

## *"Mind Games"/"Meat City"*

First appearance in trade magazines: November 3, 1973

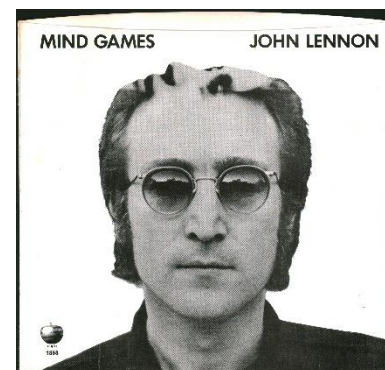
### Label dj1

Apple

P-1868

Apple label with "MFD. BY APPLE" on the full side.

Mono/stereo promotional single of the A-side.



**JOHN LENNON—Mind Games (3:59);** producer: John Lennon; writer: John Lennon; publisher: John Lennon, BMI. Apple 1868 (Capitol). Vocal overdubs and swaying strings combine in John's assertion that positive thoughts are the answer to happiness. He espouses chanting the Mantra and peace on earth. Flip: no info available.

### Label af1

Apple

1868

Apple label with "MFD. BY APPLE" on the full side.



**SINGLES** **JOHN LENNON, "MIND GAMES"** (prod. by John Lennon) (John Lennon, BMI). Long awaited single from Lennon is one of his best songs in the post-Beatle period. Title tune from forthcoming album should be on top in no time. The "Games" people play will be this one. Apple 1868.

Factories: Los Angeles; Jacksonville

Label af1L has the album title on two lines.

### Picture Sleeve

With the same image on both sides, this round-cut sleeve also appears on purple-label copies of the single.

**JOHN LENNON (Apple P-1868)**  
**Mind Games (3:59)** (John Lennon, BMI—J. Lennon)  
 From his forthcoming album of the same name, John comes through with his most powerful recorded effort in some time. Top flight vocal performance backed by that steady, yet driving, tempo accentuates some great lyrics, all in making for a great song. Definitely Top 5 within a matter of weeks. Flip: no info. available.



Label af1W (Winchester) has the album title on one line.

### Label 78

Capitol

1868

Purple label with "MFD. BY CAPITOL" rim print.



Factories: Los Angeles, Winchester

Factory: Jacksonville

### Label 83

Capitol

1868

Black rainbow label with print in the color band

Factories: Los Angeles, Jacksonville, Winchester; Specialty (later)



## Label 88

Capitol

1868

Purple label with “MANUFACTURED BY CAPITOL” rim print.



*French picture sleeve*

Factories: Specialty

## Behind the Songs

The story to “Mind Games” might go back as far as an 1814 painting by Francisco Goya. Goya’s work, “The Third of May 1808 in Madrid,” which depicts the crackdown by the French imperial forces against the Spanish people in response to acts of rebellion the previous day. Goya’s painting shows a Jesus-like figure facing a firing squad. He bears a stigma mark on his right hand, has his arms outstretched, and a look of despair appears on the people’s faces.



In 1958, graphic designer Gerald Holtom had this image in mind. He modified and stylized it into a symbol. “I drew myself: the representative of an individual in despair, with hands palm outstretched outwards and downwards in the manner of Goya’s peasant before the firing squad. I formalized the drawing into a line and put a circle round it. It was ridiculous at first and such a puny thing.” Holtom realized that his design might be the semaphore signals for N and D overlapping; for him, that stood for “nuclear disarmament,” and his peace symbol became the symbol of the anti-war movement in the 1960s.

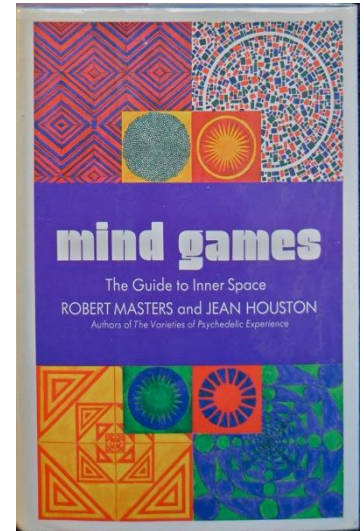


During the late 1960s, the slogan that the hippies most frequently associated with the peace symbol was “Make love, not war.” Protestors had used that slogan at least as early as spring 1965, but the appearance of a song with that name in the movie Teenage Rebellion in 1967 helped to popularize the expression in California. From there it spread widely, and by 1970 all of the peaceniks were using it. Among them was John Lennon, who had begun writing a song called “I Promise” which contained the lyric “Love is the answer, and you know that is true.”

At least by mid-February, that song became “Make Love, Not War” – including the above line and picking up an additional one: “I want you to make love, not war. I know you’ve heard it before.” Symbolizing the peace movement, these strains eventually became part of “Mind Games.”

The year prior to the song’s completion, John read *The Book*. That book was *Mind Games: The Guide to Inner Space*, by Robert Masters and Jean Houston. The authors’ intent was to present literal games for the reader. In their own words, “Mind games are education, ecstasy, entertainment, self-exploration, powerful instruments of growth. Those who play these games should become more imaginative, more creative, more fully able to gain access to their capacities and to use their capacities productively.”

