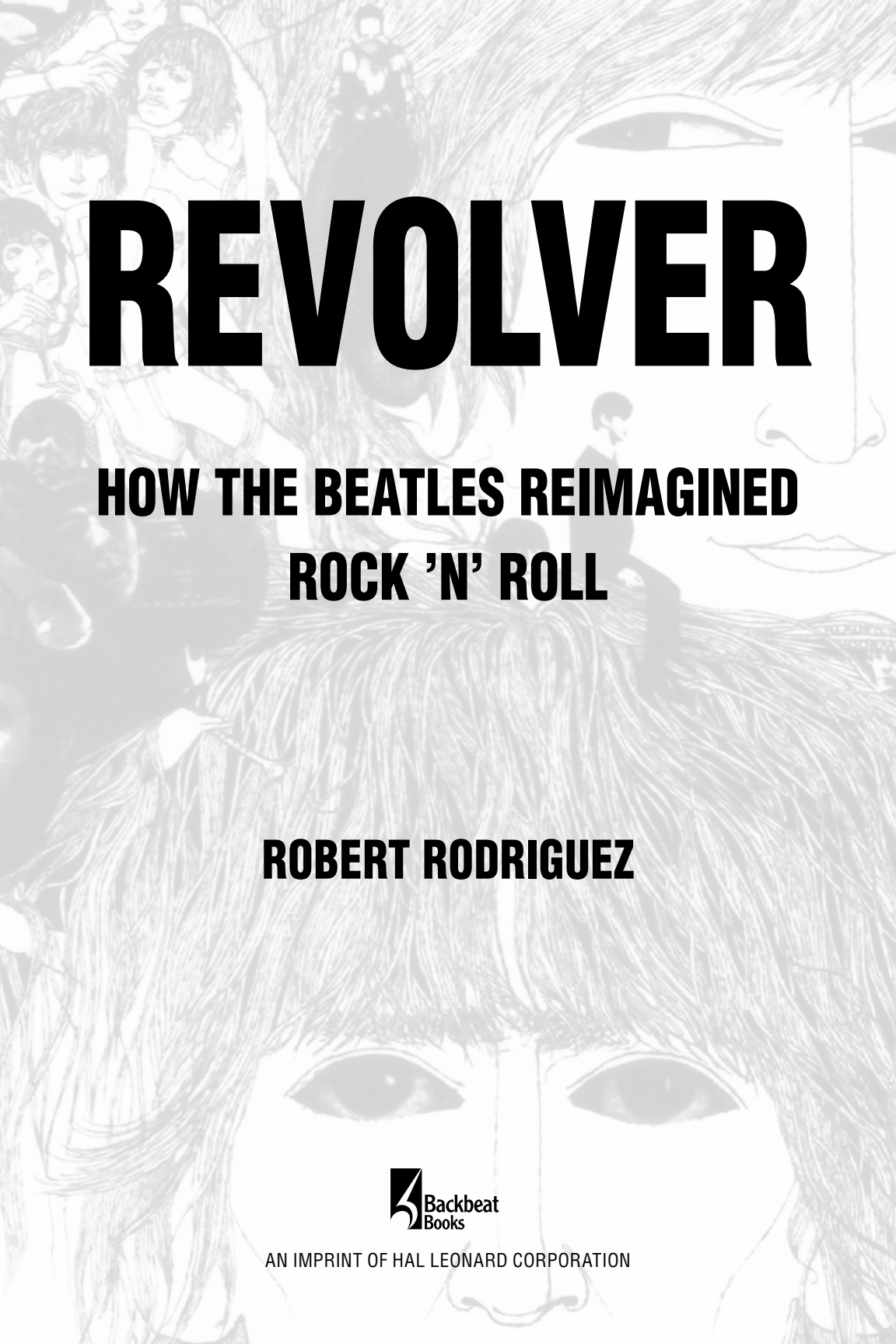
REVOLVER

HOW THE BEATLES REIMAGINED ROCK 'N' ROLL

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

REVOLVER



REVOLVER

HOW THE BEATLES REIMAGINED ROCK 'N' ROLL

ROBERT RODRIGUEZ

Backbeat Books

AN IMPRINT OF HAL LEONARD CORPORATION

Published in 2012 by Backbeat Books
An Imprint of Hal Leonard Corporation
7777 West Bluemound Road
Milwaukee, WI 53213

Trade Book Division Editorial Offices
33 Plymouth Street, Montclair, NJ 07042

All images from the author's collection, except as follows: *Beatles '66* songbook courtesy of Garry Day; "Got to Get You into My Life" sheet music courtesy of Pete Nash from the British Beatles Fan Club; *Teen Life* cover courtesy of Guy Barbier. Thanks also to Robert Brundish and to Noah Fleischer / Heritage Auctions.

Every reasonable effort has been made to contact copyright holders and secure permissions. Omissions can be remedied in future editions.

