As arguably the most beloved, most popular, most influential band of all time, The Beatles are probably the most covered pop artist of the last 50 years. Everybody's done it, with covers becoming hits themselves (Jock Cocker, Earth, Wind & Fire) and even more weird cult favorites (William Shatner, Mrs Miller). There's a deep, deep bench of great songs to choose from, and it's hard to go wrong by picking a more obscure Beatles song to cover, yet most of them are "Yesterday."

"Yesterday" is one Beatles song that doesn't tend to get covered as much by indie acts though. They seem to prefer more psychedelic songs like "Tomorrow Never Knows." You'll find a few covers of that one in this list of 35 Beatles covers by indie/alternative acts. A few of these you may know
and a few you may not, but they're all good, and some of them are amazing. But none of them are "Yesterday."

35 INDIE / ALT ROCK BEATLES COVERS

801 (Brian Eno, Phil Manzanera) - "Tomorrow Never Knows"

In 1976 while Roxy Music were on a two-year hiatus, Phil Manzanera formed an ad-hoc group with former Roxy electronics wiz Brian Eno, as well as Bill MacCormick, Francis Monkman, Simon Phillips and Lloyd
Watson, with the idea of performing a few shows. The group took their name from Brian Eno's song "The True Wheel" ("We are the 801") and played three concerts that year where they performed versions of Manzera and Eno songs, but they also worked up a fantastic, jazzy, proggy and very Eno-esque version of "Tomorrow Never Knows." There are a LOT of covers of this song, but this is one of the best.

Arctic Monkeys at Forest Hills Stadium (photo by Dana Distortion)

**Arctic Monkeys - "All My Loving"**

When Arctic Monkeys [headlined Madison Square Garden](https://www.brooklynvegan.com/35-great-beatles-covers-by-indiealt-artists/) on February 8, 2014, it was one day shy of the 50th anniversary of The Beatles' first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. In tribute, Alex Turner and the band whipped up this cover of the first song the Fab Four played for Ed. "Apparently one in three Americans actually watched that performance," Turner told the crowd. "So if we're lucky, one or three Americans might watch this YouTube video."
Boris & Merzbow - "I Am the Walrus"

Japanese metal band Boris and Japanese noise group Merzbow have joined forces a few times over the years, including for a 2007 12" single featuring this doomy, noisy rendition of "I Am the Walrus." It could be argued that "Goo goo g'joob" is one of the least metal phrases in existence, which might explain why this cover omits it entirely.

The Breeders - "Happiness is a Warm Gun"

Before "Cannonball" turned them into indie rock superstars, The Breeders began as a much darker, noisier beast, as a more prominent creative outlet for Kim Deal and Tanya Donelly outside of their bands Pixies and Throwing Muses. Made with bassist Josephine Wiggs and Slint drummer Britt Walford, and Steve Albini behind the board, 1990's Pod is a pretty gnarly record. Despite a bunch of great originals, one of the album's highlights is this out-there, amazing cover of this White Album classic which was suggested to the band by 4AD label owner Ivo Watts-Russell. Walford's drumming gives it an almost metal attack on the verses, and the arrangement -- and Albini's recording style -- leaves a lot of room for atmosphere.

Butthole Surfers (photo via Alternative Tentacles)

Butthole Surfers - "Come Together"

Butthole Surfers were one of the most notoriously wild live bands of the underground '80s, with homemade pyrotechnics courtesy of lighter fluid covered crash cymbals. Even without the danger of incineration, the band were a kinda scary psychedelic punk trip, be it via their own demented music, or when covering someone else's songs. "Come Together," captured in Berlin, 1985, takes on malevolent undertones between Gibby's unhinged vocal and King Coffey's explosive drumming. The siren in this song may either be coming from the stage or the
authorities. Who can say?

