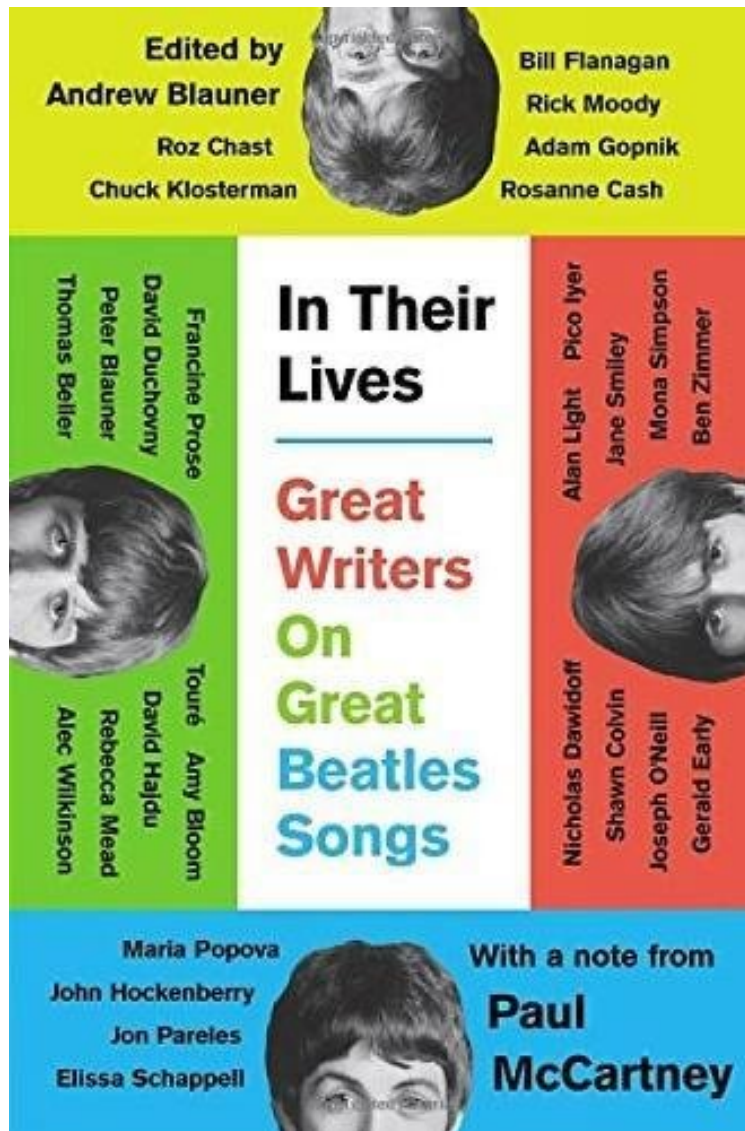


# In Their Lives: Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs

Andrew Blauner

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**Andrew Blauner : In Their Lives: Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised In Their Lives: Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Applause!By DCGreat compilation. I found myself admiring many of the writers' offerings----enough to peek my interest as to their other works. Now it's out of control! Superb anthology. I enjoyed every page.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Need Volume IIBy El NinoWish they would have focused on some of the lesser known, but better, songs. Maybe Voulume II?10 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs is a serial anthologistBy John PlowrightAndrew

Blauner, the editor of *In Their Lives*. *Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs* is a serial anthologist. This is his sixth. In this instance he apparently asked twenty-eight people to write about their favourite Beatles songs (although their responses cover much more than twenty-eight songs). According to the introduction the songs are presented chronologically according to the date of the songs release but whilst the arrangement is mostly sequential two songs from Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band (*Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* and *Shes Leaving Home*) are actually presented out of order. The subtitle of the book is *Great Writers on Great Beatles Songs* but although all of the contributors write well it is a stretch to call them all great writers and some of their choices, notably *Helter Skelter* and *You Know My Name (Look Up My Number)*, would not be regarded as great Beatles songs even by even the most hardcore fans. In terms of the years when the Beatles were recording the coverage is pretty comprehensive and well balanced, with fourteen contributions covering the period up to and including *Revolver* and the remaining fourteen essays covering the singles and albums thereafter. Honours are also fairly even divided between John and Paul but curiously George only gets one song: *Here Comes the Sun* which is, moreover, somewhat bizarrely considered in tandem with *Theres a Place*. This relative neglect appears even more unjust when one considers that Ringo not only gets one song as writer/lead vocalist (*Octopuss Garden*) but also another as lead vocalist (*Yellow Submarine*). As to the writings on the songs themselves they are, predictably, a very mixed bag in terms of length, character and quality. Some, like David Duchovny (*Dear Prudence*) elect to speak about the song purely as they recollect it, whilst others, such as Ben Zimmer (*I Am the Walrus*) have chosen to research the song extensively and share their findings. Both of these approaches can work well. Still others write about the personal impact or influence of a song, which means that the reader learns a lot about some aspect of their lives but next to nothing about the song itself (Roz Chast on *She Loves You* and Elissa Schappell on *Octopuss Garden*). This is less satisfactory. The book is also not free from factual error. For example, Tour states that *Rubber Soul* was the first Beatles album without covers, which would be true if he were talking about UK releases but is not true of US releases, as the US version of *Help!*, unlike its British counterpart, omitted *Act Naturally* (by Johnny Russell and Voni Morrison), which appeared as the B-side to *Yesterday* in the States, and *Dizzy Miss Lizzy* (by Larry Williams), which was on *Beatles VI*. Such is the extraordinary richness of The Beatles catalogue that everybody is likely to lament some omissions (for me first and foremost *Come Together* and *While My Guitar Gently Weeps*) but despite this and despite the other shortcomings mentioned above, this book still has much to commend it. At its best the writing can shed new insights into the songs or raise interesting questions about how they were created and how theyve been interpreted (or misinterpreted). I am certainly grateful to have learned, for example, that Lennons *goo goo ga joob* (like Paul Simons *coo coo ca-choo* in *Mrs Robinson*) may owe a debt to Helen Kanes *boop-oo-p-a-doop* or even Baby Esthers *boo-boo-boo* syncopations. In short, *In Their Lives* isnt the best book on The Beatles. It may not even be the best book on The Beatles to be published this year. But it certainly contains more than enough of merit to justify its purchase and keep its readers interest.

