resumes mid-sentence>

JL: ...**"give us it, then". That's the first thought if you don't want it. And then, was "well I'd sooner be unhappy in luxury." And then when you get down to defining luxury, y'know, the happiest time in my life, one of the happiest times was in India, in some kind of pit. And, happily mentally and physically, because it was just was such a groove. Such a pure thing. Now I'm getting the same kind of groove on this diet as I did then. I mean everything isn't all great and that. I just know that everything is slightly more in perspective; just I can handle the situation a bit better. Because I am ticking better. It's like... I'm in a better physical and mental condition to handle all the shit that is coming in. Y'know, the worse condition you are mentally and physically, the more they can get you.**

Interviewer: *Well, why do people want to be rich? Is it just because of the telly or adverts or the system, the ones that...*

JL: **Well, I wanted to rich because I was relatively poor and I thought rich would sort of get you out, which it did get me out. But it only got me out of Liverpool, y'know. It didn't get me out of my mind or out of my body. And whether I would've started meditating and eating macrobiotic food, et cetera, et cetera, acid, all the trips I've been through this last two years, I probably would've done it rich or poor, you see? And then wouldn't have bothered to try and make money. But I didn't try too hard. It just so happened my gimmick was the one that earned money, y'know. And that I don't believe... I used to think anybody can write songs and be a pop star. I think I even said it in the Beatles book. It was only last year... I've changed that much since then. I don't believe it, no. I made it cause of me and I have that thing that makes that music and makes those songs up. I believe everybody's got something. It's just they've got to bring it out.**

Interviewer: *Yeah, that struck me, that business about...*

JL: **Because it was always people saying, y'know, just all the time or whatever, what have you got, what have you got that... y'know, I can't... Christ knows is what it is, y'know. So it was really a reaction. "Look man anybody can do it." For Christ's sake we were just ordinary lads. I can come from any society. Yoko and I are like the mentally. And she comes from some kind of high-class Japanese banking family that wouldn't let me even sweep the floor. And I come from Liverpool and that... and she comes from the east... with all the symbolic bit, y'know?**

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

JL: **And I'm... there's a that most, uh... The nearest thing to me I've ever come across in my life, y'know. And, I mean I believed that intellectually before that you could come from working class, you could be born royal and still make it, y'know even I think that's harder to be born into that situation and taught you are above all. Shit, her hardest thing was being brought up to believe she was special and that her class was special and that you don't have to... y'know, you don't communicate, you don't worry. At least if you're born at the bottom, you're told that you're nothing and you either accept it or you try to set out to do something about it. And that choice you've got. But if you're up there born royal, you're told that you're great. You're told that you don't need to do anything to justify living. And they've got to get over that. That's why I'm always cracking about royalty and that. Because I really think they are – the ones that accept it well, y'know, piss on 'em – but the ones that try and do anything, it must be bloody hard to be brought up and told you are unhuman, that you're the almost son of God and brought up in that atmosphere. It's incredible that any of them have done anything but I don't know if any of them have, except for set up Boy Scout funds and all that. But y'know, even whatever they're trying to do... it's difficult.**

Interviewer: *Has success and money given any of the other Beatles happiness?*

JL: **No, they're all in the same boat.**

Interviewer: *Have you met any people that are rich and happy?*

JL: **No, no. No, no. I've met people... the rich people I've met... No**

thanks, hang on... The ones that are so-called happy with it are happy in that sort of way that the woman in semi-detached is happy... like we used to live in a row of about twenty and the ones at that end who had two cars or something. It was supposed to be happier than those that had no car or no phone or whatever. So the rich people are supposedly happy like that. But I've met no happy people in bags, in one bag or another. Like rich or poor, y'know? And I've never met anybody completely happy. Cause I don't believe it exists. There's always got to be the positive/negative yin yang bit.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

JL: **And, there's no such thing as just happiness. Pure, like that. I think you can reach a state of consciousness. I don't know whether you can make it in this life. All the Buddhas and the Jesuses, all the great ones that were pretty hip, conscious-wise, I don't think they had complete happiness. But I reckon that you might get that; I think complete happiness is when you are a bit of electricity, when you've made the absolute of the Buddhist or whatever it is say. And then the concept of what we think of happiness, of just being which is what happiness will be for all of us. It's not... I've had that through meditation. Just a state where you are not aware of anything. So there you've been and that's complete happiness. You just are. And that is what happiness... is the bit where all... the peace, the peace we're looking for. It's just to BE and nothing affects you and you affect nothing, literally. Well, of course you must do in the way cause of all the ramble, ramble, ramble. But you just are, you know. The happiest people, the people that are 'being' more times a week than anybody else. It's just down to that.**

Interviewer: Ravi Shankar, he's a very happy chap...

