



Join our free membership site, **The Duke Humfrey's**, and get access to full transcripts, past episodes, exclusive downloads and more. You'll find it all at www.MBS.works/podcast

MBS ([00:00](#)):

"Living is easy with eyes closed, misunderstanding all you see. It's getting hard to be someone, but it all works out. It doesn't matter much to me." Yep, that is me. And that's me reading the lyrics to the Beatles' Strawberry Fields in an admittedly slightly pretentious way. So I'm sorry about that. But trust me, there's a reason for that. "Misunderstanding all you see, but it all works out," that's the clue. Let's dive into the power of conflict and creativity. Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. And my guest today is an author who delights in writing about human behavior and the traits that drive us. I first discovered his work with his important book, *Curious*, which unpacks the nuances of curiosity, but Ian Leslie has a new book,



Conflicted, and today we're talking about the link between curiosity, which I love, and conflict, which frightens me a little. Ian didn't start out as an author, however. He spent his early professional career in advertising, until one fateful day, when the rug was pulled out from under him, and he was fired.

Ian ([01:22](#)):

I had an early midlife crisis, some point in my kind of mid 30s. And I really do advise it and I think you should get your midlife crisis in early and often. And I thought, "I don't actually want to do that..." I love advertising in lots of ways, but I don't want to all the time, the rest of my life, "I'm going to see if I can get a writing career off the ground."

MBS ([01:43](#)):

So Ian did. And in addition to his book, he writes for The Economist and other well known publications. And he has one of his own, a newsletter called The Ruffian, which got its name by unconventional means.

Ian ([01:55](#)):

I couldn't think of what to call it. And what I started it, I saw it as a place where I would just sort of draft thoughts and bounce ideas off and eventually they might become articles or even books and so on. So it was a pun in the rough Ian, the rough [inaudible 00:02:13] of... And of course, it's a stupid part, nobody gets it. And it's sort of meaningless, and I'm stuck with it.

MBS ([02:21](#)):

So I love a bad/good pun. And in fact, the name of one of the greatest bands in the world, the Beatles is a bad pun, as well. It's B-E-A-T-L-E-S, rather than the usual beetles spelling. And that's the segue I need to introduce Ian's chosen book. It's about the Beatles, and how they created their brilliant, groundbreaking songs. Ian's quite the fan.



Ian ([02:49](#)):

I hadn't really understood the extent of their creative genius. I could see that they were hugely successful, and they make great music. And I could see they're likable guys. But very few writers had really taken them seriously as musicians, as artists, really. Because it was almost like we were still in a process and our cultural history where we didn't really take pop that seriously. I don't know, there's a certain point where you love the music, and you also get so bound up in the story, in these characters, John, Paul, George, and Ringo, that you just become immersed in the story. And once you're in, it's like a cult, you can't get out. And I'm still part of it decades later.

MBS ([03:44](#)):

Now, the book Ian chose to read from, goes against the trend you typically find when reading about your favorite artists. Ian explains:

Ian ([03:53](#)):

I read so many interviews and articles about pop musicians is on, where they talk about everything except what they do. Like, if you want to understand the soul of this person, you want to get to the heart of what this person is about, [crosstalk 00:04:10] talk to them about the music.

MBS ([04:10](#)):

Show me the work. Yeah.

Ian ([04:11](#)):

Yeah. Come on, talk about the work. That's where they are, right? And this is what Ian MacDonald does in his book, so it's important, not just as a kind of book about the Beatles, which obviously to me was hugely revelatory and important. But it's also, even if you're not particularly into the Beatles, fascinating book about the nature of creativity, and art.



MBS ([04:41](#)):

What did it give you permission to do, having read this book?

Ian ([04:44](#)):

It gave me permission to really think a lot harder about the nature of the creative process and art and to really... It sort of, even if only in a small way, it sets the bar for you. Whatever you're doing, it will come to you in lots of different ways. In fact, when I read the passage, I'll point some of them out, but there are many ways in which I go, "You know what, his is similar to the problems that the Beatles faced," right? Because it's such a sort of archetypal creative process, there are many lessons that you can draw from it for any creative endeavor, in which you are involved.

