



By ALFRED G. ARONOWITZ

YEAH! YEAH! YEAH!

MUSIC'S GOLD BUGS: THE BEATLES

They can't read music, their beat is corny and their voices are faint, but England's shaggy-maned exports manage to flip wigs on two continents.

Brian Sommerville is a balding 32-year-old Londoner whose jaw juts out like the southeast corner of England when he thinks he is about to say something important. At Kennedy International Airport in New York last February 7, Sommerville's jaw was projecting so far he was almost unable to open his mouth to speak. A thousand screaming teen-agers were trying to wriggle toward a thin white line of a nylon rope that had been stretched across the terminal building lobby. Three thousand more were screaming from behind bulging metal railings atop the roof, where they were the guests of New York disc jockeys, who had invited them to take the day off from school.

Next to Sommerville a New York *Journal-American* photographer was tugging angrily at his arm, shouting, "We bought an exclusive story and we can't even get a picture of them looking at us—what did we pay you money for?" At Sommerville's other arm a phalanx of British correspondents was complaining that the police wouldn't let them into the press room. There wasn't space left in the press room anyway, and one of the cops tried to throw out a Capitol Records executive who had arrived without an identification badge. Disc jockeys equipped with tape recorders were pointing cylindrical microphones at the mob. Flashbulbs exploded. From the back of the lobby came word that two girls had fainted. Hemmed in and harassed, Sommerville's jaw signaled a pronouncement. "This," he said in the intonations of a nation that has been accustomed to ruling the world, "has gotten entirely out of control." Sommerville is press officer of a rock-'n'-roll group known as the Beatles. Their plane had just landed.

Amid a fanfare of screeches, there emerged four young Britons in Edwardian four-button suits. One was short and thick-lipped. Another was handsome and peach-fuzzed. A third had a heavy face and the hint of buck-teeth. On the fourth, the remnants of adolescent pimples were noticeable. Their names were Ringo Starr, Paul McCartney, John Lennon and George Harrison, but they were otherwise in-

distinguishable beneath their manes of moplike hair.

After they were ushered into the floodlit uproar of the press room, Brian Sommerville, acting as master of ceremonies, stepped to a microphone, again thrust out his jaw and addressed the reporters. "Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen," he said, "will you please shut up!" The first question from the American press was, "Do you believe in lunacy?" "Yeah," answered one of the Beatles, "it's healthy." Another reporter asked, "Would you please sing something?" "No," replied another Beatle, "we need money first." Still another reporter asked, "Do you hope to take anything home with you?" "Yeah," a Beatle replied, "Rockefeller Center." At first, few of the reporters could remember which Beatle was which. But by the end of their two-week visit to America, each of them had become a distinct personality. Each of them, in fact, had become a star.

Ringo is the one that some observers have compared to Harpo Marx. He has bright blue eyes that remind one of a child looking through a window, although he sometimes deliberately crosses them as he sits dumbly at the drums playing his corny four-four beat. "I hate phonies," he says with the absolutism of somebody who thinks he can spot one a mile away. "I can't stand them." The most popular of the Beatles in America, he evokes paroxysms of teen-age shrieks everywhere by a mere turn of his head, a motion which sends his brown spaniel hair flying. When he flips his wig, the kids flip theirs. "RIIINNGO! RIIINNGO!" the kids call out. He acquired the nickname because he wears two rings on each hand. He wears different rings at different times, changing them like cuff links. "I like the gold ones," he says. "The fans send a lot of silver ones, too, but I send them back." Then he adds, "Do you know I have 2,761 rings?" His fame has brought Ringo other treasures, but he seems not to have forgotten what it was like to grow up amid the grimy row-house streets of Liverpool.

He was born Richard Starkey, the

only son of a father who was a house painter and a mother who was a barmaid. He never finished school. He was kept out by pleurisy and more than a dozen stomach operations. Also, it seems, he never started growing. Asked how tall he is, he snaps back, "Two feet, nine inches!" Actually he is five-feet-seven. "When I feel my head starting to swell," says John Lennon, "I just look at Ringo and I know perfectly well we're not supermen." Without proper schooling, Ringo worked as an electrician's apprentice and at various odd jobs before turning to drumming.

