A possible history of pop . . .

without the beatles

DAVID JOHNSTON

To musicians and music-lovers,
everywhere, and forever.

A possible history of pop…

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"*We were just a band who made it very, very big. That's all.*"
John Lennon[1]

PROLOGUE

In 1962 a new, quite different-sounding song clawed its way up through the UK's best-selling fifty singles. The young musicians from the north of England who'd recorded it had started out, like so many others, as a bunch of enthusiastic schoolboys. Some had been able to play their instruments quite capably, some less so, and the lineup that took a long time to settle on a name had fluctuated around its committed core members. They'd immersed themselves in many of the American folk and blues songs that British jazz musicians had frenetically transformed into something they called skiffle, as well as, also from the US, seminal rock'n'roll and rare black rhythm and blues. They were entranced by the sweet harmonies of African American vocal groups, especially female vocal groups, and they embraced some of the more recent melodic white pop music. They'd occasionally been lucky to witness exotic stars touring the UK when they played concerts in the regional city where they lived. But they still recalled childhood singalongs of family favourites around the piano that had imbued them with a love of music – any music – as long as it had that special magic.

Of a large number of these songs they'd painstakingly worked out the chords, learned the riffs and guitar solos, discerned the lyrics, arranged the vocals. And over half a decade they'd played them, probably many hundreds of times, sometimes all through the night, to appreciative, even adoring, as well as drunken and brawling audiences. Their performances had become tight, but exciting. As a close-knit group their individual and collective personalities had radiated from the stage and this had been reflected in how they looked and behaved, what they chose to wear, even how they combed their hair.

Sometimes consciously, sometimes subconsciously they had been influenced by some of their mentors as they tentatively began writing songs of their own, believing that success, and self-pride could only lie with becoming totally autonomous. They didn't want to be dependent on a string of outside songwriters and as they'd become proficient players they also didn't want session musicians replacing them in the studio as was the practice of the time. Even after all this, the man they'd accepted as their manager had almost given up trying to secure a recording contract until finally one producer – who didn't much like their own songs and certainly not their drummer, nor even his successor to start with – had taken them on.

They'd stuck to their guns though and this ultimately oddly-named group of four young men from Liverpool with thick provincial accents, strange haircuts and a serious, yet quite unconventional approach had, nine months into 1962, recorded their first, self-composed single. It had a keening harmonica introduction, a simple and repetitive melody, a plodding stop-start beat, and raw, almost bluesy vocals with penetrating two-part harmonies that expressed the basic, incessantly pleading lyric. The song wasn't rock'n'roll…it wasn't a ballad…what exactly was it? The record had scrambled up the UK chart, down, and finally up again, by Christmas reaching its zenith just inside the top twenty. With the title 'Love me do' it was by a group called 'The Beatles'. These Beatles were either a quaint here today, gone tomorrow novelty, or, perhaps they might just have something more to offer.

In 1963 they followed on with not one but four singles. The first of these went to two on the official weekly chart, the next finally made it to the premium position – and then two more number ones quickly followed. Their debut LP also soared to the top and stayed there for *thirty* consecutive weeks, more than twice the achievement of any other UK pop artist before – *or since*. In the Beatles' wake, thirty of the other chart entries that year were by hitherto unknown English acts – from the north and from other parts of the country. Many of these groups had brand new shaggy hairdos styled after the Liverpool group and their songs (that however were mostly non-original) featured beaty drums, jangly guitars, and bright harmonies. They, and others after them in the years to come were taking the Beatles' road to hoped-for fame and fortune.

Whether any of them would have emerged and triumphed if the Beatles had never existed, or, to what extent they capitalised on that group's success, its sound, its image is debatable. Would the UK still have been the launching pad for the next major pop star – or stars. Or would the US have continued to be the driver of popular music as it had throughout the twentieth century?

I

BEFORE THE BEATLES

1 | GALAXIES OF STARS

There has always been pop music, and there have always been pop stars. That's a bold assertion, but leaving aside music that has an intrinsic function such as for religious, tribal or military ceremonies – and even this is not always clear-cut[a] – 'pop', or *popular* music can be construed to mean any music that provides entertainment for the *people*[b] – in any culture, anywhere, at any time in history.[c] It can be regarded as 'high art', such as so-called classical music, or it can come from a busker playing tunes on a battered old instrument. It can be lyrical, as opera is, telling its entire story in sung word, or, the intensely personal communication of a singer-songwriter. It can be purely choral – from a massed choir to a barbershop quartet – or it can be entirely instrumental, performed by a brass band or surf guitar group. Whether as a solo piece or a multi-layered composition it can be intricately melodic, or, it can be stripped of discernible melody, like that often created on electronic instruments, or, played by an ensemble of drummers.

Pop *stars* are musicians and singers who, intentionally or otherwise, attract attention from their audience. They can do this by their performance style, whether passionate, or emotionally contained, and by the power of the lyrics that they impart, or, by their instrumental virtuosity. And finally, while this has nothing whatsoever to do with music – or even, some would claim, musical talent – pop stars can be those who come to notice just because of the way they *look*. Arguably, the most potent pop stars embody more than just one of these attributes.

Pop stars can arrive by accident: they start with the simple enjoyment of making music and then perhaps gain some awareness of the impact it is making on those who listen. Throughout time certain musicians and singers of all styles have consciously cultivated and capitalised on their 'star' status: the opera singer who theatrically wrings passion from every aria or the string quartet player with arms flailing and hair flying; the music hall artiste who never fails to have the audience in stitches or the deeply emotional traditional blues singer; the perspiring jazz

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[a] Many religious, tribal and military ceremonies have features that would excite the masses in similar ways to a pop concert.

[b] 'people' – from the Latin *populus*; 'popular' – from the Latin *popularis* meaning 'belonging to the people'.

[c] My definition is no doubt controversial; while the term 'pop music' was apparently first used as early as, but no earlier than the 1920s, it has been in general use since the 1950s. As the music evolved and diversified during the '60s 'pop' came to be derided by purist 'rock' music aficionados – as if their music was, nor was no longer intended to be in any way popular.

trumpeter with cheeks bulging or the waif-like folk singer; the country duo gazing into each other's eyes or the axe-shredding heavy metal guitarist; the electronic musician who intensely crafts sound from a bank of keyboards or the DJ spinning turntables, and, the gesticulating rapper out front. To the cynical, these are clichés all; to the adoring audiences, they are something they will watch, and listen to, again and again and again. The discovery, and adulation of pop stars has, before, and especially since the post-World War II 'invention' of the teenager,[a] also invariably been driven by young female fans.

In the late 1950s and throughout the '60s those four young men from northern England combined many often divergent 'pop' aspects – accident and intention, naïveté and insight, talent and experiment, insouciance and personality – to make an unprecedented impact on the history of music.

But was their music…is *any* pop music *real* music? Noted composer and musicologist Howard Goodall who has an appreciation of, and involvement in a wide range of different musical forms has contended, "…even now there are those who say that if music has mass appeal it can't also be music of signicance or depth. What the Beatles proved once and for all was that this idea is hopelessly, absurdly wrong." [1]

[a] The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that 'teenage', denoting the adolescent years has been in use, especially in the US, since the 1920s, but the demographic of the 'teenager' was only recognised some twenty years later, in other words, most probably since the end of World War II.

2 | POP BEGINNINGS

While it can be argued that there have always been 'pop stars', technical developments in sound production early in the twentieth century amplified – literally – the concept. Unless playing in intimate settings, as many acoustic blues, folk, hillbilly and other musicians did, guitarists in larger bands and in noisy venues had been virtually inaudible. Then, during the 1920s and '30s the first amplifiers were developed. Soon after, the invention of the dedicated 'electric' (not just amplified acoustic) guitar enabled the soloing guitarist to take centre stage.

Guitarists have often been regarded as 'sidemen', ancillary to the more important horn soloists in a big band – or, in the present age, to lead singers. Surprisingly, it was also the *singers* who, during the 1930s, operated as side- men, or women and were brought to centre stage only to intersperse some vocals amongst the instrumental sections. This ended for all time with the other major audio-technical advancement. The invention of the microphone meant that singers no longer had to project to be heard, and this (as well as improvements in phonograph records and radio broadcasts) ushered in the very inception of modern pop stardom.

Beginning in the US in the 1920s with artists like Rudy Valleé (who, pre-amplification, had made singing through a megaphone sexy), then Bing Crosby, and Frank Sinatra right through to the Harry Connick Jr.s and Michael Bublés of today, the microphone allowed vocalists to sing more personally – to 'croon' – and in doing so, pluck the emotional heartstrings of the listener. After World War II the American entertainment industry was booming and along with stage and screen stars, male singers like Crosby, then Sinatra became the first major international pop stars. Nevertheless, the intimacy of their close-miked crooning style was deemed by some extreme conservatives to be degenerate.

Of course, to most whites in the US, what was really degenerate was the music that black musicians were making in the post-war years. Some, playing mainstream jazz and popular music, like vocalist-pianist Nat 'King' Cole, vocalist-trumpeter Louis 'Satchmo' Armstrong or torch singer Ella Fitzgerald were acceptable as long as they were unthreatening, loveable or exotic – and kept to themselves offstage. However, in large towns such as Memphis and New Orleans, the northern industrial centres of Chicago and Detroit, and big cities like New York, former acoustic blues and jazz musicians were creating vibrant music: the electric guitar blues of McKinley Morganfield and Chester Burnett – a.k.a. Muddy Waters and Howlin'

Wolf, the tenor sax-driven jump blues of Louis Jordan, Big Joe Turner and Wynonie Harris. This so-called 'race music' was given the more dignified categorisation of 'rhythm and blues' (by Jewish American journalist, and future record producer Jerry Wexler). Featuring an urgent, pulsating beat, late 1940s songs like 'Good rockin' tonight', 'Rock the joint' and 'All she wants to do is rock' sounded a lot like something that was yet to become big. These recordings existed in a parallel universe largely unknown to the mainstream white entertainment industry – but they were increasingly audible to enthusiasts tuning in to 'black' radio stations.

Equally obscure was the 'hillbilly'[a] music thriving in the Appalachian Mountains and other remote areas throughout the USA. It had largely evolved from the folk tradition imported by settlers from the British Isles and other European countries. Played on household instruments with centuries-old origins around the world such as fiddles, mandolins and banjos, it provided a focus for communities of poor rural white people. In time it was a strong influence on what has become known as country music.

And a marriage of 'hillbilly' and rhythm and blues would soon engender a vibrant new music form…

[a] 'Hillbilly' was the word given to this music by early country musician Al Hopkins; unusually for the style he played the piano.

3 | THE BIRTH OF ROCK'N'ROLL

In the early to mid-1950s two white singers adapted elements of these minority styles and brought them into the mainstream. Inspired by African American artists such as LaVern Baker and Ivory Joe Hunter, John Alvin Ray became 'Mr.Emotion', pre-dating another's moves as he flailed his arms, tore at his hair, wailed and fell to the floor. Johnnie Ray's 1952 chart-topping million-selling single, appropriately titled 'Cry' may have been inspired by rhythm and blues but it wasn't yet creating a revolution.

From a musical family – his father played banjo and mandolin – a young man from Michigan immersed himself in country music, in particular, the jazzy style known as Western swing. A year after 'Cry', Bill Haley and his cleverly-named Comets (formerly known as the Saddlemen) charted with their 'Crazy man crazy' and in 1954 adapted Big Joe Turner's black rhythm and blues number 'Shake rattle and roll' for their first big hit in the US and UK. Then the following year Haley's definitive version of 'Rock around the clock' (written by white composers, and recorded a year before by little-known African American Sonny Dae and His Knights) topped both charts. Its use in the teenage rebellion film *Blackboard Jungle* (which was quickly followed by a 'sequel' called…*Rock Around The Clock*) drew a permanent line in the sands of time. 'Rock'n'roll' (another new term popularised by disc jockey Alan Freed from its original sexual connotation) was officially born.

While Bill Haley was not exactly pop idol material, the decade-younger Elvis Aaron[a] Presley certainly was. In the same year as 'Shake rattle and roll', the local success of his Sun records debut, a black blues tune originally by Arthur 'Big Boy' Crudup called 'That's all right' precipitated a label upgrade to RCA. The surprisingly doom-laden slow blues 'Heartbreak hotel' topped the national chart in 1956 and was one of a dozen singles, and three LPs, all making number one, accompanied by numerous concerts, TV appearances and four feature films before the end of the 1950s. The 'degenerate' Crosbys and Sinatras who had brought solace to so many during the Great Depression and World War II years paled into insignificance compared with Presley and his rock'n'roll music: Sinatra himself recycled the pejorative adjective that had previously been applied to his *own* singing style when he described the new music as "brutal, ugly, *degenerate*, vicious [emphasis mine]".[2]

[a] Elvis's middle name was spelled 'Aron' on his birth certificate and other early documents, but he later opted for the spelling as above.

Blending a part-crooning, part blues wailing style with infusions of the aforementioned previously unheard forms of music, plus some distinctive surly looks and pelvis-grinding moves, Elvis Presley quickly became pop music's newest superstar – the undisputed 'King of Rock'n'Roll'. He thoroughly alienated the dads and mums who were enjoying their comfortable lives after the war. Their teenage 'baby boomer' offspring were hell-bent on forging a brand new future.

As suggested, rock'n'roll was eclectic and evolutionary music with no single impetus, nor identity. Elvis from Memphis, Tennessee and Bill from further north were only two in the vast entirety of the USA who were combining elements that would be seen as constituting rock'n'roll. Born in the mid-west state of Missouri, Charles 'Chuck' Berry was of similar vintage, but somewhat different heritage to Bill Haley. Although he had fallen under the spell of fellow black blues guitarists T-Bone Walker and Muddy Waters he also absorbed other styles of music including country through playing with pianist Johnnie Johnson. On moving to Chicago Chuck secured a contract with Chess records and in 1955 wrote and recorded a high octane version of the old traditional tune 'Ida Red'. With new lyrics and retitled 'Maybellene' it was the first of several number ones for him on the rhythm and blues charts and by the end of the decade the idiosyncratic, but prolific songwriter-performer was riding high in the mainstream top tens.

Down south, two African American piano-playing singer-songwriters had been experimenting with rhythm and blues – or r&b – years before the novice Presley had considered airing his talent. Originally from Macon, Georgia, 'Little Richard' Penniman attempted to reconcile religious fervour with homosexual proclivity in an unlikely performance that included highly-charged elements of gospel music, and cross-dressing; New Orleans-born Antoine 'Fats' Domino had recorded his first million-seller, the self-effacing 'The fat man' in 1950. Both enjoyed mainstream success throughout and beyond the '50s, although the public were initially somewhat more wary of the flamboyant Richard complete with eyeliner, jewellery and high-stacked pompadour than the cuddly, flat-topped Domino, constantly turning from his piano to beam at the audience. It was still very much a white bread world though, and both artists were trumped by Christian crooner Pat Boone whose first two hit singles in 1955 were family-friendly versions of Domino's 'Ain't it a shame' (retitled 'Ain't that a shame') and – with lyrics further sanitised from Richard's own already toned-down version – 'Tutti frutti'.

Also from the southern state of Louisiana, a younger white pianist had absorbed influences including gospel, r&b and country. Jerry Lee Lewis travelled up to Sun

Studios in Memphis where he played sessions with other name artists before recording his re-arrangement of Big Maybelle's rhythm and blues tune 'Whole lotta shakin'' and then a new song 'Great balls of fire'. Both records approached the top of the US charts in 1957 but, like Little Richard, Jerry believed that his devout Christianity was at odds with the sexual nature of his songs. This mental torment can't have lasted long: for his aggressive performances he was dubbed 'the first wild man of rock'n'roll' and his personal life reflected that reputation.

Jamming with Lewis and Elvis in the legendary ad hoc (but somewhat shambolic) 'Million Dollar Quartet' session at Sun were singer-songwriters Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. Both emphasised the 'hillbilly' that had been strong in Elvis's heritage and Cash in particular became successful in straddling country and pop. Like Presley and Lewis, Johnny Cash, with his tough blend of musical influences, distinctive bass-baritone voice, hard living and his 'Man in Black' persona would also in time come to have a larger than life identity. Contrastingly, Carl Perkins' understated style that he'd cultivated during the rapid ascension of 'The King' still earned him his own 'royal' title, 'The King of Rockabilly'.[a] To most contemporary music lovers these days he was the man who wrote songs that others popularised. However, while Elvis's version of 'Blue suede shoes', (concurrently issued cover versions of contemporary songs were common in that era) is perhaps better remembered today, in 1956 it was actually Perkins' single that sold more copies.

Others who had an affinity with the Sun Studios brand of stripped-back white rock'n'roll soon emerged from all over the US. The same age as Elvis, but living more than six hundred miles to the north-east, Vincent Eugene Craddock reversed his first two names to become Gene Vincent, the sound of his co-written song 'Be bop a lula' inevitably being compared with that of Presley. Recorded with his band the Blue Caps it made the top ten in 1956, the peak of his career. And on the opposite side of the country, in California, the slow-burn of another, younger Elvis soundalike Eddie Cochran included film acting, a duo (with the entirely unrelated Hank Cochran) and finally, after several unsuccessful singles, the classic top ten hit he co-wrote in 1958, 'Summertime blues'.

Two solo singers, and a duo who began to enjoy success in the later 1950s were, like Carl Perkins, examples of the triumph of substance over style, and each introduced something a little bit new and different to the by now established rock'n'roll formula. Bespectacled, conservative-looking young Charles Hardin

[a] Rockabilly: Rock + hillbilly; the term was invented by *Cash Box* magazine reviewer Ira Howard.

Holley from Texas became Buddy Holly. He had the distinction, and learning experience, to support both Bill Haley and Elvis Presley. Then, like Gene Vincent, he formed a band with its own identity, the Crickets. Oddly, he maintained a solo career, as well as one with his group, and their records appeared on two different labels, Coral and Brunswick (but both under the auspices of the Decca company). In 1957 the Crickets' 'That'll be the day' (written by Holly with drummer Jerry Allison) introduced Buddy's distinctive 'hiccupping' vocalisations and topped the American and British charts. Then two months later 'Peggy Sue', released in his own name, also charted in both top tens. Over the next two years a whirlwind of success and acceptance by white and black audiences alike ensued: more writing and recording, experimentation with different musical styles, international touring (he was very popular in the UK where his albums went top ten while not so back home), marriage and plans for a film career. A big future seemed assured.

Singing siblings such as 1940s stars the four Mills Brothers and the three Andrews Sisters have always had special appeal. Born two years apart, and with musical parents, Don and Phil Everly possessed the familial ability to perfectly blend dual vocal harmony parts. Their clean-cut look (inspired by touring with the neatly attired Buddy Holly) and signature Gibson Super Jumbo acoustic guitars endowed them with a distinctively different image – and their sound was arresting. Operating out of Nashville, Tennessee, the Everly Brothers had almost immediate international success. In 1957 their second single 'Bye bye love' (written by southern husband and wife team Boudleaux and Felice Bryant) went to two in the States and six in the UK. In the remaining years of the '50s and into the '60s the Everlys were rarely out of top tens around the globe.

Another Sun Studio acolyte ultimately became one of the truly unique artists in the history of popular music. Only a year younger than Elvis, shy Texas-born tenor Roy Orbison played around the circuit with his band the Teen Kings, recorded at both Sun and RCA with 'Ooby dooby' a minor hit in 1956, and began writing with fellow Texan rockabilly singer Joe Melson. His true appreciation, however, didn't materialise until the start of the next decade.

4 | NOT ONLY ROCK'N'ROLL

The artists mentioned undoubtedly created an upheaval in popular music and were powerfully influential on what was to come. It would be a mistake though to believe that they – with one notable exception – dominated the US music scene in the second half of the 1950s. In fact, very few artists, and no new styles of music, have ever been able to do more than share the charts with a wide range of others of completely disparate genres. It seems that not only teenagers listen to the radio, play jukeboxes and buy records. A glance at the *Billboard*[a] annual best sellers from 1955 to the start of the new decade reveals some interesting realities, and trends.

Firstly, some of the 'old guard' – the Bing Crosbys and Frank Sinatras – had long ceased to be regarded as 'degenerate' and, now in their middle years were highly respected chart mainstays. Those two were accompanied by others of their generation – Perry Como, Nat King Cole, Dean Martin, Tony Bennett – and newer 'fellow travellers' like Andy Williams, Guy Mitchell, Johnny Mathis and Al Martino. Always ready to cross genre boundaries was, of course, Pat Boone.

But there is one group of people so far missing from this history: women. Sadly, as with so much else in life, female singers suffered inequality – of opportunity, remuneration, respect – in the entertainment business, and this largely continued throughout the twentieth century and beyond. While most people can name several successful and talented women in different fields of music, the truth also remains that if they were asked to quickly nominate the best artists from any era in any genre the majority of those, if not all, would be male. The reason, apart from æons of ingrained across-the-board sexism, is clear: female fans tend to idolise male artists; men generally prefer music made by…men.

Of the women whose careers had begun during the '40s and early '50s, white vocalists including, from jazz backgrounds, Dinah Shore and Peggy Lee, and singing actresses Doris Day and Debbie Reynolds continued to feature in the charts. Patti Page, the personification of demure femininity became the best-selling female artist of the 1950s – who could forget, try as they might, 'How much is

[a] Founded in 1894, *Billboard* is arguably the premium magazine covering the entertainment industry in the US, possibly, the world; *Cash Box* (now, *Cashbox*), mentioned in the previous footnote and originating around fifty years later, and *Record World* were both regarded as major alternatives but both are now only available online.

that doggie in the window'? – and she prospered despite the birth of rock'n'roll. 'The rock and roll waltz' was Kay Starr's amusing song about parents trying to dance to this new solid four-beats-to-the-bar music. Georgia Gibbs, like Pat Boone found success covering black artists' material. In 1955 she went to two, and then topped the US chart with closely imitative versions of LaVern Baker's 'Tweedle dee' and Etta James' 'Wallflower' (also known as 'Roll with me Henry', but de-sexualised for white ears in Gibbs' version as 'Dance with me Henry').

New so-called white 'girl singers' in the second half of the decade began to toughen up the previously often submissive image. Another actress, Josephine Cottle with the tempestuous stage name Gale Storm recorded her cover version of African American Smiley Lewis's r&b tune, 'I hear you knocking' – "but you can't come in", and Connie Francis (who topped the chart with 'My heart has a mind of its own') and Brenda Lee – 'Little Miss Dynamite' – brought assertiveness unprecedented in white females to their performances. Despite, however, being dubbed 'The Queen of Rockabilly' and having a close association with Elvis Presley, Wanda Jackson was not a big name on mainstream charts. Even the song for which she's best known, the raw-vocalised 'Let's have a party' (first recorded with a heavy swing feel by Presley) made only modest inroads into the US popular music chart; others of her ilk like the leather-wearing Sparkle Moore and two who vied for the title of 'Female Elvis', Janis Martin, and, yes, *Alis* (born Alice) *Lesley* fared even less well. The world wasn't yet ready for confronting guitar-toting white 'rock chicks'.

Instead of seeking to emulate the Everly Brothers, vocal groups still remained more in the tradition of those Mills and Andrews siblings from the World War II years. Recording everything from old standards to up-tempo new material and with either minimal accompaniment or lush orchestration they steadily maintained, and even increased in popularity. The McGuire Sisters consciously inherited the Andrews Sisters' mantle, but amongst the female trios there were also the Fontane Sisters,[a] and on the male side, the well-established four Ames Brothers[b] and, the Kalin Twins.

Canadian singing quartets the Crew Cuts, and the Diamonds were very popular south of the border. Again following the trend that was continuing to grow, these two had mainstream hits with songs previously recorded by lesser-known US black groups: the Crew-Cuts, with the Chords' 'Sh-boom' and the Penguins' 'Earth angel', and, the Diamonds, with Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers' 'Why do fools

[a] Actually, the Rosse sisters.

[b] Actually, the Ulrick brothers.

fall in love' and the Gladiolas' 'Little darlin'' (three of these four being compositions by members of the original groups).

'Sh-boom' and 'Why do fools fall in love' are examples of what became known as 'doo-wop' singing. This had originated with small vocal groups such as the Mills Brothers and progressed through the a cappella stylings in the late 1940s and early '50s of the so-called 'bird groups': the Penguins, and, the Robins, the Ravens, the Orioles, the Larks, the Crows and others . Remaining popular throughout that decade and into the '60s, 'doo-wop' was named for its horn section-evoking, often wordless backup vocals that included stylised imitations of other instruments. The classic image is of four or five teenagers on a ghetto street corner (or perhaps somewhere more acoustically suitable) singing in sweet but rhythmic harmony.

Doo-wop began in black neighbourhoods – successful groups in the second half of the 1950s included Billy Ward and His Dominoes ('Sixty minute man'), the Cadillacs ('Speedoo'), the Monotones ('Book of love') and the Silhouettes ('Get a job'). White groups such as Danny and the Juniors (who topped the charts with 'At the hop') and Italians, like Dion and the Belmonts ('A teenager in love') and the Elegants ('Little star') were also increasingly popular. And racially integrated lineups like Frankie Lymon and the Teenagers and the Del-Vikings ('Come go with me') made a powerful statement that times were changing.

Two African American vocal groups made a lasting impression. The Drifters were impresario-created early in the decade around the former lead singer of the Dominoes, Clyde McPhatter. The all male, 'hired gun' group lurched from lineup to lineup – McPhatter was one of around a dozen lead singers – and they enjoyed spasmodic bursts of top ten success, from the r&b debut of 'Money honey' in 1953 to chart-topper 'Save the last dance for me' in 1960…and then beyond. The Platters, like the Drifters, were another confected group with numerous personnel changes that included female vocalists but during the '50s they enjoyed more consistent chart success than the Drifters. They blended the popular ballad singing style of the time with an r&b sensibility – a decade later it would be described as sweet 'soul' music. 'Only you' in 1955 was followed over the next five years by many other top ten hits, including four number ones. The Platters, and the Drifters remain iconic: to this day a number of groups bearing their names, and claiming some tenuous connection to the 'original' lineups still play clubs around the world.

Most popular music, rock'n'roll or otherwise, endlessly recycled and repackaged age-old romantic (or in fact, discreetly veiled sexual themes). The romance was also often evoked by the large amount of purely instrumental music available from

large orchestras playing lush themes from blockbuster films or Broadway shows. At the other end of the scale, Bill Justis's 'Raunchy', featuring guitarist Sid Manker would inspire the dramatic twangy instrumentals of Duane Eddy and Dick Dale. Other young learners around the world were listening, and practising.

It's worth drawing attention to a significant number of other releases that looked beyond human relationships. Novelty records had always appealed, but a third very popular African American vocal group (also with a frequently changing lineup), the Coasters perfected the crossover from r&b into comedy. Writers Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller took time out from crafting hits for Elvis Presley to pen the Coasters' lyrically witty, imaginatively arranged and exuberantly sung humorous numbers such as the chart-topping 'Yakety yak' as well as others like 'Three cool cats' and 'Searchin''. And keeping smiles on American faces were those artists who sang silly but innocuous ditties about cavemen, witchdoctors, chipmunks and purple people eaters.

US music fans were also captivated by musical depictions, real or concocted, of the history and landscape of their own country (and sometimes beyond). In the 1955 top thirty, in the wake of the popular Disney TV series about the Mexican-American war of the previous century, four different versions of 'The ballad of Davy Crockett' charted. One was by Fess Parker who played Crockett in the series and a second was by Tennessee Ernie Ford whose other entry, the million-selling 'Sixteen tons' (itself one of several versions) recalled the harshness of Kentucky coalmining. Marty Robbins' fictional country ballad 'El Paso' that was set near the Texas-Mexico border was unprecedented in its more than four and a half minutes duration. Johnny Horton specialised in wartime epics such as 'The battle of New Orleans' and the World War II-recalling 'Sink the Bismarck' as well as 'North to Alaska', another theme song from a film of the same name. Mitch Miller had his finger in many musical pies but in the same year his Gang, a male chorale, topped the chart with their racially sanitised version of the Mexican-American war folk song about a heroic 'coloured' woman, 'The yellow rose of Texas'. Most unlikely of all, by the massed Mormon Tabernacle Choir, was the 1960 Grammy award-winning rendition of the even older American Civil War 'Battle hymn of the Republic'.

All these songs could, if produced differently, have been classed as 'folk music'. As already mentioned, American folk music had, in many ways like rock'n'roll, evolved from what had originally been introduced from the UK and Europe. It had often melded with, among other forms, black acoustic blues that had been

kept alive by artists like Huddie Ledbetter – commonly known as 'Lead Belly' (or usually now, 'Leadbelly'), Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee, and Josh White. It then became a platform for writers to protest about injustices and so, during the post-World War II East-West 'Cold War', these people came under suspicion for what was construed as (in some cases quite correctly) their Communist beliefs. Consequently musicians like Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger remained marginalised, but others took the music, if not necessarily the politics, and commercialised it. The fresh-faced Kingston Trio had a hit with 'Tom Dooley', another historical folk song whose perky presentation belied the fact that it was about murder and capital punishment. The Tarriers were also white faux-folk singers who recorded the traditional Jamaican 'Banana boat song' and it bettered the definitive version by Harry Belafonte who essentially introduced the very different rhythms of the Caribbean to the world.

Returning to the rock'n'roll artists, perhaps the one to straddle all of the genres referred to so far was Chuck Berry. He blended rhythm and blues with country, and wrote wickedly witty observations of real life '50s America, from the newly defined teenage stage through the cult of the automobile to more serious topics like racial inequality – 'Brown eyed handsome man' proclaimed pride in Chuck's own African American identity. While coming up with an occasional blues ballad like 'Wee wee hours' (not to be confused with Sinatra's 'In the wee small hours' of the same year, 1955), Chuck Berry unequivocally also celebrated, in style, and in titles such as 'Roll over Beethoven' and 'Rock and roll music', the actual phenomenon of the new music sounds. He was arguably the first folk rock poet as well as a consummate, if idiosyncratic performer.

For Chuck, and the other rock'n'roll artists the new decade, the 1960s, should have been theirs to further push the boundaries of popular music. It was not yet to be.

5 | THE DEATH OF ROCK'N'ROLL AND THE RISE OF THE TEENAGE IDOLS

Late in 1957, at the age of twenty-four, and just two years after initial chart success, but capping off a decade in the music business, Little Richard quit. Mistaking the Soviet satellite *Sputnik* for a sign from God, he re-embraced his other passion and joined the Christian ministry. The following year another Christian rocker did something considered very un-Christian: twenty-three year-old Jerry Lee Lewis took his third wife, his thirteen year-old cousin. It stopped his career in its tracks. During 1958 also, Elvis Presley accepted, if not God's, at least President Eisenhower's will and was drafted into the US Army. He duly shipped out for a two year stint in Germany and though singles were still successfully issued, Elvis's absence took a toll. Gene Vincent's last hit single, 'Dance to the bop' charted earlier that year but after a tax dispute he packed up and also – voluntarily – relocated to Europe. In 1958 'Summertime blues' was the pinnacle of Eddie Cochran's career. While he continued recording he, like Gene Vincent looked to overseas where he was still popular. During a UK tour in 1960 these two artists were in a horrific car crash together. Vincent suffered serious injuries; Eddie Cochran died in hospital. Early in the year before, Buddy Holly was on tour in the States with other new stars Ritchie Valens (of Mexican heritage, his culturally-influenced compositions 'Donna' and 'La bamba' gave him a double-sided hit in 1958) and disc jockey-singer J.P. 'The Big Bopper' Richardson (his co-written 'Chantilly lace' charted that same year). Their chartered plane crashed. There were no survivors. And Chuck Berry? The '50s decade ended for him when he was arrested for seducing a fourteen year-old waitress from interstate. A jail term, his second, awaited.

Was it really only five years since rock'n'roll had stormed the citadels of popular music? By the late '50s the sting had gone. Its progenitors were deceased, or had lost acceptance or relevance, or changed their sound and image. Once considered demonic, rock'n'roll had been tamed by conservative reactionaries. Singers like Pat Boone and others sought to synthesise this new music and intentionally or otherwise its potency was almost invariably diluted and diffused. Only one year after Elvis Presley first burst on to the US scene a slew of aspiring Elvises – neat, good-looking young white men with clean, brushed-back hair and, sometimes, tuneful voices – began appearing, often having been deftly manoeuvred in that

direction by music industry executives. Many, like Eric 'Ricky' Nelson and Tab Hunter (a.k.a. Arthur Helm) were television or film actors. Tommy Sands did have a musical background (and was managed by Presley's impresario, 'Colonel' Tom Parker) but his big chance came after he played an Elvis-type character on a TV show and the featured song 'Teen-age crush' became a hit. Others, like Robert Ridarelli, better known as Bobby Rydell, and Frankie Avalon had played in a band together before later being offered solo recording contracts. Walden Cassotto, older than the other so-called 'teenage idols', changed his name to Bobby Darin and began his career writing songs for singers like Connie Francis before enjoying his own hit, the rock'n'roll novelty 'Splish splash'. His next, the syrupy pop song 'Dream lover' indicated that he was a musical dilettante as he continued to explore, in composition and delivery, a wide variety of styles before his premature death in 1973 at only thirty-seven. The career of Bobby Vee (born Robert Velline) began when the then fifteen year-old singer and his schoolboy band the Shadows nervously took Buddy Holly's place at the very next date on the ill-fated tour; his first recording, with Buddy-style voice, was 'Suzie baby', a tribute to 'Peggy Sue'. There was a Buddy connection too for Canadian singer-songwriter Paul Anka: following his own self-penned hit 'Diana' another of his compositions, 'I guess it doesn't matter any more' became Buddy Holly's first posthumous release.

So most of the new 'teen idols' had at least a modicum of musical credibility. Not, perhaps, Fabian Forte. Noticed in the street for his good looks by Frankie Avalon's songwriter, record producer and label owner Bob Marcucci, Fabian joined the Buddy Holly tour in the wake of the tragedy and had a few top ten hits before, a year later, being dropped from the label. The reluctant idol later admitted that, in an early case of audio engineering, his voice had been processed to improve its sound. Billy 'Crash' Craddock (no relation of Vincent Eugene Craddock a.k.a. Gene Vincent) had a different career path. Marketed, again, as an Elvis alternative, only one of his singles charted – just inside *Billboard*'s top hundred listings, for one week. Touring Australia however, he was startled to discover that his 'Boom boom baby' had topped the chart there and he was mobbed – a teenage idol at last.

As the '50s gave way to the '60s these and a number of others who aspired to, if not dethrone, at least share the 'royal' court with the King allowed fans to give vent to their teenage passions in an entirely more wholesome way. Many of the 'teen idols' quickly became mere memories; the rock'n'rollers who created the original excitement may have lost their potency, but their legacy would endure.

6 SKIFFLE – AND THE BRITISH TEENAGE IDOLS

Across the Atlantic, the nation that had once colonised North America was now its enfeebled progenitor. Although the Allies, including the late-joining US had finally beaten off aggressor Germany in 1944, World War II had hit Britain hard. Because of huge military expenditure the country was in debt to the USA, and almost bankrupt. Rationing of numerous basic foodstuffs was continuing well into the 1950s, and intensive German aerial bombing of London and other cities such as the port of Liverpool and industrial centres Manchester and Birmingham had left vast numbers of derelict buildings, many not being demolished or rebuilt for more than a decade.

GIs stationed in Britain had brought over precious, unprocurable commodities like Coca-Cola, chewing gum and nylon stockings but American popular culture was already well-entrenched through jazz and big band swing, Broadway musicals and Hollywood movies. Though British theatre and film still maintained a proud tradition, music after the war predominantly came from either importation, or imitation of American recordings. The range of local content included variety performer Max Bygraves, Trinidad-born pianist Winifred Atwell and pleasantly harmonising vocal group the Stargazers. As in the US, instrumental music was popular, and big bands and orchestras were fronted by such as the flamboyant Mantovani – young Annunzio Paolo had emigrated from Italy with his family early in the twentieth century – as well as, from the war years, Ted Heath, Frank Chacksfield and Billy Cotton. And not forgotten was the 'Forces' Sweetheart' Vera Lynn whose 'We'll meet again' had provided wartime solace for so many. As the 1950s slowly progressed, artists like David Whitfield (who enjoyed some success in the US), the romantically named Dickie Valentine and young Alma Cogan – 'The Girl with the Giggle in her Voice' – brought other easy listening sounds to the airwaves. From Liverpool came crooner Frankie Vaughan, and Lita Roza (with *her* version of 'How much is that doggie in the window?').

Unlike in America where radio stations large and small from all over the country jostled for space on the dial, the British airwaves were sparsely populated. Until the late 1960s there were essentially just three stations, all government-owned, of which only the aptly-titled BBC Light Programme included any 'popular' – but not necessarily 'pop' – music. Radio Luxembourg, a commercial station broad-

casting from the tiny European country three hundred miles away with limited hours and variable signal strength grew to be a much-valued supplement to this. In the early 1960s it was joined by the so-called 'pirate' radio stations that operated from small ships and other bases beyond British territorial waters.

Even without saturation airplay the first mid-'50s reverberations of change from the US could be felt. Whether it was an ongoing love affair with all things American, or the more compact British geography and smaller population, or because the music was new, exotic and rare in a barren musical landscape, the developments were often embraced by young people in the UK with more fervour than in the USA. 'Teddy boys'[a] rioted and tore up seats at showings of *Blackboard Jungle* and after his initial success with the theme song 'Rock around the clock' Bill Haley continued to vie with Elvis on the charts even while his career was fading at home. Others to remain, in the later 1950s, more popular in the UK than in the US included Johnnie Ray – and Pat Boone was seemingly ubiquitous. Melodic newcomers Buddy Holly and the Crickets and the Everly Brothers made an immediate impression. Little Richard provided the theme song for the most recent rock'n'roll film, *The Girl Can't Help It* which, following a Christmas premiere in the States opened in the British summer of 1957. Gene Vincent, and Eddie Cochran with his as yet unreleased 'Twenty flight rock' also contributed to the soundtrack which was influential on young British musicians.

The one homegrown phenomenon to capture the imagination of the British people was the sudden, albeit brief explosion of skiffle music. As with so much other popular culture it's most probable that skiffle actually originated in the US – "skiffle was derived from the rent parties, speakeasies and Dust Bowl jug bands of the US Depression".[3] Certainly the word came from there, referring to types of country blues and appearing in song titles and band names. Also, the improvising of music using household items – washboards and tubs, liquor jugs, cigar boxes – as well as other common and portable instruments like acoustic guitars and banjos occurred throughout the States.

The musical origins were American too but Anthony 'Lonnie' Donegan, with his stripped-back, rhythmic versions of old songs that had already been adapted by Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie and others is credited with 'inventing' skiffle in the UK. Donegan was the guitar and banjo player with Chris Barber's jazz band

[a] 'Teddy boy': "A member of a British hooligan movement during the 1950s and early 1960s. Named for their mode of dress, which was a modified Edwardian style."
(*Urban Dictionary* www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=teddy%20boy)

(Barber, and other British bandleaders like Stanley 'Acker' Bilk and Kenny Ball would later take 'trad' jazz back to where it originated and enjoy US hits around the turn of the decade). In 1956 Lonnie Donegan's locomotive-paced, and appropriately accented version of the American railroad song 'Rock Island Line' on the small British Pye label was a UK hit and surprisingly it also stormed the charts, making it to eight in the country of its birth. Skiffle came to a climax the following year as Donegan released three more frenetic folk songs, two, including the Appalachian 'Cumberland Gap' that topped the British chart for five weeks. The Vipers Skiffle Group was probably second only to Lonnie Donegan in popularity. Their version of another folk song, 'Don't you rock me daddy-o', was produced for Parlophone records by a young man called George Martin and it made it into the top ten. A third group led by Charles McDevitt, with one Nancy Whiskey on vocals, took the African American folk song 'Freight train' (on another small UK label, Oriole) to number five. Many other skifflers had their time in the studio, and, on BBC TV's first teenage 'live' music show *Six-Five Special*.[a] Despite the proliferation of similar-sounding groups copying each others' arrangements, Lonnie Donegan indisputably reigned as 'The King of Skiffle'.[b]

Most importantly though, skiffle inspired tens of thousands of young – yes, usually men – in those austere postwar years throughout the UK to scratch away on washboards, construct basses from tea chests and broomsticks and buy cheap imported European acoustic guitars and ramshackle drum kits. Mark Lewisohn has made the claim that "there were upwards of 5000 skiffle combos in existence around Britain during 1956 and 1957."[4] American electric rock'n'roll was big time but skiffle provided a possible bridge to it. And for so many post-war teenagers, it was just a whole lot of fun – and more productive than vandalising cinemas.

Occasionally jamming with the Vipers Skiffle Group when his ship was docked was Thomas Hicks, a merchant seaman who, like Donegan, played guitar and banjo. Hicks was typical of the British seafarers at the time who sailed to the United States, heard rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues there and brought the records back, either distributing them, or learning to play the songs. Inspired by the new sounds he abandoned skiffle, adopted an appropriate persona and changed his name to Tommy Steele. In 1956, with his new permanent band the Steelmen

[a] Soon followed by *Oh Boy!* on the only other TV channel, commercially operated ITV. Neither programme lasted into the 1960s.

[b] British comedian Peter Sellers of radio comedy troupe the Goons uncannily evoked Donegan's style in his skit, 'Puttin' on the smile'; it was produced by the aforementioned George Martin. (*Songs For Swingin' Sellers*, Parlophone, 1959)

he recorded for Decca 'Rock with the caveman', the first of several co-written with Lionel Bart (whose future lay in musicals such as *Oliver!*) and former Viper Mike Pratt. It made the UK top twenty but it was American material that gave Steele most success. At that time when multiple cover versions of popular songs abounded, his rendition in the same year of the swinging 'Singing the blues' (definitely not blues – the irritating non-stop whistling made sure of that) briefly displaced Guy Mitchell's at the top of the UK chart (Mitchell's, also a US number one, regained its position a week later). The British singer wasn't able to repeat this with the tandem follow-up, 'Knee deep in the blues' (featuring more whistling): Mitchell's made it to number three, Steele's, fifteen. Tommy Steele never enjoyed success in the US and, like so many others, quickly mellowed into more easy listening styles, abandoning trans-Atlantic aspirations for fame at home.

In Britain the 'teen idol' transformation was in its infancy and in 1957 American actor Tab Hunter was the first to make an impression when the innocuous 'Young love' spent four weeks on top of the chart (and in the US); Paul Anka's 'Diana' would later achieve that for nine weeks, the longest of any that year. Tommy Steele had been the first British 'teen idol' to be groomed by local impresario Larry Parnes who went on to manage more than a dozen hopeful young men.[a] As Tommy had, others took on, or were given heroic names. Reg Patterson became Marty Wilde, Christopher Morris became Lance Fortune (he replaced the deceased Eddie Cochran on his UK tour), and then there were Vince Eager, Duffy Power and the 'sheik of shake' Dickie Pride. John Askew from Liverpool was given the inexplicably effete pseudonym, Johnny Gentle, but Joe Brown remained plain Joe Brown, rejecting another odd name choice, Elmer Twitch – perhaps he was intended to be the counterpart of US singer Conway Twitty.[b]

Most enjoyed some success around the concert circuit and in the charts, and, like their US 'teen idol' counterparts, most had at least *some* talent – and many, including Steele, Gentle and Wilde were unusually entrusted with writing their own material. Marty Wilde's own composition, 'Bad boy', after reaching seven in the UK even made the US top fifty in 1960; like Larry Williams' song of the same name it was covered by many. Wilde went on to become an accomplished songwriter (especially in the 1980s for his daughter Kim). Again, as in the US,

[a] Again, in the George Martin-produced 'So little time' Peter Sellers hilariously satirised Larry Parnes and his stable of aspirant pop stars. (*Songs For Swingin' Sellers*).

[b] Conway Twitty (real name Harold Jenkins) was another Elvis soundalike who had some success before embarking on a country music career.

some had dual singing and acting careers: Steele began making the first of many films not long after his opening single and became an evergreen star of musical comedy stage and screen. Terence Nelhams-Wright (one not managed by Parnes) was rebadged as Adam Faith, popular on TV and film as well as on record.

Johnny Gentle was not the only northerner in Larry Parnes' stable. From just outside Manchester, Clive Powell a.k.a. Georgie Fame was a brilliant keyboard player beginning a lifelong career, not just in pop music but in jazz and r&b. And like Askew/Gentle, fellow Liverpudlian[a] Ronald Wycherley was transformed into Billy Fury (at first backed by Fame with his group the Blue Flames). Contrary again to customary practice, Fury was allowed to write most of his songs, (Gentle had also composed both sides of his debut: both artists were pioneers in what would soon become a proud Liverpudlian songwriting tradition). With a number of top ten singles right through to 1965 Billy Fury became an inspiration for other regional aspiring pop stars: growing up far from the entertainment epicentre of London wasn't necessarily an impediment to success. However, irrespective of their varying fortunes from the late '50s and into the next decade most of these British pop stars were fated to remain reasonable-sized fish, in a very small fishbowl.

One who did tentatively make it out of the bowl and across the Atlantic was Harry Webb. He'd changed his name to the rugged-sounding Cliff Richard – after his musical hero, Little Richard – and modelled his sullen looks on Elvis Presley's. Cliff's first releases on the large EMI (Electric and Musical Industries) conglomerate's Columbia label had been locally written rockers, all the equal of anything by Vincent or Cochran, that followed his first 'Move it'. He quickly modified his image though and his first UK number one 'Living doll' (not to be confused with his earlier rocker 'Livin' lovin' doll') was a bouncy pop song. Like Lonnie Donegan's first hit it made the transition to the US scene and registered as high as thirty there. Cliff's backing band had come from skiffle beginnings, several members having played with the Vipers[b] and Newcastle's Railroaders. But with Cliff's US success, his Drifters needed to change their name to the Shadows.[c]

Frederick Heath stood out from others by demonstrating that British musicians didn't necessarily have to be carbon copies of their American counterparts. Also a former skiffler, he was a prolific writer, and in 1959 he and his band – whimsically

[a] Liverpudlian: A term for citizens of Liverpool (ie. 'pool' = 'puddle'; some claim however that this was originally a derogatory term and 'Liverpolitan' should be used instead).

[b] Hank Marvin, Jet Harris and Tony Meehan.

[c] A further irony: as earlier noted, 'The Shadows' had been the original name of Bobby Vee's band.

called the Nutters – recorded for EMI label HMV Heath's co-written rock'n'roll song, 'Please don't touch'. Unconsulted, they were informed that henceforth they would be 'Johnny Kidd and the Pirates' and in time they adopted an image to match – complete with cutlass and swashbuckling eyepatch for 'Johnny'. After the debut record made twenty-five on the chart the four-piece band of vocalist Kidd plus guitar, bass and drums in 1960 sent his original 'Shakin' all over' and its distinctive guitar sounds (actually provided by a session lead guitarist) to the top. This was the peak of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates' career: lineup changes and less successful singles followed, but their image, lineup, sound and that hit record would prove to be influential.

Johnny had the Pirates, Cliff, the Shadows, Tommy Steele his (shortlived) Steelmen, and Adam Faith and Joe Brown later took on bands, the Roulettes and the very cockney-sounding Bruvvers respectively – but many of the British solo artists had no permanent form of accompaniment. As Johnny Gentle was to discover, they often had to 'pick up' a backing group of unknown proficiency at short notice for a tour, or be content with the house band at a concert.

In the US of course it had been little different: throughout his career Chuck Berry frequently relied on, with little or even no rehearsal, whatever musicians the promoter hired for the job. Fixed, named backing combos like Gene Vincent's Bluecaps were exceptions, and rarer still were self-contained vocal and instrumental groups like the Crickets, with Buddy having been regarded, ostensibly at least, as part of the group.

7 | SOME MARK TIME, OTHERS MAKE THEIR MARK

'The King' returned from Germany and was released from Army service in 1960. But despite the promise of his new LP record *Elvis Is Back!* Presley was no longer a rock'n'rolling menace to society. Welcomed to the TV show of his former bête noire, Frank Sinatra, and with the first of three collections of sacred songs, a heavy schedule of two or more anodyne teen movies a year accompanied by sadly uninspiring soundtracks, and, another album purporting to offer *Something For Everybody*, Elvis now appealed to a much broader demographic. Consequently, many more worldwide hit singles followed.

With the excitement of the mid-1950s now long gone, pop music seemed to be marking time. The sanitising of American rock'n'roll and elsewhere continued – although a few artists, like Presley clone Ral Donner and 'The explosive' Freddie Cannon were doing their best to keep it vibrant. Eddie Cochran posthumously topped the British chart with, what else but 'Three steps to heaven'; it was however at best a ghostly reminder of what he'd achieved in his brief career. On the other hand, the former 'King of Skiffle' Lonnie Donegan returned to the US charts with – a novelty song, 'Does your chewing gum lose its flavour (on the bedpost overnight?)', its similarly comedic predecessor, 'My old man's a dustman' having gone to the top back home and in several other English-speaking countries. Dorsey Burnette and his younger brother Johnny grew up in Memphis at Elvis's time, tried their hand at rock'n'roll but found success writing songs for Ricky Nelson. In 1960 Johnny finally had a hit of his own on both sides of the Atlantic, 'You're sixteen'.

'You're sixteen' exemplified pop music as it was now acceptable: mid-paced, sung with tuneful voices, still retaining some of the swinging feels of rock'n'roll, and therefore owing more to Holly than Berry, but with arrangements that often included sweeping strings and shrill female backup vocals. Bobbys Vee, Rydell and Darin were joined by a new one, Bobby Vinton who would have number one singles in the US through the 1960s. Ricky Nelson 'grew up' by dropping the 'y' from his first name and Dion DiMucci, still only known by *his* first name parted from the Belmonts. He, and Paul Anka were joined on the charts by other newer singer-songwriters Del Shannon, Neil Sedaka and Gene Pitney. And with the soaring rendition of his co-written song 'Only the lonely', Roy Orbison who had persevered through the latter half of the 1950s finally established his own

unique style. In 1960 the record made two in the US and topped the UK chart; the ensuing years rewarded Roy's persistence and he – 'The Big O' – established enduring popularity with singles making the highest reaches of pop listings around the world.

On the UK charts in the early '60s, homegrown artists continued to feature alongside their US counterparts. Cliff Richard dominated while his Shadows also maintained their own strong presence, and from Larry Parnes' stable, Billy Fury, as well as Adam Faith and another new singing actor, John Leyton all had success with their own versions of American-style pop.

Of the small number of successful female artists, in the US Patsy Cline crossed over from country to pop with the second-best selling single for 1961, 'I fall to pieces' but only Brenda Lee and Connie Francis were popular in both countries. Fourteen year-old Helen Shapiro burst on to the British scene, but she would not be as enduring as Petula (real name Sally) Clark, twice her age, whose career had begun during World War II. Of Nigerian and English parents, Welsh torch singer Shirley Bassey commenced an esteemed career in the UK.

One group of artists really began to make their mark. Probably the most astonishing feature of the late '50s and early '60s, particularly in the US, was the increasing general popularity of music made by African Americans. Arising from the racial segregation of the early to mid-twentieth century it grew to become a whole industry of its own: serviced by radio stations, recording companies and performance opportunities on the black 'Chitlin'[a] Circuit'. Conservative America though deemed that it was not, could not, *should* not be acceptable to white ears.

In 1942 *Billboard* magazine had finally accepted its 'exotic' nature, establishing the 'Harlem Hit Parade'. The name was changed three years later to the no less dubious 'Race Records', with the chart ultimately adopting Jerry Wexler's term, 'Rhythm And Blues'. As already noted, the particular appeal of African American music started filtering through to wider audiences: the radio programmes could be heard, emanating, on weak and crackling frequencies, from black radio stations (until white deejays like Elvis's friend Dewey Phillips, Alan Freed a.k.a. 'Moon Dog' and Johnny Otis started including the records in their playlists), musicians were allowed to perform to segregated audiences (as long as they entered through the back door), and, just occasionally, the songs made it on to the mainstream charts (though more acceptably when covered by white artists).

[a] Chitlin': Short for 'chitterling', stewed pig's intestines, an African American culinary item comprising the most basic remnants of pork cuts.

Billboard's thirty most popular singles of 1955 had included Bill Haley's 'Rock around the clock' at number two. Twenty-seven of the songs were by white acts, including, as already mentioned, Pat Boone's 'Ain't that a shame', and Georgia Gibbs' 'Dance with me Henry' and 'Tweedle dee' – all three by black songwriters, and originally recorded by black singers. The only three – one tenth of the total number – African American artists' recordings to chart, in the bottom ten, were the uniformly smooth sounds of Nat King Cole's 'A blossom fell', Al Hibbler's 'Unchained melody' (trumped though, by white orchestra leader Les Baxter's instrumental at five) and the Platters' lilting ballad 'Only you (and you alone)'. All were written by mainstream white composers.

This pattern underwent a gradual shift. Vocal groups continued to please listening audiences, and the mellow Platters over the next few years featured regularly amongst the US best-sellers – from 1956, the top *fifty*. They were joined by the second incarnation of the Drifters fronted by various lead vocalists, most notably Ben E. King who had replaced the original, Clyde McPhatter, (King soon left too; both he and his predecessor had solo successes in the ensuing years). Ballads were popular, with African American solo singers such as Tommy Edwards having a million-selling record (six weeks at number one in the weekly chart) with 'It's all in the game'.

The humorous material kept coming: the Silhouettes had a hit with their own quirkily ironic 'Get a job' while the enduring Coasters put more Leiber-Stoller novelty numbers amongst the best-sellers for three years in a row. By the late 1950s the number of black artists in the larger list had increased to eleven. These included satin-voiced cross-over gospel singer Sam Cooke while the raw and original rock'n'roll of Chuck Berry and Little Richard was offset by Bobby Day's chirpy 'Rockin' robin'.

In 1959 *Billboard*'s annual chart expanded to comprise the 'Year-End Hot 100' singles. Not half a decade after just three African American songs in the 1955 top thirty, New Orleans singer Lloyd Price *by himself* scored three of 1959's thirty best-sellers (including 'Personality', one of two co-compositions). His contemporary Fats Domino was still popular and he and Price were joined by Phil Phillips, also from southern Louisiana with his original ballad, 'Sea of love'. Unfortunately a New Orleans compatriot who'd had hits in the preceding years experienced an age-old, but this time, *double* indignity. Huey Smith's vocal was erased from his own composition 'Sea cruise' and white artist Frankie Ford's overdubbed version became the hit. Wilbert Harrison successfully revived Leiber and Stoller's song

from earlier in the '50s 'Kansas City', and Ray Charles and Brook Benton began to come to the fore. Elsewhere throughout the full hundred listings were black male and female vocalists, established and novice, solo and group, and two more integrated lineups, the Impalas and the Crests.

Extraordinarily now, on the cusp of the new decade around a *third* of the top-selling one hundred songs were by African American artists, singing and playing in myriad styles from jazz through doo-wop to the increasingly relevant r&b. Considering that African Americans at the time represented only around ten percent of the total US population this was an impressive statistic.

The numbers dipped slightly in 1960 (to a quarter of the 'Year-End Hot 100') but this would prove to be only a temporary downturn. At ten was the hitherto unknown Chubby Checker: covering a B side from the year before by black r&b stalwart Hank Ballard he taught everyone around the world to do 'The Twist'. Over the next few years Chubby tried other moves with 'Pony time' and 'The Fly' before suggesting 'Let's Twist again'. Finally he decelerated to 'Slow Twistin'' (with Dee Dee Sharp) but by 1962 there were no fewer than *eight* other twist songs by African Americans in the annual list – with Chubby's 'The Twist' back for a second time, at number nine. It was in fact one of *six* singles by black artists in that year's top *ten* – including two other dance tunes, 'Mashed Potato time' (by Dee Dee on her own) and 'The Loco-motion' by Little Eva (Boyd) who was employed as a babysitter by the song's co-writer Carole King.

Vocal groups went from strength to strength: in 1961 new lineups included the aforementioned chart-topping Marcels with a hepped-up version of the old 'Blue moon'. The Miracles' hit 'Shop around' was written by their leader Smokey Robinson and, Berry Gordy Jr. who had founded two new record labels, Tamla and Motown (they soon merged to bear only the second of the two names). The Miracles included one female member, but a new movement of so-called 'girl groups' was beginning with the Marvelettes and the Shirelles both having number one hits. These groups were beginning to impress some young musicians across the Atlantic.

But with the UK's limited radio broadcasting of 'popular' music, and the preponderance of broad demographic-pleasing material – often including British versions of white American versions of African American songs – black musicians made considerably less impact on the charts there: from 1955 on they had fewer than ten out of the annual hundred best-selling songs. In that first year Al Hibbler's 'Unchained melody' was, as in the States, among the top thirty, but again, a version by a white singer, British vocalist Jimmy Young, was more popular. The

only other African American (strangely, nowhere to be found in the US chart of the year) was Hibbler's contemporary Billy Eckstine (who back in 1949 had sweetly crooned an earlier 'Blue moon' hit).

When comparing the lists of best-selling songs from the two countries over the years it's clear that the most – if not all – British music-lovers were probably unaware of the vast majority of black American artists. Of those they did know, general preference was still for purveyors of 'easy listening' music like the well-established Nat King Cole, as well as the Platters and the Drifters. US-born Harry Belafonte's Jamaican parents inspired him to popularise Caribbean music. He had three UK hits in 1957 and was of course duly dubbed 'King of Calypso'.