For readers who loved *Tune In* and Nick Hornbys *Songbook*, an anthology of essays from a chorus of twenty-nine luminaries singing the praises of their favorite Beatles songs. The Beatles influence on their contemporaries, on our cultural consciousness, and on the music industry ever after is difficult to overstate. We all have a favorite song from the band that made us want to fall in love, tune in, and follow our dreams. Arranged chronologically by the date of the songs release, these essays highlight both the Beatles evolution as well as the span of generations their music affected. Whether they are Beatlemaniacs who grew up listening to the iconic albums on vinyl or new fans who stream their favorite songs on their phones, all of the contributors explore that poignant intersection between Beatles history and personal history. With contributions from twenty-nine authors and musicians Roz Chast on *She Loves You*, Jane Smiley on *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, Rosanne Cash on *No Reply*, Gerald Early on *Im a Loser*, Rick Moody on *The End*, Maria Popova on *Yellow Submarine*, David Duchovny on *Dear Prudence*, Chuck Klosterman on *Helter Skelter*, David Hajdu on *You Know My Name (Look Up the Number)*, and more the breadth of the bands impact is clear. From musings on young love and family strife to explorations of racial boundaries and identity, these essays pay tribute to a band that ran the gamut of human experience in a way no musical group has done before or since. Timed for the fiftieth anniversary of the release of *Sgt. Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band*, this anthology captures the full spectrum of reasons fans still love the Fab Four after all these years. *In Their Lives* is full of pleasant surprises. *New York Times*

*In Their Lives* is full of pleasant surprises. *New York Times* So many of us learned the basics from the Beatles: how to listen, what longing feels like, the pleasure of loving and thinking about art. Here a stunning array of writers shares how that process worked in childhood and youth, and still works within memory and cultural history. Some first-rate music criticism's in here, too. Ann Powers, critic for NPR Music, author of *Weird Like Us* Sharp, witty, incisive, revealing. I must have read millions of words on the Beatles, but there is always room and scope and desire to write even more as every generation discovers them. The writing, all the way through is, terrific. I enjoyed *In Their Lives* and learned some new things about the ever-lasting appeal of the Beatles and their music. Hunter Davies, author of the *New York Times* bestseller, *The Beatles* How lovely to have gifted writers put into words what Ive been struggling to express for fifty years. The essays are as heartfelt and high-spirited as the songs themselves. As the

Beatles would say, I was gobsmacked! Bob Spitz, author of *The Beatles: The Biography* Their music, their style had an atomic effect on the old romantic traditions of the West, and Western civilization. hasn't been the same since. Here and now some of our best modern writers tell their fascinating stories of what the Beatles meant to them, and to those whom they loved, and everything rings so true. Yeah Yeah Yeah! Stephen Davis, author of *Hammer of the Gods* and Jim Morrison A perceptive, heartfelt collection. Though the anthology is tinged with affection, it's no mere love letter to the group. [In *Their Lives*] bound to appeal to serious Beatles aficionados, longtime followers of the group seeking a nostalgic walk down Penny Lane, and casual music fans. Library Journal A charming, delightful collection for Beatles fans and music fans in general. Kirkus The brilliant and varied essays pull the tablecloth from under so-familiar songs, revealing bits and pieces in new configurations, and in contexts that are personal, technical, social, and universal. A collection that music fans and fans of music writing will love. Booklist The collection serves as a miniature history of the Beatles. The essays are uniformly excellent and informative. Publishers Weekly About the Author ANDREW BLAUNER is the founder of Blauner Books Literary Agency. His other anthologies are *Coach, Brothers, Central Park, Our Boston, The Good Book*, and (coeditor) *For the Love of Baseball*. A graduate of Brown University and the Columbia University School of Business, Blauner is a member of PEN American Center and the National Book Critics Circle, and a former intern at Rolling Stone. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. \*\*\*This excerpt is from an advance uncorrected copy proof\*\*\* Copyright 2017 Andrew Blauner