"When I was sixteen, you know," he says, "I use to walk on the road with the rest of the lot and we'd have all our drape coats on and we'd have a few laughs with the rival gangs and then I got the drums and the bloke next door and I got a job and we started playing together and another bloke and me made a bass out of an old tea chest and this was about 1958, mind you, and we played together and then we started playing on dances and things, you know, and we took an interest in it and we stopped going out and hanging around corners every night."

These days still lie close behind him. When an American reporter asked him if he liked fish and chips, he answered, "Yes, I like fish and chips, but I like steak and chips better." One of his greatest moments was when the Beatles played before Princess Margaret and the Queen Mother at the Royal Command Performance in London last November. "It was the first time I ever felt British," he says. "You know, you never think about royalty. But the Queen Mother, she was a nice lady."

He sits with his drums behind the group as the other three perform, and he rarely sings, although that is what he would most like to do. Although, at 23, he is the oldest of the Beatles, he is at the bottom of what sociologists would call their pecking order. When he joined the group it already had a record contract, and the unspoken feeling in the quartet is that Ringo was hired by the other three. When they disagree on anything, Ringo



New York policeman carts away faint girl fan who tried to win hearts of departing Beatles at Kennedy Airport. Four girls collapsed and thousands cheered at leavetaking.

"THE QUEEN MOTHER," SAYS DRUMMER RINGO STARR, "SHE'S A NICE LADY."

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is the last to get his way. "You'd be nowhere," Paul McCartney says to him in the ultimate squelch, "if it weren't for the rest of us."

The fans call Paul the handsome one, and he knows it. The others in the group call Paul "The Star." He does most of the singing and most of the wiggling, trying to swing his hips after the fashion of Elvis Presley, one of his boyhood idols. In the British equivalent of high school, Paul was mostly in the upper ranks scholastically, unlike the other Beatles. "He was like, you know, a goody-goody in school," remembers one of Paul's boyhood friends. He also, as another former classmate remembers him, was a "tubby little kid" who avoided girlish rejections by avoiding girls.

He can afford to be much bolder now. At a cocktail party in the British embassy in Washington, a twice-divorced noblewoman put her arms around him, gazed longingly into his eyes and said, "Which one are you?" "Roger," he answered. "Roger what?" she said. "Roger McClusky the fifth," he answered, and slithered out of her grasp.

"Paul is the hardest one to get to know, although that doesn't mean he's the deepest," says a friend. When the 18-year-old English actress Jill Haworth had a private audience with Paul in Miami Beach, it lasted only a few minutes. "I just couldn't find anything to talk to him about," she later said. "It was just impossible to get started talking."

Paul, who plays bass guitar, wears the same tight pants that are part of the uniform of the Beatles, although he often distinguishes himself with a vest. "Paul," says one member of the troupe, "is the only one of the boys who's had it go to his head." Sometimes, talking with the other Beatles, he finds himself using accents much more high-toned than the working-class slang of Liverpool, where he grew up. When he does, John Lennon mockingly mimics him.

Paul and John have collaborated in writing more than 100 songs, including such hits as *I Want to Hold Your Hand* and *She Loves You*. "None of us really knows how to read or write music," says Paul. "The way we work it is like, we just whistle. John will whistle at me, and I'll whistle back at him."

John doesn't smile when he sings. "That's because," says Neil Aspinall, the 22-year-old road manager who grew up in Liverpool with the Beatles, "he's giving you his soul." He likes to wear sunglasses both indoors and out, as a sort of declaration of privacy. "John," says Brian Epstein, the 29-year-old personal manager who discovered the Beatles, "is the most intellectual of the boys." Though he has a habit of falling asleep at odd moments, he is also the most intense and has a temper that reddens his face at the slightest rub. At a cocktail party in the British embassy after the Beatles' Washington concert, John found himself besieged by dignitaries, their wives and girl friends, all of whom were thrusting autograph books at him with such official commands as, "Look, sign this for my daughter! Cawn't think why she likes



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you! Must be out of her mind." Finally John pushed away the pens. Forcing his way to the bar, he ordered a drink and said, "These people are worse than the fans. These people have no bloody manners. Now, the ambassador, I liked him; we talk the same language. But I wouldn't give a thank you for his friends." At that moment, a young embassy official approached John and said, "Come now and do your stuff." John glared back. "I'm not going back through that crowd—I want a drink," he said. "Oh, yes you are," the official said imperiously. Livid, John turned to Ringo and said, "I'm getting out of here!" With a smile, Ringo put an arm on John's shoulder and said calmly, "Oh, come on, let's go and do our stuff and get it over with." The "stuff" consisted of drawing names out of a box in a charity raffle.

