Exploring Personality and Performance in The Beatles

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Becoming the Fab Four

By

Glenn Fosbraey and Daniel Ash

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

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To our parents, for the Beatles education.

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INTRODUCTION

GLENN FOSBRAEY

In the 1998 rom-com, *Sliding Doors*, John Hannah's character says that "everybody's born knowing all The Beatles lyrics instinctively. They're passed into the foetus subconsciously along with all the amniotic stuff" (Howitt, 1998). Biologists and psychologists alike may take issue with the validity of such a statement (not to mention its source material's credentials), but somehow no level of overstatement or hyperbole seems too much when talking about the four Liverpudlians who were thrust into the limelight in 1963 and never stepped out of it. Beatles biographer Philip Norman even goes as far as to suggest that they are "after Winston Churchill, the twentieth century's greatest standard bearer for Britain" (Norman, 2004: xxi), and says, without a hint of insincerity that "when we look back over that lowering and ugly hundred years, only two moments give rise to genuine collective national pride: the one in 1940 when we stood alone against Hitler, and the one in the barely-formed Sixties when four cheeky-faced boys from Liverpool recolonised the world in our name" (Norman, 2004: xxi). Likening the achievements of a pop group to the heroics of the British armed forces in World War II may be a bit much to stomach for some, but what can't be denied is the impact that The Beatles have had on millions of lives over the last 60 years, and to underestimate this is to underestimate the impact that music can have on our lives. As Partridge says, "for many people, popular music is central to the construction of their identities, central to their sense of self, central to their well-being and, therefore, central to their social relations. As such, it functions as a 'prosthetic technology', in that it modifies mood, increases performance, informs decision-making, creates emotional spaces within which meaning is made, evokes memories of significant relationships, and so on. Consequently, it has become central to the everyday personal lives of most people" (Partridge, 2015: 4). The Beatles changed the face of the entertainment industry forever. During the seven years they spent together in the public eye between 1963 and 1970, the album, or 'LP' became an artform (both in terms of the music contained within and the artwork contained on the sleeve); Britain became the envy of the world as producers

of the most experimental and diverse music; pop stars became figureheads and mouthpieces for social change, and regional accents were no longer a barrier to success in the entertainment industry. With every move they made, The Beatles became trailblazers. The music they wrote and played, the clothes they wore, the drugs they ingested, the hairstyles they sported: all were imitated ad nauseum by a multi-million strong audience waiting for their idols' next moves. Because of them a zebra crossing became a world-renowned landmark, a plain white album cover became an artistic statement comparable to the likes of Magritte and Warhol, and an off-the-cuff performance on a roof-top became so culturally significant that it's been parodied ever since. Such influence on society from a pop band hadn't been seen before and it hasn't been since.

In the March 1964 edition of *The Beatles Book*, Frederick James ponders on why The Beatles have so many fans. He says: "The great stage, screen and disc stars of yesteryear have been remote, far-off creatures perched upon high pedestals of pop glory. You know the sort of thing – all sequins and gold lame with carefully created public images to reveal nothing more than small portions of their personalities. Can you imagine a Beatle putting up with that type of hypocrisy? Can you imagine a Beatle throwing a fit of temperament like some of the half-hysterical idols of past decades? Of course, you can't!" (Dean, 1964: 27) James also suggests that the big difference between The Beatles and stars of the past is that they "set out to play and sing for their own personal pleasure [and that] their sights were set upon making their own music as a hobby rather than a job of work" (1964: 27). The Beatles were more focused on success than this, of course, but this is indicative of their public perception: just four lads making music for fun, and if people happened to like it, even better!

In 1989, in his book *The Beatles: A Bio-Bibliography*, author William McKeen wrote that "millions of words have been written about The Beatles" (McKeen, 1989: ix). As 45 years have now passed since that observation, we can predict that those numbers have since entered the billions. Among these billions of words, much has been written examining the reasons why Beatlemania occurred in the early 1960s, and many theories have been put forward. Chiefly amongst these tend to be a post war lift in mood, the birth of the teenager, more expendable income, the excitement of something new, or the sex appeal of the band members themselves. But what about those of us who fell under The Beatles' spell decades later, long after that early cultural excitement had been and gone. What about people like Daniel and me? I was born in 1983 and Daniel in 1990, so our infatuation with The Beatles did not arise from a 'post-war lift in mood' or an emergence from

rationing. By the time we came to them, they were no longer 'something new' and nor was the concept of the 'teenager', and as two heterosexual men – 'sex appeal' was not a contributing factor. And yet, it's fair to say that the band touched our lives in, if not *equally* intense ways as it touched those in 1963, certainly in ways which shaped the course of our lives forever. To this day, Daniel and I still feel The Beatles influencing our lives even beyond all that fabulous music. For three decades now, I have taken my leave from social situations with the parting words "see you round the clubs", á la George Harrison's utterance upon leaving the band during the *Get Back* sessions. Daniel, far more fashionable than me, still buys Beatles-inspired clothing, the most recent being replicas of the brown corduroy shoes John Lennon wore in 1969, and is still very much enjoying Beatles-inspired hair, albeit it the post-1966 styles rather than the classic 'mop top'. But there were times when our infatuation was even stronger. Everybody, it seems, has their own Beatles 'discovery' story. And, seeing as it's our book, it's only fair that we share our own.