Among the more vibrant black artists popular in the UK were Frankie Lymon and his Teenagers, and the Coasters, and then later, powerful r&b singer-song-writers Sam Cooke and Ray Charles. In 1960, as in the US, newcomer Jimmy Jones caught ears with the shrill falsetto of 'Handy man'. From the New Orleans cohort, Lloyd Price and of course Fats Domino shared popularity with flamboyant vocalist-pianist Clarence 'Frogman' Henry. Apart from the Shirelles group, jazz singer (and former compatriot of Billy Eckstine) Sarah Vaughan, and later, Ketty Lester were the only African American solo females in the UK's end-of-year 'best of' lists. Little Richard was arguably better received there than at home. He scored five top tens (in the weekly charts) from 'Long tall Sally' in 1956 to, bizarrely rating highest of all there two years later, his version of the old '20s tune 'Baby face'[a] while Chuck Berry's spasmodic appearances finally included two British top tens in 1959 and 1960. Though the white American Bobbys – Vee, Rydell and Darin – were, not unexpectedly, popular in the UK, another Bobby – African American Bobby Lewis – appeared to be persona non grata there. After seven weeks on top of the *Billboard* weekly chart his 'Tossin' and turnin'' was 1961's top-selling US single[b] – but it made little impression beyond those shores.

If the BBC wasn't going to promote new black sounds in the conservative UK, how could these be heard by the British contemporary music cognoscenti and become influential on local musicians?

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[a] Written in the mid-1920s, one of the first of many versions of 'Baby face' was by Al Jolson (the immigrant Jewish American famous, or now, infamous for performing in black face), others later being by Bing Crosby, and Bobbys Darin and Vee.

[b] The only other similar occurrence had been precisely ten years before: the top song of 1951 was Nat King Cole's 'Too young'; the achievement of an African American taking out the top spot on the *Billboard* year-end top singles chart still remained only a once-in-a-decade event until the 1990s from which time black rap and 'hip hop' artists (see chapter 18) have considerably boosted the possibilities.

Where to now?

The first four 'pop stars' of the twentieth century (from the late '20s till the start of the '60s, and in two cases, beyond) had several things in common: Rudy Valleé, Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley were solo artists (albeit magnificently backed by orchestras, bands, combos and vocal ensembles), they were white males, and they all relied on professional writers for their material.

Now that even the last of the four appeared to be mellowing with age, the second-tier artists and the up-and-comers (and their management) must have been wondering, hoping, planning: who would be next to inherit the mantle?

And, just perhaps, could the paradigm be subverted?

Would the next major pop star (or stars) be male, or perhaps *female*, white or *black*, an interpreter of others' songs or *a creative musician*?

And was it possible that 'the next big thing' could be not just a solo artist, but a musical *group*?

Whichever, one thing could be confidently predicted: the next major pop star would almost certainly come, as those four had, from the entertainment hothouse that was the United States of America.

The surprising outcome of that early-1960s speculation is of course now well-known history.

But, if history had taken a *different* turn, it's tempting to imagine an alternative music world and ponder…

What if?

On the sixth of July, 1957 a teenage schoolboy and his motley bunch of friends mounted the small outdoor stage at a Liverpool fête. On their rudimentary instruments they belted out, with by now at least some degree of proficiency, a varied selection of skiffle and other songs. Then, after a second performance later that day they packed up and went home.

Over the next few years, and with different members and different styles, they continued to play here and there around the north of England. They even improved quite a bit but ultimately drifted apart as their leader diversified his occasional musical hobby with artwork and writing, social conscience and political activism…and marriage and parenthood.

Elsewhere in the town on that July day an earnest younger boy could have been heard diligently practising his trumpet, applying the same intense dedication to it as to his other instruments, the piano and the guitar. With time his musical accomplishment would strengthen, and his talent for composition, as well as performance would lead him ever deeper into his craft.

Even when attending the same school a form level can make all the difference. Another boy, a year younger than the second and therefore not really acquainted also had musical talent, the guitar alone being the instrument of his passion. Despite having distanced himself from the Catholic churchgoing of his early family life he found that, as he grew older, music complemented his growing inclination to a more spiritual way of life.

And across town an aspiring drummer, an early school leaver a few months older than the first boy began, like him, playing skiffle. As his drumming improved he regarded himself as a bit of a semi-pro: outside his day job he earned extra money regularly playing with various different show bands. He continued to enjoy this paying hobby throughout an ordinary working class life in the place of his birth.

Despite growing up in the same city, and their incidentally shared interests, the different life directions they took meant that the four young men would never meet, would certainly never make music together.

An alternative world.

So, if Paul McCartney had never met John Lennon and joined the Quarry Men[a] skiffle group, hadn't later introduced his young friend George Harrison, and the three hadn't finally teamed up with jobbing drummer Richard Starkey a.k.a. Ringo Starr… What if the Beatles had never existed?

Consider an alternative world of the 1960s inhabited by musicians who, in the absence of the Beatles, may just have been contenders for pop music dominance. Who, apart from those four from Liverpool had what it takes? Who would have been the next major pop star – or stars? And, more importantly, where would popular music have gone and what would it be today?

For the next eight chapters explore that alternative world, *without* the Beatles…

Then at the end of each, make the comparison with what *actually* transpired.

[a] While the group's name is often spelled 'Quarrymen', the two words were separated on their (very official-looking) business cards, their bass drum head and the poster for their historic garden fête performance.

II

WITHOUT THE BEATLES

A hypothetical

8 | SCOUSER[a] STARTERS

Bill Harry of *Mersey Beat*, the magazine he established in Liverpool in the early 1960s recalled, "Between 1958 and 1964 there were probably around 500 different bands in the Merseyside area. The figure at any *one* [emphasis mine] time probably stood at 350. When Bob Wooler [DJ at Liverpool's Cavern Club] and I originally compiled a list of groups that we knew personally in 1961, it ran to almost 300 names."[1] However 'Alistair Griffin' (a.k.a. 'Disker', record reviewer for the *Liverpool Echo*, but in reality publicist Tony Barrow[b]) who put together an early short history of The Cavern Club in 1964 had a qualification of this expansive estimate: "…it is certain that less than half this number have been operational at any given time."[2] Whatever the truth, it is still surprising how few of these groups can be readily recalled today. Online lists of Liverpool groups (other than Harry's and Wooler's) generally include no more than about twenty from throughout this little more than half-decade period although, as there was much name changing of groups and swapping of vocalists and other band members between them, others can be revealed with further searching. Perhaps also, as the vast majority never recorded (today's home music production and distribution technology didn't of course exist then) the few that did, and then sold enough copies to register on the UK chart are the ones considered most important.

However, it is still undeniable that in Liverpool as in other British locations in the late 1950s, large numbers of young musicians got caught up in the skiffle, and then rock'n'roll excitement. It's been contended that, because of Liverpool's relatively small size and isolation from London, its depressed socio-economic situation, and because it was a seaport – a conduit for the very latest records from the US imported by sailors[c] – groups there developed a sound, soon dubbed

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[a] Scousers: Like Liverpudlians, are citizens of Liverpool. 'Scouse' denotes the city's distinctive speech patterns and phraseology.

[b] He wrote the Beatles' press releases and the liner notes for their first three LPs.

[c] Numerous Liverpool musicians are on record having recalled this long-standing practice that encompassed not only rock'n'roll and rhythm and blues, but also jazz and country records. Yet Nick Duckett who for many years has exhaustively researched the roots of rhythm and blues, and associated music, including the influence of these on British groups controversially disputes their many claims: "In fact there is no evidence for this," and believes that the idea that young musicians "would hang around the docks waiting to meet up with stray sailors clutching handfuls of shellac records is a charming one but also highly implausible. Almost all of the songs…were released in the UK…" (Liner notes to CD set *Beatles Beginnings 8: The Quarrymen repertoire*, Rhythm and Blues Records)

'Merseybeat',[a] that was distinctive and tough, and some became very successful. Venues – or as Bill Harry called them, 'jive hives' – sprang up where young musicians could try out their stuff: in community halls or ballrooms, clubs like the old warehouse cellar (and World War II air-raid shelter) that became The Cavern Club which grudgingly, though not always graciously allowed an alternative to the currently popular 'trad' jazz, and even, nightspots set up in private houses. Beat music nights became regular fixtures on the entertainment calendar and then on circuits incorporating several suburbs within a city, or towns across a provincial region. Promoters and managers anointed themselves and did deals with each other to ensure the growth of an infant industry: choice performance opportunities were the priority, recording contracts a distant dream.

The repertoire demands of the full-time musician were punishing. With the irresistible availability of the American popular music songbook, writing new material was not yet a priority – nor did it come easily – so groups plundered the Presley, Perkins, Berry, Holly, Cochran, Vincent, Little Richard, Coasters and other catalogues and then went looking for rarities. The camaraderie of living together in this pressure cooker environment, and the usually friendly spirit of competition meant that the same songs, and even the same arrangements of those songs could be heard played – and later, even, recorded – by any number of groups. And most likely, many had not even heard the originals but had learned them from their contemporaries.

Alan Caldwell was a talented young sportsman whose other passion inspired him in 1958 to open a twice-weekly venue, The Morgue Skiffle Club. At the same time he was fronting his own group, Al Caldwell and the Texans but he soon changed his name, in Larry Parnes-style, to Rory Storm and that of his group to the Hurricanes. The personnel included the rhythm section of aspiring cabaret singer Lu Walters on bass and, also given his own vocal spot in the show, drummer Richie Starkey. Like Storm the latter who wore rings on several of his fingers took on a heroic nom de plume, Ringo Starr. The Hurricanes were one of the first groups to attempt, not without the jazz-loving patrons' considerable resistance, to play rock'n'roll at the Cavern Club. Despite an enormous amount of self-promotion and popularity around the Liverpool scene (and slightly further afield, with lucrative work in a Butlins holiday camp in Wales) Rory Storm's Hurricanes

[a] Bill Harry asserted that his magazine *Mersey Beat* preceded that term, his intention being to cover musical happenings around Liverpool in much the way that police officers would patrol a regular route – or 'beat' – around the city.

suffered many disappointments and missed opportunities. These included failing an audition with entrepreneur Larry Parnes to become Billy Fury's backing group, and, turning down a tempting offer to play in Europe…

To some of these Liverpool-born and bred musicians a job opportunity arose in a location that may have seemed as likely as playing on the moon. Hamburg was in many ways an extreme version of Liverpool: five hundred or so miles due east and on the banks of a large river, it was an important German seaport in recovery from devastating bombing during World War II, in this case, by the retaliatory British and American airforces. While postwar recovery had, in ironic contrast to the still impoverished Liverpool, made it a wealthy city it was also notorious for its vice, violence and crime. The clubs of the precinct known as 'the Reeperbahn' – reputed to be 'the most sinful mile' – attracted, unlike Liverpool's unlicensed teenage haunts, a colourfully varied cross section of adult society. In sweaty basements like the Kaiserkeller – another parallel with the subterranean Cavern at home ('keller' meaning cellar) – and at other venues like the Indra, and later the newer Top Ten and the Star-Club British groups signed on to "mach schau": not just play, but put on a show, up to ninety minutes a set, six hours on stage a night, six days a week. They played loud, slept rough, ate poorly, lived dangerously and resorted to alcohol and amphetamines that they called 'Prellies'[a] to keep them going. While playing conditions back in the UK – travelling long hours, sleeping in vans, inadequate remuneration – were certainly rigorous, it seems incontestable that Hamburg was a performance destination that, in more ways than one, turned young boys into men.

Of Nigerian parents, Liverpool-born singer Derry Wilkie and his six-piece group the Seniors were also among the hopefuls who were passed over when Larry Parnes came to town looking for musicians to back his Liverpudlian protégé (Billy Fury ultimately ended up with the London-based Tornados who would later top the UK – and the US – charts at the end of 1962 with their spacy instrumental 'Telstar'). Derry and the Seniors' consolation prize came when German entrepreneur Bruno Koschmider invited them to Hamburg to be house band in the Kaiserkeller. Derry and the Seniors were actually the *second* British group to play there: they had been preceded by London's hastily purpose-assembled Jets, with guitarist one Tony Sheridan. However, as the Seniors had no German work permits they returned home after a few months to be replaced – eventually – by Rory Storm and the Hurricanes.

[a] 'Prellies': Preludin, brand name of phenmatrizine, a stimulant drug.

A Seniors reshuffle in 1961 saw saxophonist Howie Casey (who had actually founded the group) becoming the named leader even though Derry remained in the lineup. The group then claimed another Liverpool first when early in 1962 they released an LP on the small Dutch-origin Fontana label. *Twist At The Top* cashed in on the new dance craze and singles culled from it included two of their own originals: the title tune and 'Double Twist' (urging dancers to exhaustingly gyrate twice as fast). Despite possessing an exciting and authentic sound that featured Derry's bluesy Little Richard-style vocals complete with "Whoooh!" interjections, lightning-fast guitar solos, crisp drumming and Howie's screaming sax the Seniors' records made little impression. Their third single also failed but they seemed to have lost interest and not long after disbanded. Members scattered in all directions to join other groups. Derry returned to the front of two further shortlived groups, the Pressmen and later, the Others.

Other lineups that came together in Liverpool around the late 1950s and early '60s included the Vegas Five. Mistakenly billed as 'the Undertakers' they rose to the occasion and decked themselves out in suitably sombre funereal garb. Like the Seniors they featured the sound of the saxophone, and they were later joined by bassplayer-vocalist Jackie Lomax. They were signed up for the small British label Pye with Tony Hatch as producer and over two years from 1963 recorded four singles, all covers of American material. A single week just inside the UK top fifty was the Undertakers' sole reward.

Faron's Flamingos were another raunchy-sounding popular group, though they also were hampered by a constantly changing lineup. Any chances of having a hit in mid-1963 with the American Contours' 'Do you love me' were doomed by their record company Oriole's decision to relegate it to the B side. Subsequent big-selling versions by other UK groups rubbed salt into the wound. Unfortunately the Flamingos' very commercial follow-up later that year, 'Shake, Sherry' (again originally by the Contours) backed by their own 'Give me time' provided no compensation and by November they were no more.

The Dominoes got together in 1957 and were joined by Ted 'King Size' Taylor – 6'5", and with a voice to match. During 1963, amongst seemingly constant comings and goings, ex-Senior Howie Casey came in on sax. From that year on, for various German record labels the group recorded several covers of American r&b and rock'n'roll songs, some of which were released in the UK, but to little avail.

Another of the earliest groups was the Zodiacs, the name once again doubling up with a doo-wop group from the States. The Liverpudlians had begun in 1958

as a trad jazz band but transitioned to rock'n'roll after being joined by vocalist Ian Edwards. In 1963 Ian and the Zodiacs' effectively poppy version of the Marvelettes' 'Beechwood 4-5789' on Oriole was unsuccessful (as was the follow-up, the Little Eva dance song 'Let's Turkey Trot' – for this the group was confusingly renamed 'Wellington Wade', the pseudonym of their bassist and co-songwriter Charlie Flynn). After travelling to Germany Ian and the Zodiacs became popular there and extended the initial short stint to several years during which they continued to record. With still no success back home a brief moment of glory came when their cover of a recently released song by British songwriter Geoff Stephens, 'The crying game' went to number one in Texas in 1965 but with no US tour possible they continued to retain a low profile till the end of the '60s.

Earl Preston and the Tempest Tornadoes, later abbreviated to the T-T's took one of several alternative European working holidays on offer for musicians: playing US army bases in France. They wrote a number of originals, but unfortunately the one they recorded for Fontana in mid-1963, 'I know something' had a sound that was already becoming dated. Later that year Earl created a new group, the Realms, while second vocalist Cy Tucker went solo and formed his own, the Friars. However, neither experienced any more success than previously.

Though Lee Curtis's Detours, and later, his All Stars were very popular in Liverpool they tried in vain, from Lee's debut solo release in 1963 to the All Stars' rousing 'Let's Stomp' (a cover of another dance song by little-known white US popster – yes, Bobby – Comstock), to gain wider recognition. The musicians split with Curtis but he and a rolling roster of new All Stars continued to play in Hamburg. The original members confusingly *also* retained the group name, adding to it that of their recently new drummer, one Pete Best. Various permutations and ventures of the collaboration over the next couple of years however proved fruitless.

While at least leaving some anecdotal and recorded legacy, these groups were typical of so many Liverpool, and presumably other British groups of the time: coming together organically…frequently shedding, or exchanging members with other groups (sometimes for the better, sometimes not)…gradually becoming musically proficient and evolving a cohesive identity…covering mostly American black rhythm and blues, and rock'n'roll material, perhaps very occasionally writing one or two of their own…playing for long hours in arduous circumstances…gathering recognition and being hopeful of a lucky break…possibly doing some recording (often while in Germany, mostly for the market there) but invariably with little success…losing enthusiasm…falling apart…then regrouping, or, retiring.

With the Beatles…

From 1956 on all these groups had evolved in much the same way: some were former jazzers, and some inspired by 'Rock around the clock', Lonnie Donegan's skiffle boom and the start of Elvis's career and those other new American sounds. All were seasoned, accomplished musicians with stage presence, and all had done the hard yards, playing around their home patch, many, in the testing ground of Hamburg. About one group though Derry and the Seniors had reservations: Derry wrote from Germany to Liverpool entrepreneur Allan Williams saying, "…we've got a good thing going over here for all the Liverpool groups but if you send that bum group…over to Hamburg you're going to louse it all up." [3] But Williams championed "that bum group". In August 1960 the Beatles became the second Mersey lineup to play there, briefly at the Indra (before it closed), then at the Kaiserkeller (and later, the other new clubs). Their hastily enlisted drummer was…Pete Best, joining after the demise of his first group, the Black Jacks. When the Seniors headed for home Rory Storm and the Hurricanes eventually arrived. The wait was worth it for them: their contract actually gave them a higher fee, and put them on top of the bill – above the Beatles. For the time being anyway…

Two years earlier the remaining members of those proto-Beatles, the Quarry Men skiffle group – founder John Lennon, and newer members Paul McCartney and George Harrison, along with pianist John 'Duff' Lowe and original drummer Colin Hanton – had, in a small Liverpool private studio and for their own edification paid to record two songs on a single acetate disc.[a] One was a McCartney-Harrison original, 'In spite of all the danger', the other a version of Buddy Holly and the Crickets' 'That'll be the day'.

As time went on Allan Williams became aware of the, now renamed, and stripped-back Silver Beetles. Like all other Liverpool groups they also failed Larry Parnes's Billy Fury audition but Williams persuaded Parnes to give them (with another early short-term fill-in drummer Tommy Moore), the job of backing Johnny Gentle[b] on his Scottish tour. Their enthusiastic promoter then organised another recording opportunity. John, Paul, George and novice bassplayer Stuart Sutcliffe put down some selections for Williams that he hoped would impress

[a] Acetate discs were normally used as test recordings but, compared with vinyl records, their sound quality quickly deteriorated after relatively few plays.

[b] On this tour nineteen year-old John provided the two lines of middle eight (repeated) for Gentle's original 'I've just fallen for someone' which, was released in 1962, strangely, under the very un-'pop idol' name Darren Young. Lennon was not credited.

Bruno Koschmider (Allan recalled[4] that the tape was also intended to showcase other groups including Cass and the Cassanovas – see p.48 – and a trad jazz band, Noel Walker and the Stompers). Unfortunately something had gone wrong with the recording and when Allan Williams arrived in Germany, "What came out…was not music. It was an absolute cacophony."[5]

Koschmider seemed undeterred and the German work eventuated. While the finally-named Beatles were in Hamburg, John, Paul and George's next recording session came at the invitation of Rory Storm's bassplayer Lu Walters (another Hurricanes member, Johnny Byrne acerbically commented that their manager "didn't think that our band was good enough and got the Beatles to help…")[6] They joined aspiring crooner Walters to record some 'cabaret' songs that included the classic 'Summertime'. The Beatles' bassplayer at the time, Stu Sutcliffe was not involved and Pete Best was unavailable that day so his drumming duties were performed by Walters' bandmate…Ringo Starr. Sadly again, of the limited number pressed of this unique and historic inaugural recording by John, Paul, George and Ringo – with Lu – apparently none remain.

The Beatles, again not with Stu[a] and instead with Paul on bass, participated in their most significant Hamburg recording in 1961. Under another, albeit temporary name of convenience, the Beat Brothers, they backed the aforementioned, now ex-Jet Tony Sheridan for his German Polydor label session. It took place, not in a studio, but in a school hall and it was presided over by the noted producer Bert Kaempfert.[b] Pete Best played, but his timing was questioned, and his signature heavy thumping sound emasculated by actual removal of his bass drum and floor tom tom! Of the eight tracks, two were generously allocated to the 'Brothers'. From their live repertoire one was a raucous, rocked-up version of the old 1920s tune 'Ain't she sweet' (they'd heard Gene Vincent's recording but John recalled it as "very mellow and high-pitched and I used to do it like that but the Germans said 'harder, harder.'"[7]) The other selection was the Harrison-Lennon original instrumental 'Beatle bop', intentionally renamed, with Cliff Richard's backing group in mind, 'Cry for a shadow'.

As the Beatles' popularity in Hamburg and Liverpool accelerated, Sheridan's and the 'Beat Brothers'' twistable version of the old Scottish folk song 'My

[a] He had remained in Hamburg in 1961 with his German girlfriend Astrid Kirchherr, effectively ending his tenure with the Beatles; tragically, he died a year later of a brain haemorrhage.

[b] Kaempfert and his orchestra had topped the US chart in 1960 with the lush instrumental 'Wonderland by night'.

Bonnie' from that session was released as a single in both countries (his backing group credited as agreed in Germany – where it charted at five – and as 'The Beatles' for the UK). Record shop proprietor Brian Epstein had his interest piqued by requests for the disc and soon after signed up to manage the Beatles – in his old-fashioned way he liked their 'charm'. He envisioned change, both in the local and the national music industry; Bill Harry explained Merseyside musicians' pessimism: "Since the scene was so controlled by the London moguls who didn't want to know anybody from the provinces…all the Liverpool groups believed that they enjoyed the music, they played the music, they'd make a few bob and that was that."[8]

After Decca A&R man Mike Smith was finally enticed north to witness them in impressive action at The Cavern, an audition at the very start of 1962 saw them recording fifteen songs with him. These included some of their tried and trusted favourites like Barrett Strong's 'Money' and the Coasters' 'Searchin'', along with 'middle of the road' tunes such as 'Till there was you', and just three originals, all now by Lennon and McCartney: 'Like dreamers do', 'Hello little girl', and 'Love of the loved'. But, to their dismay no contract was awarded. Decca executive Dick Rowe famously, but in hindsight extremely foolishly explained to their manager, "Not to mince words Mr.Epstein, we don't like your boys' sound. Groups of guitarists are on the way out."[9]

Despite his determination Epstein soon discovered how true at least part of Bill Harry's assessment was. After the Decca débacle he made numerous doomed attempts – even with smaller companies like Pye and Oriole – to secure the Beatles a British recording contract. When all appeared to be lost they were finally offered a test recording by George Martin at EMI's minor label Parlophone which, apart from Martin's production of the Vipers' skiffle hit, had as already noted specialised in comedy and other niche records. Like Brian Epstein, the gentlemanly Martin also appreciated the Beatles' 'charm' and was quite interested – with some reservations – in their original material. He seemed unsure of the focal point of the group: "I got them to sing lots of things to find out which voice was good. I was looking for the Cliff Richard or the Elvis Presley or the Tommy Steele saying, 'Now is Paul going to be the main one, or is John…?'…and then it hit me right between the eyes, why not just have the lot of them as they are?"[10]

Pete Best's drumming however was again proving problematical. On stage it was basic, yet thunderously exciting (a 'feature' being his accenting of all four beats of the bar on the bass drum – in all songs!) but this wasn't necessarily what

was appropriate for recording. What is more, his temperament in the final analysis just didn't seem to 'fit' with the Beatles. So, at this pivotal time, Pete was sacked. His replacement, leaving Rory and the Hurricanes and rejecting a standing offer to join King Size Taylor and the Dominoes, was…Ringo Starr. Then, in a moment of bitter irony, after the first recording session at the Abbey Road studio with his new group Ringo found that Martin wasn't even convinced of *his* ability. On arriving next week Ringo discovered hired drummer Andy White sitting in the drum chair to play on their first single, 'Love me do' (Ringo was relegated to banging a tambourine, and some maraca shaking for the flipside, 'P.S. I love you').[a]

After the ignominy Ringo was, however, quick to demonstrate his talent, his unique innovative qualities and his endearing personality. The Beatles went from strength to strength, commanding passionate crowds and hitherto unimagined fees at northern venues. And then, another shift up in gear as 'Love me do' and its follow-up 'Please please me', and the *Please Please Me* LP were issued in the UK from late 1962 through to early 1963.

Of their Liverpool contemporaries only Howie Casey and the Seniors had so far – much earlier in fact in 1962 – recorded and released records, but to little recognition. Surprisingly then, while many of the other groups were also popular in Hamburg and of course at home, it wasn't until well into 1963 that any of them recorded any singles. Mostly covers (and at this stage even the Beatles were still playing and recording many of these, though not for singles), they were predominantly on continental labels like Polydor, Ariola, Philips or Fontana, or the small British ones like Oriole (no connection with Ariola) or Pye. All came *after* the Beatles' records were climbing ever higher up the UK chart but not *one* of those early Liverpool groups so far mentioned was able to capitalise on the rise of the 'Mersey sound' and what the press were calling 'Beatlemania'.

With one exception perhaps: in addition to their exciting, but very brief American success, Ian and the Zodiacs subsequently exploited their popularity in Germany by releasing, under the name 'the Koppycats', not one, but two LPs (and several singles) that *entirely* comprised anodyne 'koppies' of songs…written and recorded by the Beatles! Some of these even sold quite well back home: a case of coals to…Liverpool.

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[a] Three recordings of 'Love me do' exist, utilising each of the three drummers (Pete having played on the song for their Parlophone audition). The earliest pressings of the single did actually have Ringo on drums from his first session but for later batches, and on the *Please Please Me* LP this recording was replaced by the 'professional' version with Andy White.

These groups had left their run just a little bit too late. The unfortunate Pete Best certainly had. Following his dismissal from the Beatles, Brian Epstein, in compensation, found him the drumming job with Lee Curtis and the All Stars. In time the Curtis-less, now *Pete Best* All Stars morphed into the Pete Best Four (recording, in 1964, a cover of child actor Eddie Hodges' 'I'm gonna knock on your door'). The following year the now Pete Best Combo were lured to the US to exploit their tenuous Beatles connection. In 'Mersey' style they put down some songs written by two band members along with older American material. Included was a Beatles' favourite, 'Kansas City' and the Shirelles' 'Boys' that Pete had sung with his former group, and which Ringo subsequently inherited and recorded. An album was even issued, cunningly, if confusingly entitled *Best Of The Beatles*! By then though, Pete's former membership of the Beatles was a distant memory, if that; in due course he returned to Liverpool and retired from the business. In the early 1980s several of the Pete Best Combo originals and others were re-released in the US on the nostalgia-fuelled Collectables label. Perhaps they *were* collectable, if only for the fact that the recording artists were shamelessly, if not potentially litigably credited as none other than – 'The Beatles'![a]

And the popular, and once highly-paid Rory Storm and the Hurricanes, after they lost their drummer *to* the Beatles? The second of the only two unsuccessful singles they ever recorded – a by now very dated 'Merseybeat' version of 'America' from *West Side Story* – was optimistically, or perhaps, contritely produced as late as November 1964 by none other than Beatles' manager Brian Epstein and released on Parlophone. Sitting in on additional percussion was…the group's original drummer Ringo Starr. The Hurricanes' story ended in 1972, ten years after Ringo's rise to fame, with Rory Storm's premature death. Deepening the tragedy, his grief-stricken mother forthwith committed suicide.

So why had most of these groups not gone on with the job? Lack of application? Poor musicianship? Unoriginality? Bland presentation? Disillusionment? Internal friction or incompatibility? Pressure of alternatives such as marriage or the need for 'a real job'? Or just fate? And was it the converse of all these factors that enabled the Beatles to move up to the next level? Certainly Hamburg had been the testing ground, but still only for relatively few of the 'hundreds' of Liverpool groups (although their job opportunities there were heightened by the Beatles' fame).

[a] A sticker that was affixed to later records partially corrected this to 'Peter Best of the Beatles', but still not the Pete Best Combo.

Some stayed on in Germany, even making homes there; others headed back to Liverpool to carry on much as before. The Beatles had changed though, returning with longer (but at first, still greased back) hair, Gene Vincent-style leather outfits, stylish cowboy boots and, from hundreds of continuous hours of playing, finesse, ferocious energy and attitude: fellow Liverpudlian musician Johnny Gustafson vividly remembered them, "stamping and roaring and screaming their brains out".[11] Some in Liverpool didn't even recognise them, thinking they must be a German group. "They were amazing that they did it, they cracked Liverpool right open. The avalanche came after that really,"[12] was Johnny's awed recall of the Beatles' rapidly attained local supremacy.

While many of his musician peers had already packed it in, Gustafson was determined that he also would ride the avalanche to wherever it would take him.

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A few Liverpool groups did manage to meet all the challenges and enjoy a little, or even more than a little success, at least for a year or two. Some were even able to impress, not just European and minor recording companies but major ones back home. Johnny Gustafson was the bassplayer with the previously mentioned Cass (Brian Cassar) and the Cassanovas who had got together in 1959. While also unsuccessful in the Larry Parnes/Billy Fury audition they were nevertheless selected to back Duffy Power on *his* northern tour. However, despite having contributed to Allan Williams' doomed 'demo' tape they initially rejected the Hamburg job opportunity.

At the end of 1960, separating from Cassar – or 'Casey Jones' as he by now often called himself – the others in the quartet became the Big Three. They were "a kick-ass group" with Gustafson reputedly being "an all-round head case" while Johnny Hutchinson was "a fearsome drummer with a short fuse."[13] The Three's 'Big' sound came from over-size custom-built amplifiers that compensated for the small number of group members and enhanced their confronting stage presence. They were an early signing of manager Brian Epstein's and finally did their 'tour of duty' in Hamburg. The Big Three's first single, on Decca was a Leiber and Stoller Cavern favourite 'Some other guy' and it entered, but quickly dived from the UK chart; their second, 'By the way' by new British songwriter Mitch Murray (backed with their own Liverpool-branded dance craze attempt, 'Cavern Stomp') stalled later in 1963 just outside the top twenty. There was no more chart success: they put their lack of success down to their first single release having actually been their Decca demo, and subsequent ones being "poppy, horrible, three-chord …songs."[14] Numerous further changes to the trio, musicians going to, and coming from other Liverpool groups precipitated the Big Three's decline by 1966.

From 1958 the Remo Four had been early Liverpool favourites and instead of the Hamburg trip they, just as Earl Preston and the T-T's had, played US airforce bases in France. Incorporating Johnny Sandon, the latest in a succession of vocalists, the Remo Four recorded two singles in 1963 on Pye including an original written by guitarist Colin Manley, 'Lies' (notable for its flamboyant snare drum fills). These and subsequent records however made no impression on the national chart and Sandon departed for an equally ill-fated solo career. The Remo Four were then matched by Brian Epstein with one of his protégés, seventeen year-old Tommy

Quigley – or 'Quickly' as he, perhaps in Larry Parnes-style was dubbed. After six more unsuccessful singles in a little over a year (now on Pye offshoot Piccadilly) Tommy, not yet twenty, retired from music in 1965. Without a front man, the Four's final single, 'Live like a lady' was another Manley composition but despite continuing lack of success the Remo Four were content to collaborate with other artists until the end of the decade, Two members finally formed the late '60s one hit wonder trio Ashton Gardner and Dyke.

Another of the early starters, the Bluegenes had begun in 1957 as a jazz-skiffle group. With banjo and double bass they persevered with this style as late as 1962 but found it unwelcome in Hamburg so they donned denim (while all other groups were being fitted out in smart matching suits) and became the Swinging Blue Jeans. Their first two singles, both originals, were recorded in the UK for HMV and made a modest impression, but then their cover of Chan Romero's late '50s US minor classic 'Hippy hippy shake' – a favourite of the Liverpool groups – almost topped the UK chart early in 1964. Making it to twenty-four in the US, it was one of the earliest to establish a new pattern for the 1960s: a British export surpassing the popularity of the original. The follow-up, Little Richard's 'Good golly Miss Molly' slipped a little further down both charts, and then came 'You're no good', an r&b song written by Clint Ballard Jr. and recorded the year before by US black singer Dee Dee (younger sister of Dionne) Warwick. The Swinging Blue Jeans took it to three in the UK, but this time their version didn't compete in the States with yet another by African American, Betty Everett. The Swinging Blue Jeans last appeared in the UK chart in 1966 with the tune by American songwriting partnership Hal David and Burt Bacharach, 'Don't make me over' which ironically this time had been a US hit for *Dionne* Warwick four years before.

Founded by John McNally and Mike Pender as a skiffle group in 1959, the Searchers became a tight four-piece in which all members could sing lead with harmonies a feature and their guitar sound was also "a bit more 'jangley' [sic] than the other Liverpool groups".[15] The just referred to Johnny Sandon had sung with the Searchers but when he left to join the Remo Four he wasn't replaced. Bassplayer Tony Jackson became nominal lead singer and the remaining quartet played many of the Liverpool clubs, in 1962 becoming one of the later groups to travel to Hamburg. They were championed by Les Ackerley, the manager of one of Liverpool's newest night-spots, and rival to The Cavern, the Iron Door club. His amateur recording of them reached the appreciative ears of record producer and songwriter Tony Hatch in London (they eventually became part

of the large and varied stable of established impresario – but self-confessed hater of rock'n'roll! – Tito Burns).

The Searchers were a strong component of the northern onslaught on the UK chart, and their debut, the Hatch-produced version of the Drifters' 'Sweets for my sweet' made number one in August 1963. Five more chart-topping – or close to – singles on the Pye label followed through to 1965, along with five LPs, four of them in the top ten. The Searchers' second number one, 'Needles and pins' with its distinctive guitar treatment was originally a lowly US placing for American singer-songwriter Jackie DeShannon.[a] Early in 1964 it almost made the top ten in the US at the same time as the Swinging Blue Jeans' success: both Merseyside groups were in the vanguard of what soon became known as the 'British invasion'.

Original songwriting by the group members wasn't a strong suit though – a number of B sides and a couple of undistinguished A sides and LP tracks – with all of their singles being covers, mostly of songs by black, and often female artists such as their third British chart-topper, the Orlons' 'Don't throw your love away'. African American male doo-wop group the Clovers' 'Love potion No.9' at three was their only top ten in the US. By 1964-65 however British music was evolving quickly and it seemed as though the Searchers were content to maintain their established, and much-imitated – particularly in the US – guitar and vocal sound.

Tony Jackson disdained its mellow nature and departed for a solo career in London. He was backed by a new group he called the Vibrations that differentiated itself from the Searchers with the inclusion of an organ player. Despite several single releases also on Pye – again, covers of American songs (some ironically simulating a 'Searchers' sound, two actually *covers* of Searchers songs) – he had little further success. The Searchers' appeal had dwindled too; however, they continued to record until the early 1980s and, with sole original member McNally,[b] they are one of the few '60s groups to still be playing their hits right up to the present day.

The Fourmost began as the Two Jays in 1957 and by 1961 the, now *Four* Jays were an early attraction at The Cavern Club. Under their final name – adapted from a third permutation, Four Mosts – they were managed by Brian Epstein, and then recorded by George Martin for Parlophone. Their first two singles made the UK top ten, and twenty, and their third, 'A little loving' penned by American

[a] For this song she claimed, but was never granted, a co-writing credit with composers Jack Nitzsche and Sonny Bono. Jackie would however earn full royalties for her own song, also recorded by the Searchers, 'When you walk in the room' (number three for them in the UK).

[b] Mike Pender, having left the group in the mid 1980s then chose to front a series of new groups that he perhaps confusingly calls 'Mike Pender's Searchers'.

Russ Alquist peaked at six. There was no recognition in the US though, and no more hit singles. The death of their rhythm guitarist in 1966 accelerated the Fourmost's departure from the pop scene, and, as they had always injected a deal of comedy into their act, they moved across to the cabaret circuit. Their last entry in the British chart was a version, with silly Bugs Bunny voice and kazoo solo, of the Coasters' (and later Elvis Presley's) Leiber and Stoller song 'Girls, girls, girls'.

Another foursome, the Mavericks came together somewhat later than others so far mentioned and, capitalising on Liverpool's new 'sound' and with image to match, were renamed the Mersey Beats. The two words soon merged and the Merseybeats' first four releases on Fontana were sedate, proficiently executed ballads, still imbued with that distinctive northern English sound. The first and fourth were written by Hal David and Burt Bacharach, the middle two by Peter Lee Stirling, a member of briefly charting Birmingham group the Bruisers. All these sold well, their second, 'I think of you' making it to five in the UK (and their LP making it to just outside the top ten). Despite their saleable name, the Merseybeats were not able to make an im-pression on the US scene, and with most of the next four singles performing less well back home, they split in 1966. Consequently, half the group took half the name: as the Merseys they surpassed any previous accomplishments by making number four in that breakup year with a song by the American McCoys, 'Sorrow'.

William Ashton became Billy J. Kramer and was another to be noticed by Brian Epstein. His band since 1960, the Coasters – yes, another name that had long been in use by an established American group – were not keen to go professional. So Epstein enticed a group from Manchester, the Dakotas to leave their vocalist and imported them, lock, stock and barrel (for their part the Coasters teamed up, with no name change and to little acclaim, with fifteen year-old Chick Graham). The more successful 'new' act was Billy J. Kramer *with* the Dakotas, the deal enabling the band to also record in their own right (their instrumental 'The cruel sea' made it within the top twenty in 1963 and was covered the following year by American surf guitar group the Ventures).

Kramer was, by Epstein's hyperbolic description "perhaps in some ways the best-looking pop singer in the world."[16] Be that as it may have been, record producer George Martin's expert opinion was also in a global context: "…his was not the greatest voice in the world."[17] Nevertheless, Billy and the Dakotas hit pay dirt: the first five singles of the collaboration on Parlophone registered one, two, four, one again and ten in the UK. The fourth release, the American composition

'Little children', and its flipside, also made the US top ten but that was the only major impression Billy J. made on the charts there. As the Searchers had discovered, nothing stays the same for too long and in 1965 Billy J. Kramer's final chart appearance – twelve in the UK – was with David and Bacharach's 'Trains and boats and planes'.

In many ways, the quintessential Liverpudlian pop artist, the 'boy most likely' was Gerard Marsden. He was born, as most of his musical contemporaries were, during the early war years and would, in the Merseyside suburb of Toxteth, have experienced all the privations of that time and its long years of recovery. He had an early love of music, but that was probably not unusual in the days when singalongs occurred regularly at family and other events. In 1959, after the usual grounding in skiffle he enlisted his two years-older brother Freddy and two others and with only one change a little later the quartet remained stable. 'Gerry and the Mars Bars' (their name soon changed after complaints from the confectionery company) were an unusual combination. Gerry, with cheeky grin and a chirpy, 'Scouse' singing voice was sole guitarist, the other lead instrument being upright piano, along with the bass and drums rhythm section.

Gerry and the Pacemakers became one of the top groups in Liverpool and while at first they turned down the Hamburg opportunity they ultimately became very popular there. They were the second group to be signed by Brian Epstein – he said Gerry was "one of the biggest stars in Liverpool" and saw in him Tommy Steele-style "native talent and warmth and instinctive showmanship".[18] In April 1963 their George Martin-produced single on Columbia, Mitch Murray's jaunty 'How do you do it?', (albeit a song already rejected by other acts including Adam Faith), became the very first Liverpool production to reach the top of the official UK chart. This achievement was quickly repeated by Murray's not dissimilar 'I like it', and then Gerry and the Pacemakers changed pace for their version of the uplifting ballad 'You'll never walk alone' (from Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*). It became their third consecutive number one and this established a chart-topping record not equalled by any other Mersey group during the 1960s.[a] Hopes of four in a row were dashed early in 1964 when their fourth single, Gerry's own 'I'm the one' was kept from the top by the Searchers' 'Needles and pins'.

Gerry and the Pacemakers never had another UK number one although two other singles, also both originals made it into the top ten in 1964. That was the

[a] Not until that city's Frankie Goes To Hollywood, twenty years later.

year of the 'British invasion' of the US and the group was very popular there too with three top ten hits and three other respectably placed entries up till early 1965. Oddly, the Pacemakers only issued two British LPs (compared with, for instance, the Searchers' four in the time). The first, the cleverly named *How Do You Like It?* that predominantly comprised covers of American material went to number two in the UK; the second was Gerry Marsden's mostly original soundtrack of the group's 1965 feature film that cashed in on all things Liverpool, *Ferry Cross The Mersey*. But from that point on, only two years after the great northern English music revolution, nothing more of any great consequence happened for Gerry and the Pacemakers. The next era in popular music brought about their demise late in 1966 and Gerry in time proved to be an endearing cabaret performer.

And it was probably too late for newer acts from that city hoping to ride on the coat tails of their predecessors: as that champion of Liverpool music, Bill Harry conceded, "After 1964 groups from Liverpool, no matter how talented, were personæ non gratæ."[19a] The Escorts were begun in 1962 by three school friends. They opened their account with a plodding version, on Fontana, of Little Richard's 'Dizzy Miss Lizzy' (the signature riff with bizarrely tremolo[b] bar-bent notes throughout) and followed it with five more unsuccessful non-originals before fizzling out four years later.

Earl Royce and the Olympics formed in 1963 and recorded for Columbia a Latinised arrangement of Doris Day's 'Que sera sera' and then, for Parlophone, a pop version of 'Guess things happen that way' originally by Johnny Cash. Their career highlight was appearing in Gerry's film *Ferry Cross The Mersey*.

Despite Cavern Club DJ Bob Wooler's assertion that the Dennisons had created the biggest impact in Liverpool since the earlier groups the shock waves of this were minimal. Their first single on Decca in 1963, their original 'Be my girl' and, quite different sounding, Rufus Thomas's 'Walking the dog' a year later made the lower reaches of the British top forty.

Sounding like children's TV characters, the Bumblies also started in that heady year, 1963 but didn't change their name to the Cryin' Shames[c] until the end of

[a] He went on to qualify this: "Talent in the city didn't dry up, as many presumed: it was simply condemned to isolation once more when London regained control of the music business." Evidence of this is shown from chapter 11 of this book onward.

[b] A tremolo, or more correctly, vibrato bar is attached near a guitar's bridge and can be used to increase tension on the strings, modulating the pitch. In the early 1960s it was commonly used by 'guitar groups' like the Ventures and the Shadows.

[c] Not to be confused with the strangely spelled Cryan' Shames from the US who, with a version of 'Sugar and spice', charted there at forty-nine, five places lower than the Searchers' version from a year or two before.

1965, releasing on Decca a cover of the Drifters' 'Please stay' shortly after. It made twenty-six on the UK chart but then the group rejected Brian Epstein's managerial offer, underwent lineup changes and released two more singles before meeting, at much the same time, a similar fate to the Escorts.

Denny Seyton (real name Brian Tarr) and the Sabres were unusually signed to the UK division of the American Mercury label and early in 1964 they recorded their first two rocking singles – both presumably with no double entendres intended – Leiber-Stoller's 'Tricky Dicky' and Larry Williams' 'Short fat Fannie'. With ballads accepted as occasional alternatives to beat songs their treatment of the mellow 1930s ballad 'The way you look tonight' had a modest showing in the chart. However, despite a name and label change, the Denny Seyton Group's poppy original by organist Lally Stott,[a] 'Just a kiss' recorded for Parlophone failed to further their career.

The Kubas began in 1962, took the Hamburg trip and were signed by Brian Epstein. Like the Cryin' Shames they missed out on the euphoria of the earlier '60s, not releasing their first single on Columbia, their quite effectively jangly, but by now dated original 'I love her' until as late as 1965. Again, that song (though not footage of the group which ended up on the cutting room floor) was featured in Gerry Marsden's *Ferry Cross The Mersey*. With a sound that harked back to earlier times the Koobas (as spelt on the next two records for their new label Pye) had no chart success. In similar fashion to the Remo Four, they embraced the changes that the second half of the decade would bring, reverting to Columbia for four more singles before calling it a day in 1968.

Most unusual, and rare, if not unique in the entire world was the all-female vocal and instrumental quartet the Liverbirds[b] (pronounced 'lie-verbirds') that specialised in raw rhythm and blues rather than pop. Formed in 1963, but less well-known around their home town, they, like Ian and the Zodiacs concentrated on a career in Hamburg. They even enjoyed a top ten German hit with African American blues-rock'n'roll crossover artist Bo Diddley's 'Diddley daddy' and released their version of the Miracles' 'Shop around' (backed with their original, 'It's got to be with you') in the US. The Liverbirds finished up by the end of the decade, but by now several members had found permanent homes in Germany.

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[a] Stott would continue to further his songwriting career; while recording many of his own songs his arguably best-known tune that many, try as they may, would not be able to get out of their heads was 'Chirpy chirpy cheep cheep', recorded in 1971 by the Scottish group appropriately called Middle Of The Road.

[b] No connection with *The Liver Birds*, the popular BBC TV series set in Liverpool that ran for a decade from 1969.

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A late-starting group that did achieve, and should have done even better were the Mojos who began (as the Nomads) in 1962. The usual lineup shuffles (including the addition of one of Faron's Flamingos) served to progressively strengthen the lineup whose sound, with piano and harmonica, took on the bluesy feel that the Liverbirds also featured and was gaining strength elsewhere in the UK: as founding member Stu James commented, "We made our name in Liverpool as blues specialists but were persuaded to do all sorts of lightweight pop stuff." [20] Their superb second single on Decca in 1963, 'Everything's alright' made it to nine in the UK in 1964, and the next two registered within the top thirty. More than one member of the Mojos contributed to the original songwriting on both sides of most of their singles. As James has observed though, they seemed to lose focus after that hit year, persevering for four more nonetheless.

With impeccable credentials, one new Liverpool artist, immensely popular throughout the 1960s and beyond was inevitably doomed, for totally unjust reasons explained earlier, to, if not second-class status, at least alternative categorisation. The artist was not a group. A denizen of The Cavern Club – employed as cloakroom attendant – Priscilla White abbreviated and inverted her name to become Cilla Black, often singing with groups such as King Size Taylor and the Dominoes, Rory Storm and the Hurricanes and the Big Three. She completely eclipsed other Liverpool female hopefuls – including fellow Cavern singer, Beryl Marsden. Born Beryl Hogg (and therefore no relation of Gerry's) she released several singles and later joined Shotgun Express, a shortlived London r&b group. Its other members went on to much bigger and better things (see p.140) – but sadly, not Beryl.

From elsewhere in the UK however, those who *would* share Cilla's spotlight, many of these with big hits, including number ones of their own included Sandra Goodrich, Mary O'Brien, Lynn Ripley, Julie Rolls and Mary Lawrie – better known respectively as Sandie Shaw, Dusty Springfield, Twinkle, Julie Rogers, and Scottish Lulu (initially with her group the Luvvers) – plus, one to use her actual birth name, Marianne Faithfull. They were joined by older singers like Kathleen O'Rourke, stage name Kathy Kirby, and reviving her career yet again, Sally – Petula – Clark. And not to be forgotten is Judith Cock – who took her mother's surname Durham. She was the vocal strength of the much-loved expatriate Australian pop-folk group the Seekers who, with their acoustic guitars and double bass held their own amongst the British beat groups and twice topped the chart.[a]

[a] Several Seekers hits were written by Dusty Springfield's brother Tom (who changed his birth name from Dion O'Brien); both he and Dusty had earlier in the '60s played in a similar group, the Springfields.

Cilla Black, with her soaring vocal range, perpetually, but genuinely sunny personality, and proudly Liverpudlian speaking voice – her catch phrase being, "Tara for now!" – along with Brian Epstein's management, earned eleven top ten UK hits (and three LPS) up till 1971 including two number ones in a row at the beginning of her career. Seemingly loved by all, Cilla Black graduated to a lifetime of show business popularity – long after most Liverpool groups were merely fading memories.

With the Beatles…

The Beatles, having cut their teeth on all the same material played by most of these groups stood their ground when it came to recording. While their early sound differed little from, say, that of the Swinging Blue Jeans' beat incarnation, they were determined to set themselves apart from their fellow Liverpool musicians with their creative originality – even if their own songs at this early stage still comprised a small part of their repertoire. In doing so they were strengthening the trend that had been set by American artists since time immemorial, right up to the likes of Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison: popularity was one thing, but true integrity only came from taking charge of as many aspects as possible of one's career. Along with the fact that they were not a solo artist but a group of four, they were also drawing a line between themselves and those older-style stars – such as Sinatra and Presley – who sang other people's songs.

They had persuaded producer George Martin that their debut should be, with its 'Hey! Baby'-inspired harmonica[a], the lurching 'Love me do' (written as early as 1958, and already heard by him at their 'recording test') – and *not* the aforementioned 'How do you do it?' (even though it was a new song by a British writer). The choice for their follow-up of 'Please please me', albeit with Martin's suggested faster tempo than their originally intended Orbison-esque feel, vindicated their stance on recording originals. As luck would have it however, Gerry and the Pacemakers' rendition of 'How do you do it' topped the officially recognised British *Record Retailer* trade magazine Top 50 singles chart while 'Please please me' just fell short (the Beatles' consolation prizes being number one position on the lists of the other UK music newspapers, *New Musical Express*, *Melody Maker*

[a] Not a single key 'blues harp' (although he later used that type too) but a multi-key chromatic harmonica – as John explained, "a harmonica, you know, with a button…which wasn't real funky blues enough I suppose, but you couldn't get 'Hey! Baby' licks on a blues harp." (Interviewed by Dennis Elsas, September 1974 http://www.denniselsas.com/john-lennon/) John had actually stolen this one from a Dutch music shop on their first trip to Hamburg. He'd first been given a harmonica by his uncle when he was young and years later learned some tricks from Delbert McClinton who was in the UK with Bruce 'Hey! Baby' Channel's band.

and *Disc* – so George Martin's proclamation, "Gentlemen, you've just made your first number one record,"[21] was technically correct). In further compensation, the Beatles' first two LPs, each with more than half original songs, hit, and stayed at the top of the long player charts consecutively for thirty, and, twenty-one weeks (*no* other Liverpool artists' LPs made number one during the 1960s; *every one* of the Beatles eleven UK albums did – the last, *Let It Be* in mid-1970).

Most of the Beatles' early singles, as well as B sides and LP tracks featured John Lennon's distinctively non-pop idol sandpaper vocals (he appeared still to be nominal leader, and lead singer)[a] with Paul on backup and often George adding a third harmony. The chugging 'From me to you' (as previously, with harmonica, and enhanced by their producer's canny suggestion of the "da da da, da da dum dum da" intro) was followed by the "yeah yeah yeah" teen fodder of 'She loves you' and 'I want to hold your hand' (teen fodder it may have been but it "…electrified American pop…American youths crouched by their dansettes[b] with guitars trying to work out what the Beatles were doing."[22]) The swinging, rocking 'Can't buy me love' was Paul's first for a single on lead vocal. Then came the beginning of the experimentation that would consistently expand the difference between the Beatles and their contemporaries: the dramatic opening twelve-string guitar chord[c] and ostinato terminal riff, wordplay and guitar-piano lead break of 'A hard days night' (not to mention the artful film of which it was the theme, and its companion LP – their third, and this time 100% original), and the startling feedback intro, chunky guitar work and energetic tom tom workout of 'I feel fine'. *All* were number one records, for weeks and weeks, in the UK, US and many other countries, and all by the end of 1964.

Lennon's and McCartney's songwriting was already being seen as a guarantee of success – but whether that was due to its quality, or its presumed magical connection with the Beatles can be debated. Billy J. Kramer certainly benefited. His 1963 first single, chosen from the Beatles' *Please Please Me* LP, was 'Do you

[a] On 'Love me do' both John and Paul closely harmonised throughout the verses. But because of the limitations of two-track recording, in order for John to play harmonica Paul alone sang the title words, and the bridging "Someone to love…" section. With the exception of Paul's vocal for 'Can't buy me love', Lennon sang lead on the other Beatles' next eight official UK-release singles up to and including 'Help!' (and most LP tracks). Following that the balance significantly shifted toward Paul who was the main vocalist on nine singles (including 'Eleanor Rigby' with Ringo singing 'Yellow submarine' on the double-A side single), and John only singing four (including 'Day tripper' and 'Strawberry Fields forever', again, both double-A sides with Paul's 'We can work it out' and 'Penny Lane'); George provided the lead vocal for his 'Something'.

[b] A Dansette was a British brand of portable record player. As it was generally not available in the US it is no doubt being used here as a generic term.

[c] Augmented by John on six-string acoustic guitar, Paul on bass and George Martin on grand piano.

want to know a secret?' (the B side 'I'll be on my way', was specially written for Kramer by John and Paul). It was kept from the top only by 'From me to you' but then Kramer's Lennon-McCartney tailor-made song 'Bad to me' – with the Beatles' 'I call your name' on the B side – held down number one for three weeks, in turn to be deposed by 'She loves you'. In the US, 'Bad to me' – as a B side, its *third* release there – finally scored nine (the A side, the already mentioned 'Little children' went two places higher). The Beatles pair's 'I'll keep you satisfied' and 'From a window' also registered in the UK top ten for Kramer and the Dakotas.

The Fourmost had a similar experience, to a lesser extent. John Lennon's earliest composition, a Buddy Holly-sounding song dating back to 1957 and chosen by the Beatles for their Decca audition, 'Hello little girl' was recorded both by the Fourmost and, by Gerry and the Pacemakers. In strange parallel with the 'How do you do it?' situation, Gerry recorded a demo but passed on it, cannily preferring what became his second chart-topper 'I like it'. The Fourmost took the Lennon-McCartney' song to nine late in 1963 and then the songwriting pair's 'I'm in love' – also recorded, but not released by Billy J. Kramer! – to seventeen. In 1966 their final, but inconsequential attempt to have a hit with a Beatles song was the faithful cover of 'Here, there and everywhere' from *Revolver*.

Throughout the 1960s and down the years numerous artists, and not just from Liverpool have hoped to be touched by the magic. But after the top ten debut for Birmingham's Applejacks with London writers Les Reed and Geoff Stephens' 'Tell me when' they could only manage twenty late in 1964 with another Beatles Decca audition song 'Like dreamers do'. In the same year the Naturals from Essex recorded 'I should have known better' from the *A Hard Day's Night* soundtrack. Despite its being voted a 'miss' by George and Ringo when they guested on BBC TV's new record release preview programme *Juke Box Jury,* the Naturals' quicker tempo version rose to twenty-four (while not issued as an A side in the UK or US, the Beatles' original topped charts elsewhere in parts of the world). The Naturals' following singles (that included a new Mitch Murray tune) went nowhere. American James Marcus Smith travelled to the UK and had some success as P.J.Proby; his recording of 'That means a lot', a reject from the Beatles' second soundtrack *Help!* made thirty on the British chart. After a string of failed records, the Dowlands, two Everlys-imitating brothers from Bournemouth had a brief chart moment in 1964 with, from *With The Beatles*, 'All my loving'.

A more successful acoustic guitar-playing duo was Peter and Gordon. Peter Asher, the brother of Paul's current girlfriend Jane was, with his singing partner

Gordon Waller the beneficiary of the Beatles connection when the pleasantly harmonious, Beatles-lite 'A world without love' (written by McCartney, but also credited to Lennon) hit the top in both the UK and US in 1964. Following it, the less substantial 'Nobody I know', this time officially just by McCartney made only ten, and two more of his, 'I don't want to see you again' and, two years later, 'Woman' made the US top twenty but were not as successful at home (the composer of 'Woman' was listed in the UK as 'Bernard Webb', the US as 'A. Smith', Paul's ploy to see if the song could achieve on its own merits). Peter and Gordon continued to chart with covers and some novelty numbers until the later '60s.

Another British duo was easily confused with them: both pairs sported 'Beatle' haircuts and one of each wore heavy-rimmed glasses. Like Peter and Gordon the second two went by their first names, Chad and Jeremy[a] and, Everly Brothers-style, strummed acoustic guitars (although Chad sometimes uniquely played a recently issued Gibson EDS-1275 double-neck – six and twelve-string – electric). With a softer sound, and less reliance on harmonies they had little success in their home country but, with one top ten and three others around the twenty mark were popular in the US. However, their release of Lennon-McCartney's 'From a window' in 1965 lacked the drive of Billy J. Kramer's version from the year before; its highest placing for Chad and Jeremy was just inside the weekly *Billboard* 'Hot 100'.

And to *further* add to the confusion a third duo used 'Christian' names when they put Lennon and McCartney's 'Michelle' into the UK and US top twenties a year later. The biblically-titled 'David and Jonathan' were in fact two composers in their own right, Roger Greenaway and Roger Cook. Later in 1966 their own 'Lovers of the world unite' achieved seven at home but a second Beatles' song, 'She's leaving home' made little impression for them the following year. And to demonstrate how convoluted the practice of recording others' songs could become, former folk group the Overlanders recorded versions of both Chad and Jeremy's earlier US hit 'Yesterday's gone' (written by Chad Stuart) and 'Michelle', the latter record outdoing David and Jonathan by ten places to top the British chart.

