

BEATLES HISTORY - PART ONE: 1956-1964

January 1956-June 1957: The 'Skiffle Craze'

In January 1956, Lonnie Donegan's recording of "Rock Island Line" stormed into the British hit parade and started what would become known as the 'skiffle craze' in Great Britain (vgl. McDevitt 1997: 3). Skiffle was originally an amateur jazz style comprising elements of blues, gospel, and work songs. The instrumentation resembled New Orleans street bands called 'spasms,' which relied on home-made instruments. Before skiffle was first professionally recorded by American jazz musicians in the 1920s and 1930s, it had been performed at 'rent parties' in North American cities like Chicago and Kansas City. Many African-American migrant workers organized rent parties in order to raise money for their monthly payments (vgl. Garry 1997: 87). Skiffle provided the musical entertainment at these parties, as everybody was able to participate in the band, which usually consisted of home-made acoustic guitars or a piano backed by a rhythm section of household instruments, such as a washboard, a washtub bass, and a jug (vgl. McDevitt 1997:16).

Jazz trumpeter and guitarist Ken Colyer pioneered the skiffle scene in Great Britain. In 1949, he formed the Crane River Jazz Band in Cranford, Middlesex, together with Ben Marshall (guitar), Pat Hawes (washboard), and Julian Davies (bass). Their repertoire included skiffle songs "to illustrate aspects of the roots of jazz and to add variety to a programme" (Dewe 1998: 4). After leaving the group in 1951, Colyer migrated to the United States to work with jazz musicians in New Orleans. When he returned to Great Britain in 1953, he joined a band featuring Chris Barber (trombone), Monty Sunshine (clarinet), Lonnie Donegan (banjo), Jim Bray (bass), and Ron Bowden (drums) (vgl. Dewe 1998: 6). Tensions within the group caused Colyer to leave the group in May 1954, while his former band colleagues Lonnie Donegan, Chris Barber, and Monty Sunshine formed Chris Barber's Jazz Band (vgl. McDevitt 1997: 5). In July 1954, Chris Barber's Jazz Band released an album called *New Orleans Joys*, featuring two skiffle songs, "Rock Island Line" and "John Henry," credited to The Lonnie Donegan Skiffle Group (vgl. Dewe 1998: 16). When Decca Records released "Rock Island Line" as a 78-rpm sin-

gle in late 1955, it became an unexpected chart success for Lonnie Donegan and his band (vgl. Davis 2003). Donegan's recording brought skiffle to the fore in Great Britain and spawned a series of skiffle hits by professional musicians like The Chas McDevitt Group, Nancy Whisky, The Vipers, and many others (vgl. McDevitt 1997: 9). What is more, the simple musical structure and instrumentation inspired literally thousands of young people all over Britain to form their own skiffle bands (vgl. Dewe 1998: 134).

By mid-1956, 15-year-old John Lennon had become fascinated with American rock and roll music. He particularly favored the music and appearance of Elvis Presley, whose "Heartbreak Hotel" had been a great success in Great Britain in early 1956: "Nothing really affected me until I heard Elvis. If there hadn't been Elvis, there would not have been the Beatles" (Harry 2000: 881). Since Elvis and many other American rock and roll stars were usually backed by professionally trained musicians whose skills could not easily be imitated, teenagers would not naturally conceive of the idea of forming a rock and roll band themselves. However, when Lonnie Donegan introduced skiffle to a large audience, young people realized the possibility of performing music with a set of cheap and home-made instruments.

John Lennon's friend Len Garry points out that "[s]kiffle and the ability for people to access such music easily acted only as a catalyst and precursor to [John Lennon's] continuing obsession for Rock 'n' Roll music" (Garry 1997: 95). The music of Lonnie Donegan and his followers inspired John Lennon to learn to play the guitar, and he borrowed one from a schoolmate (vgl. Davies 2001: 38). Later, Lennon's mother Julia paid for his own guitar, an inexpensive instrument he had ordered from a mail order advertisement in the Daily Mail (vgl. Coleman 1992: 137). A hobby banjoist herself, Julia taught her son a few banjo chords which he applied on his guitar, simply ignoring the guitar's two bottom strings (vgl. Beatles 2000: 11).

In the fall of 1956, George Lee, one of Lennon's friends from Quarry Bank High School, suggested to John Lennon that he form a skiffle band (vgl. Garry 1997: 109). Lennon approached his best friend Pete Shotton with this idea, and within a few weeks, the boys had recruited mates from Quarry Bank High School and the Liverpool Institute to form their own band. Dismissing their initial name The Black Jacks, John Lennon, the bandleader, decided to call the group The Quarry Men, as a reference to a line from the school song: "Quarry Men, strong before our birth" (Harry 2000: 896). Although the line-up went through several minor changes at the very beginning, a quite firm constellation had evolved by the end of 1956. For approximately eight months The Quarry Men consisted of

John Lennon (guitar), Pete Shotton (washboard), Eric Griffiths (guitar), Rod Davis (banjo), and Colin Hanton (drums).

Rod Davis recalls the band's equipment: "We just had two cheap guitars and a very old banjo, a tea chest bass made from a box bought from the grocer's for a few shillings, a washboard found in Pete Shotton's mother's shed and Colin's drum kit, which was the cheapest in the shop, but nevertheless it put us in a different category of skiffle group, bec[au]se very few of them could afford drums" (Davis 2003). As the band's initial tea chest bass player Bill Smith turned out to be rather unreliable, Len Garry and, occasionally, Ivan Vaughan were asked to master this typical skiffle instrument. John Lennon was the group's lead vocalist, supported by the other members on the choruses. George Lee, the boy who had suggested forming a skiffle band, never joined The Quarry Men.

According to Eric Griffiths, he and John Lennon initially took guitar lessons from a classical guitarist in Hunt's Cross, Liverpool (vgl. Davies 2001: 40). The boys, however, soon realized that they would not need a theoretical background to play the music they liked and gave up the lessons. The Quarry Men, like several hundred other skiffle groups in Great Britain at the time, learned and rehearsed a number of traditional American songs that had been popularized by Lonnie Donegan and other prominent skiffle musicians. Their early repertoire included songs such as "Rock Island Line," "Cumberland Gap," "Freight Train" and "Midnight Special," which were all based on three guitar chords.

As bands conventionally had a uniform stage outfit, The Quarry Men usually wore black jeans and white shirts at their performances. Rod Davis points out that "this was because we all had white shirts and therefore did not need to go and buy a special shirt" (Davis 2003).

The band's rehearsals took place in an old air-raid shelter in Pete Shotton's garden, at Colin Hanton's home and, without drums, in Julia Lennon's bathroom (vgl. Davies 2001: 42). At first, they only publicly performed at their friends' parties. As soon as they considered themselves good enough to perform for money, Nigel Whalley, one of John Lennon's friends who had also played the tea chest bass in The Quarry Men for a short while, appointed himself The Quarry Men's manager and tried to secure bookings for the band. Whalley had at least three different kinds of visiting cards printed and put notices in shop windows announcing "Country – Western – Rock 'n' Roll – Skiffle. The Quarry Men. Open for Engagements" (vgl. Coleman 1992: 140) In 1957, he actually organized performances at St. Peter's Youth Club, at Lee Park Golf Park, and at the Cavern Club in Liverpool (vgl. Davies 2001: 48-49). In June 1957, The Quarry Men even entered a skiffle contest for Carroll Levis's

television show *Discoveries*, but they failed to pass the initial audition (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 14).

July 1957-October 1961: From The Quarry Men to The Beatles

On July 6, 1957, The Quarry Men Skiffle Group performed three sets at the ‘Garden Fête’ of St Peter’s Parish Church in Woolton, a village bordering Liverpool city center. After the evening performance, the band’s occasional tea-chest bass player Ivan Vaughan introduced to John Lennon and the other band members his classmate Paul McCartney, a 15-year-old rock and roll fan from Allerton, Liverpool (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 12).