Glenn

My way 'in' to The Beatles isn't the most glorious, but it's precious to me, nonetheless. It's December 1995. I am 12 years old, and my family and I are living in a small town called Voorschoten in the Netherlands. I am "King of The Geeks", and spend the majority of my time holed up in my bedroom, playing unfashionably outdated games on my Master System, or enjoying the cricket dice-game 'OWZTHAT' (a game intended for two players) by myself. At school everyone is into Nirvana, Green Day, and Blur, and although I will later become a fan of all three, at that time I just don't *get* music. It is something that the other 'cool' kids are into, and while I pretend to know what they are talking about, I'm secretly counting down the hours until school ends, so I can return to the sanctuary of my Master System. But one evening, The Beatles' 'Free as a Bird' music video comes on *Top of The Pops*, and I am blown away by it. I have heard Beatles songs before, of course, but this is the first time one has really registered with me. Later that evening, I head up to my parents' bedroom and riffle through my Dad's LP collection. Pretty much every Beatles album is there, along with the *Red* and *Blue* compilation albums, which he assures me are great starting points for a fledgling Beatles fan. I promptly record both onto cassette tapes and listen to them on my Walkman non-stop for months.After that, every second of my life revolves around The Beatles. I talk about them constantly at school, play their albums and singles repeatedly when I get home (and yes, that Beatles song reference was intended), and before I go to sleep, I read Hunter

Davies's Beatles biography over and over until it falls apart in my hands. For my 13th birthday, I ask for an acoustic guitar, which I use to learn their songs, then to write my own, which I record in the loft using a 30-year-old microphone and a Dictaphone (these songs still exist, so feel free to send your life savings and an SAE for a copy).

Luckily for me, my Beatles infatuation occurred at the same time their *Anthology* series was released, and *Beatlemania 2* was rampant in England (OK, that's a bit of an exaggeration, but they were all over the press, and everyone was talking about them). It was fashionable to love The Beatles again, and I managed to become one of those 'cool' music-talking kids at school that had seemed so alien to me before.

Eventually, I had every Beatles song ever recorded, so the only sensible option was to begin buying their solo albums (a minefield if ever there was one). My love for The Beatles led to a love for the Rolling Stones, and as the years went by, I left my 60s cocoon and started casting my musical net elsewhere. Although I was to 'fall in love' with other artists and bands, and with some there would be an intensity *close* to what I felt when I discovered The Beatles (e.g. The Smiths), nothing has ever quite matched that connection. Until now, I have never sat down and properly examined in detail those days in late 1995 and early 1996, when I became so infatuated with the band that they impacted every aspect of my life: haircuts, clothes, vocabulary, and romantic interests that seemed so aligned with the lyrics of their songs. To risk hyperbole, it was as intense a period of falling in love as I have ever experienced, and although I can imagine my wife's reaction when she reads this, fellow Beatles fans will no doubt know what I mean. In fact, I *know* they will. A few months ago, Daniel and I went to the live recording of The Beatles podcast 'I am the Egg Pod', and the experience was truly a wonderful one. Standing outside during the interval, I looked around and thought "these are our people". Our fellow Beatles fanatics, standing around ranking Paul McCartney's solo albums, comparing Beatles t-shirts (I've never before seen such an obscure range), debating the merits of Ringo's drumming versus that of his contemporaries, and having a back and forth over whether George's moon boots or John's corduroy shoes were the standout footwear items of the *Get Back* series on Disney+. Heaven.

Daniel

First impressions mean everything. If all those years ago, the glove compartment of my dad's car contained towers of Black Sabbath and AC/DC cassettes, I'd probably be working on a completely different book, wearing vastly different clothes and if brave enough, might even have 'OZZY' tattooed on both knuckles. However, like Glenn, my dad was a Beatles fan and like Glenn, my dad introduced my sister and me to two very important cassettes tapes. The music on those tapes, and the people who created them had an immeasurable impact on my personality, my values, my job, my dreams, the clothes I wear, and of course, my chosen method of boring people at parties. I fell hard for a band called The Beatles. The *Red* and *Blue* compilations soundtracked those foggy years when I was too young to really remember much else, apart from sitting in the back of my parents' Ford Mondeo on long car journeys. I couldn't tell you where we went, I couldn't tell you what we did when we got there, but I could tell you all about the magical music we heard on those journeys. My parents, in an admirable effort to stop us kids bickering, would often pick out cassettes to play, and the *Red* and *Blue* albums were always our favourites. It was a win for everyone: my sister and I were introduced to the infectious world of The Beatles' singles, and my long-suffering parents finally got a bit of peace and quiet. There were, of course, other tapes available, but Simply Red's *Stars* and *The Very Best of Bob Newhart* would never compete. How could they? In what would become a crucial part of my personality, I became obsessed. At home, my dad owned original vinyl copies of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and *Abbey Road*. I spent months lost in those albums, the sleeves pressed up to my nose, admiring the names and faces that would come to play such a big role in soundtracking each and every day of my life. One Christmas, aged six, I got my first Hi-Fi and my first Beatles album, a CD copy of *Rubber Soul*. I had requested *Rubber Soul* especially as 'In My Life', 'Girl', and 'Michelle' were my favourites on the *Red* album. When I played *Rubber* Soul, it blew my mind that there were all of these Beatles songs that I still hadn't heard and I lost so many wonderful hours in my room, miming performances of 'You Won't See Me' or trying to work out why something like 'In My Life' made me feel so sad. At school, I was a complete outcast, but I thrived on that and I loved feeling like I was part of this secret club. I would go to my friends' houses and sneak through their parents' CD collections, forever asking questions about the music that they liked, and when feeling brave enough, asking to borrow something. One time, I threw a toddler tantrum in an ASDA supermarket because my parents wouldn't buy me a copy of the *White Album*. Then I had a disagreement

with my primary school teacher in front of the whole class when I told her that my favourite Beatles song was 'Revolution' and she replied that she "didn't think it was a Beatles song." Unfortunately, she'd picked the wrong six-year-old kid. The kind of six-year-old kid who had never been more confident of an answer in his life and would continue to argue the toss until the end of the day. The kind of six-year-old kid that would bring in a cassette the following day to prove that 'Revolution' actually was a song. To this day, I think that's the closest I ever got to being something of a nightmare child. I continued to pick up albums from good school reports (once the dust from the 'Revolution' argument had settled!), libraries, and birthday and Christmas presents. The final Beatles studio album I got my hands on was *Beatles for Sale*, which might explain why it never quite had the same impact on me as the others. I remember feeling disappointed that there were so many cover songs on the album, but as we will see later in this book, they are a crucial part of what made The Beatles who they were and influenced their authentic live sound. After all, isn't it the same as me wanting to include numerous Beatles covers in the live sets of the many bands I have been in over the years? Like the Fabs, I simply wanted to play the songs that made me happy and the songs that got me on a stage in the first place. So, before we begin, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank my parents for introducing me to the music of The Beatles, without whom I wouldn't be here. And Dad, the moustache and badges that have been cut out of your *Sgt. Pepper* insert had absolutely nothing to do with me.