MBS ([05:38](#)):

Well, I can't wait to hear these two pages, Ian, so when you take it away. So Ian Leslie reading *Revolution in the Head* by Ian MacDonald, published first in 1994. I think the latest edition was 2009. So Ian, over to you.

Ian ([05:54](#)):

Thank you. Okay, so I'm going to just introduce this passage, just by telling you where we are in the Beatles' story.

MBS ([06:02](#)):

Yeah, please.

Ian ([06:03](#)):

So this is late 1966, about halfway through the Beatles' short career. And they've just recorded an album called *Revolver*, which was this huge kind of leap forward, included *Eleanor Rigby* and *Tomorrow Never Knows* and *Yellow Submarine*, all sorts of insanely brilliant stuff. And they were already thinking



about the next album, which turns out to be Sgt. Pepper. They don't know that yet. But they are starting to think that their next album should be about childhood, that is a very vague notion that they're quite interested in writing songs about, childhood and nostalgia. And these two pages are about Strawberry Fields Forever or Strawberry Fields, which, in the end, wasn't on the Sgt. Pepper album. It's like, they had so many songs, they just left off the album. So it was released as a single with Penny Lane.

Ian ([07:16](#)):

And so Strawberry Fields is primarily a John song. And so these two pages are really the story of him coming up with a song and then how the band recorded it. And I think just, you'll see there's like 10 different lessons about creativity, just... so excuse me if some of it's a little bit technical. But it's very rich at the same time. Okay, this is September 1966. John has gone to Spain to be in a film called How I Won the War. So by himself, a lot of the time he's with his guitar, and when he's off set, he's just working on this little song, it may not go anywhere. Just sort of playing a few chords over and over again.

Ian ([08:10](#)):

Piecing this song together on acoustic guitar during breaks from filming How I Won the War in Spain in September, Lennon seems to have lost and rediscovered his artistic voice, passing through an interim phase of creative inarticulacy that's reflected in the halting childlike quality of his lyric. The music too shows Lennon at his most somnambulistic, moving uncertainly, through thoughts and tones, like a momentarily blinded man, feeling for something familiar. In fact, so unusual was the direction that Lennon took with Strawberry Fields, that he had no idea of what he wanted. And the first three days of recording, which begin couple of months later in November... The first three days of recording amounted to a sustained false start. There's a thin sketch, is now kind of... Some of this is released now. You can listen to evolve. The first



version is a thin sketch in which the chorus is held back for two verses. Then the chorus is brought to the front. And the slower first version of Strawberry Fields was commenced on 28th of November, five takes of this being accumulated by the end of the next day. And the last mixed down to... this is take seven, on the assumption that it would be the basic track.

Ian ([09:37](#)):

Lennon, though, was uneasy, and after a week's break, he and George Martin agreed to start from scratch using different instrumentation, trumpets, cellos. A faster, denser rhythm track was created on the 8th and 9th of December. And a week later, the session players, the trumpet players and cello players, scored by Martin, performed their overdubs. Lennon remained unsatisfied. Finally, after a week of pondering, he announced that he wanted the first part of the original version to be spliced to the second part of the new one, a task that would involve matching two takes recorded at different speeds and a semitone apart in pitch. George Martin ventured mildly that this would be impossible. Lennon was adamant. Lennon was adamant and he turned out to be right. By sheer fluke, it happened that the difference in [tempo 00:10:35] between the two tracks was a nearly exact ratio to the difference in their keys. By vary speeding the two tapes to approximately the same tempo, Martin and his engineer, Geoff Emerick, pulled off one of the most effective edits in pop, detectable only and a change in ambience at about one minute in, the swoop from the airiness of the first chorus verse into something more shadowy, serious and urgent, was what Lennon had been groping for all along, yet ultimately it had to be achieved through controlled accident.

