

THE CURSE OF POP

By

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FADE IN:

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

PAUL, a man in his late twenties is reaching for his alarm. His bedroom is jam-packed with records - wall to wall. Any spaces that aren't taken up with records are taken up with some kind of music memorabilia.

PAUL (V.O.)

I no longer listen to music, if I can avoid it. I try and avoid any kind of music, but especially pop music.

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Paul is showering, humming along to a tune we vaguely recognise.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I used to be addicted. My entire (solely occupied) bedroom is dedicated to records and music memorabilia. Not for much longer, though.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Paul is going about getting his breakfast, he's still humming, until he puts the radio on. He fiddles with it until he finds a tune he likes.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

The records are going to have to go soon. Very soon. Even the rare ones. It brings a tear to my eye, but it's for my own good.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Paul is listening to headphones, still humming along to a tune, even mouthing the odd word of the song he's listening too.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Anyway, this is my story; the reason I hate music.

(MORE)

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It starts with something I think
we're all familiar with: You
know, sometimes, you get a tune
stuck in your head?

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Paul is still humming along to a tune in his head. A female colleague, LINDA, who has the desk next to his smiles. Paul notices and smiles back.

PAUL
Sorry. Got a tune stuck in my
head.

LINDA
Yeah. It happens.

PAUL
It'll be gone by lunchtime.

LINDA
They usually do.

Suddenly Paul's phone goes off (another recognisable tune).

PAUL
(into phone)
Hello? Oh, hi Mum. What?

Linda notices how Paul's face drops - obviously it's bad news. Paul slumps into his seat.

PAUL
(into phone)
Oh God. Oh no.

FADE TO:

INT. FRONT ROOM - DAY

The wake of a funeral. Everyone is sitting or standing around making polite conversation. Paul is sitting by an older woman, his MUM. She looks bereft of feeling, staring out in front of her, eyes red raw. No one knows what to say to her. Paul puts his hand on her shoulder then, without words, exits the room.

INT. ANOTHER ROOM IN THE PARENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul walks into the room which is filled with records - namely Beatles records. He wanders over and begins to root

through them, a wistful smile appearing on his face. His Mum enters the room, giving him a small start.

MUM

Your Dad wanted you to have these, you know.

PAUL

Really?

MUM

For your collection.

PAUL

They belong here.

MUM

Your father belongs here. But, things change.

PAUL

I guess so.

Mother and son embrace.

MUM

Please. Take them. It's what he wanted. He told me time and again that you should have his records. You're the only one he trusted.

PAUL

(smiling)

Yeah. He always said I never had enough Beatles in my collection. 'Gets into your head like no other band'. How many times had did I hear that?

MUM

He was right.

PAUL

Never had the heart to tell him I preferred the Stones. Come on. We should get back.

EXT. PAUL'S FLAT - DAY

Paul is lugging boxes of vinyl into his flat. Inside he plonks the boxes down where he can find space.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul is carefully handling the records.

PAUL
(to himself)
Okay, let's do this in order.

He pulls out the record he was looking for - 'Please Please Me.' He puts it on the turntable and sits back to listen.

We hear 'I Saw Her Standing There.'

Paul sits back to listen, an ever-growing grin appearing on his face.

SERIES OF SHOTS.

Cut to a locked off shot of Paul's bedroom. Paul is in a different part of the room, doing something different each time, and every shot has a different Beatles track from the same album playing.

Eventually he puts the record away and walks into his kitchen to prepare some dinner.

LATER

Paul prepares for bed, humming a tune. He switches the lights off.

CUT TO BLACK:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul's alarm goes off, a loud buzzer. Simultaneously, we can hear a tinny, muffled 'I Saw Her Standing There'. Paul wakes with a jolt. He smiles and starts to hum along with the tune.