This book, split into two parts, will examine the enduring appeal of The Beatles. In the first section, Glenn will explore Philip Norman's statement that, in 1963 "…it was [even] possible to like The Beatles without necessarily liking their music" (Norman, 2017: 171), focusing on non-musical elements to examine how fans fell in love with them so intensely and in such large numbers. In the second section, Daniel will discuss how Beatles cover bands have embodied John, Paul, George, and Ringo in their live shows, and attempted the biggest, most impossible and magical feat of them all: making us believe, for a few golden moments, that The Beatles have come back to life in front of our very eyes.

PART 1

HOW THE BEATLES PERSUADED US TO FALL IN LOVE WITH THEM WITHOUT SEEING THEM LIVE OR EVEN HEARING THEIR MUSIC

GLENN FOSBRAEY

This part of the book will examine how fans in 1963 received The Beatles, drawing upon mainstream media to examine how the four of them were presented as a band and as people to the British public. The analyses here don't concern themselves with what the band were *actually* like as people, but how we were *persuaded* to view them.

Ian Inglis writes in *Popular Music and Television* that the Beatles began 1963 as relative unknowns but ended it having sold "millions of singles and albums, completed four nationwide tours, hosted their own 15-part weekly radio series *Pop Go The Beatles*, approved the monthly publication of *The Beatles Book*, been names as the Variety Club's Show Business personalities of the Year, given their name to a new form of mass hysteria, contracted to make their US debut on CBS-TV's *The Ed Sullivan Show*, performed to over 100,000 fans at London's Astoria Theatre in *The Beatles Christmas Show*, negotiated a three- picture contract with United Artists, and established their own music publishing company, Northern Songs" (Inglis, 2016: 179). As the *NME*'s Derek Johnson said: "when our descendants study their history books, they will see one word imprinted against the year… Beatles! For just as convincingly as 1066 marked the Battle of Hastings, or 1215 The Magna Carta, so will this […] year be remembered for the achievements of four lads from Liverpool" (Rees, 2022: back cover). As such, I have chosen the year 1963 for my analysis in this section as it represents the year in which most people in the UK got to know of The Beatles' existence for the first time. I have chosen to focus on their personalities as drivers for their success because they were major factors in establishing them. After all, it was their personalities which led to them being adored by:

Brian Epstein, who recounted there being "some indefinable charm" and finding them "extremely amusing" (Epstein, 1964: 44);

Those who saw their early concerts in Liverpool, with future 'Roadie' Mal Evans saying that he "fell in love with them" (Womack, 2023: 34) the first time he saw them;

George Martin, who "admitted he was drawn to The Beatles' personalities more than their music" (Bedford & Popper, 2018) and said "we hit it off because, like me, they had this quirky, irreverent sense of humour" (Lewisohn, 2013);

The press, with *Evening Standard*'s Maureen Cleave saying: "The Beatles made me laugh immoderately, the way I used to laugh as a child at the Just William books" (Sandbrook, 2006: 505);

The UK public, to whom they 'demonstrated a dislike of authority and middle-class stuffiness […and] also an unpretentiousness and self-deprecating wit that endeared them to their fans' (Lyons, 2021);

The US, where, as Ringo said "being cheeky chappies […] endeared us to them" (The Beatles, 2000: 120);

and finally, the *world,* where their popularity and influence continue to be felt.

For many, how we view the personalities of a group or artist also influences how we feel about their music, and "common associational linkage suggested by the voice sends us towards the person and the biography of the singer" (Bennett et al. 2005: 13). This works in reverse too, with the biography of a singer sending us toward the songs they sing. It can't be ignored that some people in 1963 who may not yet have heard the music of The Beatles would have been aware of them via reading articles about them in local or national newspapers, seeing their photographs on the covers of music magazines, or simply by word of mouth, as news of the band spread up and down the country.

In his book, *Face Value: The Irresistible Influence of First Impressions*, Alexander Todorov points to how powerless we are to resist forming immediate judgements on people, saying: "we look at a person and immediately a certain impression of his character forms in us […and] such impressions form with remarkable rapidity and with great ease. [Although] subsequent observations may enrich or upset our view […] we can no more

prevent its rapid growth than we can avoid perceiving a given visual object or hearing a melody" (Todorov, 2017: 3). It's probable, then, that for at least a proportion of the UK, the first impressions they formed of The Beatles came from something other than their music. As such, to examine how these impressions might have been favourable and added to the band's appeal, it is necessary for us to analyse contemporary photographs, news articles, and other media that would have been available to the British public during 1963.

While it seems a blindingly obvious thing to say about a band that has "183 million units [in] certified sales" (Gotting, 2023), I do need to say here that The Beatles' success is mainly down to their music. As biographer Mark Lewisohn says, "their music underpins everything: one game-changing album after another and one game-changing single after another, 214 tracks recorded in seven crowded years in a kaleidoscope of styles" (Lewisohn, 2015: ix). Importantly, though, their success wasn't *just* down to their music. In addition to this rather necessary component for a pop group, Lewisohn says the band were also "special" due to how "they did everything with down-to-earth humour, honesty, optimism, style, charisma, irreverence, intelligence and a particularly spiky disdain for falseness; how they were articulate, bold, curious, direct, instinctive, challenging, blunt, sharp, polite, rude, prickers of pomposity, rule-breakers never cowed by convention […and] created a profound and sustained connection to their public" (Lewisohn, 2015: x). But how exactly did they connect with the public so well that by the end of 1963, they were one of the most famous and beloved groups on the planet?