Paul McCartney had grown up in a musical family, his father being the pianist in a traditional jazz band. When his mother unexpectedly died in 1956, he developed an almost obsessive interest in music. After dismissing his first instrument, a trumpet, because he wanted to be able to sing and play at the same time, McCartney acquired a £15 acoustic Zenith guitar (vgl. Miles 1997: 21). Even though he was fond of various kinds of music, he became especially attracted to skiffle, rock ‘n’ roll, as well as American rhythm and blues, which he used to listen to on Radio Luxembourg, as these genres of popular music were virtually ignored by the BBC (vgl. Miles 1997: 24-25). Paul McCartney’s friend George Harrison, who was nine months younger and a class below McCartney’s at the Liverpool Institute, showed a similar enthusiasm for skiffle and rock and roll music. Moreover, he was also an aspiring guitarist and owned a £30 Höfner President (vgl. Beatles: 2000: 28). Together they tried to figure out guitar chords from a guitar manual and learned to play songs such as “Don’t You Rock Me Daddy-O” and “Besame Mucho” (vgl. Giuliano 1991: 17). Paul McCartney was soon able to play a number of contemporary hit songs. What is more, at the age of fourteen, just having mastered three chords on the guitar, McCartney composed his first song called “I Lost My Little Girl” (vgl. Beatles: 2000: 20).

When The Quarry Men first met Paul McCartney, his knowledge of rock and roll songs as well as his ability of playing and tuning a guitar particularly impressed John Lennon: “He could obviously play the guitar. I half thought he’s as good as me. [...] Now, I thought, if I take him on, what will happen? It went through my head that I’d have to keep him in line, if I let him join. But he was good, so he was worth having. He also looked like Elvis” (Davies 1969: 42). Days later Lennon actually had Pete Shotton ask him to join the group. After some time of consideration

and a two-month break at a scout camp, Paul McCartney finally became a member of The Quarry Men in the fall of 1957 (vgl. Coleman 1992: 147).

According to Colin Hanton, The Quarry Men's drummer, Paul McCartney influenced the band's stage appearance from the very beginning: "Once Paul joined The Quarry Men – that's when things started to change [...]. White jackets for him and John as the lead singers, the rest of us in white shirts and black ties. That all came from Paul" (*A Long and Winding Road* 2003: DVD 1). Apparently, Paul McCartney had already developed a sense of promotion and public image in entertainment, which he admits in his official biography: "I have a reputation now of being a PR man, which has grown over the years, because anything you promote, there's a game that you either play or you don't play. I decided very early on that I was very ambitious and I wanted to play" (Miles 1997: 34). While The Quarry Men had previously been a rather unconcerned group of amateur musicians, Paul McCartney and John Lennon now developed a more professional attitude toward their performances. By wearing suits, shirts and ties instead of casual outfits at several performances, The Quarry Men became more acceptable for an adult audience. Although these early attempts at displaying a homogeneous stage image were inspired by conventional outfits worn by traditional jazz bands and skiffle groups, The Quarry Men's repertoire was becoming more oriented toward rock and roll music than skiffle. Shortly before McCartney joined the band, Rod Davis had quit The Quarry Men because of this development:

"[Skiffle] came out of New Orleans jazz bands in the UK, but jazz fans hated rock 'n' roll, which they thought was trashy manufactured music, exploiting teenagers, and was not 'traditional'. Equally the rock 'n' roll fans, who were more likely to be teddy boys – there was an element of class distinction there – hated the university intellectual types who liked jazz. [...] I have to confess that I did not like Elvis Presley and rock 'n' roll [...]" (Davis 2003).

Consequently, banjoist Rod Davis left The Quarry Men to form a jazz trio, while Pete Shotton, the group's washboard player, had already quit months before. The Quarry Men now featured three guitarists, John Lennon, Eric Griffiths and Paul McCartney. Tea chest player Len Garry's association with The Quarry Men ended when serious health problems forced him to leave the band in August 1958.

By mid-1958 Paul McCartney's friend George Harrison had replaced Eric Griffiths as the third guitarist in the band. When The Quarry Men recorded their first demonstration disc in mid-1958, they had already developed into a pure rock 'n' roll band. This is confirmed by John Lowe,

an occasional pianist with The Quarry Men, who also participated in the band's first recording session at Percy Phillips' home recording studio in Liverpool: "When I was in the band we never played any skiffle. [...] We played covers of 57/58 rock/ballad music normally from USA – Buddy Holly, Everly Bros, Elvis, Chuck Berry etc." (Lowe 2003). While the band members had occasionally worn suits and ties on stage during the band's skiffle period, they now returned to more casual outfits. John Lowe remembers The Quarry Men's appearance on stage in 1958: "We all wore jeans (I had to borrow a pair off John) and black/white country & western shirts with tass[el]s going across the chest" (Lowe 2003). This kind of outfit, combined with a certain hairstyle, is usually associated with the image of a 'Teddy Boy'.

When drummer Colin Hanton left The Quarry Men after a disagreement in early 1959, the group basically ceased to exist (vgl. Davies 2001: 79). George Harrison became a member of The Les Stewart Quartet, while John Lennon rather carelessly pursued his studies at the Liverpool College of Art, where he had started his first term in September 1957. At the art college, John Lennon met Stuart Sutcliffe, Bill Harry and Rod Murray, with whom he developed a close friendship (vgl. Harry 2000: 669). He also met his future wife Cynthia Powell around that time.

George Harrison initiated a reunion of The Quarry Men in August 1959, when he and guitarist Ken Brown quit The Les Stewart Quartet. Their bandleader had not wanted the group to perform at the opening night of a new youth club, the Casbah Club, in West Derby, Liverpool. Brown and Harrison, who were eager to perform at the new venue, asked John Lennon and Paul McCartney to join them. They decided to use the name Quarry Men for this new line-up, which now consisted of four guitarists (vgl. Harry 2000: 211). Ken Brown points out that the group members did not wear a particular stage uniform at these performances: "[W]e just wore casual wear – jeans – jumpers – sweatshirts – or sometimes slacks with a shirt and loosely tied tie" (Brown 2003). The Quarry Men regularly performed at the Casbah Club until October 1959, when John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison walked out on Ken Brown and club owner Mona Best after a dispute concerning their payment.

Lennon, McCartney, and Harrison stayed together as a group and again joined a sequence of preliminary talent contests for Carroll Levis' popular ABC television show *Discoveries*. For these performances, they renamed their band Johnny and The Moondogs, a name inspired by American performers Buddy Holly and The Crickets, whose "Think It Over" they performed at the contest (vgl. Beatles 2000: 23). This time they reached the local finals and performed in Manchester, where the

strength of audience applause was supposed to determine the winner at the end of the show. Johnny and The Moondogs, however, had to leave early in order to catch the train back to Liverpool. Therefore, they were not able to participate in the final voting (vgl. Beatles 2000: 31).

In January 1960, John Lennon persuaded Stuart Sutcliffe, his friend and colleague at the Liverpool College of Art, to buy a bass guitar and join the band. Sutcliffe had sold one of his paintings to John Moore who organized prominent exhibitions at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool. The money Sutcliffe obtained for his painting was invested in a Höfner President bass guitar. David May, a Liverpool bass guitarist, and George Harrison initially taught him basic bass patterns, as Sutcliffe had never played guitar before (vgl. Harry 2000: 1048).

Even though Stuart Sutcliffe's abilities as a musician reportedly were quite modest (vgl. Beatles 2000: 44), he contributed significantly to the band's progress by organizing performances and equipment. For instance, through Sutcliffe and his friend Bill Harry the group was hired to play at Saturday dances at the Liverpool College of Art (vgl. Harry 2003). As the band members did not have any money for proper stage equipment, Sutcliffe and Harry, who were both members of the Students' Union Committee, suggested that the Students' Union finance a proper amplifier system for the 'college band' Johnny and The Moondogs (vgl. Harry 2000: 1048).

