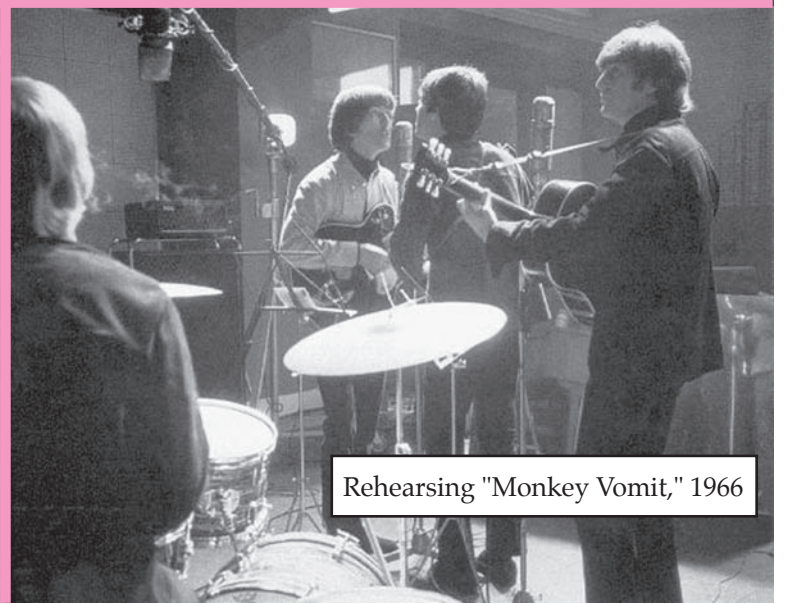


All smiles after beating Federal racketeering and extortion charges, 1964. L-r: Paul, George, John, and Ringo



An appearance on *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, 1965



Rehearsing "Monkey Vomit," 1966

BLIMEY!

They're Britain's biggest pop sensations since Alma Cogan.
Mateo Burtch confabs with the Fab Four

Paul McCartney remembers the day well. "I had just gotten out of the bath," he recalls with the trademark smile that has made him the love interest of a million teeny-boppers worldwide. "I had some toast and then I watched a bit of telly and then I went to bed."

A normal day for most of us — but, then, most of us aren't members of the pop "supergroup" The Beatles. Since bursting out of England a few years ago (*see box, page 10*), the Four Moptops have soared to the top of the pop charts, charming listeners of all ages and amassing a fortune that *Forbes* magazine estimated to be very large. Their spectacular harmonies, innovative melodies, and gift for the winning pop "hook" have made them kings of the new music scene while still in their twenties. Paul is left-handed.

Recently, SHAG caught up with Britain's most famous hairy youngsters — singer-songwriter John Lennon, singer-songwriter McCartney, singer-songwriter George Harrison, and "Fifth Beatle" Ringo Starkey — after a performance at London's Palladium Hall Arena. We spoke by telephone.

SHAG: Hello.

JOHN: Hello.

SHAG: Is this the Beatles?

JOHN: It's one of them, at any rate.

SHAG: Hello?

JOHN: Hello?

SHAG: I have a bad connection. Hold on. I'm going to call you back.

JOHN: Hello?

[We dialed them a second time.]

SHAG: Hello, lads.

ALL: Hello, SHAG!

SHAG: How's it going?

PAUL: It's going great.

SHAG: Let me begin by asking what it's like to be a Beatle.

PAUL: Oh, it's good, mostly.

GEORGE: Mostly, that is.

RINGO: Yeah, there are good bits and bad bits. Like anything.

SHAG: I hear the English play a lot of soccer. Do you like soccer?

GEORGE: Oh, we watch a bit on the television. We'll watch pretty much anything.

PAUL: We don't play it. Can't, you see. We're indoors all the time.

JOHN: We just kick Ringo around a little. He's very soft.

GEORGE: That's right, he's very soft. You're soft, aren't you, Ringo?

RINGO: Gerron then with you!

'We're not just bigger than Jesus. We're bigger than any of the apostles except St. Philip.'

SHAG: I'm wondering where you get your ideas for songs.