John began with ideas of becoming a painter, spending two years at the Liverpool Art Institute. He also writes short stories and poems [see pages 40-42], a collection of which, combined with his sketches, is being published in London. One editor calls Lennon's literary efforts "British hip, a sort of conglomeration of funny Lewis Carroll jabberwocky with a slight tinge of William Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* and an almost Joycean word play."

When John first appeared on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, a subtitle identifying him carried the parenthetical message, "Sorry, girls, he's married." His wife Cynthia is a quietly beautiful 21-year-old blonde

whom he met at the Liverpool Art Institute and whom the newspapers now call, to the Lennons' disgust, "Mrs. Beatle." When the Beatles traveled from New York to Washington, she wore a black wig so she could get through the crowd. In Washington, she remained alone in her hotel room. In Miami Beach she sunbathed by herself. "Ever since the boys became famous," says Cynthia, "it's become more and more difficult for me to see John." They have an infant son, John, whom the newspapers call, again to their disgust, "Baby Beatle." When the Lennons have business visitors, Cynthia serves tea and recedes into the background. "Women," says John, "should be obscene and not heard."

John is the leader of the Beatles. "We have no leader," he might argue with some annoyance. "We're a team, y'know, pull together and all that." As a matter of fact, each Beatle has a veto on what the four of them do together. "But it's John who usually wins out," says one of their friends. "John is the hippest and the sharpest of the lot. They've all learned from him. Even their humor, the way they're always sending people up, they got that from John."

Just 22, George Harrison is the youngest of the Beatles. "He doesn't have the maturity of the others, so he tends to play it a little safe," says a member of the troupe. "It's as if he's the baby of the family." Being the baby of the family is a role to which George is accustomed. The son of a bus driver, he is the

youngest of four children. "George was always the one who tried to please," says his sister, Mrs. Louise Caldwell, the pretty platinum-blond wife of an engineer who lives in the Midwest. "When the fire needed more coal, he would always say, 'Mummy, I'll do it, let me get the shovel.' Or when we'd be going to church, George would polish everyone's boots."

George plays lead guitar for the Beatles, often with a look of unconcern that seems to reflect a desire to be strumming elsewhere. "Well," he says, "the songs that Paul and John write, they're all right, but they're not the greatest."

His boyhood idols were guitarists Chet Atkins and Duane Eddy, although he recently discovered Andrés Segovia. He listens on the radio to other pop artists from the start of his day, which often begins when road manager Aspinall drags the boys out of bed at 10:30 to keep some 10 A.M. date. He keeps a transistor radio in his hand, even during conversations. He adjusts the volume according to his interest in what is being said.

"You have to be very careful of what you say to George," says disc jockey Murray (The K) Kaufman of New York's WINS, who glad-handed the Beatles when they stepped off the plane in New York and who was George's roommate when the Beatles traveled to Miami Beach. "You have to be sure that every word means what you want it to mean. He takes what you say very literally."

"George, as a matter of fact," says manager Brian Epstein, "is the only one

RINGO SPOTTED A GIRL SINGER AND YANKED HER INTO AN ELEVATOR.

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who asks questions. He's the only one who takes an active interest in the business aspect of the Beatles. He wants to know how I book them, how the discs are distributed, and everything that has to do with the financial workings."

George's ambition, he says, is to retire with "a whacking great pile of money." He recalls that in the early days of the group in Liverpool, "we got what would work out to two dollars a night apiece—and all the soda we could drink. We drank until that stuff came out our ears to make sure we got our money's worth."

