



Instamatic Karma: Photographs of John Lennon

May Pang

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?There were times I was a bit reticent in taking out my camera, like when some ?old friends? stopped by to hang out. I didn?t want to intrude on these moments, but John insisted. He felt that I captured him in ways that no one else did because of his comfort level with me?For years, only my closest friends got to see these photos?which were literally tucked away in a shoebox in my closet. They were surprised that these images did not convey the John that was portrayed in the press during our time together. In fact, they saw a side of John seldom seen.??From INSTAMATIC KARMA

John Lennon is the most famously photographed Beatle?everyone from Iain MacMillian to Annie Lebowitz took iconic images of him?but there have never been pictures of him like these taken by May Pang, Lennon?s girlfriend from 1973 to 1975. In INSTAMATIC KARMA, they?re collected for the first time. With very few exceptions, these photos are that rare thing: never-before-seen images of an icon. The photos here show Lennon in a variety of settings: at work, at play, at home, and away. They show a playful Lennon, a casual, unguarded Lennon; they?re the kind of photos one lover takes of another. May has written rich captions to accompany her photos--taken together, they tell a simple story of the time May and Lennon spent together; a time, according to legend, when Lennon was unhappy and unproductive, estranged from his family and bandmates. Pang?s photos clearly tell another story?they show Lennon clowning around, working on his hit album ?Walls and Bridges?, embracing old friends and family, hanging out in their apartment on Manhattan?s East 52nd Street, relaxing in the country in upstate New York or spending peaceful days swimming in the waters of Long Island.

The photographs in INSTAMATIC KARMA are both color and black & white, casual Polaroids and more composed shots. Each one is an intimate glimpse into a fascinating time in John Lennon?s life.

Instamatic Karma: Photographs of John Lennon Details

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Gerardo Vega says

John Lennon and Yoko separated for 18 months to find themselves, John Lennon got lost with May Pang for 18 months in which he called the "Lost Weekend" in this book May Pang shares the pictures she took of John Lennon and their adventures. I remember her describing the pictures in detail, it's definitely interesting to see the lost weekend in pictures. May Pang definitely fell in love with Lennon but Lennon's love for Yoko was stronger. I recommend it to anybody that's a John Lennon fan like myself.

Peacegal says

This is a good-natured collection of candid snapshots taken during what is mistakenly called Lennon's "Lost Weekend" with his assistant/girlfriend/etc. May Pang. The photos here don't convey a sense of being lost at all—indeed, most radiate joy and contentment.

This is an essential piece of history for Beatles fans.

Anna says

hoorah for pictures!

Maybe it's just me, but in MOST John/Yoko photos he looks glum or too serious...

In this collection of photos taken by May Pang (with a couple by Julian), John is beaming from almost every page! I don't know where Yoko's "PR machine" gets their info on him "being so desperately lost" during this time... The photos speak volumes otherwise

He looks happy, he's relaxed, he's hanging out with friends + Julian and just doing his thing.

The shots aren't pro (some are blurry, some have faded colors) - it's all purely spur-of-the-moment amateur quick-snaps, which makes it seem all the more endearing

Bill F. says

These photographs are truly amazing, including [to my knowledge, anyway] the last known photograph of John, Paul and Ringo together (in 1974). While no one will ever know whether the Lennon/Ono relationship was as disturbed as portrayed in Albert Goldman's *The Lives of John Lennon* or as idyllic as Yoko's works (the movie *Imagine* and countless other projects), there is no denying that Lennon had a surreal ability to change the lives of those with whom he spent time. While Lennon and Harry Nilsson [to my knowledge] never saw each other after 1975, Nilsson was so shaken by Lennon's murder that he devoted the last 14 years of his life to gun control issues; Eric Clapton - who hadn't seen Lennon [again, to my knowledge] since 1969

- had to be sedated after violently trashing his home upon learning of Lennon's death; and actor Peter Boyle - for whom John stood as best man at his mid-70s wedding - could never speak of his relationship with Lennon for the remaining 20+ years of his life because, he said, "it is simply too emotionally painful". All of this is to demonstrate that - whatever it was - Lennon had an aura that stayed with everyone - not just May Pang - long after he departed their lives.

Sari says

Despite May Pang's personal negative feeling towards Yoko Ono, this book has really fun personal images of Lennon during the break in Lennon and Ono's relationship in 1974.