Printed in United State of America

Book design by Michael Kellner

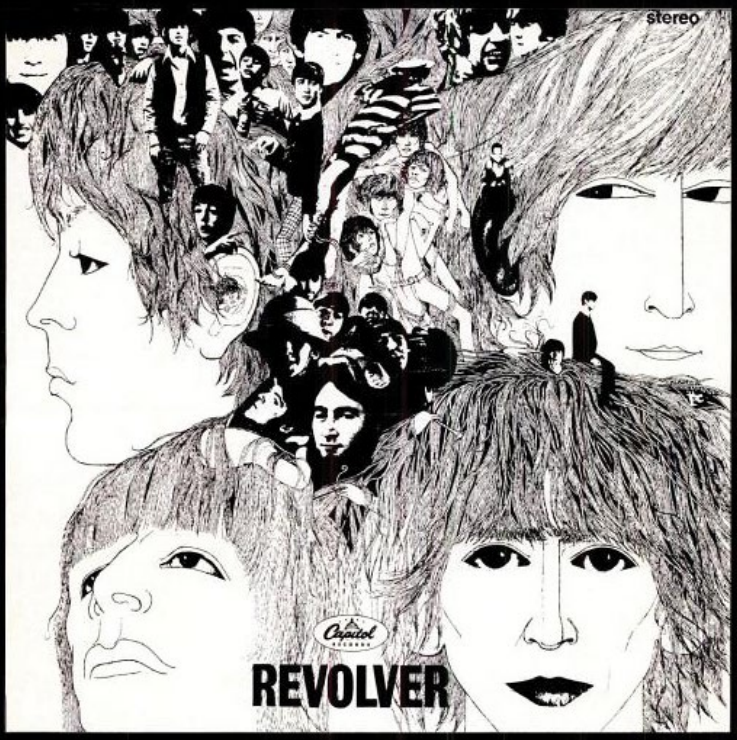
Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Rodriguez, Robert, 1961-
Revolver : how the Beatles reimagined rock 'n' roll / Robert Rodriguez.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-61713-009-0
1. Beatles. Revolver. 2. Beatles. 3. Rock music--1961-1970--History and criticism. I. Title.
ML421.B4R64 2012
782.42166092'2--dc23
2011047486

www.backbeatbooks.com

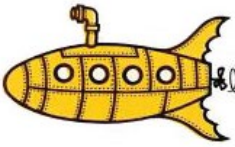
To Klaus, who got it right . . .

CONTENTS

BANG!



(S)T 2576 Capitol RECORDS

including  and Eleanor Rigby

LET ME TELL YOU HOW IT WILL BE: A BRIEF INTRODUCTION

"Did you ever dream about a place you never really recall being to before? A place that maybe only exists in your imagination? Some place far away, half-remembered when you wake up. When you were there, though, you knew the language, you knew your way around. That was the '60s. [Pause.] No, it wasn't that either. It was just '66 and early '67. That's all it was."

—"Terry Valentine" (Peter Fonda) in *The Limey*, 1999

For too many years, assessments of the Beatles' recorded output have routinely placed their 1967 release, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, atop the heap. The acclaim it received upon its arrival has echoed onward through the years as critics and a large segment of the fan population view it as the group's finest effort, an album that influenced everything that followed and set the standard against which all other acts would be measured.

Until perhaps the last decade or so, this was a common consensus. Other albums produced by the group might be better loved (*Abbey Road* comes to mind) or may have stirred more powerful feelings of personal nostalgia (Capitol's *Meet the Beatles!* was life-changing for the generation coming of age when it was new), while certain Beatles LPs ended up more respected than revered (e.g., 1968's sprawling "White Album" was seen by some as unfocused and self-indulgent in places: ". . . number nine, number nine . . ."). Yet it was *Sgt. Pepper* that seemed to live at the apex of the Beatles' creativity. Everything about it projected Importance, from its grandiose cover artwork to its apocalyptic ending chord—no rock album had ever seemed so much bigger than the sum of its tracks.

Currently, a dark horse within the Beatles' oeuvre has challenged—and in many instances, bested—that album for suprem-

acy in lists assessing the group's finest work. Unlike *Sgt. Pepper*, the 1966 release of *Revolver* wasn't a major media event. There was no speculative buildup or public wondering about what the Beatles were about to unleash. Further, its issue came under a cloud: just as the band were preparing to undertake what became their final tour, a scandal prompting bannings and bonfires swept America, dwarfing their stunning achievement.

Knowledgeable fans noted too that what emerged in the U.S. was not even representative of the group's artistic intent, being an eleven-track condensation of what the rest of the world was getting to hear. (Three John Lennon compositions—"I'm Only Sleeping," "And Your Bird Can Sing," and "Doctor Robert"—were withheld from U.S. editions of *Revolver* while the sessions were in progress, and used as padding on an earlier stateside release to feed the insatiable demand for new product by Capitol, their American label.) Not only was the album overshadowed by collateral concerns, but—as presented in the world's biggest market—it didn't even represent fulfillment of the group's vision.

Revolver is the Beatles' artistic high-water mark. For a start, unlike *Pepper*, it was a true group collaboration. Their work would increasingly take on the appearance of a musical co-op, with three members supporting the fourth member's individual pursuits; but with *Revolver*, the music bears all the evidence of the group as a whole being fully vested in creating Beatle music.

For the first time, studio technology was deliberately incorporated into the conception of the recordings they made, rather than used merely as a tool to capture performances. Suddenly, the possibilities of what a rock band could aspire to create were not limited by what they were expected to reproduce onstage. Pushing the studio's technological limits, they now sought to capture sounds previously unheard and in their heads, conscious of their place in rock's hierarchy and driven by the need to stay ahead of the competition. With this, the concept of the "recording artist" was born.

Only an act on their level of success could demand—and get—almost unlimited studio time to pursue their artistic agenda. Enabling them were longtime producer George Martin and engineer Geoff Emerick, visionaries equal to the task of looking

past what had been done and seeing what could be, fulfilling the Beatles' collective ambitions and inspiring them to reach for even greater heights. Their talents were as key to *Revolver*'s success as were the Beatles' own, resulting in a working relationship unique within their peer group.