Little more than six months ago one of his major desires was to own a racing car. He now owns a Jaguar. Although by no means the quietest of the Beatles, because none of them really is quiet, George remains the least prominent. At a press conference for fan magazines in New York's Plaza Hotel, a young woman asked, "Mr. Starr is known for his rings, Mr. McCartney, obviously for his looks, and Mr. Lennon for his wife. What about you, Mr. Harrison?" George swallowed a bite of a chicken sandwich, fluttered his long eyelashes in the same manner that Paul often does and answered, "As long as I get an equal share of the money, I'm willing to stay anonymous."

These are the Beatles, the four young men who brought with them to America a phenomenon known as Beatlemania. So far, Beatlemania has traveled over two continents. In Stockholm the arrival of the Beatles was greeted with teen-age riots.

In Paris another congregation held screeching services at the airport and the Beatles' performances at the Olympia Theater were sold out for three weeks. In the Beatles' native Liverpool 60 youngsters collapsed from exposure after standing all night in a mile-long line of 12,000 waiting to buy tickets to the Beatles' performance. When a foreman shut off the radio in the middle of a Beatles record at a textile mill in Lancashire, 200 girls went out on strike.

While the Beatles toured the United States, three of their singles were in the top six and their albums ranked one and two in the record popularity charts. Beatle wigs were selling at three dollars apiece, high-school boys were combing their forelocks forward and hairdressers were advertising Beatle cuts for women. Beatle hats, T-shirts, cookies, eggcups, ice cream, dolls, beach shirts, turtleneck pullovers, nighties, socks and iridescent blue-and-green collarless suits were on the market, and a Beatle motor scooter for children and a Beatlemobile for adults were being readied for production. American bartenders were confounded by a sudden deluge of orders for Scotch and Coke, the Beatles' favorite drink. "I think everyone has gone daft," says John. Adds Ringo, "Anytime you spell beetle with an 'a' in it, we get the money." In 1964, Beatle-licensed products stand to gross \$50 million in America alone. As for the Beatles, their total 1964 income is expected to reach \$14 million.

It all began in Liverpool, a smog-aired, dockfront city that overlooks the Mersey

River. When the Beatles first put their brows together eight years ago, there were an estimated 100 rock-'n'-roll groups in the city. Today Liverpool is the pop music capital of the British Isles, and what newspapers have come to call "The Mersey Sound" dominates the English hit parade. "Do you want to know what the Mersey sound is?" says one American critic. "It's 1956 American rock bouncing back at us."

In the beginning the group was called the Quarrymen Skiffle Group, then the Moondogs and then the Moonshiners. John, Paul and George were in the original group; Ringo Starr joined in 1962. Hired in 1959 for a job in Hamburg, Germany, the Beatles worked their way up to a wage of \$25 a week, and became one of the main attractions along the Reeperbahn, the main street of the city's red-light district.

Swinging in Liverpool

"When they got back to Liverpool, that's when they really started to swing," says Neil Aspinall. It was then that Brian Epstein discovered them. A delicately mannered young man who once wanted to be a dress designer, Epstein at the time was in charge of the television-radio-records department of his father's department-store chain. When several customers began demanding Beatles records, Epstein signed them up, got them a test with Decca Records, which they flunked, and then brought them to Electric and Musical Industries Ltd.

"They were impressive—it was like striking oil," recalls an E.M.I. official. "I remember I gave them back their first tape and told them, 'If there's anything you don't like, let me know.' And George came right back and said, 'Well, I don't like your tie for a start.'"

In short order the Beatles had four

hits and teen-age mobs began following the Beatles throughout England. It wasn't, however, until last October 13 that the Beatles became national heroes. On that night, they played London's Palladium and several thousand fans mobbed them. They had to be rescued by police. "Well, there were no assassinations that day," recalls Brian Sommerville. "There were no wars, no invasions, no great crises of state, and the Beatles were the only good story the London dailies had, so they gave it a big display."

In the United States, Capitol Records, which has first rights to any E.M.I. release, originally turned down the Beatles' records. As the craze grew it not only issued them but poured \$50,000 into a promotion campaign. "Sure there was a lot of hype," says Capitol vice president Voyle Gilmore. "But all the hype in the world isn't going to sell a bad product."

