



Erick Falc'her-Poyroux is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Nantes, France, where he is the head of the language department in the graduate school of engineering. He is also the author of a Ph.D. thesis on the identity of Irish music (university Rennes II, 1996) and of several books on Ireland.

Whether you love them or hate them, you've heard them all... "Sgt Pepper's is their best album", "The Rolling Stones were the real rebels", "Yoko and Linda were responsible for the separation", and many more.

Very few authors have taken a simple look at what people believe about The Beatles, beyond the image we all know: the aim of this book is to take a look at facts, and to disentangle history from mythology.

Starting from what everyone knows, or what everyone assumes they know, this book concentrates on the main episodes of their story, often in the Beatles' own words, and reviews their careers, for better or for worse.



THE BEATLES CLICHÉS - ERICK FALC'HER-POYROUX



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ERICK FALC'HER-POYROUX



AMERGIN BOOKS

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*Whether you love them or hate them!*



# THE BEATLES CLICHÉS

Erick Falc'her-Poyroux

AMERGIN BOOKS

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To Lann & Tifenn, once again!



Thanks to Yannick Falc'her for the musical initiation.

Thanks to my parents Jo & Serge Poyroux for a home full of music of every kind.

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## *About the Author*

### **Erick Falc'her-Poyroux**



Born in Nantes, France, on a snowy Monday morning in January 1964 - a couple of days before The Beatles début in Versailles, near Paris - he was given his first Beatles album by his uncle at the age of 10. Slightly perplexed, he asked for a pair of walkie-talkies instead. By 13, the magic had finally worked and he abandoned his collection of tree leaves to start a new one, consisting of Beatles recordings.

Nowadays, and to a large extent thanks to John, Paul, George and Ringo, he is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Nantes, France, where he is the head of the language department in the graduate school of engineering. He is also the author of a Ph.D. thesis on the identity of Irish music (university Rennes II, 1996) and of several books on Ireland.



**BEATLES (The)** - English musical group formed in Liverpool, consisting, between August 1962 and April 1970, of John Lennon (1940 -1980), Paul McCartney (born 1942), George Harrison (1943 -2001) and Richard Starkey (a.k.a. Ringo Starr, born 1940).

After discovering Elvis Presley, John created his first band The Quarry Men in 1956, joined by Paul in 1957, then by George in 1958. In 1960, Peter Best and Stuart Sutcliffe joined the group to play in Hamburg strip clubs, where they took the name of The Beatles.

In 1961, Stuart chose to remain and live in Hamburg and Brian Epstein became their manager after seeing them play at the Cavern, their local club in Liverpool. In 1962, they signed a contract with Parlophone (an EMI subsidiary), Peter was replaced by Ringo, and their first single, "Love Me Do" reached number 17 in the UK charts. The Beatles became a phenomenon in Great Britain in late 1963, and a triumphant visit to the U.S.A in early 1964 confirmed their international status.

Between 1962 and 1970, they released 12 albums in Britain (11 of which became number 1), 22 singles (including 17 reaching number 1) and 13 EPs, under the guidance of their producer George Martin. They stopped touring in August 1966 to devote themselves solely to studio work. In 1967, their manager Brian Epstein died and the following year they created their own company - Apple - to run their businesses.

The first musical and personal differences became more obvious around this period and in September 1969, John announced to the other 3 members that he was leaving the band. He agreed however not to disclose the information for a few months. Paul confirmed the separation to the public on April 10,

1970 in a press statement whilst announcing his first solo album.

John was killed on Dec. 8, 1980 and George died of cancer on Nov. 29, 2001. Paul was knighted by the Queen in 1997, followed by Ringo in 2018, and EMI continues to publish unreleased recordings and compilations of the band, with enduring success.

## *Introduction*



*The Beatles, New York airport, February 7, 1964*

Seven years only: The Beatles were a musical comet in the sky of the twentieth century, the effects of which can still be felt today. Not a day goes by without hearing their songs in the media, not a year without seeing them in the headlines, not a decade without a major musical event involving their music.