Although the group's name seemed to be acceptable at the time, Sutcliffe and Lennon were trying to find a more appropriate band name that would reflect their interest in beatnik lifestyle and emphasize their basic idea of not featuring only one particular singer. In the course of 1960 the name developed from Sutcliffe's original idea 'Beatals' to 'Silver Beats' and 'Silver Beetles,' until the band finally decided to call themselves The Beatles (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 18).¹

Stuart Sutcliffe became a key influence on the group's stage image, as his appearance as well as his manners on stage contributed an air of mystery to the Beatles' stage act (vgl. Harry 2000: 1049). According to his sister Pauline, he modelled his outer appearance on Polish actor Zbigniew Cybulski: "[...] Stuart [was] taken by the style of Cybulski, the

1 John Lennon insists that the name Beatles with its reference to beat music and beetles was inspired by the double meaning of "Crickets," the name of Buddy Holly's backing band (vgl. Davies 1969: 73). Recent band histories suggest that Sutcliffe and Lennon were inspired by the movie *The Wild One*, which features a motorcycle gang called Beetles (vgl. Beatles 2000: 41). Bill Harry points out that this is impossible, as *The Wild One* was not shown in cinemas around Britain until the late sixties (vgl. Harry 2000: 104).

lookalike of a young Jean-Paul Belmondo, with wavy, swept-back black hair, and cool sunglasses and manner” (Sutcliffe/Thompson 2002: 100). Sutcliffe adapted Cybulski’s look and even wore sunglasses on stage. He did this also for practical reasons, as he had rather weak eyesight, just like his friend John Lennon. While Lennon found his glasses incompatible with his image as would-be Teddy Boy, Sutcliffe managed to look ‘cool’ and be able to see by wearing self-made clip-on shades (vgl. Kirchherr 2003). On stage, he would often play with his back to the audience, in order to hide his poor musical abilities.

It was also through Stuart Sutcliffe that the newly named Silver Beatles got involved with Liverpool concert promoter and coffee bar owner Allan Williams. After Sutcliffe and his friend Rod Murray had decorated the walls of Williams’ coffee bar, the Jacaranda, he asked Allan Williams for his assistance in finding bookings for the band. Williams, who had been asked to organize auditions of Liverpool bands to back singer Billy Fury on a tour, arranged for the Beatles to appear at these auditions. As the group did not have a drummer, Williams hired Tommy Moore to play with The Silver Beatles. However, when it was their turn to play, their new drummer had not yet arrived. Therefore, Johnny Hutchinson, the drummer with Liverpool group Cass & The Cassanovas sat in for the audition.

Even though Fury’s manager Larry Parnes did not consider The Silver Beatles fit to accompany his most popular singer, he wanted them to join his most recent discovery, Liverpool singer Johnny Gentle, on a tour of Scotland. In May 1960, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Stuart Sutcliffe and drummer Tommy Moore set out to back Johnny Gentle on his seven-date tour of Scotland (vgl. Gentle/Forsyth 1998: 31).

In June and July 1960, The Silver Beatles were quite busy performing at different venues in and around Liverpool. Tommy Moore, who was seven years older than John Lennon, quit The Silver Beatles in June 1960, and Paul McCartney temporarily took over the role as the group’s drummer. Another short-term drummer was Norman Chapman who quit the band after only three concerts, as he was called up for National Service (vgl. Harry 2000: 255).

Band promoter Allan Williams had secured bookings for Liverpool band Derry & The Seniors in Hamburg, Germany, where they played at a club called Kaiserkeller in the city’s red-light district St. Pauli. Because of the group’s great success, club owner Bruno Koschmider asked Williams to send more bands to Hamburg. Since Liverpool’s top group Rory Storm & The Hurricanes had accepted another engagement, Williams offered the job to the re-named Beatles, who were eager to go abroad. The Beatles, however, did not have a drummer at that point. Williams ar-

ranged an audition with Pete Best, the son of Mona Best, who had hired The Quarry Men to play at her coffee club, the Casbah, the year before. Best easily passed the audition and became The Beatles' drummer (Best/Doncaster 2001: 29).

In August 1960, Allan Williams drove The Beatles to Hamburg, where they were expected to play at a former strip club called Indra. Horst Fascher, who became The Beatles' friend and bodyguard in Hamburg, remembers their stage outfit at the beginning of their engagement: "[A]n dem Abend, an dem sie das erste Mal auftraten, [trugen sie] Teddyboy-Kleidung, die damals getragen wurde in England. Mit spitzen Schuhen [...], engen Jeans und einfachen Hemden mit etwas längeren Kragen" (Fascher 2003). They performed forty-eight nights at the Indra and subsequently played fifty-eight nights at the Kaiserkeller (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 28). Until the end of November, The Beatles performed seven nights a week, between four and five hours a night at these bars (vgl. Miles 1997: 58), which were both owned by Bruno Koschmider. These extensive performances vastly improved the band's musicianship, and The Beatles became one of the most popular acts at the Reeperbahn, attracting a varied audience. While The Beatles were very popular with regular visitors, such as seamen, workers, and prostitutes, they also became close friends with a small circle of local art students who called themselves 'the existentialists'. In particular, Astrid Kirchherr, Jürgen Vollmer, and Klaus Voormann had a lasting impact on the group's image and history.

Astrid Kirchherr was the first person to take professional photographs of the band. The first photo session took place at the fairgrounds in Hamburg. The Beatles, still wearing their Teddy Boy outfits, posed at the Dom, on a carousel and a Ferris wheel at the city funfair, on an old lorry, and outside a market tent. Although the band had become well known for their lively and wild performances at the Kaiserkeller by then, they appear calm and thoughtful in Kirchherr's black and white photographs. According to Astrid Kirchherr, it was her intention to reveal a warm, human, but also a gloomier facet of The Beatles (vgl. Kirchherr 2003).

Astrid Kirchherr and Stuart Sutcliffe fell in love with each other and became an inseparable couple, which led to a strong connection between the 'Exis' and The Beatles. They influenced each other's conceptions of philosophy, lifestyle and art. While Klaus Voormann points out that he and his friends had a profound influence on The Beatles' general conception of art and literature (vgl. Voormann 2003), Astrid Kirchherr remembers a mutual fascination with each other, which also included outer appearance and image (vgl. Kirchherr 2003). For instance, the Exis inspired

The Beatles to gradually drop their Teddy Boy outfits in favor of black leather clothes which were popular among the existentialists. Pete Best recalls The Beatles' initial fascination with leather: "We all fell in love with Astrid's black leather outfits. Influenced by her, Stu was the first to appear in a black leather jacket. George soon followed suit in a jacket bought off a waiter for £5. Then the rest of us got into line; buying cheap bomber-style models which we wore with the tightest of jeans and cowboy boots" (Best/Doncaster 2001: 66). In Hamburg, leather was worn by art students as well as by working class 'rock 'n' rollers.' Kirchherr and her friends were fascinated by the appearance of Gene Vincent and Marlon Brando, both of whom were also idolized by the rock and roll fans. However, the two youth groups could easily be distinguished by their outfit and hairstyle, as the existentialists were more obviously influenced by French movie stars and philosophers (vgl. Kirchherr 2003). Horst Fascher points out the differences between 'Exis' and 'Rockers' in terms of fashion: "Die Rock 'n' Roller trugen Leder; und auch die Exis trugen Leder, wobei die Exis eher schwarze Kleidung dazu trugen. Schwarze Hose oder vielleicht schwarzes Sakko, und die Rock 'n' Roller trugen eine schwarze Hose und ein weißes Hemd" (Fascher 2003). Fascher explains that rockers liked to wear white shirts in order to be well visible in bars where ultra-light made the shirts appear to be 'double-white,' while the exis originally preferred 'to vanish in darker jazz cellars' (vgl. Fascher 2003).

