

MUSIC

Who are John Lennon's kids? All about Julian and Sean

The late Beatle's two children had different relationships with their father, but both turned to music to define themselves.



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By Randee Dawn

John Lennon left behind a huge legacy when he was assassinated in 1980 at the age of 40: music he made with The Beatles, his thriving solo career (including classic songs like “Imagine”) and his two sons.

Over the years, Julian Lennon and Sean Ono Lennon have forged paths through the entertainment industry, making their own unique brands of music, but always with the shadow of their father (and, in the case of Sean, his equally artistic mother, Yoko Ono) close by.

Below, everything to know about the two men, each of whom had very different relationships with their father. Study up before watching the restored version of the 1970 film “Let It Be,” [now streaming on Disney+](#).

Julian Lennon



Julian Lennon in 2024. **Lila Seeley / Getty Images**

With looks and a singing voice that could help him pass for his father's doppelgänger, Julian Lennon is now 61. A philanthropist, author and photographer, he's also a musician whose discography can be found on his [website](#).

Born in 1963 as [John Charles Julian Lennon](#) (he [officially changed his name to Julian](#) in 2020) to Cynthia and John Lennon in Liverpool, United Kingdom, he was named after his father's mother, Julia Lennon. His early childhood, spent in London and nearby Surrey, was shaped by the rise of The Beatles. When he was around 3 years old, Julian brought home a drawing from school that became the inspiration for the band's "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds."

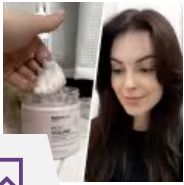


John Lennon with his first wife, Cynthia Lennon, in French Polynesia in 1964. **Getty Images**

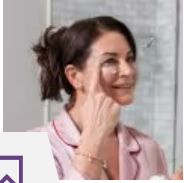
“It was just a bunch of stars and this blond girl I knew at school,” Julian told [Rolling Stone](#) in 1984. “Dad said, ‘What’s this?’ I said, ‘It’s [Lucy in the sky](#),’ and, well, you know the rest.”

Both Julian and John quashed myths claiming the song’s title was code for the drug LSD. The real story is that the blonde girl was Lucy O’Donnell (later Vodden), a real person who died of lupus in 2009. According to the [Lupus Foundation of America](#), Lennon released the song “Lucy” to honor her memory and donated the funds to lupus research.

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Julian was also the inspiration for The Beatles' hit "Hey Jude," which Paul McCartney wrote after John left Cynthia for Yoko Ono in 1968. Rolling Stone recalled that McCartney said the lyrics were meant to be a "hopeful message" for the boy (though, apparently, John thought the lyrics were about him and Ono).

"I have a love-hate [relationship] with it," Julian told the L.A. Times in 2023. "I've probably heard that song and heard renditions of it more than most people alive. And

even my dear friends send me babies in nappies playing guitars [and] singing, 'Hey Jude', which I *really* don't need."



Julian with his father, John Lennon, in 1968. **AP**

As a kid, Julian was immersed in the music industry (making his debut at just age 11, when he played the drums on a remake of Lee Dorsey's "Ya Ya," which appeared on his father's 1974 album, "Walls and Bridges"). Later that year, his dad gave him a drum machine.

Julian went on to record seven albums of his own between 1984 and 2022, finding his biggest chart successes with debut "Valotte" (1984) and "The Secret Value of Daydreaming" (1986).

Two early videos stand out: "Too Late for Goodbyes," which features a long-haired

man in a white outfit popping in and out of a doorway — a puckish evocation of John Lennon — and was directed by legendary movie director Sam Peckinpah; and “Stick Around,” which includes cameos from ’80s stars including Joe Piscopo, Jami Gertz and Michael J. Fox.

But “Valotte,” a song dedicated to the fractured relationship with his father (who left Julian out of his will, per [Antonelli & Antonelli](#)), remains one of his best.

After his father’s death, Julian stayed in touch with McCartney, sharing with Rolling Stone, “I remember rolling about on the floor, wrestling with Paul, when I was a kid. He always sends me telegrams on my birthday, which is nice, and he sent me one about the record (“Valotte”) a couple of days ago: ‘Good luck, old fruit.’”

Beyond music, Julian branched out into other interests. In 1987, he appeared in a benefit musical, “The Hunting of the Snark,” and in 1995, he makes a cameo in “Leaving Las Vegas.” By 2002, he gave commercials a try, re-recording The Beatles’ “When I’m Sixty-Four” for an AllState Insurance ad.

Diving into photography, he curated an exhibition called “Timeless” for Art Basel in 2010, and still impresses with his artsy Instagram account. In 2015, he launched The Cynthia Lennon Scholarship for Girls in Kenya and began publishing children’s books about the environment a couple of years later. Furthering his resume in the film industry, he executive produced “Women of the White Buffalo,” a documentary about Lakota women, in 2022.

Today, Julian lives in Europe, usually Monaco or Italy. He’s never been married or had

children, sharing that his father's relationship with his mother has made him hesitant to commit.