Regarded by some as a glorious example to look up to, and by others as over-rated peddlers of sopiness, they rarely leave anyone indifferent. But, whether you love or hate The Beatles, everyone thinks they know them



through their music and the image reflected by the media: the “Four Lads from Liverpool”, the hysteria of the early days of Beatlemania, the ‘moptop’ hairstyle, the rivalry with The Rolling Stones, the childlike chorus of “Yellow Submarine”, the psychedelic jackets, etc. Not to mention the irruption of Yoko Ono, the never-ending trials, and in 1980 the assassination of John Lennon that put a final end to the dreams of a reunion. But none of this can account for their impressive popularity, fifty years on.

Of course, collectors keep on accumulating and musicians keep on emulating. But very few books have taken a simple look at what people believe about them, few documents have simply tried to look slightly beyond the image we all know. Over the last decades, however, a useful stream of writings has emerged, looking with renewed interest at the career of the “Fab Four” (their most common nickname). Since the mid 1990s (and most probably because of the 1995 television series *Anthology*, along with a major reference book in 2000), researchers in musicology have started considering this musical and social phenomenon as worthy of study: some books or documentaries analyse in detail the composition talents of the group, while others shed light on the multiple social and political implications of The Beatles’ music, and still more volumes bring to our attention the questions of identity raised by the band during

the post baby-boom period. With passion and conviction, all these researchers, most of whom were barely born at the dawn of Beatlemania, help us better understand the cultural and musical revolution associated with The Beatles during the sixties, in no small part thanks to the filtering perspective brought by the 50 years that have passed since their separation.

This little book will certainly not attempt to explain everything you need to know about what was, after all, "*just a band who made it very, very big*" as John Lennon put it in 1970. More modestly, the objective of the chapters that follow is to disentangle facts and rumours, to recognize history from mythology, sometimes created by The Beatles themselves, and to restore certain facts too often forgotten. Starting from what everyone knows, or what everyone *assumes* they know, we will concentrate on the main episodes of their story, and review their careers.

And hopefully, if some of our readers only learn a little more about their pre-existing passion, others might even take a liking to it.



## ***01 - "The Beatles were working-class heroes."***

*"A working-class hero is something to be"*

John Lennon, "Working Class Hero",  
1970

Liverpool, a city-port established at the beginning of the 18th century, is a major trading centre in Europe, suffering from a negative image as an industrial city despite its cosmopolitan character. Having witnessed a large influx of Irish immigrants in the mid-19th century, driven into exile by the Great Famine, the population of Liverpool peaked in the early 20th century along with the activity of its ports, before declining after the First World War. In 1960, the city still had about 700,000 inhabitants (compared to only 498,000 in 2019) and its industrial character still dominated.

It was in this context that the four members of the group were born between 1940 and 1943. Three of them, Paul, John and George, have acknowledged their Irish origins and McCartney never fails to recall that "*Liverpool, they used to call it the 'Capital of Ireland' "* (*All You Need Is Love, The Story of Popular Music*, 1977). He even went as far as writing in his poem *Irish Language: "The Beatles were a bunch of Micks"*.

One of the main advantages of a city like Liverpool in the 50s and 60s was therefore its direct

link with the rest of the world through maritime trade, and more specifically with the United States and its musical production. All the musicians in Liverpool knew at least someone from whom they could buy the latest singles by some of their idols, such as Elvis, Chet Atkins, Big Bill Broonzy, Buddy Holly, and the Everly Brothers.

A whole generation thus immersed itself in music with a rare passion, giving birth in the mid-1960s to a wave of artists from Liverpool, later dubbed by the media the “Mersey Beat”, after the river that flows through the city.

Contrary to a well-known cliché – after all, he wrote the song “Working Class Hero” – John Lennon came from a middle-class neighbourhood.

