



was looking for ersatz father figures, or that he found in his relationship with Yoko (whom he referred to as "Mother Superior") a mother-substitute as well as a lover. Previous to Yoko, he'd nourished an infatuation for the late Alma Cogan, who, he said, reminded him of his beloved Julia.

Lennon and Yoko wrote to Janov and requested that he personally conduct the therapy on them. Janov eventually agreed on the condition that they give up drink, drugs and smoking and submit to conditions of isolation and separation (the couple were forced to book into separate hotels) prior to the treatment. Cynics have occasionally dismissed the primal scream experiment as "hippie dabbling" typical of the credulity of the era, but again what's overlooked is the courage exhibited by Lennon in undertaking what would be lengthy and excruciating purgative therapy. This was more than just a trip to The Body Shop.

Furthermore, who was to guarantee that, in exorcising his demons, Lennon might be unwittingly banishing the very engines of his artistic force? As he said himself: "The only reason I am a star is because of my repressions. The only reason I went for that goal is I wanted to say, 'Now, Mummy, will you love me?'"

The three-hour daily sessions were indeed painful, with Lennon deprived of all distractions, urged by Janov to fix his mind on traumatic memories of childhood. He cried non-stop for a fortnight. The treatment was continued in LA, in soundproofed and darkened rooms. And when he wasn't in therapy Lennon was in the studio. Whether he was ever properly purged is doubtful - it's the opinion of Janov that the emotional surgery was left unfinished, that it would have required still further months of continual, intensive therapy properly to 'cure' Lennon. What's clear from 1970's *Plastic Ono Band* album is that the treatment had no lobotomising effect on his muse.

PLASTIC ONO BAND is Lennon's greatest and most astonishing solo album, unambiguous and unflinching in its sentiments. It's piercing in its simplicity,

In 1967, presumably on drugs at the time, Lennon declared to the rest of The Beatles that he was Jesus Christ

absolute in its honesty but always drily, artfully so - there's no sense of the listener being drenched in the self-pity of a psychically pampered, self-indulgent whiner. The opening lines to "Mother" ("You had me but I never had you . . .") are typical of the agonisingly bleak clarity that hangs over the album like a cloudless winter sky. Its cool light pervades "Working Class Hero" whose mirthless castigation of the British class system is scoured of every last

trace of optimism. "I Found Out" is similarly stone cold, a red-raw take on the theme of The Who's "Won't Get Fooled Again" a seemingly final 'fuck you' to the hippie freeloaders and panhandling idealists who'd been trying to get a foot in Lennon door since the days of the Maharishi and the

Apple debacle. "I seen through junkies, I been through it all/I seen religion from Jesus to Paul." He found out, at last.

Similarly, the soberly grandiloquent closing statement, "God" - "a concept by which we measure our pain" - with its lengthy list of "don't believe in: which include the Bible, Tarot, Hitler, Jesus, Dylan The Beatles themselves, sounds like the conclusion of a man who, having been stripped to his spiritual floorboards, freed of his demons, has also been of all his illusions. The Primal Scream therapy, it seemed, had worked.

Plastic Ono Band was Lennon's first solo album. felt like it could have been his last. Had fate snatched Lennon from the world \precisely 10 years sooner, I would have been a logical, valedictory, gesture. Alternatively, he might have retired from public life, become a recluse at Tittenhurst Park, continued his therapy, cultivated his beard,

confining his musical output private hymns of acoustic praise to his beloved Yoko.

But that was never going to happen. Instead, within a few months, having shed himself of his illusions, he promptly reacquired them. In January

1971, an encounter with leftist activist Tariq Ali, who secured an interview with Lennon for the radical magazine *Red Mole*, rekindled in him the campaigning, proselytising bug. In April, Lennon, who had with almost snide resignation dismissed t masses as terminally addled and compromised on "Working Class Hero" was now yodelling "Power To The People" on an impromptu single release with renewed lustiness. »



The Rock'n'Roll Circus, 1969: (anti-clockwise from top left) Pete Townshend, Brian Jones, Yoko, Julian and John, Eric Clapton and Roger Daltrey