



Busted: John and Yoko emerge from Marylebone Magistrates Court, London, where John was fined for cannabis possession, November 28, 1968

THE LAST THREE YEARS OF THE DECADE he had to an almost unbelievable extent inspired and defined had been for John Lennon a sullen, hellish drag. Nothing, really, John looking back now as the 1970s loomed, had been the same since the death of Brian Epstein in 1967. What he had felt since the death of the man who had guided the career of The Beatles had been a toxic mix of helpless surrender, frustration and anger towards a world he no longer recognised with the clarity and certainty of only a few years earlier

He seethed now, for instance, at what he considered the "humiliation" of being a Beatle. The group had long since left behind their image as loveable mop-tops in matching suits, but Lennon still resented the years of cheerful gurning for the cameras, The Beatles as cheeky scousers, all big grins and thumbs-up breeziness, everyone's favourites.

As much as he resented what The Beatles had become, he also now began bitterly to resent Paul McCartney, to whom he'd lazily conceded leadership of The Beatles and who he regarded with increased contempt. This he had demonstrated to no small extent during the calamitous *Let It Be* sessions, during which he had serially belittled McCartney, his scorn bordering often on open hostility, the

animosity between them a sadly festering thing. He hated George and Ringo, too, for their clear antipathy towards his new partner, the avant-garde artist Yoko Ono, who had sat in on both the *Let It Be* and *Abbey Road* sessions. In one of his better puns, he referred to them as "my beast friends" for not embracing his soul mate (who'd recently suffered two miscarriages), for not indulging more cheerily her unsmiling presence, whimsical, gnomic utterances and unfortunate inclination to grab the microphone during studio sessions and shriek amusical ululations into it.

Lennon, in turn, was resented by the band for stating, on record, that Apple, the label The Beatles had set up in a hazy fit of well-meaning, was in danger

of ruining the band financially. "What did you ham go and say that for?" McCartney fretted, still clinging to the doe-eyed feeling that the label, like The Beatles themselves, might have a chance these current woes if they only stuck together like troupers and gave the thing a decent chance. Lennon would always be prey to impractical idealism and dubious gurus, but when his and disenchantment became more than he could adequately bear, he was not slow in stating so frank and publicly, rather than limping on in abject denial John knew The Beatles were finished. In fact, he'd s The Beatles, so far as he was concerned, during a band meeting in which he'd asked for "a divorce" That one time, he hadn't gone public. So he was all the more