Ian ([11:10](#)):

More controlled accident lies behind the track's peculiar swimming sound, derived from the vary speeding techniques developed during the Revolver sessions. In fact, there's so much varying of the speed, the tape speed, during



the making of Strawberry Fields that the final mix wanders in a micro tonal borderland between keys. An idea of how much acceleration is needed to be applied to the first version to match it to the second one can be had by comparing Starr's high frequency snare sound in the opening minute, with its more natural pitch thereafter. Though par excellence a Lennon song, Strawberry Fields drew sharp contributions from all involved. Apart from Starr's indispensable foundation work, the main features of the texture was applied by a Mellotron played by McCartney. The Mellotron was a kind of primitive electronic organ. And if you can recall the opening of Strawberry Fields, there's that little sound dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, dee, doo, doo. That's kind of childlike, slightly creepy organ, which is so important to the track. The atmosphere of the track is played by... it was McCartney's contribution.

Ian ([12:33](#)):

And there's also... This is MacDonald, back to MacDonald, and a sort of Indians zither called a [sfa mandel 00:12:41], used by Harrison for the descending raga scale, which pans across the stereo spectrum at the ends of the central choruses. Picking up on this Indian inflection, George Martin wove his cellos exotically around McCartney's, sitar like guitar fills in the fade. Its one note brass fanfare emerging as the most exciting feature of a superbly climactic arrangement. Devouring an unprecedented 55 hours of studio time... By the way, 55 hours to make a track would not be considered a long time these days. Bills did everything very fast. And the fact that 55 hours was extraordinary for them, but now it wouldn't be. Devouring an unprecedented 55 hours of studio time, Strawberry Fields Forever extended the range of studio techniques developed on Revolver, opening up possibilities for pop which, given sufficient invention could result in unprecedented sound images.

Ian ([13:43](#)):



Such moods and textures had formerly been the province of classical music. And when George Martin described the recording as a complete tone poem, like a modern Debussy, he did so with justification. Genres apart, the main difference between a Debussy piece and a song like Strawberry Fields lies less in expressive aspiration than in range of color and fluency of articulation. Here the Beatles show that technical shortcomings, far from constraining the imagination, can let it expand into areas inaccessible to the trained mind. Heard for what it is, a sort of technologically evolved folk music, Strawberry Fields Forever shows expression of a high order. While there are countless contemporary composers qualified to write music usually more sophisticated in form and technique, few, if any, are capable of displaying feeling and fantasy so direct, spontaneous and original.

MBS ([14:49](#)):

Wow, that is fantastic. And I know I've immediately lost about 80% of my listeners, because they've all turned off the podcast to go and listen to the song. [inaudible 00:14:59] "Wait, let me listen to it now."

Ian ([15:01](#)):

Yeah, that's exactly what it does, right?

MBS ([15:01](#)):

Right.

Ian ([15:05](#)):

And the passage, this is true of the whole book, right? It just sends you back to the music and you hear it again, even if you've heard it 1000 times. You read this guy, and you go back to it, you go, "Wow." Yeah.



MBS ([15:20](#)):

I just love... so much about that. But as somebody who's a writer myself, the idea of sustained false starts, just strikes me to my soul, as I discard 1000s of words of, "I thought it was good, it's not so good." And also Lennon's... that naggingness in the back of your brain going, "You know what, it's not there yet. It's good enough. We could put this out, it would do. But I've got a vision for something and I'm groping towards it." And it's only in the groping that the vision unfolds. That just feels so resonant, yeah.

Ian ([15:58](#)):

Exactly. Right. And... Yeah, I mean, there's so much in here. And actually, you can actually listen to a few of these, the versions on YouTube or on Spotify. And yeah, you see that we hear Strawberry Fields and like with any kind of finished article, you kind of think, "Wow, how did they come up with that? That's brilliant. This is genius." It didn't feel like genius at the time. To them it would have felt like a bit of a... [crosstalk 00:16:32]

MBS ([16:31](#)):

... long hours.