Nineteen sixty-six was a year that saw major change in rock music as the dichotomy between pursuing chart success and aspiring to create something new forced many acts to choose sides. While the Beatles were able to stride both paths, seemingly with ease, others weren't so lucky. Perhaps the Beatles' closest artistic rival during this period, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys, attempted to do both; but when *Pet Sounds*, his crowning achievement, failed to engage the masses, he was pressured by his bandmates and his label to abandon the pursuit of perfection and higher ideals, resulting in one of rock's most notorious breakdowns.

Sgt. Pepper, in contrast to its predecessor, is inextricably tied to its time: a pleasant period piece but a period piece nonetheless; not so *Revolver*, an album crackling with potent immediacy. It's been said that it sparked subgenres with every track, anticipating electronica ("Tomorrow Never Knows"); punk (the abrasive sneer of "Taxman"); Baroque rock ("For No One"); and world music ("Love You To"), among other subgroups—and all within the space of fourteen tracks. Its very eclecticism may have worked against it in the short run, making it difficult to pigeonhole, but today is seen by many as its most appealing quality.

The depth of the songcraft evident on *Revolver* is hard to better. While John and George broadened their horizons, addressing such subjects as politics, pill pushers, and the illusory nature of the material world, Paul reached the top of *his* game, offering up sharply etched portraits of romantic breakdowns and societal isolation, balanced with sunny optimism. One thing the Beatles didn't do on this album was shy away from dark themes. In contrast, much of *Sgt. Pepper* seems slight or self-indulgent now. Only the magnificent "A Day in the Life" marked genuine forward movement from *Revolver*'s achievements.

The Beatles are the most scrutinized and overanalyzed band

in rock history. It may be hard at this distance to grasp the innovation that marked their every release, so far removed from context is their music in the download era; but if seen alongside the work of other hit-makers of the day, one can appreciate the timelessness of their achievements all the better. The Beatles weren't the only rock group driven to advance their art in 1966—they were just the most successful at it.

One must recognize that they were far from alone in ambition. Perhaps one of the most satisfying aspects of researching this book was recognizing how many of their contemporaries shared a virtual creativity pool with the Beatles, swapping ideas, drawing inspiration, and challenging each other in (mostly) friendly rivalry. It's impossible to quantify what work the Beach Boys, the Rolling Stones, the Byrds, and even Bob Dylan might have created but not for the inescapable X factor that working alongside the Beatles meant. But it was a two-way street, and one can only guess what the Beatles would have sounded like without having such a rich environment from which to draw.

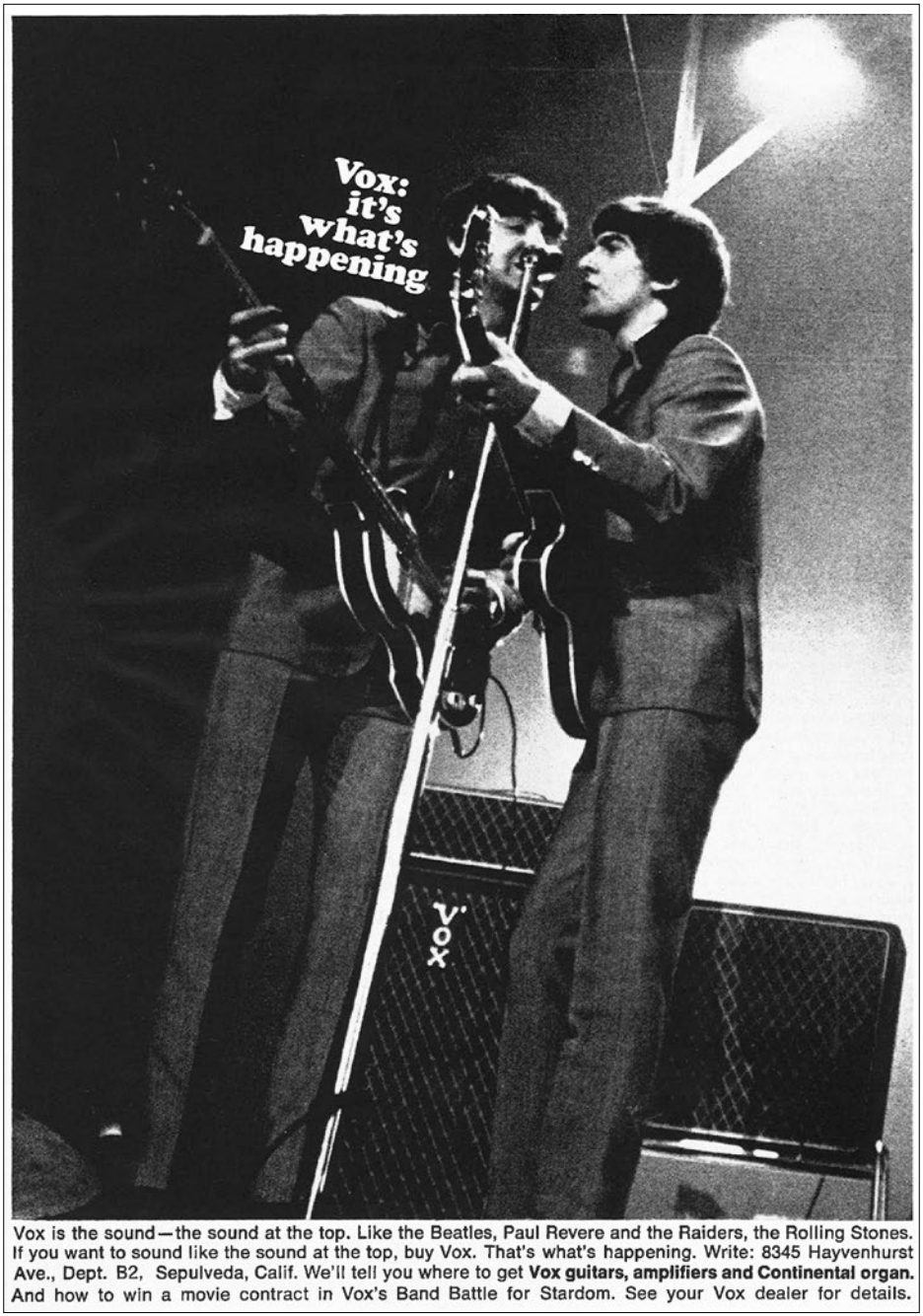
Reverberations of *Revolver*'s diversity and depth have only expanded since 1966. Not many acts attempt the feat of a holistic "concept" album *à* la *Pepper* these days; and those that do proceed at their own peril—but the model that *Revolver* set for effectively creating an eclectic collection of diverse songs lives on.