Nevertheless, that hype helped stir the interest of thousands of fans who greeted the Beatles at Kennedy Airport. Many thousands more waited for them at New York's Plaza Hotel. Outside the hotel, stacked up against barricades, the mob chanted, "We want the Beatles! We want the Beatles!" According to one maid, the Beatles found three girls hiding in their bathtub. Dozens of others climbed the fire exit to the 12th-floor wing in which the Beatle entourage had been ensconced. Still others, with the names and pocket-books of prominent families, checked in at the hotel and tried to get to the Beatles via the elevators.

On the 12th floor the Beatles rested in their suite while the phones rang with requests for interviews and autographs. One call was from a man who wanted to produce Beatle ashtrays. Another was from a promoter in Hawaii who wanted to book the Beatles.

Telegrams came in by the handful, and boxes loaded with fan mail. "We get

Paul, George, Ringo and John rehearse for Ed Sullivan show in Miami Beach. In Florida, Beatles went yachting, swam in private pool and visited heavyweight champ Cassius Clay.



12,000 letters a day," Ringo later said. "Yeah," added John. "We're going to answer every one of them." The road managers, meanwhile, were busy signing the Beatles' autographs for them, and the room-service waiters kept bringing up tables loaded with Scotch, ice and bottles of Coke. Murray the K also came in, bringing with him the Ronettes, an American recording group of three exotic looking girls. "We met the Beatles in Europe," one of them said, as if she were singing it.

As the Beatles' stay at the Plaza extended, so did the throngs. Each time the Beatles left the hotel, the mobs would break through police lines in a jumble of lost shoes, falling girls and Beatle sweat shirts. A deputy chief inspector of police accused the Beatles' press agents of bringing in teen-agers by the busload. The Beatles, meanwhile, spent their time watching TV, dining at the "21" Club, sight-seeing from their car, twisting at the Peppermint Lounge, and flirting with bunnies in the Playboy Club.

The remainder of the Beatles' tour of America was more of the same. In Washington, to which the Beatles traveled aboard a private railroad car called The King George, 2,000 teen-age fans mobbed the locked metal gates of Union Station. At their concert in the Coliseum that night the Beatles were showered with flashbulbs, hair rollers, caramels and jelly beans, in some instances a bagful at a time. "M'God!" Ringo said afterward. "They hurt. They felt just like hailstones."

When they flew to Miami, they were greeted at the airport by a chimpanzee, four bathing beauties, a four-mile-long traffic jam and 7,000 teen-agers, who shattered 23 windows and a plate-glass door. The flight-engineer of the plane wore a Beatle wig. As they were getting off, the wife of the president of National Airlines came aboard with two teen-age girls, but was blocked by Sommerville, who stormed, "No, no, madam! We cannot spend time giving autographs to employees' families." At the Deauville Hotel, they were hustled into an elevator. Along the way Ringo recognized a girl singer and pulled her into the elevator. Later a reporter asked Ringo who she was. "She's just a girl I know," he said. "What's her last name?" the reporter asked. "I don't know her that well," Ringo answered.

In Miami Beach the Beatles went yachting, swam in a private pool, posed for photographs on the beach while an elderly woman kept walking deliberately in front of the cameras, and then visited the training camp of Cassius Clay.

At one point, Sommerville, beaming with gratitude, decided to thank the police sergeant in charge of the Beatles' security detail by offering him a compliment. "Somebody told me," Sommerville said warmly, "that Miami Beach has the best police department that money can buy." Upstairs in Sommerville's room John was busy answering the telephone, with the calls again coming, one after the other, from as far away as Hawaii. "Hallooo," he said. "Brian Slummerfield here. . . . Yes luv. . . . Yes luv. . . . No luv. . . . G'by luv."

The Beatles flew back to England on February 21 to make their first movie. When they stopped off at Kennedy Airport to change planes for London, they again found several thousand teen-age fans screaming from the observation roof after waiting there for hours. Four girls collapsed. When it was all over, America could relax—at least, until the Beatles return this summer. THE END



Most popular of the Beatles in America, Ringo Starr holds informal court for group of demonstrative admirers on Florida sands.