Cilla Black had a false start in 1963 with a third song from the Beatles' Decca audition, Lennon and McCartney's 'Love of the loved'. This was later redeemed by two top tens, also written by them, 'It's for you' in 1964 and 'Step inside love' four years later. Despite Cilla's British popularity she had difficulty competing in

[a] Chad Stuart (or actually, David Stuart Chadwick) and Jeremy Clyde (Jeremy being his third given name).

the US with its plethora of female stars.[a] No such problem was encountered in 1969 by Mary Hopkin, the Welsh singer discovered by Paul McCartney. After having a huge hit in the UK, US and around the world with the originally Russian 'Those were the days' she followed it to similar international acclaim with Lennon-McCartney's 'Goodbye'.[b]

Beatles songs couldn't *always* guarantee success. After earlier top ten hits, Kenny Lynch, a London singer of Caribbean parentage was the first outside the group to record a Lennon-McCartney song. Hastily composed on a bus they were all sharing for a tour, 'Misery' was first offered to headliner, young Helen Shapiro. When that was declined – sixteen year-old Helen may not have readily identified with the morbid title – Lynch took it on but it suffered a – miserable – fate (the Beatles revived it for their first LP). Backed by the Remo Four, young Tommy Quickly's 'Tip of my tongue' written by Lennon and McCartney also sank without much trace in 1963 and a Beatles song couldn't kick start the new career of Larry Parnes' former pop idol Duffy Power. He recorded an interesting organ-driven jazz-blues version of 'I saw her standing there' backed by London's Graham Bond Quartet (with young drummer Peter 'Ginger' Baker and teenagers Jack Bruce and John McLaughlin). American Del Shannon became the first ever to put a Beatles song into the US weekly 'Hot 100'. Competing with the original that was struggling against almost complete lack of interest in the States in 1963 (that all changed a year later), his closely imitative version of 'From me to you' – he carried off the falsetto to perfection – that he'd heard while in England peaked at seventy-seven halfway through the year. The next year, 'I'll cry instead' from *A Hard Day's Night* made little impression in the UK for Sheffield's Vance Arnold (and his Avengers). In an odd reversal, 'Vance' then reverted to his real name and recorded some more Beatles' tunes later in the '60s with considerably better results (see chapter 15).

Most unusual of all was Lennon and McCartney's 'One and one is two'. As compositionally simplistic as the equation of its title, it was rejected by both Billy J. Kramer – John Lennon even warned it might end his career! – and the Fourmost until optimistically picked up in 1964 by a group whose origins – possibly South

[a] Most British female singers made at least some impression across the Atlantic at this time: veteran Petula Clark scored a number one there, and Lulu also, with the theme to the hit film *To Sir With Love* (similarly, the Seekers made second position with their theme from *Georgy Girl* after their earlier top ten 'I'll never find another you'). Dusty Springfield had a top ten single and another just outside and Marianne Faithfull did quite well; but Sandie Shaw, and most surprisingly, Cilla Black could only make modest inroads in the US.

[b] Despite the accreditation this was actually, like 'A world without love', wholly Paul McCartney's project – written, produced and accompanied on guitar, bass and drums by him.

African – seem to be shrouded in mystery. In a reversal of Billy J.'s group-naming arrangement, the Strangers *with* Mike Shannon (no relation of Del) had, it would seem, no success at all, anywhere, with the song.

Whether, in the absence of the Beatles – and their songwriting – any others of their time could have become the world's next major pop stars is difficult to know. It is nigh on impossible of course to remove the Beatles overlay that persists fifty years later in order to gain any degree of true objectivity. It's safe to say however that most of the Liverpool acts, even though they undoubtedly had considerable merit, can be eliminated from the process. All were either individually, or collectively capable of professional standards of playing and singing – and many had, by 1964, recorded, and for major British labels. Most of them however had little or no songwriting ability so continued to record the rock'n'roll songs they'd been playing live for years, or, recent African American material, and, if they were lucky, something new available from a professional tunesmith from the States or the UK.

Most of their singles sought to capture something of that Beatles sound: jangly guitars, vocal harmonies and of course that trademark, often deliberately exaggerated 'Scouse' accent. All this considered, success and/or longevity, even in their home country, should surely have been expected to be greater: in actual fact most only lasted until around the mid-'60s. In the final analysis, it would seem that the Beatles were both a boost, but also, as they now dominated the charts and the world's attention, an impediment to their compatriots' chances.

As for presentation, Brian Epstein had set the bar (notwithstanding the Swinging Blue Jeans, not managed by him) with his insistence that the Beatles slough their leather outfits and wear tailor-made matching dark suits which they teamed with stylish white shirts and narrow knitted ties (their famous collarless pale grey suits, based on a design by Pierre Cardin made a relatively brief appearance only during 1963). Their elastic-sided Cuban-heeled footwear very soon became known as 'Beatle boots'. Hairstyles were something else, and the Beatles were again ahead of the game with moptops fashioned by Jürgen Vollmer, one of their arty German friends (this happened not in Hamburg, but in Paris where he cut and styled the holidaying John's and Paul's hair; on their return, George followed suit, drummer at the time Pete Best did not, but replacement Ringo was only too happy to conform when he joined). Large numbers of other Liverpool musicians copied the example overnight by washing the grease out of their hair and letting it flow, and grow – although some, including Billy J. Kramer and members of the Searchers, resolutely stuck with the brush-back. And others, like the Pacemakers with their

neat short hair made no attempt at all to embrace any trend. Spectacles were also worn without any apparent self-consciousness, artists like Buddy Holly and Shadows' guitarist Hank Marvin having set that example – although John Lennon at first refused to emulate his hero Buddy and wear *his* glasses, preferring to peer myopically into the presumably unseen audience.

As with the clothing, stage acts were relatively toned down from the drug and alcohol-fuelled Hamburg days. Most groups, including the once unhinged Beatles – Lennon's only vestige of that being his tasteless on-stage imitations of disabled people, and Nazi salutes – now tended to stand, play and sing, smile a lot, occasionally shake a shaggy head, and politely bow together at the end of their performance. Despite the restraint, some however still managed to retain a distinctive aura.

It seems probable that, in lieu of the Beatles, only two Mersey groups, both originally considered on par with them – neither of them recording any Lennon-McCartney songs – could have been contenders for pop idol status (although Cilla Black certainly became, if not a pop idol, an all-round showbiz star). The talented and good-looking, but fairly wooden Searchers had solid credentials – and the fourth singing voice was a bonus, (in the Beatles Ringo only had a – much-loved – cameo lead vocal role and he occasionally sang backup in recording sessions). Important also was the Searchers' equivalent of George Martin, producer-musician-songwriter Tony Hatch (who, unlike Martin, recorded *all* their records with the then uncommon stereo separation).[a] Despite some strong hit singles in the UK – their first number one, 'Sweets for my sweet' as a result of John Lennon's suggestion – and in the US, the Searchers' lack of original material, and their unpreparedness, or inability to vary or develop their trademark sound and image inhibited their progress. Inconsistent management contrasted with the personalised care offered to the Beatles, and to a lesser extent his other charges, by Brian Epstein.

Founding members John McNally and Mike Pender recalled seeing the Beatles – still with Stuart Sutcliffe and Pete Best – in early times when the Searchers were rated more highly. McNally observed the Beatles' magnetism: "…people actually stopped dancing…[they] all walked forward and watched the band and we thought, 'Something's happening, something strange is happening here'," [23] and similarly Pender's reaction was, "…once we saw the Beatles we realised we were always going to be second best…The first time I saw them I thought, 'Yes, that is how

[a] The Beatles' records were all, up to 1969's *Yellow Submarine*, primarily mixed in mono, (stereo was seen as less important as few could afford equipment capable of playing it). They *were* then mixed in stereo as a second priority but once the mono mixes were complete the Beatles themselves showed little interest in the later process.

you have to be.' " [24] Frank Allen, the Searchers' bassplayer since Tony Jackson departed in 1964 (and formerly of instrumental group Sounds Incorporated) has expressed appreciation to "the Beatles for opening the doors" conceding that, "They were way ahead of everyone and it is only because of them that we and others were able to make it." [25]

Gerry and the Pacemakers had been seen as very much equals of, in fact earlier, like the Searchers, *superior* to the Beatles back home – Bob Wooler, DJ at The Cavern Club and a man with his finger on the pulse of the Liverpool music scene certainly had been convinced so. Gerry's established group had been playing regularly long before the Beatles had a working lineup – and of course he and the Pacemakers ultimately had that record-establishing triumvirate of chart-toppers. As for international fame how-ever, Gerry, very much like Frank Allen acknowledged, "The Beatles opened the door. If it wasn't for them we'd never have made it in the States so early." [26] But, with his music hall smile and banter in reality he was the focal point of an other-wise fairly lacklustre-looking and instrumentally limited group. Gerry's personality and chirruping 'Scouse' voice, and the group's perky sound endeared them to teens and parents alike elsewhere in the UK and overseas but, despite Brian Epstein's management, their rise – and demise – was meteoric, original songwriting coming too late to prolong their career.

Allan Williams and Bob Wooler had a similar experience to that of Searchers McNally and Pender: they witnessed both Gerry and the Pacemakers and the Beatles in an even earlier Liverpool concert, before either group's time in Hamburg (and while the Beatles were still hiring temporary drummers). On that occasion both men agreed that Gerry and the Pacemakers "were truly magnificent." [27] Then Williams and Wooler observed what ensued: "When the Beatles came on it was as though someone had pressed ever so gently on the nervous system of each and every boy and girl in that hall…as they played, the Beatles formed a solid bridge of feeling between themselves and their audience…There was something supernatural about it. They had a greatness about them…" [28] For his part, Wooler was soon "to become the Beatles' biggest champion." [29]

As for the Beatles' music, their biographer Bob Spitz encapsulated its features: "There was no mistaking that a distinctive sound was developing: chord patterns that repeated in their repertoires, a penchant for exquisitely modulated phrasing and sudden downshifting into minor chords, deliberate Everly Brothers references in the harmonies, ways of punctuating lyrics with dynamics, all of it creating a unique, idiosyncratic pop style." [30]

10 | MANCUNIANS[a] AND BRUMMIES[b]

From 1963, for three or so short years, the homegrown Mersey sound from that alien northern city of Liverpool exploded, precipitating a music revolution throughout the UK that engulfed the US and elsewhere in the world a year later. But who else, from where else, attempted either to emulate that sound, build on it, or, for that matter, offer an equally exciting alternative?

Manchester is only thirty-five miles, or around an hour's drive inland, east of Liverpool. It's also connected with the seaport by the Manchester Ship Canal that was constructed in the late nineteenth century to enable ocean-going vessels to gain access to the important industrial centre (earlier in the 1800s one of the first ever commercial steam trains opened up a route between the two cities). Like Liverpool, Manchester was extensively bombed during World War II and was undergoing recovery during the 1950s and '60s. If Liverpool, following on from the brief but popular skiffle craze was a hotbed of musical innovation during that time it would be reasonable to surmise that nearby Manchester would have had a vibrant music scene too – certainly its Dakotas were highly regarded enough to become Billy J. Kramer's new backing group.

And indeed, similarly to Bill Harry's and Bob Wooler's expansive estimate of Liverpool's 1960s beat population, hundreds of outfits are listed on the commemorative website *Manchesterbeat*. Olaf Owre, in writing about one of those groups however candidly observes, "Manchester never got a similar trademark or sound of its own," though he goes on to stress, "Nevertheless, the 'British Beat Boom' soon saw Manchester emerge as a strong contender to Liverpool, with a lot of talented young musicians and countless groups popping up everywhere in and around the city." However, he finally concedes, "…the vast majority of Manchester groups formed during the early 1960s never reached that level of fame and commercial success, and had to come to terms with achieving only local prominence, if any at all."[31] Manchester musician Graham Nash was there at the time, and played in both cities. He makes the comparison, "…there were more bands per capita in Liverpool than anywhere else," and, perhaps more significantly, "They were louder and tougher than the bands we were used to in Manchester."[32]

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[a] Mancunians: Citizens of Manchester; derived from the original Latin name for the city, Mancunium.

[b] Brummies: Citizens of Birmingham – or, as it was in the 17th, century alternately called, Brummagem. Hence, of course, 'Brumbeat'.

Hapless Pete MacLaine was, throughout 1962, the artist who had been backed by fellow Mancunians the Dakotas before Brian Epstein poached them for the higher-profile stint with Billy J. Kramer. MacLaine rejected Epstein's offer of a swap that would have paired him up with Billy J.'s Liverpool-based Coasters. Instead he formed his own new group, the Clan. With his cheery face he looked not unlike Gerry Marsden and even sounded a little like him. In 1963 the bouncy, Mersey-style 'Yes I do' on Decca that was co-written by MacLaine and another Clan member was their only single release. Hapless maybe, but apparently happy…Pete MacLaine continued to play around Manchester with differing lineups of the Clan over many years.

Much more successful was Freddie Garrity. He'd started in a late '50s skiffle group that, a few years later, evolved into the Dreamers. Like the Fourmost, they naturally injected comedy into their act, and, with diminutive (five feet three) Freddie in thick-rimmed spectacles out front of three other nondescript musicians they made Gerry and the Pacemakers look like matinee idols. Their first three Columbia singles in 1963 approached the UK's number one position, the first being a cover, with clipped enunciation of 'If you gotta make a fool of somebody', a 1962 black r&b hit by African American James Ray (who, at five feet, stood a full quarter of a foot shorter than Freddie!) Then, sounding as if Gerry (or perhaps Pete) had inhaled from a helium balloon, came 'I'm telling you now' co-written by Garrity and Mitch Murray, and, Murray's own 'You were made for me' (Freddie himself wrote most B sides).

There was one more top ten entry after that but the novelty wore off in the UK after 1965. However, their uniquely zany stage act, with grinning Garrity who cavorted around in front of the band as they performed bizarre synchronised leg movements endeared them, for a year or so, to American devotees of anything wacky associated with the 'British invasion'. 'I'm telling you now' actually topped the US chart in 1965; exploiting the gimmick to the max, 'Do the Freddie' instructed fans in the intricacies of their 'dance steps'.

The phenomenal success of Gerry and the Pacemakers in 1963 seemed to have established an alternative paradigm in the 'beat' music scene, something that was new to – at least male – pop music in general: singers who were acceptable to all ages, non-threatening, perhaps funny, like Freddie and even…cute. 'Cute' was Manchester's fifteen year-old, light-voiced Peter Noone. He became, because of a supposed resemblance to a cartoon character, 'Herman', lead singer of the Hermits. Herman's Hermits were produced by Michael Hayes, a fading pop singer with a

couple of passé singles in 1963 and a very Larry Parnes-style showbiz name, Mickie Most. The group's debut record, also on Columbia in 1964 was, again, a version of a moderately successful African American release, in this case by the lead singer of the Cookies, Earl-Jean (McCrae). 'I'm into something good' went straight to number one followed over the next year by more top ten singles, all written by professional songwriters (with some B sides written by the band). They were very popular in the US but the only two to top the chart were, following Freddie's success, the novelties (not released as singles at home) 'Mrs.Brown you've got a lovely daughter' (a faithful cover of a new song from a British TV play) and the old 1910 cockney ditty (also popularised by Joe Brown) 'I'm Henry the VIII, I am'.

Over the years Herman's Hermits have been saddled with the claim that they didn't play their own instruments in the studio. This was sometimes true, but they were not the only ones: the recording process in those days was concerned with getting the song down on tape as quickly as possible. This task was often more quickly accomplished by professional, music-reading session musicians.

Another to commence his career in 1963 was Glyn Ellis who, as 'Wayne Fontana' (after Elvis's drummer, D.J.Fontana) assembled the Mindbenders, with one Eric Stewart on guitar. They recorded, coincidentally on the Fontana label, and with somewhat more mature intent than Freddie or the Hermits, several covers of black American material. Major Lance's US hit 'Um, um, um, um, um, um' went to five for them in 1964 followed by 'The game of love', a new song by Clint 'You're no good' Ballard Jr. which, while not quite making the top of the UK chart in 1965, added to Manchester musicians' success by doing so in the US.[a] During a tour of that country Wayne separated from his group. With Stewart as lead singer, the Mindbenders nevertheless continued to enjoy success, making two in both countries with a new American song, 'A groovy kind of love'.

Both they, and their former leader continued for several more years with diminished success. Wayne Fontana's last hit, just outside the top ten in 1966 was the plaintive 'Pamela, Pamela', written by a musician from just outside Manchester, Graham Gouldman. Ironically, in 1968 that prolific songwriter joined Eric Stewart in the last months of the Mindbenders; the two would be part of a uniquely creative collaboration in the following decade (see chapter 17).

[a] Manchester as a city may not have had the profile of its near neighbour Liverpool but with four American number ones between them, Freddie and the Dreamers, Herman's Hermits and Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders outdid prominent Liverpool groups like the Searchers and Gerry and the Pacemakers – and several others yet to be mentioned – who never achieved that esteemed honour across the Atlantic.

To the east of Manchester, as Wayne had done, fellow Sheffield singer Dave Grundy changed *his* name, and in his case he was inspired by an even *more* famous American musician. Seeking a connection with the popular African American rocker, the now Dave *Berry* and his group the Cruisers charted on Decca in the UK in 1963 – with Chuck's 'Memphis Tennessee'.

Incidentally, Dave was of course totally unrelated to Londoner Michael Bourne who had some years earlier changed *his* surname to Berry. Oddly, *Mike* Berry emulated in his singing, not Chuck but a different seminal American musician. Mike and his Outlaws' 1961 'Tribute to Buddy Holly' (produced by Joe Meek who went on to engineer the special effects for the Tornados' 'Telstar') was banned by the BBC for being too morbid but it still charted just outside the top twenty. The following year 'Don't you think it's time' performed best for Mike Berry at six but time was running out for him just as 'beat music' was exploding.

And again, as Wayne Fontana had done, *Dave* Berry split with his group. Solo (albeit with entirely new, but uncredited Cruisers) he recorded a version of the popular song by African American 'girl group' the Shirelles, 'Baby it's you'. Then in 1964 the Geoff Stephens-penned 'The crying game' made five on the British chart, a position equalled by three more of his singles until the end of his popularity mid-1966. Unlike Ian and the Zodiacs who as mentioned had an unexpected flurry of interest in Texas with *their* version of that song, Dave Berry was unable to make any inroads into the US scene.

And north of Manchester in Blackburn the Four Pennies were, despite a low profile outside the UK, one of the most prolifically original groups of their genre. From 1964 all sides of their first three mellow singles on the Dutch Philips label were original compositions but the second, the harmony-rich 'Juliet' (originally a B side) rocketed to the top of the chart. Their 'I found out the hard way', and then a pop version of Leadbelly's doom-laden 'Black girl' also made the top twenty but the Four Pennies were progressively slipping further down the chart and they called it a day by the end of 1966.

Of all the – supposedly – hundreds of other Manchester outfits who remained basically unknown outside their home patch a good example is the Toggery Five (named after a clothing shop owned by one of their friends, Michael Cohen). Their two Parlophone singles, though well-played in a rawly assertive manner that set the group apart from others from Manchester, were probably doomed to failure from the start. Released in September 1964, their debut original, 'I'm gonna jump' was a confronting suicide song that was subsequently banned by the still

overly sensitive BBC.[a] Then their second, 'I'd much rather be with the boys', written by the manager, and the guitarist of an up-and-coming rhythm and blues group from London[b] wouldn't necessarily have endeared them to any potential female fans. And essentially spelling the end of the Toggery Five's ambitions, a new song they'd recorded as a demo was poached, and turned into a smash hit by one of their fellow groups from Manchester.

Those opportunistic culprits had begun in a small way, but ultimately achieved more – in the UK at least – than any others from Manchester at the time. Friends since they were six years-old, Allan Clarke and the aforementioned Graham Nash cut their teeth, like so many others, on late 1950s skiffle experimentation. They then became 'Ricky and Dane Young' – 'the Two Teens', an Everly Brothers-style duo. Their passionate love of harmony singing was finally incorporated into the beat group format, with accomplished lead guitarist Tony Hicks joining them, and providing the all-important lower part to their uniquely strident vocals. After the usual succession of names they finally became – at *Christmas*, in 1962 – but more likely in honour of Buddy…the Hollies.

They were one of the first outside Liverpool to become popular at The Cavern Club and were soon signed to the Parlophone label. The Hollies' initial singles from 1963, again, all covers of African American songs, steadily progressed up the UK chart. The third, a breakneck beat version of Maurice Williams and the Zodiacs' 1960 doo-wop hit 'Stay' made eight, and the fourth, Doris Troy's co-written 'Just one look', went to two in 1964. Right through the decade, of the first twenty singles released by the Hollies in the UK, *fifteen* held down places in the top ten, with four more in the top twenty (and most LPs sold similarly well).

But 'I'm alive' the song (written by the aforementioned Clint Ballard Jr.) that could have turned their associates, the Toggery Five's fortunes around was the Hollies' only chart-topper. Strangely also, these neatly attired, good-looking purveyors of harmony-laced guitar pop didn't at this early stage play a major role in the 'British invasion' of the United States.

Most of the Hollies' singles from the mid-'60s were supplied directly to the group by contemporary songwriters from the US such as Gerry Goffin and Carole King, and, in the UK, Graham Gouldman, among others. The first three B sides

[a] Ironically a second doom-laden song, 'Terry' by the earlier mentioned female singer Twinkle followed three months later and fared much better: it also was rejected for airplay by the BBC but sales still took it to number four on the UK chart; Twinkle's later singles sold less well.

[b] In fact, Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham and guitarist Keith Richards in an early creative experiment.

however, all strongly derivative of their Buddy Holly and Everly Brothers grounding, were written by Clarke and Nash, with the fourth, for a change, by Hicks and drummer Bobby Elliott. The next was written by a mysterious 'Chester Mann', and then subsequent others, including one of the top ten A sides, 'We're through', were credited to the equally obscure 'L.Ransford'. It turned out that both these were noms de plume of the songwriting group members, 'Chester Mann' of course being an inversion of Man - chester, and Ransford was Graham Nash's grandfather's name. It wasn't until after Graham Gouldman's 'Bus stop' that in 1966 made it to five in the UK – and the US, their long-awaited breakthrough there – that confidence in their own songwriting really kicked in. The follow-up, 'Stop stop stop', that featured Hicks playing banjo to simulate a Middle Eastern sound went to two in the UK, and seven in the US. It and its B side were this time correctly credited to 'Clarke-Hicks-Nash', and from that point the songwriting trio (or sometimes two, or just one of them) was responsible for most of the Hollies' output for the next couple of years.

Then the 'dream team' was blown apart in 1967 when, after the failure of 'King Midas in reverse', and seeking something more progressive or, less restrictive than beat music, Graham Nash departed. A song of his called 'Marrakesh Express' was rejected by the group so he joined two American musicians and recorded it with them (see chapter 17). Nash was replaced by Liverpudlian Terry Sylvester, earlier of the Escorts, more recently, the Swinging Blue Jeans. The Hollies reverted to sourcing from external songwriters, but still with continuing success till the end of the decade. Most notably, 1969's 'He ain't heavy he's my brother'[a] (written by Americans Bobby Scott and Bob Russell) made the top ten in both countries and around the world at this time of heightened awareness of human rights. Allan Clarke was next to depart – and then return – but the Hollies' fortunes were fading.

The decline was momentarily arrested when the swampy, lone vocal of 'Long cool woman in a black dress', co-penned by Clarke with the aforementioned Rogers Greenaway and Cook and closely resembling the sound of a popular new group from the US, Creedence Clearwater Revival, achieved platinum status in that country in 1972. And the 1974 worldwide hit ballad (two in the UK and top ten in the US), 'The air that I breathe' once again showcased the classic soaring three part vocals, its success confirming that the Hollies' sound was unique and everlasting. Like the Searchers, the Hollies group has continued to be maintained

[a] When re-released in 1988 'He ain't heavy he's my brother' finally gave the Hollies the second UK number one of their entire career.

by long-time members Hicks and Elliott, but for special occasions over the years rejoined by Clarke and Nash.

One other collaboration began as, again, a skiffle group, as early as 1955. The Rattlesnakes was formed by an *eight* year-old boy with his twin *five year-old* brothers after they'd relocated to Manchester from their birthplace on the Isle of Man. They rehearsed, with multi-part vocals, the American pop music of the time and played at a few venues but the group ended three years later when the family emigrated to Australia. It wouldn't however be the last to be heard of the trio of young brothers (see chapter 17).

What about new pop music elsewhere in the UK? In a torrent of group names, most of them either little heard of, or long forgotten, Alan Clayson in his book *Beat Merchants* clearly illustrates the rapid proliferation, from the early '60s on, of British acts seemingly from everywhere else outside Liverpool, and Manchester, all of them no doubt hoping to make it to the top. As Clayson somewhat indelicately puts it, "Virtually every settlement in Britain put forward some local oiks who enjoyed a qualified fame…"[33] *Virtually every settlement* also either claimed, or had ascribed to it by an eager publicist or press reporter, the dubious fact that it had its own 'Sound' or 'Beat'. South of Liverpool and Manchester, Birmingham for example, with its estimated two hundred and fifty groups[34] – including the aforementioned Bruisers – was supposed to have its very own 'Brumbeat'. Bruce Eder's cool appraisal though, like Olaf Owre's of Manchester, was that "Brumbeat…was never remotely as well-known or recognised (at least, outside of Birmingham) as the Liverpool sound called Merseybeat…"[35]

'Brummie' Brian Botfield – he called himself 'Chuck' – and the aforementioned Mancunian Dave Berry both shared an affinity with the same iconic African American rocker. Much earlier than Dave, in the late 1950s Botfield joined a group of frequently changing personnel called the Rockin' *Berries*. As in the case of *Mike* Berry, Botfield's group however bore little resemblance, at least on record, to the source of their inspiration: the falsetto voice of guitarist Geoff Turton actually invited comparisons with softer-sounding white US singing groups that were continuing to proliferate in the wake of original doo-wop. Early attempts at songwriting – including yet more attempts to create an English dance craze, 'Rockin' Berry Stomp', then, 'The Twitch' – failed but a variety of American songs on the Piccadilly label including 'He's in town' and 'Poor man's son' (originally by white groups the Tokens, and the Reflections) approached the top of the UK chart during late 1964-65. Subsequent releases were less well-received and their short hit run was over. With

Colin Lea, an expert impressionist of – not Chuck, but Elvis – in the lineup, the Rockin' Berries ultimately drifted, as several Liverpool groups had, into cabaret.

Like their fellow 'Brumbeat' exponents, the Fortunes drew from similar contemporary American harmony groups and were also, no doubt, inspired by the achievements of the Searchers, Hollies, Four Pennies and the like. Formed in 1963, they had little initial chart success – even with the British composition 'Caroline' that, produced for Decca by recent arrival from the US, Shel Talmy, became the obvious theme tune for the 'pirate' radio station Radio Caroline. The Fortunes finally broke through in 1965 with 'You've got your troubles', the earliest success for songwriters Greenaway and Cook. It made two in the UK and top ten in the US and around the world; another locally written song, Les Reed and Barry Mason's 'Here it comes again' also charted well in the same year. The Fortunes had moved into the now well-established category of 'acceptable' easy-listening pop groups and continued to have top ten and twenty hits into the 1970s.

The already mentioned Applejacks (who originally met each other in a scout troop) were rare among groups anywhere in the world – then (the Liverbirds notwithstanding), before, or since – in that one member, their bassplayer was a young woman, Megan Davies. Early in 1964 their first single, also on Decca, 'Tell me when' went straight to seven on the chart, but disappointingly their second and third registered further down at around twenty. While they continued to play, after 1965 they were yet another group that took up cabaret work, on cruise liners.

With the Beatles…

While some Northern artists like Freddie and the Dreamers exploited elements of comedy in their stage act, it must be remembered that the Beatles in Hamburg, often fuelled by stimulant pills, amused themselves (while no doubt *be*musing their audiences) as they behaved on and off-stage in the most extravagantly, perhaps even reprehensibly idiotic ways imaginable. Even after Brian Epstein had 'cleaned up their act' they continued to make fun, as their radio idols the post-war comedy troupe the Goons had, of many aspects of everyday life. John Lennon's sardonic humour at the expense of many an unexpecting individual was the most extreme example, but unsuspecting interviewers and TV hosts were frequently fed flippant, even absurd responses to questions by all four Beatles, with press conferences usually becoming – to the delight of all – impromptu comedy performances. Their films, many of their later recordings and especially their Christmas records issued exclusively to fan club members incorporated this often spontaneously surreal humour.

The combination of their hair, neat clothing and boots, plus their comfortable stage presence probably also accidentally created, ahead of anyone else, the notion that the Beatles were 'cute' – from which point vigorous moptop shaking synchronised with shrill "whooh"s at key moments in songs deliberately accentuated this. Obviously the baby-faced Paul was the prime exemplar, but 'the quiet one' George and sad-eyed, but happy-go-lucky Ringo attracted the epithet as well, with even the cynically droll married man John qualifying in some fans' eyes. During the Beatles' first American tour noted journalist Vance Packard observed that, "With their…boyish grins they have succeeded in bringing out the mothering instinct in many adolescent girls."[36]

The Hollies also performed with verve and were a good-looking group, with suave front man Allan Clarke a somewhat less edgy counterpart to Lennon, and Hicks and Nash vying for the McCartney comparison. Bobby Elliott, their flamboyant drummer (the first, Don Rathbone had suffered a similar fate to that of Pete Best although he sportingly remained as their road manager) always ensured that he had his moment of glory: live renditions of songs inevitably ended, even if these were not present on the records, with a flamboyant flourish of drums (the restrained Ringo Starr *never* indulged himself in this manner!) Various bassplayers through the years just played their stuff, perhaps in not dissimilar manner to the way that the competent, confident but stolid George Harrison approached his lead guitar work.

Most significant was the music. The Hollies were arguably as musically capable as the Beatles, and their vocal sound more unified. But while Clarke (who didn't play an instrument on stage) was, at least visibly, the Manchester group's lead singer (though Graham Nash often took this role), John, then Paul, to a lesser extent George, and even Ringo shared duties in their group. The Hollies' harmonies were well-regimented and even more distinctive than, say, those of the Searchers, but, as with that group they did become stereotyped, perhaps, even sterile. The Beatles on the other hand achieved much greater variety of sound: lead vocal, and harmony backup duties were allocated according to each song's style or arrangement, sometimes being shared, or alternating within one song. In addition, Paul McCartney in particular, and to a lesser extent John Lennon were capable of different singing styles ranging from restrained for their many ballads to 'all stops out' as with their Little Richard and Isley Brothers-style screamers.

The Hollies had been discovered – playing at The Cavern! – early in 1963 and were signed by one Ron Richards who became their producer. Ron was an Abbey

Road employee throughout the 1960s and, in the temporary absence of his close confidante George Martin he had even been called upon to produce the Beatles' second session for 'Love me do' (the one where Ringo was infamously sidelined by session drummer Andy White). Like the Beatles' Martin, and the Searchers' Tony Hatch, Ron Richards produced all the Hollies' hits. However, their management, like that of the Searchers but *unlike* that provided for the Beatles by the fervent Brian Epstein, was inconsistent. The Hollies were initially looked after by a couple of Manchester businessmen including Michael Cohen – from The Toggery clothing shop (Graham Nash worked there part-time) – and later, by London musician Tommy Sanderson.

The Hollies' songwriting began tentatively and only accelerated relatively later, while Lennon and McCartney's collaboration had commenced very soon after the two had first met (each had come up with songs even before that) and was a consistent work in progress throughout.

The real comparison between the two groups though came from the fact that, while Clarke and Nash had bonded as singing friends years before Lennon and McCartney, as a commercially viable entity the Beatles, after their intense Hamburg apprenticeship, got off to a flying start. While the Beatles were touring the US, the Hollies were still driving from Manchester to Liverpool to act as replacement Beatles (Allan Clarke recalled, "They [at The Cavern Club] loved the Beatles, and because they'd got famous it was like we'd overtaken them by being their group in Liverpool."[37]) While the Beatles were recording all-original songs, the Hollies were covering older, then more contemporary material by other writers. While the Hollies were consolidating their signature sound (that perhaps became a little clean-cut and predictable throughout their career, though loved by many for precisely this reason), the Beatles were intent on constant experimentation, pushing the possibilities of pop music, challenging listeners, even to the point of deliberately risking their alienation, but continually capturing the public's attention. The Hollies, like so many others were always one or more steps behind, trying to emulate, but not necessarily expand upon, what had gone before: as Graham Nash conceded, "It was every band's dream…to hit the big time *just like the Beatles* [emphasis mine]."[38]

A striking example of the differential rates of progress of the two groups came on the third of December 1965. On this day the Beatles released their groundbreaking and highly influential sixth LP, *Rubber Soul* before immediately lifting their sights to the next level (they began recording *Revolver* four months later). On the very same day the Hollies' new single became available. The song

recommended to the Hollies by Ron Richards was…a cover of a track from *Rubber Soul*. 'If I needed someone' was a clinical copy of the Beatles' song written and sung, not by Lennon and McCartney, but by George Harrison. For the Hollies it made twenty, the lowest chart position of all their singles so far. George himself was caustically dismissive: "I think it's rubbish the way they've done it! They've spoilt it. The Hollies are all right musically, but the way they do their records they sound like session men who've just got together in a studio without ever seeing each other before…" [39]

As the Beatles' evolution was continuing apace the Hollies' *Evolution* was just beginning. Their LP of that name was recorded over only six sessions during precisely the same time – the first quarter of 1967 – and place – Abbey Road – while the six *month*-long creation of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* was nearing completion. Fatefully again, both albums were planned to be released in the UK on *exactly* the same day, the first of June (one might wonder what Parlophone executives were thinking!) [a] No doubt the Hollies' producer Ron Richards had had his ear to the wall: *Evolution* was certainly an advance on its predecessors. The songs, all-original, are impressive if generally somewhat lightweight, well-performed and subtly decorated with, perhaps, *Rubber Soul*-era additional sounds, and the album charted just outside the UK top ten. Possibly reflecting the impending departure of Nash to join his new American colleagues its successor, *Butterfly*, recorded in late 1967 was a more diffuse affair and didn't register at all anywhere.

Strangely, it was an influential American artist (see chapter 14) who brought about the Nash-less Hollies' brief resurgence in the British album charts in 1969. Their pop-style cover version tribute, *Hollies Play Dylan* made three, the second-highest rating since their debut. In the States however the somewhat deceptively retitled *Words And Music By Bob Dylan* sold, as had all their LPs there, poorly. The Hollies were still a very good singles band but unfortunately seemed unable to make their mark during the burgeoning era of the album.

When asked if they felt that they could have succeeded without the Beatles as pioneers, two of Manchester's other famous front men implied that it was unlikely. Freddie Garrity affirmed, "The Beatles started it. They were the thin end of the wedge," [40 b] and Peter 'Herman' Noone agreed, "The Beatles magic was something

[a] *Sgt. Pepper* actually arrived in the record shops early, on 26th May.

[b] The Beatles certainly started it for Freddie. It's said that he heard them play 'If you gotta make a fool of somebody' at The Cavern late in 1962 – the Beatles regarded it as "a wacky waltz…no one had a 3/4 number." (Paul McCartney, *Observer Music Monthly*, 18 September 2005) Freddie and the Dreamers' somewhat wackier version went to three in the following year.

that touched everybody…[because of them] it seemed possible that working class people…could make it."[41] The Hollies' co-founder Graham Nash made the definitive statement: "Their incredible simplicity, and their incredible melodic structure is stunning to this day…the Beatles were the best band in the world, there's absolutely no question about it."[42]

Be this as it may, of all the acts so far described, the Hollies' heritage, presentation, sound and unbroken run of hit singles – their number of 'beat' records in the UK top tens of the 1960s was *second only* to the Beatles![a] – brought the Manchester musicians the closest so far of all their provincial compatriots to being possible alternatives to their Liverpool counterparts.

As Garrity and Noone suggested, whether the Hollies could have triumphed in the Beatles' absence is, however, open to conjecture.

[a] From 1963 to 1969 the Beatles had twenty top ten singles in the UK, seventeen of which topped the chart; the Hollies had fifteen in the top ten, but only one number one. The only other contenders amongst new artists during this period were the Rolling Stones (see chapter 15) with thirteen top tens, of which seven were number ones.

That pre-Beatles pop star, Cliff Richard had begun the decade strongly with thirteen top tens, including four number ones. Creditably, throughout 'Beatlemania' he maintained a strong fan base: during the next seven years he *equalled* the Beatles' tally of high-ranking singles (and scored three number ones).

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London, more than two hundred miles to the south is the capital city of the UK and, in the early 1960s, the undisputed centre of all things to do with British show business and the arts. Just about all entities imaginable involved with the production and promotion of music – record companies and recording studios, writers, music publishers and management, as well as concert venues and the BBC – were based in London. Even though artists such as Frankie Vaughan, Lita Roza and Billy Fury were from Liverpool it wasn't until they relocated to London that they gained recognition. In the early '60s, what was happening far away in northern industrial centres and provincial towns was of little interest and made insignificant impact in the capital: groups from there were unknown and at first had no influence on the small number of their counterparts down south.

What was undeniably common to both however was the inspiration of American music. How effectively did new London artists use these sounds for their own purposes? Did their imitations give them, as with Tommy Steele or Cliff Richard, the potential to be 'the next big thing' – at least at home even if on past record they were unlikely to make an international impression? Or, when they finally became aware of the newer, different sounds – themselves adaptations of usually lesser-known American music – that they were hearing from Liverpool, Manchester and other unimaginable places from the distant north did they use them as a springboard for their own hoped for fame and fortune?

A London group's early history was similar to that of northerners already mentioned: five friends at a secondary school not far to the east of London during the late 1950s became enthused about skiffle, rock'n'roll and pop music and formed a group. Like the Hollies, harmony singing was one of their strengths and, again, they particularly loved the music of Buddy Holly. The group whose frequently confused name referred to the sound-modulating 'tremolo' effect in music began to play regularly: a well-organised, tight-knit unit with polished counterpoint vocals and quality equipment. Their efforts were rewarded: the – terminally misspelt[a] – Trem*e*loes with Brian Poole deputed as lead singer won a prized Decca recording contract.

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[a] Because of a newspaper misprint.

Their debut single in April 1962 was written by two members of Joe Brown's Bruvvers. 'Twist little sister' was again an attempt to cash in on the still big dance craze – but it wasn't successful. It was the equal of any of the other Twist records and the spacious production was very good, but perhaps, too good. With Brian Poole's clean Bobby Vee-style vocal and "bop-bop" echo backups, ringing guitar sounds and high-pitched organ sound seemingly borrowed from label-mates the Tornados it was a million miles away from the raw sounds from up north – or any of the originators of American rock'n'roll or British skiffle. They had no more luck with September's follow-up, the Italianate 'Blue' or, their third, the 'teen idol'-sounding record, 'A very good year for girls'[a] (with the swinging rhythm and episodic style of Neil Sedaka's 'Calendar girl' it was co-written by Clint Ballard Jr.)

They decided to have a go at writing and, returning to their initial dance focus, Brian, along with guitarist Alan Blakley and Decca producer Mike Smith put together 'Keep on dancing'. It was on the soundtrack of *Just For Fun*, a British attempt to make an ensemble teenage music film, but with mostly imported US artists. With tougher drumming, vamping piano, a strong guitar break and more of a rock'n'roll lead vocal, the single was quite a creditable improvement on their previous efforts. It still didn't sell.

Bravely persevering, and indulged by Decca, they chose for their fifth single a song that was a favourite with northern pop fans. Their version of the Isley Brothers' 'Twist and shout' – quick, and sounding more like Ritchie Valens' 'La bamba' – became their first entry into the UK top thirty, ascending as high as number four in August 1963. Unlike Freddie Garrity, extremely short-sighted Brian dispensed with his Buddy Holly thick black-rimmed glasses and the whole group grew their hair – well, a little longer. Brian Poole and the Tremeloes were now recognizably a 'beat' group.

They finally triumphed with a song Brian had allegedly learned from Faron's Flamingos during a visit to Liverpool and then hastily recorded[43]…although further conspiracy theories will be discussed a little later. Unlike the Flamingos' record that did nothing, Brian and the Tremeloes' version of 'Do you love me' (with companion song 'Why can't you love me' by Blakley on the flipside) achieved the number one position. But it was probably also time for them to stop dancing when the cloned 'Do you love me' follow-on song 'I can dance' didn't exactly dance up the chart. With their next single however they were back in the top ten.

[a] Also should not be confused with the quite similarly themed 'It was a very good year' later popularised by Frank Sinatra.

'Candy man' was a perfect 'beat'-style version of Roy Orbison's composition (although on the flipside Brian couldn't help keeping on singing 'I wish I could dance'). And then, in popular ballad mode, their interpretation of the Crickets' 'Someone someone' was only held from the top position by…Roy Orbison (with *his* ballad 'It's over' – it and his 'Oh, pretty woman' were two of only *three* non-British number ones in 1964). Then the London group's final release of the year, the jaunty 'Twelve steps to love' seemed to hark back to the clean sound from the start of their career. It sold disappointingly. Change was in the air for Brian Poole and the Tremeloes.

Brian Poole, after two more releases that made around the twenty mark in the UK left his group but in 1966 the Tremeloes – without Brian – reverberated again in a very different way, embracing the mellow and melodic vocal harmony style that had been popularised by such as the Searchers and the Hollies, and particularly now, the Fortunes. 'Here comes my baby' written by up-and-coming singer songwriter Steven Georgiou (later to achieve fame under the name Cat Stevens – see chapter 17) and six other singles up to the beginning of the '70s made the top ten in the UK – and for the first time in the US – for the Tremeloes. Three of these, plus around a dozen other less successful ones were by Alan Blakley, joined by new group member Len 'Chip' Hawkes. The reborn Tremeloes' biggest hit – one in the UK and eleven in the US – was 'Silence is golden' that had been written and recorded by American group the 4 Seasons (see next chapter).

A combo from the north of London evolved to, it would seem, single-handedly create the so-called 'Tottenham sound' – 'beat' music with the emphasis very much on the beat. Again, as had happened with the formation of the Tremeloes, in 1957 a fifteen year-old novice drummer had started jamming with various friends who played piano, sax and guitar. Five years on Dave Clark had decided who would make up his Five – he reputedly paid them a weekly wage – and late in 1962 they began recording, for small labels, original instrumentals like 'Chaquita' (their take on American group the Champs' Latin-style 'Tequila') and, the twangy guitar of 'First love'. Then not even with the distinctive vocals of keyboard player Mike Smith (same name, but *not* Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' producer) could Mitch Murray's 'I knew it all the time' or their up-tempo dance version of the old nursery rhyme 'The mulberry bush' make much of an impression.

The group's first modest success on major label Columbia left them with mixed feelings. It's been alternatively suggested that Brian Poole and the Tremeloes *didn't* copy Faron's Flamingos' version of 'Do you love me' but instead were inspired by

inside information about a recording session of – the Dave Clark Five. Whatever, the unfortunate truth is that the Five's superior, and more deliberate 'Do you love me', with no simpering spoken introduction but with a bluesy lead vocal the equal of that of the Contours, emphatic drumming and buzzing sax got to only thirty late in 1963 before dropping off the chart two weeks later. At the same time, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' slighter version was riding high at number one.

Not to be deterred, only a fortnight later the Dave Clark Five were back with a vengeance. This time the assertively driving 'Glad all over' credited to Clark and Smith rocketed to the top in early 1964 followed, but only to second place, by the similar "crash, bang, wallop"[44] of their composition 'Bits and pieces' (that now incorporated stamping Cuban-heeled boots to supplement the heavy snare drum sound). Succeeding singles continued to employ their now all-original[a] songs. The Five's trademark sound, with loud but simplistic drumming (the drummer on most recordings was session player Bobby Graham[b]), vamping tenor sax, minimal guitar and Mike Smith's husky voice and Vox Continental organ was deliberately alternative to others' twangy 'beat' music. The ploy seemed to have short-lived effect though as 'Can't you see that she's mine' and the next few singles registered further down the British chart.

In the US it was an entirely different matter. Of the Dave Clark Five's eight charting singles in 1964 four made the top ten. Typical of the differences between the two countries was their ballad 'Because': at home it had been the flipside of 'Can't you see that she's mine' but as an A side in the US it achieved the highest

[a] What constitutes 'original', and who the writers of a song actually are – functionaries such as vocalists, managers, record producers and even disc jockeys have all been known to take unjustifiable slices of songwriting royalties – have long been controversial topics in the music industry. Both these conundrums can be found in the Dave Clark Five's 'No time to lose', from their first US album, and, the flipside there of 'Can't you see that she's mine'.

The song is an extremely obvious, and it would seem, intentional pastiche of the Isley Brothers' 'Twist and shout' that had become a staple of the Beatles' repertoire, and was Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' first top ten single. In fact, according to songwriter Ron Ryan who had got to know Clark well when his brother Mick played in an early lineup of the Five, Dave and the group had recorded 'Twist and shout' prior to both of those other groups, but shelved it, then commissioned Ron to pen new lyrics to the existing group backing track.

But in a double omission, neither the original writers of 'Twist and shout', Americans Phil Medley and Bert Berns (or Russell, as he was also known) *nor* Ron Ryan were given recognition for the new song. Instead it is credited to band members Dave Clark and Mike Smith.

In Ryan's case he contends that this was not the only Dave Clark Five song where his contribution wasn't acknowledged, the most notable being the US hit ballad 'Because', attributed to Clark only. Ryan world-wearily bewailed, "I think Clark ripped me off for many hundreds of thousands…I am still upset that Dave Clark can get away with putting his name on songs I wrote…" (From the no longer functional *Ron Ryan Music* website; further amplified at *The Beatle Forum*, https://beatleforum.proboards.com/thread/116/ron-ryan-dave-clark)

[b] This may have been because of the common use of session musicians, or because Dave Clark needed to be in his producer's position behind the mixing desk; nevertheless, some tracks may have incorporated both Graham's and Clark's drumming for extra impact.

chart placing – three – of all their releases there so far. America loved the good-looking Dave Clark Five and their unchanging, suave mod image: neat, smiling, dressed in matching designer outfits – no ties, but white rollneck shirts with dark blue jackets, white trousers and those boots, the fringes of their fashionable-length hair being well-brushed across their foreheads. A visual contrast to their raunchy, though still well-ordered sound.

The Dave Clark Five continued in 1965 with more of the same. 'Catch us if you can' (written by guitarist Lenny Davidson) was the theme-tune of *their* feature film (renamed *Having A Wild Weekend* for the US market). At five it was their biggest UK hit for the year but by now they had well and truly enraptured America. The song made four there but they were also taking the interesting step of reverting to their own interpretations of African American classics. These included Chuck Berry's 'Reelin' and rockin'' and Allen Toussaint and Chris Kenner's 'I like it like that'. In fact, their *only* chart-topper ever in the US [a] was 'Over and over', originally the B side of Bobby Day's 'Rockin' robin'.

Music was changing however, and the Dave Clark Five were not. They were losing fans to new trends while at least retaining those who, like the Hollies' followers, had grown comfortable with the classic sound and look. Spasmodic chart success through the remainder of the '60s saw a surprising late resurgence from 1967 in their home country (ironically at the same time that Clark decided they should stop touring) with some more top ten hits. Les Reed and Barry Mason's ballad 'Everybody knows' was sung by Lenny Davidson; making two it was their highest rating single in the UK since 'Bits and pieces'. While they continued to be popular in the US their only other top ten there however was another African American cover, Marv Johnson's 1959 hit, 'You got what it takes'.

Dave Clark, having wholly and solely presided over every minute facet of organisation – musical direction, songwriting credits, appearance, stagecraft, production, management and finances, record company liaison and more – officially disbanded his group in 1970. None of the Five ever made a substantial contribution to mainstream pop group music again.[b]

Not to be outdone by the blow being struck for equal opportunity by the Applejacks' bassplayer Megan Davies was drummer Honey Lantree. She was an

[a] With three number ones they were most popular in Canada.

[b] Dave Clark wrote and produced a science fiction musical, *Time* and, as well as retaining sole rights to all Dave Clark Five recordings, continued in various music-related entrepreneurial pursuits; Mike Smith participated in some other musical ventures but never again achieved the full recognition or success that he deserved.

assistant to North London hairdresser Martin Murray who also played guitar so, with her brother and some friends in late 1963 they formed the Sheratons. Discovered by new songwriters Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley (*not* the Tremeloes' tunesmith Alan Blakley) they took inspiration from the Dave Clark Five with their simplistically drummed 'Have I the right', elaborately engineered in Joe Meek's home studio – the stamping feet recorded on the wooden steps outside – and released on Pye. In mid-1964 'Have I the right' spent two weeks at number one, and made five in the US and top ten in other countries for these overnight sensations who, in reference to their drummer and her previous employment, had changed their name to the 'Honeycombs'. They had one other record that made it to just outside the top ten in the following year but the group fell apart by 1966.

From the Thames River salt marsh – or 'fen' – area of Kent south-east of London Bern Elliott's group reasoned that if the Merseybeats could take their name from a river then they could too. In late 1963 Bern Elliott and the Fenmen recorded a chugging, Mersey-sounding rendition for Decca of one of the beat groups' popular choices from the US r&b songbook, Barrett Strong's 'Money'. It went as high as fourteen but there was little further success, either for the Fenmen, nor Bern himself when he departed from the group.

The Zombies had an interestingly fluctuating career. Formed in Hertfordshire to the north of London in the late 1950s and early '60s by a group of schoolboys they featured the unusually breathy, falsetto vocals of Colin Blunstone and the Hohner Pianet[a] electric piano playing of Rod Argent. The unique sound – offset by Argent's freeform solo – of their Argent-penned 'She's not there' was also issued on Decca; it made a creditable twelve in the UK late in 1964, but almost topped the US chart. Their similarly styled follow-up, Argent's 'Tell her no' oddly made almost no impression at home but still achieved another top ten placing in the States. From then the Zombies had little success and broke up in 1967.

But then, a surprise resurgence in 1969 when the exquisite 'Time of the season', written by Rod Argent and bassplayer Chris White from an LP recorded three years previously pushed toward the top of the US (and Canadian) chart. The Zombies again faded from the scene, although Argent formed an eponymous band and enjoyed top ten chart success all over again in the early '70s with his and ex-Zombie White's 'Hold your head up'.

[a] The Hohner pianet was one of the earliest portable electric pianos used in pop music. Its non-sustaining sound actually bore little resemblance to the sound of an acoustic piano. This was really only finally achieved a decade or more later in the time of keyboard instruments designed to play digital samples of real sounds.

Decca seemed to have contracted the lion's share of southern musicians. Three more new groups to be signed up were the Nashville Teens, Unit 4+2, and a group of Royal Air Force ground crew who called themselves Hedgehoppers[a] Anonymous. Their songs, respectively, a version of a recent American folk blues song 'Tobacco Road', an original, 'Concrete and clay' and the bleakly ironic Cold War song, 'It's good news week' all made the UK top ten ('Concrete and clay' topping it) during 1964 and '65. While these groups released other records they're mostly remembered for just these three songs.

Another group that formed in 1965 cumbersomely went by its five members' nicknames and appeared to be exclusively the personal songwriting project of one or both of Ken Howard and Alan Blaikley (for A sides at least; most B sides were written by members of the group). Beginning a year later with the pair's 'Hold tight!' (on the Fontana label), Dave Dee,[b] Dozy, Beaky, Mick and Tich became best known for their musical pastiches of the music of other countries, the 'Zorba's dance'-evoking 'Bend it' being a typical example. Though the group was never popular in the US, among eight top tens in the UK the suitably exotic 'Legend of Xanadu' was the only one to top the chart.

Two larger ensembles with members from around London took career paths quite distinct from any of their contemporaries anywhere in the UK. The all-instrumental Sounds Incorporated (earlier, just Sounds Inc.), and Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers had six, and seven-piece lineups featuring – tenor and baritone – saxophones (the latter group, even more unconventionally had for some unknown reason *two* bass guitarists, while drummer Jay, keeping the sound bottom-heavy also sometimes used twin bass drums). Sounds Incorporated in particular was a convenient pickup band for a number of American artists, most notably Gene Vincent whom they backed for a single late in his career.

Both groups' recorded output, mostly on Decca varied from some of their own compositions to the craze at the time for arranging chugging versions of classical pieces. The Jaywalkers' 'Can can' had a little success on the UK chart (as did 'Entry of the gladiators' and 'Hall of the mountain king' by a third guitar and keyboard-based quartet Nero and the Gladiators) while Sounds Incorporated's take on Rossini's 'William Tell overure' made number two in Australia. Sounds

[a] 'Hedgehopper' was airforce slang for a bomber plane that flew low to avoid enemy radar.

[b] Lead singer Dave Dee had unique musical inspiration. In 1960, as police cadet David Harman he was first to attend the tragic Eddie Cochran-Gene Vincent car accident referred to earlier. He then proceeded to learn to play the guitar on Cochran's distinctive orange Gretsch 6120 instrument while it was retained at the police station.

Incorporated also consistently – and conveniently – remained available for a variety of purposes, as well as taking the Hamburg trip and being signed up for a time by Brian Epstein as Cilla Black's backing group.

With the Beatles…

On the first of January 1962 two aspiring groups had, from wintry streets walked into London's Decca studio.[a] In this alien environment of white-coated technicians, shadowy faces behind thick glass windows, boom microphones and sound isolation baffles they had nervously performed a batch of their best songs for a 'recording test'. The two groups were London's Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, and, of course, following months of concerted approaches by manager Brian Epstein and a long and cramped road trip down in their van the day before – and a late night of New Year celebration – the Beatles. Only one group passed the test. The Liverpool travellers returned north to an uncertain future – that was, until Epstein subsequently caught the listening ear of George Martin.

So Brian Poole and the Tremeloes had beaten the Beatles out of the starting blocks, albeit with non-original songs in the softer pop styles of the day that showed that the group as yet had little or no knowledge of what was happening up north where their 'competitors' had originated. They soon did become aware, but it wasn't until after the Beatles had topped the charts with their own third charting single 'From me to you' that Brian and the Tremeloes' fifth release gave them their chart debut, in the top ten. Their version of the popular 'Twist and shout' wisely didn't attempt to emulate either the Isley Brothers' original or John Lennon's popular throat-ripping rendition from the *Please Please Me* LP that was three months into its thirty week reign at the top. Soon after that the Tremeloes achieved their aim: in Brian's proudest musical moment their inferior version of 'Do you love me' displaced 'She loves you' at the top, for three weeks.[b]

There were no more number ones, and Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' demise a year later was only briefly delayed by the very retro-sounding 'Someone someone'

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[a] This 'historical' account *may* in fact be apocryphal: there is some doubt as to whether both groups actually did audition on that same day. The Beatles certainly were there on January 1 but Brian Poole has claimed that the Tremeloes, having already been doing studio work for Decca, had their recording test late in the previous year.

[b] 'Do you love me' stayed on top for three weeks but was replaced by Gerry and the Pacemakers' third consecutive number one, 'You'll never walk alone' for four. But the appeal of the Beatles' single endured: having remained close to the top of the chart throughout the seven weeks (both the other two quickly plummeted after their times in the top spot) 'She loves you' returned to number one for another fortnight before being overtaken by…'I want to hold your hand'. After five weeks it was then replaced by the Dave Clark Five's 'Glad all over' for a fortnight before the Searchers scored their second number one with 'Needles and pins'.

in mid-1964. At that time other groups were exploding on to the scene, all of them eager to come up with new sounds – just as the Beatles were continuing to do. To Decca's eternal chagrin, the wrong auditioning group had been chosen.

Had it not been for the US (on which Brian with the Tremeloes made no impression at all), the Dave Clark Five's story could have been similar: a slow start, a sole UK number one ('Glad all over', for two weeks, after faltering progress up the chart: like Brian Poole, Dave was ecstatic to be able to knock the Beatles and 'I want to hold your hand' from their perch), then successive singles slipping just that little bit further with each release. Although Dave Clark had, and has continued to have right up to the present day, total control of *every* aspect of his group's endeavours he has also had a vastly inflated perception of how successful they were (this is evidenced in the almost two hour-long 'documentary'[a] – with *another* two hours of extras – written, produced and directed by the man himself for 'Dave Clark International Productions'; needless to say, it lacks more than a certain amount of objectivity).

While the Dave Clark Five obviously styled their appearance as, perhaps, neater Beatles, they certainly had a unique sound – their leader made sure of that – possibly even more so than that of the eclectic Beatles who had emerged from the seething cauldron that was Hamburg-fuelled 'Merseybeat'. But, with the exception of Mike Smith's superb vocals, the other instrumentalists' seemingly limited, or perhaps constrained proficiency (on record at least) ensured that most of the Five's records had, like those of, say, the Searchers and Hollies, a predictable, even if usually exciting sameness. As with all the other artists who could have been contenders, the Dave Clark Five's failure to experiment and progress meant that after their first flush of success they just became a group that their fans could comfortably return to for old times sake. Was it purely coincidental that Dave decided to stop touring, and then terminated his group not long after the Beatles decided on each course of action?