On October 15, 1960, John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison joined members of the Liverpool band Rory Storm & The Hurricanes for a recording of the songs "Fever" and "Summertime" at the small Akustik Studios in Hamburg (vgl. Harry 2000: 18). This recording session, which had been organized by Allan Williams, was the first time Lennon, McCartney and Harrison performed together with Ringo Starr, who was the drummer with Rory Storm's group.

At the end of October, a new music club, the Top Ten, opened at 136 Reeperbahn in Hamburg (vgl. Harry 2000: 363). The venue was owned by Peter Eckhorn, who hired The Beatles' friends Tony Sheridan and The Jets for the opening night. In 1960, Sheridan was probably the most successful British performer in Hamburg, having gained the reputation of being "the best rock guitarist in Britain" (Clayson 1997: 52). While Tony Sheridan taught guitar chords to George Harrison, John Lennon was soon to copy Sheridan's high-chested guitar stance (vgl. Clayson 1997: 70), which would become Lennon's trademark at stage performances throughout the 1960s.

Although The Beatles' contract forbade the group to play in any other club but the Kaiserkeller, Horst Fascher, who now worked for Eck-

horn, persuaded the group to perform at the Top Ten, where they would receive higher payment and a nicer accommodation (vgl. Norman 1981: 100-101). Soon after The Beatles had deserted Bruno Koschmider, police authorities deported George Harrison because he was under 18 years old, and therefore he was not allowed to be in a nightclub after midnight. What is more, none of The Beatles had official work permits allowing them to perform in Germany. Within a few days, Koschmider also informed the police that Paul McCartney and Pete Best had tried to set fire to their former accommodation, the Bambi Kino. They were arrested on a charge of suspected arson and had to leave Germany on 30 November 1960 (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 24-25). John Lennon also returned to Liverpool in December, while Stuart Sutcliffe stayed in Hamburg with his fiancée Astrid Kirchherr.

In December 1960, The Beatles performed four concerts in Liverpool. As Stuart Sutcliffe had remained in Hamburg, Pete Best's friend Chas Newby was asked to play bass guitar at these performances. On 27 December, when they performed at the Town Hall Ballroom in Litherland, Liverpool, local promoters as well as the audience realized that The Beatles had developed into Liverpool's top rock and roll group during their stay in Hamburg, where they had spent more than 500 hours on stage. Pauline Sutcliffe, who was in the audience in Litherland, remembers The Beatles' unexpected effect on the audience: "The audience screamed and danced, danced, and danced, crowding the stage for a closer look at these fabulous rock and rollers. They were wild for the Beatles. The reaction was so dramatic it could have been operatic [...]. Beatlemania? Well, most certainly the start of it" (Sutcliffe/Thompson 2002: 114).

The Beatles' success in Litherland caused many promoters to book them for 'jive dances' and other events in Liverpool. Between January and March 1961, The Beatles performed at more than 80 concerts in the Liverpool area. They regularly played at the Casbah Coffee Club as well as the Cavern, a former jazz cellar (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 38-42).

After Allan Williams, Pete Best and Stuart Sutcliffe had organized visas and work permits for The Beatles, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Pete Best returned to the Top Ten Club in Hamburg, where they performed five hours a day for thirteen weeks. Again, their friends from the Hamburg art scene inspired an image change. As recalled by Pete Best, the group especially liked the leather trousers worn by Astrid Kirchherr: "Predictably, Stu was the first Beatle into leather trousers [...]. It wasn't all that long – as soon as we could afford it, in fact – before the rest of the Beatles were draping their legs in black leather and looking for longer jackets to replace the bomber-style models

now showing signs of wear” (Best/Doncaster 2001: 94). Furthermore, Stuart Sutcliffe also had his hair styled by Astrid Kirchherr, who recalls the creation of the famous ‘mop-top’:

“Das kam durch meinen Freund Klaus Voormann, der das hatte. [...] Die ganze Kunstschule war von französischen Schauspielern beeinflusst. Wenn Sie sich alte Photos anucken, zum Beispiel von Gérard Philpupes und Jean Marais – die hatten schon diese Frisuren, nur eben kürzer. Und mein Freund Klaus Voormann hatte – und hat immer noch – ganz doll abstehende Ohren. Ich habe mir überlegt, was man machen kann, damit man die Ohren nicht sieht; und dann kam ich auf die Idee, dass er einfach die Haare länger wachsen lassen muss. Und daraus ist dann dieser Beatles-Haarschnitt entstanden (Kirchherr 2003)”

Kirchherr’s fiancé Stuart Sutcliffe was the first Beatle to adopt this particular hairstyle. While John Lennon and Paul McCartney initially expressed their amusement with Sutcliffe’s new hairstyle, George Harrison soon wore his hair the same way.

In June 1961, The Beatles were hired to support British singer and guitarist Tony Sheridan on a recording produced by German record producer Bert Kaempfert. After having recorded two demonstration discs in 1958 and 1960, this was The Beatles’ first professional recording, although on the record sleeve the group was credited as The Beat Brothers. Besides recording a rock and roll version of “My Bonnie Lies Over The Ocean” and some other songs for Sheridan’s 1962 record release *My Bonnie*, The Beatles were also offered the chance to record the classic “Ain’t She Sweet” featuring John Lennon as lead vocalist, as well as “Cry For A Shadow,” an instrumental pastiche of The Shadows’ “Frightened City” (vgl. Harry 2000: 315) credited to George Harrison and John Lennon.

As The Beatles felt that they had organized their engagement at the Top Ten themselves, John Lennon refused to pay manager Allan Williams his commission. In fact, however, they were only allowed to perform in Germany through Williams’ agency Jacaranda Enterprises. When Williams sent The Beatles a letter to remind them of his contributions, they simply ignored him (vgl. Williams 2003).

The Beatles returned to Liverpool on 3 July 1961. Two days later, Stuart Sutcliffe’s friend Bill Harry published the first issue of *Mersey Beat*, a music magazine containing reports on the Liverpool music scene. *Mersey Beat*, which Harry had been planning since 1960, pioneered British pop and rock music magazines with its innovative approach, as it contained, for instance, the first weekly listing of record releases and the first British Top 100 charts. Many of these ideas were later adopted by the traditional music press: “My aim in *Mersey Beat* was to give the mu-

sicians a voice and I tried to draw out their talent. I did this with the photographers, getting them to photograph groups on stage and on location, rather than the stereotyped photos in the standard music press” (Harry 2003).

Mersey Beat was distributed through three main wholesalers and was also sold by several local venues, musical instruments and record stores. The first issue, written and published by Bill Harry and his girlfriend Virginia, sold 5,000 copies in Liverpool (vgl. Harry 2003b). The magazine’s increasing popularity also proved to be very positive for The Beatles, whom Harry promoted extensively in his magazine. The Beatles were also personally involved with the magazine from its very beginning. John Lennon contributed a short absurd biography of The Beatles to Issue No.1, which Bill Harry called “Being A Short Diversion On The Dubious Origin Of Beatles. Translated From The John Lennon.” Issue No. 2 devoted the entire front cover to The Beatles, featuring a report on the group’s recording sessions with Tony Sheridan. A photograph taken by Astrid Kirchherr in Hamburg supplemented the report, which was headlined “Beatles Sign Record Contract!” (vgl. Harry 2003b). *Mersey Beat* became The Beatles’ main instrument for publicity in 1961, as it included reports covering the group’s progress, as well as a regular column by John Lennon and a series of letters written by Paul McCartney. As pointed out by Bill Harry, the magazine made The Beatles known to a large young local audience: “When *Mersey Beat* came out [...], selling 5,000 of the very first issue and increasing every issue after that, virtually all the kids in Liverpool began to read about them – there was no other publicity but that in *Mersey Beat* throughout 1961” (Harry 2003).