**Candy Flip – "Strawberry Fields Forever"

The ecstasy-fueled rave scene was a full-on phenomenon in the UK; 1988 was dubbed "The Second Summer of Love" and saw the rise of groups like The Stone Roses, Happy Mondays, and Primal Scream. That would carry on though 1991 or so with many, many other bands following their lead. One of those was Candy Flip (whose name came from "candy-flipping," aka taking E and LSD together) who scored a #4 UK hit with this blissed out cover of "Strawberry Fields Forever," fueled by the "Funky Drummer" breakbeat sample that seemed to be on every third song you heard at the time.

The 2001 film *I Am Sam* starred Sean Penn as man who has an intellectual disability and a love for the Beatles. The film was made and edited thinking that they could use a soundtrack full of original Beatles songs...but getting rights to the Fab Four's catalog has proven notoriously tricky. So producers pivoted to new cover versions -- by Eddie Vedder, Sheryl Crow, Sarah McLachlan, Rufus Wainwright, Sean's brother Michael Penn and more -- which had to be performed at the same tempo as the Beatles' originals so they'd still work in the original edit of the film. That may explain Nick Cave's version of "Let it Be" which is not quite as intense as you might expect. But still, nobody sings it like Nick.

**The Chameleons - "Tomorrow Never Knows"

Post-punk greats The Chameleons had a powerhouse in drummer John Lever (RIP) who really muscles up this take on one of the quintessential psychedelic songs of the '60s. Singer-bassist Mark Burgess really gets into it, too, with his boomy bellow bringing bravado (and a little lyrical improvisation), while Reg Smithies and Dave Fielding weave their signature guitar interplay. Add dubby, reverby production and you've got
one of the more distinctive takes on this oft-covered *Revolver* track.

As we noted elsewhere on this site, with its backwards guitars and shimmering, kaleidoscopic, layered sound, *Revolver* outtake "Rain" sounds like the inspiration for every shoegaze band ever. If you need proof, Chapterhouse, who were compatriots with Ride and Slowdive in the late-'80s Reading UK indie scene, actually covered it on their debut EP. They didn't really do too much to it, apart from turning up the guitars a bit, and it fits right in with their other three songs.

**Kurt Cobain - "And I Love Her"**

Kurt Cobain documentary *Montage of Heck* unearthed a few gems from the Nirvana archives, and one of the best was this solo acoustic cover of *A Hard Day's Night* single, "And I Love Her." In Cobain's hands, the dreamy love song gets transposed and transformed into something much darker and sadder, but still quite beautiful.

**Damon and Naomi - "While My Guitar Gently Weeps"**

Damon Krukowski and Naomi Yang have kept things gentle since the dissolve of Galaxie 500 30 years ago, bringing their distinctive tranquil sound and tasteful style to everything they do. Case in point: this cover of George Harrison's *White Album* classic. Where the original went big (including Eric Clapton's soaring guitar solo), Damon and Naomi go gentle and placid, with understated but no less expressive lead guitar courtesy Michio Kurihara (Ghost, Boris).

**Danielle Dax, "Tomorrow Never Knows"**

A genuine oddball, Danielle Dax spent time in post-punk group Lemon Kittens and sang on the debut album from Robert Fripp's League of Gentleman before going solo. 1990's *Blast the Human Flower* was her second album for Sire, was produced by Stephen Street (The Smiths,
Blur) and tapped into the current UK rave scene. With its house-y piano backing, her cover of "Tomorrow Never Knows" would fit right in between Happy Mondays' "Step On" and Candy Flip's ecstatic take on "Strawberry Fields Forever" (found elsewhere on this list). Dax gave up on music after Blast fizzled and found her true calling as an interior designer.

Deerhoof at Northside 2018 (photo by Amanda Hatfield)

**Deerhoof - "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill"

Even if you're very familiar with the weird world of Deerhoof, what you imagine their cover of "The Continuing Story of Bungalow Bill" -- one of the lesser *White Album* deep cuts -- might sound like, is probably not going to come close to what the band actually came up with.