From early on in their career, The Beatles sought popularity and mainstream appeal, and "in their early songs, Paul McCartney says, he and John intentionally – somewhat calculatingly – tried to inject personal pronouns into as many of the early lyrics and song titles as they could. They took seriously the task of forging a relationship with their fans in a very personal way" (Levitin, 2009: 32-33). Much of this connection also came via their live performances, where they were one of the hardest working bands in the business, playing "over 250 nights" in Hamburg (Wickman, 2012), and 292 times at The Cavern (Davies, 2016: 300) between 1960 and 1963. By the time The Beatles were playing their last performances at The Cavern, "although the venue had a legal capacity of about 200 […] some 500 fans crammed in to see their heroes" (Lifton, 2023).In total they racked up "more than 1,400 live concert appearances" (Taylor, 2011: 155) by the time they stopped performing live in 1966. But even though an average of 233 concerts per year for six years is an extraordinary amount compared to, for

example, the hard-working bands Coldplay (1,320 shows across 26 years, at an average of 51 per year); Green Day (1,295 across 34 years at an average of 38 per year); or Oasis (844 across 17 years at an average of 50 per year) (Concert Archives, 2023), only a small fraction of the British and International population ever got to see The Beatles play live.

If we calculate their 292 Cavern performances as having an average audience of 500 per show (despite the average attendance almost certainly being lower than this) and discount the fact that it's extremely likely many people saw them more than once, that still means a maximum of only 146,000 people could ever have seen The Beatles at The Cavern.

In addition to those appearances at The Cavern, in total in the UK, they played:

137 shows in 1961
130 shows in 1962
220 shows in 1963
58 shows in 1964
24 shows in 1965

A BBC News article notes that "the band's appearance in the King's Hall Belfast in 1964 had the largest audience The Beatles ever played to in the UK and Ireland […with] two shows on the same day […at] a total audience of 16,000" (BBC News, 2022), meaning that their biggest ever audience in the UK was 8,000. Even if we calculate each show as having this attendance, then the maximum amount of people who could have seen The Beatles perform live in 'Non-Cavern' venues in the UK is 4.5 million. Given that this is a wild over-calculation due to many of the 1961 and 1962 shows taking place in town halls, village halls, and coffee shops where attendances may not have even made it to triple figures, it's more realistic that the total sits between 500-600,000 people. Add our Cavern maximum total of 146,000 and it's likely that less than three-quarters of a million people ever saw The Beatles live in the UK. If we calculate the number who may have seen them before the end of 1963, the year of "Beatlemania", the number falls even lower, of course, meaning it's likely that less than 1% of the 1963 UK population had seen The Beatles live at that point. In comparison, the 1963 Royal Variety Show TV screening saw around 30% of the UK's population tuning in; "approaching thirty million people" listened to BBC Radio in 1963 (BBC, 1964: 37) where The Beatles had their own show *Pop Go The Beatles*, and The *Daily Mirror*, which featured The Beatles a number of times during the year, was the "world's best-selling newspaper,

with a record average daily sale of over 5,000,000" (BNA, 2023). It is evident, then, that the vast majority of the UK's exposure to The Beatles came via means other than seeing them live on stage.

Let's also not ignore the fact that there were plenty of ardent Beatles fans who wouldn't have been able to *afford* to see them live, even if they had the opportunity to. Although ticket prices were somewhat affordable, they still remained beyond the means of someone like my father, who, turning 16 in October 1963, received 3d (old pence) a week pocket money and was therefore unable to afford either train or bus fare from his home in Sittingbourne to where the band performed in Chatham 13 miles away, let alone the entrance fee. As was the case for him, then, most Beatles fans' experiences of "seeing" the band would have been via TV shows and photographs. As no live footage exists of the band playing in Hamburg, where they performed almost exclusively decked out in "leather stage outfits" (Weber, 2016: 240), and there is only one grainy film of them performing at the Cavern (where they started performing in leather before graduating to mis-matched shirts and ties), the image of them that was seen at the time was that one that endures in our minds today: the matching suits, the "Beatle boots", Ringo at the back on his riser, Paul holding his Hofner Violin Bass stage right, his head moving to and fro and perspiration dripping from his face, George just to his left, face set in a frown of concentration as he meticulously picks the notes of his solo, John stage left, bending up and down on bowed legs and his Rickenbacker held high up on his chest. It's a snapshot frozen in time, as is their final performance, on the roof of the Apple Head Office in Savile row at the other end of the decade, where they are nearly unrecognisable from their mop-topped former selves. But their legacy and popularity goes way beyond the era-defining energy and joy of their live sets, as vital to their legend as they are. Members of modern-day tribute acts (which are Daniel's focus in his section of this book), therefore, couldn't draw upon first-hand experience of seeing the band to imitate them, and have had to rely on other means to embody their Beatles personas. The main way of doing this would of course be to study concert footage, but this only allows limited access to their characters, seeing as their speech on stage was limited to between songs, and even this was kept to a minimum. To truly inhabit John, Paul, George, and Ringo, to *become* them on stage and try to replicate the energy, joy, and passion of their performances for new audiences, the acts must draw upon other ways The Beatles were presented to the public.

Critics have been trying to "explain" the brilliance of The Beatles' music since they first became popular. In 1963, during an end-of-year review in a

"music theorist's rhapsody […] serious, respected critic, William Mann of *The Times* […] celebrated what we heard as pandiatonic clusters in "This Boy", Mahler-esque Aeolian cadences at the end of "Not a Second Time", and the major tonic sevenths and ninths and flat-submediant key switches he heard in several other songs […]" (Kozinn, 1995: 74). The writers of the songs in question, Lennon and McCartney "did not have a clue what Mann was talking about […] although it tickled them to be taken so seriously" (Kozinn, 1995: 74). Fast forward 40 years to Dominic Pedler's *The Songwriting Secrets of The Beatles*, and we see little has changed in terms of the impenetrability of such analyses, for example: "the presence of that same unstable 7th degree […], so the presence of that same unstable 7th degree – now recast as the defining major 3rd of the basic V triad – is central to the power of the dominant" (Pedler, 2003: 4). Unless we're musicologists or have a high-level understanding of music theory, this might as well be written in another language for all the good it does us. That's not to disparage Pedler's book in any way at all, for his epic near 800-page study is a vital piece of work to those who understand it. But for the rest of us who simply love and appreciate music for its catchiness, ability to move us emotionally, and other such layman-esque descriptions, we need something different to hang our proverbial hats onto.