SERIES OF SHOTS

We follow Paul on his morning routine, humming along to the tunes in his head - the exact same tunes from the album he was playing the previous evening.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Paul is listening to his headphones, which we hear; a contemporary band.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul arrives for work, nodding at his colleague, then takes off his headphones. We no longer hear the music, but we can still hear the muffled tunes of The Beatles. Paul begins to hum along to the tune.

LINDA

Another one stuck in your head?

PAUL

Yep. The Beatles.

LINDA

Classic.

PAUL

Yeah. They knew how to write a tune.

LINDA

Didn't know you were a fan.

PAUL

I'm not. Well, I wasn't. My Dad left me his collection.

LINDA

Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't mean--

PAUL

Don't worry. I'm okay.

They begin work, Paul still humming along. Linda looks at him, as if disbelieving he's okay with the loss of his father.

INT. PAUL'S FLAT - EVENING

Paul arrives back in his flat. We can still hear the music in his head, and Paul is still happily humming away.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Paul once more goes through his evening routine, culminating in him going to bed. He's humming The Beatles throughout.

A) Washing up.

B) Brushing teeth.

C) Getting glass of water.

D) Setting alarm.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul snaps awake with a jolt. The Beatles are still playing in his head. He falls back onto his pillow and lets out a small sigh. He lies in the dark for a minute, his eyes wide open.

LATER

The sun has risen and Paul's alarm is going off, but, again, it's mingled with The Beatles - the same tunes as the day before. Paul is lying in pretty much the same position as when he woke up in the middle of the night. He sits up in bed and shakes his head. He gets up and walks to The Beatles records, picking up the one that's going on his head.

PAUL
(to himself)
It's in order. Weird.

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

We can still hear The Beatles and Paul humming along with them. Linda has noticed his humming too.

LINDA
Hey, the same song as yesterday,
right? Don't think we've ever had
that before.

PAUL

Hmmm?

LINDA

The Beatles? Like yesterday?

PAUL

Oh. Yeah. It's kinda weird,
actually. It's not just one song.

LINDA

What do you mean?

PAUL

It's like I'm hearing the whole
album, one song after the other.
In order.

LINDA

That *is* weird.

PAUL

Well, I've always had a song stuck
in my head.

LINDA

Yeah, I've noticed the humming.

PAUL

Whatever. But it's never been...
like, a whole album.

LINDA

At least you get a bit of
variety, I suppose.

PAUL

Yeah, but this is kind of
relentless. It woke me up at 3
this morning.

LINDA

I wouldn't worry about it. That
happens to me all the time.
Especially on Mondays. Bloody ABBA
the other week.

PAUL

Yeah, could be worse I suppose.

INT. BURGER JOINT - DAY

Paul is having lunch. We can hear the music in his mind and, at the same time, a muzak version of the same song is playing in the restaurant. Paul smiles and shakes his head.

INT. PAUL'S FLAT - EVENING

SERIES OF SHOTS

Once more Paul arrives back in his flat. We can still hear the music in his head, and, once more, he goes through his evening routine, culminating in him going to bed.

- A) Washing up.
- B) Brushing teeth.
- C) Getting glass of water.
- D) Setting alarm.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul, lying in his bed, opens his eyes with a jolt. The Beatles are still playing in his head, but something is different. This time we're hearing a new tune. He starts to sing along.

PAUL
(singing to himself)
Close your eyes and I'll kiss
you,
Tomorrow I'll miss you,
Remember I'll always be true...

He looks thoughtful for a moment.

PAUL
(to himself)
What the fuck is this?

He gets up and wanders over to the Beatles collection and starts to flick through. He flicks past 'Please Please Me' to the next one in order: 'With The Beatles.' He gets the record and starts playing it. The first track is the same one that's in his head. He takes the needle off.

PAUL
(To himself)
Too weird.

He shakes his head and goes back to bed. We hear the music in his head still.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PAUL'S OFFICE - DAY

Paul sits down next to Linda and closes his eyes.

LINDA
Jesus. You look like shit.

PAUL
Thanks.

LINDA
What's wrong?

PAUL
I'm not sleeping.

LINDA
Things on your mind?