JL: **He's fairly happy, but he hasn't got it made by any means. He's just a guy, y'know?**

Interviewer: *Yeah but when he plays...*

JL: **Yeah but when you play... I've had that playing, or anybody that paints, draws or anything. The bit where, the bit about being is the same, or almost the same, I'm not really sure, as when you're playing a groove and Ravi does it. As soon as he hits it, he cuts out.**

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

JL: And we did, we had it playing here. Every time there's a good session you're watching musicians and they're really playing well. They're out of it. And that's when you just are being. There's nothing hassling you, or not hassling it's just... You know, and that's it. And you get it writing, and you can get it daydreaming, or idling about as a kid on the desk just sort of... or in the grass in the sun for a moment you go <makes noise>. And that you always fight back, you know... That's the whole bit. Even when you're meditating and doing these things with the whole express purpose of getting into that state, you've got to practice it like you'd practice anything so you stop being frightened when you get the state. The levels you get to in meditation, you get to a plane... And you're fighting it all the time. It's just the whole... time is spent to stop being frightened of nothing.

Interviewer: *Don't you think... You get more fighting against it since the inception of civilization, what we call civilization. So...*

JL: **I think we got a lot further away from it since we got civilized, you know. And since Christianity became Christianity with a capital "C" and nothing to do with Jesus Christ.**

Interviewer: *But in my mind, the difference of it is this time – like McLuhan said – for once, everyone's become self-conscious in a position where the tribal group who weren't self-conscious, but acted totally without ego...*

JL: **Yeah, I think it's the world is on a trip, you know, and like on record, I must relate to our records, because that's the thing I've done most. On records went through the childish, tribal bit, which is the early records; self-conscious bit, which is 'Rubber Soul', say pre-'Pepper', coming out of 'Pepper'; and now un-self-conscious I think, y'know as un-self-conscious as you can get, relatively speaking, I think as humans as what we're doing we've been a bit, the tribal bit, childlike. And then... we're suddenly becoming aware of something and becoming self-conscious and going through all the hassles you go through being self-conscious where you're so self-conscious you can't do anything. And then to come out of that is the next stage which I think we're going into, is being self-conscious but realizing that you can handle it, you know? And that's the breakthrough. That's the end of the trip, if it was a good trip. You can handle it and that we're just going through a big trip. The whole world, the whole Universe is just one big trip and we're just going through a bit of it. We've going to get hung up about what we're going through now and how we arrived at it. How they coughed up Christianity,**

**Buddhism, how they did all that. They, they but we do it. We did it, if you believe in reincarnation. It was us then anyway. We've all done it. We've been them all. We've been the fascists and we've been everything. And we're just tripping out while we're going through that bit now we're being becoming self-conscious of what we did with the basic thing we had. We've become too self-conscious of it and now we've got to put it in perspective. And we can have cars and tellys and that. But still get back to the spiritual bit, which is the bit we've missed out on.**

*Interviewer: There are some things which seem sort of inconsistent with your last few... I don't know what the other three think, but in the Hunter Davies thing you said that you often sort of write two or three draggy songs, which you didn't enjoy doing, just to finish an L.P., but also this Apple business... I don't know if it's going into production, but this machine to stop people from recording records...*

**JL: No, no. I mean, the guy came up with that invention. So the thing is, obviously we're not going to sell that to people to jam the records, man. I mean even just as a public relations job, it'd be the dumbest thing on earth. The invention's out, word-wise... Even the dumbest fascist is not going to do it if it's going to spoil his image. And we wouldn't put that out, but the thing we will do is to sell it to the tape recording people to prevent us putting it out to the record people; cause it would spoil the tape, just like that. We're playing that game, and we're playing the game on their terms. Let's copy it and change it. And why not have a go at that. And that's what we'll do with it, cause somebody's going to do it soon. It's a feasible thing. Even if we'd done it, somebody'd come up with something that'd change it. You can't get out of that, you can't beat it. You can't do that. You know, that's why they keep changing, you can always get around it. And obviously we wouldn't do that, y'know, for any reason on Earth. Just morally I wouldn't put the name... I wouldn't do it. I know the others wouldn't do it. Even if our... any advice was all the same, "Come on man, come on".**