*She Loves You* ROZ CHAST SHE LOVES YOU was released in the U.S. in September 1963, when I was eight almost nine years old. That song provided my first inkling that there was another world out there, one that did not include my parents, my relatives, my neighbors, my teachers, or my classmates a world of care free and attractive young people who did not worry about illnesses or money, and who did not care about homework or why one was not popular. The reason they did not think about these things was obvious: they were too busy having fun and being young. When I heard *She Loves You* that exuberant singing, like nothing I'd ever heard before I became aware not only that that world existed, but also that I deeply wanted to be part of it. Before the Beatles, pop music didn't really register with me. I'm sure I'd heard it, but it didn't reach me. It was boring; a bunch of mushy love songs sung by icky guys with irritating voices and greasy hair and even ickier girls with ROZ CHAST bouffants. Ugh. Gross. A lateral move from the shackles of childhood to a different, but equally shackled, adulthood. So, what was it about *She Loves You* that felt like an anthem of liberation? Perhaps it was that chorus of Yeah, yeah, yeah, or maybe it was that thrilling Woohoo! Or maybe it was the Beatles themselves. I'd never seen anything like them. I watched the Beatles sing on Ed Sullivan, with their funny suits and haircuts, bouncing to the beat of their music and playing their instruments, and was completely, totally, in love. They were sexy, for sure, but not smarmy or creepy. I wouldn't say they were wholesome, either, which implies a kind of rosy-cheeked, outdoorsy, earnestness that has never, ever appealed to me. No. This was something else entirely. That spring, the one after the Beatles were on Ed Sullivan, I was nine, and my parents and I went to Puerto Rico for a week. It was a school vacation, and since my parents worked in the New York City school system, they had the week off, too. I had befriended another nine-year-old only child who was staying at the hotel with her parents. Big shocker: we were both Beatlemaniacs. At some point, our two families were in a car driving to some tourist attraction. As the parents were chatting, she and I decided to sing *She Loves You* as loud as we could. We didn't know most of the words, but we knew when to sing the Yeah, yeah, yeah and the Woohoo. More than fifty years later I still remember how thrilling this was. I don't recall any of the grownups getting particularly mad at us. They were just baffled. This was for us, this kind of music. Not for them. And that was okay with all of us. I had a record player in my room. There were no speakers. You opened it up like a suitcase, plugged it in, plopped your record onto the spindle in the middle, and manually placed the arm that held the needle onto the record as carefully as you could, because you didn't want to scratch the record. Anyway, my first Beatles record turned out not to be a Beatles record at all. It came from a discount store in our neighborhood in Brooklyn, and it had a drawing of four Beatleish hairdos on the cover. That was what fooled me. When I got it home, I immediately realized my mistake: these were instrumental versions of Beatles songs. There wasn't even any singing! Total ripoff. My first experience with false advertising. When I was in third grade and close to the bottom of the social pecking order not the very bottom, but, like I said, close the four most popular girls put on a show for the rest of the class. They dressed up like the Beatles in suits and Beatle boots and Beatle wigs. Three of them pretended to strum guitars they had made out of cardboard. The fourth played a drum. I don't recall whether it was a real drum or made out of cardboard like the guitars. They sang a couple of Beatles songs in front of the class for our entertainment. One of them was *She Loves You*, and when they sang Woohoo! they shook their heads like the Beatles. I watched them with a kind of envy. Everyone applauded. I hated to acknowledge it, but they were great. My parents were not interested in popular music. Even Frank Sinatra and big band music were beneath them. And jazz? Don't ask. My mother played classical piano: Chopin, Beethoven, Schubert, Debussy were her favorites. Sometimes my parents listened to a little show music songs from *Carousel* or *Oklahoma!* They liked Gilbert and Sullivan. My father loved French music. He was a French teacher and a Francophile. Sometimes he listened to Yves Montand or Edith Piaf. To their ears, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, and the Mamas and the Papas all sounded identical. One of the more shameful fights I had with them as an adult was getting angry with them because they didn't listen to Billie Holiday or Ella Fitzgerald when I was growing up. When I

think about She Loves You, and how much I loved that song, how new it sounded, and how happy it made me feel to hear it, I think about how much it represented the mirage of a possible future, one that was more joyful and more interesting than my lonely and borderlinegrim child hood with its homework and tests and mean girls and stupid boys and parents who worried about everything and got angry over nothing. A promise that, in the future, things would be better, or at least I would have greater autonomy. And now that I am a grownup, I can say that even though Im not skipping along a jewelbedecked street lined with chocolatetruff le trees while angels throw rose petals at me, its definitely better than being a kid.