Section 1 of my part of this book will examine The Beatles as the UK public would have first seen and heard them in 1963, via: a) the print media in articles and editorials from UK national newspapers and magazines *The Evening Standard*, *The Daily Mirror, Today,* and *The NME*, b) television, on UK channels BBC and ITV, US channel CBS, and a British Pathé newsreel, which was screened in UK cinemas, and c) radio, on the BBC show *Pop Goes The Beatles* and a back-stage interview in Doncaster broadcast on BBC Radio Transcription Service.

Section 2 will draw upon materials from 1963 that were sanctioned by the band themselves (or their management), which will include their press officer Tony Barrow's liner notes on their LPs and EPs from that year, the *Star Special Meet The Beatles* Magazine he authored, and the August to December issues of *The Beatles Book* (issues 1-5).

Firstly, though, it's important to spend a bit of time examining the culture The Beatles and their fans operated in during 1963 in the UK.

In his article, "Beatlemania: 'the screamers' and other tales of fandom", journalist Dorian Lynskey observes that "to love The Beatles in 1963 was to embrace modernity" (Lynskey, 2013) and in *Living a Memorable*

Consumer Experience: The Epic of The Beatles Concerts, Cottet and Pache say that "…The Beatles were main actors in the development of youth culture in Great Britain by adopting a sociological perspective of contesting the old order represented by their parents' musical tastes and ways of life" (Cottet & Paché, 2022: 34). Both of these quotes point toward a turning point in society that either coincided with or was (at least in part) caused by The Beatles' sudden and drastic rise to fame in the UK during the second half of the year, and though we'll never be able to say for sure just *what* the main drivers were for change, what is evident is that the country *wanted* it, and that The Beatles were right there in the thick of it. Perhaps the biggest shift of all, Beatles Historian Ian MacDonald suggests, was "…huge sections of society effectively disenfranchised before the sixties had, as a direct result of the decade's widespread change in attitudes, found their voices and - at last – a share of social justice" (MacDonald, 2008: 4). Also, as Norman says, there were simply more young people among the UK population as "the decline in infant mortality, together with the mysterious non-appearance of a Third World War had allowed an entire generation to grow up virtually intact" (Norman, 2004: 188). What was equally as important as the desire for change and the young people to enact it was the fact that as Marwick observes in his book *British Society Since 1945* "the 1960s presented, perhaps, for the first time in British history, expendable income for the working classes" (Marwick, 2003: 88). Between 1951 and 1961 "the average weekly earnings of men over twenty-one" had almost doubled (Marwick, 2003: 88), and teenagers, too, found themselves with more money to spend on entertainment. This, in turn, led to a new "youth culture" as family income was now "sufficient to allow individual rather than family ownership of radios and record players" (Cloonan, et al., 2016: 127), and *that*, inevitably, led to the increase in single, EP, and LP purchases. As Marwick says, "the pop revolution […] sprang out of the separate culture of youth, yet it depended upon the spending power of the affluent teenager" (Marwick, 2003: 104). And The Beatles were ideally placed to take full advantage.

Although "the early attention accorded to The Beatles did not […] translate into ready acceptance of their cultural stature [and] there was no shortage of traditionalists, sceptics and assorted naysayers […] for whom The Beatles simply reinforced existing prejudices about popular culture in general and pop music in particular" (Collins, 2020: 405), their influence on how the working classes now saw themselves was hugely significant. As Marwick observes, the band's emergence saw "the emergence of a new conception of the nature of the working class and its role in society […with the] crucial development […the] beginnings of a perception of the working class not as

a stereotype, not as a banner-bearer of the future, but as itself, on its own terms" (Marwick, 2003: 97). And, most importantly, their class was something The Beatles wore with pride. In *The Beatles Anthology* book, John is quoted as saying, "we were the first working-class singers that stayed working class and pronounced it and didn't try and change our accents, which in England were looked down upon" (The Beatles, 2000: 102). This, writes Sandbrook, was a refreshing change from "the crooked, weary self-indulgence of the Establishment […and] the band's northern accents immediately associated them with honesty, dynamism, and authenticity. Northerners, and Lancastrians in particular, had for years been presented by working-class entertainers as plain-speaking, independent and warm-hearted types, and The Beatles fell nicely into the same category" (Sandbrook, 2006: 506). This was precisely the inspiration many people needed to simply be themselves.

Section 1

A) Print Media

Beatles in the press pre-1963

The first press coverage The Beatles got came via the *Mersey Beat,* a "fortnightly newspaper" which was "the idea of editor Bill Harry, a friend of Lennon's and fellow Beatle of the time Stuart Sutcliffe" (Sexton, 2023). Launching "its first edition for the period July 6-20, 1961" (Sexton, 2023), *Mersey Beat* became The Beatles' main instrument for publicity in 1961, as it included reports covering the group's progress, as well as a regular column by John Lennon and a series of letters written by Paul McCartney. As pointed out by Bill Harry, the magazine made The Beatles known to a large young local audience: "When Mersey Beat came out […], selling 5,000 of the very first issue and increasing every issue after that, virtually all the kids in Liverpool began to read about them – there was no other publicity but that in Mersey Beat throughout 1961" (Reiter, 2008: 23). Despite gaining a dedicated following within their hometown, however, "early press reaction to The Beatles outside Liverpool was largely negative" (Inglis, 2010: 551), with this "national indifference […also] evident in press responses to the group's first single "Love Me Do" […which] Record Mirror briefly dismissed […] as "an okay song [which] drags through the middle, particularly during the harmonica lead" (Inglis, 2010: 551). It took until January 1963 before The Beatles achieved their first appearance in the national press, an *Evening Standard* interview by Maureen Cleave, published on the 2nd February 1963. Cleave was suitably impressed by them,

describing their wit as "so keen and sharp – John Lennon's especially" and noting "this wonderful quality – it wasn't innocence, but everything was new to them. They were like William, finding out about the world and trying to make sense of it" (Sandbrook, 2006: 505).