As for Sounds Incorporated, while they never enjoyed major success they must have had a lot of fun along the way. The former group had become friends with the Beatles in Hamburg and under Brian Epstein's patronage they toured the world as the perfect support group for the more charismatic singing headliners. These were times still reminiscent of vaudeville or music hall, the bill comprising half a dozen or so quite disparate acts, with each one, including the *main* act,

[a] *The Dave Clark Five And Beyond: Glad All Over* (PBS, 2014)

playing for no more than twenty to thirty minutes. Opportunities to invite guest musicians on stage had not yet been considered so Sounds Incorporated never got to provide a walk-on horn section to augment the all-guitar sound of the Beatles. It wasn't until 1967 that the three sax players finally helped out on the recording of 'Good morning, good morning' for *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. This was pretty much Sounds Incorporated's last contribution of any significance to '60s pop music. In 1967 they recorded one last single – ironically featuring vocals – for the Beatles' first-ever label, Polydor.

Brass instruments, the bluesy voice and organ playing of Mike Smith, and Rod Argent's jazzy piano stylings for the Zombies were broadening new homegrown British pop music that had hitherto been dominated by guitar-dominated northern 'beat'. These different sounds were of course not new, having been born as far back as the earliest times of twentieth century music history; they would provide strong new alternatives in the UK to the pop music of the late 1950s and early '60s as will be further detailed in chapter 15. Meanwhile, the more mainstream forms of melodic, rhythmic pop music were also experiencing reinvention across the Atlantic.

12 | BACK IN THE USA

Even though the United States' expansive landmass is more than thirty times as large as that of the UK, its population in 1960 was only about three-and-a-half times greater. Nevertheless, considering the thousands of British skiffle groups, many of which then graduated to rock'n'roll, it's inconceivable now, more than sixty years on, that the concept of the self-contained 'pop group' as we understand it today – three or more musicians with vocal ability and often writing their own material – scarcely existed in the US in the late 1950s and early '60s. A 'group' there was usually all-vocal, as with the proliferation in the US of doo-wop or 'girl groups'. Musicians might have played as a loose aggregated group without necessarily being regarded as one: a jazz band or r&b combo, country pickers or guitar playing folksingers. Certainly some groups, while standing at the back became integral to the careers of solo artists, such as the Comets for Bill Haley, the Blue Caps for Gene Vincent or the Crickets for Buddy Holly (though while the last of these used only the group name it was quite clear who the main man was – as every second single was released just in Buddy's name!)

About the closest to today's concept of a cohesive lineup were, from the start of the new decade, the 'guitar groups' such as those exponents of American surf rock instrumentals, the Gamblers, Ventures, Bel-Airs, Chantays and Surfaris (their most successful counterparts in UK, while having no interest in surfing were the Shadows). All of these wrote a proportion of their recorded material.

This is not to suggest that, as with the skiffle craze, there weren't *some* other young musicians around the US singing and jamming with each other on whatever electric and other instruments they could find. An example was the bunch of seven schoolfriends from Baltimore who called themselves the Lafayettes. Complete with, like Sounds Incorporated and the Jaywalkers, a two-piece saxophone section they actually had a modest 1962 hit in their home territory with their own interesting, but basic Latin-style (complete with simulated castanets) original composition 'Life's too short'. Sadly the title was an apt description of their music career.

Of those who could claim to combine both vocals with instrumentation, most impressively pedigreed were the 4 Seasons (alternatively expressed, even on their own record labels as 'Four Seasons'). Their origins went as far back as the early 1950s, and the Italian vocal group scene. After many different names and line-

ups, founding members Frankie Castelluccio (who changed his last name to Valli) and Tommy DeVito settled on the Four Lovers (in the numerical tradition of the Four Aces, Four Lads, Four Preps, Four Freshmen and Brothers Four).

Vitalised at the end of the decade by the addition of seventeen-year old Bob Gaudio (who two years before in 1958 had helped write the hit 'Short shorts' for his group of the time, the Royal Teens) they turned disappointment to their advantage with a final name change: a bowling alley where they'd failed a house band audition was called 'Four Seasons'. The 4 Seasons' particular strength was their impeccable – though still more doo-wop-influenced – four-part harmonies featuring Frankie Valli's strident lead voice and piercing falsetto that contrasted with the distinctive bass vocal. Notably, Gaudio, usually in collaboration with their producer Bob Crewe wrote most of their songs. And while they often sang as a quartet in front of a band or orchestra, three of the four members – tenor-voiced Gaudio on keyboard, guitarist-baritone DeVito, and Nicholas Maciosi, better known as Nick Massi who played, and sang bass – were able to wrangle their instruments in performance. The 4 Seasons couldn't by definition become five so on these occasions they employed a sit-in drummer – Frankie Valli had thankfully long abandoned the maracas and solitary floor tom tom adorned with a huge heart that he'd occasionally played with the Four Lovers.

Frankie had first recorded solo as far back as 1953. During the '50s ten or more records were released by him solo (his assumed name sometimes spelt Vally or Valley) and, with variously titled lineups – identity confusion seemed to be a hallmark of his career. Only one of these recordings, by the Four Lovers, experienced any modest success. When the 4 Seasons' first single on the small Chicago-based African American label Vee-Jay also failed, Bob Gaudio, by his admission inspired by Bruce Channel's 'Hey! Baby' took, as he has claimed, fifteen minutes to write 'Sherry'. 'Sherry' shot to the top of the US chart in September 1962, staying there for five weeks. The UK also embraced this latest very different sound to come across from America and put it into its top ten. From the rather unimaginatively titled top ten LP *Sherry & 11 Others*, 'Big girls don't cry' followed in October, equalling its predecessor's impressive tenure at the top and this time reaching just outside the British top ten.

After almost a decade of repeated forays into the entertainment business, the 4 Seasons were finally stars. They and their fans celebrated Christmas 1962 with the more cleverly named *4 Seasons Greetings* and its single, the thirty years-old favourite of young, and young at heart, 'Santa Claus is coming to town'.

It's a common contention – repeated in the 4 Seasons' 1990 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame citation – that Bob Gaudio and Bob Crewe were influenced by Jewish American musician-producer Phil Spector, and also, by the 'sound' of the rising new African American Motown record company (for more on both see the next chapter). The converse though could – and should – be said to be true. Spector was in the process of developing his trademark multi-layered 'Wall of Sound'.[a] His first major recording that employed this, 'He's a rebel' by black 'girl group' the Crystals was released in exactly the same month as 'Sherry'; it topped the chart, maintaining that position for a fortnight. It achieved that inbetween the 4 Seasons' two *five*-week stints at number one.

'Sherry' has nothing in common with 'He's a rebel'[b] or any Spector project up to that time (although similarities – purely coincidental? – can be heard with the *Motown* release recorded and released at around the same time as 'Sherry', Marvin Gaye's 'Stubborn kind of fellow', with its metronomic cowbell and shrill backup vocals). Commencing with a conga drum flourish 'Sherry' immediately establishes a solid 4/4 rhythmic setup, every beat being emphasised with clapping. It was there again on 'Big girls don't cry' and then the device started to crop up in other people's songs like…released seven months later, Spector's production of the Crystals' 'Da doo ron ron' (that compounded the rhythm by overlaying fast triplets for a relentless 12/8 feel), and, more new recordings from Motown, most significantly the next wave of 'girl groups' (see next chapter). The 4 Seasons' total package – the beat, the lead and falsetto vocals, the harmonies, the crisp, uncluttered but spacious sound – was as startlingly unique as that of any of the new groups focussed on thus far.

Strangely, despite the British artists' keen awareness of everything American, both black and white, and from rhythm and blues through rock'n'roll to pop, there is almost no evidence of interest in the 4 Seasons even though they were by now quite popular with record buyers in the UK. Only on Brian Poole and the Tremeloes' first LP from May 1963, a tribute to US artists' *Big Big Hits Of '62*, do we hear, as part of a twenty-two song medley, a minute and-a-half fragment of 'Sherry' that amounts to nothing more than a pale imitation of the original.

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[a] The so-called 'Wall of Sound' was built by session musicians playing a wide array of instruments including some not normally used for pop music, several being doubled or tripled (eg.three bass guitars, drum kits, pianos), and others added in layers, all combined and fed through an echo chamber to achieve a majestically dense, orchestral effect.

[b] 'He's a rebel' was actually vocalised in the studio by another female group called the Blossoms and issued in the Crystals' name while they were touring – they had to learn to sing it on the road!

In the States the 4 Seasons celebrated the start of 1963 with their third number one, the dramatic 'Walk like a man'. It displayed most of the features of its predecessors but with a more expansive production. This time it stayed on top for a shorter, three-week period, but again did well in the UK. And then, a hiatus. Departing from the hitmaking Gaudio-Crewe partnership a completely re-arranged version of Fats Domino's 'Ain't it a shame' (as for Pat Boone's, theirs was titled 'Ain't *that* a shame') didn't make it into the US top twenty, although midway through the year 'Candy girl' by another outside writer was back up there at three. Two more LPs that continued the series of wordy titles – *Big Girls Don't Cry And Twelve Others* and the even more specific *The 4 Seasons Sing Ain't That A Shame And 11 Others* – showed the songwriting now to be stretched thin. Along with their seasonal record of all-traditional Christmas songs, these releases predominantly comprised non-original compositions. The hits, and the creativity were drying up for the 4 Seasons and Vee-Jay was by this stage focussing on other new artists, in particular to start with, British singer Frank Ifield who had recently returned to the country of his birth having grown up in Australia.

The 4 Seasons switched to the Philips label (distributed in the US by Mercury). In 1964 they briefly regained momentum at three with the originals 'Dawn (go away)' and, returning to the top (and two in the UK), 'Rag doll' (the B side was 'Silence is golden' which, as already mentioned, was very successfully covered by the Tremeloes – without Brian – three years later). But, like some of the British groups the 4 Seasons seemed content with only superficial change.

There was a member swap in 1965, but more significantly they were now officially, and, like their LP titles, extremely cumbersomely 'The 4 Seasons featuring the "Sound" of Frankie Valli'. As Buddy Holly had, Frankie (though backed by the group anyway) increasingly established a concurrent solo career on a different label. To confuse matters further, the group still occasionally recorded under a different name, mysteriously, in this case, The Wonder Who?[a] All of these 4 Seasons permutations had significant, if slightly less success through to 1968, and then, after an ill-conceived move to Motown early in the following decade the group enjoyed a resurgence. To cap off the long and brilliant career, both the 4 Seasons, and Frankie solo scored more top ten singles – and number ones – with

[a] Coincidentally, Canada's The Guess Who had just had a hit with Johnny Kidd and the Pirates' 'Shakin' all over', and, the year before, The You Know Who Group, four other Italian Americans who concealed their identity – with masks! – had tried to cash in on the 'British invasion' with an English accented record. Another actual UK group was beginning to make a name, a name that comprised just two of those words (see chapter 17).

songs written by combinations of Gaudio, Crewe and other writers – in the US, UK and elsewhere through to the end of the 1970s. Valli and Gaudio retain controlling interests in the quartet of hired singers that Frankie fronts to this day.

In 1959, far away from industrial Liverpool or grimy London and on the other side of America from the 4 Seasons in the sunny, near beachside locality of Hawthorne, Los Angeles County, California a boy had just turned sixteen. Brian Wilson, mentored by his musical parents, was already learning to play the piano and for his birthday he was given a reel-to-reel tape recorder. He used it to identify vocal and instrumental parts as he jammed with his thirteen year-old brother Carl and even younger next-door neighbour David Marks on their Christmas gift guitars. Inspired by listening to the complex harmonies of jazzy vocal groups like the Four Freshmen as well as the greats of rock'n'roll and r&b, Brian assembled a group that included Carl along with his middle brother – and drummer by default – Dennis, singing cousin Mike Love and, alternating with Marks depending on circumstances, another friend, Al Jardine. Their playing was adequate but their singing, with increasingly complex parts that explored the male vocal range from bass to falsetto, was sublime.

In October 1961 their aspiring manager, dad Murry Wilson took the group to a small studio to record 'Surfin'' that, co-written by Brian and Mike, celebrated the recreational craze that was sweeping American beaches. On receiving copies of the disc they discovered that, like Johnny Kidd and his Pirates, they'd been given a new name: the ordinary-sounding Pendletones were now, in keeping with their song and image the 'Beach Boys' (although Dennis was the only actual surfer). By the end of the year, 'Surfin'' was a hit in California. Contrary to most musicians' career paths, on New Year's Eve 1961, the night before Decca's January 1 test recording sessions in London, the Beach Boys played live for one of their very first times at the Ritchie Valens Memorial Dance – with Ike and Tina Turner top of the bill.

While it had little impact elsewhere in the States, and certainly not worldwide, 'Surfin'' was a confident, if sparse entry to the pop music stage. With minimal instrumentation (Carl on guitar, Jardine playing upright bass and Brian Wilson tapping a snare drum) it was immediately impressive for the five-part harmonies that were reminiscent of the up-tempo arrangement of the old 'Blue moon' by the multi-racial doo-wop group the Marcels that had topped both the US and UK charts earlier in 1961. Mike Love's keening lead vocal startlingly alternating with his "bom bom dit-de-dit-de-dit" bass part, the others' precision

intonation and, the freshly topical subject matter, represented something excitingly new, something that held great promise for the future.

Just after halfway through 1962, with the full band playing and singing and now on major label Capitol their second single 'Surfin' safari' continued, alongside the purely guitar groups already mentioned, to ride the waves of 'surf rock'. After some months it made the top twenty on the US national chart (passed, during that time by the 4 Seasons' number one-bound 'Sherry') and also, in that other beach mecca, Australia. Despite some considerable European success the safari didn't however make it to the cold, stony beaches of the UK.

An LP of the same name comprising more breezy, lushly harmonious vignettes of summer life followed. Possibly the most interesting track was a song that, with snatches of sound effects and spoken voice, evoked the traditional US state 'County fair'. Obsession with the minutiæ of American everyday life, and experimentation with a richly varied sound and harmony palette would energise Brian Wilson's creat-ivity throughout his life. As 1962 drew to a close the US was embracing the young Beach Boys as fresh voices of optimism.

Into the following year, 'Surfin' USA' (a pastiche of Chuck Berry's 'Sweet little sixteen'), the lush ballad 'Surfer girl' and the academic pride-inspiring 'Be true to your school' were the first ever Beach Boys singles to make the national top ten. Murry wasn't happy though when Brian shared his song 'Surf city' with Jan (Berry) and Dean (Torrance) who then outperformed their friends at number one. Possibly it was the Chuck connection that helped to introduce the Beach Boys to the UK, but their exotically-themed 'Surfin' USA' finally entered the lower reaches of the chart there. Three more LPs also made it into the US topten, with *Little Deuce Coupe* (recorded just one month after 'Surfin' USA') varying its subject matter from the surf to young Americans' love affair with cars and hot rods. Brian's progress as a composer-producer was indicated by his increased experimentation with instrumentation: strings, Hammond organ, and unexpected sounds like Mike Love's honking tenor saxophone and the harp arpeggios of Mike's sister Maureen. For the first time he also felt the need to go outside 'family', employing session drummer Hal Blaine. Wilson's increasingly complex, often double-tracked vocal arrangements subtly enhanced what were still to the Beach Boys' growing fan base just straightforward, catchy rock'n'roll songs complemented by some beautiful ballads.

The high-ranking singles followed in 1964; they included more driving songs, 'Fun fun fun' and 'I get around'. Brian's musical compositions were ever-more elaborate: on top of the contributions by the group and the expanding 'Wrecking

Crew'[a] of Los Angeles studio musicians, Brian played piano, harpsichord and organ. 'I get around' was a triumphant affirmation, the Beach Boys' first ever number one in America and also, at seven, their first top ten hit in Britain. At home, all thire LPs right up to 1966 continued to register in the top ten.

As with the proliferation of 'Mersey' soundalike groups in the UK, many of these now spearheading the 'British invasion', others in the US sought to capture that exuberant Beach Boys sound – and especially in the year of their hit-making motoring themes. 'Little Honda', the tribute to the new breed of lightweight Japanese motorcycles from the Beach Boys' sixth album *All Summer Long* was covered by – the Hond*ells* – a studio group produced by and comprising Beach Boys associates. The ploy worked: it was a one-off top ten hit (and a free commercial for Honda!) and a touring 'Hondells' was assembled. In a similar situation the Rip Chords had a floating population of singers and some of them, backed by many of the Beach Boys' studio musicians, recorded while others went on tour. As 'Bruce and Terry', Bruce Johnston and Doris Day's son Terry Melcher recorded another Beach Boys-style song about their own 'Custom machine' and were also the hired voices behind the Rip Chords' biggest hit, 'Hey little Cobra'. It was, like Chuck Berry's later 'Jaguar and Thunderbird' from 1960 (and his debut 'Maybellene'), a musical commentary on a car race, in this case, between another Ford Cobra, a British Jaguar and a Chevrolet Stingray. Ronny and the Daytonas for their part sang about a Pontiac, their 'Little GTO'. Free advertising aplenty.

Jan and Dean had a cautionary tale though. The duo's 'Surf city' had been followed by two more hits in 1963 including, of course, 'Drag city' but early next year, with significant input from the Beach Boys organisation (including Brian Wilson sharing writing credits) the doom-laden big production 'Dead man's curve' was a hit. Rather than celebrating, it warned of the mortal danger of drag racing – between a Stingray and, yes again, a Jaguar (presumably the Rip Chords' victorious Cobra stayed out of this one). Then they effectively negated that public service announcement with their novelty hit about a ludicrous lead-foot, 'The little old lady (from Pasadena)' with her "brand new shiny red super-stocked Dodge".[45]

The 4 Seasons had their own rejoinder to the Beach Boys' pæans to the sea: after Brian Wilson cheekily stole Frankie Valli's falsetto part from 'Walk like a

[a] The Wrecking Crew was the group of studio session musicians that had already been used by Phil Spector. The name remains in contention: drummer Hal Blaine either invented, or revived it in the 1990s when he refocussed attention on their achievements. Fascinating insight into their accomplishments can be gained on the eponymous documentary available on DVD (Magnolia Home Entertainment, 2015).

man' for his group's 'Surfers rule', the 4 Seasons, on the flipside of 'Dawn' rebutted that by declaring 'No surfin' today'. Perhaps the hard-headed quartet could foresee the end of the musical craze and were reinforcing the validity of their own proven style because by the end of 1964 surf music was indeed all but washed up and drag music had run out of gas. Jan and Dean tried again with 'Sidewalk surfin'' (again co-written by Brian Wilson) and though its focus, skateboarding, like surfing and drag racing proved to be enduringly popular, the music did not.

Brian Wilson was unconcerned as he was quickly tiring of formulaic music. Not just tiring, but tired – *dog* tired. Two days before Christmas 1964, after a huge year of writing, recording and playing he experienced the first of several health crises. Following a breakdown he was replaced on the group's tour by Wrecking Crew guitarist and vocalist Glen Campbell. Brian then decided to stay off the road for good, his permanent touring replacement being the aforementioned Bruce Johnston. Glen went on to a hugely successful career in country-pop music.

While his band was constantly performing, Brian Wilson was exactly where he wanted to be: consolidating his compositional skills at home with a piano. But his labours still had not achieved true fruition. The Beach Boys on record started and ended 1965 in party and cover song mode with Bobby Freeman's 'Do you wanna dance' and, from their Christmas 1965 *Beach Boys' Party!* record, 'Barbara Ann' (it had originally been recorded by Bronx doo-wop group the Regents). In between was all classic original Beach Boys with 'Help me Rhonda' being their second ever US (and Canadian) chart-topper. One of the best indications of Brian's creativity – now being enhanced by increasing experimentation with drugs – was the also high-rating 'California girls' ("recorded…while tripping on acid")[46] in which Mike Love's pedestrian, girl-ogling lyric was offset by the rich vocals, and the instrumental prelude – "among the most amazing bars of pop music ever recorded".[47] The Beach Boys commenced 1966 with another non-original. Inspired by the Kingston Trio, their version of an old West Indies folk song that they called 'Sloop John B' charted well in the US and around the world, and was, at two, their best result in the UK yet (beating 'Barabara Ann' there by one place).

Brian Wilson however was engrossed in his most ambitious creation so far, recording over many months, in several studios, songs that he put together with lyricist Tony Asher (with some contributions by Mike Love). The instrumental tracks – including two that were written to not include vocals – were played by an augmented Wrecking Crew who were frequently bemused by the twenty-three year-old Wilson dictating parts to them on the fly, often with apparently clashing

chord structures, oddities of rhythm and tempo and other idiosyncrasies. But Brian had all the parts, instrumental and vocal, inside his head: as bassist Carol Kaye acknowledged, "We sensed the artist in him…we saw a genius explode."[48] Inspired by Phil Spector's 'Wall of Sound', Brian's arrangements included as many as three basses, ukulele, accordions, harpsichord, vibraphone, tympani, numerous items of percussion, horns including his signature tenor and baritone saxophones, bass harmonica and a rudimentary electronic instrument, the electro-theremin.

To their amazement it came together, ready for the multiple harmony parts to be added – and added, and added – by the Beach Boys who, on return from touring, were nonplussed by this music that resembled nothing they'd ever sung before. The multiple instrumental parts were still only recorded on the customary four-track recorder, then 'bounced' to one of eight tracks leaving the rest for vocal overlays. *Pet Sounds* is today acclaimed as a masterpiece. With its virtually symphonic composition and sophisticated harmonies, its generally moody atmosphere and the very personal feelings expressed it resembled no other current work of popular music. Capitol was dismayed by this record that had cost $70,000 in production and seemingly contained no new single – although 'Wouldn't it be nice' did sell quite well and its original A side, the sublime 'God only knows' (with Carl on vocals) was again big in the UK (perhaps the 'God' word doomed it in the religiously sensitive US). American fans were unsure of the new direction and put *Pet Sounds* just into the top ten, the lowest placing of the last six albums but luckily elsewhere in the world it was a hit; at two in the UK it sold the best of any Beach Boys LP.

Brian's final justification however came with the release of the single later in 1966 that was being recorded concurrently with *Pet Sounds*. 'Good vibrations' incorporated all of *Pet Sounds*' experimentation and by itself ran to a huge budget but to Capitol's relief it was the first Beach Boys single to go to number one in both the US and UK as well as many other countries – and became their first million-seller. Definitely this time a pop song – immediately accessible, yet still fascinatingly complex – 'Good vibrations' was the pinnacle of Brian Wilson's commercial achievement.

If it was the pinnacle, everything that followed was on a slippery slope down, with Brian undergoing the most challenging personal problems of his life. *Smile*, his much-anticipated follow-up to *Pet Sounds* failed to be completed and the token replacement was the oddly-named *Smiley Smile* that included some of *Smile*'s songs (some more appeared on later albums). From that point, Brian's involvement with writing and recording was augmented, in some cases, replaced, by other

group members to varying degrees. There were no more US top tens until mid-1976 when *15 Big Ones* (comprising half originals, half covers) made eight, and, from the album, the single, Chuck Berry's classic 'Rock and roll music', five. Then, from the *Cocktail* film soundtrack in 1988 came the chart-topping 'Kokomo', written, not by Brian Wilson but by Mike Love and Terry Melcher along with two others, John Phillips and John Sebastian. In the UK, with 'Do it again' another number one in 1966 (only twenty at home), Beach Boys' singles and albums continued occasionally to appear in the top tens right through to the 1980s.

Personnel came and went as the band continued to tour over the years, Brian sometimes even returning to the stage. With the premature deaths of both the other Wilson brothers and friction with Mike Love the once strong Beach Boys' unit was fragmented. In recent years *Smile* has finally seen the light of day, re-recorded in 2004 by Brian with a group of session musicians (the same collaboration has unbelievably seen both *Pet Sounds* and *Smile* impeccably performed in concert). Seven years later, the actual original Beach Boys' album was at long last re-assembled from the multiplicity of its parts.

In 2016 the remaining members – Brian, plus Mike Love, Bruce Johnston and Al Jardine sharing the stage with David Marks – agreed to tour together to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. And they returned, for the first time since 1976 to high in the US albums top ten (top twenty in the UK and Canada) with *That's Why God Made The Radio*, a nostalgic look back to the America of their youth. The Beach Boys occupy their own space in the pop music pantheon, and Brian Wilson is rightly regarded as one of the true geniuses of popular music history.

While his music, and that of the 4 Seasons and others like Phil Spector and the Motown artists was becoming more complex, an alternative phenomenon had, in two novel cases, begun to gain legitimacy in the US. *Preceding* the new, relatively raw sounds of the 'British invasion' that must have sounded so different to American ears in 1964 were two other American groups. Like the Lafayettes they had been bashing away in their garages and they emerged with singles for which production must have involved not much more than setting up a microphone or two and hitting 'record'.

The nearest 'sea' to Minneapolis is a hundred and twenty miles to the north: Lake Superior is one of the Great Lakes on the border between USA and Canada – apparently its waves can be eminently rideable, especially during the winter! That may just have instilled in Minneapolitan group the – neatly besuited – Trashmen a passionate love of playing surf music and in late 1963 they put together something

they called 'Surfin' bird'. The song – or, two songs as later litigation proved – was an amalgam of 'Papa oom mow mow' and 'Bird's the word', both written and recorded a couple of years earlier by black doo-wop group the Rivingtons. The resulting anarchic piece with its guttural vocal, basic drumming and simple guitar accompaniment actually had absolutely nothing to do with surfing, included only some of the originals' admittedly scanty lyrics and, with no harmonies whatsoever, lacked their warm charm. Its 'trashy' simplicity captured young record buyers' imagination and it flew up to number four in January 1964.

Another group of young 'men' – the *King*smen – had been playing since the late 1950s. In 1963, in one take, and for $50 they quickly ran through another doo-wop song that they'd played in a show the night before non-stop for an hour and a half, African American Richard Berry's mid-'50s 'Louie Louie'. As with 'Surfin' bird', the slurred solo vocal, lurching rhythm and cheap organ sound had few of the attributes of the original but it too sold extremely well – number two at the same time as 'Surfin' bird' (despite a state governor's claim – extraordinarily further investigated by the FBI – that the song was pornographic!) Notwithstanding their clean-cut look and matching striped jackets the Kingsmen are now classed as a 'garage band'.[a] Others with a stripped-back sound included the Premiers with the low budget-sounding 'Farmer John' (originally by r&b duo Don and Dewey), and, the teenage Dartells whose 'Hot pastrami' was their thinly disguised shouty take on Nat Kendrick and the Swans'[b] extremely simplistic dance tune '(Do the) Mashed Potatoes'; both made the top twenty. Even Brian Wilson, for all his sophistication, was happy for the Beach Boys to include both 'Louie Louie' and 'Surfin' bird''s component 'Papa oom mow mow' in their live performances.

Ironically another fully-formed group that would in time confront and adapt the 'British invasion' sound, Paul Revere and the Raiders recorded 'Louie Louie' in exactly the same studio at around the same time as the Kingsmen (although this rendition, and their follow-up original 'Louie go home' had almost no success). Many acts have been inspired by that extremely basic song: author Dave Marsh has suggested that its "duh duh duh, duh duh" rhythmic feel and choppy chords directly influenced an emerging English writer and his new group's debut recording[49] and indeed, the harder-edged pop songs of many other artists that would in time rival 'Merseybeat'. More about that in chapter 15.

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[a] Garage band: An amateur rock band typically holding its rehearsals in a garage and usually having only a local audience. The first known use of garage band was in 1972. (Merriam-Webster online dictionary)

[b] Nat Kendrick and the Swans was a stage name for rising black r&b star James Brown and his band.

With the Beatles…

The 4 Seasons and the Beach Boys rose to prominence at around the same time that the Beatles were beginning their recording career – although of course, the two-year time delay before the 'British invasion' meant that the newcomers' impact wouldn't be felt in the US until the two American groups were well-established there. 4 Seasons' producer Bob Crewe was unfazed by the new arrivals. He later commented, "What a wonderful thing to have that kind of infusion. It was being called an invasion. I was not a bit fearful of it at all…the Seasons kept on going."[50] Indeed, in 1965 Frankie Valli was invited to visit the Beatles while all five were in Rome and he and they expressed their mutual admiration. But Brian Wilson didn't initially see 'Beatlemania' as an 'infusion'. He recalled, "The Beatles invasion shook me up an awful lot…they eclipsed a lot of what we'd worked for…"[51] Mike Love got to know the Beatles later when he, they and others travelled to India to seek spiritual enlightenment but despite meeting Paul in 1966, Brian maintained a competitive attitude from start to finish.

The similarities between the three groups were pronounced, more so in many ways than between the Beatles and any other British group of the time and of course, any other American group. For two of them this even extended to the fact that Bruce Channel's 'Hey! Baby' had, albeit for different reasons, been influential on both the Beatles' and the 4 Seasons' first chart-topping singles! All three groups played instruments and featured superbly arranged vocal harmonies, they recorded songs written by one or more of their members, and all had producers – George Martin, Bob Crewe and Brian Wilson – who were able and prepared, not just to sit in a booth and twiddle knobs, but to work, even write and arrange, respectfully and proactively with their artists to achieve the best from what they had to offer. All were convivial collaborations forged from shared family, friendship or cultural roots and no doubt because of this they maintained cohesive membership and exerted strong control of their own destinies. But while the Beach Boys were of similar age to the Beatles – Brian Wilson was born two days after Paul McCartney – most of the 4 Seasons were up to, and more than *ten years* older. The 'baby' of the group Bob Gaudio was the exception, again being younger – five months – than McCartney – but the other three had been born before Elvis Presley, two of them, in the *decade* before.

In 1963 the 4 Seasons had their three number ones in a row but the Beatles' plans for conquering the US in that year met with resistance. Echoing Brian Epstein's

London experience two years before, their records were rejected by major American labels but one company that finally took the gamble on releasing the British group in the US was…Vee-Jay (confusingly, two Beatles records came out on Vee-Jay's subsidiary label, Tollie; and to add further confusion, another small label, Swan also later scored the rights for 'She loves you' and even optimistically released its German version, 'Sie liebt dich'; it charted just inside the weekly 'Hot 100').

Vee-Jay was of course the same company with which the 4 Seasons had recorded their first hits but demand for Beatles' records in 1964 was so overwhelming that focus shifted away from the earlier signings. The label's days were numbered anyway (its president had resigned because he had been embezzling money): as already noted, disgruntled, the 4 Seasons soon switched to Philips, and, under pressure, Vee-Jay surrendered the Beatles (and Frank Ifield) to Capitol – which already had the Beach Boys!

In its death throes the company desperately issued any back catalogue material they had, in whatever format they could. On Vee-Jay the British group's unofficial 'first' US album, *Introducing The Beatles* was followed by the bizarre *Jolly What! England's Greatest Recording Stars* that cobbled together music by the Beatles with that of crooner Frank Ifield, (though Ifield was stylistically poles apart, John Lennon did like the harmonica introduction to his 'I remember you'). Then came a double album of both of Vee-Jay's former groups' 'greatest hits' that they breathlessly titled *The Beatles vs the Four* [sic]*Seasons: The International Battle of the Century!* It even included a voting sheet – "You be the judge" – that enabled listeners to rate the songs. At the same time, and with absolutely nothing to lose in this crazy 'British invasion' year of 1964, Capitol itself was flooding the charts not only with the official singles, but others cherry-picked from Beatles B sides and EP and album tracks.[a]

The 4 Seasons undoubtedly had a unique style – cheekily dubbed 'The Jersey Sound' – adding a pulsing beat behind those Italianate doo-wop vocal harmonies. Their personable stage act though varied from Frankie Valli singing out front of the other three instrument-playing members, to all four, with no instruments, standing in close formation as vocal groups had done for decades. And their stage

[a] That wasn't the end of the label confusion: in the same year, on Atco (a subsidiary of Atlantic) the Beatles' 'Ain't she sweet' from the Hamburg recordings reached nineteen. Another, 'Sweet Georgia Brown' by 'THE BEATLES With Tony Sheridan', but with Sheridan's re-recorded vocals, and adapted lyrics was also released on Atco but didn't chart. And two others, similarly credited – but on the MGM label! – were the original 'My Bonnie' single and, Sheridan's 'Why' (backed by the Beatles' instrumental 'Cry for a shadow'); they charted at twenty-six, and eighty-eight. Finally, the American *A Hard Day's Night* soundtrack album was issued by the film's distribution company, United Artists; the title track and other singles however were on Capitol!

outfits ranged from matching neat casual ensembles to smart tuxedos. In other words, they looked like, and were of appropriate age to be, cabaret performers. Perhaps most significantly, despite the quality of their songs, arrangements, and the studio session musicians the 4 Seasons' trademark sound evolved very little during the '60s. The Beatles kept their ears open for any new or interesting sounds from the States but there is little evidence that they were impacted greatly by the 4 Seasons, although, of the vocal stylings in 'From me to you' writer Ian Macdonald contended that the US group "…employed similar falsetto and almost certainly influenced the Beatles in this respect."[52]

While the 4 Seasons were not in the same league as the Beatles, they were certainly in a league of their own. During the 1970s disco era both Frankie and the group scored more worldwide number one hits and the momentum continued through their strong connection with the hit movie *Grease*. Appropriately that film was set in the 1950s, the decade of their formation. In the final analysis it is nevertheless undeniable that if the Beatles had never existed the 4 Seasons, while successful, were too old, too unhip to have been the next major pop idols. Unconcerned, Valli, Gaudio, DeVito and Massi (and later replacements after Massi left in 1965) along with Bob Crewe nevertheless just kept on putting out that classic 4 Seasons sound – and the hit biographical musical *Jersey Boys* has brought their music to whole new generations.

Though the Beach Boys' rocking harmony-rich sound endeared them to *their* fans, the younger group was in reality little more exciting than the 4 Seasons. Grinning goofily at the audience in their matching striped shirts and pressed slacks, and with their paternal-looking, though only twenty-two year-old nominal lead vocalist Mike Love who seemed unsure what to do with his hands in the absence of an instrument (except for occasionally honking on his tenor sax), the Beach Boys looked and sounded as if they'd been hired for the senior prom.

When Brian Wilson left them early in 1965 to pursue his creative dreams on behalf of the group his original spirit of competition with the Beatles burned even brighter. During the two years of the 'British invasion' the Beatles had played to capacity audiences around the world including three US tours (during which a record seventy-three million TV viewers watched them on *The Ed Sullivan Show*); they had also starred in two films. They had topped the *Billboard* singles chart ten times (with numerous other appearances in the top ten and elsewhere) and all six albums released so far had likewise occupied that premier position. In comparison, the Beach Boys had, still impressively, put ten singles into the top ten, four making

number one, and there were ten top ten album entries (but no chart-toppers). The first of the Beatles' seriously creative albums *Rubber Soul* had been released at the end of 1965 (the American version missing four tracks, but including two from *Help!*). It came one month after *Beach Boys Party!* which, with irritating dubbed party noises, predominantly featured loose acoustic short cover versions of other popular songs including…three of the Beatles. The following year, with nothing forthcoming from the Beach Boys two more Beatles albums ascended to the top of the US chart, staying there, as had *Rubber Soul*, for around six weeks: the US-only compilation *Yesterday And Today*,[a] and then, their version of *Revolver*.

Brian Wilson had been fascinated by *Rubber Soul*'s innovative combinations and manipulations of sounds, and he quickly became focussed on what he wanted to do next: "The inspiration for *Pet Sounds* was *Rubber Soul*…I got so blown out that I went to the piano and started writing songs…I wanted to top it, I felt competitive with the Beatles."[53]

Paul McCartney was typical of the British fans who, hungry for new creativity in pop music then enthused about *Pet Sounds* even if the Americans generally hadn't. He has commented, in not dissimilar fashion to Wilson's reaction to *Rubber Soul*, the album "...blew me out of the water...It was certainly a record we all played – it was the record of the time..."[54] Unlike the Beach Boys who – apart from Brian – remained enthusiastic about touring, the Beatles, after three years of screaming mayhem and intercontinental exhaustion were going off the road for good, to concentrate on recording. They took up the Wilson challenge: Paul readily conceded, "…my influence was basically the *Pet Sounds* album. John was influenced by it, perhaps not as much as me,"[55] and producer George Martin concurred: "Without *Pet Sounds*, *Sgt. Pepper* wouldn't have happened. *Revolver* was the beginning of the whole thing. But *Pepper* was an attempt to equal *Pet Sounds*…"[56]

The first single to emerge from the exhaustive sessions, (recorded concurrently with *Sgt. Pepper*, but released separately), 'Penny Lane' (paired with 'Strawberry Fields forever') couldn't however overshadow 'Good vibrations'. While both 'Penny Lane' and 'Good vibrations' topped the US chart – for a week each – the Beatles' single was the first since 'Please please me' to make it only to two in their home country while the Beach Boys ascended to the top there. It has been suggested

[a] *Yesterday And Today* comprised 'Day tripper' and 'We can work it out', plus some tracks that had not made the American versions of *Help!* and *Rubber Soul* and, three omitted from the American *Revolver*; its controversial 'butcher' cover that depicted the Beatles in white coats, draped with raw meat and holding bloody decapitated dolls was very quickly replaced by an image more acceptable for American fans.

that, as it was essentially a double A-side record, the two competed with each other although this was not the first time that Beatles songs had been given equal billing.[a] The resulting LP though would indicate that perhaps, as these early '60s groups were maturing, little 45s no longer mattered quite as much and that those previously marginalised favourites of parents, long playing records were coming into ascendancy for the new generation.

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band was, as *Pet Sounds* initially had been, recorded using a four-track machine, but despite what many think, it "…didn't start out life as a 'concept album'."[57] In fact, there was no single concept, and little homogeneity, even though continuity and immediacy was promoted by the segues between some tracks, with others being separated by almost no lead time. If there was any concept, it was Paul McCartney's novel contrivance that the music was actually not recorded by the Beatles, but by the album's eponymous band. None of this was really of any significance: *Sgt. Pepper* was totally unique, with wildly creative production and combinations of sounds, startlingly assertive playing – including the increasingly inventive and individual drumming of Ringo Starr – and elaborate packaging. Costing virtually exactly the same exorbitant amount as *Pet Sounds* to produce[b] it took the world by storm. It spent, in sharp contrast with the Beach Boys' album, more than *three* months on top of the US album chart, and *twice* that in the UK (*Pet Sounds* peaked there at two but still stayed in the British top ten for a similarly long stint). This was the best performance of any Beatles' LP since the heady days of their first two.

It has been surmised by many that, on hearing *Sgt. Pepper* – or before that, 'Penny Lane' and 'Strawberry Fields forever' – Brian Wilson realised, even though he had already begun work on *Smile*, that the Beatles had 'won'. His record company, following the triumph of 'Good vibrations' threw their support behind him but factors such as continuing incomprehension of his new music – and latest collaborator Van Dyke Parks' surreal lyrics – by Brian's fellow Beach Boys (returning from a triumphant 'greatest hits' tour of the UK), the subsequent departure of Parks ("It just got too much for me… I walked away from that funhouse"[58]), and the combined effects of drugs, paranoia, depression and a nervous breakdown

[a] The earlier 'Day tripper'/'We can work it out' was reputedly the first ever double A side single released in the UK and not long after came 'Yellow submarine'/'Eleanor Rigby'; both singles made number one there. In the US, where each of the sides of most of their singles charted 'We can work it out' scored one and 'Day tripper', five, 'Yellow submarine' two and 'Eleanor Rigby', eleven, and, 'Strawberry fields forever', eight.

[b] 25,000 English pounds, at the time roughly equivalent to 70,000 American dollars.

caused Wilson to abandon the protracted project. He concluded, "I just got tired of the direction we were going in. I didn't like it."[59] Today however as noted, *Smile* has been completed, pieced together from hundreds of separate 'modules': instead of recording song by song in the traditional manner of *Sgt. Pepper*, Brian had simply committed to tape numerous different takes of, sometimes quite short 'grabs' of music with little understanding at the time of how they would all be combined. Its release has ultimately revealed that if *Sgt. Pepper* wasn't really a concept album, *Smile*, if it had been completed back in 1968, definitely would have been. Mirroring the Beatles' vignettes of English life it is a joyous celebration, a travelogue – from Plymouth Rock to Hawaii – of Americana, and its complexity is in every way the equal of – the vocal arrangements superior to – *Sgt. Pepper*.

The rest however is history. As eminent composer-musicologist Howard Goodall has said of the Beatles, "…they set a standard of invention and imagination that few, if any have equalled since."[60] And even Wilson conceded that *Smile*, even if finished at the time would never have been the Beatles' album's equal: "No. It wouldn't have come close. *Sgt. Pepper* would have *kicked our ass*."[61]

Following the non-release of *Smile* both Brian and the Beach Boys went into a significant decline (although of course, after the shock death in 1967 of their manager Brian Epstein similar can be said of the Beatles). By tenaciously persevering with recording and touring in different incarnations, the Beach Boys in live performance have nevertheless retained a measure of viability right up to the present day, long after the Beatles' demise.

That acknowledged, it still seems that, if it really had been the competition that Brian Wilson always imagined it was there can only be one conclusion. With infinitely more on- and off-stage charm and style (and later, mystique), hysterically attended live performances, truly collaborative songwriting and record production, dedicated innovation that continued throughout their career (even if this was relatively short, and somewhat fragmented toward the end), unprecedentedly huge record sales, plus of course, that all-important trans-Atlantic novelty factor, the Beatles were the all-round superior group of the two, the only true pop stars.

Without the creative tension between the two groups it is quite possible that the Beach Boys, and even Brian Wilson may have dwindled into obscurity long before the creation of *Pet Sounds*.

13 | *BLACK* IN THE USA

As the new decade progressed, the rise of African American music in the US, and to a lesser extent elsewhere in the world continued to accelerate. By 1962 and 1963 black artists were now responsible for significantly *more* than a third – not far off forty in each year – of the *Billboard* 'Year-End Hot 100' singles. Within this demographic the biggest growth was in the proliferation of 'new' vocal groups.[a] They contributed nine hit songs in 1962 and *seventeen* in 1963.

As mentioned earlier, the longstanding Miracles, like the Platters, shared the distinction of being an essentially male group with one female member. Likewise, the Sensations who began in 1954, broke up and then re-formed several years later had, with 'Let me in', the highest rating group single of 1962. The biggest success story at the start of the 1960s though really belonged to black *all*-female groups. With their hits 'Mr. Lee', and 'Maybe', the five-piece Bobbettes and Chantels had led the way back in 1957. Three years later the four Shirelles were in the vanguard of the new so-called 'girl groups'. Their 'Will you love me tomorrow?' topped the US chart early in 1961 and it and its flipside 'Boys' were big in the UK too.

Five more of their releases (including the popular 'Baby it's you') followed into the high reaches of the American top ten over the next three years. They were joined later in 1961 by another female foursome, the Marvelettes whose 'Please Mr.Postman' (on the single's paper sleeve their faces were replaced by an innocuous mailbox image to obscure their racial identity) also made number one – though, as yet, only a few in the UK were noticing. In the following year the earlier mentioned Orlons had hits including one popularising another new dance, 'The Wah-Watusi' while both Ike and Tina Turner had a hand in 'I'm blue (the gong-gong song)' for their backing trio the Ikettes.

Phil Spector (who had written the chart-topping 'To know him is to love him' for his own white vocal three-piece the Teddybears in 1958) was an important factor in the rise of the 'girl group'. The chart-topping 'He's a rebel', originally offered to, but rejected by the Shirelles was recorded by – or at least, in the name of – the Crystals (see footnote, p.50). 'Da doo ron ron' and 'Then he kissed me' – this time one-hundred per cent Crystals – gave them two more top tens in 1963 with chart placings also in the UK but by this stage Phil Spector was employing

[a] Most had actually been persevering for years – some, like other groups already detailed, from as far back as when they were in school.

his 'Wall of Sound' elsewhere. His trio of 'bad girls', the Ronettes took 'Be my baby' toward the top of both countries' charts by the end of the year.

Other successful African American 'girl groups' in 1963 included the Chiffons whose 'He's so fine' took the prime position on the US chart, and the Jaynetts[a] with 'Sally go 'round the roses' which almost achieved that. The second incarnation of the Cookies (the first having morphed into Ray Charles' Raelettes in the late '50s) made number three with 'Don't say nothin' bad (about my baby)'. Their 'Chains' had also been popular the year before.

The Exciters had originally been an all-female quartet but by the time of their 1963 hit 'Tell him' one of their members was male. The Essex had a 'girl group' sound but was actually a group of five marines, only *one* of which being a distinctive female singer. Similarly, Ruby Nash sang out front of her all-male Romantics. With the chugging 'Easier said than done', and, the ethereal 'Our day will come' the Essex and Ruby and the Romantics both topped the US chart in that same year.

The winning 'girl group' formula was then successfully copied by *white* singers the Angels and, with a tougher Ronettes-style image, the Shangri-Las. Both had number one hits in 1963 with 'My boyfriend's back' and, 'Leader of the pack'.

Most of these groups appeared on a variety of smaller labels like Kapp, Tuff, Laurie, Roulette and Scepter, as well as Phil Spector's Philles. Founded by a group of songwriters including Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, the Red Bird label enjoyed one of the last hits of the early '60s 'girl group' era when the African American Dixie Cups trio ascended to the top in 1964 with a song originally intended for the Ronettes, 'Chapel of love'.

In the industrial city of Detroit in 1959 the nascent power of African American recording had been given a huge boost by Berry Gordy Jr. and his Motown label. It had released artists already mentioned such as their first hitmaker Barrett Strong, as well as Mary Wells, Smokey Robinson's Miracles and, the Marvelettes. Then in 1964 came the emergence of a trio that would take the sound and look of the 'girl group' to the next level and help establish the place of African American music – and Motown – in the mainstream of the world's popular music for once and for all.

In 1959 four young women had come together as the Primettes, a sister group to the male Primes. After many permutations, the Primes eventually morphed

[a] The Jaynetts were not really a fully-formed group: apart from five named members other vocalists sang on 'Sally go 'round the roses', and on a 'cash in' LP. Further singles used the group name, but employed a variety of different singers.

into the increasingly popular Temptations and after some lineup reshuffling of their own, and encouraged by Smokey Robinson, the Primettes also presented at Motown's confidently-titled 'Hitsville' studio. Between 1960 and 1963 the newly renamed, now three-piece Supremes released six singles that came from the pens of such as Robinson and Berry Gordy himself. Varying in style from sultry to sassy – and the silly, 'Buttered popcorn' – none of these set the world on fire. The Supremes did finally make it to just outside the top twenty in 1963 with 'When the lovelight starts shining through his eyes', written by a strong new Motown team comprising Lamont Dozier with brothers Eddy and Brian Holland. Then halfway through the following year the Supremes finally gained…supremacy.

Holland-Dozier-Holland's 'Where did our love go' stripped away all the excesses of the previous recordings. Its four-to-the-bar body percussion motif – in this case stamping feet on a specially installed plywood floor – had already been heard a year or two before in clapping songs like 'Sherry' and 'Da doo ron ron', and in 1964 by the marching Cuban heels of the Dave Clark Five's 'Bits and pieces'. This structure was reinforced with basic piano chords but subtly broken up by syncopated bass and drum patterns. The vocal arrangement was propelled by the now undisputed lead singer of the previously homogeneous trio, Diane – now, Diana – Ross. Her silky voice was complemented by the other two's "Baby baby" and "ooh" and "ohh" vocal effects shimmering in the background. Endlessly looping, the song that lacked any readily discernible verse, chorus or coda – the only diversion being the contrastingly growling baritone sax solo – was seductive and trancelike. It shot to the top of the US chart, for a fortnight, to be followed to that position later in 1964 by the similar – more foot stomping – 'Baby love' for a month (and two weeks in the UK, their best result there), and then, the again rhythmically similar 'Come see about me'.

Eleven more US number ones (and six UK top tens, plus others throughout the world), mostly written by the same hitmaking team, and each creatively building on the original winning formula followed through to the end of the 1960s along with several big-selling albums. Startlingly, the Supremes have earned the greatest number of chart-toppers of *all* US groups – of *any* style or composition – not only in that decade, but throughout the *entire* history of American music to the present day. The voice, and alluring image of Diana Ross became ever more prominent so that by 1967 the group was named 'Diana Ross and…'. The end of the decade saw her strike out solo with more number ones; the Supremes minus Diana continued, though were never able to equal the success of the 'classic' lineup.

The fact that this explosion occurred during the 'British invasion' year was astounding: a trio of female singers who didn't play instruments (although for recordings they were backed by Motown's crack – racially integrated – studio band, dubbed 'the Funk Brothers') were taking it right up to the jangly guitar-playing white boys from the UK who were being hysterically welcomed to the US and making hits – frequently, from black music.

Other Motown acts readily adopted the Supremes' template. Martha – Reeves – and the Vandellas had experienced similar beginnings to the Supremes in the late '50s, changing names and reducing numbers over time from six to three. The Holland-Dozier-Holland songwriting team again was the key, and hits started happening a year before the Supremes in 1963 – not on the Motown label, but on a subsidiary label of Berry Gordy's using his own surname. The group's second single, 'Heatwave' topped the 'Rhythm And Blues' chart and went to four on the weekly 'Hot 100' while the similar-sounding 'Quicksand' also made the top ten.

Then, after two less successful efforts, in 1964 the services of Holland-Dozier-Holland were dispensed with. The song most often associated with Martha and the Vandellas (and, probably with the white quartet that covered it later two years later) was the Marvin Gaye-led team's exuberant 'Dancing in the street'. It rose to two on the US chart and was popular in the UK. Unlike the Supremes however, the arguably less sophisticated-sounding, but more soulful Martha (later, like Diana, using her full name) and the Vandellas, while continuing to have some top ten hits during the remainder of the '60s never enjoyed a number one. By the new decade the group became fragmented and Martha subsequently commenced a briefly successful solo career.

In a rare twist in the history of music, the Supremes' success boosted the careers of Motown's *male* singing groups. The Four Tops were one of the most consistent acts in the entire history of pop music in that, for more than forty years from 1953 their lineup remained unaltered – extraordinary for a vocal group, for that matter, *any* kind of group. Having begun as the Four Aims while they were still at school they signed to Chess records as early as 1956 but it wasn't until after moving to Motown in 1964 that they put their debut Holland-Dozier-Holland song 'Baby I need your loving' just outside the top ten. For the next four years they enjoyed eleven more top twenty hits, including number ones 'I can't help myself (Sugar Pie Honey Bunch)' and 'Reach out I'll be there'. In 1988 the group that had continued to perform and record over the decades providentially missed their Pan Am flight: a terrorist bomb explosion caused it to crash in Lockerbie,

Scotland – with no survivors. In 1997 the premature death of tenor Lawrence Payton ended the Four Tops' brilliantly unbroken partnership.

Even more successful were the aforementioned Primes/Temptations. After some false starts, including being unavailable to record that favourite of the British groups 'Do you love me' (on the Gordy label it made number three in the US for the Contours in 1962), two years later they had a number one hit in both the US and UK in 1964 with 'My girl' (co-written by Smokey Robinson). More than twenty US top twenties including three more at the top – 'I can't get next to you', 'Just my imagination (running away with me)' and 'Papa was a rollin' stone' – followed well into the 1970s. Unlike the Four Tops, the five Temptations experienced numerous lineup changes but, as with many such vocal groups this has enabled them to continue to entertain through to the present day, although Otis Williams is the only member whose career dates back as far as before the '60s.

The Miracles steadily continued hitmaking with more top tens like 'You've really got a hold on me' and 'Mickey's monkey'. Echoing Diana Ross and the Supremes and Martha Reeves and the Vandellas they then became *Smokey Robinson* and the Miracles and the 'new' name must have brought good luck as in 1967 'I second that emotion' became their best-selling single for five years. It wasn't until 1970 that, capitalising on age-old fascination with the 'sad clown', they scored a number one in the US with 'The tears of a clown', and, despite patchy sales there over the years, in the UK. Two years later Smokey Robinson retired from the group but it was not the end of the Miracles: 'Love machine part 1' (with part 2 on the B side) that was co-written by new singer Billy Griffin and original Miracle Warren Moore also returned to the top in 1975. The Miracles, with two long-term members including Smokey's wife Claudette were still performing until a few years ago.

Too late, and too early to share the Supremes' and others' post-1964 flush of fame were the Marvelettes, and Gladys Knight and the Pips. After 'Please Mr.Postman' in 1962, and 'Playboy' the year after, the Marvelettes had only one other top ten record, 'Don't mess with Bill' in 1967. Openly frustrated by their second-tier status with Motown they continued recording until breaking up in the early '70s. Ironically, this was the time when Gladys Knight and the Pips were enjoying their greatest success. After the Pips had formed as a family group as early as 1952 – when Gladys was seven! – the final male lineup with Gladys out front put a couple of songs in the higher reaches of the chart before they were signed to Motown in 1965. Their fourth single on that label, 1967's 'I heard it through the grapevine' (co-written by Barrett Strong) made number two (Marvin Gaye's later version eclipsed it for

seven weeks over 1968-69). Other records released during the '60s by the Pips performed well but only one other in 1972 equalled that highest placing. At that point the Pips departed from Motown for MGM records' new label Buddah and their real hitmaking period ensued over the next two years with four top ten singles, their first ever number one being 'Midnight train to Georgia'. Gladys Knight disbanded the group in the late 1980s to pursue a solo career.

Often wrongly assumed to be Motown signings were female trio the Toys, and the all-male Impressions with main singer and songwriter Curtis Mayfield. The Toys had a huge hit in both the US and UK with 'A lover's concerto', written by Sandy Linzer and Denny Cordell and released on their friend Bob Crewe's DynoVoice label; in another borrowing from classical music it was based on Christian Petzold's 'Minuet in G major'.[a] The Impressions were one of the first groups not only to increase black presence on the music charts, but to politicise, with songs like 'Keep on pushing', the equal rights movement in song; they had top ten and twenty singles throughout the '60s on ABC-Paramount. The Impressions' similarity to the Motown sound extended to their being successfully sued when Mayfield's 'Can't satisfy' was judged to be a very 'impressionistic' take on Holland-Dozier-Holland's Isley Brothers song, 'This old heart of mine'.

Motown (and its associated labels) was a distinctive entity and became a powerhouse of US music – indeed they boasted that they were 'The sound of young America'. Other successful artists in the stable included the actually only briefly-tenured Isley Brothers (Motown was only one of ten companies they recorded for) and, frequently in the top ten until his untimely death in 1984, the also aforementioned Marvin Gaye. The prodigiously talented 'Little' Stevie Wonder, blind since birth, was only twelve years-old when 'Fingertips' hit the top in the US in 1963, and then the Jackson 5 got underway a year later, the youngest of these brothers, Michael, being only five!

While some critics claimed that Motown sold out by manipulating African American music for white ears, others countered that they and their artists were doing it on their own terms, and at least those white ears were now listening. It arguably helped focus attention on increasingly popular, if perhaps intentionally less commercial, but ultimately equally influential black 'soul' stars from those other labels like Chess, Atlantic and Stax (the last of these, with their multi-racial house quartet Booker T. and the M.G.s): Otis Redding, Aretha Franklin (the

[a] Petzold was a contemporary of the more famous composer Johann Sebastian Bach who, it was earlier believed, had written the piece.

'Queen of Soul'), Sam and Dave, Wilson Pickett, Percy Sledge, Etta James and more. The even smaller King label's main artist was James Brown who, while earning his own, perhaps dubious title as the 'Godfather of Soul' would further energise that music form with a frenetic stage act and his invention of the distinctively rhythmic 'funk' style. And singing groups who looked smart, moved well and sang sweetly and powerfully proved that they could still be as popular with audiences around the world as the new all-purpose, self-contained 'British invasion' outfits.

With the Beatles…

From the previous chapter, the Rivingtons and Richard Berry were two African American artists who could well have been aggrieved that their songs were being appropriated by white musicians. Some however have paid tribute to those from the UK and elsewhere whose love of their music helped establish respect for black singers and musicians. In fact in 1964 Motown attorney George Schiffer wrote to EMI's Derek Everitt to acknowledge…"the Beatles, our best publicists, mention our records and artists wherever they go,"[62] and in the same year Berry Gordy himself claimed that record sales had doubled in that twelve month period. Whether this happened because of the Beatles' recommendations, or from the revenue from that group's (and others') covers of Motown recordings, or…the boom would have happened anyway matters little. Despite, or because of the 'British invasion' African American artists continued to consolidate and expand their popularity, in the US and around the world.

It's well known that the British beat groups' musical influences substantially included black rockers like Little Richard, Larry Williams, Chuck Berry and the Isley Brothers, as well as other rhythm and blues artists such as the Coasters, and, from Motown, Smokey Robinson, Barrett Strong and Arthur Alexander. The UK musicians witnessed each other playing the songs live, incorporated them into their own repertoires and then recorded them – with, as has already been noted, songs like 'Twist and shout', 'Money', 'Slow down' and even the obscure r&b tune 'Mr.Moonlight'[a] ending up on more than one group's singles, EPs or LPs.

One British lineup had a natural predilection for black music. The Chants were five soulfully harmonising doo wop singers who, like Derry Wilkie were from Liverpool's African community. The two founding brothers had been imbued

[a] Originally a 1962 B side recorded by Willie Perryman a.k.a. Piano Red a.k.a. in this case, Dr.Feelgood, with group the Interns (the eponymous A side was covered by Rory Storm and the Hurricanes' for their debut single); prior to 'Mr.Moonlight' on *Beatles For Sale* it had been recorded by both the Merseybeats and the Hollies.

with the sound by their church organist-choirmaster father and they were supplied with the latest authentic r&b recordings, not by seamen but by African American GIs stationed nearby. While highly regarded, their sound however seemed to be in a 'no man's land' between burgeoning US black music, and Liverpool 'beat'.