Brian Epstein, the manager of North End Music Stores in Whitechapel, Liverpool, became interested in the local music scene when he realized the great success of *Mersey Beat*, which sold in large quantities at his record store. He contacted Bill Harry in order to learn more about The Beatles, whom he had apparently read about in Harry’s magazine: “Brian asked me to describe the local scene and was particularly interested in the Beatles cover story and the fact that a local group had made a record. He immediately booked advertising space and asked if he could review records. I appointed him record reviewer, beginning with issue No. 3 [...]” (vgl. Harry 2003b).

From July to September, The Beatles performed almost daily at various venues in Liverpool. They regularly played at The Cavern Club, a popular youth club located at 10 Mathew Street.

In October, John Lennon and Paul McCartney went on a two-week holiday to Paris, where they met up with their German friend Jürgen Vollmer. While they had previously resisted their friends’ attempts to re-

style their hair, they now asked Vollmer to cut their hair: “John and Paul visited me and decided to have their hair like mine. A lot of French youth wore it that way. I gave both of them their first Beatles haircut in my hotel room on the Left Bank” (Miles 1997: 77).

November 1961-September 1963: On the Way to Fame

On November 9, 1961, 27-year-old Brian Epstein and his personal assistant Alistair Taylor attended a lunchtime performance by The Beatles at The Cavern Club. At that time The Beatles consisted of John Lennon and George Harrison on guitars, Paul McCartney on bass guitar and Pete Best on drums.

Even though neither Epstein nor Taylor particularly liked rock and roll music, they were impressed by the band’s energy as well as by their charisma and humor (vgl. Epstein 1998: 98). However, Epstein noticed that the band’s presentation on stage lacked discipline and professionalism: “They were rather scruffily dressed – in the nicest possible way or, I should say, in the most attractive way: black leather jackets and jeans, long hair of course. And they had a rather untidy stage presentation, not terribly aware, and not caring very much, what they looked like” (Lewisohn 2000: 34-35).

Epstein, who had grown weary of managing his father’s record store, recognized the band’s commercial potential and realized their need of a professional management. Although he had never before considered managing an artist, let alone a rock group (vgl. Epstein 1998: 99), he arranged two meetings with the band to discuss a possible business relationship. At the second meeting, on December 6, 1961, he suggested becoming The Beatles’ manager. The group almost immediately accepted Epstein’s offer, and a contract was finally signed on Wednesday, January 24, 1962 (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 36).

As soon as Brian Epstein had taken on the responsibility of managing the Beatles, he introduced substantial changes concerning the group’s stage image. Epstein, who had studied at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts from 1956 to 1957, was very well aware of principal rules of presentation in show business. He advised the band to change their stage outfits and helped them develop a distinct style of presenting themselves on stage. Pete Best remembers Epstein’s initial influence on the group: “He claimed that no one in the world of entertainment outside our present environment would tolerate our slovenly look, our chatting to the birds near the stage, our eating and drinking on the stand, our playful

butting and jostling and generally enjoying ourselves” (Best/Doncaster 2001: 123). While The Beatles’ previous performances had been characterized by spontaneity and improvisation, Epstein insisted on carefully planned stage shows and advised the group to select their songs and the running order before the actual performance (vgl. Brown/Gaines: 2002: 64).

Epstein’s assistant Alistair Taylor points out that the manager wrote down a set of rules The Beatles had to follow on stage: “They were told in writing that they must stop swearing onstage, they must stop joking with the girls, they must stop smoking onstage or carrying cans of Coke onstage” (Geller 2002: 43). While it is generally agreed that Epstein never tried to interfere with the group’s music (vgl. Taylor 2003: 32), he entirely modified the Beatles’ appearance on stage.

In order to make the band more acceptable to the large target audience envisioned by Epstein, The Beatles were persuaded to abandon the leather clothes they had acquired in Hamburg in favour of more respectable and more fashionable tweed suits. Hence, they were taken to tailor Beno Dorn in Birkenhead where Epstein bought them a set of identical dark blue mohair suits with matching ties (vgl. Harry 2000: 352). Paul McCartney points out that their image change actually did have an influence on their initial commercial success: “We picked out some very groovy mohair suits, which were OK. [...] It was a good thing. It did open doors for us. He was right. It meant that people who wouldn’t accept the leather look could have us looking a bit more seemly” (Geller 2002: 43).

Brian Epstein personally attended most of The Beatles’ performances and supervised the group’s choreography. Paul McCartney explains the way Epstein advised the Beatles: “If you’re in a theatrical endeavour the only way you can tell if you’re doing good is if you have someone out there who says, ‘That was really good. When you moved over, they lost you. Don’t do that next time.’ He was a director” (Geller 2002: 49).

Even though it has been suggested that Brian Epstein actually invented The Beatles’ outfit and their stage choreography (vgl. Geller 2002: 48), both were initially inspired by the stage image projected by Cliff Richard’s former backing group The Shadows. As recalled by *Mersey Beat* editor Bill Harry, “[Epstein] took them to the Empire Theatre to watch the Shadows, pointing out how they were dressed in mohair suits and dickie bows and how they bowed to the audience at the end of the show” (Harry 2003). Epstein realized that it was necessary to create a unique visual image of the group on stage, in order to distinguish The Beatles from other pop groups at the time. While the suits and an organized stage show were necessities in show business, The Beatles’ haircut

and their rather static and detached attitude on stage distinguished them from other pop artists at the time. Performers such as Elvis Presley and Gene Vincent were famous for their lively performances and their provocative movements on stage. On the other hand, guitar groups such as The Shadows moved their guitars simultaneously. The Beatles, however, deliberately dropped such show elements and remained rather motionless on stage. In 1970, John Lennon explained how The Beatles created their stage image to distinguish themselves from conventional pop groups.

“In the early days in England all the groups were like Elvis and a backing group. And the Beatles deliberately didn’t move like Elvis. That was our policy because we found it stupid and bullshit. And then Mick Jagger came out and resurrected bullshit movement, wiggling his ass and that. So then people began to say, ‘The Beatles are passé because they don’t move.’ But we did it as an intellectual [sic] – when we were younger, we used to move, we used to jump around, do all the things they’re doing now [...]” (Wenner 2000: 13).

The Beatles’ other distinctive feature was their unique haircut which was basically a tidier version of the hairstyle originally designed by Astrid Kirchherr and Jürgen Vollmer. Alistair Taylor remembers taking John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison to Horne Brothers in Liverpool, “who then had a reputation as very classy hairdressers. Their long hair was trimmed and styled into a much more clean-cut image. [...] Much to their relief, the hair was still left reasonably long but the greasy untamed look was definitely a thing of the past” (Taylor 2003: 33).

Epstein immediately fixed higher rates for The Beatles’ performances and put great effort into promoting the group. Besides the local promotion in *Mersey Beat*, Epstein tried to organize performances in radio and television shows. On 8 March 1962, The Beatles made their radio debut on the BBC program *Teenager’s Turn – Here We Go*. Despite this initial success, Epstein found it difficult to find promotional support by the music press. Tony Barrow, the record reviewer for the *Liverpool Echo*, pointed out to Brian Epstein that The Beatles would need to release a record to raise media interest. Even though Epstein made use of his connections to the recording industry in order to find the group a recording contract, The Beatles were rejected by all major record labels, including Columbia and HMV. With Tony Barrow’s help, Epstein was able to arrange a recording audition for the band at Decca Records, one of the leading British record companies at the time (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 37). On 1 January 1962, The Beatles auditioned in London, where Decca’s A & R assistant Mike Smith recorded fifteen songs from the group’s stage repertoire on tape. Although The Beatles were quite convinced to have secured a recording contract, the company turned them

down in favour of Brian Poole and The Tremeloes, who auditioned on the same day (vgl. Harry 2000: 938). When Brian Epstein had their audition tape transferred to a 78-rpm demonstration disc, the engineer Jim Foy referred him to a publishing company, Ardmore & Beechwood, whose general manager Sid Coleman put Epstein into touch with George Martin, the head of A & R at Parlophone, a label owned by EMI (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 53). George Martin listened to the demonstration disc and arranged an audition with The Beatles at Abbey Road Studios in London on 6 June 1962 (vgl. Martin/Hornsby: 1994: 122).