"Why The Beatles Create All That Frenzy" by Maureen Cleave, The Evening Standard, 2nd February 1963

Maureen Cleave was 24 when she was appointed as a features writer for the *London Evening Standard* in 1959 and had a regular column, *Disc Date*. (Davies, 2016: 31) Inside The Beatles inner-circle, Cleave was considered to be "an outstanding features writer" and she was "trusted" to write about the band (Davies, 2016: 31). The article published on the 2nd February 1963 represented The Beatles' "first appearance in the national press" (Sandbrook, 2006: 505), and drew on her interview with the band on the 10th January (Rees, 2022: 48), conducted due to Cleave being "urged by Liverpool journalist Gillian Reynolds to seem them" (Rees, 2022: 19). Aged 28 when she interviewed the band (and, based on the detail in the article, saw them perform), nine years older than youngest member George Harrison and with an even more significant age gap between the "little girls of Merseyside" that she identifies early in the article. Crucially, this allowed her to distance herself from being swept up into the "frenzy", giving her article the necessary objectivity to be taken seriously by its readers. Immediately suggested by the article's title, where she makes a statement rather than asks a question, Cleave's aim is to explain The Beatles' impact on fans rather than question its validity or to try and either diminish or justify it.

Cleave begins the article by talking about how passionate The Beatles' fans are, identifying them as "little girls of Merseyside" and describing them as "fiercely possessive", to the extent where they refused to buy the band's debut single in case, they became popular and "left them" to go to London. At the time, the classic format of the "Inverted Pyramid" (Busa, 2013) for a news story was in vogue, demanding that copy be written "in descending order of importance" (Hicks et al., 2016: 13), and although Cleave's opening paragraph doesn't adhere to it exactly by explaining the title, it does give the title a bit of context, establishing as it does that it's the "little girls of Merseyside" who are the subjects being sent into the titular frenzy. The opening paragraph also sets its stall out for what is important – which is to emphasise the fact that this will be an article which seeks to explore (and seek to explain) the unusually extreme fanaticism The Beatles engender in their followers. It's also important to note that Cleave uses the word "Merseyside" twice in the opening two sentences, immediately attaching

both band and fans to this particular area. The use of the word “fiercely” to describe the behavior of the “little girls”, and the use of the word “forced” in the sentence “they forced Granada to put […the band] on television” is, perhaps, one of the first observations that popular music was a factor in the changing behaviours and aspirations of “British teenage girls” whose adolescence until that point “was often seen as a premature reward for shouldering the responsibilities of adulthood” (Tisdall, 2022: 496) now “challenged 1950s gender roles […and] pursued education, career, sexual freedom and a desire for autonomy by embracing the new urban youth culture” (August, 2009 :80).

Cleave goes on to list the instruments they play (“three guitars and drums”) but not their names at this point. She also points out the band’s success, noting that their second single is selling “at the rate of 50,000 a week”, and their originality, saying that they “don't sound a bit like The Shadows, or anybody else for that matter.” Why Cleave decides to compare The Beatles with The Shadows specifically is somewhat baffling, although they were perhaps the band to compete with at the time, given they had reached the top of the UK album charts four months previously in October 1962 with *Out of The Shadows*. It’s hard to determine how the “50,000 copies a week” line was received by readers at the time, but we can infer from the way Cleave has written “at a rate of” before the number that it is a figure meant to impress. Following this, Cleave says that she believes it is the band’s *looks* (her italics), which she considered the main reason for their fans’ infatuation, and describes them as being “scruffy, but scruffy on purpose” and describing their appearance in detail, identifying their suit type and colour, shirt colour, footwear, and, of course, haircuts. She also brings in their age here as a factor, listing their “average age” as 20. Before she names them (and describes their individual characters) Cleave finishes her description of them a single unit by detailing how they perform on stage, where “there's none of this humble bowing of the head, or self-effacing trips over the microphone leads”, and that their “self-confidence and professional polish” is understandable given that they have been “at this game since 1958”. The observation that “Liverpool lads of twelve and upwards now have small bouffant Beatle heads with the fringe brushed forwards” is another indicator of the band’s embryonic influence on youth culture, but this time influencing males As Moretta says, “the band’s long hair made a statement […] that young people would set their own standards” (Moretta, 2017: 93).

When Cleave does get round to describing them individually, it’s brief and entirely physical, giving each band member the shortest of introductions:

John has a "brutal and devastating" upper lip; Paul has a "baby face"; George has a "handsome" yet "untidy" appearance, and Ringo is "ugly but cute". Cleave then quotes her friend's verdict on their appearances, but this goes straight back to an overall perception, describing them as she does as "beat-up and depraved in the nicest possible way." It's intriguing here that, even though she goes out of her way to identify their appeal as being down to their "looks", Cleave spends such a short time discussing them and moves straight on to talking about their manners ("friendly and charming"); intelligence ("three of them went to grammar school, and John Lennon had more education at the Liverpool College of Art"); ambition ("we all want to get rich"); light-heartedness ("for us, this is just good fun"), and unique sense of humour ("our humour is based on anything other people don't laugh at") and dedicating the rest of the article to non-appearance-based observations. Seemingly without knowing it, Cleave succeeds in immediately identifying most of the attributes that would endear the band to the rest of the world in in the space of a year.