The flipside of the Chant's debut (original) record was 'Come go with me', the Del-Vikings' doo-wop song that – albeit with John's improvised lyrics! – had intrigued Paul McCartney about the Quarry Men. The r&b influence certainly continued to feature in the Beatles' own songwriting. As well as recording Smokey Robinson's 'You've…', or as they sang it, '*You* really got a hold on me' for *With The Beatles,* John Lennon openly acknowledged Robinson's influence on, from that same set, his songs 'All I've got to do' and 'Not a second time'. Again, of the contemporaneously recorded 'This boy' (flipside of 'I want to hold your hand') George Harrison commented, "If you listen to the middle eight…it was John trying to do Smokey."[63] Lennon also remembered that he'd written 'Tell me why' (from *A Hard Day's Night*) "…like a black-New-York-girl-group song."[64] Later Paul came up with his own soul tribute with the horn-laced 'Got to get you into my life' (it became a top ten US-only single[a]); and he had extremely high regard for one of the *studio* musicians: "The biggest influence on my bass playing was James Jamerson who played [with the Funk Brothers] on many of my favourite Motown releases."[65]

The Beatles differentiated themselves from other beat groups by their additional appreciation of the emerging '60s 'girl groups'. Among the – relatively, compared with their contemporaries – small numbers of non-original songs on their first two LPs were the Shirelles' 'Boys' and 'Baby it's you', the Marvelettes' 'Please Mr.Postman', the Cookies' 'Chains' and, more obscurely, the Donays' 'Devil in his heart'.[b] Only a few other British pop outfits, such as the Searchers and Brian Poole and the Tremeloes (who both covered the Crystals' 'Da doo ron ron' on early LPs), appeared to have shared the love of the African American 'girl groups' to any degree (special mention going to two Australian groups: the Questions who covered the Jaynetts' 'Sally go round the roses', and the Twilights with their unique beat version of the Velvelettes' 1964 Motown single 'Needle in a haystack').[c]

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[a] And, recorded in 1966 by Cliff Bennett and the Rebel Rousers it registered six in the UK (see chapter 15).

[b] The Donays were from Michigan and recorded just one single for the small Brent label; 'Devil in his heart' was the B side of 'Bad boy' – but not Larry Williams' song that the Beatles also recorded! (Nor even Marty Wilde's composition of the same name.)

[c] The Velvelettes did not attain the level of the Jaynetts' brief success, let alone a Supremes-style career: 'Needle in a haystack' made the US chart at forty-five in 1964, its follow-up 'He was really sayin' somethin' ' even lower.

1964 was a huge year for pop music: from January the Beatles, with the release of 'I want to hold your hand', international tours and appearances on prime time TV shows watched by record-breaking viewing audiences headed the 'British invasion'. Their first two US hit LPs (with different titles and track listings from what had been issued in the UK the year before) notably contained two more songs that also featured body percussion before the release of 'Where did our love go' in June:[a] both driven by steady clapping were Lennon-McCartney's 'Hold me tight' and Chuck Berry's 'Roll over Beethoven' (a device, not used on Chuck's original, that they took to extremes later in the year with their version of Buddy Holly's 'Words of love' where *every* quaver beat was clapped throughout the song). Beatlemania continued to rage with the world premiere in June of their evocative debut film *A Hard Day's Night*.

Later in 1964 however the trans-Atlantic assault was stemmed by the Supremes with their three number one hits. An indication of what was happening was when the third of these, 'Come see about me' was deposed, after only a week in December at the top of the Hot 100, by the Beatles' new, more experimental 'I feel fine'. The Beatles held down that position over Christmas for three weeks until…'Come see about me' returned for one more week. Its reprise became one of the Supremes' four number ones in 1965, with more to come.

After the Beatles' earlier flirtation, as a consequence of their growing song-writing confidence they never again turned to the 'girl groups', and never recorded a Supremes song. Later in the '60s however racially integrated British bands paid their dues to Motown, most notably the Foundations (their name obviously inspired by the Temptations) whose two big UK hits also charted high over in the land that had given birth to soul music (see chapter 15).

The Supremes didn't ignore 'Merseybeat'. Later in 1964 they acknowledged, or perhaps cashed in on the 'British invasion'. Entitled *A Bit Of Liverpool*, their third LP featured five Lennon-McCartney songs including the one written for Peter and Gordon, 'A world without love'. It also included Gerry and the Pacemakers' 'How do you do it?' and, from far south of Liverpool the Dave Clark Five's influentially stomping 'Bits and pieces' and that group's US hit (but UK B side) 'Because'. And it reclaimed from the Beatles, for Motown, Smokey's 'You've really got a hold on me' as well as the Contours' Brian Poole hit 'Do you love me'

[a] *Meet The Beatles*, issued January 1964; *The Beatles' Second Album*, April 1964. 'Where did our love go' was recorded on 8 April 1964 two days before the US release of the second of these; the Dave Clark Five's 'Bits and pieces' was also issued in the States in April that year.

and, for reasons to be referred to in chapter 15, the originally English, later New Orleans-adapted folk song 'House of the rising sun'.

While the Supremes increasingly became a cabaret act during the rest of the '60s (teaming up with the Temptations, doing a country album and even singing the musical comedy songs of Rodgers and Hart), during this time they, and Diana Ross solo continued to cover seven more Beatles songs. Many more were recorded by Motown acts such as the Temptations, the Four Tops, and, the Miracles: Smokey Robinson himself paid reciprocal tribute with 'And I love her' and 'Yesterday'. The wider range of African American r&b and soul artists also enjoyed sampling from the Lennon-McCartney (and Harrison) catalogue.

Popular music was coming of age and becoming globalised: different styles from different countries were impacting on other parts of the world and were cross-pollinating to facilitate the creation of new hybrid sounds. Nevertheless, the Beatles and the Supremes (and later some of the individual members of each group) essentially operated, throughout the 1960s and beyond, in their own quite separate musical universes.

If the Beatles had never existed there is absolutely no doubt that the Supremes would still have refined that late '50s and early '60s 'girl group' sound to become superstars. Engineered and powered by the all-black Motown organisation they were the most successful act so far to break through the 'colour bar', paving the way for all other African American musicians to come. And as a singing group that, unlike the Beatles and other beat groups, was entirely dependent on external song-writers, and, required a backing band or orchestra, they kept alive the tradition of Sinatra and other such singing stars throughout popular music history.

The Supremes' act was subtle, but still very visual, and carefully choreographed as most Motown groups' acts were. Since then concerts featuring one or more vocalists have developed far beyond what was envisaged by Berry Gordy Jr. back in the '60s. The concept has increasingly been used and adapted, not only by solo or group singers, but also, no longer content simply to stand and play, by bands too. The audio-visual extravaganza has developed to be the most popular crowd-pleasing experience right up to the present day.

14 | FOLK ON THE MOVE

The Motown-style 'show' was by no means new to American stage and screen: since vaudeville times concert spectaculars have enthralled countless numbers. At the completely opposite end of the spectrum, artists performing entirely by themselves, often as 'wandering minstrels' have always entertained with their music, even if in the most spartan circumstances. The US is no exception in its rich history of itinerant musicians. European immigrants sought to preserve folk traditions while those unwilling arrivals, slaves from Africa struggled to maintain their own cultural practices, these often being proscribed by their white 'owners'. Life in the new country was invariably hard, and privation, or the prospect of work induced many to move around. If they could sing, and play a portable instrument, earning possibilities were increased. Or at the very least, music could offer a temporary respite from troubles for them, and their audiences.

Three of America's most iconic 'wandering minstrels' were Jimmie Rodgers, Robert Johnson, and Woody Guthrie. Rodgers' mother had died when he was only a boy so, by the early 1920s and while only in his early teens, disrupted family life and a love for performing took him out 'on the road'. Attempting to rein him in his father sought a compromise so Jimmy began working on the railways. Here his musical horizons were expanded as he rubbed shoulders with a disparate bunch of railroad characters, both black and white. Resultantly his music interwove elements that today can be identified as 'country', 'folk' and 'blues', his mastery of the ancient European vocal art of yodelling being a consistent feature. Rodgers' railway employment endowed him with the nickname 'The Singing Brakeman' but recurring tuberculosis that had interrupted this work – though not his music – dealt him a premature death in 1933 at thirty-five. Jimmie Rodgers' influences are felt throughout the broad sweep of contemporary music to this day.

Robert Johnson, a Mississippi African American bluesman was also from an unsettled family. He'd been the struggling musical apprentice of contemporaries such as Son House and Blind Willie Johnson (no relation) until, as legend has it, he 'sold his soul to the Devil' and returned from one of his travels with inexplicable guitar playing virtuosity. Throughout the 1930s Robert moved around, using a number of assumed names, busking in a variety of – not always blues – styles and forming tenuous relationships with women wherever he went (he had already married twice, but both his wives died, one in childbirth). In the years not long

after Jimmie Rodgers' death Johnson recorded in two sessions twenty-nine of his own songs plus alternative versions (several, in the free and easy tradition of folk music, were adapted from or inspired by tunes he'd heard others play). A year later, at the age of twenty-seven he also was dead, his whisky poisoned by, perhaps a jealous suitor, or, her cuckold. Robert Johnson's vocal and playing technique, his songs, and his mystique have shaped blues music down the decades.

Born in Oklahoma to middle-class parents who were beset by multiple tragedies, Woodrow Wilson Guthrie (named after the US President of the time) was a third to have experienced family disruption. Resultantly much of his teenage was spent busking the old British folk music that had been brought to the area – and his own songs – as well as soaking up African American blues influences. The pivotal event in his life was his exodus with thousands of others to California during the 1930s when devastating droughts and severe wind storms turned ineptly farmed areas of the central US states into a 'dust bowl', this unfortunately coinciding with the worldwide economic Depression. Typified by his career-establishing *Dust Bowl Ballads*, Woody Guthrie's lyrics increasingly railed against injustices and his music was championed by leftist political movements (his guitar bore the inscription "This machine kills fascists"). Writing stirring songs such as 'This land is your land' as well as other poetry and prose he befriended Pete Seeger, Ramblin' Jack Elliott, Leadbelly and many other, mostly activist musicians. He continued to move around the States, incessantly creative and focussed until at the age of fifty-five he died, as his mother had, from Huntington's disease. His final years in the early 1960s were however inspirational for a new group of folk singers…

Rodgers, Johnson and Guthrie were only three of the many musicians who had since time immemorial been plying their craft around the countryside. Apart from a deep appreciation of all their music, and, a ludicrously concocted back-story (with bogus claims of differing birthplaces and a supposedly dysfunctional family situation as well as fictitious travels working in dead-end jobs throughout the length and breadth of America) one other singer had little in common with any of these 'wandering minstrels'. Robert Zimmerman, his four grandparents having escaped anti-Semitic persecution by emigrating to the US from eastern Europe, lived a comfortable and devout middle-class life in Hibbing, Minnesota with them, his parents and his younger brother. Taking the name Bob Dillon, his early passion for rock'n'roll and pop (he loved Little Richard, was in high school groups and even played piano on a couple of dates in Bobby Vee's band) gave way while he was at university to folk music – "it was more of a serious type of thing."[66]

Frustrated by small town life and inspired by Woody Guthrie's music and his autobiography *Bound For Glory*, the now twenty years-old Bob *Dylan* (the new spelling almost certainly influenced by Welsh poet Dylan Thomas) decided to travel to New York. Instead of hitchhiking or – as myth has it, jumping a freight train[a] – he underwent the long journey skirting the south of the Great Lakes in a shared car. He arrived early in 1961 in Greenwich Village, a hotbed of counter-cultural expression: politics, art, poetry and jazz and folk music. As well as being astounded to be able to meet, and even sing to his ailing mentor, Guthrie, he immediately fell in with the established resident musicians – Joan Baez, Dave Van Ronk, the three Irish Clancy Brothers and their countryman Tommy Makem, and others. Bob intensively played, usually the old folk songs in circulation, or Guthrie's material: his girlfriend around that time, Suze Rotolo[b] recalled, "He channelled Woody Guthrie,"[67] and indeed another observed that he "had absorbed during his visits with Guthrie not only the great Okie[c] musician's unpredictable syntax but his very vocal color, diction, and inflection."[68] Manager Albert Grossman took him on and then, rejected by several small traditional folk labels, the young singer finally caught the ear of the noted music lightning rod John Hammond who signed him to Columbia records.

Dylan's eponymous first album recorded over two days in 1962 predominantly comprised versions of old folk and blues songs he'd been singing or had heard sung around the folk haunts (for some of these in the public domain he claimed songwriting credit!) It sold poorly but two original compositions, 'Talkin' New York', his take on Guthrie's recitative style, and 'Song to Woody', announced Bob Dylan's birth as a songwriter. His exploding creative output dominated successive releases. With songs like 'Masters of war', 'A hard rain's a-gonna fall' and 'Only a pawn in their game', the next two years' pair of follow-up albums carried strong socially-conscious messages about racial inequality, poverty and the fear of renewed war. Dylan was labelled now, not just as a folk singer, but a protest singer. Acclaimed performances at such as the Newport Folk Festival, and healthier LP sales quickly elevated him to star status (though his urgent guitar strumming and seemingly haphazard harmonica blowing, not to mention strident, nasal singing were not

[a] His own myth in fact: in his memoir Dylan recalled that when asked by Billy James of Columbia records in 1961 how he'd arrived in New York, he responded, "I rode a freight train," before later in the narrative confessing, "I hadn't come in on a freight train at all." (*Chronicles Volume One*, Bob Dylan (Simon & Schuster, 2004))

[b] Pictured with Dylan on the cover of *The Freewheeling Bob Dylan*.

[c] 'Okie': Someone from Woody Guthrie's, but *not* Dylan's birth state. The word was originally applied, usually in highly derogatory manner, to the impoverished farmers as they moved westwards.

to all tastes). His music was, perhaps, sanitised and certainly further popularised by artists like the more family-friendly trio that Albert Grossman devised, Peter Paul and Mary. They enjoyed US top tens with one of his most acclaimed 'protest' songs 'Blowin' in the wind' as well as 'Don't think twice, it's all right', two years before Dylan himself appeared anywhere in the singles charts.

Bob Dylan didn't believe in neat categorisations though and, it seemed, liked to keep people guessing. In an awkward interview with *Time* magazine, then a pillar of publishing, Dylan said of his songs, "I don't write them for any reason, there's no great message…I don't think I'm a folk singer…"[69] and, in introducing 'Blowin' in the wind', "This here ain't a protest song or anything like that, 'cause I don't write protest songs…"[70] As if to reinforce this stance his fourth album released in August 1964 was tellingly titled *Another Side of Bob Dylan*, its only song dwelling on the hardships of life being the lengthy and majestic 'Chimes of freedom'. Many aficionados, including at his second Newport Folk Festival appearance that year were disenchanted by this 'other side' of their chosen spokesman. But something even more cataclysmal to Bob Dylan's music was already that year raging through the United States and the entire world.

Like all other Americans Dylan couldn't fail to be affected by the 'British invasion'. When interviewed by journalist Al Aronowitz he originally dismissed the music as 'bubblegum' but on further listening found new appreciation for the ways that UK musicians were adapting the sounds of his nation and creating anew. The feeling was mutual. Bob Dylan was embraced, if again not universally, by young music enthusiasts in the country from which many of the roots of his music had originated and which still had its own thriving contemporary folk scene. *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan* topped the British chart in mid-1964 with *The Times They Are A-Changin'* also in the top ten (likewise its title track, Dylan's first entry in a singles chart anywhere). *Another Side Of Bob Dylan* had similar success (and his debut LP that had not charted at all in his home country was discovered by British fans the following year).

For every one of his album tracks so far – a total of around fifty songs (with more than twenty others not making the final cuts) – Dylan had sparsely accompanied himself on guitar, harmonica and, on one track on *Another Side…*, piano. The uncharacteristic sole exception had been, on *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*, the 1920s tune 'Corrina Corrina'. It was one of three songs put down in two sessions late in 1962, the purpose being to record Dylan's first official single, a stand-alone, non-album track. At a time when he was exhaustively (over more

than a year) working on his breakthrough second album replete with meaningful socially aware compositions, the single's title 'Mixed up confusion', and lyrics such as, "there's too many people, and they're all too hard to please," were a very early indication of the disaffection that would typify Dylan's life and music. The song's fast rockabilly feel and the fact that it, along with a spirited version of – Presley's 'That's alright Mama' – plus 'Corrina Corrina', were recorded with a *band* (two other guitars, piano, bass and drums) was sharply out of character for the musician whose rock'n'roll days were assumed to be behind him. The 'British invasion' – still more than a year away at the time when these were recorded – was however ultimately going to result in full-on band backing being, not the exception, but the norm for Bob Dylan.

Whatever the instigation, March 1965's *Bringing It All Back Home* and its coinciding single cut launched a deliberate assault on all preconceived notions about the by now much-loved singer-songwriter. While half of the album was, in relatively familiar style, solo – with some subtle additional instrumentation – the other returned to and further developed Dylan's experimentation with a full band. For the listener there was to be no easing into the new sound however, as from track one it was straight into the 'electric side', the 'acoustic' songs appearing on side two. And the lyrics were even less comprehensible than those in earlier compositions. If his creative outpourings no longer railed against 'The Establishment', they now appeared to defy any established ideas or expectations – about life in general, about Dylan himself in particular.

The single (and album track one) 'Subterranean homesick blues' featured grabs of existential rhetoric set against a loose Chuck Berry 'Too much monkey business'-style backing. It was accompanied by a film clip[a] in which a deadpan Dylan in a London street setting insouciantly discarded placards scrawled with seemingly random words and phrases from the song.[b] There was no attempt at all to mime.

As if now finally eager to leap into the brave new world of the later '60s, Americans loved all of it. The album was Dylan's first to make the top ten, and, at thirty-nine, 'Subterranean homesick blues' was his first ever charting single in the US. His LPs were of course no strangers to the British chart and *Bringing It All Back Home* hit the top again. Preceded at twenty-two by the UK-only album cut, 'Maggie's farm', 'Subterranean homesick blues' entered the top ten.

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[a] The main clip (actually one of three) was shot by D.A.Pennebaker as the opening sequence from his *Don't Look Back* film that documented Dylan's 1965 British tour.

[b] Or not. For reasons no doubt known only to Dylan many of these didn't appear in the lyrics.

One other song from *Bringing It All Back Home* became a worldwide hit. Jim McGuinn, David Crosby and Gene Clark were three musicians who shared Dylan's musical background. They'd all played in some of the proliferating 'collegiate' folk groups that, in the late 1950s had followed the Kingston Trio and were invariably "relentlessly clean-cut, frequently campus-based, determinedly commercial and 'crowd-pleasing' in repertoire and orientation."[71] The three came together sharing not only that passion, but also a fascination with the new sounds coming from the UK. As the Jet Set, and then, the very British-sounding Beefeaters they co-opted other members including, notably, the bluegrass-infused Chris Hillman and by November 1964 they had a recording contract.

The song that was offered had already been recorded by another 'collegiate' group, the Brothers Four. The new combination (although in the studio only the original trio of vocalists plus McGuinn's distinctive electric twelve-string guitar, and backed by the Wrecking Crew) effortlessly eclipsed that version with their unique blend of folk and pop. They were now the Byrds, and 'Mr.Tambourine Man' had been one of the few acoustic songs on Dylan's *Bringing It Back Home*. Their very different electric styling (produced by Terry Melcher) was given its writer's stamp of approval and topped the charts late in 1965 in the US – the first and only song written by Dylan ever to do so on the *Billboard* 'Hot 100' weekly singles chart – and in the UK and elsewhere globally. The Byrds had created 'folk rock' and this new style influenced other artists around the world who, like the American Turtles (originally the Tyrtles!) with their pop version of 'It ain't me babe' from *Another Side Of Bob Dylan*, had hits in this style. And of course innumerable others throughout time have put their own spin on Dylan's timeless compositions.

With their jangly guitar sound, the Byrds had proven that US artists could use the 'British invasion' influences to their own advantage. They then capitalised on the success of 'Mr.Tambourine Man' with a top ten debut album of the same name and a follow-up single from the same songwriting source, 'All I really want to do'. Beaten by 'folk rock' duo Sonny and Cher's rendition it fared less well (except for in the UK). Apart from one more number one in 1965, 'Turn! Turn! Turn!' (adapted by Pete Seeger from a verse in the biblical Book of Ecclesiastes) and the following year's original, and almost certainly drug-influenced 'Eight miles high' the Byrds had less impressive, but still consistent appearances in the charts. Apart from McGuinn – from 1967, for self-chosen spiritual reasons, *Roger* McGuinn – members came and went as these musicians encouraged the Byrds to explore other musical influences.

For the new, electric Dylan a flood of reinvigorated writing, recording and performance followed. His next two full band albums, *Highway 61 Revisited* from later in 1965 and, the following year's groundbreakingly double set *Blonde On Blonde* both repeated the top ten ratings in the US and UK as well as having high-ranking debuts elsewhere in the world. The singles, particularly 'Like a rolling stone' (with an improvised, and impromptu organ contribution by guitarist Al Kooper[a]) from the first of the two albums, the shambolic 'Rainy day women #12 & 35' with shouted punchline "Everybody must get stoned!" from the second, and the stand-alone 'Positively 4th Street' also continued to rate highly.

Dylan had always pioneered new developments in contemporary music and the young pop fans of the early '60s were however now maturing and looking for something meatier than two-and-a-half minute jukebox singles. The 'album' was starting to come into its own, not just as a collection of some hit songs plus filler, but as a holistic statement in its own right. Dylan's had always been intended for intensive listening, the singles were of secondary importance. With *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Blonde On Blonde* he transformed the album into an artform.

Mid-1965 Dylan appeared for the third time at the Newport Folk Festival. After pleasing the old faithful earlier in the day with a few acoustic numbers he decided to team up with members of the Paul Butterfield Blues Band and others including Kooper for a short electric set. Crowd unrest erupted, although, as large numbers of younger patrons showed their enjoyment the issue may actually have been the distorted sound from an inadequate PA system. Early next year after some more American dates he embarked on an extensive overseas tour that, similarly, was received with mixed reactions, some of the faithful even booing his performances – one disenchanted English fan famously yelled out "Judas!" – while newer enthusiasts delighted in his progressiveness.

The backing band that Dylan settled on had originally formed in 1957 in Arkansas around rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins – hence their name, the Hawks. With the diminishing popularity of that style in the States, Ronnie and the Hawks had moved to Canada where his more elemental music was still fresh and appealing. Band members were progressively replaced by northern musicians and by 1961

[a] "…the band is so loud I can't even hear the organ, and I'm not familiar with the instrument to begin with…You can hear how I waited until the chord was played by the rest of the band before committing myself to play in the verses…I'm always an eighth note behind everyone else, making sure of the chord before touching the keys."
(*Backstage Passes and Backstabbing Bastards: Memoirs of a rock'n'roll survivor*, Al Kooper (Billboard, 1998))

the final lineup – original southern drummer Mark Lavon Helm, better-known as 'Levon', plus four Canadians on guitar, bass, piano and organ – was in place. Then three years later they themselves, tiring of Hawkins' endless round of bars and clubs and resenting his restrictions on band behaviour departed and continued to work without him. Late in 1965 after their hopes of backing African American bluesman Sonny Boy Williamson II were ended by his sudden death they were recommended by white blues artist John Hammond Jr. (son of Dylan's original producer) to be taken on as Bob's touring band. The relatively unknown musicians left their small venues to tour the world with someone who was now one of the biggest and most innovative stars of modern music. The combination successfully evoked the rambunctious style of the recordings but the often hostile audience reactions resulted in a disgruntled Helm dropping out and being replaced by a series of other drummers before the tour ended mid-year.

Then, another cataclysmal change. In July 1966 Bob was involved in a motorcycle accident. He immediately withdrew from touring, and, for a number of months, from the public eye. The Hawks returned to a more low-profile regime of backing other singers but began to focus on writing so that they could succeed in their own right. During 1967 they were joined by Dylan (and ultimately, rejoined by Levon Helm) at Bob's place, and in the rented Woodstock house that the group called 'Big Pink'. There they set the tape rolling as they jammed – on old songs, and many new, often collaborative creations. Enthusiasts' hunger for these recordings was in time satisfied by a bootleg double LP (*Great White Hope*), but more recently upward of a hundred have become officially available on various so-called 'Basement Tapes' compilations. Also coming out of this period of relatively tranquil, yet incessant creativity was Dylan's return to a more basic, restrained style (though lyrically no less inscrutable) with his eighth album released at the end of the year, *John Wesley Harding*. It was an immediate success, registering highest so far at two in the US and topping charts in the UK and other countries. In a return to early days though, singles were no longer rating well anywhere.

Despite the time they'd spent together, *John Wesley Harding* was not recorded, not even workshopped in the basement with the Hawks. At least for Dylan's erstwhile collaborators came completion of *their* debut album, and on this their mentor's influence was writ large. With its cover painted by him, and including one of his songs and two other co-writes the appropriately titled *Music From Big Pink* sold moderately well although predictably did better in Canada. The band was after all basically anonymous to most music enthusiasts, so much so that when

they finally decided to rid themselves of the last remaining Hawkins connection they decided that from then on they would simply be – the Band. As the '60s turned into the '70s their following two albums made the top tens in both Canada and the US. However, though many of the songs are now acclaimed as classics and have been covered by a range of other artists, like Bob they were never focussed on singles. What they were was completely uncategorisable: not entirely country, nor blues, jazz or rock'n'roll (and certainly not pop). With eccentric combinations of guitar, keyboard (the classically trained Garth Hudson chose a Lowrey organ over the more common Hammond while Richard Manuel played piano) and, fiddle, saxophone, mandolin, accordion and more, not to mention the three lead singers' very different, earthy voices and harmonies they somehow evoked the very essence of North America, from Arkansas to Alaska. While they continued to reward enthusiasts with their subsequent releases, sales fell away and a number of factors brought about the Band's demise in 1976.[a] They celebrated the occasion with an elaborate concert, 'The Last Waltz' that brought together many of their collaborators over the years from Ronnie Hawkins to Bob Dylan and beyond.

For Dylan's part, in 1969 he followed *John Wesley Harding* with the even more country-style – including his hitherto unheard soft crooning vocals – *Nashville Skyline*. For a time Bob could do no wrong, defying critics into the new decade by releasing a double album (*Self Portrait*) that returned to predominantly comprising covers, a revived nasal twang for *New Morning*, a film soundtrack – and acting role – for *Pat Garrett & Billy The Kid*, then arguably one of his greatest releases, *Blood On The Tracks* and even into the 1980s, three albums reflecting his conversion to Christianity! Of these many scored number ones, and most made it to the top ten or twenty.

But from 1980 onwards Dylan's appeal to all but diehard fans diminished. He has nevertheless recorded and toured relentlessly, and in recent times – perhaps coming with the public's comprehension of his nearly sixty year career that has incorporated almost everything in music as well as many other art forms including painting, and writing an acclaimed autobiography (and for his song lyrics he was controversially awarded the 2016 Nobel Prize in Literature) – his albums have topped the charts again. Ever unpredictable, Bob's musical exploits during recent years have included his recording of more than fifty American classic tunes not

[a] In 1983 the Band reformed – without Robbie Robertson (who it seems, had fallen out of favour with his old friend and mentor Levon Helm) – and continued to tour and record. Three years later Richard Manuel committed suicide; the death in 1999 of bassplayer Rick Danko brought about the very end of this unique collaboration.

written by him, most of them previously sung by that evergreen pop star, Frank Sinatra! And of several downloadable new original songs in 2020, 'Murder most foul' – at just short of seventeen minutes, his longest ever – weaves the assassination of President John Kennedy into a tapestry of twentieth century popular culture. It has been Dylan's first *ever* single to go to number one on a *Billboard* chart.[a]

Bob Dylan of course wasn't the first solitary troubadour: Jimmie Rodgers, Robert Johnson, Woody Guthrie and many others preceded him. His achievements during the 1960s though elevated the status of fellow creative artists such as Americans Paul Simon, Tim Buckley and James Taylor, Laura Nyro, Janis Ian and Melanie (Safka), and esteemed Canadians Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen and Neil Young (and some from the UK to be examined in later chapters) to unprecedented levels, forever cementing the appeal of the solo 'singer-songwriter'.

With the Beatles…

Despite skiffle's folk origins, there's little evidence that any of the Quarry Men or others who would become Beatles were interested in visiting any of the Liverpool folk venues set up by such as that city's acclaimed (multi-racial) group the Spinners. Nor, perhaps recalling early Cavern patrons' disdain for beat music, did they like 'trad' jazz, despite John Lennon's first instrument being the (four-string) banjo, and Paul McCartney learning to play piano, and trumpet (his father and grandfather had also played brass instruments). In John's characteristically outspoken way he once went as far as to say, "We were always anti-jazz. I think it is shit music…"[72] The Beatles did nevertheless have an appreciation of the songs from their parents' generation that formed the basis of family and pub singalongs.

As well as folk and jazz there was, though it may be hard to believe, a strong country scene in Liverpool: Liverpudlian writer Paul Du Noyer has claimed, perhaps hyperbolically in the manner of others from that city, "In the 1950s the town was said to have more country groups than Nashville itself."[73] For example, Kenny Johnson adopted two of that genre's singers' names[b] to become Sonny Webb, backed by his group the Cascades; despite their 'beat' image they recorded authentic-sounding versions of US country songs on a single, and on a German-only released LP *Hillbilly Jamboree*. Later, incorporating pedal steel guitar they became the Hillsiders, "the top country band in the UK, winning polls and awards all over Europe".[74]

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[a] *Billboard* US Rock Digital Song Sales; it also registered in the top tens of other US and UK download charts.
[b] Sonny James and Webb Pierce.

Even the Beatles' 'Merseybeat' contemporaries had an ear for country: as Du Noyer observes, "When skiffle hit Britain around the mid-1950s it proved wonderfully compatible with Liverpool's country leanings."[75] George Harrison was, in another example of a previously mentioned method of music importation, enchanted by "Jimmie Rodgers and Hank Williams records brought back from America when [his father] Harold Harrison was in the merchant navy,"[76] and John too had an early appreciation of Williams' music. The Quarry Men played, via Elvis, some country songs and "George and Paul were both keen on the fingerpicking style of Chet Atkins".[77] Richie Starkey's perennial love of country music began when he first heard singing cowboy Gene Autry, and he appreciated Frankie Laine and "…Hank Williams, Hank Snow and all those country acts."[78] As 'Ringo' he adopted a 'country' name, and throughout his young life fantasised about leaving Liverpool for the enticing wide open spaces of the United States of America.

Be that as it may, skiffle and then rock'n'roll were ultimately the undoubted main attractions for most young musicians. The Quarry Men got together in 1956 and quickly amassed a vast, all-purpose repertoire of "over 600 tunes"![79] It initially included a large number of skiffle favourites often adapted from old songs popularised in the US by such as Leadbelly, including Lonnie Donegan's hits 'Rock Island Line' and 'Cumberland Gap' and, 'Worried man blues' recorded by Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and others. They also had an enduring fondness for an up-tempo version of the eighteenth century Liverpool folk song 'Maggie May' (spelling it 'Maggie Mae' the Beatles included a brief – less than thirty seconds – burst on their second-last recorded album, *Let It Be*;[a] for this they, like Dylan, collected composition royalties on a song that had long been in the public domain).

Most of these skiffle numbers of course came from the same sorts of American, and originally British folk songs that Bob Dylan would be playing in New York in five years time – and, that would have made up the Spinners' repertoire at their Liverpool club. As they delved further into the newer rock'n'roll the young proto-Beatles and Dylan both had a shared passion for, as well as for Elvis and others, the vibrant music of Little Richard (in his college yearbook, the young Bob stated that he wanted to be in his band, and when Paul met John he impressed him with his imitation of Richard's vocalisation of 'Long tall Sally' that the former later recalled as being as "wild, hoarse, screaming."[80])

[a] It was just one of numerous seemingly off-the-cuff bursts of music captured for what was originally intended as a fly-on-the-wall documentary and LP to be titled *Get Back* which was then abandoned, and finally completed – as *Let It Be*, and not to universal acclaim – by Phil Spector.

Lyrically, Dylan's first two recordings up till late 1963 contained either interpretations or rewrites of old folk tunes or, his own songs dedicated to life on the road – not *his* life on the road of course, but other people's – and similar imaginings of worldly experiences. Despite the Beatles' earlier inception as a musical unit it wasn't until a year after *Bob Dylan* debuted that they issued *their* first LP. It and its follow-up included, along with a smattering of other people's compositions, a variety of Lennon and McCartney's pop songs whose basic lyrics examined young love themes (as had most pop songs since time immemorial). So the influences for Dylan's and the Beatles' two sets of originals couldn't have been more diverse, the former's writing being precociously complex in its observational and expressive qualities. As well as adopting the acknowledged Woody Guthrie template the young man had, while still at university begun to avidly absorb, among an extremely eclectic range of literature, the avant-garde writings of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and other so-called American 'Beat' poets and writers.

In contrast, while the Beatles had experienced early life in war-torn Liverpool, many more years of intensive performance, and, particularly in Hamburg from late in 1960, actual rough living, none of this was as yet reflected in their original material. They loved the offbeat humour and wordplay of BBC radio comedians the Goons and their scriptwriter Spike Milligan, and John Lennon in particular was fascinated by the fantasy and nonsense books of Lewis Carroll and Edward Lear, and humorous broadcaster Stanley Unwin's verbal 'gobbledigook'; all were British. There appears to be no evidence that at this early stage they were greatly affected by the writers who had inspired Dylan although John, like Dylan is said to have read Kerouac's *On The Road* while at school. Reputedly also, he, Stu Sutcliffe, Bill Harry and others would sit in the local pub "discussing Henry Miller and Kerouac…Corso and Ferlinghetti."[81] But, they called themselves 'the Dissenters': they disdained the influence these American 'Beat' writers had on the British arts scene.

In June 1960 the Beatles did actually meet a self-confessed 'Beat' poet, one Royston Ellis. This so-called British 'King of the Beatniks' was regarded by the mainstream as an oddball character but some years later Lennon in hindsight called him "England's answer to Allan Ginsberg".[82] Ellis invited them, as previously he had – of all groups, *the Shadows* – to provide musical accompaniment for his poetry readings. It was an unlikely collaboration (although perhaps less unlikely than the one with the guitar group that was more used to backing Cliff Richard!) Ellis called the performance, no doubt to the delight of the verbally-inventive Lennon,

'rocketry'.[a] With the tempting attractions of Hamburg still a few months away the young group was intrigued by Ellis's anti-social attitude and, his overt bisexuality. He was also the very first to entice them into experimenting with drugs (other than alcohol) – extraordinarily in this case, the small quantities of benzedrine at that time salvageable from nasal inhalers! And one of several different theories is that Royston Ellis the 'Beat' poet was instrumental in naming them – the *Beat*les.[b]

Four years later, 1964 was a turning point for both the Beatles and Bob Dylan. In January the Beatles were in Paris where they listened intently and intensively to the tracks from *The Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. As John Lennon later recalled, "…for the rest of our three weeks in Paris we didn't stop playing them. We all went potty on Dylan," [83] and Paul McCartney described it as "a mystical experience."[84] Dylan's musical stylings – "The way he sings…and plays discords" – made an impact on George Harrison and, no doubt recalling the Beatles' scruffy Hamburg attire before being suited out by Brian Epstein, George also envied, "…the way he dresses, the way he doesn't give a damn."[85] But, much more lyrically, George was indelibly impressed by the man who would become a lifetime mentor as possessing "vital energy, a voice crying out somewhere, toiling in the darkness".[86]

Ironically, though not unexpectedly as the 'British invasion' was by now in full swing, Bob Dylan first heard the British group at around the same time. He remembered that, "…driving through Colorado we had the radio on and eight of the ten top songs were Beatles songs. In Colorado!" Despite the fact that these were essentially all teenage pop ditties that as already mentioned he had previously dismissed as 'bubblegum' [c] he nevertheless reciprocated appreciation of their musicality: "They were doing things nobody was doing. Their chords were outrageous, just outrageous, and their harmonies made it all valid." [87] Looking back later in his life Dylan was even more specific: "George had an uncanny ability

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[a] Rocketry: Rock('n'roll) + poetry, in case you'd not worked it out!

[b] This theory can almost certainly be discounted as the group underwent many flirtations with different names as they evolved from the Quarry Men. Around the middle of 1960 their bassplayer at the time Stu Sutcliffe suggested an insect name to evoke Buddy Holly's Crickets and, most likely because they were playing beat music, variations of Beatals, Silver Beats, Silver Beetles, Silver Beatles and, finally, just Beatles stuck.

Or, perhaps the real truth was revealed in the column John wrote for the *Mersey Beat* publication. His short 'history' of how 'The Beatles' came to be could qualify, along with the convoluted texts of his two books from a few years later, *In His Own Write* and *Spaniard In The Works*, for inclusion in the pantheon of 'Beat' literature: "It came in a vision – a man appeared on a flaming pie and said unto them 'From this day on you are Beatles with an 'A'." (*Mersey Beat*, 6 July, 1961) 'Beat' writing, or, perhaps it was just John being silly again?

[c] Dylan was typically before his time – or inventive – in using this disparaging term. *Dictionary.com* defines 'Bubblegum pop' as, "light rock'n'roll music characterised by simple, repetitive phrasing and lyrics." The craze for this didn't commence until around 1967.

to just play chords that didn't seem to be connected in any kind of way and come up with a melody and a song. I don't know anybody else who could do that…Lennon, to this day, it's hard to find a better singer than Lennon was…I'm in awe of McCartney…his melodies are effortless…"[88]

The two-way effect was immediate. It's been claimed that, following the Paris revelation their arrangement of 'I should have known better' was "based on an imitation of Bob Dylan's huffing harmonica style."[89] And, of the single 'I'm a loser' written at around the same time but appearing on the Christmas 1964 release *Beatles For Sale*, John readily confessed, "That's me in my Dylan period."[90] The angst of 'Help!', Lennon's later title track of their second film soundtrack – "I was fat and depressed and I was crying out for help,"[91] – albeit with a very upbeat arrangement, and then, his languid vocal for the acoustic guitar-strummed 'You've got to hide your love away'[a] from the same album amounted to further obvious acknowledgment of the continuing influence.

As for Dylan, he met the Beatles in August 1964 during their second US tour. Notwithstanding their benzedrine experience with Ellis, and then the 'Prellies' of their Hamburg exploits, Bob got them stoned on marijuana for the very first time (he was surprised by their inexperience with drugs other than stimulants, later saying that in 'I want to hold your hand' he had previously thought John was singing "I get high")![92] While recognising that the Beatles "were pointing the direction of where music had to go,"[93] he was also deeply impressed by some of the other harder-edged British groups that were following in their wake (see next chapter). He subsequently recorded *Another Side Of Bob Dylan* that controversially eschewed social comment, and then re-embraced experimentation – after 1962's 'Mixed up confusion' and the two others – with 'pop group' instruments for the three 'electric' albums.

But, unlike the Beatles' new songs that displayed varying Dylan influences, Bob's results sounded nothing much like anything from the 'British invasion', nothing much like anything else in fact. While the Beatles, with the invaluable assistance of George Martin finely honed their arrangements – of instrumental passages and vocal harmonies – and production, Dylan took a different path. He assembled a studio band and it would often simply play the songs on the fly, verse after verse, over and over again while the maestro called, seemingly at whim, for

[a] In turn, a folk group from England called the Silkie featured Dylan's songs and then recorded, with assistance from no less than Lennon, McCartney and Harrison, 'You've got to hide your love away'. The single charted in their home country and went as high as ten in the US.

different arrangements, tempos, even keys and time signatures. As he said of pop music's later technical developments, "I didn't know how to record the way other people were recording, and I didn't want to. The Beatles had just released *Sgt. Pepper* which I didn't like at all. I thought that was a very indulgent album…I didn't think all that production was necessary."[93]

The future members of the Byrds were immediately bowled over by the 'British invasion': as David Crosby later said, "They [the Beatles] were our heroes. They were absolutely what we thought we wanted to do."[95] Recognising the unique chord structures and progressions, the original duo of Jim (Roger) McGuinn and Gene Clark began incorporating Beatles songs and feels into their early repertoire: McGuinn has recalled, "I heard the Beatles and it inspired a combination of folk and rock and I went down to Greenwich Village and I started playing traditional songs with a Beatle beat."[96]

Acoustic twelve-string guitars had been in common use since the 1920s and '30s by blues and folk artists like Leadbelly and Pete Seeger – and, more recently, McGuinn – and they then began to be heard in more commercial releases like the Rooftop Singers' 1962 chart-topper 'Walk right in' (that employed *two* twelve-strings). Then the following year the US Rickenbacker company designed what would become the most popular semi-acoustic electric twelve-string guitar, the 360/12 and they presented one of their earliest models to George Harrison during the Beatles' tour of the States in February 1964. The Byrds had no doubt already heard the Searchers' US hit 'Needles and pins' that featured a twelve-string guitar *sound* (actually emulated by two six-strings with echo) but they became really excited later that year when they observed Harrison 'playing' his Rickenbacker for the mimed performances of *A Hard Day's Night*.

George used electric twelve-string for five of the songs from the Beatles' accompanying LP, and then soon after the Searchers released 'When you walk in the room', this time really featuring that instrument. It wasn't a Rickenbacker though, but a solid body variant, the Double Six made by the British Burns company (another from that country was the unusually shaped Vox Phantom XII played by the Hollies' Tony Hicks). Both John McNally, the Searchers' lead guitarist, and McGuinn of the Byrds soon acquired the much-desired *American* guitar and the – now officially named – Byrds put it to excellent use on their debut single 'Mr.Tambourine Man'.

Despite the Mersey influence, ('I'll feel a whole lot better', the flipside of their second single bore a striking resemblance to 'Needles and pins') the sound soon

no longer imitated anything from Liverpool: Roger McGuinn recalled, "The original Byrds were very much Beatles-influenced, and then we gradually got our own sound."[97] The Beatles reciprocated the respect. George Harrison, for example, admitted to emulating McGuinn's chiming guitar from the Byrds' 'The bells of Rhymney' when recording 'If I needed someone' for *Rubber Soul*. The Beatles nominated the Byrds as the best band in the States at that time.

The Band, apart from the shared grounding in early rock'n'roll, had little in common with the Beatles, and unlike Dylan and the Byrds they were unimpressed by the British group. To drummer Levon the Beatles – and, perhaps even more predictably so, the Beach Boys – "…came across to us as a blend of pale, homogenised voices."[98] Guitarist Jaime Royal Robertson – better known as Robbie – was of the same opinion, at least to start with: "It didn't mean nothing to us when the Beatles showed up," but, "When the Beatles became experimental and started breaking the rules it meant a lot to us. We could relate a lot to that. But in the beginning…it was just more of the same to us with longer hair."[99] Unlike Dylan though, Robertson did enjoy listening to *Sgt. Pepper*: "What caught my ear immediately was the use of the recording studio as a musical instrument – incredible experimentation with sounds and effects, quite the opposite of a Bob Dylan record."[100]

When Beatlemania was raging throughout North America the Hawks were still playing the rudimentary music of their early times with Ronnie Hawkins. After leaving him, the singles they released in their own right (as the Canadian Squires, then Levon and the Hawks, most songs being written by Robertson) were decidedly more rhythm and blues than pop. Then from the testing Dylan years they emerged in 1968, as if from the Arkansas backwoods or perhaps, from the wilds of Canada, looking like grizzled pioneers and with an elemental sound that seemed to reverberate from earliest colonial American history. Recorded essentially live in the studio with only a few overdubbed additional instruments, *Music From Big Pink* proudly displayed, apart from Garth Hudson's love of sound-altering gizmos, none of the *Sgt. Pepper* wizardry.

Despite, or because of their organic approach to songwriting and their minimalist production values, the Band, and their mentor Dylan *were* pioneers. They revalidated the roots of music and helped break down the demarcation between what was British and what American, forging the trans-Atlantic melting pot of contemporary popular music as it progressed from the late 1960s into new eras to come.

The Beatles themselves, having spent time with Dylan and the Band, (mostly so George, who later visited them all at Bob's Woodstock house and formed a lifelong friendship with him) came under that influence as, after the experimental years they longed to return to basics. For *Get Back*/*Let It Be*, the Beatles' LP recorded (but not released) most recently after *Big Pink*, George's 'I me mine' and 'For you blue' as well as Paul and John's composite song 'I've got a feeling'[a] and even the title tracks of both manifestations of the album were evidence of this stripped-back approach.[b]

Of course the song from that set that pre-dated the Beatles themselves, not to mention the Band *and* Dylan was 'One after 909', a Lennon composition that evoked old folk and skiffle train song favourites like 'Rock Island Line'. It was written early in 1960 while John, Paul and George were still Quarry Men, young Robbie Robertson had just joined Levon in the Hawks, and Robert Zimmerman had quit his first year at college, planning what to do next.

Bob Dylan, and the man whose songs he's recorded in recent years, Frank Sinatra, (as well as Elvis Presley, albeit with the shorter and more spasmodic time in the spotlight before his premature death, but whose posthumous popularity has never wavered) arguably share the title of being modern music's first lone 'superstars', having consistently been exalted throughout – and in the cases of the last two, beyond – their long careers.

John, Paul, George and Ringo all continued with solo and other projects after the demise of their group in 1970 and some of these accomplishments approached former glory. Nevertheless, while all four are eternally lauded as stars simply because of what they achieved during the '60s, none can separately claim *super*star status on the strength of what they *individually* did, with various degrees of quality and success, *after* the Beatles. The group was the sum of its parts, and incontestibly that was the biggest thing that happened to popular music throughout the 1960s.

And if the Beatles had never existed? Bob Dylan, that determined and eclectic achiever would without doubt have taken on other influences – and put his own spins on them. Whatever may have happened, his intelligent songwriting and the aura that has surrounded him ever since he set foot in Greenwich Village would have set him apart from, and above, all other singer-songwriters, ever.

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[a] Recorded live in their brief rooftop concert, McCartney's 'I've got a feeling' segued into Lennon's 'Everybody's had a hard year'.

[b] These songs are best listened to on Glyn Johns' mixes of the original *Get Back* concept (available on bootleg releases), and *Let It Be Naked*, the decades later, re-imagined version of *Let It Be* that stripped away all of Phil Spector's post-production embellishments.

15 | BLUES FROM THE DEEP SOUTH OF ENGLAND (& OTHER PARTS)

What Dylan, the Band and others were achieving in their country – getting in touch with the elements of music – others had been approaching, perhaps in different ways on the other side of the Atlantic. In the UK of the early 1960s not all aficionados of American music just looked back, as the 'beat' groups tended to, over the relatively few years since the beginnings of rock'n'roll, black rhythm and blues, and what they discerned to be quality white pop.

While British skiffle was common ground for most British musicians, some of those who played folk music and 'trad' jazz were, like their counterparts in Greenwich Village and elsewhere, also delving even further into the past to discover the very roots of contemporary music – in particular, African American blues of the early twentieth century. They would have been aware of the stripped-back, acoustic Delta blues that employed little more than a guitar and a voice, perhaps a harmonica, and a verandah to stamp on, and, when played indoors, maybe an upright piano. They would have noted the creative integration of blues music with marching band brass instruments. And they would have followed the northward migration of Robert Johnson's southern blues to the industrial centres of Chicago and elsewhere (but not all may have approved of the use of electric guitars and amplifiers).

Two who'd been part of both the skiffle and jazz scenes were guitar, banjo and later harmonica player Cyril Davies, and guitarist Alexis Koerner (professionally spelled Korner). Having been allowed, as Lonnie Donegan had, to try out their music with Chris Barber's jazz band they became instrumental in promoting the appreciation of the blues in London. At informally established clubs and in loose assemblages of musicians they called Blues Incorporated cross-pollination was encouraged between more seasoned musicians such as John Mayall (originally from Manchester's Blues Syndicate) and younger, talented enthusiasts like Graham Bond, 'Long John' Baldry, Brian Auger, Ginger Baker and Jack Bruce.

Having grown up around the same area as Bern Elliott, in late 1961 former schoolfriends Mick Jagger and Keith Richards joined with bass guitarist Dick Taylor and immersed themselves in what Davies and Korner were doing; they called themselves Little Boy Blue and the Blue Boys. Another youngster, Brian Jones had played slide guitar for a time with a singer called *Paul* Jones (no relation

of his, the latter's real name being Paul Pond) and in time he enlisted vocalist Mick, then guitarist Keith, and Dick, plus piano player Ian Stewart, then later, the somewhat older Bill Wyman (who replaced Taylor) and, of several in the chair from time to time, experienced jazz drummer Charlie Watts.

They renamed themselves 'the Rollin' Stones' after a Muddy Waters tune, their shared interest being traditional and electric blues, and some of the rock'n'roll, and perhaps even just a *little* of the pop that had inspired 'beat' musicians. An ex-publicist for Brian Epstein, nineteen year-old Andrew Loog Oldham became their manager and encouraged them to differentiate themselves visually from both the old, and the new neat conservative looks by their non-uniform, unkempt and sullen appearance. With a slightly revised name the Rolling Stones crafted themselves to become the antithesis of all who had gone before. As Mick Jagger recalled, "…if you've got heroes you've got an anti-hero…good guys and bad guys…the Rolling Stones were the bad guys, it wasn't just an accident." [101]

The Rolling Stones' lineup was finalised early in 1963 when excellent pianist Stewart was asked to leave because he looked too conventional; like Don Rathbone, the Hollies' first drummer, Ian nobly stayed on to play in recording sessions and help out in other ways. For their debut single they chose, not a blues song, but one by Chuck Berry, that rock'n'roll artist influential on the northern groups, but also, on Keith Richards, (the Stones went on to record four more by Berry over the next two years). Released on Decca in June 1963, the Rolling Stones' brief (1'50") and quite poppy version of 'Come on', with anodyne vocal and featuring Brian Jones' wailing harmonica sold quite well, making it to just outside the top twenty.

Despite the original ideals of founding members Jones, Jagger and Keith 'Richard' (the terminal 's' curiously dropped at the suggestion of Oldham "because it looked more pop" [102a] – no doubt like *Little* Richard, surely not *Cliff* Richard) the Rolling Stones moved further away from the blues with their follow-up singles that included a song by another much admired by the beat musicians, Buddy Holly.[b] Its connection with black rhythm and blues was the distinctive Bo Diddley beat [c] that Holly had used for its structure. With more harmonica and Jagger's snarling vocal 'Not fade away' took them to number three in April 1964.

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[a] It remained this way on record and other credits until the late 1970s.

[b] Nominally, by the Crickets.

[c] Bo Diddley, or Ellas McDaniel (born Bates) provided, in the 1950s and '60s, a crossover from blues to rock'n'roll, his specialty, beginning with his eponymous single from 1955, being the African-influenced rhythmic sequence that has been verbally simulated as 'shave and a haircut, two bits'.

In a very short time the Rolling Stones became established stars, and after only a fortnight their self-titled debut LP outdid their two singles by topping the UK album chart; it stayed there for twelve weeks. Produced by Oldham, but with surprise support from visiting Americans Phil Spector, and Gene Pitney on piano, it predominantly comprised black blues, r&b and soul covers, as well as one original written by Jagger and Richards, plus two group compositions credited to 'Nanker-Phelge'.[a] Then, staying closer to their roots the Stones finally went to number one on the singles chart in August 1964 with their cover of 'It's all over now', an African American song by Bobby Womack's Valentinos (the B side, 'Good times, bad times' was a bluesy original composition).

While a few of these singles had some impact on the US they first entered the top ten there with one not released at home. Going to six was their cover of black r&b singer Irma Thomas's 'Time is on my side'. The Stones' second British chart-topper (though not released in the US) later in the year was, and still is the only twelve-bar blues song ever to achieve the premier position. For the sparse but atmospheric Delta-style Willie Dixon-Howlin' Wolf tune 'Little red rooster' Brian Jones' slithering bottleneck guitar took the sound back to their London blues origins. The Rolling Stones were helping to expand what British music fans could expect in 'pop' music, perhaps even, what purists could expect in blues music.

In 1965 the Rolling Stones emerged to be the only artists to pose a serious alternative, a serious challenge in fact to any other current pop acts – in the UK, or, anywhere. With their very distinctive sound and with the mesmerising Jagger in front of his apparently diffident, long-haired and indiscriminately-attired group they were, like Dylan, redefining for the first time in popular music history what it meant to be major stars.

On the strength of the success of another slow-paced single exclusive to the US, 'Time is on my side', Jagger and Richards' composition 'Heart of stone' made the top twenty there (in turn, it didn't appear in the UK till later in the year as one of still only four originals on the third LP *Out Of Our Heads*).[b] Many of these, typically for the time, staggered releases – both singles and long players – were

[a] According to Bill Wyman in his *Rolling With The Stones* (Dorling Kindersley, 2002), "Brian [Jones] suggested crediting it to Nanker-Phelge. The entire band would share writing royalties. Phelge came from Edith Grove [where Jagger, Richards and Jones lived] flatmate Jimmy Phelge, while a Nanker was a revolting face that band members, Brian in particular, would pull." Some 'Nanker-Phelge' compositions also included manager Oldham and Ian Stewart.

[b] Amongst predominantly African American compositions – by such as Sam Cooke, Marvin Gaye and Chuck Berry – track one, 'She said yeah!' was co-written by Sonny Bono of Sonny and Cher fame.

now also doing well in other countries, such as Australia which supported a run over two years of more than a dozen top ten Rolling Stones hits picked from both UK and US releases, including some only available 'downunder'.

Three months into 1965 all the loose ends were drawn together. 'The last time' was actually the first time: the first time a Mick Jagger and Keith 'Richard' composition had been simultaneously issued as a single worldwide; it made number one in the UK and nine in the US. Then halfway through the year came the cherished prize of *dual* chart-toppers. The fuzzed guitar sound (created by a Gibson Maestro FZ-1 Fuzztone distortion pedal),[a] crashing drums and frustrated wails of '(I can't get no) satisfaction' provided plenty of satisfaction for the Rolling Stones and their fans alike by becoming hugely popular around the world.

The Stones replicated the hitmaking later in the year with the increasingly prolific Jagger and Richards' 'Get off my cloud' and from that point most of their singles up to the early 1980s continued to chart in top tens. Even more impressively, *every one* of their around twenty-five studio LPs and most of their live sets and compilation albums have made the highest reaches – including many number ones – of charts around the world right up to the present day. Rising above incidents as cataclysmal as the 'resignation' (in fact ejection), then tragic death of group founder Brian Jones in 1969, the Rolling Stones who had begun as a coterie London blues band were fully-fledged international superstars.

Both the Rolling Stones', and the Dave Clark five's first EPs had included a song originally by the very popular Coasters, 'Poison ivy' (the Stones actually recorded two versions, and the Hollies had one as well – and it ignited the beat explosion in Australia for Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs). Incidentally, at around the same time a piano-based r&b group from Essex called the Paramounts issued a sixth new version of the song as a single and it made the lower reaches of the UK chart. With their following five singles being unsuccessful, in 1967 three of the Paramounts changed to a more successful musical direction (see chapter 17).

On departing the early lineup of the Rolling Stones, Dick Taylor put together a new group, named after another African American song, Bo Diddley's third single from 1955. The Pretty Things of course perversely styled themselves as anything but pretty: *uglier*, with hair *longer* than the Stones and, again, no attempt to adopt uniform stage attire – although they did all move a little on stage unlike the mostly

[a] The fuzz guitar sounds of 'Satisfaction' had been preceded three years before on the Ventures' instrumental '2000 pound bee' for which a special one-off distortion unit had been designed by a friend of theirs.

statuesque Stones. Despite their stated dedication to the blues their first two Fontana singles were new British songs: the endearingly rough and raw 'Rosalyn' didn't do well but the similarly basic 'Don't bring me down' (written by the road manager for another band whose name – the Fairies[a] – also didn't reflect their style) surprisingly penetrated the top ten in late 1964. After their third, self-composed single 'Honey I need' the Pretty Things enjoyed no further major chart success – and none in the US – but with many lineup changes they, like the Paramounts, went on to undertake different musical ventures (again, see chapter 17).

Not all these blues enthusiasts came from the South. A group from Newcastle was steeped in the music but, like the Rolling Stones incorporated other more recent African American music into their repertoire. Featuring the expert Vox Continental organ and piano playing of Alan Price behind gravel-voiced singer Eric Burdon, the Animals were named for their supposedly animalistic performances – although, as with Jagger of the Stones, Burdon was really the only one who could in any way have been accused of anything approaching that in front of his conservative-looking group. After their modest success in 1964 with a rejig of a thirty years-old folk-blues song recorded for Columbia, 'Baby let me take you home' they hit number one in both the UK and US with the sprawling four-and-a-half minutes of the even older 'House of the rising sun', distinctive for Hilton Valentine's recurring guitar riff and Alan Price's swirling organ sounds.

Bob Dylan (who had previously recorded versions of both songs on his debut LP[b]) returned from a British tour and reported, "My God, ya oughta hear what's going down over there. Eric Burdon, the Animals, ya know? Well, he's doing 'House of the rising sun' in rock. Rock! It's fuckin' wild! Blew my mind,"[103] (and then as mentioned the Supremes covered the Animals' version). Their own 'I'm crying' and six other Mickie Most-produced songs mostly originating from American songwriters from different eras plus three LPs of blues, rock'n'roll and original songs were also top ten British hits, and the Animals were very popular, if not quite as successful, in the States.

