

The Beatles' Story

transcribed from the original album

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On Stage With The Beatles

(applause)

And here they are, the Beatles!

This is the sound of Beatlemania! I don't know how this sound can be explained!

The Beatles are now on stage! The entire audience has jumped to its feet! Flashbulbs are going off in every direction! I'm standing on stage about fifty feet away from the Beatles and hear the screams, shouts, yells, cheers! Listen to the crowd! This is something like I've never seen before!

How Beatlemania Began

It started in Liverpool, England. A sound, a feeling, an emotion. It started in Liverpool, England, and swept up the youth of the world. And while adults speaking in many foreign languages looked on it all, four young boys from a poor British seaport slum town, their hair style, a harmless defiance of convention, their musical style brash, earned renown which they had never dreamed of and perhaps never really wanted.

The Beatles had even picked a name which defied and challenged acceptance. Their very success, ironically, seems to defeat their 'I don't care' philosophy. But through it all, confused at times, perhaps a little frightened at times, they've clinged to their identity and grown closer to one another.

From such romantic sounding of the dank appearing Liverpool clubs as 'The Cavern' or 'Iron Door', where the smell of sea water mixes with the odor of ciggies, now come the sound-alikes, the singing and screaming junior auxiliaries of Britain's storied angry men but always up front, George, Paul, John, and Ringo, a quartet of musical rebellion who make no effort to charm but strangely enough by that very act charmed their most severe critics, and like pied pipers, their fans are legion but their cultist reactions are phenomenal.

Beatlemania In Action

"What did it do to you? You seem to be in a—"

"I thought they were just like four boys. I really liked them. They were good. They were really great guys. It didn't really hit me. And then you see them standing there, singing, and I don't know what they did. They just changed you. They're not what they used to be. They're just so much better. And you see them on stage, and they're just like they're meant for you and no one else. It seems so personal but yet it's just for everybody."

"Did you ever expect the concert to do this to you?"

"Oh no, I came here to say I'm not gonna scream, I'm not gonna cry, I'm not gonna do anything. So here I am crying. And the thing is, I touched Paul the other day. And I thought, well, that's not gonna be nothing. I touched Paul McCartney, and now that I've touched him, I can't touch him again, ever again... never. I got his autograph."

"Do you have anything else you wanna add?"

"I just think they're the most wonderful persons I've ever met in my whole life. I just love 'em."

Beatlemania. But what is Beatlemania? Mania by definition means craze. We found a label, but we still don't know what's inside the bottle. In Hamburg, Germany, where the early Beatles started, youngsters who didn't even understand English felt Beatlemania. Beatlemania is in fact a temporary state of mind which can only be accurately described by the one who is under its influence. There are many reasons for Beatlemania.

Man Behind the Beatles: Brian Epstein

This is the reason why Beatlemania was ready to serve to the world. Into the musical Liverpool cauldron where the basic Beatle ingredients of excitement, sound, movement, freshness, cooked over the bubbling waters of the 'Mersey River', it was Brian Epstein, stirring the brew, adding from time to time the dash of professional seasoning. Drawing on his own theatrical education, Epstein, the Beatle manager, was able to take the admittedly scruffy quartet and act as both an objective mirror and business guide. How Epstein and the Beatles joined forces is another chapter in this living legend.

Epstein, at the youthful age of twenty-seven, had rejected the temptations of a career in theatre to enter the family business in Liverpool. Despite an almost lifelong yearning for the theatre and a formal education, which included study at the 'Royal Academy of Dramatic Art' in London, he decided to employ his creative talents and boundless energy in the business world where the chances of financial security were considerably greater than theatre.

Although his personal tastes were somewhat sophisticated, Brian Epstein found the business of selling pop music records so financially rewarding that he decided he'd better immerse himself in the pop music world, which strangely enough was focusing its beams on Liverpool and the 'Mersey Beat', successor to both the European 'Skiffle' and American 'Rock' were popular.

So down the cobblestoned streets of Liverpool's storied beat generation section went Epstein, with dress and manner genteel. He reportedly projected a feeling of confusion the first time he was confronted by the Beatles. But in subsequent trips, his demeanor changed, and when Brian Epstein finally made a personal decision to manage the Beatles, it was a decision which would affect the musical history of the world.