From January to June, The Beatles headlined various concerts in the Merseyside area. On 11 April 1962, they left Liverpool for another engagement in Hamburg. Astrid Kirchherr awaited them at the Hamburg airport with the devastating news that her fiancé, The Beatles' friend and former bass player Stuart Sutcliffe, had died of a brain haemorrhage the day before.

Despite the tragic death of Stuart Sutcliffe, the group stayed in Hamburg to perform 48 nights at the Star Club, a new rock and roll club owned by Manfred Weissleder. Horst Fascher, the former 'bouncer' at the Kaiserkeller and the Top Ten, had become Weissleder's assistant and had negotiated The Beatles' contract with Brian Epstein. Fascher points out that the new, clean image did not diminish The Beatles' popularity in Hamburg. In fact, suits, shirts and ties had become fashionable at that time.

“Auch das hat man akzeptiert – auf einmal liefen die Beatles mit Schlips und Kragen rum und mit Anzügen, die ein bisschen anders geschnitten waren als unsere. Aber wir trugen auch Anzüge [zu der Zeit]. Das Erste, was man sich von seinem Geld, das man sich erarbeitet hatte, gekauft hat, war ein Hemd und einen Schlips. Und einen Anzug. [...] Das wurde auf einmal Mode. Das ging ein bisschen weg vom Saloppen. Man wollte elegant sein” (Fascher 2003).

During their third engagement in Hamburg, The Beatles participated in another recording session with Tony Sheridan, and after The Beatles had returned from their seven-week long engagement at the Star Club in Hamburg, they attended their first recording session at Abbey Road Studios in London. They presented several of their own compositions as well as some favorites from their stage act to A & R and record producer George Martin. Martin, who had a reputation of producing comedy records with Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan, was not enormously impressed by The Beatles' own material and did not offer The Beatles a recording contract right away. When George Martin finally decided to sign the group in July, he was still not sure who was going to be made the 'star' of the group, as pop groups usually featured only one lead singer,

such as Cliff Richard and The Shadows and Brian Poole and The Tremeloes.

“I put them all on test individually, getting them to sing numbers in turn, and my original feeling was [that] Paul had a sweeter voice, John’s had more character, and George was generally not so good. I was thinking, on balance, that I should make Paul the leader. Then, after some thought, I realised that if I did so I would be changing the nature of the group. Why do that? Why not keep them as they were? It hadn’t been done before – but then, I’d made a lot of records that hadn’t been ‘done before’. Why not experiment in pop as I had in comedy?” (Martin/Hornsby 1994: 124).

Although he liked The Beatles’ personalities, George Martin was least impressed with Pete Best’s drumming. He suggested to Brian Epstein that Pete Best stay the group’s drummer at live performances, while a professional studio musician should replace him at recording sessions. (vgl. Martin/Hornsby 1994: 123). He did not know that John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison had actually been thinking about replacing Pete Best with Ringo Starr, a Liverpool drummer who had become their friend in Hamburg. When Brian Epstein told Pete Best about the other Beatles’ decision, he was shattered. Sam Leach, a concert promoter from Liverpool, who had been supporting The Beatles’ career from a very early stage, explains why Ringo Starr was the perfect drummer for The Beatles: “For me, Ringo was the original Beatle. Prior to his joining The Beatles, his image was that of an immaculately-dressed, talented and dedicated performer with a sharp, somewhat off-beat sense of humour. That is exactly what The Beatles became known for around the world” (Leach 1999: 175).

On 4 September 1962, The Beatles with their new drummer Ringo Starr traveled to London to record their debut single. George Martin wanted the group to record a song called “How Do You Do It,” written by Lionel Michael Sticher under the pseudonym Mitch Murray. The Beatles, however, detested the song and persuaded George Martin to let them record “Love Me Do,” a song Paul McCartney and John Lennon had written in Germany the year before. Although George Martin had considered Murray’s song to be more commercial, it was decided that “Love Me Do” would be released as The Beatles’ first single.² Its release

2 The Beatles’ recording of “How Do You Do It” served as a demonstration tape for Gerry and The Pacemakers who topped the British charts with their version of the song in 1963. The Beatles’ version of “How Do You Do It” was finally included in the group’s first *Anthology* compilation in 1995.

date being set on 5 October 1962, Brian Epstein organized a promotion campaign for his protégés. Again, Epstein consulted Tony Barrow from the *Liverpool Echo*, this time asking him to become The Beatles' official press agent. Barrow, who was working for Decca Records, initially declined the offer and referred Epstein to his former colleague Tony Calder, who had set up an independent PR firm with Andrew Loog Oldham (vgl. Harry 2000: 96). Subsequently, Calder was hired to send out press releases and to arrange press interviews: "The week before ["Love Me Do"] came out Brian Epstein asked if I could drum up some press on them. They meant nothing in London, but I talked everybody into it and trotted them down to *Melody Maker*, *NME* and *Disc* – and they all did these little 15-minute interviews, which was all you got in those days" ("Unsung": 67). In order to reach their target audience, The Beatles gave live concerts, signed copies of their single at record stores, and performed and gave interviews for radio shows, such as *The Friday Spectacular* on Radio Luxembourg and *Here We Go* on the BBC Light Programme (vgl. Miles 2001: 72-73). On 17 October 1962, they made their first appearance on television. Granada TV's *People and Places* showed The Beatles as they performed two songs live at the Cavern Club in Liverpool (vgl. Miles 2001: 72-73). Epstein asked Bill Harry, still one of The Beatles' personal friends, to 'plug' the group's first single release in his magazine *Mersey Beat*. According to Epstein's autobiography, Harry's work contributed significantly to the local success of the single, and "the kids of Liverpool bought it in the thousands" (Epstein 1998: 121). The week after their first television appearance, "Love Me Do" entered the *Record Retailer* charts at position 49. It was the first time The Beatles experienced the commercial power of audiovisual media. Until the end of the year, The Beatles toured the Merseyside area and fulfilled two concert bookings at the Star Club in Hamburg, which had been arranged prior to their record release in Britain. On 27 December, "Love Me Do" peaked at position 17 in the *Record Retailer* singles charts.

In January 1963, The Beatles went on a tour leading them through Scotland and England. On January 11, their second single "Please Please Me" was released in Great Britain. Backed by an extensive publicity campaign "Please Please Me" became The Beatles' first hit record in Great Britain, reaching the No. 2 spot in the *Record Retailer* charts and the No. 1 position in the *New Musical Express* and *Disc*. On February 11, 1963, The Beatles recorded the remaining ten tracks to complete their first album *Please Please Me*, which was released on March 22.

During the following months, the group engaged in several tours through Great Britain, causing mass excitement at many concerts. The British media realized The Beatles' overwhelming effect on teenage audiences

and began to take more interest in the group. In addition to their live performances, The Beatles appeared in various radio and television programs.