In 1965 Price left to put together his own jazz-r&b group, earning a British top ten hit with his very restrained, classically-styled version of African American Screamin' Jay Hawkins' raucous 'I put a spell on you', and then several more big

[a] The Fairies were one of the earliest groups to record a Bob Dylan tune, but their excessively American-accented rendition of 'Don't think twice it's alright' from 1964 was not successful.

[b] He himself had heard 'Baby, let me follow you down' (one of many variants of its title, and in fact, lyrics) and, 'House of the rising sun', from fellow Greenwich Village folksingers Eric Von Schmidt, and Dave Van Ronk.

sellers including novelty pop numbers. By the end of 1966 the Animals dissolved but Burdon continued to use the name for a while as he explored new, more progressive sounds that temporarily led him away from his original blues focus.

From a place even further-flung than Newcastle, across the Irish Sea in Belfast, George Ivan Morrison – known simply as 'Van' – was a vocalist and multi-instrumentalist with similar passions to the Animals and Stones. He co-opted a lineup called the Gamblers for his new rhythm and blues club, and then, with a new, distinctively monosyllabic name – Them – they travelled to England to record some songs (augmented, and in some cases, sidelined by session musicians).

Their time there was largely unsatisfactory for all concerned: the group was uncompromising in its approach to performance and attitude, the inference that could be drawn being that, unlike the Rolling Stones and Pretty Things who manufactured their anti-social stance, Them were genuinely uninterested in behaving to impress. Certainly Morrison sang, while every bit as passionately, with none of the visual allure of the extrovert Jagger or soulful Burdon: stationary, eyes often closed and with a seemingly surly expression. Nevertheless, riding on the current r&b swell their version on Decca of Big Joe Williams' old blues song 'Baby please don't go' (with Morrison's 'Gloria' on the B side) made the UK top ten, followed by Bert ('Twist and shout') Berns' co-write 'Here comes the night' (also covered by Lulu) at two, and twenty-four in the US. There seemed to be a bit of interest over there, with a third single, Morrison's 'Mystic eyes' charting as well.

But Them, already having experienced several lineup changes broke up in America in 1966. Morrison has continued throughout his life, with numerous albums of original music and with live performances, though rarely with any less minimal stage presence than originally, to deeply explore his passion for r&b and jazz, often fascinatingly fused with the Celtic music of his birthplace.

The Moody Blues formed in Birmingham in 1964 and established a sound quite different from the mellow styles of that city's Rockin' Berries or Fortunes, or, most of the other northern groups. The 'Moodies'' initial focus was on black rhythm and blues, and they featured the piano playing of Mike Pinder (not to be confused with the Searchers' Mike P*e*nder) and the guitar and vocals of Denny Laine. Co-founder, and original lead vocalist Ray Thomas was mostly relegated to playing flute and shaking maracas. Their debut single on Decca failed, but the follow-up later in '64, a grandiose, grand piano-heavy cover of 'Go now' by African American Bessie Banks topped the UK chart and registered in the top ten of US and other charts – Banks is one who has ruefully recalled how the cover seriously

retarded sales of her original. Further Moody Blues singles were less well received and perhaps most disappointingly, their LP *The Magnificent Moodies* including several Pinder and Laine originals didn't chart. Magnificence was yet to be achieved (more about this is contained within chapter 17).

A more compactly effective distillation of black r&b than that of the early Moody Blues was encapsulated by a later-starting Birmingham outfit, the Spencer Davis Group. It comprised Welsh-born Davis, with drummer Pete York and Muff Winwood on bass. The Group was completed by someone who could only be described as a child prodigy. Muff's brother Steve who was only *fourteen* at the inception played Hammond B3 organ, piano, guitar and drums. And he sang with one of the most authentically 'black' voices of which a white man – or in this case, boy – was capable (a standout example was his vocal and piano treatment of the 1930s tune 'Georgia on my mind' that is often compared favourably with the rendition by inspirational black r&b singer-pianist Ray Charles).

The Group's first four Fontana singles, and their three LPs from mid-1964 featured covers of songs mostly by African American artists ranging from John Lee Hooker through to singing groups, both male and female. The albums all made the UK top ten but the breakthrough for the singles came late in 1965 with a new song by Jamaican Jackie Edwards. Featuring a rumbling bass line, metronomic drumming and, like the Rolling Stones' 'Satisfaction', guitar fuzzbox distortion, 'Keep on running' went to the top of the UK chart. Edwards came up with a second number one for them with 'Somebody help me', but a third, similar-sounding contribution 'When I come home' sat just outside the top ten.

Up till now the group hadn't written many songs but it wasn't until their hastily contrived 'Gimme some lovin'' that they first hit the US top ten – albeit with a version augmented by a vocal refrain that repeatedly emphasised the title. The unembellished original nearly returned them to the top at home. The follow-up, again their own 'I'm a man' also made the top ten in both countries, but at that point early in 1967 the Group split in two. Despite the devastating loss of Winwood who, like Graham Nash, was pursuing more experimental ventures, the Spencer Davis Group continued, albeit with diminished chart success into the 1970s.

Back in the south, interested in a jazz and rhythm and blues mix was the accomplished keyboard player-vocalist referred to in chapter 6. Clive Powell, originally from near Manchester and forever known as Georgie Fame had departed Larry Parnes' stable of 'teen idols' to immerse himself in more meaningful music. Like Winwood he featured the Hammond B3 organ and, with his jazz-r&b group,

still post-Parnes called the Blue Flames, his vocal and keyboard sound drove the Latin-flavoured 'Yeh yeh' (originally an instrumental, with lyrics written by American jazz singer Jon Hendricks) to the top for two weeks in early 1965. Georgie's recorded output on Columbia rarely attempted to embrace 'pop' tastes, although his own composition 'Get away' also went to number one the next year, as did the song inspired by the gangster movie *Bonnie and Clyde* written by Mitch Murray and his new co-writer Peter Callander. Georgie Fame never actively sought what his Parnes-imposed surname implied, but has continued – including in collaborations with contemporaries Alan Price, Van Morrison and, most recently, former Rolling Stones bassplayer Bill Wyman – to maintain a respected profile in jazz and r&b music to the present day.

Paul Pond, a.k.a. Jones who had earlier briefly sung and played harmonica with his 'namesake', Rolling Stone Brian, joined up with South African keyboard player Manfred Lubowitz better known as Manfred Mann – and this pseudonym became the name of a new group. Mann and percussionist Mike Hugg too were keen to blend blues with jazz, and music enthusiasts appreciated the unique sound that included instruments like vibraphone, flute and alto saxophone.

Girls, though, focussed on "the one in the middle" and came to "see the singer looking sweet" as the tongue-in-cheek, but no doubt accurate words of his humorously autobiographical song[a] depicted the tall, handsome Jones. After two failed records on HMV, Manfred Mann established themselves when they wrote the theme music ('5-4-3-2-1') for *Ready Steady Go!* – screening on the UK's commercial channel ITV and rival to the new BBC TV show *Top Of The Pops*. The resulting single made it into the top ten early in 1964 followed to eleven in August by another of Jones' and Mann's compositions, 'Hubble bubble'.

Major success came with a non-original: Manfred Mann topped both the UK and US charts with the Exciters' 'Do wah diddy diddy'. Similarly joyous covers of other American songs, including another number one, 'Pretty flamingo', constituted most of five more to make it in or just outside the British top ten.

Halfway through 1966 a membership shuffle occurred but Manfred Mann's groups would prove to be nothing if not adaptable. Among other changes, Paul Jones opted for a solo singing career (with two more British top tens to his name) and dabbled in film acting. With his replacement, Mike D'Abo, the second chapter of Manfred Mann continued to catalogue an impressive run of increasingly now

[a] 'The one in the middle' (lyrics and music by Paul Jones)

poppy, still non-original hit singles: seven more made the UK top ten, and three in the US, up till the end of the '60s. Their third UK chart-topper, 'Mighty Quinn' was a pop version of Bob Dylan's 'Quinn the Eskimo'. It was also their third interpretation of songs written by him (the earlier 'If you gotta go, go now' with Jones on vocals and 'Just like a woman' with d'Abo had been successful in the UK, the former, in the US also). This lineup of Manfred Mann finally split in 1969, but further permutations saw Mann enlist new members for highly-acclaimed, and still occasionally hitmaking progressive rock ventures right through the 1970s.

With no keyboard player, but featuring a string of talented lead guitarists the Yardbirds were another of those groups that had been thoroughly immersed in the London blues scene: as the Metropolitan Blues Quartet they had played with Cyril Davies and they later took over from the Rolling Stones as house band at the Crawdaddy Club. They toured with visiting Sonny Boy Williamson II and recorded a live album with him – as did the Animals, in the same month, December 1963. (As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Band also had the opportunity, but Sonny Boy died before it could happen; the Yardbirds and Animals may have been chagrined to know that Williamson's apparent appraisal of his time in the UK, as gleefully relayed by Robbie Robertson was: "…those young English cats over there really wanna play the blues bad, but unfortunately that's just how they play it…bad." [104]) The Yardbirds had lost their original lead guitarist Anthony Topham and then his successor Eric Clapton departed. He disparaged the commercial sound of their third single on Columbia, the Graham Gouldman-written 'For your love' that featured that very non-bluesy instrument the harpsichord (played, in the unusual absence of any other keyboard instrument in the studio, by one more accustomed to the Hammond organ, Brian Auger).[a]

Clapton's assessment of the recording's commercial value was accurate: in early 1965 it shot to three in the UK and six in America; for Eric's part he joined the more 'purist' bluesman John Mayall and his Bluesbreakers before becoming part of Cream, a trio that ironically, but very successfully mixed blues and – pop – just as his former group was continuing to do. With the Yardbirds' new, more experimental lead guitarist Jeff Beck they recorded another two singles that year. Both also Gouldman compositions, 'Heart full of soul' and 'Evil hearted you', with flavours respectively of India and the Middle East essentially repeated the success

[a] He recalled the situation: "They don't have an organ here…there's no piano…over in the corner was this shape, we whipped the cover of it and it was a double-tier harpsichord…I thought this was a joke!" (Brian Auger, Stagg Street Videos, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ahPumX-aIzw)

of their previous single. In the States their wildly climaxing version of Bo Diddley's (*not* the Spencer Davis Group's) 'I'm a man' made the top twenty. The hits kept coming in 1966 when the group took over the writing for their next two that featured Beck's overdriven guitar, 'Shapes of things' and 'Over under sideways down'. Further lineup changes saw session musician Jimmy Page joining on bass, then briefly providing a twin guitar assault, but Beck soon quit for a solo career. The Yardbirds' days were numbered and they split in mid-1968 with Page's initiative evolving into an even more experimental, and harder hitting outfit (see chapter 17).

John Deighton was another singer from London who, as 'Chris Farlowe' began with a skiffle band in 1957. He joined the Thunderbirds two years later and recorded, mostly on Columbia, a solo single and five with the group including some self-penned under his birth name. As 'the Beazers' he even recorded a bluebeat[a] tune, and then under the nom de plume 'Little Joe Cook' (though there was already an African American singer by that name in the States), a pure blues rendition of the 1948 T-Bone Walker classic 'Stormy Monday'. Farlowe was then taken on – essentially without the Thunderbirds – by Andrew Loog Oldham's Immediate label. As with the previous releases, despite guidance by Eric Burdon, the first with the new label made little impression.

It was however not the Animals', but the Rolling Stones' connection that suddenly rocketed Farlowe to chart success in 1966. His soulful version of Jagger and Richard's 'Think' (with their and Oldham's production) charted and then the Jagger-produced 'Out of time' (from the Stones' *Aftermath* LP) went to the top. Another of the songwriting pair's, 'Ride on baby', also sold quite well and an album made it inside the top twenty. There were three more Jagger-Richard offerings (again produced by Mick) as well as others by Manfred Mann's Mike d'Abo and, the uniquely experimental big band-sitar mashup 'Moanin'', and some ballad-based material, but chart performance never matched the peak of 'Out of time'. Following the trend, by the end of the decade Chris Farlowe immersed himself in different musical styles with no further expectation of hit singles.

Concentrating on straight blues, veteran musician John Mayall's non-commercial Bluesbreakers comprised, as well as Eric Clapton, a rolling roster of the 'who's who' of British musicians. The second LP, *Blues Breakers* (not a typographical error) *With Eric Clapton* went to four in the UK and after the esteemed guitarist moved

[a] Bluebeat, or ska music evolved from what had previously been called mento but also contained elements of calypso; other influences had come from the African origins of Jamaican slaves, as well as jazz and rhythm and blues from the southern states of America.

on again three other Bluesbreakers' albums made the top ten during the '60s. Others during that time who graced the lineup (which continued into the new millennium – eighty-six years old Mayall still tours today) included bassist Jack Bruce (who later formed Cream with Clapton and London blues scene drumming mainstay Ginger Baker), guitarists eighteen year-old Mick Taylor (who then in 1969 replaced the deposed, then deceased Rolling Stones guitarist Brian Jones), and Peter Green, and, drummer Mick Fleetwood[a] and bassplayer John McVie.

In 1967 the last three of these musicians founded another blues band, Fleetwood Mac. In the next two years three LPs made the top ten, with a number one single, and two more just behind. Chicken Shack also had albums that sold well and featured another rare female musician, keyboard player-vocalist Christine Perfect. She later joined husband John McVie in Fleetwood Mac (which had a very different-sounding, but phenomenally successful pop-oriented incarnation in the late 1970s).

Standing at six feet seven inches tall, 'Long John' Baldry was in a number of fringe blues and r&b bands, including the Hoochie Coochie Men, Bluesology with a young Reginald Dwight (now better known as Elton John) on piano, and Steampacket, the last with the aforementioned organist – and accidental harpsichord player – Brian Auger with vocalist Julie Driscoll. In 1968 Auger's and Driscoll's Trinity had a hit with 'Wheels on fire' (co-written by Bob Dylan and the Band's bassplayer Rick Danko). Baldry's side career singing power ballads earned him a number one single.

Like some of the early Liverpool groups, as well as Sounds Incorporated and Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers, many rhythm and blues bands often had expanded lineups that featured two or more brass players. Apart from the instrumentation though, the all-important elements were the soulful vocals. Like Chris Farlowe, one of the earliest British r&b artists was London's Cliff Bennett with the band that he'd formed back in 1957, the Rebel Rousers. From 1961, echo-laden pastiches of Jerry Lee Lewis-style American rock'n'roll and pop featuring piano and sax, written by Joe Meek (under the name Robert Duke) and produced by him on the Parlophone label met with little response. Work in Hamburg gained the group respect and their repertoire moved more into the blues and soul area. Brian Epstein took over management and Bennett's gritty voice, and the two saxophone attack came into their own on the Drifters' 'One way love'. It registered nine on the UK chart late in 1964, but another Drifters cover had no luck, and five more singles suffered a similar fate until a shortlived return to the top ten in 1966.

[a] Green, Fleetwood, young blues singer Rod Stewart, and Liverpudlian Beryl Marsden had been in the promising, but shortlived r&b band Shotgun Express.

Again, follow-ups including Bennett's own compositions were not successful and he and the band parted company. Cliff Bennett had been one of the most undervalued voices in British '60s r&b music; rejecting an invitation to join US jazz rock band Blood Sweat and Tears, he moved, as many others like him did, into other more experimental areas but once again, with limited recognition.

And another esteemed Hammond organ player, Zoot Money and his sax-driven Big Roll Band issued a number of singles from 1964 but it wasn't until 1966 that a gimmicky song that catalogued professions rhyming with 'Big time operator' made it on to the UK chart at twenty-five. Not long after that members of the band moved, again, into more experimental music.

During World War II many people from British Commonwealth countries in the Caribbean and West Africa had emigrated to the UK and over time black musicians launched successful careers. As mentioned earlier in this book, Trinidad-born pianist Winifred Atwell had been very popular as a variety entertainer during the 1950s. Later that decade Emile Ford, originally from the Caribbean island of St.Lucia, and his band the Checkmates had a hit with the old 'What do you want to make those eyes at me for?' In 1964 Jamaican-born teenager Millie Small went close to the top in both the UK and the US with her bluebeat/ska version of 'My boy lollipop'.[a] And Derry Wilkie from Liverpool's Seniors – and Ghanaian percussionist 'Speedy' Acquaye with Georgie Fame's Blue Flames – were other examples of musicians of colour playing alongside their British counterparts.

Mindful of the roots of r&b music two big brassy bands featured black singers and other players in their lineups. The Ram Jam Band first featured Jamaican vocalist Errol Dixon and then after him, Geno Washington, an African American airman based in England; of the records they released from 1965 till the end of the decade two live LPs made the UK top ten. At the same time, Jimmy James and the Vagabonds relocated from Jamaica to the UK; like Millie, they brought an injection of Caribbean ska music that was still relatively unheard in the UK. While both groups were very popular around the London clubs they ironically missed out on the acclaim accorded those other groups headed by white singers detailed in this chapter, and, the increasingly respected black combinations in their homelands.

More successful was a multi-racial group appropriately named the Equals. They were begun by a group of schoolfriends, their Guyanese-born vocalist Eddy Grant

[a] In an interesting twist the song, written by a member of African American doo wop group the Cadillacs (who'd recorded the hit 'Speedoo'), had originally been recorded – as 'My boy lollypop' – eight years before by fourteen year-old white singer Barbie Gaye.

writing most of their material. It wasn't until when a B side, 'Baby come back' (on the small British President label) became a hit in Europe that they ascended to the top of the UK chart in 1968. They recorded prolifically and with two more top tens, and an album selling similarly well maintained a profile but from 1969 a car accident and then other health problems curtailed the Equals' career.

Formed later, in 1967, the most successful of all of these groups was the Foundations (mentioned in chapter 13). Comprising musicians from the West Indies, UK and Ceylon (Sri Lanka), they, like the Ram Jam Band and the Vagabonds had a large lineup incorporating a brass section. Emulating the commercial Motown sound they enjoyed several hits on the Pye label at home, in the US and elsewhere: their debut 'Baby, now that I've found you' topped the UK chart and 'Build me up buttercup' went to two, and three in the US.

The Foundations were another example of the how the line between 'pop' and more mature genres of music was becoming blurred. They exemplified the increasing globalisation of popular music as, with greater ease of travel and expansion of communications and the media, stylistic influences flew from one place to another with ever greater rapidity, mutated, then bounced back again in a constant process of revitalisation.

Two white British groups were *originally* inspired by rhythm and blues, but after initial hit singles they diversified into quite different styles. The Troggs (formerly the Troglodytes) were co-founded in 1964 by Reginald Ball and Ronald Bullis – the former, in the by now well-established tradition changing his last name to Reg *Presley* – and were managed by former Welsh pop singer Larry Page. Their second single in 1966 on Fontana was a song by American Chip Taylor (he'd also written the Hollies' 'I can't let go'). A harmonica-wailing bluesy version a year before had been unsuccessful for US band the Wild Ones but the Troggs' growling, lurching 'Wild *thing'* that featured a rudimentary solo bizarrely played on an ocarina[a] shot to the top around the world – except for in the UK where it just missed out on that position. Their next, Presley's slightly more melodic 'With a girl like you' did ascend that one place higher at home, and several more high-rating singles followed there but interest was waning elsewhere. They had one last return to the US, and UK top tens late in the following year with a Reg Presley ballad, 'Love is all around' but after that their two years of fame were over.

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[a] Ocarina: A clay flute of ancient origins.

BLUES FROM THE DEEP SOUTH OF ENGLAND (& OTHER PARTS)

Larry Page was no doubt inspired to manage the Troggs after the success he'd had with another monosyllabically named group whose first hit single in 1964 had paved the way for 'Wild thing'. Raymond Davies, one of the new crop of British musicians shared, with his sixteen years-old guitarist brother David and bass-playing friend Peter Quaife, the usual love of skiffle and rock'n'roll along with their parents' music hall heritage…and the new sounds from the north: as Ray recalled, "Merseybeat…was unbelievable. It used to inspire me every time."[105] They formed a group at school but when Ray went to art college he became more immersed in jazz and rhythm and blues, joining, with help from Alexis Korner,[a] several bands (one included drummer Charlie Watts). Into his ensemble that operated under a succession of names, Ray gradually re-introduced Dave and Pete and took on jazz drummer Mick Avory.[b] Larry Page suggested one final name change: the Kinks.

The Kinks' first single was recorded early in 1964 with American producer Shel Talmy (in the now not uncommon situation, Avory was asked to sit out, and continued to do so for the next few sessions). The ever-popular 'Long tall Sally' (on the Pye label) and its follow-up, Ray Davies' 'You still want me', with both B sides also written by him, had an authentic, if dated chugging Merseybeat-style sound; they failed in the charts.

'Long tall Sally' had been a considerably tamer version than Little Richard's, but later that year the Kinks recorded Ray's unhinged 'You really got me' which, by his own admission, and as earlier foreshadowed in chapter 12 was influenced by the Kingsmen's primal rendition of 'Louie Louie' (and the Kinks included that song too on their first EP). The very basic construction of the Kinks' song was torn asunder by Dave's wildly improvised lead break that pulsated through his deliberately slashed amp speaker – creating an abrasively dirty guitar sound one year before 'Satisfaction', 'Keep on running' or any of the others that then rushed to embrace the 'fuzzbox' sound. By September 'You really got me' had made it to the top of the British chart, and it was followed – to second position – by the very similar 'All day and all of the night'; both singles reached the US top ten. The Kinks' self-titled LP that comprised r&b material and songs by Chuck Berry as well as originals by Davies and Talmy registered three on the British chart and thirty in the US. Their raw sound, while, on their singles not really being r&b, was the equal of that of the Rolling Stones, Pretty Things or Them.

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[a] Ray was no relation of Korner's musical associate Cyril Davies.

[b] Ironically, Avory had occasionally played with future members of the Rolling Stones well before Charlie Watts took over the drum chair.

Through 1965 more Ray Davies compositions, none of them quite as frenetic as the two major hits were still top ten sellers at home – their third, the positively languorous 'Tired of waiting for you' was another chart-topper (and top ten in the US). Their next two LPs also sold well at home, though not so in America. Then events occurred that would abruptly curtail their brief burst of popularity across the Atlantic and cruel their chances of capitalising on the 'British invasion'. Tensions in the group often erupted into physical violence on and off-stage: at one point drummer Avory thought he may have *killed* an aggressive Dave Davies by retaliating with a hi hat cymbal stand! This inter-personal rancour – between the brothers, between other Kinks, and between them and others, including an American union official – amazingly resulted in their being banned from returning to the US for a career-crippling four years.

With the Kinks confined to home, Ray Davies turned his attention to the people and situations of his own country. At the start of 1966 the Kinks released two similarly themed, satirical 'portrait' songs, 'A well respected man', and, 'Dedicated follower of fashion' (a frequenter of the clothing boutiques of Carnaby Street, the style epicentre of 'Swinging London'). Released as singles, respectively, in the US – at least they could still sell records there – and, the UK, they were the Kinks' highest rating records in each country since the early hits (and Davies' third in the trilogy, 'Dandy' was a European top ten for them, and in the US for Herman's Hermits). Manfred Mann's hit from two years later, 'Semi-detached suburban Mr.James' (written by Geoff Stephens and, another British writer John Carter) almost certainly was emulating a model well-established by Ray Davies and the Kinks.

The wistful 'Sunny afternoon' topped the British chart and briefly returned them to just outside the US top ten though the touring ban still devastated sales of other releases there until the end of the decade. Davies' songwriting was delving further into the hitherto rarely considered – at least among British pop songwriters – realm of social observation and comment. Gerry and the Pacemakers had one year before returned to the top tens in both countries with their film theme 'Ferry cross the Mersey' that obliquely examined people in Liverpool going about their everyday lives, and in January 1966 the Hollies' 'Look through any window' (written by Graham Gouldman) adopted a similar viewpoint. A precedent for all of these were the currently popular 'kitchen sink' novels, plays and films that depicted British working class life, often in provincial towns like Liverpool and Manchester, with unflinching social realism. Other singles of the genre later in 1966 included the more specific, and considerably grittier Rolling Stones' hit singles 'Mother's little

helper' and '19th. nervous breakdown', and, Australian group the Easybeats' celebration of the end of a wage slave's working week, 'Friday on my mind'.

The Kinks' contributions to the œuvre, 'Dead end street', 'Waterloo sunset' and 'Autumn almanac' featured high in the British top ten and comprised what is often considered, the raucous early releases notwithstanding, to be the Kinks' 'Golden Age'. Compared with other artists' increasingly lush and extravagantly produced work, these songs were downbeat, subtly composed and minimally arranged and orchestrated: mostly just Ray's "fragile vocal" (as he has described it)[106] with ensemble backup voices and the group's instruments (often with dominant acoustic guitar sound, and no more of Dave Davies' lead guitar freakouts) plus 'front parlour'-style piano (played by former Cyril Davies, and future Rolling Stones alumnus Nicky Hopkins) and occasionally, a sole featured instrument such as trombone.

From 1968 on, in the *next* phase of the Kinks' spasmodic career, their releases moved ever further down the chart, even in their own country, and at this time when albums were becoming important statements of their creators' art their LPs had already begun the slide. Davies' master work of that year, *The Kinks Are The Village Green Preservation Society* ignored the explosion of new imagery and sounds, not to mention current affairs such as worldwide civic unrest and the Vietnam war, concentrating instead on English pastoral themes and bygone days. Champion of the album, Andy Miller has conceded, "At the time *Village Green* seemed completely out of date, anachronistic."[107] It scarcely registered on the UK chart – amazingly, it was the last to make *any* impresson there. One consolation however was that, with the touring ban lifted from 1970 on the Kinks began reappearing in the US charts and their songwriting focus became more global.

Ray Davies is no quitter and, with or without his brother, and with various other sidemen he has persevered as a prolific songwriter and even, an increasingly flamboyant performer to this day. 1970's worldwide hits, the humorously provocative 'Lola' and whimsical 'Apeman' were followed a decade later on the American Arista label by the bitter-sweet 'Come dancing' (written about his older sisters, one of whom had died of a heart attack on a dance floor when Ray was only young). Its nostalgic remembrances of a long-gone England helped it register just outside the UK top ten, and six in the States, and albums started selling quite well there again (though still not at all at home). He and his idiosyncratic Kinks hold a very special place in '60s music history and despite Ray's recently developing interest in Americana, they are usually regarded as "the quintessential English band – the most English of the British bands of that era".[108]

While in many ways rooted in the past the Kinks were an enduring example of the new paradigm of the late '60s and the new decade and beyond: after '50s rock'n'roll, and early '60s pop, skiffle and Merseybeat, music was unlikely to offer anything that would sound completely new to ears that, via numerous media, were being increasingly bombarded with sounds. Instead, artists (and increasingly management and record companies) would devise a formula, albeit an eclectic one and doggedly pursue it in the hope that it would achieve success in some niche or other of the rapidly expanding market.

With the Beatles…

Although American music was the common factor, the seminal blues movement in the south of the UK had been relatively isolated from Northern music. Blues, or what became uniquely British *rhythm* and blues[a] and its developments throughout the rest of the 1960s and beyond stood defiantly apart from what was regarded as pop music made by pretty boys for young teenagers. This said, much of the r&b played by artists examined in this chapter quite quickly became regarded as pop anyway, with as many rabid young fans as for the beat groups.

An example of the melding of forms was the former 'Vance Arnold' who had unsuccessfully covered the Beatles' 'I'll cry instead' in 1964. Under his (almost) real name of 'Joe' (actually, John) Cocker and with his distinctive gravelly vocals he returned to playing the blues around his northern home town of Sheffield. Two years after Cliff Bennett's rendition of the Beatles' 'Got to get you into my life' made the top ten, in 1968 Joe Cocker's second single with his new Grease Band was an unrecognisably slow and soulful arrangement of another of theirs, the originally jaunty 'With a little help from my friends' voiced by Ringo on *Sgt. Pepper*. Joe's version topped the British chart but it wasn't until his passionate

[a] As already hinted at in this book, Jerry Wexler's term 'rhythm and blues', or its abbreviation r&b has meant differing things in different times. It was originally applied to black 'jump blues', that melding of both blues and jazz influences driven by drums, piano and particularly tenor saxophone, and sometimes other brass instruments, but with less emphasis on prominent lead guitar: "urbane, rocking, jazz based music with a heavy, insistent beat." (*Deep Blues: A Musical and Cultural History of the Mississippi Delta*, Robert Palmer, (Viking Penguin, 1981)) In time r&b came to encompass all blues music played by a band, and this was given impetus by many of the 'British invasion' groups. Singers sought to emulate African American vocal phrasing, and were augmented by electric guitars, sometimes electric organ and piano, and now less often by brass instruments. A little later in the US, rhythm and blues continued to expand to include soul music and other developments like funk by mostly black artists (often in collaboration with respectful whites in management and production, and in bands and in the studio). In the present day rhythm and blues (or more often, just 'r&b') incorporates an even wider variety of styles such as 'hip hop' (see chapter 18) and electronica. But always, the roots have been African American music.

performance the following year at the Woodstock festival in the States that he attracted the worldwide popularity that continued throughout his career. As well as imaginative arrangements of well-known songs and others by some of the world's best writers such as Dylan, his version of the Beatles' 'She came in through the bathroom window' from *Abbey Road* became another Joe Cocker signature tune.[a]

Not only r&b, but in fact any music played on young people's radio programmes and featured on TV shows like *Top Of The Pops* tended to be categorised as 'pop'. A good example of this phenomenon was Welsh singer Thomas Woodward. He was discovered singing in beat groups and in the year of the release of a popular film of the same name he was renamed 'Tom Jones'. Jones possessed a voice that would – still today – considerably enhance any blues or r&b band but, after the failure of his roaring up-tempo treatment of the country song 'Chills and fever' he found fame as a solo artist singing material from across a wide range of genres. The jazzy follow-up 'It's not unusual' went to one in the UK and made ten in the US; what would be a lifelong career was on a roll. Because he was seen as 'new' he therefore became a pop star who, like the female singers mentioned in chapter 9 not only appealed to young fans, but to older music-lovers.

While preceded by the earlier mentioned American-born P.J.Proby, it was Jones who laid the way for others of his ilk including Arnold Dorsey, better-known as Engelbert Humperdinck, New Zealander John Rowles and even 'Long John' Baldry in non-blues mode. In similar style, three other American emigrants with matching pudding bowl hairdos, the (unrelated) Walker Brothers emulated their fellow hitmaking countrymen the (also unrelated) Righteous Brothers. These artists all sang more in the tradition of Sinatra than the Beatles but were still heard on pop radio and seen on teenage TV music programmes in the same company as beat and r&b groups.

Returning to the British r&b musicians: despite also being seen as 'pop' artists, most nevertheless honoured their music over their image and never made fame their primary objective – even if some had fame thrust on them. There was however one exception… The Rolling Stones were fiendishly clever. They ensured that they bore very little physical resemblance to the Beatles or any other group – as Keith Richards put it, "The Beatles have got the white hat…what's left? The black hat." [109] Despite this, or more likely, *because* of this they, particularly the overtly sexual Jagger, along with the waiflike Richards and blonde moptop Jones garnered

[a] On that second, eponymous album Joe also paid tribute to a second song from *Abbey Road*, George Harrison's 'Something'.

their very own legion of ecstatic and defiant young fans of both sexes, as well as discerning ones who could *feel*, if not fully understand the heritage of their music. "Beatles or Stones?" That was the defining question of the times – although Bob Dylan appreciated elements of both groups.

When it came to repertoire, after Chuck Berry's 'Come on' that could have been recorded by any of the beat groups, for the follow-up the Rolling Stones accepted a song from, of all people, Lennon and McCartney. The Beatles had witnessed the Stones in action at the Crawdaddy Club: Ringo recalled, "I remember standing in some sweaty room and watching them on the stage, Keith and Brian – wow! I knew then that the Stones were great. They just had presence,"[110] and despite the contrived differences the relationship between the two groups was always, as Jagger explained, "Super, highly competitive – but friendly."[111]

The insubstantial 'I wanna be your man' (later also sung by Ringo on *With The Beatles*) propelled the Rolling Stones into the limelight and, by Keith Richards' admission, the Beatles pair's facility for completing the song on the spot especially for the Stones inspired him to develop his songwriting collaboration with Mick Jagger. Jagger said, "…we thought it sounded pretty commercial, which is what we were looking for, so we did it like Elmore James or something…it was a hit and sounded great onstage."[112] Driven by bass guitar and punctuated by shards of Jones' slide guitar 'I wanna be your man' went to twelve in December 1963. The Rolling Stones unwittingly continued to reveal their affinity with the Beatles and other beat groups with their next, and, in third position, even higher rating single 'Not fade away', as well as three from their first EP: the earlier referred to 'Poison ivy', 'Money' (already recorded by the Beatles on *With The Beatles*, among several other artists) and 'You better move on'. The four songs were by those Liverpool musicians' favourites: Buddy Holly, Barrett Strong, Arthur Alexander, and the Coasters.

After 'It's all over now', and then, of all songs, 'Little red rooster' (Alexis Korner, and Cyril Davies, from his premature January 1964 grave would have been proud), the Rolling Stones could do anything. They had single-handedly created a new paradigm that kept contemporary music viable for those who hated the increasingly formulaic pop sounds, for those who were no longer young teenagers, and for those who just wanted to be different.

Existing in parallel with their northern counterparts, the Rolling Stones were definitely their equals, even as the Beatles became less pop-oriented and more extravagantly experimental (and even – in this case one step behind the Stones – increasingly casual in appearance and anti-social in habits). Only once did the

Rolling Stones falter at this time in their creative progress, and that was when they misguidedly attempted to match, or be a match for, the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* with *Their Satanic Majesties Request*. Keith Richards didn't have a high opinion of either: of *Pepper* he has commented, "Some people think it's a genius album, but I think it's a mishmash of rubbish…" and then went on to explain, "…kind of like *Satanic Majesties…*"[113] Notwithstanding, *Satanic Majesties*, charting at three, equalled the performance of both its predecessor, and its successor in the Stones' album catalogue; today it is seen as – indeed, an aberration – but an interesting one, and not without its own merits.

Thereafter, during what is regarded as the height of their creativity (that, coincidentally, followed the Beatles' implosion) right through to – notwithstanding their mostly sub-standard recordings of the last couple of decades – their sellout stadium concerts in the present day, the Rolling Stones have surely exceeded their wildest dreams. Apart from a very small number of British musicians – John Lennon and George Harrison early on, Paul McCartney, Graham Nash, Eric Burdon, Van Morrison, Steve Winwood, the Yardbirds' last three guitarists – few who emerged during the early to mid-1960s gained much further worldwide recognition beyond that decade.

The definitive opinion came from Bob Dylan in 2009: "The Rolling Stones are truly the greatest rock and roll band in the world and always will be…They were the first and the last and no one's ever done it better."[114]

One other artist of the time – and by extension, his group – has remained in the consciousness of popular music cognoscenti. Ray Davies and the Kinks are often compared favourably, not so much with the Rolling Stones whose direction, sound and attitude they initially approached, but with the Beatles – although, noted US music writer Joe Levy has made the bold claim: "They outdo *both* [emphasis mine] what the Beatles and the Stones are best at."[114] Charles Young, writing for *Rolling Stone* identified Davies' songs as "picking up at some midpoint between Chuck Berry's short stories and Bob Dylan's jeremiads and English music hall comedy."[116] Perhaps Ray Davies ultimately had more in common with folk troubadours than pop or rock musicians.

As for his beginnings he has recalled that, having been inspired by the Beatles to develop his music he owes them "a tremendous debt": "I remember I was at Art College when I watched…'Love me do' on TV, and thought, 'That's great. I know I can do that.'"[117] The Beatles were already international stars by the time

Davies' group had its first hit late in 1964…but the Kinks' sales amounted to a fraction of the Beatles' and their opportunity to experience hysterical receptions in the States didn't eventuate. Perhaps the Kinks' lower profile has induced some like Levy to champion Davies as the 'under dog' and contend that the melodies and lyrics he supplied his group were superior to those of Lennon and McCartney and the Beatles. There is no doubt that, after their first noisy hits the later, more placid Kinks recorded a suite of distinctive, high quality songs during a few years in the later 1960s (and in ensuing decades). Whether they though, as a group, were better, or more inventive than the Beatles is debatable.

Just one of the claims supporting this controversial contention, for example, is that the Kinks, and not the Beatles introduced Indian music to the pop palette. The Kinks had stopped over in Bombay (now Mumbai) at the beginning of 1965 during their Australasian tour and Ray Davies, having heard the chanting of fishermen adapted the drone effect he heard for the guitar theme of his group's eighth single 'See my friends'. But it was released in July, up to two months after the Yardbirds' second, 'Heart full of soul' which was originally recorded using a sitar, this later being replaced by Jeff Beck's distorted guitar. Even before that, in mid-February while the Kinks were still on tour 'Ticket to ride' was the first of the *Help!* soundtrack songs to be recorded; it included, as Ian Macdonald detected, John Lennon's rising and falling melody "in mesmeric raga[a] style".[118] Later that month George Harrison became interested in the sitar during the filming of *Help!*, this then being reinforced by his friendship with two of the Byrds, David Crosby and Jim – Roger – McGuinn who were also interested in Indian music. In December 1965 the Beatles' *Rubber Soul* included the (Bob Dylan-flavoured) 'Norwegian wood'. It was the first Western pop recording to use the sitar.

Discussions about "who was first" though are academic, and ultimately futile. The fact was, contemporary musicians were opening their ears to *any* influences available, from *any*where, and from *any* time in history; Indian music and its instruments constituted just some of these sounds.

As for lyrical content, in mid-1964 John Lennon wrote his first Dylan-influenced song 'I'm a loser'. While still dealing with lost *love* it was one of the Beatles' earliest to focus on the 'loser' rather than what had been lost. John quickly followed it with a song whose deep inner meaning was diffused by its upbeat arrangement, and its status as the theme to their madcap second film. In the extremely intro-

[a] In Indian music a raga is a sequence of notes that creates a mood.

spective 'Help!',[a] with no obvious reference to love at all, Lennon desperately cries, "I need somebody" and "Help me if you can, I'm feeling down".[b]

The Kinks' 'See my friends' that also laments that "she is gone and now there's no one left" was recorded about a year after 'I'm a loser' – actually, around the same time as the chart-topping 'Help!'. 'See my friends' made it to ten on the British chart and was followed by another lost-love song, 'Who'll be the next in line'. The latter was, however, the first Kinks' single not to make the UK top ten. Davies then embarked on his social commentary songs, in tandem with writing material for the aptly named third LP *The Kink Kontroversy*. Potently influenced by the Kinks' exile from the US the album was replete with titles like 'Where have all the good times gone' (nostalgic yearning for an idyllic past would increasingly dominate Davies' writing) and 'It's too late', 'What's in store for me' and 'You can't win'.

It was the Kinks' last LP to chart in the UK top ten and its release toward the end of 1965 coincided with the arrival of the Beatles' *Rubber Soul*. That record's fresh new sounds and variety delighted fans who kept it at number one for eight weeks. As well as 'Norwegian wood' it included two more of Lennon's reflectively autobiographical songs: 'Nowhere man' – Paul claimed, "…he'd written it about himself, feeling like he wasn't going anywhere…"[119] – and, the retrospective 'In my life' (that featured, not a sitar, but, from a different time and place in history an elegant 'harpsichord'[c] solo).

In the middle of 1966 the Kinks' 'Golden Age' really gathered momentum with their UK number one hit 'Sunny afternoon' (at fourteen it was their last impression on the US chart for the remainder of the decade); four more British top tens followed for them over the next two years. But it was also a golden age for the Beatles and many other groups that were continuing, or commencing their careers in the second half of the 1960s. The Beatles' 'Paperback writer' that again depicted the quirks of a singular person had already topped charts around the world and it was followed by three more portraits on their next LP *Revolver*: 'Taxman' (George Harrison's satirical reiteration of Davies' attitude to that public servant in 'Sunny afternoon'), drug-peddling 'Doctor Robert' and the lyrical

[a] Actually written not long after his third major flirtation with drugs, the unanticipated experience with LSD provided by London dentist John Riley.

[b] Intentionally or otherwise, the B side echoes the sentiment as, in complete contrast to the melodic 'Help!', its instigator Paul McCartney passionately screams, in his best Little Richard voice, "I'm down".

[c] Unlike on the Yardbirds' 'For your love', the solo was played by George Martin on a piano, the tape then sped up to simulate the sound of a harpsichord.

'Eleanor Rigby' (these essentially written, and sung by George, John and Paul respectively).

It pays not to take sensationalist newspaper headlines at face value. In August 1966 the British *Disc and Music Echo* magazine trumpeted a Kink's appraisal of *Revolver*:

RAY DAVIES reviews the BEATLES LP
'Really, it's a load of RUBBISH'

Contrary to this deceptively inflammatory quotation, Davies' contribution was actually a thoughtfully objective track-by-track exposé. Though he concluded that he believed *Rubber Soul* had been a better record, he was fair in his analysis, praising some tracks, ambivalent about others, disparaging of a few. The venom implied in the headline was actually reserved for the whimsical 'Yellow submarine' – which, with 'Eleanor Rigby' was selected from the set as a double A-sided 45 and featured Ringo's first ever vocal for a single release. Davies' opinion (from which the headline was culled)? "This is a load of rubbish, really. I take the mickey out of myself on the piano and play stuff like this. I think they know it's not that good." Lovers of novelty songs (and anything by the Fab Four) disagreed. 'Yellow submarine'/'Eleanor Rigby' (the latter also dismissed by Davies as written to "please music teachers in primary schools") was released on the same day as the parent album and topped the UK chart for four weeks (in the US it was kept from this position by the Supremes' 'You can't hurry love'); *Revolver* held down the premium position for seven, and six respectively. In retrospect many consider *Revolver* – complete with several examples of Indian-influenced music, especially Harrison's 'Love you to' with guests playing sitar, tabla and tambura, as well as more of Lennon's introspection, and McCartney's extroversion, and some obvious results of consumption of mind-expanding substances – to be the finest of all the Beatles' albums.

Then in early 1967, wresting the global focus away from anything that had gone before came 'Penny Lane'/'Strawberry Fields forever' followed by *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Both further exploited an eclectic and experimental mix of sounds with lyrics ranging from what was now freely being described as 'psychedelic',[a] to nostalgic. The album stayed on top of the chart, and returned to the top, and returned, and returned…for an unprecedentedly long time, earning

[a] Psychedelic: A word coined in 1956 by psychiatrist Humphrey Ormond to describe the hallucinogenic effects of drugs. Authors, musicians and others of the 1950s 'beat generation' started using the term – as well as the drugs – freely. Use of – at the time still legal – psychedelic drugs as well as depictions of their effects in songs, artwork and lifestyle accelerated during the '60s.

the accolade as the best-selling album in the UK of the 1960s. As already mentioned though, the single was the first since 'Please please me' to make it only to two in the UK (it still reigned supreme in the US). No album review from Ray this time but he later smugly recalled, "I didn't listen to all of it…I knew I'd put out the best song of the year, so it didn't matter to me." [120] That song was the Kinks' 'Waterloo sunset', released just before *Sgt. Pepper*. It also only made it to two (and didn't register in the US) but it was almost undoubtedly Ray Davies' masterpiece – noted American music journalist Robert Christgau went so far as to fulsomely declare it to be "the most beautiful song in the English language".[121a]

From 1968 the hits started drying up for the Kinks, 'Days' which made it to just outside the UK top ten being the only notable performer. The LPs were already scarcely registering anywhere although, again retrospectively, *The Village Green Preservation Society* is now highly regarded. It also is sometimes cited when claims are made in comparing the two groups although it can be argued that the Beatles had partially traversed its territory, particularly with songs like McCartney's elegiac 'Eleanor Rigby', nostalgic 'Penny Lane' and speculative 'When I'm sixty-four'.

The Beatles of course charged on, further pushing boundaries and maintaining star status even though *Sgt. Pepper* was probably their last truly unified work. Ironically, as they finally unravelled at the beginning of the 1970s, that brief new burst of popularity came for the Kinks, and then again the decade later. While others were long gone, Ray Davies' group had against all odds endured.

If the Beatles had never got together could the Kinks have assumed the mantle of Britain's premium new pop stars? Though Ray Davies wouldn't have had that early inspiration from the Liverpool quartet it's possible that the – albeit mostly unoriginal – melodic music of other northern groups such as the Searchers or the Hollies may have served some purpose. Or, as blues was Davies' earlier passion he might have persevered with London r&b. His thoughtful lyricism would undoubtedly have triumphed, but while his songwriting was arguably on par with that of Lennon and/or McCartney, the Kinks as a group with Davies firmly at the helm could not compare with the Beatles' combined multiple talents and eclectic musical passions, not to mention, their esprit de corps. This limitation was increased by the Kinks' predisposition for conflict (which did also become an issue within

[a] Extraordinarily, while the song is extremely evocative of Ray's home city he, who had been influenced by the Beatles and Merseybeat, has confessed, "…the song was originally called 'Liverpool sunset'…London was home, I'd grown up there, but I like to think I could be an adopted Scouser. My heart is definitely there." *Liverpool Echo*, 14 May 2010

the Beatles, particularly for sparring partners Lennon and McCartney, but was relatively civilised, and kept under control until their last days). In the final analysis the Kinks were unlikely ever to be as multi-dimensional, as relent-lessly creative or, simply, as endearing a group as the Beatles.

If the Kinks couldn't claim the status of the Beatles what about the Rolling Stones? Without the Beatles' role in pioneering new British music, then providing the London group with a 'crossover' hit, and finally, being the yin to their yang, would the Rolling Stones have succeeded – at all, and if so, to the same or even greater degree?

Despite their professed devotion to the blues, the Stones' shared affinity with the Beatles' much-loved Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly and contemporary black rhythm and blues artists indicates that they might still in time have taken a more commercial course, even if on their own terms. Their choice of 'I wanna be your man' may have been either to gain, as others like Billy J. Kramer had already, from that 'magical' association with the hitmaking Beatles, or, as they had by this time befriended Lennon and McCartney it may have just been a happy accident. Or simply, with the paucity at this early stage of their own songwriting, they wanted to avail themselves of a brand new song in order to progress into uncharted territory. Very few other British group members at this stage were writing their own material – or being allowed to feature it on record – and any such songs, even if they had been prepared to share them would quite likely not have suited the Stones.

So they would have been faced with three alternatives: to continue to cover existing American songs, to chance on a suitable new one from an established professional songwriter (as the Pretty Things, Them and, much to the disgust of purist Eric Clapton, the Yardbirds did), or, to start writing their own.

The Rolling Stones' earliest creative efforts were rudimentary: fairly tediously jammed instrumentals, or heavily derivative African American-style songs, or ponderous efforts like 'Congratulations' or 'Tell me' (not that being ponderous impeded 'Heart of stone'). Most commercial, though not released as singles were ditties like 'Little by little' (the B side of 'Not fade away' with intro resembling Roy Orbison's 'Candy man') and, a perky song that perhaps even Freddie and the Dreamers or Herman's Hermits would have been happy to record, 'Off the hook'.

It all changed though in 1965 when their huge successes like 'The last time', '(I can't get no) satisfaction' and 'Get off my cloud' opened the floodgates. Literally *hundreds* of Jagger-Richards songs would follow throughout the rest of the 1960s, into the '70s and over the next *fifty* years.

The final conclusion therefore can only be that the Rolling Stones, who, like so many other groups had come together out of strong friendship and a passionate interest in particular musical genres *would*, if the Beatles hadn't existed, have taken their music and performance to the next level. With the self-assured and increasingly extroverted Jagger out front they would in time have sought to put on a 'show', even with flamboyant costumes, rather than just a concert. They would have wanted to make hit records, and they would have been hungry not only for ever-increasing fame but pop stardom. They, and others like them would have taken their versions of American music back to where it had come from (as well as throughout the world), re-energising artists like Dylan, before global cross-pollination became the norm.

Brian Epstein had cleaned up his Scouser scruffs' act so the Rolling Stones' manager Andrew Loog Oldham had encouraged his protégés to deliberately project a nondescript and even unlikeable image. As he provocatively challenged, "Would you let your daughter marry a Rolling Stone?" [a] A number of earlier American artists – Little Richard, early Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis (who is fabled to have once set a piano on fire mid-performance), Screamin' Jay Hawkins [b] (who often emerged on stage from a different kind of box – a coffin!) and James Brown – had made a feature of their always theatrical, often confronting stage presentations.

The Rolling Stones, along with Bob Dylan became the first, *only* artists to prosper with (mostly) creative output, coupled with an 'anti-hero' image – *sustained throughout sixty years*. We're now into the third decade of the 2000s and the Stones and Dylan are all approaching the threshold of *eighty* years old. They have staying power, attitude and devotion to their artform, and they remain must-see artists capable of filling huge auditoriums and arenas.

[a] Reported and referred to in numerous newspaper articles at the time, and has now become the stuff of legend; but there appears to be no specific evidence of Oldham making this statement or releasing it to the press.

[b] His name and stage act inspired British '60s shock-rock singer David 'Screaming Lord' Sutch (with his band, the Savages). He later became a serially unsuccessful politician and founder of the Official Monster Raving Loony Party! Another Hawkins devotee in that country at the time was Arthur Brown who, out front of his band Crazy World was one of the first to affect garish face paint. Even more eye-catchingly, it was topped by a flaming helmet.

III

AFTER THE BEATLES

16 FROM POP STARS TO ROCK GODS: A NEW REALITY

As only very few, like the Beatles, Stones and Dylan can attest, pop *super*-stardom can last a lifetime – for those like Crosby, Sinatra and Presley, *longer* than a lifetime. On the other hand, *non*-super stardom can be just a flash in the pan. Recent pop music history can arguably be seen to move in cycles of as few as three to five years, and increasingly, even less than this. The blooming of rock'n'roll (as distinct from earlier rhythm and blues) commenced with, for example, Bill Haley's, Elvis Presley's, Little Richard's and Chuck Berry's initial record sales dating from around 1955; that period ended just before the next decade with the deaths, scandals and other changes that beset the prototypical rock'n'rollers. What is often known as the 'Bobby' period, during which rock'n'roll was tamed and commercialised (not denying however that other significant developments were still occurring) took up the early 1960s until 1963 when Merseybeat and other sounds stormed the charts in the UK, and then a year later invaded the US.

Another four years later, little more than halfway through the decade big changes were again afoot. As documented, these ended the careers of many 'beat groups' and other artists; those that continued to survive until the end of the 1960s and even beyond did so either because of sheer doggedness or willingness to compromise, or, their preparedness and ability to adapt and create anew. Rory Storm and the Hurricanes and the very earliest Liverpool beat groups were by now distant memories (though perhaps some were at least still slogging around the circuit at home), and the ones that had soldiered on a little longer like the Swinging Blue Jeans, the Fourmost, Billy J. Kramer and Gerry and the Pacemakers were essentially washed up by 1966. They were not alone: groups from elsewhere in the UK such as Freddie and the Dreamers and the Zombies (notwithstanding the latter's momentary resurgence) suffered the same fate. Others, like the Searchers, Herman's Hermits, Fortunes and Tremeloes – even the Hollies, albeit with their late, but unfortunately belated creative push – observed the latest seismic shift in music but simply opted to keep their ageing fans (and by now, quite possibly the parents, perhaps even children of those fans) happy with the same pleasant, sometimes still very clever middle-of-the-road music.

Evergreens like Cliff Richard and Elvis – especially after the latter's so-called 'Comeback' TV special in 1968 – continued to maintain a presence throughout

the 'beat' years and would continue to reinvent themselves in subtle ways for some time yet. Even Frank Sinatra had a worldwide number one hit with 'Strangers in the night' in 1966, and another the following year in duet with his daughter Nancy. Both he and Bing Crosby continued to appear, and record for many more years until just before their deaths; Crosby's 'White Christmas' that he recorded in 1942 remains the biggest-selling single of all time.

From the '60s, others persevering to differing degrees of success and merit by maintaining their own very distinctive sounds were such as the 4 Seasons, the Beach Boys and the Dave Clark Five, most successful by far being the Rolling Stones whose brand of rootsy rock'n'roll has varied little over the decades. And the other r&b artists like the Yardbirds, Pretty Things, Moody Blues and Manfred Mann as well as Eric Burdon, Van Morrison, Eric Clapton and Steve Winwood didn't try to compete with that: when their earlier groups were no longer viable they remained sufficiently enterprising to try other variations, often with more sustained success than their earlier incarnations. Some dabbled in psychedelia or ventured into what at the time was dubbed 'progressive rock' while others followed the Byrds and the Band in their exploration of Americana. Most adaptable of all of course was the inscrutable and ever unpredictable Bob Dylan.

African American music was an entirely different matter. Having been marginalised for so long, and now all of a sudden embraced – in fact, particularly by British musicians, *revered* – it continued to progress as it always had: organically, and independently of most conventions of 'white' music. Motown's success brought other singers, musicians, writers, producers, studios and record companies into focus. As already mentioned, companies such as Stax and Atlantic, and artists like Aretha Franklin, Wilson Pickett and Otis Redding quickly became big during the 'soul' boom. The exuberant appearance of Otis at the Monterey International Pop Festival (ironically dressed in a neat double-breasted suit while most of the other artists were resplendent in 'hippie' regalia) constituted the most potent sign yet that racial barriers in music had been torn down forever.

It's fruitless to continue Part 2's attempt to remove the Beatles from the equation and imagine where pop music might have been without them. The Beatles had made their mark on music so indelibly that it is probably best now to return to real history and examine their music from *Sgt. Pepper* to the end, how other new artists were influenced by this and how *they* adapted the sounds, and whether there were any other musicians who either totally ignored them, reacted against them or came up with anything else that was significantly original.

FROM POP STARS TO ROCK GODS: A NEW REALITY

After the triumph of *Sgt. Pepper* early in 1967 the Beatles could truly be said to be on top of the world. In June they performed the blissfully idealistic 'All you need is love' (that included musical references to the French national anthem, the Glenn Miller big band's 'In the mood', 'Greensleeves', Bach's 'Brandenburg Concerto' and their own 'She loves you') in *Our World*, a fourteen country live TV hookup to a global audience of 400 million.[a] A thirteen-piece orchestra accompanied the group whose vocals, bass, lead guitar solo and drums were performed live to their own pre-recorded backing track of other instruments – including John, Paul and George playing harpsichord, double bass and violin! Invited friends like Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Marianne Faithfull, Eric Clapton and Graham Nash sat reverently cross-legged at the Beatles' feet and joined the singalong chorus.

But only two months later, at the age of only thirty-two their faithfully nurturing manager, "The Beatle-making Prince of Pop" [1] Brian Epstein was dead.[b] The Beatles became, apart from George Martin's continuing collaboration (with one notable exception) in the studio, rudderless. What ensued was the ill-advised TV special, *Magical Mystery Tour* with a dual EP of new songs (padded out to album format in the US); the double 'White Album' (the deliberately simple, actual title *The Beatles* being embossed on the plain – compared with *Sgt. Pepper* – packaging) that yielded some excellent new work – and some not so; the *Yellow Submarine* cartoon film (no doubt Ray Davies gave that a miss) with an LP including only four, mostly inconsequential new songs; the ill-fated *Get Back* documentary that morphed into the often depressing film, *Let It Be*; and its 'soundtrack' album, tentatively cobbled together several times by engineer Glyn Johns but finally controversially finessed – Paul McCartney strongly disapproved of the embellishments – by Phil Spector; and the saving grace, still somewhat fraught but with Martin back behind the desk, *Abbey Road* (recorded after, but issued before the overbaked *Let It Be*). Of course all the full-length albums continued to make number one everywhere, as did most of the singles issued – they were still by the Beatles after all.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that the group was fracturing, the songwriting partnership split, recording being done separately, enmities developing between members (and especially, for John Lennon's ever-present second wife Yoko Ono),

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[a] The telecast wasn't as colourful as it may have been in the studio: it was broadcast in black and white as colour television was not yet available in most countries of the world. The performance video available has been colourised.

[b] Officially, accidental, due to a combination of sleeping pills and alcohol.

vague ideological pursuits offering false hope and distraction, their private company Apple undertaking bizarre, doomed ventures, massive amounts of money being wasted, major differences ensuing about management alternatives and, all four Beatles recording solo albums. As their faithful press officer at the very beginning and then at the very end Derek Taylor wearily recounted, "I guess everything got too big, too bloody vast for human beings, frail, ill-prepared human beings, to cope…and we had to concede it…they *were* human…"[2]

Each of them at different times walked out on the group: George, tired of touring, back in 1966, then briefly Ringo, during recording of the 'White Album', again George, departing, and returning to the *Get Back*/*Let It Be* sessions in the following January, John privately telling the others he wanted a 'divorce' in September 1969, and lastly, Paul publicly announcing his resignation on the tenth of April 1970. His lawsuit against the other three was filed on the last day of that year, although legal wrangling dragged on for another four years (and residually, for decades). Effectively, the Beatles were no more.

Early in their career John had mused, "You can be big-headed and think, yeah, we're gonna last ten years, but as soon as you've said that you think, you know we're lucky if we last three months…"[3] The first, for them at the time, *wild* conjecture was portentously close to the truth.

