

THE BIG INTERVIEW: Rob Flemming meets the pop art legend, Sir Peter Blake, who talks of music, muses and maxims...

The aristocrat of pop art is still creating 'tons of stuff'

SIR Peter Blake officially launched his exhibition, *Montage of Generations*, at a private viewing in the Brook Gallery in Budleigh Salterton on Wednesday evening. And by 9pm, many of the familiar images carried the traditional red spot indicating a sale.

One of Britain's most famous pop artists, Peter's best known works have graced album covers for bands including The Beatles and The Who and singers such as Paul Weller.

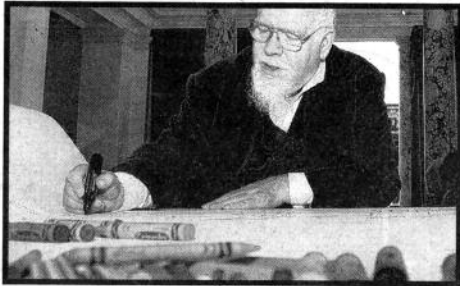
"As a kid, I loved music and rock 'n' roll," said Peter.

"I have always been a fan. But I think there's also a sociological link. Almost every band has a kid who went to art school. In the Beatles it was John, with the Stones, Keith and maybe Charlie. There's always that link with art and I get on very well with musicians."

Ian Dury was one of Peter's students when the latter was teaching at Walthamstow School of Art. The two became close friends, but it was only after Ian's death that Peter's artistic skills were linked with his friend's music.

"The first day I went to the school, probably with a hang-over, I was late," he recalled.

"I vaguely headed to where the class would be and went into a pub for a drink. Ian was



Sir Peter Blake pictured at work on his latest piece OLIVER SANDERS EE190308_0S03_02

there with one of the other kids. Instead of saying, get back to your class and draw, I bought them a drink. I don't think he ever forgot that and we were friends for the rest of his life.

"I never did a record cover for him, because we were so close. Then there was this homage album to Ian that I did and, funnily enough, I'm doing one for the Blockheads."

Peter's collages, such as Sgt Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band or Parade, often juxtapose 19th century and modern images.

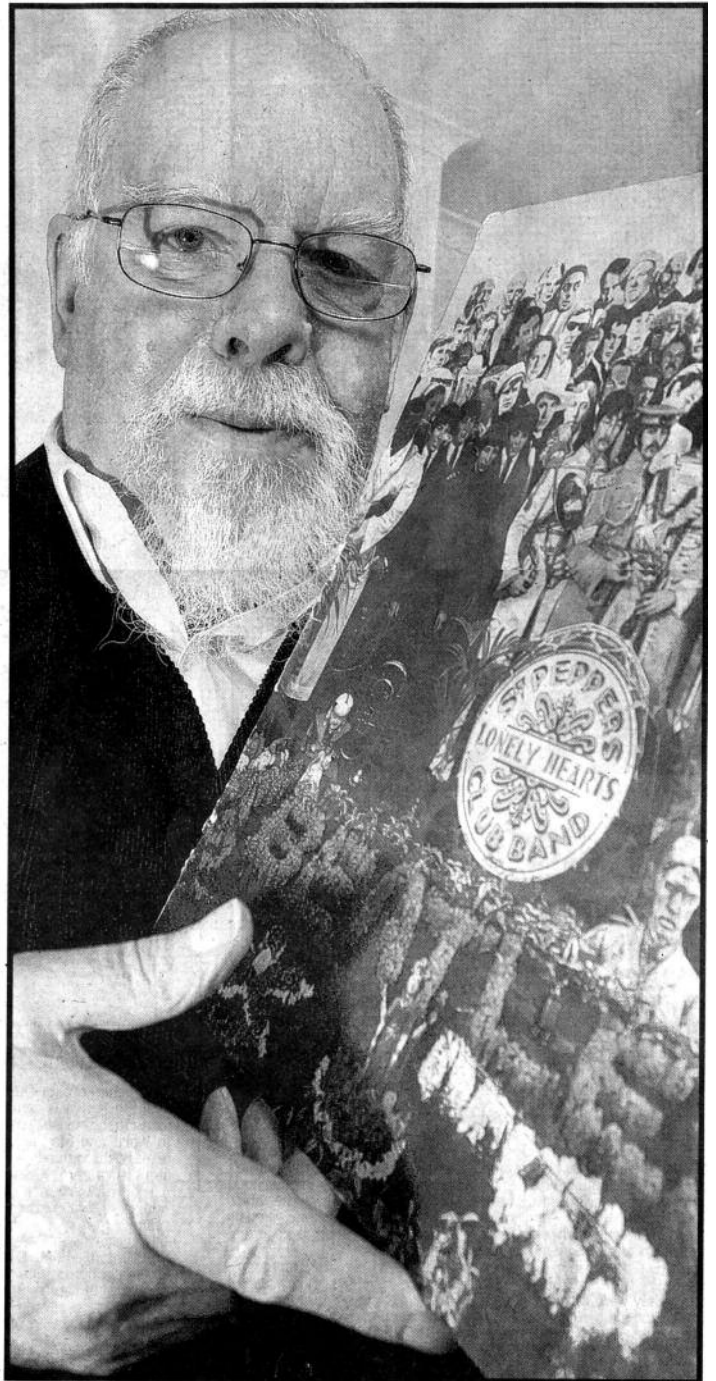
"The best example is Do they Know It's Christmas?" said Peter. "I was presented with a set of horrific photographs taken

by David Bailey in Ethiopia and I thought, if I put these on the cover it's never going to sell.

"The finished sleeve shows a happy Edwardian Christmas, but the Ethiopian children are in the same room. They don't know that there's a party and the party doesn't see them. The nostalgia was deliberate."

The result was an extremely powerful image that perfectly complemented the Band Aid anthem. But the collage is only one of the techniques that Peter employs.

"There are various ways of working," he agreed. "Memories of Place includes a walk



Sir Peter Blake with his seminal cover for the Beatles' Sgt Peppers Lonely Hearts Club Band album

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