It is not my mission to tell people what should be their favorite Beatle album. Instead, I want to show how *Revolver* was their real game-changer—the work that signaled their intention of abandoning the lucrative live-performance side of their career in favor of creating soundscapes without limitations. *Revolver: How the Beatles Reimagined Rock 'n' Roll* tells the story of what they did, and how they did it.

—Robert Rodriguez
Autumn 2011

PART I

SPINNING THE CHAMBER



One of Brian Epstein's canniest moves was inking a deal with Vox in 1963. In exchange for the Beatles using Vox exclusively on stage, the musical-equipment company was allowed to use their image—a great deal for both parties.

1

AND THE BAND BEGINS TO PLAY: BEATLES '66

"What's going to come out of the next recording sessions?"
"Literally anything. Electronic music, jokes . . . one thing's for sure: the next LP is going to be very different."

—John Lennon, 1966

Though they did not yet know it, as the Beatles stepped out before some 10,000 screaming fans on that spring Sunday evening, it would be the last time that they would play before a paying audience in Great Britain. The date was May 1, 1966; the event was the *New Musical Express* Annual Poll-Winners All-Star Concert, held as always at London's Empire Pool, Wembley. The legions that had been waiting to see them through nearly twenty other acts didn't know it either, but as they witnessed the largely inaudible spectacle before them, an era was ending. The Beatles' participation in this annual event had become practically routine since 1963, but with this, their fourth appearance, they were happy to dispense with the ceremony once and for all.

Clad in black, and with John sporting dark glasses throughout, the Beatles offered an anticlimactic finish to this particular tradition. They were already agitated before taking the stage, locked in a battle against their comrades, the Rolling Stones, over who would close the show. At issue was who would appear last; though the set-enders would garner all the prestige as Britain's top rock act, they would also miss out on the television broadcast due to unresolved issues with the BBC. Therefore, the *second*-to-last act would get the coveted TV exposure.

This was what Brian Epstein and Andrew Loog Oldham (the

NEW MUSICAL EXPRESS

POLL-WINNERS PROGRAMME

ALPHABETICAL ORDER OF ARTISTS TAKING PART IN THIS CONCERT

BEATLES
John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, Ringo Starr

SPENCER DAVIS GROUP
Spencer Davis, Stevie Winwood, Muff Winwood, Pete York

DAVE DEE, DOZY, BEAKY, MICK AND TICH
Dave Dee, Trevor Davis, John Dymond, Mick Wilson, Ian Amey

FORTUNES
Rod Allen, Dave Carr, Glen Dale, Andy Brown, Barry Pritchard

HERMAN'S HERMITS
Herman, Karl Green, Keith Hopwood, Lek Leckenby, Barry Whitwam

ROY ORBISON
Backed by the Barry Booth Orchestra

OVERLANDERS
Terry Widlake, Paul Arnold, Laurie Mason, David Walsh, Peter Bartholomew

ALAN PRICE SET
Alan Price, John Walters, Boots Slade, Clive Burrows, Steve Gregory, Roy Mills

CLIFF RICHARD
Accompanied by The Shadows

ROLLING STONES
Brian Jones, Mick Jagger, Keith Richard, Charlie Watts, Bill Wyman

SEEKERS
Judith Durham, Keith Potger, Bruce Woodley, Athol Guy

SHADOWS
Brian Bennett, Hank Marvin, John Rostill, Bruce Welch

SMALL FACES
Steve Marriott, Kenny Jones, Ronnie "Plonk" Lane, Ian MacLagan

SOUNDS INCORPORATED
Griff West, Barrie Cameron, John St. John, Alan Holmes, Wes Hunter, Tony Newman

DUSTY SPRINGFIELD
(with her backing group, The Echoes)

CRISPIAN ST. PETERS

WALKER BROTHERS
Gary Leeds, John Maus, Scott Engel

WHO
John Entwistle, Keith Moon, Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend

YARDBIRDS
Paul Samwell-Smith, Chris Dreja, Keith Relf, Jim McCarty, Jeff Beck

THE ARTISTS WILL BE INTRODUCED BY

PETER MURRAY

TWICE winner and four times runner-up in the NME Disc Jockey Poll, PETER MURRAY—like many of his contemporaries—is a graduate of Radio Luxembourg. Indeed, it was at 208 that he first gained the enormous following which he has subsequently retained—or rather, substantially increased.

Peter was trained as an actor, and today nothing gives him greater pleasure than acting in a straight play. His 6-3 commitments give him little opportunity for this—but occasionally we do see him in such productions.

Like Jimmy Savile, much of Peter's popularity stems from his Dutch shows on Luxembourg, but he is also a BBC "regular"—and has just completed 18 months as host of the very successful "Late Night Saturday" show. Younger viewers will also know him well as compere of ATV's "Action" series.