17 | DERIVATIVES AND ALTERNATIVES

So, who *would* be the next major popular music phenomenon, the next in the tradition of Bing, Frank, Elvis and…the Beatles? Would thirteen year-olds (and even younger than that) in the mid- to late-1960s, and beyond, have any interest at all in the now ageing Liverpudlian pop musicians or would they be looking for something new and fresh? What music would captivate the *older* teenagers as they moved towards and into adulthood, and would anything of significance come from, and for this demographic?

The answer is not straightforward. The world was still by no means a perfect place, but for around a quarter of a century it had at least been free of the global economic depression and warfare that parents and grandparents had endured. Standard of living for large numbers of people, particularly in countries like the US and UK was perceptibly rising. Discontentment with the unending conflict in Vietnam was central to the concerns of most older teenagers and young adults, but at the same time they were riding a euphoric wave of freedom – to dress and behave as they chose, to indulge in exciting, even forbidden new experiences, and, to enjoy the music of their youth that, instead of being eclipsed by something completely different in the second half of the decade was constantly evolving and diversifying. Rock'n'roll had been born in 1955, but in its maturity a decade or so on its 'pop' component was now for younger teenagers, the older ones moving into adulthood just wanted 'rock'.

Teenage pop…

For the thirteen year-olds it was simple: the original Beatles were too old, too hairy, too weird so…give them new 'Beatles'! The custom-created Monkees (who came to be known as 'the Prefab[a] Four') were a moptop American quartet that performed catchy pop music (initially written by other, gifted songwriters) and acted wacky, not in a film like *A Hard Day's Night*, but in their own TV series. From a series of auditions were selected folk musicians Peter Tork and Michael Nesmith, and actors Mickey Dolenz and English – Manchester-born – Davy Jones (who, appearing with the cast of *Oliver!* in 1964 on *The Ed Sullivan Show* had been thrilled by the Beatles' debut performance). Dolenz, regarded as the best

[a] Prefab: Prefabricated, contrived.

singer in the lineup had to learn drums from scratch; 'second' singer Jones who *could* play drums shook a tambourine out front.

The Monkees' first single was released in August 1966 ahead of the series' commencement. Ironically, their American TV debut came less than a fortnight after the original *Fab* Four, thoroughly exhausted from touring and associated dramas, had returned from their final US concerts to announce that they would never play live again. The Beatles were weary of being loveable pop stars. As was of course planned, the Monkees were *instantly* loveable, their singles and albums topping charts around the world for the next year or so during the show's two series. The group's desire for autonomy gradually increased however and they toured, by now playing their own instruments live, and increasingly lobbied for greater participation in song selection and to record more of their originals. But the TV series was cancelled early in 1968, record sales were on the decline, an anarchic (though now cult) feature film *Head* alienated fans, and finally Tork, then Nesmith left the group.

The Beatles, as lovers of comedy had openly expressed their enjoyment of the Monkees: John Lennon tactfully commented that they were "the funniest comedy team since the Marx Brothers."[4] During their visit to London Mickey Dolenz said, "The Beatles have always been revered by us…there isn't a person on the pop scene who has not been influenced by them,"[5] and Mike Nesmith attended (along with Mick Jagger, Marianne Faithfull, Brian Jones and Keith Richards among others) the *Sgt. Pepper* recording session for 'A day in the life'. For his part Paul predicted, "I fully expect the Monkees to go from strength to strength. This is no here today and gone tomorrow group."[6] But, if not tomorrow, the Monkees *were* soon gone, in September 1970, four years since their inception, and three months before the final fracturing of the Beatles.

Twenty years later a Chicago journalist was asked by his daughter, "Who do you think is better, the Beatles or the Monkees?"[a] While pondering how to tactfully answer this question, Dad came to the astounding realisation that many of his family's young friends actually believed the American group had *preceded* the Liverpudlians – perhaps they interpreted the term *Pre*-fab four literally! It was an understandable misconception on the youngsters' part, in their attempts to comprehend what to them, decades on, must have been very ancient history. The

[a] A friend of Harry Stein confided in him, "…Monkees fans that they are [twenty years later!], they are convinced everyone else ripped them off. Lennon, McCartney, Jagger, Dylan – as far as my son's concerned, they're all pale imitations of Davey [sic] Jones and Peter Tork." (Recalled by Harry Stein, *Chicago Tribune*, 16 November 1987).

chronological truth is of course indisputable, but, few also would doubt which actually was the more talented, creative – and real – of the two groups.

While pop stars had been around since earlier in the century it was really the 'cute' Beatles (and manager Brian, with his insistence on neat grooming) who, whether they intended it this way or not, had steadily adjusted the average age of teenage fans downwards. The svengalis behind the Monkees exploited this, putting their wholesome quartet on prime time family TV, while at the same time the Beatles were beginning to inhabit their own personae: outspoken (especially with Lennon's observation, "We're more popular than Jesus now"[a] not going down too well in the conservative US 'Bible Belt'), musically experimental, drug-taking (Paul was last to take, but first to admit taking LSD[b]), and, flamboyantly attired and, facially, as well as tonsorially ever more hirsute.

Descendants of Frank Sinatra's young 'bobby soxers', the teenage, and pre-teenage fans – usually girls – became known as 'teenyboppers'.[c] From singing "We love you Beatles"[d] right up to the present day they have shown their adoration for generations of pop stars. A few of these – in their later times, the Monkees, then, Scotland's Bay City Rollers of the early 1970s, the three Hanson brothers in the late '90s and the Jonas Brothers into the twenty-first century for example – actually played instruments and wrote some of their own material. Most however have performed in the 'doo-wop' tradition as singing groups, often with choreographed moves – from the Jackson 5 and the Osmonds through to the so-called 'boy bands' of today. Other solo artists like David (and brother Shaun) Cassidy and Leif Garrett early in the '70s, and millennial Canadian Justin Bieber have revisited the clean-cut solo appeal of the 'Bobby' era. And defying girl enthusiasts' usual preference for male artists have been those few like the Spice Girls, Britney Spears and Miley Cyrus. All of them have, at least at first, projected elements of the fun-loving, innocuous 'cuteness' of (the early) Paul McCartney, Gerry Marsden, Peter

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[a] "Christianity will go. It will vanish and shrink. I needn't argue about that; I'm right and I'll be proved right. We're more popular than Jesus now; I don't know which will go first – rock'n'roll or Christianity. Jesus was all right but his disciples were thick and ordinary. It's them twisting it that ruins it for me." (John Lennon to Maureen Cleave, *Evening Standard*, March 1966)

[b] To a reporter from *Queen* magazine in June 1967 (not long after the issue of *Sgt. Pepper*), reprinted in *Life*, and then reiterated in an interview on British ITV.

[c] Bobby soxers, teenyboppers: The former were American 1940s popular music-loving teenage high school and college girls, named for the short socks that they wore under flowing skirts; the latter were similar fans in the 1950s and the two decades that followed as pop music was marketing to progressively younger age groups.

[d] Based on 'We love you Conrad' from the teen-idol musical *Bye Bye Birdie* and recorded by British 'girl group' the Carefrees in that heady year, 1964.

'Herman' Noone or any of those original 'British invasion' heart-throbs. Andy Greene of *Rolling Stone* magazine, in identifying twenty-five of the teenyboppers' favourites of all time summed it all up: "Teen idols are a special kind of rock star – their popularity may fall as fast as it rises, but it tends to rise higher and inspire more ecstatic adoration than any other kind of artist."[7]

...and grown up rock

In many ways the enduring Kinks, notwithstanding their enforced, and to a certain extent, chosen low profile, were among the constants that endured during this mid- to late '60s period and then into the '70s while new artists surfaced. Developing in parallel with the Kinks – but generally travelling somewhat better – was a group with a similarly short, but, startlingly abrupt name. As with the Kinks, three who had attended the same school came together in 1961 and worked through different musical genres and personnel. They finally settled on a different, and unusual four-piece configuration for their group that they at first called the Detours. Inspired by the minimal lineup of Johnny Kidd and the Pirates, Roger Daltrey sang out front of Pete Townshend who mostly played slashing rhythm guitar, and, John Entwhistle whose style could best be called 'lead bass'. Last to join in 1964 was explosive drummer Keith Moon. They came up with the new name but with advice from new management opted to become the High Numbers, releasing one beaty, but lightweight and unsuccessful r&b original 'Zoot suit'. The High Numbers were tailored to appeal to the latest sub-culture, the stylish 'mods' who had evolved from aficionados of modern jazz through early beat music.

Then Townshend deliberately wrote a song in the Kinks' style to entice that group's producer, Shel Talmy to work his magic. The ploy worked: reverting to their preferred name, the 'debut' single on Brunswick records for – the Who – was 'I can't explain'. It went to eight in the UK early in 1965, and then, a co-write with Daltrey, 'Anyway, anyhow, anywhere' made ten. Again as with the Kinks, pent-up tensions in the group often erupted although, initiated by an accidental guitar breakage on stage one night they (usually) turned this outwards into an aggressively anarchic stage act. Instruments were smashed and group members (with the exception of the stoic Entwhistle) exercised extreme physicality in their performances. In the studio they also experimented with effects such as guitar feedback and oddities of vocal phrasing. The defiant 'My generation' almost topped the UK chart and the LP of the same name made five but at that point they fell out with Talmy (who then confusingly, and mostly unsuccessfully issued various tracks from the

album as Brunswick singles). They joined the new Reaction label (founded by Australian-born promoter Robert Stigwood who had unsuccessfully aspired to be heir to the deceased Brian Epstein) and their next five official releases, as well as their second LP continued to feature in the UK top ten over the next two years.

Perhaps wary of this group that appeared to be every bit as threatening as the Kinks, and more so, US record buyers showed substantially less support. Perverting the 'kitchen sink' style, Townshend's quirky lyrics delved into themes of identity uncertainty ('Substitute' and 'I'm a boy'), society's outcasts ('Happy Jack'), romantic fantasy ('Pictures of Lily') and avenged deceit ('I can see for miles'), the last of these finally breaking into the US top ten late in 1967.

The Who's long-awaited American success may have been attributable to their premiere US appearance. One of only three British groups at the Monterey International Pop Music Festival in California to which thousands of gentle, peace-loving hippies flocked, their cataclysmal stage act was distinctly at odds with the ethos of the 'Summer of Love'. Their antics on and off-stage during subsequent US tours may have had authorities reassessing the danger that the Kinks had posed, but the Who continued with powerful performances through to the Woodstock festival in August 1969, into the 1970s and, after the premature death of drummer Moon, until their (initial) breakup in 1983. From 1969 they had occasional success with singles in the UK and less so elsewhere but the continuing rise in significance of the album ensured that each of their eight LPs has featured in, or just outside UK and US top tens. Despite Entwhistle's passing in 2002, Townshend and Daltrey have continued to come out of retirement, in the studio and on stage, showing no signs of diminution of that original creative and performing energy.

While Pete Townshend had earlier, no doubt provocatively, derided the Beatles' musicianship as "flipping lousy"[8] in more recent times he has conceded that "…there's something universal about that music and the Beatles' appeal that will go on for a long time to come…Because they were driven by a real passion…and were endlessly innovative."[9]

In remembering that *Sgt. Pepper* was the Who's favourite album during their first US tour (along with the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*) Pete Townshend believes that it "redefined music in the twentieth century"[10] and Roger Daltrey later expanded on this appraisal: "*Sgt. Pepper* gave us confidence that the public would be willing to accept new ideas. There's no doubt about that. George Martin's work with the Beatles and the songs they were writing really gave us confidence that the public would accept anything if it was good."[11]

The 'new idea' that Daltrey's group came up with was the extension of the *Sgt. Pepper* concept into a full-blown 'rock opera'…but the Who's was not the first of these. In October 1967 only five months after *Sgt. Pepper* two British singer-songwriters calling themselves Nirvana (twenty years before the very different-sounding American 'grunge' band of the same name) released, to ambivalent reviews and negligible chart success *The Story Of Simon Simopath*. At the end of the next year the newly experimental Pretty Things told their 'story of Sebastian F. Sorrow', or, *S.F.Sorrow*. Released in the same week as the Beatles' 'White Album' and the Kinks' *Village Green Preservation Society*, it was poorly promoted and quickly forgotten about (but championed decades later).

The Who were much more successful. In 1969 they were actually third out of the blocks with their exploits of "that deaf, dumb, blind kid", the "pinball wizard" called *Tommy*. Perhaps because of its creators' greater stature this was the record – a double album – that received the attention. Concert performances featuring guest vocalists were mounted around the world, and an extravagant dramatisation was filmed by Ken Russell. Then, five months later, yet another 'rock opera'[a] arrived. *Arthur (Or The Decline And Fall Of The British Empire)* was the Kinks' next project after *The Village Green Preservation Society*.

There were many features common to the four albums: not only were all named for their idiosyncratic male protagonists but there were many songwriting, instrumental and vocal similarities – not to mention a few *Sgt. Pepper* influences. *Arthur* received widespread critical acclaim and was even deemed by a *Rolling Stone* reviewer to be "the best British album of 1969…It shows that Pete Townshend still has worlds to conquer and that the Beatles have a lot of catching up to do."[12] While sales were again poor at home the Kinks' resurgence in the States was about to begin.

Spearheaded by the Beatles (and frequently fuelled by hallucinogenic substances) British experimental pop music was booming. Groups that had earlier played basic 'beat' music or rhythm and blues were expanding their horizons. Apart from the groups just mentioned, and the Rolling Stones with their flight of fancy *Their Satanic Majesties Request*, other successful examples already mentioned include the 'super group' Cream (also on Reaction records), and Steve Winwood's new freewheeling venture Traffic. A relatively new outfit, the Small Faces had quickly abandoned their earlier soulfully rocking style – very popular, like the Who, with the mods – to embrace psychedelic music. The Small Faces'

[a] Or perhaps, 'rock musical' as the music was intended to accompany an – ultimately ill-fated – TV play.

tour de force in 1968 was *another* 'concept album' *Ogden's Nut Gone Flake*, packaged like a large circular tobacco tin and featuring, on the second side, a fantasy song cycle that incorporated a bizarre narration by that favourite of John Lennon, British humourist Stanley Unwin. Unfortunately, other than one single, 'Itchycoo Park', the Small Faces never really captured American attention, but members' splinter groups fared better some years later as they went back to more basic music. Another schoolboy group that formed in 1962 persevered for more than half the decade until the renamed Status Quo put the psychedelic 'Pictures of matchstick men' into the UK top ten and just outside in the US. A follow-up single also did well at home but at the start of the 1970s they embraced the return to those four-on-the-floor harder rocking styles. It became their – 'status quo', so to speak – throughout many decades to come.

The lush, overlaid sounds of experimental pop led some rock musicians to gain appreciation for the classical composers who had originally written and arranged for multiple instrumental parts, (this territory having already been traversed to a small extent, if for novelty purposes by groups like Sounds Incorporated and Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers). A new band that began in Birmingham in 1965 had an initially eclectic repertoire but then aimed to emulate the hard-hitting approach of the Who. With similarly minuscule name, the Move had their first success in January two years later with 'Night of fear', based on Tchaikovsky's '1812 Overture'. Seven of their singles made the UK top ten but very little recognition came from across the Atlantic – founding member Carl Wayne re-called, "…the Move was a very, very good pop band, though not of the calibre of the Beatles."[13] In further attempting to approach that group's distinctive sound, in 1972 some members formed the Electric Light Orchestra which, with two cellos and a violinist also continued to exploit classical, not to mention, Beatles influences.

Those other two bluesy bands referred to in chapter 15, the Paramounts and the Moody Blues underwent significant changes – in the case of the former, a change in name to Procol Harum. In May 1967 their 'A whiter shade of pale' with the classical heritage of Johann Sebastian Bach's 'Orchestral Suite No.3 in D Major' hit number one in the UK and stayed there for six weeks. It did well in the US and around the world; its follow-up 'Homburg' with twin keyboard attack also sold satisfactorily but other single and album sales were patchy.

In 1966 the Moody Blues had a substantial membership re-shuffle, and a change of direction to all-original symphonic pop. It featured the Mellotron, a new instrument that keyboard player Mike Pinder had recently introduced to the

Beatles, and which late in 1966 they used for 'Strawberry Fields forever'. Pinder has vividly acknowledged that group's music as his inspiration, and detailed how he repaid the debt: "If you visualise the world of music like a giant mansion with countless rooms to explore, I understood the Beatles to be the ultimate explorers of the mansion. They opened up door after door, leaving those doors open for other musicians to enter and explore the room and its possibilities. And this is why I wanted the guys to have a Mellotron."[14a]

The Moody Blues' new endeavour was rewarded: their new record company, Deram (a Decca offshoot) wanted them to record Dvořák's 'New World Symphony' to demonstrate a new 'improved' stereo format but this plan was shelved in favour of the group's own all-original, and only second-ever album. 1967's *Days Of Future Passed*, replete with lush vocals and fully arranged for accompaniment by the 'London Festival Orchestra'[b] did well at home and went to three on the US albums chart. One of the new members, Justin Hayward was of the same mind as Pinder about his musical muses: "The Beatles were moving so fast and the rest of us were just trying to keep up and move through the doors they had opened."[15] His lilting feature song from *Days Of Future Passed*, 'Nights in white satin' nearly topped the US singles chart and made nine at home. Subsequent singles charted, but most significantly every album from 1968 through to 1981 (even after this successful lineup was starting to disintegrate again) made the British top ten, with three number ones, and they enjoyed similar success in the US.

While not inspired by the classics and not generally regarded as being of Procol Harum's or the Moody Blues' style, one group built the third part of their musical journey on lush, almost symphonic ballads. The *second* part had commenced in 1958 on arrival at Brisbane, Australia whereupon those three very young brothers from Manchester's Rattlesnakes skiffle group (see chapter 10) immediately resumed their passion. The trio soon became known by the initials of the elder, though still only fourteen-year old brother, Barry Gibb.[c] With the twins Maurice and Robin not yet in their teens, the now officially renamed Bee Gees performed regularly on the Queensland coast, and as their fame grew the family relocated

[a] Appropriately, the Mellotron was, in 1963, developed in the Moody Blues' home town, Birmingham; Pinder had worked in the factory where it was made. Its ability to produce pre-taped sounds when keys are pressed was an advance on the Chamberlin that was invented in the States during the early 1950s. And of course both were precursors of sampling technology that is now well-established.

[b] They were actually studio musicians accorded the impressive-sounding name, presumably to give the album greater credibility.

[c] As well as two Australians who'd given them early encouragement, Bill Goode and Bill Gates.

south to Sydney. All but two of the Bee Gees' records from 1963 featured Barry's increasingly prolific writing (and his songs were being taken up not only by other local artists, but from as far away as the States). The young trio acknowledged a wide variety of their influences – including, by now as big in Australia as throughout the world, the Beatles. Of that early time Barry recalled, "…all of a sudden, bang! The Beatles started happening. It changed our whole attitude towards show business,"[16] and Robin remembered, "…we started our experimental stage because the Beatles were happening and we thought, 'Let's get some inspiration from this group that are doing so well overseas.'"[17]

Despite their efforts and undoubted talent, but possibly because they were attempting to please too wide a demographic – and perhaps also, because Australia was still unquestioningly coveting British and American culture – the Bee Gees failed there. So, at the beginning of 1967 the whole family packed up and returned home. Unbelievably, as they sailed across the seas their recently released *eleventh* single, the deliberately simple and catchy 'Spicks and specks' rose to the top of Australian charts.

Back in the UK, after an approach to Brian Epstein the Bee Gees established a connection with Robert Stigwood who saw the young group's potential as possible successors to the Beatles. 'Spicks and specks' was released on the Beatles' first-ever label, Polydor and created some interest in Europe but it was generally considered to be out of step with the trend to bigger productions. So the imaginary drama 'New York mining disaster 1941'[a] was quickly co-written by Barry and Robin and deliberately distributed to radio stations in plain sleeves: many DJs believed it was a new 'secret' Beatles record and consequently it made the top twenties in both the UK and US. Most of their following singles and LPs also did well, with two topping the UK chart but their first number one in the States didn't occur until the beginning of yet another significant change in their direction.

The fourth, and most successful part of the Bee Gees' journey came in the mid-1970s when they explored another influence, the African American sounds of disco dance music. Later Barry again paid tribute to the group that had originally inspired the Brothers Gibb: "I think to this day, people not of our generation do not realise how huge the Beatles really were. Even people like Michael Jackson, I think, don't have the same aura. Whatever they did to the world, they did to all ages, they didn't do it to one age."[18]

[a] The fictional subject matter was based on the tragedy that occurred at a mine in Aberfan, Wales a year before.

The ultimately most successful of the new wave of groups deeply exploring psychedelic music had, like the previous four, begun early. In 1963 Roger Waters, Nick Mason and Richard Wright were architecture students who formed a Merseybeat-style group. By the mid-1960s, the quartet that now included the younger Roger 'Syd' Barrett transitioned into playing the more popular London rhythm and blues and, as the Beatles had needed to in Hamburg, they began extending solos to fill out long sets in clubs. Developing this further, the *almost* finally named Pink Floyd[a] Sound ('Sound' was later dispensed with) became very popular, among others like the more recently formed Soft Machine, at 'underground' venues such as the UFO that celebrated new musical trends, artistic expression, adventurous clothing styles, drug culture and political protest. The music, now accompanied by lighting and visual effects, expanded exponentially as did the often all-night events that could involve multiple bands, poetry readings, performance pieces and film.

Though London's psychedelic era was, by the end of 1967 becoming diffused, Pink Floyd was only beginning to gain momentum. Attracting a Columbia contract that year, they recorded their first two Syd Barrett-written songs, both with psychedelic elements but still eminently commercial: 'Arnold Layne' made twenty on the UK chart and 'See Emily play', six. While no other singles charted at all for the next decade and a half, like so many other bands their preference was for full-length artistic statements and the debut LP *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* rose to six later in 1967. Outdoing the Moody Blues (but not matching the Rolling Stones) every one of Pink Floyd's fifteen albums right up to the present day has featured in the British top ten. Interest in the US picked up from the early 1970s with equivalent results not only there but around the world and singles culled from these also began reappearing in the upper reaches of the charts.

The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn was produced at Abbey Road by Norman Smith, the engineer of all Beatles' LPs up till *Rubber Soul*, and recording took place just one studio from where the mammoth *Sgt. Pepper* sessions were being completed (the Hollies' *Evolution* was being recorded elsewhere in the complex). Naturally the younger band was excited that the Beatles' latest album was taking shape next door to where they were putting down their first. Lyricist, vocalist and bassplayer Roger Waters has said that, in general, the Beatles' music encouraged

[a] The name devised by Barrett from those of two African American blues musicians, Pink Anderson and Floyd Council.

Pink Floyd "to express ourselves…we could be free artists and…there was a value in that freedom,"[19] while drummer Nick Mason confessed, "They were God-like figures to us…but they were in a strata [sic] so far beyond us that they were out of our league."[20] It was however Syd Barrett's creativity that was writ large all over their album, the music and lyrics of which being startlingly different from anything that had come before in the UK. *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* has been described as "the strangest psychedelic album…no scratch that… the strangest album ever made…an assault on all of your senses…*Piper* is an album that revels in being strange and isn't afraid to go into sometimes unsettling places."[21] Unfortunately 'strange' also described Barrett: his increasing consumption of drugs, and associated mental illness caused him to be ousted from the band within the year. With his replacement, David Gilmour, Pink Floyd continued, experimentally but never quite as eccentrically, on their unerring rise.

Pink Floyd's live performance of their rambling 'Interstellar overdrive' from *Piper* often ran to as many as twenty minutes in duration. The shorter version on the album was also recorded by the band playing together in the studio, and with only minimal later overdubbing of their own additional instrumentation.

It was not the only extended piece of experimental music recorded by a British pop group in 1967.[a] Paul McCartney, unlike the other Beatles who were ensconced in country estates outside London preferred the creative stimulation of living in the metropolis and he immersed himself not only in nightclubbing but in the progressive arts scene, and particularly, avant-garde music. When tentatively asked in January if he might prepare a soundscape for another 'underground' event to be held later that month, the 'The Million Volt Light and Sound Rave', he readily agreed. This then became all four Beatles' second task for the year, the 'Penny Lane' sessions being put on hold for a day. Coming a year after *Revolver*'s 'Tomorrow never knows' with its looping tapes and multiple other sonic effects, but predating by nearly a year and a half John's masterminded 'Revolution No.9' from the 'White Album', 'Carnival of light'[b] was nearly fourteen minutes of "…hypnotic drum and organ sounds, a distorted lead guitar, the sound of a church organ, various effects

[a] As opposed to shorter improvisations, such as Dave Davies' and Jeff Beck's guitar solos in 'You really got me' and 'I'm a man'. Experimentation with musical forms had been done by British modern classical and jazz musicians for decades. Joe Meek is generally acknowledged as one of the first pop music producers to experiment with different recording methods, including multi-tracking, and sound effects, such as in the Tornados' globally successful 1962 single 'Telstar'.

[b] To this day it remains unreleased. It was never regarded as part of the Beatles' catalogue, and while Paul supports its release, others over the years, particularly, apparently, George have opposed it.

(water gargling was one) and, perhaps most intimidating of all, John and Paul screaming dementedly and bawling aloud random phrases like 'Are you alright?' and 'Barcelona!' "[22] While *Sgt. Pepper* has of course cemented its place in history, until such time as 'Carnival' can be heard by more than just the rare few so far it can't be truly evaluated. *The Piper At The Gates Of Dawn* (recorded in a little over half the time taken for *Pepper*) and tracks like 'Interstellar overdrive' however stand as unique and remarkable achievements at that time in British pop music.

One short coda – and it *is* a coda: the Beatles' utilisation of the 'run-out' groove[a] at the very end of the *Sgt. Pepper* disc (following 'A day in the life') for a recurring sequence of backwards gobbledigook was, on the twenty-first of April, the last thing recorded. One month later – to the day – Pink Floyd completed *their* closing track on *Piper*, the enigmatic and often derided 'Bike'. Appended to its end is…a short repeating sound collage. One Pink Floyd enthusiast has observed that it "bears more than a passing resemblance to…the inner groove of *Sgt. Pepper*. Maybe…Norman Smith, the *Piper* producer, not only managed to get them into the studio to meet the Beatles[b] but also informed them about, or even enabled them to have an early hearing of, the Pepper run-out groove."[23] Maybe, or maybe not…and if so, was it an act of appropriation, or, an homage?

The pop eclecticism and experimentation of the Beatles and others like Pink Floyd aided by the availability of increasingly sophisticated recording methods opened up possibilities for ever more complex creations. An explosion of electric bands blended and evoked classical, rock, jazz and other musical styles: Yes, King Crimson, Colosseum, Genesis, Emerson Lake and Palmer (with their classical arrangement for keyboards, bass and drums of 'Pictures At An Exhibition' by nineteenth century Russian composer Mussogorsky) and others all carried the 'progressive rock' banner into the next decade. Some groups like the Incredible String Band, Fairport Convention and Steeleye Span fused the British folk music tradition with modern sounds while Pentangle broadened that mix with elements of jazz and blues. Jethro Tull began as a blues band but, with leader-vocalist Ian Anderson's unique flute playing, incorporated folk and jazz influences into a harder-edged, in fact, often quirky rock setting.

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[a] The run-out groove brings that long, tight spiral groove on vinyl records to a closed circle: unless lifted from the record, the stylus continues to travel around it indefinitely – otherwise it would simply career off on to the central label with damaging outcome. While the run-out groove had sometimes been used to make the very most of the short time possible for recordings on 78rpm discs, the Beatles had – again – come up with something novel (obviously for CDs and tapes the run-out is repeated several times before fading out).

[b] According to engineer Geoff Emerick they did drop in once, unannounced; they weren't welcome. (*Here, There And Everywhere: My life recording the music of the Beatles* (Avery, 2007))

In the wake of Bob Dylan's, and other North Americans' successful revitalisation of the age-old singer-songwriter tradition, others from elsewhere in the world tried a solo career. From the UK came younger artists like Scottish folksinger Donovan (Leitch) who, so enamoured of Dylan was sometimes criticised – even derided by Dylan himself – as an imitator, until he ventured into new psychedelic territory, and Nick Drake (who, like Syd Barrett seemed tragically out of step with the times).

Taking it up a notch (or two) were Stephen Giorgio, Reginald Dwight and David Jones. Giorgio changed his name to Cat Stevens and had two British top ten singles and an album in 1967 before enjoying enormous success throughout the 1970s. Former Bluesology pianist Dwight took the names of band members *Elton* Dean and 'Long *John'* Baldry to become Elton John. Many of his early songs written with wordsmith Bernie Taupin were rooted in the American tradition, and his eponymous second LP made the top ten in 1971 in that country and at home. This almost overnight success was the start of a lifetime of huge-selling albums and singles throughout the world. David Jones also had his grounding in the blues; understandably not wanting to be confused with the Monkees' front man he changed his stage name from 'Davie', and later, 'Davy' Jones to David Bowie. Like Stevens, Bowie had two UK top ten pop singles in 1967 and '68. His albums, with less accessible music took a little longer to gain an audience but from 1971 all but one has made the UK top ten – including nine number ones. The prolific and constantly evolutionary songwriter single-handedly moved his music into – and far beyond – dimensions traversed by the 'progressive pop' bands.

All of the singer-songwriters named had differing backgrounds from, and were around half a decade younger than the Beatles. By the later 1960s they would have been exposed to numerous musical influences although fifteen year-old Cat Stevens had, on hearing the Beatles in 1963, been inspired to buy a guitar,[24] and John Lennon's biographer Philip Norman went so far as to claim that "…everything about [Bowie] was directly traceable back to the Beatles…"[25] Donovan, having witnessed the recording of 'A day in the life' actually though went on to teach John Lennon something new. Of the time when the Beatles and others had visited India to seek enlightenment from the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi,[a] Donovan recalled,

[a] George Harrison's interest in Indian music then extended to Eastern spirituality, and specifically the 'teachings' of the Maharishi. Having met him in August 1967 George took the Beatles to a seminar in Wales, and then, early the following year, to the Maharishi's ashram in India – accompanied by Donovan, Mike Love of the Beach Boys, actress Mia Farrow and others. The experience was appreciated by some, others, not, but a deal of music and songwriting ensued with many songs appearing on the 'White Album'.

"We were sitting round and playing the guitar and he [Lennon] said, 'How do you do that…that picking?' He learnt a guitar style and some chord shapes that I knew he wasn't used to and then the songs started coming, 'Dear Prudence', 'Julia'…" [26a] The Beatles' music, and production methods would unquestionably have infused Elton John's and David Bowie's creativity. Both have recorded Lennon-McCartney songs, and have, to a certain extent collaborated with, particularly, Lennon. The two certainly stand alongside the Beatles as superstars.

While what ultimately became known as British 'prog rock' remained viable for a number of years yet, the Band's influence on the Beatles and others like Elton John and Eric Clapton brought about a revisiting of more basic rock'n'roll. Clapton, from the now disbanded Cream, and, ex-Traffic, Steve Winwood collaborated in Blind Faith; three of the Small Faces discarded the 'Small' and teamed up with former young habitué of the London blues scene Rod Stewart along with guitarist Ronnie Wood while Small Faces singer Steve Marriott formed Humble Pie with Peter Frampton, previously, guitarist with the Herd. Other new rock groups included Ten Years After and Free (and evolving from the latter, Bad Company).

Not to be sidelined, around 1968 other UK 'prog rock' bands increasingly emphasised the rock to give birth to what became evocatively termed 'heavy metal' music. With classically trained keyboardist Jon Lord, former Searchers' drummer Chris Curtis was the instigator (but only fleeting member) of Deep Purple; the band's early experiments included elaborate album treatments of the Beatles' 'Help!' and 'We can work it out' which were initially more popular in the US than at home. The last Yardbirds guitarist Jimmy Page honoured his group's blues heritage (and also some English folk elements) when the remnants morphed into the harder-hitting Led Zeppelin (that included vocalist Robert Plant and Page's fellow former session bassplayer John Paul Jones). The frequently fluctuating lineups of Deep Purple have had several number one, and other high-rating al-bums and singles, particularly in their home country, while Led Zeppelin, whose unchanging four-piece membership over twelve years (until the death of drummer John Bonham), rarely released 45s and placed their faith in long-players. After their eponymous debut album made six in the UK and eight in the US, all of the following seven topped both charts. A third, consistently successful band over the years, Black Sabbath laid the way for others whose music, often more demonic than melodic, would remain enduringly popular with certain enthusiasts.

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[a] Inspired by, respectively, Prudence Farrow, sister of Mia, and John's mother Julia.

In the US some American groups – like the Sir Douglas Quintet and the Beau Brummels, as well as the regally-themed Beefeaters (pre-Byrds), the Buckinghams, the Palace Guard and the Royal Guardsmen had attempted to cash in with varying success on the 'British invasion'. Others sought to repel it, an example being the earlier mentioned Paul Revere and the Raiders (whose *Sgt. Pepper*-evoking outfits actually honoured the legendary Paul Revere[a] who'd been an activist in the original American Revolution that sought independence from Great Britain).

1967's 'Summer of Love' brought about an explosion of psychedelia. The Holy Modal Rounders had begun in the early '60s as a folk group. Their version of the old 'Hesitation blues' reputedly was the first song to include their own insertion, several times, of the word 'psychedelic' (the song however was anything but). The first to *proclaim* that they played this music titled their 1966 debut album, *The Psychedelic Sounds Of The 13th Floor Elevators* (the Blues Magoos' *Psychedelic Lollipop* came soon after).

Many bands had seemingly been inspired by the Beatles' psychedelically-titled 'Yellow submarine' from 1966 to devise the most bizarrely inapposite double- or triple-barrelled monikers (for some unknown reason, these often incorporated foodstuffs): the Strawberry Alarm Clock (who topped the US chart with 'Incense and peppermints') and, the Chocolate Watch Band, the Electric Prunes, Moby Grape, the Peanut Butter Conspiracy, the Peppermint Trolley Company, Tangerine Zoo, even, Ultimate Spinach… Some, like Vanilla Fudge were exploring heavier, or more adventurous music – and Iron Butterfly actually preceded Led Zeppelin with the contrasting 'earthbound-airborne' imagery of its name.

Psychedelia, if innocently enough, even infused 'bubblegum'. In the wake of another of those foody double-barrelled groups the Lemon Pipers (with their US number one hit, 'Green tambourine') more groups for younger fans were assembled by opportunistic svengalis. Band names such as 1910 Fruitgum Company and The Kasenetz-Katz Singing Orchestral Circus now evoked the old-time feel of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (Ohio Express being one that, like Paul Revere's Raiders, identified more with its American heritage). Following the Royal Guardsmen's novelty songs about Charles M. Schulz's much-loved cartoon dog Snoopy, a cartoon group, the Archies (with their own TV show that 'starred' the teenagers from the *Archie and Jughead* comic books) was also popular. 'Their' third single 'Sugar, sugar' not only made number one in the US and the UK but

[a] Paul Revere the musician was actually born Paul Revere Dick.

became *the biggest-selling single of 1969 in both countries!* The Archies weren't the first cartoon group though. Three years before, another very popular TV show revolved around fun-filled fictional exploits, and the music, simulated voices and animated likenesses of…the Beatles.[a]

Unusually, some other well-known British musicians were a big part of these essentially American ventures that, echoing situations already described, were often created as a package – composition, instrumentation, backup and even lead vocals, and production – by anonymous personnel. Key collaborators – at a British studio – were ex-Mindbenders Eric Stewart and Graham Gouldman along with the latter's childhood friends Kevin Godley and Laurence 'Lol' Creme. Several years later their varied experience and vocal ability enabled them to explore various styles when they emerged as the hitmaking 10cc.

Apart from some mentioned, most of the American psychedelic groups had evolved organically. They were competent, and several, with homegrown hit singles, the equal of their British counterparts. Alternatively to the joyous celebration – though more and more, the cynical exploitation – of the 'Summer of Love' that was mainly centred in San Francisco, other musicians had for some time been deeply involved in experimental, even anarchic music that frequently exceeded the excesses of the British 'prog rock' groups.

Frank Zappa – *not* a stage name – was two months younger than John Lennon. During his teens he'd enjoyed the same less accessible popular music of the '50s as Lennon had, but over and above that he was fascinated by the intricacies of contemporary 'classical' music. Playing in regular bands while also composing songs and film scores, Zappa was by the mid-1960s incorporating his eclectic, all-encompassing musical passions that ranged from the conventional to the avant-garde into the first Mothers of Invention recordings. The complex creations incorporated everything from free improvisation to tightly regimented arrangements. Like a Phil Spector or Brian Wilson, Zappa was in charge of *every* aspect of the project so musicians needed to be highly disciplined. Concerts invariably involved both spontaneous and orchestrated performance, and extravagant visual effects.

In a 1966 interview for which Frank gave ludicrously flippant responses he nominated *Revolver* as his favourite record of the year, inscrutably claiming that

[a] Internationally produced and syndicated – though, other than the music, with no input from the group or its management – *The Beatles* premiered in September 1965. Despite the real Beatles' ever-evolving image, and the series' later use of songs as advanced as 'Strawberry Fields forever', over three years and throughout thirty-nine episodes the series' characters remained visually locked in time as the 'Fab Four' of 1964.

his own debut *Freak Out!*[a] was "a hoax, in case you haven't noticed."[27] Hoax or otherwise, and whether Zappa really enjoyed *Revolver*, Paul McCartney was reputedly inspired in his ideas for *Sgt. Pepper* by the conceptual framework of *Freak Out!* (as well as, of course, that of the Beach Boys' *Pet Sounds*). The Mothers' fourth album in early 1968 satirised *Sgt. Pepper* and the Beatles with an overt parody of its cover, Zappa's sardonic title implying that the British group's raison d'être was *We're Only In It For The Money*. He was dismissive of the Beatles: "Everybody else thought they were GOD. I think that was not correct. They were just a good commercial group."[28] But *Sgt. Pepper* was still topping charts everywhere and being venerated for its pioneering innovation and superlative production values, and Frank's biographer later concluded, "This was what really irritated Zappa, who felt that his records deserved this kind of accolade."[29]

Frank Zappa uncompromisingly maintained an aversion to commercialism, and disdained a range of societal conventions – even many that had become new conventions of *his* generation such as 'flower power' and, especially, the drug scene. Throughout his life he created a vast collection of albums of widely differing styles including jazz and classical. A few of these ascended to higher reaches of the charts and, at least enjoying a modicum of *Sgt. Pepper*'s status and success, two even made it into the top ten in the US and UK.

Also growing up in California and soon cementing a long-term creative connection with Zappa was the similarly extremely talented – in the visual arts as well as traditional styles of American music – Don Van Vliet. As 'Captain Beefheart' he, like Zappa strictly controlled his Magic Band's musical output that emanated from, but usually subverted blues forms. While the Beatles admired his talent (and wanted to sign him to their new, but shortlived experimental Zapple label[b]), Van Vliet was openly contemptuous of their (and even the Rolling Stones') music. He released a track titled 'Beatle bones 'n' smokin' Stones' which, among its nonsensical lyrics with references to strawberry thises and thats, contained the line "Strawberry *feels* forever" [italics mine]. Esteemed music writer Lester Bangs extravagantly claimed though, "…Captain Beefheart is the most important musician to rise in the Sixties, far more significant and far-reaching than the Beatles, who only made pretty collages with material from the public domain…"[30]

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[a] Released a month before *Revolver* it was the second-ever double pop/rock album after Dylan's *Blonde On Blonde*.

[b] There is no evidence to suggest that the Zapple name was an intentional merging of Zappa's name with that of their main label, Apple.

Whether Zappa and Van Vliet really considered the Beatles to be inferior – or if they were just being typically provocative, or maybe, just a little envious – is open to conjecture. However, not all American 'underground' musicians shared their cynicism. Tuli Kupferberg, one of the founding vocalists of the extremely confrontational – in the political and sexual references of their music – group that was mischievously called the Fugs acknowledged an early influence: "Now what started to impress me, I believe, was the Beatles and the Rolling Stones…Although the Beatles were not exactly the fine composers and poets and thinkers and feelers that they later became, they still had a lot of energy and kind of freedom [that] was admirable, and I think was new…seemed to be new to me, and I guess to Ed [a] and a lot of other people at that time." [31]

The Fugs remained truly unconventional, non-commercial musicians. Others however gradually gathered a rabid following that remained with them throughout their lives, and their uncompromising music actually infused, altered and enriched the mainstream. In 1964, the year of the Fugs' formation a young man who'd experienced troubled teenage years, but who, like Zappa and Van Vliet possessed a prodigious intellect and eclectic interest in music and writing struck up a friendship with a visiting Welsh classical viola player. A year later Lewis Reed and John Cale formed the Velvet Underground, at first playing delicate music that often utilised the same sorts of drone sounds that were fascinating British musicians like George Harrison and Ray Davies at the time. True to their name the nascent group embedded itself in the New York avant garde arts scene, joining 'pop' artist Andy Warhol's entourage and taking part in his multimedia shows that, like the Pink Floyd-accompanied events, had their roots in the 'happenings' of the 1950s (and events of the iconoclastic art movements Dada and surrealism before that). After an initial hitch their debut album *Velvet Underground & Nico* [b] (its cover featuring a stark, but *peelable* banana image designed by Warhol) was released at the very same time as, and, its sales hindered in the States by, the arrival of *Sgt. Pepper* (coincidentally, with *its* lavish cover by *British* 'pop' artist Peter Blake and his American wife Jann Haworth). Ironically the American group's record was best received in the UK where it made forty-three, but in truth, nothing of the Velvet Underground's output – at least at that time – ever sold well.

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[a] Ed Sanders, fellow Fugs founder.

[b] German singer Nico, born Christa Päffgen was introduced to the Velvet Underground by Warhol; she sang on three of the eleven tracks.

If *Sgt. Pepper* annoyed Zappa, it appears to have enraged Lou Reed: "I never liked the Beatles…I thought they were garbage…When [bands] did try to get… 'arty,' it was worse than stupid rock and roll."[32a] John Cale however was not enraged, but enthralled by George Harrison's incorporation of droning sitars into the Beatles' songs. Throughout his youth he'd been immersed in classical music and his fellow countrymen's records were the first pop he'd really become aware of so his opinion was at odds with Reed's: "They were a driving force in the Velvets, and made us work harder and got us on our bikes. *Rubber Soul* was where you were forced to deal with them as something other than a flash in the pan. It was rich in ideas…"[33] Of their later album, erstwhile singer Nico selectively commented, "There is a song I liked on *Sgt. Pepper*, called 'A day in the life'…a beautiful song and then this strange sound [ie.the orchestral climax] like John Cale would make…"[34]

David Bowie who, in the early 1970s produced Lou Reed's second solo album that brought his music to a wider listening audience contended that Reed's first group was always greatly undervalued: "…it was the fringe, strange bands that nobody ever bought, like the Velvet Underground that actually have created modern music, and you kind of think, where's 'Yesterday' in all this, or 'Penny Lane', where's its influence?…[while] many critics were saying how important the Beatles were, the heart is running around saying, 'Yeah, they're ok but hear the Velvet Underground.' The artists make culture, not the critics."[35]

The "stupid rock and roll" that Reed derided was not what the Beatles played in their earlier, pre-"arty" stage (or indeed, their later, post-"arty" stage). He was referring dismissively to a fellow American band that certainly *rock*ed, but also incorporated many progressive elements, especially poetic lyrics (though the literate Reed didn't appear to acknowledge these).[b] The poet was Jim Morrison, an extremely impressionable and precocious thinker, and a reader of an extensive range of literature. As a vocalist and songwriter in the mid-'60s he joined three exponents of varying musical styles to form a group that took its name from the Aldous Huxley novel appropriated by the psychedelic generation, *The Doors Of Perception*. Two years later the Doors burst on to the scene with their self-titled

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[a] Interestingly, Lou (and Warhol too) were briefly enamoured of Australian group the Easybeats who followed their trans-Atlantic 'kitchen sink' hit 'Friday on my mind' with the majestic 'Falling off the edge of the world'. Apparently it was one of Lou's favourite jukebox spins, and in speaking to music journalist Lillian Roxon he reputedly called it "one of the most beautiful records ever recorded." But you never could tell with Lou… (*The Easybeats Absolute Anthology*, Albert Productions, liner notes written by Glenn A. Baker, January 1980).

[b] "What I mean by 'stupid', I mean, like, the Doors."
Lou Reed, interviewed on *Blank On Blank*, PBS, 15 February 2005.

debut album that made two in the US, accompanied by a number one single (seven in the UK), 'Light my fire'; they had another chart-topping single but more significantly, each of their next five albums also charted in the top ten.

The band's 'persona' became split three ways: firstly, the music, expertly played by the three instrumentalists, complemented by Morrison's evocative lyrics and expressive vocal stylings; secondly, his darkly, and controversially sexual presence onstage; and finally, his even more dangerous alcoholic and drug-addled life offstage. As if Reed hadn't already been angered enough by the Doors' success, the Velvet Underground's champion Andy Warhol quickly became obsessed with the mesmeric Morrison, who in turn embarked upon a tempestuous relationship with Nico. Jim Morrison's life on the edge would end prematurely: when he died of heart failure at the age of twenty-seven the Doors' career effectively came to a close.

The Beatles had made some impact on the Doors: of the orchestration on their fourth album *The Soft Parade*, guitarist Robbie Krieger was asked, "Were you compelled to go into this direction because of the Beatles?" to which he replied, "Yeah, totally. In those days you had to try to keep up with the Beatles!" [38] The truth however was that, as the Rolling Stones had done many years before, the Doors, while influenced by many current sounds created music that was distinctively their own.

Another alumnus of Warhol's, James Osterberg Jr. disagreed with both his later collaborators, David Bowie, and Lou Reed. He has remembered, "When I was in my early teens, I'd listen to the Top 40 and I would wait for the one Beatles song that the radio station would play; this engendered an incredibly emotional reaction, almost like a drug compulsion…" [36] In the late 1960s he formed the Psychedelic Stooges (dropping the 'Psychedelic' when it was no longer fashionable) and, taking the snappier name of Iggy Pop he aspired to emulate Jim Morrison's outrageous antics: "If they've got a hit record out and they can get away with this, then I have no fucking excuse not to get out on stage with my band." [37] Today, at more than seventy years-old, perpetually writhing and stripped to the waist in performance, he remains a "real wild child".[a]

The US music scene, having begun the 1960s with relatively few homogeneous pop groups but then, after exposure to the 'British invasion' was rebounding with vigour. America's larger population that congregated in big cities and small towns

[a] 'Real wild child' (retitled for US release from the original 'Wild one' so as not to be confused with the swinging Bobby Rydell song of the same name) was co-written and recorded in 1958 by Australia's first rock'n'roll star Johnny O'Keefe. Iggy Pop's definitive version in 1986 has been one of several covers over the years.

alike was spread over a wide area, and cultures that were constantly evolving engendered rich diversity. Strands of American music heritage – folk, rock, jazz, country and blues – were being adapted, combined and electrified to create anew.

These distinctive blends that today are often described as 'roots' music or 'Americana' typified the sound of bands such as the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane and Love while the briefly chart-topping, and innovatively named ? and the Mysterians incorporated some of the rough-edged 'garage' feel that had been popularised by the Kingsmen. The Lovin' Spoonful[a] and Country Joe and the Fish had elements of jug band music and bluegrass. Others to experiment with fusions of country and rock included the later '60s lineups of the Byrds that introduced the country sounds of Gram Parsons; bluegrass enthusiast Chris Hillman was still in the band but upon his and Parsons' departure they formed the even more country-focussed Flying Burrito Brothers. Creedence Clearwater Revival sounded as if the group had been 'Born on the bayou' even though its members were from San Francisco, two-thousand miles from the Mississippi Delta. Buffalo Springfield spawned three important musicians: Richie Furay who co-founded early 'country rock' group Poco, and, Stephen Stills and Canadian Neil Young who got together with founding Byrd David Crosby and ex-Hollies' Graham Nash in different singing combinations bearing their surnames. Also with harmony-rich, contemporary folk-oriented sounds were the two men and two women who called themselves the Mamas and the Papas,[a] and the Simon and Garfunkel duo that angelically rendered Paul Simon's poetic lyrics.

Different facets of blues and rock were explored by the Blues Project, Canned Heat, the Allman Brothers Band and, founded by Paul Butterfield's former guitarist Mike Bloomfield, the Electric Flag, while Big Brother and the Holding Company featured the powerful vocals of Janis Joplin before she moved on to form her own groups. In a return to a (stripped-back) version of the big band sound, and developing 'jazz rock' from sounds introduced by the Buckinghams were the nine, and eight-piece Blood Sweat and Tears, and Chicago Transit Authority (or simply Chicago as they soon came to be known). Mexican American guitarist Carlos Santana in his eponymous band introduced new Latin rhythms to rock while the Young Rascals – after early success they dropped the 'Young' – gave soulful feels to a variety of pop music. Sly and the Family Stone, with two female members and a multi-racial composition were exponents of energetic and uplifting soul-rock.

[a] Leading lights in the Lovin' Spoonful, and the Mamas and the Papas were John Sebastian, and John Phillips, mentioned on p.95 as two of the co-writers of the Beach Boys' 'Kokomo'.

One other American artist embodied all – and more – of the attributes, the aspirations, the accomplishments that had come to the fore in this later 1960s era. His name, Johnny, was officially changed four years after his birth to that of his grandfather, James – but he ultimately became known just as 'Jimi'. Jimi Hendrix was African American but his heritage included Cherokee American Indian and he was proud to have attended a school where different races from around the world mixed happily, his credo being, "Colour doesn't matter…I always say let the best man win, whether you're black, white or purple."[39] His upbringing however was not always as happy: it wasn't until he was three years old that he saw his soldier father who, when discharged couldn't find steady work; Jimi lived with various family members but his four siblings were fostered out; then after his alcoholic and often violent parents finally divorced, he and his younger brother remained with their father, his mother dying when he was just twelve. He was not unexpectedly a withdrawn child, but he burned with fervour to play the guitar.

Jimi learned by listening to the African American blues of artists such as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf and Elmore James, but also, the pop and rock'n'roll played by Buddy Holly, Chuck Berry and Elvis. So the left-handed Hendrix strapped on a restrung right-handed instrument and this perennially became his configuration of choice. While intent on a musical career he had to temporarily put it on hold: in order to avoid jail time for some misdemeanours he chose to undergo training as a paratrooper.

When the intransigent serviceman was discharged a year later his playing resumed in earnest and he began travelling around the country in backup bands for seminal black artists like Sam Cooke, the Marvelettes, Solomon Burke, the Isley Brothers, Ike and Tina Turner and Little Richard. While the grounding was invaluable, Jimi became disenchanted with forever standing in the shadow of front men and women – who were often annoyed by their guitarist's flashy playing. His outstanding, if unconventional talent was nevertheless noticed by others like the acclaimed Mike Bloomfield (who after witnessing Jimi in action announced that "he wasn't going to pick up the guitar again" [40]) and, by Keith Richards' girlfriend Linda Keith. She convinced Chas Chandler, the Animals' former bassplayer that Jimi would be a sensation in the UK. Chandler assembled a three-piece group, presumably using Cream as a template, with Englishmen Mitch Mitchell, a jazz drummer from Georgie Fame's band, and, Noel Redding who had been auditioning as a guitarist for a new lineup of the Animals but was convinced to switch to bass. The Jimi Hendrix Experience was born.

On the twenty-third of September 1966 Jimi flew to the UK. Not one to let the grass grow under his feet, a week later he attended a night club and asked the band if he could jump up for a jam. The band was Cream; their lead guitarist's memory of that occurrence? "The song Jimi wanted to play was a Howlin' Wolf song called 'Killing floor'. I thought it was incredible that he would know how to play this…Of course Jimi played it exactly like it ought to be played, and he totally blew me away…it was musically great too, not just pyrotechnics…I remember thinking that here was a force to be reckoned with. It scared me, because he was clearly going to be a huge star…"[41a]

Eric Clapton wasn't the only high-ranking British musician to marvel at the newcomer's astonishing ability. Night after night at Jimi's shows different Beatles, Stones, Animals and others would be seen in the audience, enraptured (and also marvelling at his exotic clothing choices).

Later that month Hendrix and the band began recording their debut single, and album. The single, 'Hey Joe' that featured Jimi's relatively restrained, but still distinctively ringing guitar was a slow, bluesy rendition of a song that some claim to be traditional but probably was written as recently as the early '60s; it had already been recorded, in different styles, by more than half a dozen other artists. The Experience's version (backed by his original 'Stone free') was an immediate hit in the UK, registering as high as six by early 1967…but it did not chart in Jimi's home country.

The album, *Are You Experienced* was released on the twelfth of May 1967. As an indication that Jimi Hendrix was far more than another visiting black bluesman it contained eleven original songs that displayed his impressive creativity and virtuosity (not to mention Mitchell's and Redding's thoroughly confident and supportive collaboration). His guitar playing was in turn spiky, and resonant; the vocals – despite his being unsure of his singing ability – imbued with equal amounts of satin, and passion; the music artfully blended blues, jazz, soul, funk and rock influences. Jimi launched them into the psychedelic stratosphere.

The record business year in the UK had begun with the unfailingly popular *The Sound Of Music* soundtrack back for its latest chart-topping run (for two years

[a] Having been told that there were no good guitarists in the UK Jimi was typically respectful: "…I was surprised, especially when I heard Eric Clapton, man. It was ridiculous. I thought, 'God!'" (Interviewed by Steve Barker, January 1967 https://gaslightrecords.com/articles/jimi-hendrix-interview-january-1967) Jimi may or may not have been aware of the 'Clapton is God' graffiti that had appeared around London the year before he arrived in London.

from mid-1965 it held down number one *seventy* times, slipping to no lower than second position for the rest of the time, a salient reminder again that it wasn't only teenagers who bought records). It was – temporarily – replaced for seven weeks by the Monkees' first LP, and shortly after, though only briefly, by their second. 'Best of collections' by the Beach Boys, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Dylan had all achieved top ten placings while *Revolver* and *Pet Sounds* still hung on in the chart. The Stones' fifth album *Between The Buttons* had gone as high as three and other big-sellers that likewise had not quite been able to rise to the top included The Who's *A Quick One* and Cream's debut *Fresh Cream*. But none of the newer artists' records had the impact – in terms of content and sales – of Jimi and the Experience's first outing; perhaps only the similarly unconventional (though for different reasons) preceding records of Zappa, Captain Beefheart and the Velvet Underground – that to this point had almost certainly been little heard in the UK – shared any of its arresting characteristics.[a]

Unlike those so-called 'underground' American albums, *Are You Experienced* was intentionally a record for the pop-rock market. It took only three weeks for it to shoot to its highest position of two in the UK. Then eleven days after its release, toward the end of May, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* hit the record shops. With its unique format, variety of songs and adventurous production and packaging, *Sgt. Pepper* immediately stole attention away from all other contemporary music. In just a fortnight the Beatles hit the top and stayed there for *twenty-seven* weeks. The Jimi Hendrix Experience was thereby deprived of the satisfaction of an inaugural number one…although *Are You Experienced* still remained in the top ten for another seventeen weeks.

Always modest, and eager to pay tribute to the masters, Jimi didn't begrudge the Beatles their success – nor they, his. Excited by an opportunity to take his new band back to his home country, not just for club dates but for what would be a seminal event, Jimi acknowledged who'd been responsible: "Paul McCartney was the big bad Beatle, the beautiful cat who got us the gig at the Monterey Pop Festival." [42] Prior to departure in June his band headlined a show at the Brian Epstein-owned Saville Theatre. With Paul, and George Harrison in the audience the Experience commenced with a new, but non-original song that Jimi had opportunistically learned, and then taught the others in the dressing room just

[a] In characteristically drolly eloquent manner Zappa described Hendrix's music as "orgasmic grunts, tortured squeals, lascivious moans, electric disasters and innumerable other audial curiosities…delivered to the sense mechanisms of the audience at an extremely high decibel level." (*Life* magazine, 25 June 1968)

before going on stage. It was a respectful tribute, the trio's unique treatment of 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band', the title track of the Beatles' new LP released just days before. Paul was ecstatic: "It's a pretty major compliment in anyone's book. I put that down as one of the great honours of my career."[43]

Jimi's return to the States was triumphant. The Experience, the Who and Eric Burdon and his new more experimental Animals were the three British bands on the Monterey bill of nine. The first two, competing to put on the most startling performance for the day flipped a coin to decide order of playing. The Who went on first, and Pete Townshend smashed his guitar; not to be upstaged, Jimi – MC Brian Jones called him "The most exciting guitarist I've ever heard,"[44] – set *his* on fire. As Jimi evocatively recalled, "We had our beautiful rock-blues-country-funky freaky sound. I felt like we were turning the whole world on to this new thing, the best, most lovely new thing."[45]

Are You Experienced went to five in the US while the follow-up, *Axis: Bold As Love* was already being recorded and early in 1968 it also ascended to the high reaches of the charts in both countries (singles continued to sell better in the UK). The third album, the sprawling double *Electric Ladyland* incorporated additional musicians including Steve Winwood, Al Kooper and, Jack Casady from Jefferson Airplane. It outsold the Experience's first two, topping the US chart. Arguably the most notable inclusion was a non-original, Bob Dylan's 'All along the watchtower'.[a]

Hendrix had encountered the master songwriter during earlier days in Greenwich Village: he said, "I really dig him…" although, ever insecure, added, "He doesn't inspire me actually, because I could never write the kind of words he does."[46] For his part, on Jimi's creative interpretation of 'Watchtower' Dylan lavished compliments: "It overwhelmed me, really. He had such talent, he could find things inside a song and vigorously develop them. He found things that other people wouldn't think of finding in there. He probably improved upon it by the spaces he was using. I took licence with the song from his version, actually, and continue to do it to this day,"[47] and he mused, "Strange how when I sing it, I always feel it's a tribute to him in some kind of way."[48] By the time that Jimi was at the height of his career

[a] Among songs by other artists he occasionally included in his set Hendrix also played Dylan's 'Like a rolling stone'. Apart from the aforementioned 'Killing floor' he played classic tunes by blues musicians such as Elmore James and John Lee Hooker, and, Chuck Berry's 'Johnny B. Goode'. He even paid tribute to Cream with 'Sunshine of your love' and, to the Doors with 'Morrison's lament'. 'Sgt. Pepper' wasn't the only Beatles song either; he also gave 'Tomorrow never knows' his specialist treatment. And legendary were his extraordinary renditions of the US anthem 'The star-spangled banner' at Woodstock (and various other venues), and, 'God save the Queen' at the Isle of Wight festival.
(Information from setlist.fm: the setlist wiki, https://www.setlist.fm/stats/covers/jimi-hendrix-bd6ad56.html)

however, Bob had moved away from anything that could be described as psychedelic, or even electric, to the sparse, earthbound sounds of *John Wesley Harding*.