PAUL
Yeah. The Beatles.

LINDA
Huh?

PAUL
This is going to sound weird...

LINDA
Oooh... go on. I like a bit of weird.

PAUL
You know we were talking the other day about the song in my head. Or the songs I should day.

LINDA

Sure... That was The Beatles,
wasn't it?

PAUL

Yeah - and it was the whole
album. In order.

LINDA

Yeah, I remember you saying... That
was a bit weird.

PAUL

Right? But get this, last night a
new song pops into my head.

LINDA

That's good news, isn't it?

PAUL

But it was one I'd never heard
before.

LINDA

What do you mean?

PAUL

I was hearing a song I'd never
heard before. But, somehow, I *knew*
it.

LINDA

You must have heard it somewhere
or other - on T.V. or something.
I do that all the time.

PAUL

No. It was a new Beatles song. New
to me, anyway.

LINDA

Okaaaay.

PAUL

One that I'd never heard before.
Then it was followed by another
one and another, so I rifled
through my Dad's records and
everything I'm hearing is coming
from the second album in the
collection.

LINDA

So, what are you saying?

PAUL

My mind is playing the Beatles.
In chronological order.

Linda laughs.

LINDA

Don't be a daft bugger.

PAUL

I'm telling you.

Linda shakes her head. In the distance, we hear the muffled sound of The Beatles in Paul's head.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Anyway, I've got a theory. I reckon I've got some kind of rare... 'ability' I suppose you'd call it.

LINDA

You've got something: The Crazies.

PAUL

I reckon I've got all these tunes stuck in my head and I can access them at any time. Like a juke box.

LINDA

Ah-ha. As I suspected. Definitely The Crazies.

PAUL

If I just concentrate long and hard about an artist, I reckon it'll start playing the whole collection. It'll be just like Spotify! I'll never have to buy a record ever again! It'll be right there!

Linda has stopped listening. Paul just shrugs and gets to work, humming the Beatles as he goes.

SERIES OF SHOTS.

A) Paul picking up some groceries on his way home, humming the Beatles.

B) Paul in the pub with his groceries reading the paper and humming along with the Beatles.

C) Paul making his way home, humming the Beatles.

D) Paul making his dinner, humming the Beatles.

Paul is on his computer at home, looking something up on the internet. On the screen we read 'MIND GAMES: THE ANOMOLY OF THE BRAIN.'

LATER

Paul is lying in his bed.

PAUL
(to himself)
Right. Beach Boys. Beach Boys.
Beach Boys.

He closes his eyes.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Pauls eye's snap open. We (and he) are hearing The Beatles; a new track.

PAUL
(to himself)
No! You've got to be kidding me!

We hear 'Can't Buy Me Love'

He scrambles out of bed and over to the Beatles collection. He picks up the next record along - 'Hard Day's Night.' Sure enough, 'Can't Buy Me Love' is the first track.

PAUL
(to himself)
This is unbelievable.

He goes back to bed, eyes wide open, listening to The Beatles in his head.

INT. PAUL'S BATHROOM - MORNING

Paul is in the shower, shouting/ singing at himself - something other than the Beatles. He's beginning to look a little strained.

PAUL
(singing/ shouting)
IT'S A BITTER SWEET SYMPHONY...

He gets out of the shower, but, despite his best efforts, we can still hear the Beatles in his mind.

EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY

Paul is walking down the street, his headphones on. We hear what he's playing (Pixies - 'Where Is My Mind') and it's loud.

He turns into the supermarket and takes his headphones off. The minute he does we hear the Beatles once again. Paul looks more unhinged at every passing moment. At the checkout he talks to the BOY behind the till.

PAUL
It's been a hard day's night. And
I've been working like a dog.

BOY
Um, do you need a bag?

PAUL
It's been a hard day's night. I
should be sleeping like a log.

He mechanically begins to pack his shopping into his rucksack. He turns to the woman behind him.

PAUL
But when I get home to you, I find
the things that you do make me
feel okay.