Ian ([16:32](#)):

Yeah, and certainly in those early stages, it was like, "There's something here, but I'm not sure it's very good." And so you can hear Lennon kind of bashing away and acoustic guitar, singing some kind of verses, and it just doesn't... It's not much there. But he kind of just keeps nagging away at it. And it just sort of grows and grows and grows. So yeah, first of all, it's a reminder of how things kind of evolve almost from nothing, and they can go all the way to something brilliant. But also, this idea of kind of not knowing what he wanted, but knowing he wanted something... Walking into the studio and saying, "Look, this is what I've got. And I've got a kind of vision for it. And I feel like it should be... but I don't



know what it is." And also kind of just demanding the impossible, which Lennon did a lot. There's a-

MBS ([17:37](#)):

And also, a reminder of, as it's been said many times, but they called George Martin the fifth Beatle and for the role he plays in making the impossible happen. When Lennon goes, "Make these two... Make this..." It's like Apollo 16. It's like, "We've got around thing, we need to square thing, just make it happen. And you've got 16 hours, go!" And it's like, "Okay."

Ian ([17:59](#)):

Yeah, that's exactly right. And I think it's really interesting, because in many different types of work, collaboration, you're often dealing with people who think in very different ways, right? Some version of a kind of engineer, and a creative person, right? And often the creative person is saying, "Yeah, but I want it to be like this." And then the person responsible for executing the plan is like, "I don't think that's going to be possible." Now, if the creative person just-

MBS ([18:33](#)):

Marketing, they're a nightmare to work with.

Ian ([18:36](#)):

Yeah, I mean, certainly. I saw this in advertising all the time, right? And if the creative person is too easily backs down and says, "Well, okay, yeah. I guess it's not possible," then, you may not get to the genius... to the brilliant thing that can happen. Okay, so McCartney and Lennon had different... George Martin talked about how they would present their problems in different ways. McCartney would come to him with a problem almost half solved a lot of the time. So McCartney will come in and say, "I think I want to orchestrate the track like this. And I think we're going to have flutes like this, and trumpets like this, and it's



going to work like this." And Martin will be like, "Great. Yeah, I can work with that. Let's go and do that." Lennon will come in and he would say, "I want this one to sound like a lemon." And Martin will go, "Okay, John. Yeah. We'll see what we can do."

Ian ([19:38](#)):

And they're both actually great. There's no right or wrong way to do it, especially when you're at that level of talent, but you kind of... Lennon's sort of determination to just say, "I want it to be like this. And it's over to you, George and the team at Abbey Road. Help me make it happen."

MBS ([20:01](#)):

It's helpful to have George Martin be able to speak both languages. [crosstalk 00:20:05] question in, if I can. What light, if any, does that passage, which is so brilliant about the unexpected creation of Strawberry Fields, how did that reflect on or shade in some way the latest work around understanding productive conflict?

Ian ([20:27](#)):

I think that's what I was talking about really, in terms of you need... It doesn't say that they had a [inaudible 00:20:37] about how they were going to mix those two tracks together, whether that was possible. But there's clearly some disagreement there, right?

MBS ([20:47](#)):

Right.

Ian ([20:48](#)):

So Lennon says, "Right, we've got these two takes, we've got a kind of rock band take and we've got this kind of more orchestral Baroque take," and Lennon



walking into Abbey Road in saying to Martin and the engineers, "Well, I like both of them. Let's put them together." Now, they probably did feel like this is ridiculous, you can't do that. "George, tell him you..." Probably the other engineers was like, "Come on, George, you tell. You..." And George Martin said... probably did it very politely and diplomatically, but, "That's impossible." But the fact that they were able to handle those kind of tensions and disagreements, and actually, without that disagreement, the genius of the Beatles' albums they were kind of a creation of these kind of relatively technical conservative engineers in Abbey Road. I mean, they wore white coats, right?

Ian ([21:51](#)):

These guys were quite sort of rigid in their thinking, in some ways, quite conservative, versus these crazy kind of guys who were like, "Hey, I want to make this sound like 1000 monks on the top of a hill, just go and do it." It was the two together that... So I do think that... In *Conflicted*, I talk about how conflict is essential to creativity and innovation. You need both sides, you need people kind of pushing from both sides in order to create something new, that's neither one nor the other, right? So you don't get their conventional take, and you don't get the really radical out there take. You literally get what Lennon created in that... what they created together, which is, you smooch the two things together and you create something new that nobody's ever done before.

MBS ([22:45](#)):

One of my first bosses, he had a motto... He [inaudible 00:22:49] innovation and creativity. And he's like, "We're finding the space between madness and measure." And I love that as a cord. He's like, "If it's too far on the extremes, it's boring or weird. But where the two meet, where they intermingle, that's where some magic can happen."