Tensions were growing though, between Hendrix and his bandmates, and his producer, and management. Noel Redding, who had not played on seven of the *Electric Ladyland* tracks departed. For the Woodstock festival Jimi put together an expanded, multi-racial lineup but another tension existed between him and his own African American community. He had been chagrined to hear such comments as, "he plays white rock for white people," but he earnestly stood by his lifelong belief: "there is no white rock or black rock."[49] For whatever reason, his next band reverted to being just a trio – wholly comprising black musicians. With his old army friend Billy Cox on bass and former Electric Flag drummer Buddy Miles (who'd replaced Mitch Mitchell on two *Electric Ladyland* tracks) the all-new Band of Gypsys issued a live album and a few more singles.

Tensions were also affecting Jimi internally. He was aware, not unlike the Beatles before they went off the road for good, that he had become a stereotype: in his case, a performer who was always expected to wear freaky hair and clothes, to act hyper-sexually, to play 'weird', loud and distorted music and to destroy guitars and amplifiers. As Lou Reed said, in a manner greatly more complimentary than his disparaging attitude toward the Beatles, "his music, to me…was entertaining, as was his stage act…but the thing was, he was such a bitchin' guitar player, that, that…was enough."[50]

At the same time Jimi's originally moderate consumption of alcohol and drugs accelerated. His performances were becoming unpredictable, and while he now preferred music composition and studio recording to live playing, even those endeavours resulted in no new releases.[a] On the eighteenth of September 1970, only a few days short of four years since his original exciting move to London, Jimi Hendrix died there aged twenty-seven. This was at the same age as his champion, Brian Jones whose body had been found, little more than a year before, at the bottom of his swimming pool – only weeks after being sacked by the Stones. And incredibly, less than a month after Jimi's came the death of Janis Joplin, also the same age. Jim Morrison then met precisely the same fate, halfway through the next year.[b]

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[a] In more recent years several album compilations of these have been issued, to varying response.

[b] And a fifth musician, Alan 'Blind Owl' Wilson of Canned Heat had died two weeks before Hendrix. All five of these musicians, and many others who predeceased them – Robert Johnson being a notable example – or, who went to 'rock'n'roll heaven' (or wherever) after them have become celebrated as dubious 'members' of the so-called '27 Club' of musicians whose premature deaths have come at that same too young age.

As the 1960s ended, history from the previous decade was repeating: Jimi, Jones, Janis and Jim were dead, and the Beatles, defunct. All else was not well either. Jimi's triumph, the Woodstock 'Aquarian exposition' of August 1969 – '3 Days of Peace & Music' – that had attracted an amazing 400,000 or more blissed-out enthusiasts had been remarkably trouble-free. Nevertheless, apart from inadequate food, sanitation and medical attention – inevitable for a festival of such unprecedented size – it was also fraught with drug overdoses, musicians wrangling for fees, torrential rain, concertgoers pushing down fences to gain free entry (resulting in the organisers incurring a huge debt) and, resentful nearby residents. Authorities declared the site a "disaster zone". One of the most potent images from the resulting documentary film came at the very end as the last audience members straggled away from the site revealing a vast vista of rubbish strewn across the quagmire that had been a once idyllic festival site. Nevertheless, applying an airbrush to all of this, Woodstock has gone down in history as one of the happier occasions of 1960s pop history.

Some four months later came another major concert. Organised by members and associates of two of the Woodstock bands, the Jefferson Airplane and the Grateful Dead (who were also on this bill) and with headliners the Rolling Stones the free one-day event was mounted in December at California's Altamont Speedway for an audience of 300,000. Providing security for the stage was the Hells Angels motorcycle club…their agreed fee was beer to the value of $500. As the day unfolded numerous incidents of random drunken violence impacted on audience members and musicians alike (consequently peace-loving co-organisers the Grateful Dead refused to play). During the Rolling Stones' twilight performance – on arrival Mick Jagger himself having been punched – a young man was violently ejected from the stage. He went to defend himself – with a revolver – and was stabbed to death by one of the 'guardian' Angels. Altamont was the tragic conclusion to the heady, extended 'Summer of Love' that had begun so innocently with the Monterey Pop Festival two and a half years before.

These doom-laden occurrences could, as earlier in the decade have resulted in a vacuum to be filled by opportunistic entrepreneurs foisting bland, contrived acts, or even whole new engineered trends upon a music-starved public. But the relative simplicity of the nascent times of rock'n'roll and pop was now well in the past. The music scene was stronger, business was bigger than ever before, and there was no shortage of real talent to take superseded artists' places. Manufactured acts like the Monkees, the 1910 Fruitgum Company and the Archies were just very small ripples amongst the creative musical currents that were still flowing strong.

18 | EX-BEATLES

In the Beatles' final year all members issued albums of their own[a] (three of them included eight sidelined songs written for the group before the breakup). Before the *Let It Be* album (and the accompanying film) finally saw the light of day in May a depressed Paul produced his solo home recording *McCartney* while conversely Ringo took the initiative with not one, but two big studio productions: *Sentimental Journey* and *Beaucoups Of Blues*. The former, with some assistance from Paul was a nostalgic collection of some of his mother's favourite songs, the latter, recorded in Nashville, inspired by his lifelong love of country music.

In November George's previously curtailed creativity poured out in the lush *triple* album *All Things Must Pass* (track one, 'I'll have you anytime' co-written with Bob Dylan) and a fortnight later, following February's top ten single 'Instant karma!' John's contrastingly skeletal – and angst-ridden – *John Lennon/Plastic Ono Band* was released. Ringo played on both John's and George's records, along with old Hamburg associates, American keyboard player Billy Preston,[b] and Klaus Voormann on bass (Klaus had also played with Manfred Mann and, multi-talented, had designed the *Revolver* cover; thirty years later he created the artwork for the Beatles' *Anthology* of archival recordings). Phil Spector had a producing hand in both, notably on George's for which the international 'Wall of Sound' incorporated an array of musicians including Eric Clapton.

All but two of these records made the British and American top tens and in other countries, (Ringo's *Sentimental Journey* got to seven at home, but *Beaucoups Of Blues* was not well-received anywhere). *McCartney* went to number one in the US and two in the UK, the single 'Another day' achieving similar results, and it was followed in 1971 by *Ram* that maintained those achievements. But John's next album *Imagine* hit the supreme position all around the world and his three singles – the album's title track (not released in the UK) and anthems 'Power to the people' and 'Happy Xmas (War is over)' – also did well. Finally, of the four ex-Beatles, George received his long-overdue reward when *All Things Must Pass* –

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[a] These didn't include five wildly atypical – of the Beatles – recordings that two of them undertook in the last few years leading up to the group's demise: John's avant-garde recordings with his wife Yoko Ono, *Unfinished Business No.1: Two Virgins*, *Unfinished Business No.2: Life With The Lions*, and *Wedding Album*; plus, George's soundtrack, mostly instrumental, for the film *Wonderwall* and his experimental *Electronic Sound* album. John had also had top ten success with his Plastic Ono Band's singles 'Give peace a chance' and 'Cold turkey'.

[b] The Beatles had got to know Billy in Hamburg when he was there playing there in Little Richard's visiting band.

and its spiritual single 'My sweet Lord'[a], 1971's best-seller in the UK – became acclaimed and long-lasting international chart-topping hits.

The four continued to record – and in three cases, compose – prolifically. Paul was the most successful in his determination to carry the Beatles' torch with generally uplifting, commercially oriented material and an enthusiastic performance schedule while John's and George's releases were more idiosyncratic, introspective and less expectant of chart ratings. After a few hit singles in the first half of the '70s mostly written and produced in collaboration with Harrison, Ringo continued throughout his life just to have fun making music – and acting, something initiated by a memorable cameo in the *A Hard Day's Night* film all those years before.

Different ex-Beatles got together at times but despite several lucrative offers the four never played or recorded again together. Following the hideous murder of John Lennon in 1980 the three remaining members were involved with the *Anthology* compilation, and an associated documentary. And, two new and reasonably successful 'Beatles' singles were concocted by Paul, George and Ringo (with production, sadly not by the increasingly hearing-impaired George Martin, but by the Electric Light Orchestra's Jeff Lynne) when they fleshed out two of John's rudimentary song ideas. Then – *Sir* – Paul and – not yet Sir – Ringo[b] participated in the moving 'Concert For George' after Harrison's untimely death to cancer in 2001. These surviving two have each continued to sporadically record, and perform to nostalgically ecstatic audiences since then.

The Beatles' final performances in America were a distant memory. In January 1969 all four, with Billy Preston, had briefly played through a minimal PA system to an unseen street 'audience' from the roof of the Apple building for the *Get Back/Let It Be* project. But apart from a few other separate appearances – John, Yoko, and others in the Rolling Stones' ramshackle *Rock And Roll Circus*[c] concert at the end of 1968 (made for BBC-TV but not shown) and his hastily assembled Plastic Ono Band at the Toronto Rock Revival Festival the following September; and George, and Eric Clapton, touring for a short time in December with Americans Delaney & Bonnie and Friends – by the time of their breakup, none of the ex-Beatles had performed live, on their own or together, for years.

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[a] The glory dimmed a little when 'My sweet Lord' was deemed in a court ruling to be a "subconscious plagiarism" of the Chiffons' 1963 hit 'She's so fine'.

[b] All four Beatles had been awarded MBEs in 1965; four years later John returned his for expressed political and other reasons; Paul was knighted in 1997; in 2000, not long before his death, George rejected an OBE; Ringo was knighted in 2018.

[c] *The Rolling Stones Rock And Roll Circus* was eventually released on DVD in 1996.

The group had begun back in the early 1960s playing small venues, then halls and finally, huge arenas, but in that time their Vox[a] guitar amplifiers grew in capacity from thirty watts to only a hundred. PA systems remained basically whatever was already installed for 'public address' purposes and while drums sometimes had a microphone placed somewhere in the vicinity no additional sound enhancement was provided for the small guitar amplifiers. When the Beatles played at the enormous Shea Stadium in 1965 the specially installed setup consisted of four 175 watt amplifiers feeding sound to speakers positioned around the ground; however, "…the noise coming from the crowd was 135 decibels – more than double the output coming from the Beatles' sound equipment." [51] 1967's Windsor Jazz and Blues Festival in England featured Cream, Fleetwood Mac, the Move, the Small Faces, Donovan and others (but not the advertised Pink Floyd) playing at the racecourse through an unprecedentedly powerful 1000 watt system. Despite this still being inadequate for the 40,000 present the sound engineer was arrested for "disturbing the peace"! Two years later at Woodstock the purpose-built amplification had increased ten-fold – but so had the audience.

Components of a band's sound tended to develop in isolation from others. Drum kits were designed pretty much the same as they'd always been, so even though a microphone may have been placed in front of a bass drum, or overhead, drummers just had to play louder (and consequently with less nuance) to be heard above amplifiers that steadily increased in power. PA systems were getting bigger, but lacking monitor speakers[b] vocalists couldn't hear themselves above the onstage din. And, with nothing other than vocals being controllable out front, and certainly not on-stage there was no way to balance sound in the way that this was achieved in recording studios.

Sound recording, though, was improving. As noted earlier, the Beatles' *Please Please Me* LP (and its follow-up *With The Beatles*) had been recorded to two tracks on quarter-inch tape (Phil Spector's early epics had used three tracks) but from 'I want to hold your hand' in 1963 the Abbey Road studio acquired four-track machines running one inch tape. Given that the Beatles and most other groups

[a] Vox was a British amplifier (and guitar) company that developed a fifteen watt amp used by groups like the Shadows. When the Beatles told them they needed more volume they doubled the output.

[b] Stage monitors, often known as 'foldback' are speakers that direct concert sound, or elements thereof back to the band, allowing them to clearly hear what otherwise is projecting from the front of the stage out to the audience. To start with this facility was provided simply by means of additional speakers turned toward the band; in the present day monitor sound is mixed independently and can provide each member with sound tailored to their precise requirements.

had four instruments anyway, and in their case, up to three-part harmonies this still left a shortfall so more than one sound needed to be recorded at the same time. Then to free up space for additions such as percussion, keyboards and other instruments, already recorded parts were combined, or 'bounced' on to single tracks. From 1965 eight-track recording was possible – in the States, for *Pet Sounds* and Motown sessions – but *not* in the UK for *Sgt. Pepper* (though the technology finally arrived at Abbey Road for the 'White Album'). In 1969 availability of channels doubled to sixteen, then next decade doubled again, and again, until from the 1990s digital recording to computer allowed an unlimited number of tracks to be recorded simultaneously, or layered from other sessions.

Following George Harrison's debut solo recording success he was inspired by his sitar master Ravi Shankar to stage two concerts at New York's Madison Square Gardens in August 1971 to raise money and awareness for civil war refugees who'd fled genocide in East Pakistan which was claiming independence as Bangla Desh.[a] Preceded by the Phil Spector-produced single with the country's name as its title, the gesture was enormously successful and a film and live album (again, a triple) further contributed to proceeds. Similarly to *All Things Must Pass*, in less than a week George assembled and rehearsed a thirty-strong ensemble including Ringo Starr and many others from the previous recordings – plus special guest Bob Dylan. John Lennon didn't play because Yoko wasn't invited; Paul McCartney was still disgruntled about the financial implications of the Beatles' dissolution. With only three hours for setup the stage was described as "a roadie's nightmare of instruments, mikes, amps and speakers,"[52] and despite the fact that George had two large monitors angled toward him there appeared to be little for anyone else. The sound and vision was indeed stirring, if predictably a little shambolic.

It took some years for engineers to coordinate all the elements needed for optimum sound both out front and on-stage. Many artists, mistrustful of what venues had to offer were carrying their own PA systems, such as the Grateful Dead's record-breaking 20,000 watt rig. By the end of 1973 Paul McCartney, now with his group Wings (that included his wife Linda) was back in the very top ranks of recording artists, scoring chart-topping albums and hit singles. In contrast with the rarely-appearing John, Paul was as enthusiastic as ever about playing live. Two years later he took the band on their third tour,[b] the year-long 'Wings Over

[a] More recently spelt as one word, Bangladesh.

[b] Not including their 1972 'tryout' tour where they dropped in essentially unannounced to British universities.

The World' (the set list included, just for old times' sake, five Beatles songs and, 'Go now', sung by guitarist, and ex-Moody Blue Denny Laine).

As the concert film[a] revealed, production values – lighting and other effects such as (all-enveloping!) smoke machines, costuming, cameo lead vocal and solo instrumental spots for each member, utilisation of a variety of musical instruments with incorporation of, for some songs, a well-disciplined horn section – had progressed considerably in the four years since George Harrison's worthy but far from slick extravaganza.

The greatest improvement was in sound clarity. The music was loud and pumping but Wings' ecstatic audience could hear everything perfectly. Most importantly, unlike during the Beatles' concerts, so could the band.

[a] Finally released by Miramax Films as *Rockshow* in 1980.

19 | NEXT BEATLES?

Paul and Wings were not the only '60s artists to benefit from the ever-improving technology. More popular than ever were the Rolling Stones, The Who, Pink Floyd, Led Zeppelin, David Bowie and Elton John (the last two, but not *only* the last two, riding high on the wave of extravagantly outfitted 'glam rock') while others were taking advantage of the worldwide popular music boom. Revamping the minority appeal blues band for pop audiences were the men – and women – of the now trans-Atlantic Fleetwood Mac. Newer groups included Queen from the UK who enhanced pop with operatic flourish and the Eagles who transformed American country rock into a polished art form. All of these recorded and performed using cutting edge facilities.

Away from the big stages, DJs spinning discs of African American-style music in the nightclubs energised stylishly dressed dancers with pulsating 'disco' beats and dazzling light shows. In an indication of the increasing globalisation of popular music, two men and two women from Sweden who had won the Eurovision Song Contest used their first names to form the acronym ABBA. They became immensely popular, predictably more so in Europe, but also in the UK, Canada and Australia (though not to the same extent in the US). And on an as yet much smaller scale, Jamaican ska music was morphing into what would become known as 'reggae' with its own associated lifestyles and spirituality. Reggae's uniquely angular rhythms would add new vibrancy to mainstream pop.

Against every trend there is a reaction. Stripping pop back to basics – again – in the mid-'70s were, inspired by such as Iggy Pop, so-called American 'punk rockers', the Ramones, and then the Sex Pistols who promoted 'Anarchy in the UK'.[a] Also from London, the Clash incorporated many sparse Jamaican rhythms into their often stridently political music. Punk's elemental structure was then intelligently embellished by 'new wave' artists like Elvis Costello and Talking Heads, while later the three peroxided members of Police created what some derisively referred to as 'white reggae'. The Knack, with appearance not unlike the 'British invasion' groups were touted as the 'new Beatles'; they produced just one hit single. 'New wave' morphed into the 'New Romantic' movement, with a return of flamboyance not seen since the days of mods, hippies and glam rockers. Most

[a] 'Anarchy in the UK', the Sex Pistols (Paul Cook, Steve Jones, John Lydon, Glen Matlock) EMI, 1976

flamboyant of all, even more so than Little Richard, was the overtly androgynous George O'Dowd – forever to be known as Boy George – out front of the coolly funky Culture Club.

Meanwhile, of the 'old guard', 1977 brought the deaths of Bing Crosby (at seventy-four) and, the thirty-two years younger Elvis Presley (of a heart attack no doubt brought on by excessive consumption of prescription drugs). They were followed three years later by John Lennon (and another year after that by Bill Haley).

In everyday life, music that had originally been purchasable on easily damaged shellac, then vinyl discs became more accessible during the '70s. Cassettes, small reel-to-reel tapes encased in plastic boxes (and their larger, but ultimately less popular cousins, eight-track cartridges[a]) enabled enthusiasts to listen to music in their cars and in portable players, and, to avoid buying records altogether by taping other people's. Then in the 1980s these convenient, though infuriating inventions – individual tracks couldn't be selected, and the thin, narrow tape often unravelled, twisted, stretched or snapped – and indeed, records themselves were replaced by the miracle of 'compact discs'.[b] Much smaller in size than records, CDs, were – reputedly – indestructible, had pristine[c] sound and allowed a full album to be heard from start to finish. Similarly, in the continuing search for perfect audio FM[d] radio that allowed music to be broadcast in stereo with "no static at all"[e] provided a non-stop soundtrack to people's lives. And those who wanted not only to listen, but *watch* as well could do so twenty-four hours a day on 'music television', or *MTV* that was accessible via subscription cable service.

Pop music was enveloping the world, and the ultimate example of this came halfway through the 1980s. Seeking funds for Ethiopian famine relief, more than forty well-known British singers and musicians under the name 'Band-Aid' recorded 'Do they know it's Christmas?' and this was matched by a similar collaboration of artists across the Atlantic dubbed 'USA for Africa' with their 'We are the world'. Then George Harrison's earlier idea of a multi-artist benefit concert was taken to the greatest possible extreme. On a Saturday in July 1985, simultaneous hugely attended 'Live Aid' concerts incorporating more than fifty acts ran throughout

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[a] Rather than using 'reel to reel' technology, cartridges had a single reel around which an endless loop of tape moved.

[b] Technically, digital optical disc data storage. (*Wikipedia*)

[c] Now disputed by lovers of the 'warm' analogue sound stored on vinyl microgroove records, even though these still had a propensity for becoming warped or scratched – and were mastered with reduced bass response to prevent stylii from jumping out of grooves!

[d] 'Frequency modulation', as opposed to inferior, monoaural AM – or 'amplitude modulation' – radio.

[e] A claim made in the song 'FM (No static at all)' recorded by Steely Dan as the theme to the 1978 film *FM*.

the day in both those countries – and many others. Reminiscent of the Beatles' participation in the *Our World* global TV broadcast, concert footage was beamed to a multitude of viewers around the world by satellite. Phone-in donations unimaginably raised around 150 million British pounds, or 185 million US dollars. With similar benefit events for a variety of causes over the years and the proliferation of other festivals right up to the present day the festive spirit of Woodstock has endured. Enormous audiences have also filled stadiums in ever-greater numbers just for *single* attractions such as Bruce Springsteen – well and truly 'Born in the USA' – with his E Street Band, and, Irish group U2. In contrast with the Beatles' twenty minute concert spots, but more reminiscent of their Hamburg marathons, 'The Boss' Springsteen is often on stage for upwards of four hours!

The Beatles' belief in being autonomous, creative artists had, in the early 1960s been novel – and inspirational. It was now well and truly the norm: all of the post-1960s bands previously mentioned wrote their own material, and played it live and recorded it in the studio; 'hitmaking' songwriting teams, though still viable were rarely needed for the new star bands – nor many solo artists.

The Motown team of writers had been important for the rise of the young Jackson 5 but when, as 'the Jacksons' they decided to switch to the Epic label members of the family independently blossomed. Pre-eminent was Michael, the third-youngest of the eight siblings. He was inspired by other brilliant, and indeed extroverted African Americans including Little Richard and James Brown, and that other earlier child prodigy Stevie Wonder who, still with Motown, was now enjoying the pinnacle of his creativity. By the end of the 1970s Michael was phasing himself out of the family group to establish a solo singing and writing career. From that point until his sudden death in 2008 in the US he had twenty-six top ten hit singles, twelve of them number ones, and thirty-eight (including seven number ones) in the UK. Most were written – and arranged – by Jackson and they included two duets – one, a co-write – with Paul McCartney. Of the relatively small number of albums – six – all but one also topped the chart.

Michael Jackson was the world's greatest star of the 1980s – one of the greatest ever – with fans from 'teenyboppers' to adults and earning his own 'royal' title, 'King of Pop'. In doing so he was part of a break away from the dominance of rock groups and a return to the glory days of the solo artist, albeit one who now had a great deal more control over career, image, output and production.

Travelling parallel with him through this time was another prodigiously talented African American musician, Prince Rogers Nelson – known forever only by his

first name.[a] The two had many similarities: both were influenced by the same musicians, and wrote, arranged, sang and, in their *MTV* film clips and live shows, danced – although Prince, like Stevie Wonder, was also a virtuoso musician. He played *all* twenty-three instruments on his debut album in 1979 but worked with tight-knit backup groups on stage. In many ways Prince was, in a similar situation to the Rolling Stones and the Beatles, yin to Jackson's yang, appealing to an older audience with lyrics and stage act that were highly sexualised compared with moonwalking Michael's dancing hoodlums of 'Beat it' and comic book vampires of 'Thriller'. Prince had, from ten high-ranking albums in the US, three that made the top – and two more than this in the UK, and of eighteen top ten singles, five number ones (but only one in the UK). In 2016, just eight years after Michael Jackson, Prince also died prematurely; similar to the death of Elvis Presley, both fatalities were caused by combinations and overdoses of prescription drugs.

One female superstar shared an attribute with each of Prince and Michael Jackson. Like the former, Madonna Ciccone became known only by her real first name; corresponding with the latter she was hailed as 'Queen of Pop'. Uniquely, every one of Madonna's fourteen albums and countless singles between 1983 have registered in the US and UK top tens, most of them making the number one position, an achievement replicated in charts around the world – she is recognised as being the biggest-selling female artist of all time. Again, not just a singer, she has also collaboratively written and produced most of her material and plays several instruments, dances, and is an author, and Golden Globe award-winning actress.

These three multi-talented stars created a challenging standard for others to aspire to. In the past it had been sufficiently enthralling to witness a solo singer performing on stage backed by a big band, orchestra, or later, a blues, rock or pop group and perhaps some backup vocalists. The voice and personality of the artist, perhaps a few nifty moves, even a little dancing combined with the all-enveloping sound of the instruments – brass, reeds and strings, guitars, keys and drums plus backup vocals – along with some effective lighting and later, improved amplification were sufficient to constitute an entertaining event. As already detailed though, the developments, probably beginning from the psychedelic rock era, in sound and visual production married with costuming, sets, backdrops including huge projection screens, computer-controlled lighting, special effects and spectacular

[a] Almost forever…from 1993 till 2000, because of a dispute with his recording company Warner Brothers he changed his name to an unpronounceable 'love symbol' ☥. During this time he was often, more cumbersomely but with greater ease of pronunciation, referred to as 'The artist formerly known as Prince'.

synchronised ensemble dancing to rival an old-time vaudeville show or Broadway musical have taken live pop music to its ultimate level. The last forty years have seen a non-stop cavalcade of solo artists – and 'girl groups' and, so-called 'boy bands' (usually also all-vocal), as well as pop, rock, country and other lineups – all attempting to utilise and, if possible, expand the 'show' template.

With cutting edge facilities such as cordless microphones, leadless guitars, special effects pedals, electronic drums and drum machines, digitally sampled sounds, MIDI[a], pre-recorded and sequenced backing tracks and even instantaneous pitch correction of faulty live vocals it is sometimes difficult to separate the actual core of the music from the numerous added layers. Intriguingly though, two of the biggest artists in the world in this latter part of the 2010s are British singers Ed Sheeran and Adele whose presentation owes less to hi-tech extravaganza than to the direct communication of soul artists and singer-songwriters of the past.

In the last decades of the twentieth century musicians of two quite distinct racial groups attempted to return to something more elemental, often in reaction to pop and rock that was seen as overblown, soulless and manipulated by moguls. Young African Americans, like their ancestors of the blues, their doo-wopping grandparents and their soul-singing parents took music back to their roots but with a very different sound. Progressively adapting features – music emphasising steady beat and pulsing bass – that could be traced back to 1970s discos, 'hip hop' also incorporated an 'MC'[b] who declaimed, or 'rapped' clever, lightning-fast, rhymed spoken word while the 'DJ'[c] became more creative than the disco counterpart of old, merging different soundtracks from pairs of records, altering tempos on the fly to fit steady four-beat patterns, creating percussive effects – 'scratching' – by manually moving the stylus backward and forward round the grooves and, for recordings, sampling[d] snatches of melody. Yet again African Americans had created, and continued to own (despite, as always, imitators around the world) a completely new – if more rhythmic than melodic – but certainly,

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[a] MIDI: Musical Instrument Digital Interface is a cutting-edge method of co-ordinating, combining, controlling and communicating digitally generated sounds for live and studio application.

[b] MC: Traditionally (over many centuries) and in a formal manner, a 'master of ceremonies'. 'Hip hop' MCs have little in common with this concept and more with the 'Beat' poets of the 1950s.

[c] DJ: Also traditionally, at least as far back as the 1950s, a 'disc jockey' or 'deejay', originally, a radio announcer who played music from records, then someone who did the same in clubs, and finally in a more creative way, as part of the 'hip hop' and dance party scene.

[d] Sampling means recording a sequence of melody, sung lyrics or other sounds to be incorporated into a different context, combined with other beats and music; when presented as a whole 'new' composition on a recording, copyright infringement has often been prosecuted.TED.

lyrical style. Like reggae, hip hop would endure in its own right, often making powerful, even inflammatory social and political statements.

Amongst predominantly white musicians, from the late 1980s, Californian US guitar band Green Day had kept the spirit of rudimentary '60s music and punk alive. Then early in the following decade bands with similar lineups from around Seattle such as Nirvana,[a] Pearl Jam and Soundgarden came up with a heavier, angst-ridden version that came to be known as 'grunge'. The style kept diversifying into other forms; but its proponent Kurt Cobain, Nirvana's singer-songwriter and guitarist suicided in 1994: another young musician had joined the '27 Club'.

Back in the UK 'Britpop' guitar bands like Blur and Oasis endeavoured to present something a little more upbeat than the fare of their US counterparts, their sound often evoking the halcyon Beatles era. Although, like grunge, Britpop as a style endured for less than the '90s decade, other later British bands such as Radiohead and then Coldplay maintained the validity of a group of musicians simply creating and playing for listening pleasure.

But were any of these 'new Beatles' – or even, new *something else* – or is that phenomenon still in the future?

[a] As already noted, *not* the British duo of the late 1960s.

20 | THE NEVER-ENDING END

The mists of time may obscure memory but it seems as if the 1950s and '60s, at least in music, had been relatively simple, even, innocent. In the US, UK and other Western countries a real generation gap had separated those who'd endured the war years, and their offspring, so each group enjoyed their own music, and virtually never the twain did meet. This is not to suggest that there were only *two* types of music, but generally, minority genres such as African American blues or hillbilly folk were rarely heard by mainstream music enthusiasts of any age – until the songs were appropriated and adapted for the broader listening public, or, the artists – if of an acceptable nature – were 'discovered' by industry movers and shakers. Elvis Presley and his cohort broke through by appealing to the new generation of postwar teenagers who were cashed up and hungry for change. Then the Beatles did the same in impoverished, war-ravaged Britain. They proceeded to bring blissful optimism to a 'Cold War' world that feared nuclear apocalypse and opposed involvement in the Vietnam conflict, was riven by racial tension and horrified by the assassinations of young US President John Kennedy, and later, his brother Robert, and civil rights campaigner the Rev. Martin Luther King. Each of the many steps the Beatles took during their decade-long journey right through the 'Summer of Love' till the end brought joy to the world. Other musicians travelled with them – perhaps using alternative modes of transport – but all were excited to advance popular music into uncharted territory.

In the start the Beatles, under the different names they were using were indistinguishable from the many other British groups that were transitioning from skiffle to rock'n'roll. The three core musicians had passion, but because of shifting membership, especially, lack of a permanent, or indeed often *any* drummer, the group was initially decidedly *inferior*. It wasn't until returning from later engagements in Germany that the finally settled and proficient lineup with Paul now on bass and Pete Best's pounding drums, and their ferocious, yet disciplined performances allowed them to move ahead of the other Liverpool groups. Their Hamburg stints didn't just toughen them up; the requirement for long hours of playing, and the demand by patrons for all manner of songs forced them to draw, not only on their repertoire of American rock'n'roll, rhythm and blues and pop but on ballads and Broadway soundtracks as well as old songs that had been much-beloved of their families. This eclecticism proved to be a valuable asset, not only then, but in their future.

Of course, it wasn't long before most of this material by other artists and writers became of secondary importance. As early as 1956, a year before joining the Quarry Men Paul McCartney had written his first composition, 'I lost my little girl' (the Beatles, with John singing, experimented with it during the *Get Back*/*Let It Be* sessions more than a decade later) and another evolved into 'When I'm sixty-four' for *Sgt. Pepper*. 'I'll follow the sun' was written by Paul in 1958 and reappeared on *Beatles For Sale*. John's first, in 1957 was 'Hello little girl' that was then used for their Decca audition, and later recorded by the Fourmost; around the same time he wrote 'One after 909' that finally made the cut more than a decade later for *Let It Be*. As already detailed, in the 1960s the Lennon-McCartney songwriting floodgates then really opened.

Of the chemistry between the two, John somewhat simplistically – in fact, not absolutely correctly – recalled that Paul "…provided a lightness, an optimism, while I would always go for the sadness, the discords, the bluesy notes." [53] Producer George Martin mischievously exploded Lennon's theory: "'Julia', which is incredibly tender and quite beautiful…who wrote it, Paul or John? You have to say Paul. And then…'Helter skelter', who wrote that? It must be John." [54a] Throughout their career, John'sand Paul's compositions, and those of George (Ringo wrote two and had a hand in a few others) constituted most of the Beatles' output and many were taken up by a wide range of other artists – even as early as when by "…mid-1966, an astounding eighty-eight Lennon-McCartney songs had been recorded in over 2,900 versions." [55] With more than two hundred compositions by the end of the Beatles era, Lennon and McCartney are regarded as not only the most successful songwriters of the 1960s but, extraordinarily, *of the century-plus from 1890 till 2008*. [56b]

It wasn't only the sheer quantity of original songs that differentiated the Beatles from their peers, it was the quality, and the variety. George Martin hadn't at first been so sure: "As composers, they didn't rate. They hadn't shown me that they could write anything at all. 'Love me do' I thought was pretty poor, but it was the best we could do…" [57] But he very soon recognised, "There seemed to be a bottomless well of songs…They had good musical brains…Wherever the genius came from, the Beatles could certainly write great tunes." [58] And, of the Lennon-McCartney nexus: "…they were blood-brothers…blood-brothers in music." [59]

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[a] Of course, the opposite was the case.

[b] The statistic includes songs written separately by Lennon and McCartney after the Beatles' breakup.

Their early singles, EPs and the first two LPs, *Please Please Me* and *With The Beatles* were worthy, and extremely successful pop-rock entrées to the early 1960s music scene, introducing the very different-sounding Liverpudlian voices – especially John Lennon's world-weary stylings – and chiming harmonies supported by solid playing. The original tunes that constituted eight of each set of fourteen album tracks varied from what Paul McCartney readily confessed were 'work songs'[a] through compositions influenced by some of their favourite African American musicians, to others where 'music experts' bemused the untutored Beatles by identifying complex chord changes – even, an 'Aeolian cadence'.[b] Arguably the stand-out original track from both LPs was the McCartney-dominated 'All my loving': melodic, but its excitement being built by Lennon's fast rhythm guitar triplets and George Harrison's economical country-influenced solo.

The Beatles came of age with *A Hard Day's Night*, the all-original songs of which have a mature quality that belies the Beatlemania that the group was fuelling – or perhaps slyly satirising – in the on-screen hi-jinks. The much-debated opening chord announced the thoroughly assured up-tempo material and especially the beautiful ballads: the McCartney-instigated 'And I love her' and 'Things we said today', and John's 'If I fell', (closely harmonised with Paul and "the most chord-intensive the Beatles had so far recorded, its changes moving with nearly every note of the tune."[60]) *A Hard Day's Night* demonstrated that, in early 1964 the Beatles had progressed to being in a class of their own.

Beatles For Sale – the title indicated how the group must have felt about their increasing commodification – was recorded whenever possible during their hectic appearance schedule and reverted to the original:non-original ratio of the first two LPs. The sessions also yielded the non-album track single 'I feel fine' and, with Paul in bluesy voice, 'She's a woman'; both songs further advanced the Beatles' experimental progress. From the LP, the ringing 'Eight days a week' – with unique fade-*in* – was not released as a single in the UK but topped the US chart. Despite the smaller number of new songs and the downbeat nature of several of the lyrics *Beatles For Sale* still contained quality material.

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[a] 'Work songs' or 'fillers', ie.songs that they regarded as not first-class but still worth including, perhaps at that early stage, in lieu of anything better.

[b] William Mann, *The Times* music critic writing about 'Not a second time', 27 December 1963.
Of 'Aeolian cadences' John said, "To this day, I don't have any idea what they are. They sound like exotic birds." (To David Sheff, *Playboy* magazine, January 1981)

The often critically panned *Help!* film – "…a fiasco of farcical whimsies…a clutter of mechanical gimmicks and madcap chases"[61] as one reviewer described it – nevertheless conjured up a sunny mood that disguised the introspective lyrics of several songs. Of the twelve originals (seven from the film soundtrack plus five others), George Harrison's two demonstrated his own developing artistry. Some of the most distinctive features of the album were the adventurously lush, often overlapping three-part vocal parts. The overall texture was more varied than previously: of, for example, 'Ticket to ride' with its crashing, staggering drumming John has claimed, "That was one of the earliest heavy metal records made." [62]

The availability for the first time of four-track recording allowed incorporation of different sounds such as Hohner pianet and grand piano, flute, bongo drums and other percussion as well as different Beatles overdubbing more of their own, and sometimes *others'* primary instruments – Paul, for example, often played rhythm and lead six-string guitar, piano and for later albums, even drums. Of course the most surprising track of all used just one acoustic guitar, and one voice – plus a string quartet. Indicative that the previously collaborative songwriting was now becoming more independently generated, Paul McCartney's signature tune 'Yesterday' came to him early one morning, as the story goes, so fully-formed that he feared that he had unconsciously plagiarised the melody. 'Yesterday' has been recorded by more than *two-thousand* other artists including Frank Sinatra, Elvis Presley and Bob Dylan.

Immediately after recording *Help!* in June 1965 (the film having been completed earlier) the Beatles played fifteen European dates, and then, after the release of both in August, a similar number in the US including at the Hollywood Bowl and New York's Shea Stadium. As already detailed, they were tiring of the travelling show and the following year's tour would be their last, this decision also precipitated by such factors as deafeningly screaming audiences and dangerous crowds, death threats in Japan, virtual eviction from the Philippines and the American backlash against John's "more popular than Jesus" comment.

The studio was where they wanted to be. It was here, with the highly-qualified 'fifth Beatle' George Martin that not just the quality, but the *variety* that distinguished their output from late 1965 onwards ensured that they would continue to forge ahead of the pop music game. At least four things contributed to this: firstly, the breadth of family musical backgrounds and the early interests of the four young Beatles, and the mining of these when playing those long hours in Hamburg; secondly, their indulgent record company and studio that ultimately allowed them

virtually unlimited recording time with their empathetic, supportive yet disciplined producer and engineers; thirdly, Lennon's and McCartney's increasingly independent methods of songwriting, with George Harrison also becoming a strong contributor; and fourthly, the external mind-expanding effects of global awareness from their world travels and internally, of marijuana and then LSD.

Rubber Soul (and the non-album double-sided single 'Day tripper'/'We can work it out') was all-original as would be the case from then on. Completed in a month it has been aptly described as a "synthesis of folk, rock, soul, baroque, proto-psychedelia, and the sitar," [63] but it again contained incisive relationship lyrics from all three writers, ballads and, a country song tailor-made for Ringo. Their first fully cohesive album – "where the Beatles became the Beatles…the album where the moptops grew up" [64] laid the way for *Revolver*.

Revolver (with 'Paperback writer'/'Rain') was recorded over nearly three months from early 1966 and released in August. Amid the prevailing psychedelic atmosphere predominantly created by inventive studio effects, its variety included the string-laden epitaph 'Eleanor Rigby', the Indian-influenced 'I'm only sleeping' and the whimsical 'Yellow submarine'. As already substantially detailed in earlier chapters, *Revolver* was "fundamentally unlike any rock album that had preceded it," [65] and American musicians were in awe of the Beatles' and their studio team's efforts that had been achieved with relatively limited facilities: "What they did, everything they did, became state of the art." [66]

Then the even more psychedelic *Sgt. Pepper* along with 'Penny Lane' and 'Strawberry Fields forever' – six months in the studio, but still only using four-track recording – nostalgically revisited old-time entertainment of the music hall and circus, went deeper into George's fascination with Indian music and stunningly explored an unconventional use for a full orchestra, not to mention numerous other experimental effects. The Beatles' recordings that followed continued to utilise a seemingly unlimited palette of ideas, influences and sounds (although, curiously, on *Abbey Road* the Beatles were not the first to use the new Moog synthesiser).[a]

Other artists around the world were also giving vent to their creativity; the Beatles were now just part of the rich tapestry that they had begun to weave half a decade before. Pop and rock'n'roll music that had previously conformed to a

[a] The Moog synthesiser whose keyboard activates electronically generated sounds (unlike the Mellotron that reproduced existing 'real' sounds) came into its own after being demonstrated at the Monterey Pop Festival and began to be included on recordings – played by expert practitioners – from 1967 by artists as disparate as the Doors, the Monkees, the Byrds and Simon and Garfunkel. George Harrison first experimented with one for his solo *Electronic Sound* album in late 1968 and the Beatles, on *Abbey Road* the following year.

neat industry formula of two or three minutes or so of melodic verses and choruses, intros and outros, vocal harmonies and instrumental solos all sung and played in pleasing ways would never be the same again.

The hypothetical question, "Who would still have become superstars if the Beatles had *never* existed?" has already, perhaps controversially, been answered in this book. At the end of Part II my contention was that, of those who established careers during the 1960s it is still likely that only the Rolling Stones and Bob Dylan would have developed enough musicianship, originality, distinctive image and desire to rise to the very top and stay there for their entire lifetimes. Sadly, the startlingly creative and charismatic Jimi Hendrix, and perhaps also the enigmatic, but magnetic Jim Morrison (and the Doors) were unable to fully realise their potential. African Americans, their profile boosted by the success of the Supremes and other soul artists continued to achieve ever-greater things as the decades progressed and the '70s saw the arrival of their biggest and most distinctive stars so far, Michael Jackson and Prince. Obviously some groups like the Kinks would still have made quality music with differing amounts of success while others like the Who and Pink Floyd and solo artists Elton John and David Bowie very quickly established their own powerful identities. And of course if the Beatles *had* never existed, musicians like Frank Zappa and Lou Reed would have just kept on doing whatever they chose to do.

The real question though, "Since 1970, have new Beatles arisen from the ranks?" is much more complex. In a career that effectively only spanned the years 1962 to 1970 they produced eleven full-length albums[a] and somewhat more than twenty singles. By comparison, the longer-lasting Rolling Stones have released thirty albums and one hundred and twenty singles and Dylan, thirty-eight studio albums and more than ninety singles, (these numbers are now not unusual though, even for artists with more recently commenced careers). Even so, the Beatles are still acknowledged as the biggest-selling musical act *of all time*. Elvis Presley generally comes in second, but after that, placings are taken up by a fluctuating

[a] These eleven are the officially released UK albums that resulted from the Beatles' planned recording schedule. They include the double 'White Album' but do *not* include *Magical Mystery Tour* (which was originally released on a double EP in the UK) or *Yellow Submarine* that only included five new group songs (the title track having already appeared on *Revolver*). They also don't include the albums released in the US and elsewhere, often with different names and track listings. The numerous compilations are not included either, but suffice to say that they would account for significant sales as would re-releases in different formats (cassette, CD, download) and 'improved' versions (remasters, remixes). It is pointless trying to account for all the singles released in other countries, on various different labels, and comprising album tracks, or 'rarities' such as the Hamburg Beatles tracks, or even the German versions of 'She loves you' and 'I want to hold you hand'.

range of both pop, rock, r&b and now even country artists, old and new, many identified in the previous chapter and earlier in this book. While most can still only claim around *half* as many sales as the Beatles, they have all undoubtedly enjoyed enormous success, some quite recently, some within only one or two decades, some over a much longer time.

Today's contemporary music has become increasingly less compartmentalised and labels like 'blues', 'folk', 'jazz', 'country', 'pop' or 'rock' can no longer be easily applied. These genres, infused with recent influences such as reggae, hip hop and others from around the world continually now mix, morph and mutate in an enormous global melting pot. A hit can be created with acoustic, or electronic instruments, by male or female artists, of different races and from different countries – but more than likely, from combinations of any or all of these. By the wonders of multi-track recording and computer file transfer, different musicians and sound sources don't even have to be together in any one place, at any one time to contribute their components. And now, controversially, compositions can even just be assembled by the computers themselves. Contemporary music may no longer sound distinctively 'new', but its ingenious permutations and imaginative production methods continue to excite.

Expensive studios catering only for those fortunate enough to be awarded a contract are no longer a necessity. High quality recording, and even production of film clips can be achieved at home, or, anywhere, with accessible, yet increasingly sophisticated equipment such as laptop computers, or even basic mobile phones equipped with surprisingly good quality microphones and high-definition movie cameras. Exposure of creative output has been made possible in ways inconceivable in the past: innumerable film clips and live footage can be viewed on internet sites such as YouTube or disseminated via Facebook, Instagram and other social media. Whether artists are famous, or totally unknown, they can be on a level playing field for promotion, and success depends as much on luck as talent – though usually still a combination of both. The continuing global enthusiasm for ever-more lavish TV talent quests exposes new, supremely talented singers and musicians who, nurtured at every stage from birth (the 'generation gap' is now essentially non-existent) are daily becoming stars.

Music no longer needs to reside on discs (although in recent times the 'warm' analogue sound of vinyl records *has* made a comeback) but invisibly exists as digital files. It can be downloaded from the enormous virtual library available on the internet for a small fee or streamed from subscription sites like Spotify, and all are

readily accessible via portable and wireless personal devices. The ability for people to be constantly entertained are supplemented more traditionally by such as non-stop piped music in shopping centres and the use of popular songs (of all eras) for advertising, and television and film soundtracks. The world is saturated with pop music – or as Australian music writer Michael Dwyer astutely observes, "…music doesn't so much evolve as eternally accumulate,"[67] – and therein lies the problem with answering that second question.

By virtue of their circumstances the Beatles and those earlier stars of the more 'innocent' pre- and immediately postwar years pioneered music and gained and maintained prominence almost uncontested, albeit in the company of a relatively small number of their peers.

But from the 1970s onward every aspect of the pop industry has expanded exponentially and artists, of broad diversity and in much greater numbers have clamoured for their – as Andy Warhol wryly encapsulated it – "fifteen minutes of fame"[a] (although half a century later this now may only be fifteen seconds!) Creative, talented, alluring, hugely popular. Pop stars…superstars…even, mega-stars.[b] All jostling for limited space on an enormous stage.

'New Beatles'? The Beatles were uniquely of their time. American writer Jeff Somers compares the Beatles phenomenon with the impact that the classic 1941 Orson Welles film *Citizen Kane*, regarded by many as the greatest of all time, had on film-making: "…removed from the context of the pop music scene of the 1960s, it's difficult to appreciate their incredible impact. The Fab Four innovated, invented, and refined songwriting, recording, and performance techniques that revolutionised music so much that the effect became invisible, infiltrating the landscape of the pop music scene across the five decades that followed."[68]

The Beatles occupied the 1960s…then they departed…but they and their legacy will endure forever. Until a new cultural paradigm emerges from some unimaginable global upheaval[c] there will continue to be an abundance of wonderful music created by myriad brilliant artists.

But there will be no 'new Beatles'.

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[a] "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." (Quote ascribed to Warhol in his 1968 exhibition catalogue for Moderna Museet – Modern Art Museum – Sweden)

[b] 'Superstar' was reputedly coined, to describe a sportsman, as early as the 1920s. (*Wikipedia*) However, the Beatles could only have been regarded as *megastars* in the dying years of their career as the word was not formally acknowledged until 1969: megastar, n. Even bigger than a superstar. (*Oxford English Dictionary*)

[c] Who knows? Perhaps the coronavirus pandemic? Musicians, even when confined to home, will continue to create.

One of the Beatles' fellow travellers is still
a performing superstar after almost sixty years.
He has seen them, and many others come and go.
Let him have the last word…

"*The Beatles were so big*
that it's hard for people not alive at the time
to realise just how big they were.
There isn't a real comparison with anyone now…
They were so big
that to be competitive with them was impossible…
They were huge." [69]

Mick Jagger

APPENDIX
Statistics from April 1963 – December 1970

(Artists mentioned in this book only)

	No.1 SINGLES		Weeks at No.1	
	UK	US	UK	US
The Beatles	**17**	**21**	**69**	**59**
The Rolling Stones	8	5	18	13
The Supremes	1	12	2	22
The Beach Boys	2	3	3	5
The Monkees	1	3	4	12
Simon and Garfunkel	1	3	3	11
Elvis Presley	3	1	9	1
Manfred Mann	3	1	7	2
The 4 Seasons	0	4	0	15
The Jackson 5	0	4	0	10

	No.1 ALBUMS		Weeks at No.1	
	UK	US	UK	US
The Beatles	**11**	**14**	**168**	**118**
Bob Dylan	6	0	22	0
The Rolling Stones	5	1	33	3
The Monkees	2	4	9	37
Herb Alpert's Tijuana Brass	0	5	0	26
Simon and Garfunkel	2	3	31	26
(Diana Ross and) the Supremes*	2	3	7	8

**incl.one with the Temptations*

Other SINGLES statistics:

Three no.1s in the UK: Gerry and the Pacemakers, the Searchers, Sandie Shaw, the Kinks, Georgie Fame, Cliff Richard (one with the Shadows)

Three no.1s in the US: Bobby Vinton, the Jackson 5

Two no.1s in the UK and US: Frank Sinatra, Nancy Sinatra, (one a duet)

Two no.1s in the UK, one no.1 in the US: Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison

Two no.1s in the US, one no.1 in the UK: Herman's Hermits, Petula Clark, the Four Tops, the Byrds

Two no.1s in the UK: Billy J. Kramer, Cilla Black, the Spencer Davis Group, the Moody Blues, the Bee Gees, the Seekers, Tom Jones, Engelbert Humperdinck, the Walker Brothers

Two no.1s in the US: The Temptations, the Doors, the (Young) Rascals

One no.1 in the UK and US: The Dave Clark Five, Peter and Gordon, the Animals, the Troggs, Louis Armstrong, Smokey Robinson and the Miracles, Marvin Gaye, Sonny and Cher, the Archies

One no.1 in the UK: Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, the Tremeloes (without Poole), the Hollies, the Four Pennies, the Honeycombs, the Overlanders, the Moody Blues, Unit 4+2, Dave Dee Dozy Beaky Mick and Tich, Chris Farlowe, Fleetwood Mac, the Foundations, the Equals, the Small Faces, the Move, Procol Harum, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Joe Cocker, 'Long John' Baldry, Dusty Springfield, Mary Hopkin, Frank Ifield, Creedence Clearwater Revival

One no.1 in the US: George Harrison, Freddie and the Dreamers, Wayne Fontana and the Mindbenders, Lulu, Donovan, the Shirelles, the Chiffons, the Crystals, the Dixie Cups, Ruby and the Romantics, the Essex, the Angels, the Shangri Las, Diana Ross (solo), Mary Wells, Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Otis Redding, Jan and Dean, the Turtles, the Mamas and the Papas, the Lovin' Spoonful, Sly and the Family Stone, ? and the Mysterians, the Strawberry Alarm Clock, the Buckinghams, the Lemon Pipers, The Guess Who, Peter Paul and Mary, Herb Alpert (solo)

Other ALBUMS statistics:

Two no.1s in the UK and US: Led Zeppelin

One no.1 in the UK, two no.1s in the US: Creedence Clearwater Revival

Two no.1s in the UK: The Moody Blues

Two no.1s in the US: Peter Paul and Mary, Blood Sweat and Tears

One no.1 in the UK and US: Cream, Blind Faith, Tom Jones, Elvis Presley, the Temptations (with Diana Ross and the Supremes)
(And... *The Sound of Music* film soundtrack – *70* weeks on top in the UK!; soundtracks (of films and musicals) were even more prevalent in the US – seven of these shared thirty-eight weeks at number one in this period.)

One no.1 in the UK: The Hollies, the Small Faces, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull, Black Sabbath, Tom Jones, the Seekers, the Four Tops, Otis Redding

One no.1 in the US: Paul McCartney, the Jimi Hendrix Experience, the Doors, Janis Joplin, Crosby Stills and Nash, the Mamas and the Papas, Santana, Johnny Cash, Glen Campbell, Frank Sinatra

APPENDIX

Peak Beatles saturation of the '*Billboard* Hot 100' – 4 April, 1964

Twelve of the hundred: the top five, plus seven more (they include singles, not released in the UK, derived from B sides and LP tracks, and on four different labels).

1. **'Can't buy me love'** (Capitol)
2. **'Twist and shout'** (Tollie)
3. **'She loves you'** (Swan)
4. **'I want to hold your hand'** (Capitol)
5. **'Please please me'** (Vee Jay)

31. 'I saw her standing there' (Capitol)
41. 'From me to you' (Vee Jay)
46. 'Do you want to know a secret' (Vee Jay)
58. 'All my loving' (Capitol)
65. 'You can't do that' (Capitol)
68. 'Roll over Beethoven' (Capitol)
79. 'Thank you girl' (Vee Jay)

Also charting were 'We love you Beatles' by the Carefrees and 'Letter to the Beatles' by the Four Preps.

Other artists in the top twenty on 4 April included the Dave Clark Five, the Searchers, the Four Seasons, the Beach Boys and Elvis Presley.

In the following week, while the top five was no longer pure Beatles, the Hot 100 now had *fourteen* of their singles with 'There's a place' and 'Love me do' entering the chart.

The Beatles' longest-running No.1 albums in the UK in the 1960s

Please Please Me	30
Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band	27
Abbey Road	23
With The Beatles	21
A Hard Day's Night	21
Help!	9
Rubber Soul	8
The Beatles ('The White Album')	8
Beatles For Sale	7
Revolver	7
Let It Be	3
(weeks)	

Best-selling albums in the UK in the 1960s

1. ***Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band***
2. *The Sound Of Music soundtrack*
3. ***With The Beatles***
4. ***Abbey Road***
5. *South Pacific soundtrack*
6. ***Beatles For Sale***
7. ***A Hard Day's Night***
8. ***Rubber Soul***
9. ***The Beatles***
10. *West Side Story soundtrack*
11. ***Revolver***
12. ***Please Please Me***
13. ***Help!***

Best-selling singles in the UK in the1960s

1. **'She loves you' The Beatles**
2. **'I want to hold your hand' The Beatles**
3. 'Tears' Ken Dodd
4. **'Can't buy me love' The Beatles**
5. **'I feel fine' The Beatles**
6. 'The carnival is over' The Seekers
7. **'Day tripper'/'We can work it out' The Beatles**
8. 'Release me' Engelbert Humperdinck
9. 'It's now or never' Elvis Presley
10. 'Green green grass of home' Tom Jones

Best-selling singles in the US in the1960s

1. 'The Twist' Chubby Checker
2. **'Hey Jude' The Beatles**
3. 'The theme from *A Summer Place*' Percy Faith Orch.
4. 'Tossin' and turnin' Bobby Lewis
5. **'I want to hold your hand' The Beatles**
6. 'I'm a believer' The Monkees
7. 'Aquarius/'Let the sunshine in' The 5th.Dimension
8. 'Sugar, sugar' The Archies
9. 'I heard it through the grapevine' Marvin Gaye
10. 'Are you lonesome tonight' Elvis Presley

Best-selling artists in the UK since 1952 (as of 2012)

1. **The Beatles**
2. Elvis Presley
3. Cliff Richard
4. Madonna
5. Michael Jackson
6. Elton John
7. Queen
8. ABBA
9. David Bowie
10. Rihanna

Best-selling artists in the world (album sales)

1. **The Beatles**
2. Garth Brooks
3. Elvis Presley
4. The Eagles
5. Led Zeppelin
7. Michael Jackson
8. Elton John
9. Pink Floyd
12. The Rolling Stones
15. Madonna

The Beatles have had the most No.1 singles ever on the *Billboard* chart (20), most No.1 albums in the UK (15)

Artists who have spent 26+ weeks at No.1 on the *Billboard* album chart

Albums by the Beatles, Elvis Presley, Garth Brooks and Michael Jackson earned them the four highest positions; other artists included here (and referred to in this book) are selected from a total number of twenty-two artists.

1. **The Beatles** (132 wks)
2. Elvis Presley (67)
3. Garth Brooks (52)
4. Michael Jackson (51)
8. Elton John (39)
9. Fleetwood Mac, The Rolling Stones (38)
11. The Monkees, Harry Belafonte (37)
13. Prince (35)
14. Adele (34)
16. The Eagles (30)
18. Led Zeppelin, Bruce Springsteen (29)
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SONGS AND OTHER MUSIC

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Written by others, recorded by the Beatles

INDEX

nb.'UK', 'Britain'/'British', 'England'/'English', and 'US', 'America'/'American' do not appear in this index because of frequency of references throughout the book. Search instead for specific locality and city names.

C

David Johnston is a writer (and musician and graphic designer) from the Yarra Valley, east of Melbourne, Australia.

In the early 1960s, too young to have paid much attention to the real origins of rock'n'roll, David was firstly entranced by the less potent pop music – by the Bobbys, Cliff and the Shadows and others – emanating from the US, the UK and his home country.

Then in 1963 the radio played something that wasn't really rock'n'roll either. The distinctive "*da da da, da da dum dum da*" introduction was like nothing he'd ever heard before.

'From me to you' was the first Beatles' single to really register in Australia, making top tens everywhere. David was hooked; the Beatles' music has influenced his own throughout his life.

In the fiftieth year since that magical era ended, *Without The Beatles* is not only David Johnston's tribute to the group, but, as collective memory of them fades, an assertion that the musical excitement they created was not only unprecedented, but unparalleled – then or since.

David Johnston's earlier book, *The Music Goes Round My Head* (published in 2010) is a history of Australian pop music from the years 1964 to 1969, a time when musicians 'downunder' scrambled to respond in different ways to the Beatles' new sounds.

"…much more information on Australian artists of the '60s than any rock encyclopaedia…an aptitude and deep love of this music."

Shindig! magazine (UK)

David has also written about music for Australian *Rhythms* magazine and the Melbourne *Age* newspaper.

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