

touchingly queuing up to deliver tributes to the man whom they regarded as one of New York's treasures, as opposed to a dormant subversive. "He is one of the great artists of the western world," said Mailer. "We lost TS Eliot to England and only got Auden back." Even ageing actress Gloria Swanson chipped in.

Lennon's public life, however, was extremely limited. He and Yoko had agreed that he would play house husband to young Sean, bond with the boy and assume full domestic responsibility, while Yoko would take care of business. Which she did with formidable effectiveness, transforming into a ruthless businesswoman who would multiply the Lennon fortune and embark on a series of shrewd deals, including, notoriously, the sale of a cow for \$265,500. (When asked how she squared her newfound rapacity with her former anti-materialism, Yoko explained that she had had to "humble" herself by dispensing with the illogical idea that artists should be anti-money. Even rampant capitalism, it seemed, could play a part in the soul-purifying process).

If this new arrangement meant there would be no more Lennon output, then so be it. "I am blessed with a second chance," Lennon wrote, in unconvincingly lofty tones. "Being a Beatle nearly cost me my life and certainly cost me a great deal of my health. I will not make the same mistake twice in one lifetime. If I never 'produce' anything more for public consumption than 'silence', so be it.»

From what we know from published extracts of his diaries and the sometimes biased accounts of former employees and various associates, this would be



Hey Jude: Julian and John (May Pang in background)

## Lennon retreated into a dark world of drugs, dreams and diaries... such a withdrawal elicited comparisons with Howard Hughes

anything but a happy period in Lennon's life. While Lennon wanted peace for mankind and arguably did more than any other figure in recent popular culture to propound that idea, deep down he did not want peace in his own life, or rather was congenitally incapable of enjoying it. Lennon, like the man in the Bible, was born to struggle as the sparks fly upward.

Lennon retreated into a dark world of drugs, dreams and diaries as the world drifted on without him, drifted away from him. He wasn't quite the recluse he's often depicted as—he made a number of public appearances, including one at President Carter's 1977 inaugural gala. Indeed, compared to today's slo-tech world, where the imperatives of modern recording and marketing plans preclude the possibility of making more than three records a decade, the lowness of Lennon's profile and the absence of album releases would not excite undue comment. In the late 1970s, however, such a withdrawal elicited comparisons with Howard Hughes.

ONCE THE THRILL of bread-baking began to pall, Lennon's domestic life descended into a mire of stoned, festering chaos. One suspects he baulked at his confinement in the Dakota—arguably an emasculating punishment imposed by Yoko for the good times he'd had in LA. Resentment towards his peers grew also. He regarded Bowie, Jagger and McCartney as pests. When Elvis Presley died in 1977, the first remark from his lips was, "Elvis died when he joined the Army." He also nursed a grudge against Bob Dylan, whom he lampooned in a series of home tapes (which emerged on the *Anthology* collection) and castigated for his »

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