Born on October 9, 1940, he was raised from the age of 9 by his Aunt Mimi on Menlove Avenue, a residential neighbourhood south of the city, where his mother was run over and killed by a car in July 1958.



*Menlove Avenue*

Two kilometres from John's house, at 12 Forthlin Road, stands the small house where

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

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## *Bibliography*

Close to 10,000 books have been written about the Beatles and it is simply impossible to cite only a small number of those without overlooking others. So here is a small selection, entirely subjective, none of them making any claim to perfection. The first part is meant to help beginners, and the second part those who would like to go a little further.

### **For beginners**

The best book - but one of the most expensive - on the history of the group is undoubtedly *The Beatles Anthology* (2000), consisting almost entirely of extracts from interviews with the four musicians, and some of their close professional entourage. A television documentary series under the same name was also broadcast worldwide in 2000.

Another interesting approach is to read their biography, but opinions differ wildly among fans on which book best describes the band's history and context.

Among the most important works are: Hunter Davies' *The Beatles: the authorised biography* (2009), Nicholas Schaffner, *Beatles Forever* (1977, 2nd ed. 1997); Philip Norman,



*Shout! The Beatles in Their Generation* (1981, 2nd ed. 2004); Bob Spitz, *The Beatles: The Biography* (2005). Mark Lewisohn has also started writing the most accurate biography to date, but only the first volume has been published so far: *Tune In: The Beatles: All These Years* (2013) covers the years 1940-1962. Two more volumes are eagerly awaited, but Lewisohn clearly prioritises fact-checking over publishing deadlines.

For individual biographies, one might be interested in Barry Miles' *Paul McCartney: Many Years from Now* (1998) or Philip Norman's *Paul McCartney: The Biography* (2017).

John Lennon's biographies are abundant but two stand out: Philip Norman's *John Lennon: The Life* (2009) and Ray Connolly's *Being John Lennon* (2019). Of course, John also wrote two books in the 1960s, in the British nonsense genre: *In His Own Write* in 1964, and *A Spaniard In The Works* in 1965.

Only George has written his own (very short) autobiography, with Derek Taylor: *I, Me, Mine* (1980, 2nd ed. 2008). A more comprehensive approach is given in Simon Leng's *The Music of George Harrison: While My Guitar Gently Weeps* (2002) and in Graeme Thomson's *George Harrison: Behind The Locked Door* (2013).

Fewer books have been written about Ringo, but Alan Clayson's *Ringo Starr: A Life* (2005) and Michael Seth Starr's *Ringo: With a Little Help* (2015) are regarded as the best way to understand The Beatles' drummer.

#### **For fans**

Among the early documents written by the Beatles' entourage, the memoirs written by their manager Brian Epstein in 1964 is almost a must read, despite its very superficial character (*A Cellarful of Noise*). More interesting are George Martin's memoirs *All You Need is Ears* (1979, 2nd ed. 1994) and Geoff Emerick's (with Howard Massey) *Here, There and Everywhere: My Life Recording the Music of the Beatles* (2007).

Concerning the end of their career and the history of Apple Corps, one should read Denis O'Dell's book with Bob Neaverson, *At the Apple's Core: The Beatles from the Inside* (2003).

Also worthy of mention are Kenneth Womack's *The Beatles Encyclopedia* (2016); Peter Brown and Steven Gaines, *The Love You Make: An Insider's Story of The Beatles* (2002); Cynthia Lennon, *John* (2006).

More specialised - and fascinating - works include: Kevin Ryan and Brian Kehew, *Recording The Beatles* (2006); Andy Babiuk, *Beatles Gear: All the Fab Four's Instruments, from Stage to Studio*, (2001, 2nd ed. 2010);

Kenneth Womack, *Winding Roads: The Evolving Artistry of the Beatles* (2007); Ian MacDonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (1994, reprinted 2008) ; Roy Carr and Tony Tyler, *The Beatles: An Illustrated Record* (1975, 2nd ed. 1981).