And he probably holds the record for the number of appearances as a panellist in BBC-TV's "Juke Box Jury." Yes, Peter is a very busy man—and rightly so, because disc-jockeys like him are few and far between.

JIMMY SAVILE

FOR the second year in succession, the title of Britain's Top Disc Jockey goes to a man who has never presented a record programme on BBC radio! How, then, has JIMMY SAVILE achieved this remarkable distinction? Basically, on the strength of his ever-popular Radio Luxembourg series—plus his dynamic personality appearances on TV, in such programmes as "Top Of The Pops" and "Juke Box Jury".

Besides being the leading disc-jockey, Jimmy must also be the craziest, maniest d-j in the business. But it is his with-it approach that makes him so popular—furthermore, he could never be accused of talking down to the teenagers.

But behind that comedian facade, there lurks the shrewd and enterprising brain of the business man. For Jimmy's activities cover a very wide range—dance hall owner, promoter, even professional wrestler. And let's not forget his praiseworthy charity work.

Jimmy may come in for criticism from time to time for his off-beat ideas and unorthodox garb, but pop music would be much less colourful without him. We could do with a few more like J.S.

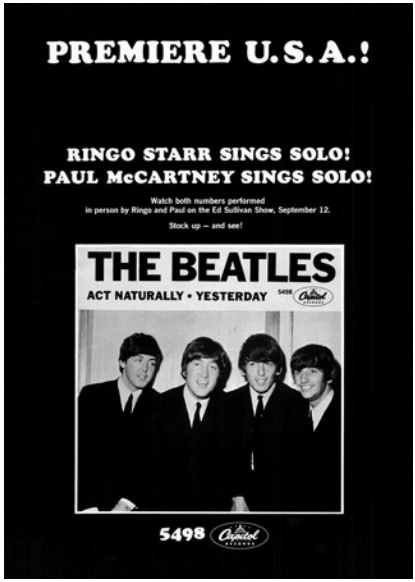
The 1966* NME *Poll-Winners concert was probably the high-water mark of this annual event. The following year saw Cream, the Beach Boys, the Small Faces, the Move, and Cat Stevens—but no Stones or Yardbirds.

Stones' manager and Epstein's former employee) were battling over. Apparently both bands were secure enough in their status to take a pass on the honor of closing; but in the end, the Stones prevailed and went on *first*. As it happened, neither band's set was filmed—which is probably for the better. By now viewing such occasions as a chore, the Beatles phoned in their performance, even opening with the same 1964 hit—"I Feel Fine"—that they'd played at the same event a year earlier. To those in attendance the Beatles could do no wrong, but on this evening they seemed under-rehearsed, and looked as if they didn't want to be there.

By then the Beatles were one month into crafting *Revolver*, the follow-up to *Rubber Soul*—which, upon its December 1965 release, had been seen as a major breakthrough beyond the Merseybeat sounds of their previous five LPs. Their ambitions to move beyond their peers were manifest, as Paul's "Yesterday" from the *Help!* album had proved in late summer. Issued as a single in the

U.S., the string-laden ballad went to number one, proving that their fan base was willing to accept something new and different from the Beatles.

The song's arrangement, layering a classical string quartet atop Paul's solo acoustic guitar, had been the inspiration of their producer, George Martin, and not the Beatles themselves. But as their artistry began to bloom in late 1965 and their innate ambition to stay ahead of the competition asserted itself, *Rubber Soul* emerged as a triumph that hinted at grander ambitions, perhaps ones that the existing rock paradigm could not contain. The album contained some of the most transcendent Lennon–McCartney originals yet: John's "Norwegian Wood," "Girl," and "In My Life" being chief among them. Paul's way with a hook was as strong as ever, evidenced by "Drive My Car" and "You Won't See Me." A tune originally conceived during their Liverpool days as a send-up of French art students was dusted off and reinvented as "Michelle," stirring dozens of covers as well as a Grammy Award for Song of the Year. And George Harrison too kept pace, weighing in with a pair of his most sophisticated offerings yet. One, the ambiguous "If I Needed Someone," would provide the Hollies with their next single. In short, the Beatles were on a roll.



Two tracks originally appearing on U.K. editions of the* Help! *album saw issue in the states as a single in September 1965, featuring the two most popular Beatles on vocals.

It must have struck the group as a complete waste of time to disrupt their focus as they worked on an album that already showed the promise of eclipsing even *Rubber Soul* just to perform a mini-set at Wembley before a crowd determined not to listen. Ostensibly showcasing recent fan favorites, the Beatles plowed

through "I Feel Fine"; a pair of *Rubber Soul* cuts, "Nowhere Man" and "If I Needed Someone" (the only Harrison composition the Beatles would ever perform live); the A-side of their most recent single, "Day Tripper"; and "I'm Down," the Little Richard retread that had replaced "Long Tall Sally" as set closer in 1965.

Their new single, "Paperback Writer" / "Rain," was already in the can and would drop in the U.K. in six weeks. To contemporary readers, it must seem unfathomable that the Beatles would squander the opportunity of such a high-profile gig to preview their next release. Their approach to the *NME* Poll-Winners gig serves as a perfect illustration of the schizophrenic nature that their career path had taken on. Conventional wisdom of the day held that a pop act could not survive purely as a recording entity; live appearances were essential to sustain one's career, not only as a means to stay fresh in the public's mind within a very competitive business, but also for monetary reasons.