John Lennon

From the rough and rowdy streets of Hamburg, to the cellars of Liverpool's ancient and not-so-honorable alleys, the Beatles were already legend. And like musical boulders dropped into still water, the story of that strange overpowering audience reaction rippled across the continent. Perhaps Roger Christian can explain a few reasons for this Beatlemania.

One reason is John Lennon, the chief Beatle. Without John, there would be no Beatles. John was the one who organized the group and gave them their name, one that has become in the past year the most important word in the English vocabulary.

On October 9, 1940, John Winston Lennon was born in Liverpool. He grew to be five feet eleven inches tall, with brown hair and brown eyes. John Lennon is a determined twenty-three-year-old whose somewhat stern face gives the impression of an angry young man. Fittingly, Lennon is called the Chief Beatle. "But we don't let it count so much really," he says. "If we gotta have a leader, I'm him."

The appointment of John as group leader came about, not from necessity but only to fulfill a public demand. People kept coming up and asking who the leader of the group was. The Beatles replied, "Nobody." The people said, well, there must be a boss. "So the others said to me, well, you started the whole thing off, John, so you've got to be our leader." And that's the way it was.

John goes on to say, "ours is a co-operative group, nobody lays down any laws. We talk things over. We have our rows, nothing serious though. Just differences like any other human beings."

And like his three fellow Beatles, Lennon is an individual who doesn't hesitate at any time to speak his mind. Once when asked about politics, he replied:

"Politics? They have no message for me nor for any of our group. The bomb, nuclear disarmament, well, like everyone else, I don't want to end up with festering heat, but I don't stay up nights worrying. I'm preoccupied with life, not that."

Born in Liverpool, John attended Liverpool High School and later the Liverpool College of Art.

Lennon readily admits his school life was far from being successful. He goes on to say, "My whole school life was a case of 'I couldn't care less'. It was just a joke as far as I was concerned. But don't think I'm proud of it. I wouldn't want anyone to follow my example."

Al Wiman, in our 'Beatle Biography in Sound', probes deeper into John Lennon's fascinating mind.

Although two of the three R's of school held no particular fascination for John Lennon, he always had a desire to express himself with the medium of the third R, writing. His originality of style is evident in his book, published by Simon and Schuster.

The book, aptly entitled 'In His Own Write', is a huge sales success. When John was asked if he employed the help of a ghost-writer, he jocularly replied:

"No, I mean, who's gonna help you with a thing like that?"

As for the off-beat style John employed within its pages, he candidly says:

“Well, that’s the way I think.”

The huge success of his book amply overshadows his self-admitted failures in school. But even before his literary achievement, John was to taste success in a Liverpool club called ‘The Cavern’.

But what if there had been no ‘Cavern Club’, no Brian Epstein, no George Martin, no Capitol Records, no Lady Luck to smile down on those four lads from Liverpool? George Harrison very simply puts it this way:

“I don’t know. I know if we weren’t making a lot of money and popular, then we’d just be poor unpopular Beatles.”

After many successful months of playing at the ‘Cavern’, the Beatles landed a booking tour with a Larry Parnes pop show. The job wasn’t a very good one, just backing a young singer, but it was the first time that the Beatles had played outside their native Liverpool. After that came the booking at the ‘Indra Club’ in Hamburg, Germany and a short time later their discovery by Brian Epstein.

While in Germany, the other Beatles at that time, including the late Stuart Sutcliffe, Paul McCartney, who had been with John since the days of the not-too-successful ‘Nerk Twins’, and George Harrison who had just become a Beatle, all found the young German frauleins much to their liking.

But it was clear that John, although greatly elated over the group’s new found fame, longed for his home in Liverpool and in his words, “My love was in Liverpool. She and I met one day, and suddenly fell in love. Later we were married and I love her.”

And, like every good husband, John wanted his family to have financial security. However, at this point, this seemed to be the least of his worries.

Who’s a Millionaire?

When asked about the rumor if he or any member of the group was a millionaire, he casually scoffed:

“No, that’s another lousy rumor. I wish we were.”

[laughing]

“Is Brian Epstein a millionaire?”

“No, even he’s not one, poor fellow.”

“Where does all the money go?”

“Well, a lot of it goes to her majesty. She’s a millionaire!”

[laughing]

And she, too, is a Beatle fan and as long as we have Beatle fans, I guess we’ll always have Beatlemania!

Beatles Will Be Beatles

It's a great sound, isn't it? Some say it's the sound of a group that has achieved overnight success. But don't you believe it!