PAUL: Oh, just about anyplace, really. I got the idea for the song "Help, I'm On Fire" from one time when I was on fire.

RINGO: Some bird had tossed a can of petrol on him and threw a match afterward.

PAUL: So anything can be an inspiration. It was just lucky I was sitting at the piano at the time.

JOHN: Yeah, and I wrote "Depressed and Suicidal" after a haircut.

SHAG: That went to number one.

JOHN: No, the haircut only made it to number 38 here.

SHAG: I wonder if you could tell us who some of your inspirations are.

GEORGE: Early on it was Buddy Holly and Chuck Berry. Later it got more spiritual, more mystic. Now we're going back, towards the middle.

RINGO: We found an Indian guru who knows the chords to "Twenty Flight Rock."

GEORGE: He plays a two-day version of it.

PAUL: He's an amazing performer. He can play the tablas behind his back, or with his teeth.

SHAG: Many people feel that your recent songs encourage drug use. Your comment?

JOHN: Look, everyone knows we've tried LSD. It's well known. So some of that will show up in our songs. I mean, it would be daft if it didn't.

GEORGE: Daft.

JOHN: But the things people are saying, well, they're daft, too. I mean, in "Walnut Tracheotomy" I wrote "a thousand electric chocolate sunrises / Perforate my sternum" and I was only talking about a trip to the zoo. But people read drugs into it.

GEORGE: It's daft.

PAUL: Besides, Bob Dylan started it.

RINGO: That's right, he started it.

GEORGE: But we always get blamed for it. It's daft I tell you.

SHAG: Yet there *are* secret messages in your songs. If you play "Rubber Girl" backwards you can hear John repeating, "Paul, take out the trash."

PAUL: Well, it was my turn.

JOHN: But it gets all blown out of proportion, you see. I mean, the whole 'Paul is Dead' thing was absolute rubbish.

GEORGE: When really it was Ringo

who was dead.

RINGO: That's right. Since 1958.

SHAG: So there are no secret messages in your songs.

PAUL: We put in little things. The chorus to "Kiss My Head" has a reminder that I'm supposed to pick up a loaf of bread and some milk on my way home. Because I'm always forgetting to do that.

SHAG: I'm wondering if you could give us a glimpse into the songwriting process. Do you compose together?

PAUL: In the early days we wrote all our songs together, but John's guitar kept poking me in the shoulder, so now we usually start a song on our own and then get help with it.

JOHN: Maybe I'll have a song I haven't quite finished, and Paul will have an idea for the middle eight, or vice-versa. Which is why "My Lovely Darling Love" switches to a verse about tuna after the chorus.

GEORGE: Meanwhile, I'm usually off to one side being sullen.

PAUL: But George writes some very good songs, too, you know.

Who Are The Beatles?

In Portugal they're known as *Os Beatles*. In Spain and Mexico, it's *Los Beatles*. The French know them as *Les Beatles*. In Australia they go by "The Beatles," while over in Canada they're called "The Beatles." In New Zealand they're also known as "The Beatles."

Whatever they're called, this much is for sure: they burst out of tiny Hamburg, England and changed the world forever. Everything about them was new — their music, their hair, their clothes . . . even their "English accents," which gave words like *schedule* and *weekend* a "mod" and "gear" twist!

But these "overnight successes" were no overnight successes. They'd spent years gigging in small clubs, honing their songwriting and performing skills to the breaking point. Finally, in 1962 they were discovered by manager Brian Epstein, who changed their name from "The Fab Four" and set them on their way to stardom. With Richard "Ringo" Starkey (*né* Starr) replacing original drummer Ed

Sullivan, the group was set, and fame was quick to come.

Since then success has followed The Beatles as closely as a bloodhound who's on the tail of a mass murderer who is still carrying a bloody purse with him while he runs. While their early hits, such as "Love Me Please," "Eight Weeks a Year," and "Eleanor Yesterday" showcased their singing and composing talents, it was their trio of movies — *A Hard Date*, *Hello!*, and *Sunken Submarine* — that gave them worldwide cachet and endeared them to the entire family.