The deal that the Beatles signed with EMI in 1962 was particularly punitive, paying one cent per single sold (which was then split four ways) and *half that* on overseas sales, which was the bulk of their business. (Album sales paid them two shillings per, which again was split four ways.) Lennon–McCartney's deal with Dick James Music was equally draconian, paying them the *minimum* of the time, fifty percent, which was then split 20-20 between John and Paul, with ten percent to Brian. Dick James received the other fifty percent.

Not until January 1967 did the group re-sign with EMI, agreeing to a nine-year deal that gave them a substantial raise; if not what they deserved, it was at least more in line with fairness than existed previously. They received a $2 million signing bonus, plus a royalty increase to ten percent. (Most importantly to the group, the contract stipulated that Capitol was no longer allowed to reshape their albums.)

But until them, the bulk of the Beatles' income had been derived from live appearances. On the high end of things, their famed appearance at Shea Stadium in August 1965 gave them a $160,000 payday (almost $1 million today); Chicago's White Sox Park gig paid nearly as much, $155,000, while other dates paid

in the $80–90,000 range. Sweetening the deal was the fact that they did not pay U.S. tax on their earnings, only U.K. tax, which, though high, at least made their typical thirty-minute-maximum sets worth the effort. The Beatles thus viewed touring as a necessary evil, though one that stirred increasing disenchantment as time went on.

By the time the Beatles took the stage at Wembley, they'd already completed or started work on "I'm Only Sleeping," "Got to Get You into My Life," "Love You To," "Doctor Robert," "Taxman," "And Your Bird Can Sing," "Eleanor Rigby," and—with the greatest leap into the future the band had yet undertaken—"Tomorrow Never Knows." Yet here they were, cranking out a set not too far advanced from what they'd been playing at the Cavern only three years prior. The situation demonstrated the dichotomy between fulfilling duties out of financial need (and fan demand), and pursuing their artistic destiny in the studio, where their creative heart lie. As far as they were concerned, the latter course was the way of the future.

How *Revolver* came together was a matter of circumstance as much as design. Nineteen sixty-six was originally mapped out to be an echo of the preceding two years: a film, a soundtrack album, tour dates, another album. But the plan was thrown into disarray when they found they could not agree on a script for their third film, on which they were due to begin work in April. Brian Epstein had blocked out three months to accommodate a shooting schedule that did not materialize; once it became evident that plans would be postponed, the group suddenly found themselves with some unexpected downtime for the first period since Epstein had entered their lives.

In February 1965, it had been announced in *NME* that the Beatles had selected *A Talent for Loving*, written by Richard Condon (*The Manchurian Candidate*), to be the basis of their third collaboration with producer Walter Shenson and director Dick Lester. A Western satire—*à* la *Cat Ballou*—it would have, for the first time, given the four the opportunity to play actual characters, and not versions of themselves. But without a decent script (as well as enough fittingly themed songs to fill up the soundtrack),

it was announced in *Billboard* in December that the launch had been scrubbed. (It eventually emerged in 1969, directed by Richard Quine and starring Richard Widmark and Cesar Romero.) This unplanned bounty of free time proved to be a creative catalyst. In the meantime, Brian scrambled to put together a tour to fill the unexpected opening in their schedule.

The year had begun with the group tying up some loose ends: a film of their 1965 Shea Stadium concert was being prepared for television broadcast (in America, the film would not be televised until January 1967, just as a very different group was at work crafting *Sgt. Pepper*). Before it could be completed, though, some audio shortcomings had to be patched up. On January 5, the Beatles duly arrived at London's CTS Studio to lay down retakes of some of their set; most of the issues centered on a complete lack of bottom end or inaudible drums on the recording.

A detailed account of the session exists in a letter written by the project's overseer, production manager M. Clay Adams, to his teenage son. Adams was a seasoned professional with many years in the business, notably on the 1950s *Victory at Sea* series, but also *Sgt. Bilko*, and, most importantly, *The Ed Sullivan Show*. It was Sullivan's production company that was producing the film (in collaboration with NEMS Enterprises, Brian Epstein's company), hence Adams's involvement. His son Michael was a certifiable Beatlemaniac, and had been from the beginning. Adams's work accorded him the privilege of proximity, and he made the most of it, making sure that he got his son a ticket not only for the Beatles' 1964 *Sullivan Show* debut, but even access to their dress rehearsal as well.

The elder Adams's account offers a rare glimpse from a non-insider into the group's work habits and individual personalities. Of the four Beatles, it was Paul that arrived first. Granted, he lived the closest, but he also seemed keen on making the most of the time, quickly knocking out all the songs that he alone was needed on ("I'm Down," "Dizzy Miss Lizzie," "Can't Buy Me Love," and "Baby's in Black"). Describing him as "full of fun," Adams also opined that Paul was the most inherently musical, sit-

ting down at the piano between takes and compulsively pounding out improvised melodies.

The others arrived at 10:30—exactly one hour late—having carpooled together. This didn't seem to concern them, nor did the fact that their guitars hadn't yet arrived. Ringo was sporting a full beard, glasses, and a Civil War–type cap, while John was prepared to give Adams a hard time. Reminding John that, without the instruments, there'd be no point in being there, Adams was told, "Well, at least they didn't get here all smashed. They wouldn't be any good to us if they arrived smashed, would they, now?" The producer quickly realized that he was being subjected to the Beatles' brand of Scouse humor, and with that, the ice was broken.

Once their gear showed up, the group proved themselves to be quick and disciplined performers, listening attentively to the directions issued by George Martin and following them to the letter. Several songs were tweaked in part only, or "fortified," as Adams phrased it. The word seemed to amuse Paul, who kept asking after each take, "How are we doing, Clay—did we fortify that one okay?" "Ticket to Ride" and "Help!" were re-cut in their entirety. Running short on time, they elected to substitute the live Hollywood Bowl recording of "Twist and Shout" for the Shea Stadium one, while Ringo's "Act Naturally" was repaired by simply dropping in the studio recording wholesale.