It took the Beatles over five years to become an overnight success. And much like the title of their first motion picture, it was indeed 'A Hard Day's Night'.

John Lennon, who almost was side-tracked into an art career, by the way, must be credited not only with initiating the Beatles, but also as the one member who never gave up hope of success despite many adversities. And he was always the rallying point for regroupings.

John Lennon, whose whole family was musically inclined, was also the first to form a group and called it the Quarrymen. Paul McCartney soon joined John's Quarrymen, thereby earning the title of Beatle-in-waiting number two.

That the world never caught on to a craze called 'Quarrymenmania' was evidence that the magic sound was not yet formed. 'The Quarrymen', originally five in number, dwindled down to John and Paul. But under the new name, 'The Nerk Twins', there was still disillusionment.

With musical idols, Buddy Holly and the Crickets, George Harrison was the next to join John and Paul, becoming Beatle-in-waiting number three. With George, the new group name became 'John and the Moondogs'. But, no 'Moondogmania'.

By now, the skiffle craze was dimming, and with it, the hopes of the Moondogs, who were still in their skiffle apprenticeship at the time when skiffle 'journeymen' couldn't find work.

While still working on new ideas for sound, and some moral support too from better-known Liverpool groups, John Lennon introduced the name 'Beatle'. But who came up with the final name 'Beatles' spelled with the B-E-A-T? Paul McCartney explains the origin.

"John got the name 'Beatles' in a vision. Ages ago, when we needed a name and everybody was thinking of a name and he thought of 'Beatles'."

"Why the B-E-A instead of the B-E-E?"

"Well, if we left it with B-E-E, it was hard enough getting people to understand why it was B-E-A, never mind that."

For a time, the name was softened to 'Silver Beatles', and with various other artists joining and leaving the group, John, Paul, and George were getting closer and closer to that magic door, which one day, was to suddenly fly open, and lift them from a Liverpool cellar, and carry them before a world spotlight so bright, it would leave their image permanently embedded in entertainment history.

The Beatles like to be thought of as a fun-loving, devil-may-care, non-conforming, life-loving quartet, which is more often disjointed than jointed. But while they may have neither interest nor ability in booking their own engagements or counting profits, they've consistently displayed that they take their music seriously, themselves lightly, and world acclaim moderately. Not even their success-swelled bank accounts seem to phase their basic down-to-earth outlook.

Even with full knowledge that critics and friends by the legion are scampering, clawing, begging for tidbits of information, any information, on how they formed, how they dress, they take it casually.

John Lennon, for instance, when asked the technical question of how long it took them to develop the Beatle sound from its parent skiffle beat, answered:

“Uh, over a period of about six months, I think. Or was it a year?”

“Eh, a little longer, John.”

“You forget, you know. I know I met Paul first and he sort of joined this little group I had then... then, George, you know, and it gradually changed a little. It was just us three.”

But it really wasn't as easy as it sounds. Those last painful months before discovery were full of obstructions and barriers, and disillusionment, and disappointments.

But, if success seemed to elude the Beatles in their native Liverpool, several junkets to Hamburg, Germany worked well for both their pocketbook and spirit.

Particularly their last trip, in which they achieved their first audience reaction, which was later to be called Beatlemania. The Germans were the first to feel Beatlemania. And this, despite the fact that a good part of the Beatle act was spoofing everything from Nazis to Nietzsche and Aryans to Agrarians, the Barbs, with noted Liverpoolian wit, were burned into Hamburg audiences between numbers and during numbers.

Returning home to Liverpool, however, was somewhat of a disappointment for their Hamburg success story hadn't reached home. For the boys, Number 10 Matthew Street, the address of the popular 'Cavern Club', was as far away as Number 10 Downing.

About this same time, another Liverpool act, Mersey Side, was achieving notable success, a group called 'Rory Storm and the Texans'.

Music historians would later pay particular note to a mournful-faced little drummer with the Texans known to friends as Richie, but to the public as Ringo Starr.

It wouldn't be long before Ringo would be Beatle number four.

Lady Luck would be Beatle number five, and with the brilliant guiding hand of young Brian Epstein as their manager, the Beatles would soon lift off the Liverpool launchpad with enough force to put the entire music world into orbit.

