

# Screen: 'Yellow Submarine' Emerges

## Songs of the Beatles Pepper Cartoon

By RENATA ADLER

**"YELLOW SUBMARINE,"** which opened yesterday at the Forum and Tower East, is the Beatles' first feature length cartoon, designed, for the most part beautifully, by Heinz Edelmann, in styles ranging through Steinberg, Arshile Gorky, Bob Godfrey (of the short film "The Do It Yourself Cartoon Kit"), the Sgt. Pepper album cover, and—mainly, really—the spirit and conventions of the Sunday comic strip. The Phantom appears. So do many other pop art and comics characters. (Dick Tracy's inspired Moon Maid would not have been out of place.)

The story concerns the kingdom of Pepperland, invaded by the Blue Meanies, the only antidote to whom is music. There are 12 songs, most of them from "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," and it becomes clear throughout the film not only that the rhythm of movie direction (by George Dunning) and the rhythms of music are meant for each other, but also that any human occasion demands—before pictures, before prose even—something in music.

"Do you ever get the feeling . . . ?"

"Yeah."

"That things are not as rosy as they appear to be underneath the surface." . . .

"There's a cyclops!"; "But he's got two eyes?" A bicyclop; "Black, Blue White, Red. Can I take my friend to bed" ("Can I bring my friend to tea" is another refrain); "Tell us where we're at." The Socratic question—the whole movie, alternately washed and hard edge, art nouveau and full of flowering shrubs and thistles, is full of enfolded meanings, jokes, puns—some of them Lennon-infantile, none of them aggressive, pretentious or self-indulgent—that would delight a child, or a head or anybody who loves and admires the Beatles, even though this is a film in which they either redo old songs or appear once, in person, briefly, in one of their worst acted appearances ever. "Come on. The whole world is being attacked"; "Hook up, and otherwise commingle"; "All together now"—these are the lines in which the Beatles, with their special talent, life



Animated versions of John Lennon, left, and Ringo Starr appear in Pepperland in the Beatles' "Yellow Submarine."

### The Program

**YELLOW SUBMARINE**, screenplay by Lee Minoff, Al Brodax, Jack Mendelsohn and Erich Segal, from an original story by Mr. Minoff, based on the song by John Lennon and Paul McCartney; directed by George Dunning and produced by Al Brodax; designed by Heinz Edelmann; a King Features Production presented by Apple Films; released through United Artists; starring Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. At the Tower East Theater, 72d Street and Third Avenue, and the Forum Theater, Broadway at 47th Street. Running time: 85 minutes.

and energy, launch their unfrenzetic, unhardsell upbeat message to the world.

There are completely lovely visual ideas: a fish with hands, which swims breast stroke; a consumer creature with a trumpet snout, who ingests the whole world; decanting people out of a glass ball, by means of a hole that has been picked up from an op polka-dot field of right-side up and upside-down holes; a submarine that is convertible into a bravely smiling fish; a fort that disgorges a cavalry charge against Indians, and a cigarette lighter. The Dantesque landscape of other worldly types; the Alice in Wonderland snails; mushrooms; trains emerging from under sinks; bleachings of color from hyperactive corridors; teeny weeny Meanies, and particularly the thistles are drawn with such care and amiability by Heinz Edelmann. (He is

not so good on people or anthropomorphic types: they tend to Popeye distortions below the waist, and undistinguished faces above.) Not a great film, after all, but truly nice.

"Yellow Submarine" is a family movie in the truest sense — something for the little kids who watch the same sort of punning stories, infinitely less nonviolent and refined, on television; something for the older kids, whose musical contribution to the arts and longings for love and gentleness and color could hardly present a better case; something for parents, who can see the best of what being newly young is all about. "Hard Day's Night" and "Help!" were more serious, and more truly Beatle saturated. But "Yellow Submarine," with its memories of Saturday morning at the movies, and its lovely Oswald the Rabbit in Candyland graphics, makes the hooking up and otherwise commingling very possible. When invited to, the whole audience picks up the "Alltogether now" refrain and sings.