Julian Lennon and Sean Lennon in 1986. **John Barrett / MediaPunch / IPx via AP**

“Mum was more about love than Dad. He sang about it, he spoke about, but he never really gave it, at least not to me as his son,” he told The Times of London in 2011.

In another interview that same year, this one with Record Collector, he said, “He was young and didn’t know what the hell he was doing. That’s the reason I haven’t had children yet. I didn’t want to do the same thing. No, I’m not ready. I want to know who I am first.”

Sean Ono Lennon



Yoko Ono (center right) in 1984 with son Sean (right) and Julian Lennon (center left) as they head to ceremonies marking the groundbreaking of a portion of Central Park dedicated to the late John Lennon. **Rene Perez / AP**

Sean Taro Ono Lennon, born in 1975 on his father's 35th birthday in New York City, has led an eclectic, fiercely independent artistic life heavily influenced by his mother, Yoko Ono.

Over the decades, the 48-year-old musician has proved adept with various bands and genres. His newest album, "Asterisms," dropped in February, with [Rolling Stone](#) calling it "a genreless wash of instrumental music that flirts with jazz, rock, and electronic."



Sean Lennon playing with The Claypool Lennon Delirium in Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2019. [Jeff Hahne / Getty Images](#)

Early on, Sean received a lot of attention from John, as the former Beatle stepped away from music to be a stay-at-home dad, per [NBC News](#). He has a very famous godfather — Elton John, per [Far Out](#) magazine — and his school life is just as impressive.

After attending kindergarten in Japan, as he told [New York magazine](#) in 2006, he

went to preschool in San Francisco, private school in New York City, and then boarding school in Switzerland.

In 1984, Sean was back in New York City for his birthday, when Apple co-founder Steve Jobs presented him with one of the first Macintosh computers. Photos on [X, formerly Twitter](#), show Sean checking it out alongside legends including Keith Haring and Andy Warhol. (Author David Sheff's account of the evening, published on his [website](#), is absolutely worth a read.)

By this time, Sean musical career was on the rise. In 1981, he recited a story on his mother's album "Season of Glass" and continued collaborating with her throughout

his teen years.

In 1988, he appeared in Michael Jackson's musical anthology film "[Moonwalker](#)," and in 1990, he starred in a Sony promotional short film called "[Infinite Escher](#)."

He gave college the old, well, you know, but Columbia University proved not to be his cup of tea. After three semesters, he dropped out to focus on music, according to [AAE Speakers](#).

"People have said, 'Why don't you just do things under a pseudonym and then see what people's true reaction would be?'" he told [The Guardian](#) in 2015. "I always felt like doing that, though, would be sort of disrespectful to my dad and my family and myself. It's like oh, well, I can't be proud of who I am? I didn't want to hide."

Sean has been bouncing around the industry ever since. See his [website](#) for proof. He's recorded albums with Cibo Matto; with his band, The Ghost of a Saber Tooth Tiger (which is composed of him and his girlfriend since 2006, Charlotte Kemp Muhl,

per the [L.A. Times](#)).

Further collaborations include albums with Plastic Ono Band, Mystical Weapons and The Claypool Lennon Delirium. Sean has also contributed to no fewer than six film scores, one of which was for 2007's "Friendly Fire," starring Carrie Fisher and Lindsay Lohan — which he also co-wrote.

Like his brother and his parents, Sean is involved in philanthropic efforts. In addition to organizing the [Tibetan Freedom Concert Lineup](#) with Beastie Boys member Adam Yauch from 1996 to 1999, he performed for Occupy Wall Street protesters in New York City in October 2011, per [Billboard](#). The following year, he had an anti-fracking essay published in [The New York Times](#).

In 2018, Sean collaborated with Miley Cyrus and Mark Ronson on a cover of his parents' "Happy Xmas (War Is Over)," which they performed on "Saturday Night Live."

And in 2024, Paul McCartney's son, James McCartney, credited him as a co-writer on the song "Primrose Hill," reported by The Guardian — proving the Lennon-McCartney songwriting team can carry over into the next generation.

Like his half-brother, Sean has never been married and has no children. But he still has a lot of love around him.

In 2019, Sean posted an image to [Instagram](#) of him and his sibling with the caption, “Was fun having this guy in New York for a bit.”

“The only reason I’m interested in art and music at all is because of my parents,” he told [The Guardian](#) in 2015.

“Respect for them is at the heart of everything I do. It defines me. ... I sort of hero-worshipped them as a child, then went to work making music on my own,” he added.



Julian Lennon and Sean Lennon at the Stella McCartney "Get Back" capsule collection and release of Peter Jackson's "Get Back" in 2021 in Los Angeles, California. **Rich Fury / Getty Images**

Randee Dawn

Randee Dawn (she/her) is an entertainment journalist and author based in Brooklyn. In addition to writing for TODAY.com, Variety and The Los Angeles Times, her debut novel, *Tune in Tomorrow*, about a reality TV show run by mythic creatures, published in 2022. She's also the co-author of *The Law & Order: SVU Unofficial Companion*. When not interviewing the stars or dabbling in speculative fiction, she dreams of the next place she can travel to, or cuddles her Westie. More at [RandeeDawn.com](https://www.randeedawn.com).

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