That's the sound that's rocked the music world. And in that world, music or jukeboxes, which are equipped to accept coins in return for recorded Beatle entertainment, feel the metallic waterfall of dimes, quarters, shillings, marks, pesos, francs, lire, yen, and other forms of national coin. And from the back of burro-driven oxcarts in remote sections of Latin America, to push air-conditioned, ultra-modern record emporiums of the continent, eager hands reach for each new Beatle record. Worldwide record sales reportedly have already exceeded the 30-million mark.

Why? Why indeed. Certainly, a key factor is Beatle manager Brian Epstein, who found the long-haired version of Aladdin's lamp in a Liverpool cellar.

Man Behind the Music: George Martin

But there's still one more man who's played a key role in this amazing Beatle story. He really doesn't look like a genie, but on the other hand, he doesn't necessarily look like an oboe player who once conducted classical music either. But he was just that. His name, George Martin.

He selects the music, the material, and the success of the Beatles is a commentary on George Martin's ability.

While the formula for Beatlemania was being sampled on the continent, America's first exposure to the Beatles came in short bursts from small record companies unable to marshal the promotional kick-off needed to properly introduce the young singers to America.

That's when Capitol Records decided to take over distribution and planned a full-scale, coast-to-coast master plan, and the Beatles then had the winning combination to meet America.

George Harrison

That's the lead guitar artistry in Beatlemania of George Harrison. Although it's not documented, George Harrison was probably born with an amused smile on his face. And if he has his way at the end, he'll go out in a similar manner, amused or in attempt to stifle a yawn.

Harrison, whose deadpan expression makes the sphinx jealous, didn't join the Beatles until 1958. But if he were ever asked why, he'll probably say, 'because nobody asked me'. In his teens, musical interests were centered on Buddy Holly, but sports interests dulled early attempts at a serious musical study.

George is an interesting combination of beat and blase, but takes his music seriously. To get an angry response out of George, you'd probably have to be his tailor, for clothing next to music is his only concern. As for a personal glimpse into Harrison, he is alternately analytical and casual.

George, you might say, is the unsung hero of the group. Although he doesn't do most of the songwriting or lead singing, he's very proud of the job he does do. As for his specific role with the Beatle group, Harrison says, "I play lead guitar and sing a couple of songs. And I sing a couple of bits on the songs that people don't think I sing on."

Blase with a beat. That's pretty much the story on George Harrison. Guitar playing and singing are not George's only interests. In his own words, "I like parties and a bit of fun like anyone else and there's nothing better for me than a bit of peace and quiet. Sitting around a big fire with your slippers on and watching telly. That's the life."

George's ideal life is a far cry from his real life. Like the rest of the Beatles, his home is often surrounded by dozens of female fans. "They don't worry me though," says George. "In fact, I rather like it. I'd be dead worried if those girls weren't around and if their screams died away. In any case, we aren't home very much these days."

George did have one chance to go home over the past year. It was during a two-week vacation recently. The first the group has taken since their phenomenal rise to stardom. Instead, he took off for America, “to see the ordinary side of the states,” he said. “The shops, the airports, the trains, the garages, and the way people seem to live in general.”

Despite the novel hairdo and the new approach the Beatles have to music, George feels the main reason for the phenomenal rise of the group is because, in his words, “we’re a different generation and so are our fans.”

Born in Liverpool, George left school to become an apprentice electrician. He said he stopped trying to be an electrician though because he kept blowing everything up.

But how successful did Harrison feel the group would be when he first joined? When asked if he ever thought that he and the members of the group would ever be as big as they are today, Harrison, in down-to-earth fashion, said, “Well, I’m still only five foot eleven, you know.”

George Harrison is the youngest of the Beatles, born February 25th, 1943, and he’s the one with the longest hair. “As for my starting the haircut, that was completely by accident,” says George. “We’d been swimming. When I came from the pool, my hair dried into what is now the Beatle hairdo. Not having a comb or brush, I did not comb it afterwards and then it looked as it does now. We decided we liked it, and it has remained.”

George’s thoughts are closely allied to those of his fellow Beatles. He doesn’t think much about the future. In his own words, “We’re too busy today to talk about tomorrow.” And he’s disinterested in many other things that older people consider worthwhile. He’s completely at ease, and looks at the prospects of the group quite realistically.

True to his unhurried approach to life, Harrison is candid about the early aims of the Beatles measured against that which has happened since.

“We didn’t sit down and think we’re gonna be stars and we’re gonna do this and gonna have funny haircuts. The only thing we wanted to do was to make a record.”

And make a record they did. And have since, in every field of their endeavor in entertainment, broken all existing records.