**Echo & The Bunnymen - "All You Need is Love"

Echo & The Bunnymen were the biggest band from Liverpool since The Beatles -- according to frontman Ian McCulloch, at least -- and Mac would often work in parts of Fab Four songs on live versions of EATB's "Do it Clean." They covered a Beatles song proper, though, for a 1983 episode of Channel Four television performance series *Play at Home*. Recorded live in a church, the Bunnymen add sitar to their version of "All You Need is Love" and, like the original, McCulloch throws in lyrics from other Beatles songs. But then he keeps on going, quoting James Brown's "Sex Machine," Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone," and their own "Read it in Books."

**The Feelies - "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey"

Hoboken legends The Feelies are famous for liberally peppering their marathon live shows with covers. Here's one of a couple instances, though, where they actually recorded one in the studio. "Everybody's Got Something to Hide Except Me and My Monkey" was already a pretty
hyper song, but The Feelies really step on the gas for this version which appeared on their 1980 debut album, giving it their signature manic jangle treatment, with crazy rhythms courtesy drummer Anton Fier.

**The Flaming Lips - "Lovely Rita" ft. Tegan & Sara, Stardeath & The White Dwarfs**

In the late-‘00s and the early-2010s, The Flaming Lips stayed busy with a bunch of side projects and collaborative albums, including this track-for-track cover of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, featuring collaborations with My Morning Jacket, Miley Cyrus & Moby, Phantogram & Julianna Barwick, Maynard James Keenan, and more. The covers range from fairly straightforward to the very out-there. In the latter category is "Lovely Rita" which they made with Tegan & Sara and fellow Oklahoma band Stardeath & The White Dwarfs (who are led by Dennis Coyne who is the nephew of Flaming Lips' frontman Wayne Coyne). In their hands, McCartney's playful song is transformed into gentle synthpop with, of course, a technicolor psychedelic glow.

Grandaddy at Le Poisson Rouge (photo by Amanda Hatfield)

Some artists treat covers reverentially, some artists take songs in new directions, and others approach them as if they wrote it themselves. California band Grandaddy definitely take the latter approach on their version of "Revolution," another track from the *I Am Sam Soundtrack*, and given the band's chugging, synth-rock style this sounds like it could've been plucked straight from *The Software Slump*. Jason Lytle's laconic drawl makes you really feel like it's gonna be alright.

**Husker Du - "Ticket to Ride"**

It wasn't very punk to like The Beatles in the '80s, but Husker Du never really played by the rules and never hid their love of '60s pop, either. (They're also a band who weren't afraid to unironically cover the *Mary*.
Tyler Moore Show theme as a tribute to their hometown of Minneapolis.) Grant Hart sings this live version of "Ticket to Ride" which was included on a 1986 compilation EP given away with copies of music magazine NME. They make it roar while still keeping it sweet.

Daniel Johnston – "I Will"

Outsider musician Daniel Johnston loved The Beatles. They were one of his obsessions and he even wrote a lovely tribute song about them on his classic album Yip Jump Music. ("God bless them for what they done.")
Daniel also covered a number of their songs, almost always in warts-and-all single takes made with just a simple tape recorder that brings a spooky "other" quality. Take for example his version of *Revolver*’s "Got to Get You Into My Life" that appeared on his "1990" album. The banging of the bass notes on his not totally in-tune piano seem like he's trying to get that person into his life by sheer force.

Daniel Johnston - I Will (The Beatles Cover)

Subscribe to [Brooklyn Vegan](https://www.brooklynvegan.com) on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com)
Laibach - "The Two of Us"

Hailing from Trbovlje, Slovenia (which was called Yugoslavia when they formed in 1980), Laibach are quintessential industrial revolutionaries, pounding out grinding, militaristic, metallic music with synthesizers and drum machines, not to mention Wagnerian overtones and a wry sense of humor that attacked capitalism, communism and fascism in equal measure. In 1988, Laibach decided to attack pop music, aiming right at its heart by covering The Beatles in Laibach's own inimitable style. They
chose *Let it Be* because they considered it the Fab Four's worst and their way, way over the top approach is probably not for some, or even most. Some of the arrangements are inspired, though, like this operatic version of "The Two of Us" which turns McCartney's sweet original into a ride worthy of valkyries.