Adams noted the musical telepathy between the four Beatles. If John or Paul began trying out a musical idea, the rest of the group would quickly fall in, "no matter how complex the arrangement." There was also a lot of instrument swapping go-

ing on, with George demonstrating some drum patterns behind Ringo's kit, while the latter doodled around on guitar or piano. Also evident was their high regard for George Martin, whom Adams described as "thoughtful, cooperative, and very 'giving' of himself." Before Adams returned to New York, Martin graciously gifted him a copy of the U.K. edition of *Rubber Soul*, plus *Beatles for Sale* and a pile of British musical magazines to give to his son.

Whatever regard they'd once had for the material they were trotting out on tour had since been diminished by the passage of time and the freshness of what they now aspired to create. John told *Melody Maker*, "I can't stand listening to most of our early stuff . . . songs like 'Eight Days A Week' and 'She Loves You' sound like big drags to me now." If the necessity of revisiting their back catalog for their stage set wasn't enough to weary him, the stifling effects of fame more than made up for it.

In the May 1966 issue of *Flip*, a youth-oriented journal that contained surprisingly insightful interviews, John confided, "If I thought I'd [have] to go through the rest of my life being pointed and stared at, I'd give up the Beatles now. It's only the thought that one day it will all come to an end which keeps me going." Remarks like this were one element that prompted a continual cycle of rumors throughout the year that the group was breaking up. Seen within a wider context, what they really revealed was a restlessness within John that somehow, all the fame, adulation, and success had so far failed to satisfy.

This chronic emptiness had been amplified within the pages of London's *Evening Standard* back in March, when John, along with his bandmates, were each profiled by journalist Maureen Cleave, a friend of the group's. During an multiple-hour visit to Kenwood, the Lennons' home in Weybridge (the "stockbroker belt" outside of London), Cleave succeeded in getting John to reveal his belief that being a Beatle wasn't his life's mission. "You see, there's something else I'm going to do, something I must do, only I don't know what it is. That's why I go 'round painting and taping and drawing and writing and [all] that, because it may be one of them. All I know is, this isn't it for me."

This was an astonishingly frank admission for someone in his

position to make. Rather than the standard "it's lonely at the top" confessional seen from time to time in show business, John was musing aloud that everything the Beatles had worked for and achieved left him feeling dissatisfied. It was, to be sure, a trait that would follow him the rest of his life, but readers in 1966 must have been incredulous. It underscored his perception that he was an artist that performed, not a performer (or "entertainer") with an artistic bent.

For most of their recorded output to this point, it had been John more or less in the driver's seat. His dominant, assertive personality and need to be the first spurred the band's boldness. For example, opening "I Feel Fine" with feedback had been his idea; and to his credit, George Martin happily fulfilled the request without simply dismissing it out of hand, as another producer might have. It was John that suggested George use his sitar on "Norwegian Wood," and came up with the bright intake of air as an element of the refrain on "Girl" (reminding some listeners of the sound of taking a hit on a joint). His loud dissatisfaction with double-tracking his vocals led to engineer Ken Townsend's invention of ADT—Automatic Double Tracking—a technique that would be used almost relentlessly not only on this record, but would eventually become a common studio trick in all of pop music.

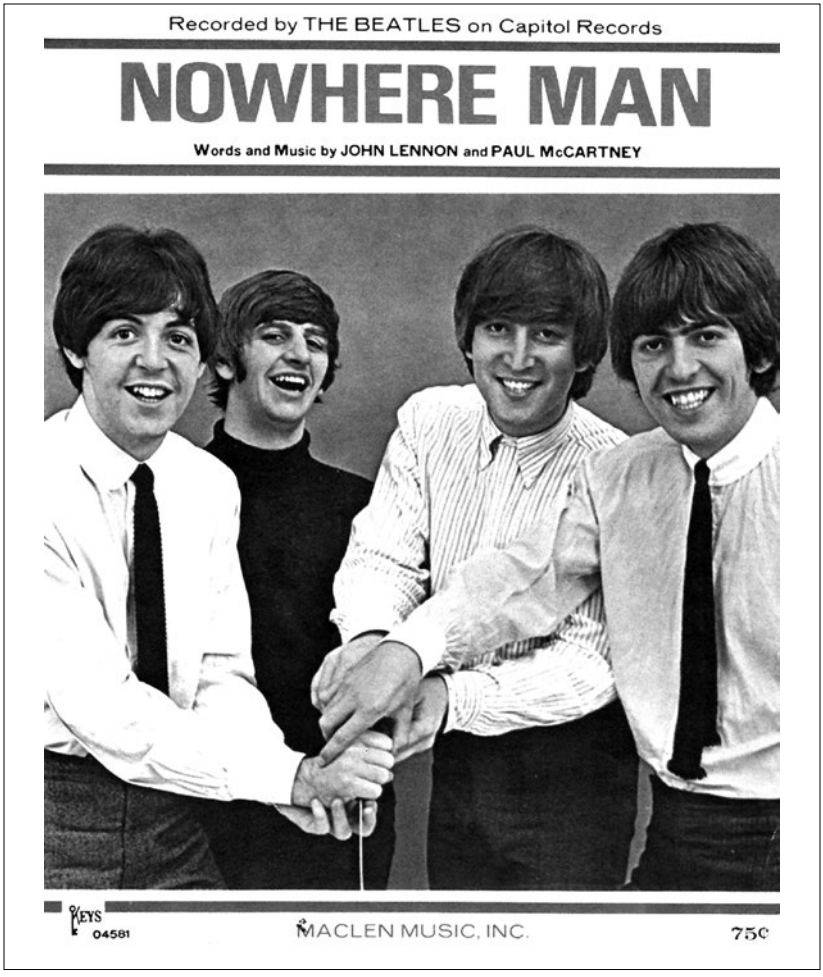
Not every idea panned out. During the session for "Tomorrow Never Knows," he opined that the distant vocal sound he was after might best be achieved by swinging him upside down from a rope in the studio and capturing his singing into the microphone as he swung to and fro. This was one idea that George Martin was unwilling to test out, but it did indicate John's eagerness to do what hadn't been tried before.