She smiles politely.

INT. PUB - DAY

Paul, a few beers down, is on his mobile.

PAUL
Linda, you've got to help me.

LINDA

Paul? You okay?

PAUL

You've got to help me. It's not going away. The fucking Beatles aren't going away.

LINDA

Paul, you don't sound so good.

PAUL

God forgive me, Linda, but I HATE the Beatles. But what if it doesn't stop? There's like, five more albums to go. Maybe more. And what if it's not just the studio albums? What if it's the compilations? Bootlegs? Live albums?

LINDA

Paul...

PAUL

What if it's the remastered Apple re-releases? The collector's editions? The BBC session? The fucking BOX SETS!?

LINDA

Paul...

PAUL

Or the solo work? The Yoko Ono band? Christ, what if it started playing WINGS?!

LINDA

Paul. Get a grip. Listen, why don't you pop 'round to mine and we'll see if we can figure it out.

Paul puts down the mobile and takes a swig of beer. After a moment he begins to hum the Beatles again.

INT: LINDA'S FLAT - DAY

Paul and Linda are sat at the kitchen table. Paul is nursing a mug of coffee, while Linda has a pen and paper in front of her, as well as an open laptop.

LINDA

So, if we figure you're hearing an album a day on repeat, and we assume you're just going to be hearing the studio albums...

PAUL

(interrupting)
U.K. releases only...

LINDA

U.K. releases only... you should only have... 13 days to go, I make it.

PAUL

Two weeks?

LINDA

Just under.

PAUL

I don't know if I can do it. I mean, there's all that experimental stuff to come.

LINDA

It's good though, right?

PAUL

Sure, if you're listening on record. Once. I mean, LSD might have some mind-expanding properties, but it's going to be pain in the arse hearing a 'A Day In The Life' over and over again.

LINDA

You're going to have to try and... I don't know... *embrace* it somehow.

PAUL

I'm trying to, but...

LINDA
Come on. I'll help. How about the
cinema?

PAUL
Are you kidding? People will
hate me. I can't stop the
humming. It's like pop
Tourette's.

LINDA
(becoming angry)
Well, I don't know. It's fucking
weird.

PAUL
I know. I'm sorry. You've been
really kind, Linda.

They share a look.

LINDA
What about something else?

PAUL
What do you mean?

LINDA
Come here.

Linda smiles and goes into kiss Paul.

INT: LINDA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Paul and Linda are in bed. Linda asleep, Paul lying awake.
We can hear the Beatles. Paul sighs.

FADE TO BLACK:

SERIES OF SHOTS.

- A) Paul involuntarily singing in various places. 'Octopus's Garden' in a dentist waiting room.
- B) 'I am The Walrus' in the fishmongers.
- C) 'Strawberry Fields' at the football.
- D) 'Your Mother Should Know' on the toilet.

INT: PAUL'S FLAT - NIGHT

Paul is on the phone to Linda.

PAUL
(into phone)
This is it. 'Let It Be.' It's the
last one.

LINDA (V.O.)
Big day. And tomorrow...?

PAUL
(into phone)
Tomorrow, we hope it stops.

LINDA (V.O.)
You want me to come over?

PAUL
(into phone)
No. I want everything to be as
normal as possible - like when it
all began.

LINDA (V.O.)
Fair enough. Good luck then.

PAUL
(into phone)
Thanks. I'll see you tomorrow.

Paul goes through his ritual of getting ready for bed. He
lies down and turns the light out. We can still hear the
Beatles.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT: PAUL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul's alarm goes off. Paul's eyes flutter open. He sits up
and looks around. All seems to be quiet. He begins to smile.
The we hear a muffled tune; 'Saw Her Standing There' by The
Beatles.

PAUL
Oh no. Nononononononono...

Paul puts his head in his hands.

INT: PAUL'S OFFICE - MORNING

Paul arrives and Linda looks at him, anxiously. He shakes his head.

LINDA
Are you sure?