For the 50th anniversary of *Revolver*, King of All Media Howard Stern curated a track-for-track tribute album, with a pretty disparate group of musicians chosen to cover the songs -- everyone from James Taylor and Jewel, to Cheap Trick and Living Colour. For deep cut "Dr Robert," Howard got J Mascis, who might officially be in solo mode here but delivers a very Dinosaur Jr rendition, ripped open with feedback, fuzz-pedal guitars and wild solos. It's exactly what you'd expect, but it's also exactly what you want.

**Nada Surf - "All You Need is Love"**
The Beatles have almost never allowed one of their songs to be used in a commercial -- Nike's "Revolution" ad being one of the most famous exceptions -- but sometimes ad agencies get other bands to cover their songs in a very similar style. Such is the case with Nada Surf's very Beatlesque cover of "All You Need is Love" which was used in a Chase credit card commercial and the band later released as a digital single in 2006.

photo: Jill Furmanovsky, Epic Records

**Oasis - "Within You Without You"

Many might argue that every Oasis song is a Beatles cover, but the Gallaghers have released a couple actual ones -- a live version of "I Am the Walrus" turned up as a b-side to "Cigarettes & Alcohol," and there's a studio version of "Within You Without You." The latter was part of BBC Radio 2's 40th anniversary celebration of *Sgt Pepper's*, where they invited bands to recreate the album's songs using original equipment at Abbey Road studios. (It was a very 2007 group of artists, including The Zutons, Athlete and Razorlight.) Oasis' version of George Harrison's trippy "Within You Without You" is actually really clever with a "Tomorrow Never Knows" arrangement.

**Pavement (Stephen Malkmus?) - "Something"

Not a lot of info is out there about this very, very casual cover of "Something" that's attributed to Pavement but it doesn't exactly sound like a full band. With the jokey approach to the lyrics ("something in the way she dances, be it waltz, can-can, or tango") and the sung guitar hooks, it's almost like a parody of what Pavement covering The Beatles might sound like, but it's definitely Malkmus singing. As piss-takes go, though, it's pretty charming.

**Pixies - "Wild Honey Pie"
"Wild Honey Pie" is probably not very many people's favorite *White Album* song, one of the many weird McCartney throwaways on the 1968 double album, but it's short and memorable like a demented radio jingle. Pixies, however, turned it into a crazed punk ripper for a John Peel BBC session around the time they released *Surfer Rosa*. Hearing Black Francis scream "HONEY PIE!" repeatedly, the song really takes on new meaning.

**PM Dawn, "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)"

New Jersey duo P.M. Dawn defied easy categorization, mixing hip hop, pop, R&B, and psychedelia for an eccentric sound that made them unlikely hitmakers in the early '90s. Powered in part by the Lyn Collins "Think (About it)" breakbeat made famous in Rob Base & DJ E-Z Rock's "It Takes Two," their laid-back and very groovy 1993 cover of "Norwegian Wood (This Bird Has Flown)" is a great example of the cross-pollination Prince Be and DJ Minutemix were so good at.

**The Residents - "Hey Jude"

Enigmatic avant-garde cult group The Residents were tied to John, Paul, George and Ringo almost from start -- the cover art to their 1974 debut album *Meet the Residents* was a defaced version of the *Meet the Beatles* cover art, which Capitol/EMI eventually forced them to change. They actually covered a Beatles song on their second album, *Third Reich and Roll* which has cover art that depicted American Bandstand's Dick Clark as Hitler and featured disquieting versions of pop hits. Their instrumental version of "Hey Jude," like the rest of the record, is equal parts novelty and disturbing, which is right in The Residents' sweet spot.