Conversely, though, the dominant Beatle was easily distracted, and if it took some extra discipline to achieve greatness, he'd just as soon not bother. Membership in the Beatles placed him in the ideal situation, however, for whenever his interests flagged, Paul was there to keep things focused, while George possessed a singular never-say-die attitude that would see an idea through to completion, no matter how long it took to master. Paul's biggest

The year they first came to America, the Beatles enjoyed an unprecedented level of success, including two Grammys. For 1965, they were nominated for ten more, spread between "Yesterday" and the* Help! *soundtrack, but they won none, beaten in more than one category by Frank Sinatra.

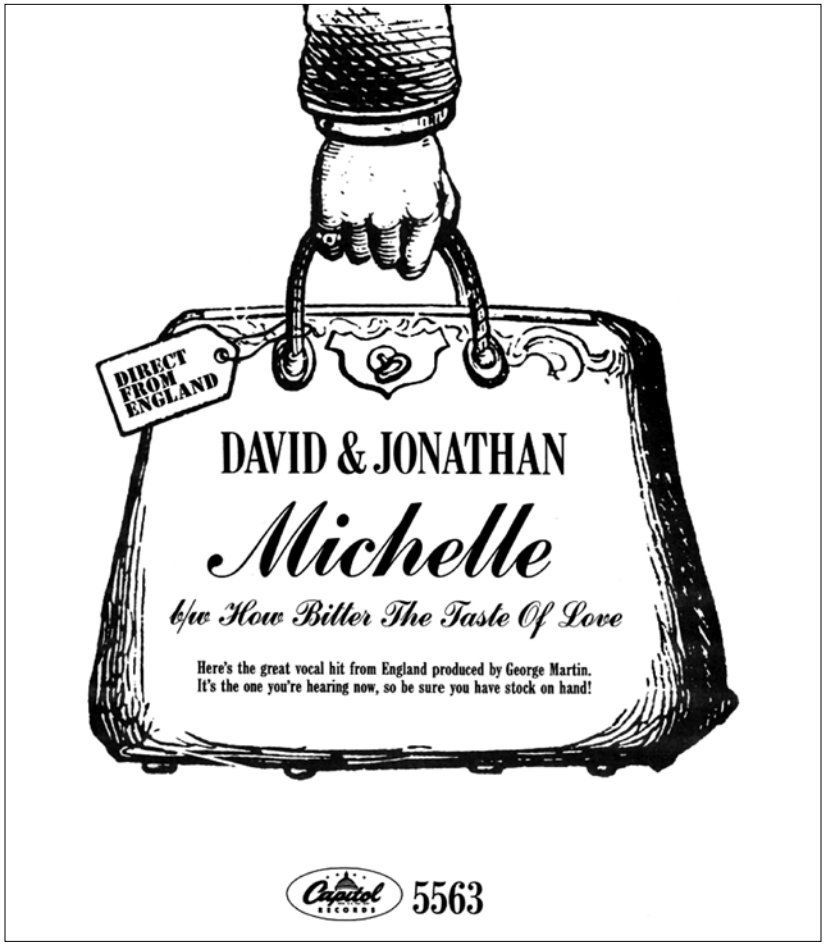
contributions to this point mostly focused on the high level of musicianship he provided, be it on bass, vocals, piano, or—on occasion—lead guitar. He also provided an unerring ear for detail, suggesting Ringo's drum pattern in "Ticket to Ride," for instance, or the sustained violin note heard in "Yesterday" during the start of the last verse.

Though artistry is something that cannot be quantified, it is a fairly accepted notion that John and Paul were, through 1966, on



Held back in the U.S. from December 1965's* Rubber Soul *release, "Nowhere Man" was released as a single by Capitol in early 1966. The song revealed John's deeper exploration into more introspective subjects, in this case his own ennui.

fairly equal footing, possessing complementary talents that, more often than not, canceled out each other's weaknesses. In very general terms, John led Paul further outside existing boundaries than he was usually inclined to go, while Paul tended to rein in John's excesses. The result was music that represented each man's optimum talents. John's deep-rooted insecurities were masked by outward aggression, leading to his domineering presence within the group. His bandmates were, for the most part, happy to let



At the same time John's worldview was turning inward, Paul was hitting his stride as a writer of standards.* Rubber Soul*'s "Michelle" drew a raft of covers by other artists, including this "sanctioned" one by David and Jonathan (the* nom de plume *of songwriters Roger Greenway and Roger Cook). Produced by George Martin, it peaked at number eighteen in the U.S.

him take the lead. It was no coincidence that his vocals had been featured most prominently on the majority of their singles to this point, or that it was he that sang lead on four of six album openers and five of six album closers.

But 1966 marked the point where things began to shift. Paul's creative renaissance came just as John's point of engagement started to wane. Every one of the Beatles' big concepts after this year came from Paul: *Sgt. Pepper*; *Magical Mystery Tour*; the forma-