Finally, Mark Lewisohn deserves a special mention with *The Complete Beatles Recording Sessions* (1988, 2nd ed. 2004), *The Beatles Day by Day: A Chronology 1962-1989* (1990) and *The Complete Beatles Chronicle* (2000, 2nd ed. 2013).

## *Discography*

Complete beginners will probably wish to start with two compilations: 1962-1966 (The “Red” album) and 1966-1970 (the “Blue” album), initially released by Apple in 1973.

If you wish to listen to the complete collection, remastered versions of the original recordings were released in September 2009 – i.e. the 12 original British albums, one American album, and two compilations of their singles. Additionally, three Beatles albums (*Sgt Peppers...*, the ‘White’ album, and *Abbey Road*) have been released in deluxe and remixed versions for their respective 50th anniversary between 2017 and 2019.

Here is the complete list, with those in bold being considered as the most important:

- *Please, Please Me* (1963)
- *With The Beatles* (1963)
- ***A Hard Day's Night* (1964)**
- *Beatles For Sale* (1964)
- *Help!* (1965)
- ***Rubber Soul* (1965)**
- ***Revolver* (1966)**
- ***Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967)**
- *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967, US version)
- ***The Beatles* (“white” album) (1968)**
- *Yellow Submarine* (1969)

- *Let It Be* (1970)
- *Abbey Road* (1969)
- *Past Masters 1 & 2* (1988 compilations)

The *Let It Be* album was also revisited in 2003 under the name *Let It Be... naked*, without Phil Spector's heavy production, following Paul McCartney's wishes.

For lovers of rare or alternative recordings, *The Beatles Anthology* collection includes three exciting double albums.

For those who would like to listen to almost everything, here is a complementary list, some albums being sometimes sold under different names:

- *1962 Live At The Star Club In Hamburg* (double album, historical recordings, but only for real amateurs since the sound is clearly lo-fi);
- *The Beatles In The Beginning* (studio recordings in Hamburg in 1961 with singer Tony Sheridan);
- *The Lost Decca Sessions* (recorded on 1 January 1962 for Decca, who turned them down);
- *Live At The BBC* (double album, live recordings at the BBC from 1962 to 1965);
- *Live At The Hollywood Bowl* (only official concert recordings, in 1964 and 1965 in Hollywood).
- Finally, a remix album entitled *Love* was released in 2006, containing the soundtrack of the *Cirque du Soleil* show of the same name in Las Vegas.

Other recordings such as studio rehearsals and outtakes, live performances or home demos – called bootlegs – are not available commercially.

Among the many documentaries about The Beatles, Howard Goodall's *Twentieth Century Greats: Lennon & McCartney* (broadcast in November 2004 on Channel 4 in Great-Britain) stands out as an excellent analysis of the musical genius of the band's two main composers.

#### **Websites**

- [www.thebeatles.com](http://www.thebeatles.com) – official website.
- [www.johnlennon.com](http://www.johnlennon.com) – [www.paulmccartney.com](http://www.paulmccartney.com), [www.georgeharrison.com](http://www.georgeharrison.com) – [www.ringostarr.com](http://www.ringostarr.com) – official websites of the four members of the group.
- [www.brianepstein.com](http://www.brianepstein.com) – official website of their manager Brian Epstein.
- [www.georgemartinmusic.com](http://www.georgemartinmusic.com) – official website of their producer George Martin.
- [www.abbeyroad.com](http://www.abbeyroad.com) – official website of the EMI studios.
- [www.beatlesinterviews.org](http://www.beatlesinterviews.org) – an impressive database of radio, press and TV interviews.
- [www.beatlesbible.com](http://www.beatlesbible.com) – a remarkable fansite, by Joe Goodden.
- <https://bit.ly/342Fx5L> – advanced musicological analyses of the songs, by Allan Pollack.

- [wgo.signal11.org.uk/wgo.htm](http://wgo.signal11.org.uk/wgo.htm) - "What Goes On?" an analysis of audible anomalies in the songs, by Mike Allen.