NME and Daily Mirror articles - 21st June 1963

Although, as we'll investigate later, group unity was one of The Beatles' official narrative's core messages (Weber, 2016: 20), two media publications on Friday 21st June 1963 showed the two very different characters of Paul and John, both concerning Paul's recent 21st birthday. Firstly, "the latest *NME* carried a thank you from Paul in the form of an ad, which cost him £15; "TO MANY PEOPLE – Thank you very much for your Gifts and Greetings on my Birthday… Great! PAUL McCARTNEY" (Rees, 2022: 222). Taking an average from various inflation calculators and concluding that £15 in 1963 is the equivalent of between £300 and £350 today, this was a lot of money for Paul, who was yet to see the riches his Beatle royalties would later bring (indeed, biographer Dafydd Rees reports that the band only "earned their first three-figure sum" on March 4th "being paid £100" for a show in St Helens, Lancashire" (Rees, 2022: 92). This identifies Paul as being so grateful to his fans that he's willing to go to significant financial expense in order to thank them. Cynics among us could point to this being an early example of what later led to John calling him "the best PR man in the world" (Wenner, 2000: 32), but it's likely that readers of that issue of the *NME* would just have taken it at face value, and been touched by Paul's gratitude, an attribute "regarded as a commendable and beneficial human quality or disposition" (Carr, 2013: 17). The second story, appearing on the back page of The *Daily Mirror* was headlined "Beatle in Brawl – "Sorry I Socked You" and concerned an incident at Paul's 21st birthday party where John apparently "assaulted Cavern Club DJ

Bob Wooler". "Written by journalist Don Short, who later became a friend and confidant to the group" (Beatles Bible, 2024a), the article quotes John saying: "Why did I have to go and punch my best friend? I was so high I didn't realise what I was doing. I had a great deal to drink at the party and very little to eat. By the time this happened I didn't know what I was doing. Bob is the last person in the world I would want to have a fight with. I can only hope he realises that I was too far gone to know what I was doing" (Rees, 2022: 222). In contrast to Paul's "nice" image, this story, for the first time in print situates John as a "bad boy", defined by Gopaldas & Molander as "aggressive, boisterous, and combative […] a man created to fight […] both verbally and physically aggressive, he is a ticking time bomb, ever-ready […] to prove his full-blooded maleness" (Gopaldas & Molander, 2020). Combined with Cleave's description of John as having "an upper lip which is brutal in a devastating way" (Cleave, 1963), as unsavoury as it may be, John's perceived "dangerous" persona and behaviour may have led to women being attracted to him, as "from an evolutionary perspective, such qualities may be highly beneficial to a prospective mate's social status, physical well-being, and/or genetic lineage" (Rebellon & Manasse, 2004). Already, then, we are seeing that "there was a Beatle to suit every taste. As a fan, you expressed yourself by picking one over the others" (Brown, 2020: 3). If fans were drawn toward "commendable" attributes like gratitude, then Paul was the one for them. If they preferred danger and daring, then it was John.

By this time, The Beatles had been getting considerable coverage in local newspapers across the UK, had been featured in the magazines *Mirabelle* and *Reveille* as well as frequent features in music publications *NME, Melody Maker, Disc, Hit Parade, and The Record Mirror.* They also appeared on national TV on *Thank Your Lucky Stars* in January 1963, where they performed 'Please Please Me', but their national newspaper coverage had been limited since Maureen Cleave's *Evening Standard* article. The story about Lennon therefore provided a watershed moment for the press. Did they latch onto it and use it as a way to produce more negative content about them? As Sandbrook observes in his book *Never Had It So Good,* "the press, had they chosen, could probably have destroyed The Beatles" career almost before it had begun […But] the truth was there was no market for scandal involving The Beatles, because the front pages were already full of far better scandals involving the Macmillan government, Soviet spies and teenage callgirls […] "You *had* to write it that way," remarked one correspondent afterwards. "You knew that if you didn't, the *Sketch* would and the *Express* would and the *Mail* and the *Standard* would. You were writing in self-

defence." (Sandbrook, 2006: 506- 507) John Lennon supports this media whitewashing of their characters, saying: "we were bastards. You can't be anything else in such a pressurised position […] Those things are left out; about what bastards we were. Fucking big bastards, that's what The Beatles were. […] We were the Caesars. Who's going to knock us when there's a million pounds to be made, all the handouts, the bribery, the police, and the hype?" (Womack, 2023: 116).

"The Big Beat Craze! Four little Lord Fauntleroys who are making £5,000 every week" in *The Daily Mirror*, Tuesday September 10th 1963

Given that "eight out of ten people" only read the headlines of news articles (Unerman, 2015), this analysis will focus only on the banner text of this article, with it separated into three separate parts on the page as follows: "THE BIG BEAT CRAZE!"; 'Four little Lord Fauntleroys who are making £5,000 every week" and "THE BEATLES" (caps and punctuation marks are the publication's own). One of the more inflammatory article titles of the era, unlike Maureen Cleave's measured, objective one, Donald Zec takes an immediately subjective, and negative tone via the following:

The word "craze":

Although the meanings of words can change over time (see "wicked", "cool", or "fit" for the more obvious examples), the interpretation of the word "craze" has remained largely unaltered since 1963, being defined today by the Oxford English Dictionary in three ways, firstly as a verb "to impair or damage (a person's mind); to cause mental illness in (a person or a person's mind); to drive (a person) to distraction" (OED, 2023); and the noun describing "a personal obsession, compulsion, or obsessive need; an excessive excitement or enthusiasm; a collective enthusiasm, usually short-lived" (OED, 2023). As we can see, neither definitions could be deemed as being positive, and, most likely, the intention of its usage by Zec was to observe that "Big Beat", led, as he suggests, by The Beatles, is nothing but a passing fad and that the people wrapped up in it are in some way insensible.

The label of "Lord Fauntleroys':

Originally coming into the public consciousness as the titular character novel by Frances Hodgson Burnet, "Little Lord Fauntleroy" soon entered the slang lexicon as an insult "inspiring a panic among certain parents, who feared their sons might turn out "priggish," "sugary," or, as all these coded

words seemed to suggest, emasculated" (Hunt, 2020). It has also been used to describe males as "pampered or excessively well-behaved" (Collins Dictionary, 2019). In the case of this article, then, the suggestion is that, coupled with the observation (whether accurate or not) that they were "making £5,000 every week" (Zec, 1963), The Beatles were now to viewed with caution by parents, lest their own sons turn into such "pampered and emasculated" men. And, with The Beatles' hair being described as "effeminate" (Saridakis, 2023: 49), "emasculation" may well have been an issue, with the lower middle classes holding the view that "permissiveness and homosexuality […were] intolerable under any circumstances (Rayside, 1992: 131-132).