**Siouxsie and the Banshees, "Helter Skelter"

Goth greats Siouxsie & The Banshees scored the biggest UK hit of their career with a 1983 cover of "Dear Prudence," but it was not the first time they'd covered The Beatles. The first side of their debut album, 1978's
"The Scream," closes with this intense, angular attack on "Helter Skelter." The band rips the guts out of the original and holds it up for us to see, destroyed but still recognizable.

via Elliott Smith Official Facebook

**Elliott Smith – "Because"**

The 1999 Oscar-winning film *American Beauty* hasn't aged very well for a few different reasons, but the soundtrack -- produced by KCRW "Morning Becomes Eclectic" DJ Chris Douridas -- still sounds pretty good. It includes a Who's Who of late-'90s indie, including Folk Implosion, Eels, and Elliot Smith who delivers this stunning version of *Abbey Road* Side 2 classic "Because." The harmonies are so spine-tingling you might misremember it as an acapella number, but instrumentation does kick in halfway through.

**Sonic Youth - "Within You or Without You"**

For the 20th anniversary of *Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, UK music mag *NME* put together a track-for-track tribute covers album titled *Sgt Pepper Knew My Father*, featuring a very eclectic group of musicians, including The Fall ("A Day in the Life"), Billy Bragg ("She's Leaving Home"), Wet Wet Wet ("With a Little Help from My Friends") and The Wedding Present ("Getting Better"). Sonic Youth delivered an awesome version of "Within You Without You," taking the drony nature of Harrison's original and applying it to their own noisy style.

**Sparks - "I Want to Hold Your Hand"**

One of the most idiosyncratic groups in the history of pop, Sparks (brothers Ron & Russell Mael) have always done it their way, and have rarely recorded songs other than their own. Yet in 1979 they released this cover of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" which sounded like nothing they'd ever done before and probably like no Beatles cover either. Having just
ditched their glammy backing band after three albums, the Maels teamed up with producer Rupert Hines (who was still a few years from asking if we liked Pina Coladas) for the 1976 album Big Beat. Recorded during the same sessions as the album is this over-the-top, gauzy, string-laden cover that sounds like something Scott Walker might have done around the same time. Fun fact: it was originally intended as a duet with Marianne Faithfull, who backed out at the last minute. Her loss!

St. Vincent @ All Points West 2009 (photo: Amanda Hatfield)

**St. Vincent - "Dig A Pony"

Annie Clark brings her guitar virtuosity to this cover of John Lennon's Let it Be jam which was recorded at the 2009 All Points West festival in NYC. She unleashes her inner Hendrix with a little bit of the "Star Spangled Banner" before smiling and telling the crowd "just kidding" and launching into the song's loping 6/8 riff. No band needed, just her and the guitar -- "All I want is you" indeed.

**Sufjan Stevens - "What Goes On"

Sufjan Stevens plays nearly every instrument on this at times baroque, at times garagey rendition of "What Goes On," including banjo, oboe, flute, recorder, glockenspiel, and triangle. This appeared on This Bird Has Flown, a 40th anniversary tribute to Rubber Soul that also featured covers by The Donnas, Fiery Furnaces, Ted Leo, Cowboy Junkies, Low and more. Sufjan flushes everything except the lyrics (and even then he adds his own), making this not so much a cover as a jumping off point for something new and entirely Sufjan-esque.

**Yellow Magic Orchestra - "Day Tripper"

Japanese greats Yellow Magic Orchestra's second album, Solid State Survivor, is an early synthpop classic that has inspired everyone from Depeche Mode to Michael Jackson. Amongst the YMO originals on the
album -- like their classic "Behind the Mask" -- is this Beatles cover that refashions the song with herky-jerky rhythms and angular guitar riffs that ping back and forth in the stereo mix. It would make a good back-to-back play with Devo's cover of "Satisfaction" which may have been an inspiration here.

What's your favorite Beatles cover? Let us know in the comments.

More Fab Four: The Best Song on Every Beatles Album