PAUL
It's started again. From the beginning.

LINDA
Paul. I'm getting really worried about you. Do you think that perhaps the stress of losing your father...?

PAUL
What's that? I'm struggling to hear over the Beatles in my fucking mind.

LINDA
Do you think it might be time to seek some kind of help?

PAUL
(not listening, shouts)
SO HOW COULD I DANCE WITH
ANOTHER, WHEN I SAW HER STANDING
THERE...

People in the office turn to see what the commotion is. Paul continues to sing/ shout the song he's hearing in his mind. His BOSS comes out of his office.

BOSS
Paul? What's going on?

Paul ignores everyone and continues to scream the lyrics of The Beatles. He starts taking his shirt off.

LINDA
He's not feeling very well.

BOSS
No shit.

LINDA

I think it's the stress of
losing his father.

BOSS

I see. Paul? Paul? Do you think
you might be more comfortable in
the canteen? Or in my office for
a moment or two?

Paul continues to ignore everyone and jumps on his desk.

BOSS

Jesus.

LINDA

Paul? Get down from there.

BOSS

I'm going to need him out of
here. Keith, Mick, give us a
hand, will you?

Two of Paul's colleagues help him down and escort him from
the room. Paul appears to be serenading them both with The
Beatles.

INT: PAUL'S FLAT - DAY

Paul and Linda are sitting at his kitchen table with a cup
of tea.

LINDA

So, what are you going to do?

PAUL

I guess it's time to see someone.

LINDA

I can help.

PAUL

Am I going mad? I mean, I was
fine until I played those sodding
records.

He gets up and wanders over to the Beatles collection. He picks one up.

PAUL (CONT'D)
This is what I can expect
tomorrow.

He removes the record from its sleeve.

PAUL (CONT'D)
He kept these in such good
condition. Oh God, I HATE this!

He throws the record across the room. Linda flinches.

LINDA
I think I should go.

PAUL
No, don't go. I'm sorry.

He retrieves the record from the corner of the room.

LINDA
It's okay. But I need to get
back to work. I'll call later -
see if I can gather some names
of people who might to help.

PAUL
Okay. Yeah. Thanks.

LINDA
Just see if you can get some
rest.

PAUL
Yeah. Just some quiet time will
help. Just the five of us.

LINDA
Bye then.

PAUL
Bye.

Linda leaves and Paul slumps on his sofa with a sigh. He gently hums the tune in his head.

FADE TO BLACK:

INT: PAUL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul wakes with a start. Sure enough the first track from the next album is playing. Paul looks terrible, clearly lacking sleep. He sighs, resigned to his fate. He gets out of bed then, suddenly, the song in his head jumps. Then jumps again. Paul stops in his tracks. After a beat he shakes his head, then walks to the shower. Before he gets there the track jumps twice more. In a rush, he goes to the record he threw across the room the previous day.

He inspects the record and there, on the first track is a large scratch, obviously caused by the throw. He sits at the kitchen table, deep in thought.

PAUL
(to himself)
Shit...

He hurries to his kitchen draw and fetches a knife. He carefully scratches across the vinyl on track 2. As the song begins to play in his head he hears the scratch.

PAUL
(to himself)
Jesus.

He picks up his mobile and calls Linda.

PAUL
(into phone)
Linda.

LINDA (V.O.)
Paul? What's happened?

PAUL
(into phone)
I think I've got it. I know how to stop it.

LINDA (V.O.)
What is it? Paul, you're not going to do anything daft, are you?

PAUL
(into phone)
Linda, I need to go. I might regret this, but I need to try something.

LINDA (V.O.)

Paul?

He ends the call.

INT: THE FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Paul is struggling through the front door with a bunch of records. His mum pokes her head around the corner.

MUM

Paul?

PAUL

Mum.

MUM

What's going on? Have you been kicked out of your flat?

PAUL

No, nothing like that.

MUM

What have you got there?

PAUL

Dad's records.

MUM

Dad's records? What...?