A Hard Day's Night – Their First Movie

After having enjoyed all the success a recording group could ever hope for and finally achieve, the height of their success is still nowhere in sight. Their record sales today have reached a figure beyond all comprehension. The next obvious step to further the Beatle image was to move from the world of wax to the world of celluloid and the medium of motion pictures.

The initial announcement that the Beatles were going to make a motion picture aroused immediate and predictable enthusiasm from fans. But Beatle critics also welcomed the news, with a cynical hope that exposure on film would expose the Beatles as entertainment world freaks, long on hair, but short on talent. Beatle enemies also smirked in anticipation of the poison pen treatment, which they forecast would come from America's hard-nosed motion picture critics.

Described officially as a low-budget film with little or no story line, it was given all the publicity treatment of a major spectacular. Interviews were granted. The Beatles said they had fun, didn't act. John Lennon even admitted that they couldn't act:

"Are you satisfied with the finished product?"

"Well, it's as good as anybody that makes a film who can't act, you know."

[laughing]

Newspaper and magazine critics held their pens at ready. Previews were held, and so were breaths.

Then surprise! The most competent reviewers hailed the Beatles first motion picture as a smash hit. They were compared to the Marx Brothers and encouraged to do it again.

Amazed readers, preconditioned to knock the movie, now made plans to see it. In England, Beatle manager Brian Epstein, casually looked up from the master plan of a future Beatle tour to announce that the movie would break every existing motion picture box office record. The Beatles, as usual, they were just busy being Beatles.

"Ringo, John, Paul, George, Ringo, John, Paul, George – all together now! Ringo, John, Paul, George. By jove they've got it in this picture. Good."

An estimated 100 million Americans have already seen the Beatles on television or at their neighborhood theatres. Hundreds of thousands more have seen the Beatles in person. And that's just one country in a Beatle marketplace which knows no limits. This is only the beginning. For almost everything the Beatles now do sets a new entertainment record.

Paul McCartney

James Paul McCartney, the baby-faced Beatle, an extremely handsome fellow, born the 18th of June, 1942. The five-foot eleven-inch McCartney has hazel eyes.

Paul's home is in a typically suburban area of Liverpool, Allerton, where his father still works as a cotton salesman. His mother died when he was only fourteen years of age. He often is heard to say, "she would have been so proud to see our success had she lived."

He describes his early years as awkward, doing everything in reverse. He was apparently very self-conscious of the fact that he has always been left-handed.

McCartney, along with Lennon, writes all of the songs for the group, and together, they have churned out over 100 songs. And of these more than 100 tunes, many have become hits and all have been recorded in hit albums.

When asked about the acclaim accorded the group through the number of their records which have been sold, Paul said:

"No idea. George said the other day, George Harrison that is, said it was about 30 million, which is fantastic."

With this in mind, John, the other member of the songwriting team, candidly admits:

"We make more money out of writing songs than we do out of appearing and running around waving, you know."

The sudden rise to fame by the Beatles is one of the things that Paul has thought a great deal about. "You know," he said, "we were talking about this just the other day. When you're about eleven, you start to think about what's going to happen to you. I've often thought about it. My plan was to go on playing the clubs until I reached about 25, a ripe old age, and then go to John's art college and hang on there for a couple of years. I never dreamt about being discovered or anything like that. I always thought discovery was something you read about."

At present, McCartney and the Beatles are being read about and studied. Paul realizes this, but he can't answer why.

Sneaky Haircuts And More About Paul

One critic tried to explain their success by saying they have a sound which is today's version of the eternal cry of the youth. Still, other critics place a lesser value on their musical appeal and attribute their success to their physical appearance.

The group's most distinguishing characteristic: the haircut. A cardinal rule, never show the forehead.

I asked Paul if the group ever visits the barber shop:

"You know, you notice when you've had a haircut. But you don't notice when we have. Well, you know, it's sneaky haircuts."

Ah, those sneaky haircuts. Those who would analyze the reasons for the fantastic appeal on the Beatles often say it's their sound, their accent and so forth, still everyone agrees that the Beatles are successful. And of success, Paul McCartney says, "it's fabulous, the success and all that, but I wish people wouldn't think that because we're successful that we're unapproachable. It's not true."

It really bothers Paul that some people think he has changed since the Beatles became the rage of England. "I really can't quite explain it, but when I meet some of my old mates, they don't seem to be the same. They have a different attitude toward me. Perhaps they think that we've all gone big time since getting into the charts. I really don't know. But I know they're so wrong."