The games involve a Guide leading a group of trusting people into hypnotic states or trances. The persons involved imagine their entire selves being positively affected by something such as the playing of a song. They might imagine objects, or people, or themselves in different situations. This is where John Lennon begins leading us on our journey through his “Mind Games.” By playing these mind games, we “push the barrier” – becoming more creative, and we “plant seed.”



John seems to regard the group becoming stronger and more mentally capable of fighting against whatever society throws at them. They become “mind guerrillas,” waging mental warfare in order to bring about “peace on earth.” He regards this sort of activity as having taken place for centuries. For him, it was the attitude of the ancient druids (as he understood them). This mental focus was what people referred to as magic.

In applying his philosophy, Lennon evokes the writings of others. There is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose concept of God making humanity so self-aware that he is able to envision his own future, drawing that future from the present. This becomes John’s “faith in the future out of the now.”

One of the games in the book involves mentally envisioning and passing around stones, and another involves going to places where one has not been. John associates this with a concept from the science of physics. Arthur Eddington’s *The Nature of the Physical World* brought forward a concept from Einstein’s imagination of the speed of light as an absolute constant – a barrier, so that nothing could possibly travel faster than light in a vacuum.

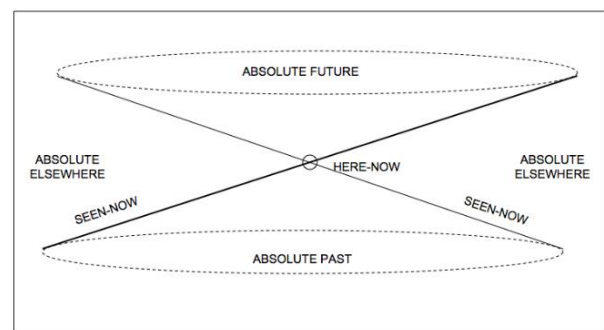


Fig. 4

Eddington created a double light-cone, illustrating that there are locations that one is physically unable to reach in a given amount of time. These unreachable places he terms Absolute Elsewhere. For John Lennon, one may reach the impossible places by playing those mind games.

Since the hour-glass is absolute its two cones provide respectively an Absolute Future and an Absolute Past. For the event Here-Now. They are separated by a wedge-shaped neutral zone which (absolutely) is neither past nor future. The common impression that relativity turns past and future altogether topsy-turvy is quite false. But, unlike the relative past and future, the absolute past and future are not separated by an infinitely narrow present. It suggests itself that the neutral wedge might be called the Absolute Present; but I do not think that is a good nomenclature. It is much better described as Absolute Elsewhere. We have abolished the Now lines, and in the absolute world the present (Now) is restricted to Here-Now.

He also seems to have read some literature about the physics of projecting images from a light source, through one medium onto another – such as we see with a movie projector. But here, by using our minds we may project our own images anywhere or anywhen: “in space and in time.”

The Karmic Wheel, which John mentions near the end of the song, is an Eastern concept that wound up being adopted by the Theosophical movement and employed extensively by the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Everything one does produces effects, either in this lifetime or in a future lifetime. John considers that if enough people were to become awakened, spiritually, through the use of mind games, they might be able – together – to stop the motion of the Wheel of Karma. This happens through love and forgiveness, and John concludes that we might elevate the spirit of peace and love if only we first raise our consciousness through mind games.

“I have read three important and revolutionary books in the last three years: Yoko Ono’s *Grapefruit*, Arthur Janov’s *Primal Scream*, and now *Mind Games*. I suggest you read and experience them.”  
—John Lennon

The B-side, “Meat City,” is just as interesting as the A-side. A “meat city” is literally a meat market: a place where one purchases beef, pork, and poultry. In the song, John has been to two places. He went to Meat City, and he went to The Mountain. Meat City is symbolic of most physical things that the world has to offer. In essence, Meat City is an aspect of New York City. It is in part the dance culture, as the world would eventually see it embodied in places like Studio 54. It was in this culture that “People were dancin’ like there’s no tomorrow” because people exclaimed, “Just got to get me some rock and roll!” Simply enough, John explains that he went there to “see for myself.”



The second verse takes John to “The Mountain.” While this could be a metaphor for enlightenment, in the song this seems to refer to a specific club or disco. There, John found more people dancing like crazy. A “snake doctor” actually refers to a dragonfly, which some people once believed were assisting snakes when they were sick. The expression gradually came to refer to someone who practiced false medicine, and some were associated with “snake charmers.” Here, the snake doctor is dancing with everyone else – possibly making promises throughout the evening. The third verse reveals that John plans a trip to China to see if the culture is different there. Would rock and roll liberate the Communists? Would it destroy them? John doesn’t predict.

The song contains three “special breaks” – immediately following the words “rock and roll.” In the third verse, there is a loud “whooh!” The second verse contains some backward music. The first verse is a backward secret message from recording engineer Roy Cicala. The single version of the song reports the message as “Check the album,” flipped backward and sped to double speed. The album version appears to instruct people to do something nasty with a pig – apparently riffing off of the expression “pig meat city” from the song.

Finally, “Meat City” concludes with a fade-out asking several times, “Who is that?” and finally wondering “And why are they doing those strange things?” While this seems to be a random Lennonism, it fits with the song’s theme. John has visited the rock-and-roll clubs and has seen some strange things. Now he shares the experience with us.