In the summer of 1963, George 'Bud' Ornstein, the head of United Artists' branch in London, conceived of the idea of making a movie with The Beatles (vgl. Carr 1996: 11). At the time it was very common for pop stars to appear in movies where they would lip-sync several of their songs. Most of these movies were low-budget productions, designed to cash in on the short-lived fame of teenage idols and pop stars such as Tommy Steele and Helen Shapiro. Often a movie like this would only serve as a vehicle for an accompanying soundtrack album, which generated high profits for the film production company that licensed or distributed the album. As The Beatles had become such tremendously popular entertainers in Great Britain, Ornstein's idea to produce a movie with them was based on the assumption that it would be another inexpensive exploitation picture, aimed at a youth audience which had become fascinated with a pop group that was expected to be only a passing phenomenon (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 6).

Ornstein contacted independent film producer Walter Shenson, who had produced several rather successful low-budget comedies. Shenson agreed to produce the Beatles' first movie. The budget for the film was set at only £200,000, as the production company did not have great confidence in the commercial durability of The Beatles (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 12).

October 1963-July 1964: The Beatles Conquer the World

While their first movie was being prepared in London, The Beatles continued their series of successes in the sphere of popular music. From October 1963 to January 1964, The Beatles went on a concert tour leading them through Great Britain, Sweden, Ireland and France. In November 1963, they released their second album, *With The Beatles*, as well as a new single, "I Want To Hold Your Hand," both of which reached the top of the charts in Great Britain. Again, they made numerous appearances on television as well as on radio to promote their recent releases.

Although The Beatles had become one of the most successful pop groups in Europe, they had not yet been able to establish their records in the American market. As Capitol Records, EMI's branch in the United States, had not been interested in The Beatles' first singles, Parlophone had offered the singles to small independent labels, Vee Jay Records and

Swan Records, which, however, did not have the financial means to introduce a new act to a large audience.³ When press reports of the group's tremendous success in Britain reached the United States, Capitol Records began to show more interest in The Beatles (vgl. Epstein 1998: 55). In addition, Ed Sullivan, the most popular television host in the United States at the time, and Sid Bernstein, an independent promoter in New York, had contacted Brian Epstein. Bernstein had become aware of The Beatles through English newspapers. As soon as February 1963, he called Brian Epstein, offering The Beatles an appearance at the Carnegie Hall in New York. As The Beatles had not had any charts successes in the United States, Epstein suggested that Bernstein give The Beatles a year to become known in America. Consequently, Bernstein booked the Carnegie Hall for a show in February 1964.

Sullivan had witnessed the effects of Beatlemania at Heathrow Airport in London in October 1963: "There was the biggest crowd I've ever seen in my life! I asked someone what was going on, and he said, 'The Beatles!' 'Who the hell are the Beatles?' I asked. But I went back to my hotel, got the name of their manager, and arranged for them to do three shows" (Harry 2000: 1043). In order to guarantee The Beatles a maximum of publicity, Brian Epstein made an efficient arrangement with the show's producer Bob Precht. While performers usually received a payment of \$7,500 for one appearance in *The Ed Sullivan Show*, Epstein accepted a total of \$10,000 for The Beatles' appearance in three shows, provided that they were presented as the main attraction. Having already arranged concerts in New York, The Beatles now were also to perform in Sullivan's show on three dates in February 1964.

Backed by The Beatles' tremendous commercial success in Europe as well as by Sullivan's and Bernstein's bookings, EMI and Brian Epstein now pressed Capitol Records to release The Beatles' new single "I Want To Hold Your Hand." Epstein personally called Alan Livingstone, the president of Capitol Records, and persuaded him to release the single on the Capitol label: "He was a gentleman and he was persuasive. I called him back and said, 'OK, we'll put them out.' Brian said, 'Wait a minute. I'm not going to give them to you unless you spend \$40,000 to promote their first single'" (Geller 2002: 71). Realizing the commercial

3 Vee Jay Records issued the singles "Please Please Me" and "From Me To You" in 1963. Swan Records released "She Loves You" in 1963. None of these releases initially charted, except for "From Me To You," which peaked at number 116 in *Billboard* magazine. After The Beatles had reached the top of the charts with "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," the two independent labels re-released these recordings, each selling several millions copies (vgl. Harry 2000: 1118).

potential of The Beatles in the United States, Livingstone agreed to Epstein's conditions, even though Capitol Records had previously never spent more than \$5,000 on promoting a single record (vgl. Harry 2000: 226). The single was released on 26 December 1963, accompanied by an extensive publicity programme including posters, stickers, T-shirts and close cooperation with radio stations to ensure air play. Livingstone remembers that "[i]t was very easy at that time to get air play. Particularly for Capitol, who had a good following. So that was the promotion. As far as the press was concerned it was almost automatic. [...] It was the easiest promotion I've ever seen" (Geller 2002: 72). American teenagers were enthused by The Beatles' music, and "I Want To Hold Your Hand" became the most successful single record in the United States to date, selling in excess of five millions copies. Although the music itself was the biggest selling point, such a tremendous success could only be achieved by the support of a company that had the capacity of providing the necessary means to distribute and promote the product.

The publicity campaign for "I Want To Hold Your Hand" went hand in hand with an announcement of The Beatles' first visit of the United States in February. Powered by Capitol Records, the media created an unprecedented hype surrounding the group's arrival in New York, which introduced the phenomenon of 'Beatlemania' in the United States. Prior to the arrival, Capitol Records had produced five million badges announcing "The Beatles Are Coming!" and distributed free buttons and T-shirts in New York. A December 23, 1963, memo from Paul Russell, National Album Merchandiser Manager, explained the extensive Beatles publicity campaign to Capitol Records employees. The information contained in this memo makes it quite clear that Capitol Records played an enormous role in launching The Beatles in the United States.

"On Monday, December 30, a two-page spread will appear in *Billboard* (it may be in *Cash Box*, too, on that day, or it will run a week later. [...])

Shortly after the first of the year, you'll have bulk quantities of a unique see-through plastic pin-on button. Inserted in each button is a shot of the Beatles, with each boy identified. What to do with the buttons? First, have all of your sales staff wear one. Second, offer them to clerks and jocks. Third, arrange for radio station give-aways of the buttons. [...]

Again shortly after the First, you'll have bulk quantities of a Beatle hair do wig. As soon as they arrive – and until further notice – you and each of your sales and promotion staff are to wear the wig during the business day! Next, see how many of the retail clerks in your area have a sense of humor. [...] Get these Beatle wigs around properly, and you'll find you're helping to start the Beatle Hair-Do Craze that should be sweeping the country soon. [...]

As soon as possible after the First, you'll have fantastic quantities of these two-inch by three-inch teaser stickers. [...] Put them up anywhere and everywhere they can be seen [...]. It may sound funny, but we literally want your salesman to be plastering these stickers on any friendly surface as they walk down the street or as they call on radio or retail accounts. [...] Make arrangements with some local high school students to spread the stickers around town. [...]

On or before the release date [...] you'll have exceptionally large quantities of both promo albums and jackets" (Spizer 2003: 73)

Radio stations were constantly playing Beatles records, and the disc jockeys informed the public of details concerning The Beatles' arrival. On 7 February 1964, when their Boeing 707 landed at John F Kennedy International Airport in New York, between 3,000 and 5,000 teenage fans and approximately 200 reporters enthusiastically welcomed The Beatles. Comments by The Beatles at the time as well as more recent interviews suggest that they were unaware of the great effort Epstein and Capitol Records had put into the publicity campaign. They seemed genuinely surprised by their apparently instant popularity and the almost frantic reception in New York City. While their music and the media hype surrounding their arrival in the States had built up local hysteria in New York City, it was the media coverage of The Beatles' press conference at the airport, which endeared them to the American public and finally resulted in a national interest in The Beatles. Having learned how to deal with the media in Great Britain, The Beatles managed to impress the press representatives with a witty press conference that set the tone for all subsequent press conferences in the United States.

"[Reporter:] Would you please sing something?