The Beatles have been exposed to hecklers despite their popularity. In some cities, the Beatles have been met with a few jeers but they shrug it off philosophically as part of the game of show business. On at least one occasion, however, the jeering got out of hand and three delinquents, or 'Teddy Boys', as the Beatles would call them, hurled objects at the stage. On this subject, all spoke for one and one Beatle spoke for all when it came to reaction:

"It was just a minor group that threw them, you know. And we had four of them in the room in Melbourne. And they decided at the end it was a stupid trick. We brought them up and said, 'Well, why did you do it?' and they said, 'Well, every time we turn the radio on your records are on,' so what can you say to that?"

Many a successful group of the past has fallen victim to what has become the established rule rather than the exception. Splitting up to individually pursue careers, I asked Paul if his group, the Beatles, was really a compatible combination:

"Well, we've been each other's friends for years now, a long time, and, you know, I knew George and John at school. And so we're just, we are each other's friends, so we get along very well. We get along as best friends do which is lucky."

Is it luck, talent, timing, the breaks? I think it's a combination of all these things. And many, many more factors. But they all add up to spell success and this very tangible commodity can often change one in the limelight. But I doubt very much whether it will change Paul McCartney. He still holds the same ideals high, still likes the same things that he did when he was a boy. He's still very fond of art.

In Paul's words, "I got my diploma in art and I'm still very interested in this subject. I often sketch while we're on tour, that is, when I'm not writing songs or go-carting."

And he hopes someday to earn enough, enough money that is, so he can invest in a business, his brother's business. It's a hairdressing business!

The Beatles Look at Life

There has never been a group like the Beatles, who could entertain, and so completely captivate their audience. But the Beatles think of themselves only as entertainers. John Babcock offers this explanation:

Being non-conformists in the areas such as dress and hair style doesn't imply any desire to be a style setter. In fact, the opposite is the case. Beatle styles are for John, Paul, George, and Ringo, not every Tom, Dick, and Harry.

In using the same basic philosophy, the Beatles don't wanna be called upon to make any sociological judgements, foreign policy statements, or take public stands on any non-show business subject.

They are firm believers that everybody's responsible for himself and in their own cases feel that that's a full time job. Specifically, John Lennon pegged the Beatle feeling this way when asked about what responsibility he felt realizing that many youngsters mimic all Beatle behavior:

"Well, we just behave as normal as we can. We don't feel as though we should preach this and tell them that. Let them do what they like."

If the off-stage Beatles feel somewhat impersonal toward the public, the public never seems impersonal when it comes to the Beatles. People either like the Beatles or dislike the Beatles, but indifference is almost never discovered.

'Victims' of Beatlemania

For those who like the Beatles, the feelings may run to high emotion such as a victim of Beatlemania, or perhaps a more subdued but loyal response such as this:

"They give the change of something in the way of non-conformity and I think every teenager, well, that's what they look for, especially in this day and age, they stress non-conformity and that's what the Beatles are."

Of course there are sometimes distraught fathers who shake their heads in confused disbelief after watching their daughters wilt under the emotional strain of idol worship:

"Ah, it's a mob, you know. They're just part of the mob. I mean, uh, they're monkey-see, monkey-do it so they come running. That's all. It's like a bunch of monkeys, you know."

And let's not forget some of the adult mothers who accompany youngsters to airport fan club rallies:

"You look like a housewife. Are you here to see the Beatles?"

"Oh, you must be kidding. My husband's coming. And otherwise, do you think I'd fight this motley crew?"

But whether you're a fan or a critic, Beatlemania is a reality. And as Longfellow once advised, "for after all, the best thing one can do when it's raining, is to let it rain."

These are the sounds which complete the picture. For is there anybody in the civilized world who does not conjure up a mental motion picture of the performing Beatles at the first sound of their distinctive style.

Which Beatle one immediately thinks of may vary. In Australia, it might be the mournful-faced Ringo, in Germany it might be the baby-faced Paul McCartney, in Britain it might be the literate Beatle leader John Lennon, in America it might be the more quiet but whimsical George Harrison.

While still others make no individual distinctions, they just see all four Beatles in motion, hair flopping, guitars waving, girls screaming.

But everybody has a mental motion picture. And that picture, plus the Beatle sound, is the formula which, when fed to the youth of the world, brings on Beatlemania.