If The Beatles have a leader, it's John Lennon, a half-Japanese Liverpudlian who accidentally killed his mother with a tram when he was sixteen. Known for his acerbic wit, Lennon has written two books, *Spanish Words* and *In His Own Life*, which display his writing and cartooning skills. His songwriting partner, Paul McCartney, is sometimes known as "The Cute Beatle," and is currently engaged to several actresses. He is left handed.

The Beatles' "lead" guitarist, George Harrison, is variously known as "The Quiet Beatle" and "The Beatle With the Extraordinarily Thick Eyebrows." Bringing up the rear is tiny Ringo Starkey, their drummer, who was acquired from an orphanage at an auction.

Despite their phenomenal success, The Beatles have not stood on their laurels. Rather, they continue to explore their own musical growth. Where their early efforts employed simple melodies and familiar themes, recent albums have featured "psychedelic" lyrics, sound effects, orchestration, and even Pakistani influences. One song even included "bongo" drums and bells!

And the boys show no sign of slowing down. They continue to stay one step ahead of their pop rivals through constant innovation and hard work. In the works are an impromptu rooftop concert in March, followed by an acrimonious breakup involving rank pettiness and squabbles over money. **S**

RINGO: He has, you know. He wrote "I'm Sullen" and "Leave Me Alone You Twit."

SHAG: Any plans for *you* to write a song, Ringo?

RINGO: John won't let me. He says I'm not tall enough.

JOHN: You've got to wait, lad.

PAUL: Ringo tried to write a song but it was awful.

GEORGE: Horrible. Some of the birds who follow us around rang us up to ask us to have him destroyed.

PAUL: But we can't do that. We have to have a drummer, after all.

'Me mum's dead.'
'What's that then?'
"I said, me mum's dead.'
'Oh, bloody hell — he's starting again.'

SHAG: Speaking of girls, does the screaming and shrieking of Beatlemania ever get old?

JOHN: It's bloody hell is what it is. We can't hear ourselves play, you know! Sometimes we sing horrible things into the microphones.

SHAG: Such as?

JOHN: Horrible things. "You're daft and barmy, you brainless bloody get."

PAUL: No, wait, that *is* from one of our songs.

SHAG: You wrote a song for the Rolling Stones.

GEORGE: Yeah, they said they were having trouble coming up with material. So we sold them one called "We Are The Beatles" for five quid.

RINGO: But it never charted.

JOHN: Well, they changed the words, didn't they. You can't rhyme "needles" with "Rolling Stones."



SHAG: You've toured the United States twice now. What really stands out for you about America?

PAUL: Oh, Room 312 at the Holiday Inn in Atlanta. Definitely.

GEORGE: Room 790 at the Hilton in Cleveland was very good, too.

RINGO: I really liked Room 811 at the Denver Plaza Suites.

JOHN: Plus they've got food in America. You can't find that here.

PAUL: That's true. In America you've got all sorts of things to eat, like nylons and Chevrolets.

SHAG: What are your plans for the future?

JOHN: I'm seriously thinking of

meeting a Japanese conceptual artist and marrying her.

PAUL: In fact, we all are. We do everything as a group.

GEORGE: That's why we only need one shower, you see.

SHAG: Well, I think that pretty much wraps up my questions.

GEORGE: If you'll hang on the line you can listen to the telly. "Top of the Pops" is on in fifteen minutes.

SHAG: No, I should be going.

JOHN: It's been gear chatting with all the little American people.

SHAG: Yes. Thanks for your time.

ALL: You're welcome.

SHAG: Goodbye.

ALL: Goodbye.

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FAB FACTS

Number 1 records: 27

Most-covered song: "I'm Loving Love"

Least-covered: "Naked Calisthenics"

Teeth (total): 120

Biggest Audience: British Large Persons' Society Ball, Hammersmith Odeon, June 9th, 1965

Distance from Lagos, Nigeria to Bangkok, Thailand: 9,288 miles

Shortest song: "Feedback" (Take 4)

Longest song: "Feedback" (Take 557)