Paul struggles down the hallway into the kitchen, where he dumps the records on the table.

PAUL

Yeah. Um, I need to ask you something.

MUM

What is it? What's going on?

PAUL

Well, I've had a little trouble recently.

MUM

Trouble?

PAUL

Yeah. Listen, you're going to think I've gone mad... But since you gave me these records, well... I can't get them out of my head.

MUM

What do you mean?

PAUL

They've literally been playing in my mind. I'm hearing them now.

MUM

I don't understand.

PAUL

It's like... It's hard to explain. The whole collection - dad's collection is playing in order. In my mind.

MUM

Paul, what are you saying? What's wrong? You're frightening me.

PAUL

I knew you'd think I was mad. And I don't blame you. But I think it's like a... ghost.

MUM

(becoming upset)
Ghost? What, the ghost of your father?

PAUL

No. Not exactly. But something happened - to one of the records - and the damage on the record was replicated in my mind.

MUM

Paul, that isn't funny. We all miss your father, but--

PAUL

(interrupting)

Mum, I really don't want to argue about it, but I just wanted you to know that I need to destroy the records.

MUM

(now becoming angry)

Don't be absurd. Listen, since we lost your Dad I've been seeing a counsellor. Perhaps you should come along--

PAUL

(interrupting)

I just came here to let you know what I was doing. I don't want to upset you - you know how much these records mean to me - how much *music* means to me - but it's the only way out.

MUM

I don't know what to say. Your father loved those records - more than he loved me sometimes. And you want to destroy them because you're having a rough time? Paul, you miss him, that's all.

PAUL

Mum, I'm sorry. But you've got to trust me.

MUM

(crying)

Paul, don't do it.

Paul picks up the records and takes through the back garden. We can hear the Beatles louder than ever, and they become the soundtrack to the action.

EXT: BACK GARDEN - DAY

Paul is putting the records on a bonfire area in the back garden. He disappears into the garden shed and reappears with a can of lighter fluid. Tears begin to form in his eyes. He's manically humming along to the music.

He sprays the records. From the kitchen window we can see his mum silently weeping. Paul drops to his knees, takes a box of matches from his pocket and sets light to the records.

As he watches them burn the Beatles become fainter and fainter. Soon all we can hear is the crackle of the burning records. The music has finally gone quiet in Paul's mind.

PAUL

I'm so sorry. Dad, I'm so, so
sorry.

FADE TO BLACK

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Paul is reaching for his alarm.

PAUL (V.O.)

And that was that. To this day I
like to think I gave dad his
music back - that, somehow, he
wanted me to return it to him.
But I'm forever haunted that I
can never be sure; that, perhaps
I'd just destroyed one of the
most precious things my father
ever gave to me: Pop

INT. SHOWER - DAY

Paul is showering.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm still in my job. I still wake
up in the middle of the night
with thoughts, worries and
troubles. But no music, thank
God.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Paul is going about getting his breakfast in silence.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

As I said, I don't listen to anything by choice these days. I even avoid most television in case a catchy little ditty gets stuck in there again. I don't think it will but, like the inexplicable success of Kylie Minogue, pop is a funny old thing; you never know what it's capable of.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

Paul is waiting patiently.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I think of dad every day and make my apologies to him. Mum thinks I'm better now and I'm spending more time with her. Mainly in silence, but, these days, that's fine by me.

EXT. FAMILY GARDEN - DAY

Paul and his Mum are sitting in the garden, by the bonfire, with a cup of tea each, just staring ahead.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I'm destined to live the rest of my life with little or no music. It's painful, but I'm getting used to it.

INT. PAUL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Paul and Linda are sitting on his bed, holding hands and looking over his record collection.

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Before I could never understand all those thousands of people who don't, quote, 'like' music.

(MORE)

PAUL (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Who'd have thought I'd become one
of them? When all is said and
done I'm just glad dad wasn't a
Rod Stewart fan. Then I really
would have gone nuts.

THE END.