Ringo Starr

The song is called 'Boys'. The boy singing is called Ringo. He's called Ringo because of his passion for wearing lots of rings. Ringo is the most recent addition to the group and he's also the oldest member.

Ringo's friends call him Richie, a name he picked up in the Dingle, one of the toughest areas of Liverpool, often compared to New York's storied "Hell's Kitchen".

The cobble streets and ancient buildings which surrounded his terraced home didn't hide the bomb craters which were left there in 1940, the year of Ringo's birth.

Richie went to St. Silas School in Dingle, but dropped out at the age of six because of appendicitis. He had complications, which resulted in hospitalization for a year. Recovering, he went back and started all over again. But at the age of thirteen, a cold got away from him and he developed pleurisy while on a trip to London.

Rushed back to his Liverpool home, he spent another year in the hospital. That ended schooling and Ringo went to work in an engineering company. In 1959, around Christmas time, Ringo got his first drum kit. He was eighteen at the time.

Ringo, the smallest member of the group, standing five feet eight inches tall, joined John, Paul, and George in the predawn era of Beatlemania, complete with beard.

The beard was shaved, his sideburns saved, and the transformation began. Rule number one, forget the haircuts. And this he did. In fact, so successfully, that some observers began to believe that his brown-haired locks were longer than those of George.

"No, George's is longer than mine. Yeah, mine's a scruffy mess."

Although Ringo has been involved in the Beatle mad movement for over a year, he's still amazed at the impact the group has made. In Ringo's words, "none of us have quite grasped what it's all about yet. It's washing over our heads like some huge tidal wave. But we're young and youth is on our side. And it's youth that matters right now. I don't care about politics or anything. Just people. And the people certainly seem to care about the Beatles."

As Ringo puts it, "we're international figures. Everyone wants to investigate us and get inside us and try to understand what makes a Beatle tick. They sent big writers down to talk to us. Writers who say they want to talk to us about our sociological significance. In Birmingham, there were dozens of policemen controlling screaming fans at the studio doors while we rehearsed a television program.

Well,” Ringo says, “if they didn’t scream, I guess we wouldn’t be where we are today. But don’t ask me to explain it.”

For Ringo is not quite one for explanation, or for that matter, talking either. You see, Ringo is the quiet one. He sits at his drums like some Buddhist idol, and wears a worried frown more often than a smile. Once in a while, he lets a smile shatter his melancholy saying, “I’m not really miserable. It’s just me face.”

Ringo considers his initiation into the group as the greatest single event of his life. To him, the taste of success means that his mother doesn’t have to work any more. He takes great pleasure in providing those things for his mother, which increase her happiness.

Beatle manager Brian Epstein considers Ringo a tremendous blossoming talent, and goes a step further to say, “I think he will prove to have great acting ability, probably the greatest of the four.”

Ringo sometimes refers to himself as the oddball Beatle, perhaps because of the fact that fate dubbed him with the distinction of being the ingredient which completed the quartet.

When asked how he feels with the label of the different member of the group, his dry sense of humor bubbled in this reply:

“Well, I’ve always been a drummer and I’ve always sat at the back so I enjoy it at the back. When they start throwing things, it’s a good place to be.”

Although he likes to sing, he prefers to please his fans by playing his drums and leaving the vocal work to the other three members of the group.

When asked if he would like to take the spotlight to sing more often, he modestly replied:

“Uh, no. I think when we do a show one of them’s enough for me. And it’s more fun for the kids if three of them are singing at once than just me.”

“It isn’t the screaming fans or the things they throw that affect me. That’s normal. You get used to it. I love ‘em and it’s great to know they love you. It’s a feeling that I might let them down.”

Well, Ringo’s worries in this department are completely unfounded because his fan mail often numbers the greatest.

But all the fan mail and adulation heaped upon Ringo hasn’t changed his attitude at all. He shares the same likes and dislikes of his fellow Beatles. As Ringo would put it, “I’m not interested in living it up. All the money’s invested. I don’t even know how much it is. I don’t take out very much, just for clothes and a few cigarettes. When it ends, well,” Ringo says, “I’ve been skinned before. But I’d like to have enough to do something. Well, something with my hands. I’ve always loved basket work or pottery, shaping something, making something, being able to say that I did that.”

Right now Ringo, along with the rest of the Beatles, is making something musical history.

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This is the biography of Beatlemania!