*Interviewer: What about the records and... doing draggy tracks?*

**JL: It's not draggy tracks. It's like draggy tracks as opposed to completely enjoying it. And that's the job I've chosen to do. Is to record and write songs. Now, it's my job to... so, if I'm feeling draggy, I mean when I say I wrote "Good Morning, Good Morning" or something like that, and I didn't like it and I didn't enjoy it as a whole, it was a job of work. But I'd gotten enjoyment from it, or**

enjoyment from doing it. You can't pin people like me down on every literal thing that's said in print like that, like these guys said [references *Black Dwarf* paper], they say it was a con job. Now, I say it is a con job and in the terms of reference that I mean by con, when I say Picasso was conning them and so was Beethoven, and having a laugh up their sleeve, because they were. Anybody that's as great as they were knows where it's at and they know that all this drivel that's written about our songs and the Stones and Dylan and all that; Dylan knows where it's at. We know where it's at in regards to our songs and what people write about them. And that is the con job. If somebody gets uptight about me putting "wobble of a grapefruit" in the middle of a song just for a laugh, or because I like the sound of "wobble of a grapefruit"... and to me that's a con, because I know Thomas Mann [John is referencing music critic William Mann] or somebody will write something about the... and he's probably right, the great sort of sense of rhythm of that line, "wobble of a grapefruit". And he's right, but I put it in for a laugh, and that's a con job. But so, I don't think con is a derogative word. That guy said, oh you're right. Who's he kidding? And so I'm not answerable to everything I said to Hunter Davies, there's a few bits in there that I said how I felt that day. But do I have to stand by that for the rest of my life just because it's in print?

Interviewer: *Why did you agree to it, then?*

JL: Because it was done. It was agreed to a long time ago when Brian was alive and he said this guy wants to write a book on you and, why not? So it was "why not". The idea was to try and get some kind of vaguely... version of what was going on a bit to do with, that had some connection with what we thought was going on as well. Cause people were going to do it anyway. But even that book is so nothing to do with what we are, it's so outdated like he says at the end of it.

Interviewer: *Yeah.*

JL: You know, you cannot do it. But people are going to write about us for the rest of our lives probably and after we're dead, so I tend to either confuse the issue so much they never knew what was going on or to try and keep shoving out bits and bits of what I think is my version of how it happened, and how Beatles happened, and how the different things happened as a result of this or that or how I was influenced or not influenced. So whoever it is bothered to be looking at it in the future, if they ever do... But people that really know will

sort out, they'll know what was going on with it and they won't have to go through a million, million things, y'know? Just like that. And it's nice to be written about, man. It's just a sense of history and it's good for your ego and we enjoyed it and it was a bit of a drag having to be talking about things, but it was just nice talking about your childhood, remembering the gags and all the things that happened.

Interviewer: *As far as music is concerned, you personally, do you think that in the record media, do you think the potential has fallen? Do you feel as if you've come to an end?*

JL: **No... I haven't even started. I keep saying this. There's no end to it. There's no end and there's no beginning, y'know. It's infinite and there's just no end to it. There's just every possibility, combination of sound on Earth is open to us and anybody else who cares to listen. Just what's going on now, that's a record. To me, that's a record... And you've got all that work on. There's no end to it and there's no bag to put it in and it just goes on and on and on. And the only end I can see if I get fed up with doing it or wanna do something else.**

Interviewer: *God help you.*

JL: **Why God help me?**

Interviewer: *Well, because it's just if you get fed up with doing it...*

JL: **There's plenty to do, man.**

Interviewer: *Oh you mean find something else instead.*

JL: **Yes, yes. I couldn't not produce or create. I'm creating a lot more than just the records, just with Yoko, just all the time. I can't stop. That's my gig and I've always done it. As a kid it was making puppets or drawing or writing poetry. That's my gig on Earth – is to turn out all this stuff. And I'll turn it out, regardless of what anybody says or thinks about it, you know?**

