When it comes to Beatles references, scientists can’t let it be

Scientists have an indisputable playful side, evidenced by frequent allusions to popular culture in their research publications. That includes popular song lyrics. And the most popular musical group, in terms of how frequently their songs and lyrics appear in the scientific literature, is The Beatles, according to a new paper published in the journal PLoS ONE.

“Some of these are genuinely brilliant,” said co-author Gabriel Budel of Delft University of Technology in The Netherlands. “‘The lung and winding road’ is a paper on Long COVID that changes one vowel of the more than 3,000 references they found to The Beatles. ‘Here comes the SU(N)’ turns ‘Here Comes the Sun’ into a quantum computing paper about mathematical groups. Someone was having a very good day at their desk.”

Back in 2014, scientists at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden revealed that they had been deliberately inserting Bob Dylan lyrics into their papers as part of a long-running bet, starting with a 1997 Nature review entitled “Nitric Oxide and inflammation: The answer is blowing in the wind.” That resulted in a 2015 study on whether Dylan lyrics appeared elsewhere in the biomedical literature; the most frequently referenced were “The Times They Are A’Changin'” and “Blowing in the Wind.”

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-to-reference-the-beatles-in-their-work/