Ian ([23:04](#)):

That's right. And the important thing here is not to think about it as a compromise. So it's not literally just like, find the spot in the middle and go there. It's like two plus two equals five, two plus two equals a million, right? You don't just find the middle ground, you take these two different points of view, these two different visions of how to do something and you make something bigger and more original from them, than either was capable of seeing themselves.

MBS ([23:39](#)):

Okay, but Ian, let me ask you this. So that I get, but here's the hard thing for me, it's staying in those moments of tension, where there's heat in the room, where I feel... Part of me goes, "This is a helpful conversation." Part of this goes, "This is a threat to my autonomy and my expertise and my role on the team." What have you learned about what it takes to be able to stay present to the moment and the opportunity in these moments of tension and these moments of heat?

Ian ([24:17](#)):

Underlying it all is always the relationship, whether it's the relationship with somebody you don't know very well or someone you've been around. It's the thing that... In communication science, they say that in any conversation, any interaction between human beings, there's always two levels going on. There's the content level, which is the thing that we are talking about. And there's the relationship level, which is inarticulate, it's not articulated, it's nonverbal. It's about what you think about me and what I think about you, do you like me and respect me? And vice versa.

Ian ([25:04](#)):

And unless there is some sort of settlement, some sort of agreement at the relationship level, the content level is just going to go off course, or it's not going



to go anywhere. When we have to have a settled relationship, where we think, "Yeah, okay," we both see each other in a way that we're both comfortable with. You can get into conflict and disagreement at the content level, and it's actually creative rather than destructive. If there is a real sort of festering tension at that relationship level, it's just going to derail the content conversation, and it's just not going to go anywhere. And one of the things about the Beatles, which McCartney still talks about is that they just knew each other incredibly well, particularly between the four of them, but then they quickly formed a good relationship with George Martin, when they met him. And they had no problem therefore disagreeing with each other.

Ian ([26:09](#)):

McCartney would say, "A lot of our songs got to be so good is that I would produce something and Lennon would say, 'That's not very good, is it?' I'll say, 'No, you're right.'" Because they knew it, they'd grown up together, they'd learn their craft at the same time. So when the relationship is strong, when the sort of micro culture of the group is strong enough, where it's accepted, that people are going to criticize and disagree and conflict, and that's okay, then you've got a really kind of fertile ground for creative disagreement.

MBS ([26:41](#)):

What's the connection between curiosity and conflict?

Ian ([26:49](#)):

Yeah, I mean, it's really interesting, because I set out to write this book about conflict and disagreement, thinking that it was a completely different subject to curiosity. And then I realized in some ways, it's a kind of part two. Because, curiosity is kind of the antidote to hostility, the kind of hostility and polarization that can set in to any disagreement, whether it's a political disagreement, red versus blue, in the States, or just even in a boardroom, you get polarization, and



people not listening to each other, people getting angry at each other, and mistaking a difference of opinion for a personal attack, right? These things happen all the time. And one of the most powerful antidotes to that is curiosity.

Ian ([27:47](#)):

If you're faced with someone, and they are saying something that you completely disagree with, you're going to have a very strong instinct to dismiss them as stupid or evil. If you put yourself into a different mindset and say, "Well, hang on a minute, I'm never going to agree with this person," right? Put that to one side, it doesn't really matter. I can be interested in how they arrived at this point of view. And actually, you can always be interested and say, "Well, how did you get here?" I'm giving a long answer to your question, but this is one of the lessons that I learned when I interviewed for the book. I interviewed expert interrogators. So really effective interrogators do not do what you see in the movies, which is, they don't walk into the room and sort of bang the table and say, "You've got to tell me what you know. I'm going to throw the book at you."

Ian ([28:40](#)):

In a way, that's what the suspect expects, and if they're a trained... They get trained to resist this kind of thing, which many of them are. It's kind of easy for them. They just shut down. The really expert ones walk in there and they say, "Look, I can't make you tell me anything," right? "If you don't want to talk, it's your legal right not to talk. You can actually leave the room if you want. But I have to say, I'm really interested in how you got here. I would like to know that." And by the way, and the key about this is that they know it works but they're not doing it cynically, because they are genuinely interested. The really good interrogators are absolutely curious about these people. They do want to know. You can't actually fake it. Or you can fake it badly and it'd probably backfire.