Hicksnco says

150 never before seen photos of John Lennon, a feast!

Gary Schantz says

Since 99% of the books about the Beatles as a group or as individuals are written by people who don't know them personally so I found this book to be fun look at a small part of John Lennon's life put out by someone who not only knew him but had no axe to grind.

The book covers the time between the end of Lennon's anti-war politics; his break-up with Yoko Ono; the final dissolution of the Beatles (contractually); and the last of his recording career before he walked away from the music business to be a family man.

It shows him hanging out for a few years with a new woman in his life (as he would call it in later interviews) during his Lost Weekend where he was hanging out with new friends and rekindling relationships with old friends (namely Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr). This is particularly the reason I bought the book because aside from one picture in a book written by Patti Harrison (George's ex), there aren't many pictures of the Beatles together after they broke up...especially pictures of Lennon and McCartney.

This part of the book touches on the fact that even though the Beatles never reunited...it was good to see that the friendships were restored between John, Paul and Ringo. For whatever reason, George doesn't appear in the book at all.

Sadly, these pictures are nearly the last of John Lennon's public life until he resurfaces some 5 years later shortly before his murder.

Rob says

This book provides some wonderful insight into Lennon's life during the time when the Beatles disbanded.

The photographs are candid and intimate, and make him seem like a "real person" as opposed to a superstar rock icon. May Pang, the author and photographer of the book, was probably the woman closest to Lennon during the 18 months the story covers, and really makes the pictures come to life with her excerpts and various commentaries. I think this would be a good book for younger reluctant readers, or anyone interested in learning more about this man.

Sandie says

Short and sweet, the photos are a reminder that even music giants are just folk.

George Bradford says

Somewhere between the heroic myths fabricated by Hunter Davies / Neil Aspinall / Ray Coleman and the slanderous lies perpetrated by Albert Goldman / Robert Rosen / Fred Seaman rests the truth. A truth we may never know. A truth even Yoko obscures from public view.

But here we catch a breath taking glimpse. In over 150 amateur photographs taken between 1973 and 1975 (and the genuinely frank text that accompanies them) this book presents John Lennon as he's never been seen before. He's complicated. He's fragile. He's human.

There are several episodes chronicled herein that make the book worth reading. And there are some images that wrench the heart. The photographs of Lennon signing the agreement dissolving The Beatles -- the look on his face and in his eyes -- give this thin book a significant weight.

It's hard to believe these photos sat in a shoe box in the author's closet for over 30 years. But they did.

Their publication -- and their story -- was worth the wait.

Peter says

I love the Beatles and John Lennon. I thought I had seen everything there was to see about them but this book contains the only photo of John Lennon and Paul McCartney after the break-up of the Beatles that I have ever seen. Think about it. Have you ever seen a photo of John and Paul post-1970? There is one in this book. Great book for Beatles/Lennon fans. And if you email May Pang, she will write back!

Kevin A. says

I never read her "Loving John" book, but May Pang's commentary on these Polaroids from 1974 make her seem quite likable. The fact that one of them is a view of Paul & Linda McCartney coming up the stairs reinforces the notion that Lennon's "lost weekend" year represents a tantalizing possibility of what might

have been without the isolating influence of Yoko Ono. Which is a fan's fantasy, of course, because Lennon himself by all accounts was happier by her side.

Krystal says

May Pang re-lives the "Lost Weekend" (aka two year relationship) with John Lennon in this book, complete with the beautiful candid photography she took that are now historic Lennon pictures. It's not a detailed biography of their personal life together, but I think more of a remembrance of what Lennon was like behind closed doors. Despite what most people think about his documented tempestuous personality, this book shows the side of John that was kind-hearted and loveable.

Ryn McAtee says

The love May had (has) for John emanates from every single photo in this book. I found myself in tears more often than not... and usually with a huge smile on my face. May is a wonderful human being, and her photos provide such an intimate glimpse into her and John's life.

Asm says

This was a great, easy read full of some rare and wonderful photographs of John Lennon during the mid-70s. It's obvious that May cared for him very deeply and tried to help him pull his life back together in the wake of the Beatles' break up. She also seemed to help John get back onto a good track with Paul McCartney, despite their often tumultuous relationship. John looked healthy and happy during his 18 months with May, who seemed to be a very good (and welcomed) influence on his life.