Interviewer: *"Revolution #9", is it about death?*

JL: [reaches to check tape recorder] **Just checking we're not wasting our time. How can it be about just death?**

Interviewer: *Well it seems to me to be about death.*

**JL: Well it is, then. Well you heard it. How many times have you heard it?**

Interviewer: *About four.*

**JL: Four, so it's about death. Well, listen to it on another day. In the sun. Outside. And see if it's about death then. It's about everything. It's not specifically about anything. It's a set of sounds like walking down the street. It's a set of sounds. And I just captured a moment of time, put it on disc, and it's about that.**

Interviewer: *There's not some specific meaning that you meant it to have?*

**JL: No, no. Nothing does, y'know.**

Interviewer: *Just sound going on every which way?*

**JL: Yeah, you know. It was maybe to do with the sounds of a revolution, y'know? There was some shooting, there was some babies crying, there was some peace, there was some... so that, that's the sort of vague story behind it. But apart from that it's just a set of sounds.**

Interviewer: *I think it's the best track actually.*

**JL: Thank you. That means a few people are getting it.**

Interviewer: [paraphrased from Maurice Hindle's personal notes] *What came across to me from mostly the violent sounds, and statements like 'take this brother, may it serve you well,' you intoning 'again and again and again,' and Yoko's 'and you become naked' – was that violent revolution inevitably produces more violence – there's no way of avoiding that . .*

Interviewer: *You're going to get it all again if you revolt and into you know, smashing things up. You can't get away from that.*

**JL: Yeah. There's no way out. Smashing it up or whatever, there isn't any way out. We're all chugging along, doing what we can. You know, all the words on "Revolution #9" were just random talking, there was nothing written down, bits of film script, this and that. I think it was just George, Yoko and I. I did a lot of it with loops and chopped up old Beethoven that was lying around EMI or any bits and**

pieces, stuck them together and we did some sort of, like priming the canvas... tracks that I didn't know if they were going to be for #9 or not. Just where we had the tape on, a bit of echo on, and a cup of tea or something and George and I just talked for about twenty minutes. Just anything. I mean, we've been doing it for years on tape around the world. Just a, "And so brother we like to say to you, welcome...", y'know just any rambling. And I got all the tapes on the different machines, all the loops on different machines, and all the basic tracks so it was like a big organ or something where I knew vaguely which track would come up if I did that. And I just tried to get the bits of conversation in that I liked, that seemed to say something like "do what you can, brother" or anything like that and tried to pull out the ones I didn't like. So I did it, I think I did it in one go. I just got it and then I did some slight editing after that. And so most of it is completely random in that respect and all the words. But you see, it's like throwing the dice or I Ching or whatever it is. There's no such thing as random, really. It's random compared with sitting down and saying, "It's been a hard day's night, it's been a hard day's night, working like a dog." But even that's random. And it was a couple of sixes and I'm not about to do it again and settle for an eleven. It probably was an eleven, rather. You very seldom get a double six in whatever you're doing on that buzz... that is actually doing that you're not aware, very seldom is the tape recorder on or everybody's got it at the same bit. So most things are nine out of twelve or things like that.

Interviewer: *Did you think it has changed since you [first started]?*

JL: **How do you mean?**

Interviewer: *...where you weren't self-conscious.*

JL: **Yeah, but on this album we had rid ourselves of the self-consciousness so we were doing what we were doing earlier on but with a better knowledge of technique and recording. Quite a few of the tracks are just straight takes of us playing. "Yer Blues" we were just in a room half the size of this, just to have a change from the big studio and we just did it. And "I Will" and "Julia" all them is just us singing like that, but the technique just makes it a bit better than one of us just signing in the early days. It's just we know the technique of recording better. If we did the first album again with "Twist and Shout" and all those things on, it would be the same! We sounded more like us on this record than than on that record. People who heard us in Liverpool and Hamburg and the early days, before**

**we turned into just a mass scream. That's how we played, heavy rock. But when it was put down on the early records there was never enough bass in it, the guitar solo never came through and generally we didn't know about recording then. So now we know how to record a bit. So...**

<first tape reel runs out>