Ian ([29:38](#)):

And they are putting aside what... They may think this person is a terrible person, right? Because but maybe this person tried to kill their colleagues or succeeded, who knows? They have to put all that stuff aside and just get interested. And I kind of think, "Well, if they can do it, I could do it." And so I put it to speed with my colleague or by a member of my family, whatever. Just let you're curiosity unfurl. And that can make a lot of disagreement way better.

MBS ([30:04](#)):

It feels to me in that, in both curiosity and playing a role in productive conflict, involves you being willing to give up something, maybe give up status or authority. And willing to kind of cede that ground to you, as you say, when your book not one up the person, but kind of allow them to one up you, so that they feel that they have authority and face and a degree of control. And that's all well and good in theory, but in practice, that's extremely difficult. I'm curious to know how you nurture that willingness to cede authority and status.

Ian ([30:47](#)):

I think that's absolutely right. Well, the first thing is, you have to kind of think about it and be aware of these dynamics, right? I mean, that's kind of the mission of the book really, is to help us all be a little bit more aware of why disagreements go wrong. It's not inevitable, you can make them go better, not always, right? It's not always possible, but there's usually a lot more you can do to make them go better. And yeah, you're right, it's a status. The reason that they go wrong is often because they just become a power struggle, they become a kind of battle of people asserting their status in the conversation. And you can help that or you can avoid that, at least to extent in two ways. One, by controlling your own ego, not letting that get out of control. That's hard enough, right?



Ian ([31:38](#)):

But the other thing you can do is help them manage their own ego, help them feel good about where they are in the conversation, which might mean complimenting them or showing them some respect or showing them that you like them or finding something that you agree on, or that you both feel the same way about. And then get into the hard part of the disagreement. But you're trying to settle them as well as settle yourself before really getting into the tough part. So yeah, there are things you can do. I agree, it's hard. But that's why we need to kind of think of it as a skill that you educate yourself in and you practice and you get better at overtime.

MBS ([32:25](#)):

Do both of these skills effectively mean that you have to kind of manage the amygdala that fight or flight response? Because, I can make him both in conflict and also when you're not curious, you could be in that kind of reactive state. Feels like both of these things need to kind of be front of the brain, prefrontal cortex acts rather than instinct.

Ian ([32:49](#)):

Yes. To a certain extent. You're certainly kind of managing those instincts. When people are disagreed with, they do often feel... There is a primitive part of their brain, which reacts to it as if they're being attacked by a bear.

MBS ([33:09](#)):

I'm living with my parents at the moment. So I feel like my amygdala flashes on and off on a regular basis right now, even though I'm a 53 year old man. I'm like, "It's so interesting to watch me react."



Ian ([33:19](#)):

Exactly, right? I do think that's the first stage, not just in disagreement conflict, but in so many ways. Just being aware of what's going on helps you manage it, right? Even if you can't control it. At least there's a little bit of you which is able to step outside and go, "Okay, my amygdala's flat. Some primitive kind of reptile brain is being triggered here." It doesn't make it go away, necessarily, but it does make it a little bit easier to manage. And I'm not kind of suggesting that we should be purely rational in a disagreement or an argument. They don't all have to be kind of Spock like, hyper rational clashes of philosophy. They should be emotional, you should throw yourself into an argument if it's something you care about. Because, actually when you care about something, that often improves your thinking, right?

Ian ([34:15](#)):

It's one of the things we learned from neuroscience is that emotions and rationality are not these kind of two separate zones, that they're bound up with each other and they can be used to improve each other.

MBS ([34:28](#)):

Hey, I've got a final question for you. It's a catch all, sweep it all, big question at the end of the interview, and it's this: what needs to be said that hasn't yet been said in this conversation between the two of us?