The assertion the band were "making £5,000 every week":

With the UK average weekly wage being around £11 in 1963 (FRED, 2018) and (Office for National Statistics, 2023), this is a staggering amount of money. To those readers not aware of the fact that only six months previously they were barely making three figures per concert (to share between the four of them, Brian Epstein, and roadies Mal Evans and Neil Aspinall), and that prior to this they were making considerably less and struggling to make ends meet, it would appear that this amount is both obscene and undeserved, particularly to the newspaper's "working-class readership" (Bingham & Conboy, 2009: 639).

To that 80% of readers who just look at headlines, then, this particular one leaves them taking away the idea that The Beatles are part of a short-lived fad which only mentally impaired people engage with, are spoiled, effeminate, overpaid, and undeserving of wealth and success. As we discussed on the previous page via the quotes from Lennon and the unnamed correspondent, though, it's evident that this kind of depiction of The Beatles was not only in the extreme minority, but was also to be supplanted quickly and spectacularly with overwhelmingly positive press coverage.

Analysing "Yeah! Yeah! Yeah!" an editorial in The *Daily Mirror,* Wednesday December 6th 1963

Singh and Singh posit that a good "editorial needs to be an opinion maker. If it is based on evidence, so much the better. But it analyses evidence rather than produces it" (Singh & Singh, 2006). Via this brief one, we can see that the aim of the editor is to bring people round to the opinion that The Beatles are now to be loved (how the tone has changed within the same newspaper within the space of less than two months!), and suggesting that anyone who

doesn't feel the same way is "a lost cause", and "not living" (Daily Mirror, 1963). *The Daily Mirror* has used this as a way of officially jumping aboard The Beatles-praising bandwagon instead of struggling against it. Using language, they clearly think would appeal to the younger Beatles fans, with words like "square" and "nutty", and terms like "brother" and "sister", but in the non-familial sense, the piece is about as supportive as one could imagine an editorial being, even bordering on the sycophantic and cringe-worthy at times, so keen is it to nail the paper's colours to The Beatles mast. Awash with adjectives to describe the band (including "handsome", "happy", "rumbustious", and "fresh") and turning the band name noun into the verb "Beatling" to describe how, during their Royal Variety Performance the "young Beatles" took "a middle-aged audience by the scruff of their necks and […had] them beatling like teenagers" (Daily Mirror, 1963) the author depicts the band as inspirational figures who are positively changing society with their energy, and are appealing to everyone, "from Wapping to Windsor. Aged 7 to 70" (Daily Mirror, 1963), and even praises their hair for being "super-clean" and "WASHED" [article's own capitals] (Daily Mirror, 1963). Working as a piece of rhetoric more than anything else, the author employs a number of rhetorical devices, such as asyndeton ("the omission of conjunctions") (Leith,2012: 266) in the line "the nutty, noisy, happy, handsome Beatles" (Daily Mirror, 1963); auxesis ("inflated language") (Leith,2012: 266) in "what a change from the self-pitying moaners crooning their love-lorn tunes from the tortured shallows of lukewarm hearts" (Daily Mirror, 1963); alliteration ("a way of wiring words and concepts together") (Leith,2012: 263), in "Wapping to Windsor" and 7 to 70" (Daily Mirror, 1963); and assonance ("the rhyming of vowel sounds") (Leith,2012: 266) which serves the same function as alliteration, in "if they don't put a beat in your feet – sister" (Daily Mirror, 1963). The article ends in a resounding "Good luck, Beatles!" [article's own exclamation mark], as if there were any doubt at all that the whole piece has been rooting for their success.

"The Beatles from Breakfast to Bedtime" by Mike Hennessey - *Today* Magazine, Week Ending November 30th 1963

As interest in the band grew, so did the interest in their personal lives. *Today* magazine, released every Wednesday from its launch on the 27th February 1960 (Quinn, 2024), was one of the main periodicals of the time, and "needed to maintain sales of a million copies a week to be able to offer national coverage to advertisers" (Quinn, 2024). It was natural, then, that they would want to cover an act as popular as The Beatles, as an inevitable boost in sales would follow. In the week ending November 30th 1963

edition, the article "The Beatles from breakfast to bedtime" concerns itself with detailing the (often mundane) movements of the band across a 24 hour period that starts in Stockholm where they wake up in a hotel, make a recording for Swedish TV, have dinner, meet members of their Swedish fan club, then go to bed, and culminates in them flying back to England, where they are met by "a police escort, special customs clearance […and a] flurry of autograph books [before they] squeeze into a car and are whisked away" (Hennessey, 1963: 18). Although there would be many more such articles which gave readers an insight into how the band spent their days, this was the first to do so in a national publication and allowed the band members to be seen as normal people rather than superstars. In fact, it's this "everyman" appeal that is so prevalent and endearing. Just by describing their morning routines, author Mike Hennessey is portraying them all as being relatable, down-to-earth, and untouched by the luxuries of fame and wealth. As he writes:

"John is the first to appear […] in vest and trousers [where he] nibbles absently at […some] toast and looks out on Stockholm with the bewildered air of a man wondering what has happened to the Mersey Tunnel" (Hennessey, 1963: 15). Ringo then comes in, wearing a "pyjama top and trousers, and squints disapprovingly at the morning light" (Hennessey, 1963: 15), followed by George "brisk […and] clean-shaven" then Paul, who stands "at the washbasin in his underpants, splashing the sleep from his eyes […]" (Hennessey, 1963: 15). In John's description we see someone who can't quite believe he is no longer living his old, humble life in Liverpool (humility); in Ringo someone who is able to meet his commitments despite not wanting to be up so early (discipline and trustworthiness); in George someone who takes pride in his appearance (cleanliness and grooming), and in Paul someone who is happy to be seen in such an unguarded state (self-confidence). Later in the piece, John shows more humility when he is quoted as saying the band "still likes egg and chips" and that they're "still living much the same" despite their newfound fame and money (Hennessey, 1963: 15). He also dismisses the crepe suzettes they are served as "just pancakes really", much to the consternation of the waiter (Hennessey, 1963: 15). As well as this humility, John also demonstrates his work ethic and dedication to his fans, his voice described as "hoarse" from singing "Twist and Shout", and having to suck numerous throat sweets (28, according to Hennessey) during the day (Hennessey, 1963: 15).