[Lennon:] No, we need money first. [Laughter]

[Reporter:] How many are bald if you have to wear those wigs?

[Starr:] All of us!

[McCartney:] I'm bald.

[Lennon:] Oh, we're all bald, yeah.

[McCartney:] Don't tell anyone, please. [Laughter]

[...]

[Reporter:] Do you hope to get a haircut?

[All:] No!

[Harrison:] I had one yesterday. [Laughter]

[...]

[Reporter:] Why does [your music] excite them so much?

[McCartney:] We don't know really.

[Lennon:] If we knew, we'd form another group and be managers. [Laughter]" (*The First U.S. Visit* 2000).

The Beatles' humor, which had contributed significantly to their popularity in Great Britain, became elementary in the press coverage of The Beatles' visit of the United States. In 1970, John Lennon explained that the British media had served as a training ground for the group: "[W]e really were professional by the time we got here. We learned the whole game. When we arrived here, we knew how to handle press. The British press are the toughest in the world – we could handle anything" (Wenner 2000: 108). In the course of the two weeks The Beatles remained in the United States, they were virtually omnipresent in the American media. While newspapers featured the group in the headlines every day, The Beatles also gave interviews to numerous radio stations. New York disc jockey Murray the K, one of the most popular radio stars at the time, was instrumental in promoting the group and accompanied them on their trip from New York City to Washington DC. As it would have been impossible to grant exclusive interviews to all radio shows, and in order not to miss the opportunity of reaching the group's target audience, Capitol Records distributed a promotional 7-inch EP to all the relevant stations. This EP contained an 'open-end' interview with The Beatles, featuring pre-recorded answers to a set of questions printed on the record sleeve. Radio disc jockeys could now create the illusion of The Beatles being in the studio, answering questions he or she read off the record sleeve.

“[Reporter:] Welcome to the show, fellas!

[All:] Thank you!

[McCartney:] Thank you very much.

[Starr:] Pleasure to be here!

[Reporter:] Say, John, how did you ever decide on a name like The Beatles?

[Lennon:] Well, I had a vision when I was twelve, and I saw a man on a flaming pie. And he said, ‘You’re Beetles with an A!’ And we are!

[...]

[Reporter:] Ladies and gentlemen, The Beatles have now taken over the world!

[Harrison:] That’s a nice thing to say, isn’t it?”

(Beatles 1964a)

In order to provide disc jockeys with more ‘exclusive’ material, Capitol Records as well as Vee Jay Records issued several additional promotional records to American radio stations in 1964. In September, Vee Jay distributed the promotional album *Hear The Beatles Tell All* to 7,000 radio stations (Miles 2001: 169), while *The Beatles Introduce New Songs* was distributed by Capitol Records in order to promote several Lennon/McCartney compositions recorded by other artists. Finally, Capitol Records released a double LP called *The Beatles’ Story* in November. The records contained a “narrative and musical biography of Beatlema-

nia”, providing biographies of each group member as well as excerpts from interviews and The Beatles’ hit records. In addition, the album also contained information on Brian Epstein and George Martin, whose importance to the group had been publicized from the very beginning of The Beatles’ career. However, the concept of The Beatles’ Story was not new, as similar releases had been on the market since reporter Ed Rudy had issued an interview album called *The American Tour with Ed Rudy*, which had reached No. 20 in the *Billboard* charts in June 1964. Realizing the commercial potential of interview releases, The Beatles’ record company Capitol Records promoted *The Beatles’ Story* along with the group’s most recent single “I Feel Fine”. The album proved to be a considerable success, reaching No.7 in the *Billboard* Album Charts in November.

In order to capture the event of The Beatles’ first U.S. visit on film, Granada Television in association with Brian Epstein’s NEMS company had contacted Albert and David Maysles, two pioneers in the field of cinéma vérité documentary films. The Maysles brothers filmed the group’s arrival and stayed with the group during their entire stay in America. While part of the film was shown in Great Britain as early as 12 February 1964⁴, the Maysles’ documentary *The Beatles in America* premiered in the United States on CBS on 13 November 1964 (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 144).

The Beatles’ omni-presence in radio and newspapers caused a nationwide interest in the group, peaking on 9 February 1964, when The Beatles performed live on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, one of the most popular television shows in the United States at the time. Their first live television performance in the States reached an estimated number of 73 million viewers, the highest rating in the history of American television to that date. They performed “All My Loving,” “Till There Was You,” and “She Loves You” in the first half of the show, and “I Saw Her Standing There” and “I Want To Hold Your Hand” at the end.

While the day after The Beatles’ first appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* was entirely dedicated to press interviews and presentations, the group travelled to Washington DC to perform in front of more than 8,000 fans on 11 February 1964. CBS filmed The Beatles’ first concert in the United States, which characteristically only lasted half an hour. The concert footage was shown as a closed-circuit telecast in cinemas across the United States in March 1964 (vgl. Lewisohn 2000: 146). The day after their concert in Washington, The Beatles headlined two shows at the

4 Granada Television showed 36 minutes of the Maysles brothers’ film footage titled *Yeah, Yeah, Yeah! – The Beatles In New York* on 12 February 1964 and repeated the documentary the following day.

Carnegie Hall in New York, which had been booked by Sid Bernstein the year before. On 13 February, The Beatles flew to Miami, Florida, where they attempted to relax while continuing their publicity campaign. Besides a photo session for *Life* magazine, The Beatles also granted a telephone interview to ABC TV's *Dick Clark's American Bandstand*. Their second appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* was broadcast live from Florida, and it proved to be another triumph for Ed Sullivan and The Beatles, as approximately 70 million viewers tuned in to see the group perform (vgl. Miles 2001: 134).

When The Beatles arrived back in London on 22 February, they were enthusiastically welcomed by a crowd of several thousand fans. The group's triumphant arrival was covered by various television and radio shows.

Only three days after The Beatles had returned to Great Britain, they began recording the songs Lennon and McCartney had written for the forthcoming movie soundtrack. A week later, on March 2, 1964, filming of The Beatles' first movie started at Paddington Station, London (vgl. Miles 2001: 135). The movie was shot within eight weeks, during which The Beatles not only attended the filming schedule but also managed to finish the recording of the soundtrack album and to appear in British and American television shows. In addition, John Lennon engaged in promotional activities for his first book *In His Own Write*, which was published by Jonathan Cape on 23 March 1964. The book's instant commercial and critical success supported Lennon's public image as 'the intellectual Beatle.'

Filming for *A Hard Day's Night* ended on 24 April 1964. Until the movie's world premiere in July, The Beatles engaged in various promotional activities for their recent record releases.⁵ Besides radio interviews and live performances for BBC radio shows, The Beatles starred in a British television special called *Around The Beatles*, which was aired on 6 May, 1964.

5 In March, the single "Can't Buy Me Love" was released by EMI and Capitol Records in Britain and the United States. Vee Jay Records released "Do You Want To Know A Secret" and Tollie Records released "Love Me Do" as singles in the U.S. in April. On 4 April 1964, The Beatles occupied twelve positions in the *Billboard* Singles Charts, including the top five positions ("Can't Buy Me Love," "Twist And Shout," "She Loves You," "I Want To Hold Your Hand" and "Please Please Me"). On 10 April, Capitol released an album titled *The Beatles' Second Album*, containing "You Can't Do That," a song written for *A Hard Day's Night*, as well as songs from the European release *With The Beatles* and other recordings previously available on singles.

In June, The Beatles went on a world tour leading them through Denmark, The Netherlands, Hong Kong, Australia and New Zealand. As Ringo Starr had previously collapsed suffering from acute tonsillitis and pharyngitis, he was temporarily replaced by session drummer Jimmy Nichols.

On 6 July 1964, The Beatles' movie *A Hard Day's Night* premiered at the London Pavilion.