Ian ([34:46](#)):

The one thing that I kind of come back to a lot when I think about creative processes, is the importance of constraints. In fact, not just creative processes, but all sorts of things, where we tend to think of freedom as this is an unalloyed good, right? Where creativity is about, "Hey, I don't need any rules here, I'm just going to go and do stuff." But a big part of the reason that the Beatles were doing these revolutionary things in the studio is that the studio was not... it was



pretty primitive. And actually, they had the chance to go and record in LA and places like that and they were tempted to do it, they just never got around to it. And they would have had a more kind of technologically advanced...

Ian ([35:36](#)):

But actually, the engineers and the band had to be so creative that actually, it just made them produce things that they wouldn't have produced in a more technologically advanced... So often, we kind of create these technologies to make these things easier for us. But by making things easy for us, it enables us to put less effort into being creative ourselves. And I think that's just such an important lesson in all sorts of ways.

MBS ([36:06](#)):

Yeah, as they always say, it's the grit in the oyster that creates the pearl.

Ian ([36:11](#)):

And sometimes that's other people, right? So that's why conflict is so important. Sometimes other people are the constraint on you. And they are the constraint that is making you think harder, and go deeper into yourself to bring up something more original and more creative and more interesting. So you should glory and people who are good disagreeers and who will come back at you and not always give you what you want. Because, then you find out, as a rival band to the Beatles, sometimes that's how you find out what you need.

MBS ([36:47](#)):

If you're like me, you've already hit pause on this podcast conversation, gone and had a listen to Strawberry Fields. And look, I appreciate you coming back. So thank you for doing that. Now, as someone who's a creator, myself, of books and podcasts and courses and the like, this was a hugely powerful conversation for me. And I'm taking three key things out of it.



MBS ([37:08](#)):

First, patience, patience to wait for things to emerge through time. It just takes a while for good things to show up. You waste, and I'm doing air quotes as I say that, a bunch of time upfront in the creating of something, particularly something that feels new or on the edge. I'm writing a new book at the moment. And I've literally just hit delete on the first third of it, it kills me. And it's just part of the process. The second thing I'm taking out of the conversation is unreasonableness. John Lennon saying, "Look, attach these two significantly different things together and just make it work."

MBS ([37:50](#)):

To create great stuff, you've often got to declare what seems impossible, or at least unreasonable. And finally, point number three, you're never doing this on your own. Strawberry Fields is as much as a George Martin production, as it is a Beatles production or Lennon/McCartney production. Martin was the master technician who made it work. And behind anybody who's really achieving great things, you've got other people who are making stuff happen in the background. Just as when I write a great book, I've got a designer, and an editor, and a copy editor and early readers. I've got a cast of 1000s helping me create the stuff that makes it look like it's all my own work.

MBS ([38:35](#)):

I hope that you're taking on a worthy goal, something thrilling and important and daunting for you. And there just might be a clue in the Beatles about how you can make progress towards something extraordinary. If you want to find out more about Ian, you'll find him at [Ian dash lezlie.com](http://IanDashLezlie.com) so that's Ian, I-A-N, dash Leslie, L-E-S-L-I-E.com and encourage you to hunt down and sign up for the Ruffian or the Ruff-Ian newsletter. That's a sub stack newsletter. I get that, I subscribe to that. I find it always brings interesting perspectives into the world.



MBS ([39:13](#)):

I just want to say thank you to you for listening to the podcast, listening all the way to the end. If you haven't done it already, perhaps you'll consider joining our free community. It's called the Duke Humphreys, the library at Oxford University where the cool, rare, beautiful, extraordinary books were kept. And [inaudible 00:39:31] you come freeze. You get access to unreleased episodes, the full uncut interviews with all of my guests, some cool downloads as well. It's totally free. But I'd love you to come and join the community there. Other people who love books and who love the 2 Pages as much as you might.

MBS ([39:49](#)):

And the podcast grows by word of mouth. So if this conversation about creativity and conflict and patience has struck a chord for you, perhaps there's somebody else in your world that you might go, "You know what? They might benefit from that conversation as well." And if that person comes to mind, please ping them a note and say, "Oi, listen to the podcast, you'll enjoy it." If you have time, a review and a little rating on whatever your podcast app is always appreciated. And I'll just sign off by saying you are awesome. You're doing great.