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'Some kind of innocence':

The Beatles Monthly and the fan community

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Abstract

The Beatles Book has been overlooked in both academic research and popular biographies of the Beatles. Over 77 monthly issues between 1963 and 1979, the magazine told the Beatles story at it happened, giving modern readers a unique chance to follow the story without hindsight. This article looks in detail at the content of the magazine and its historical and social context: its beginnings as a form of 'pop propaganda', issues of fandom and the communication between fans and the band and the treatment of the change in the Beatles image in early 1967.

Keywords: 1960s; Beatles; *Beatles Monthly*; fandom; fanzines; image; marketing; pop culture; popular music

The Beatles Book (better known as *Beatles Monthly*) was the authorized magazine for fans. It contained news, song lyrics, letters from fans, interviews and a wealth of incredible photographs of the band (for which see Adams 2011). It was first published in August 1963, in time for the release of 'She Loves You' ('John and Paul stayed up until three in the morning...writing both numbers!!' [BB01, August 1963: 25]). The debut issue sold 80,000 copies and its circulation peaked at 350,000 copies according to Bill Harry (1992: 498). The initial run of the magazine continued for 77 issues until December 1969, when its tone was more sombre. 'Ever since Apple started everything seems to be so very, very serious. Nothing is just plain fun anymore' (BB77, December 1969: 15). Reissues began to be published in April 1976 and, once he had republished all of the original issues, publisher Sean O'Mahoney re-launched the magazine in 1982. The first edition of the new magazine was numbered 78, as if neither the magazine nor The Beatles' career had ended, and it continued publication until 2003. Paul McCartney joked 'what on earth are you going to put in it?' (BB88, August 1983: 9) when meeting

O'Mahoney for the first time in June 1963, little realizing that The Beatles' epic career was to provide copy for 321 issues.

As a publication created for fans by fans (O'Mahoney included), *Beatles Monthly* provided fans with one constant medium to communicate to each other and to the band itself. This article will explore the role of the magazine in communicating their career journey to the fans, and how fans communicated back. It considers how the magazine transmitted such ideas as the changes of style (music and fashion) between 1963 and 1969, how controversial subjects were tackled and how fans reacted to the evolution of the band in the letters page and articles. It argues that despite being overseen by The Beatles' management, *Beatles Monthly* metamorphosed from its original function as a cheerleader for The Beatles into a forum in which even dissenting fans' voices were heard. The magazine went to considerable lengths to maintain the image of The Beatles as clean-living 'boys'. Yet it also attempted to treat a young pop audience with respect by providing an inside perspective on, and possible explanations of, the change in their idols.

In an age of social media, interactivity and participatory culture aided by portable 'smart' technology, scholars such as Jenkins (2007) and Shirky (1999) argue that fandom is the future. Jenkins (2007: 362) notes that 'there is a new kind of cultural power emerging as fans bond together within larger communities, pool their information, shape each other's opinions, and develop a greater self-consciousness about their shared agendas and common interests'. Similarly, Shirky (1999) states that 'no one is a passive consumer anymore because everyone is a media outlet'. He continues by talking about fan tastes ruling the box office and dominating television ratings, as well as the increased popularity in the games industry. However, this article suggests that these modes of fandom and communication between fan and celebrity were already in operation in the 1960s.

One key point Jenkins makes about fans relevant to this study is the definition of the word fan itself, shortened from 'fanatic'. There are many levels of fandom of course, and with regards to The Beatles he makes the point that Charles Manson and Mark Chapman were both Beatles fans who became fanatics (Jenkins 2013: 12–13). But if we consider the anonymous fan quoted at the beginning of this chapter, who would rather die than 'be untrue to my Beatle Paul', there is an interesting dimension of obsession to consider, not just of Beatles fans, but of all followers of specific cultural artefacts or individuals. When Jenkins (2013: 12–13) also mentions that the root of the word fan is 'fanaticus...of belonging to the temple, a temple servant, a devotee', there is a real connection to the spiritual and religious comfort, sense of belonging and fervour that believers experience from their chosen religion. Certainly, in some of the communication in *The Beatles Monthly*, the language of fans does suggest the worship of deities, the sense

of congregation, the praising of individual Beatles and the sense that they are 'followers' or 'devotees' who cannot hear negative things said about *their* idols.

'Will you read my book?': The origins of *The Beatles Monthly*

1963 was arguably the most important year for The Beatles. At the beginning of the year, The Beatles were about to embark on a short tour of the ballrooms and town halls in Scotland. Up to then the band's media presence included a number 17 single, a smattering of radio shows and one national television appearance on the ITV children's show *Tuesday Rendezvous* (see Lewisohn 2000). By August 1963, when the first issue of *The Beatles Monthly* appeared, The Beatles had released two number one singles, a number one EP and a number one LP. They had undertaken three national tours and 22 seaside shows and appeared on 17 TV shows and 35 radio shows including their own BBC show, *Pop Go The Beatles*.

The publisher of *Beat Monthly*, Sean O'Mahoney, first met Brian Epstein in the spring of 1963 to discuss a magazine dedicated entirely to The Beatles. This suited Epstein, who needed a vehicle to convey information about The Beatles to the core audience without the filter of the news media. North End Music Stores (NEMS) Press Officer Tony Barrow certainly saw the potential for the magazine to help create and maintain the desired image of the band, with its 'good news policy' and its capacity to 'deny unsavoury rumours and dismiss tasteless gossip' (Barrow 2005: 44). He recalls that 'We had one or two news pages we used at least in part for propaganda purposes, publicising those aspects of the group's latest adventures that we wanted to get across to fans' (Barrow 2005: 44). The Beatles also received a third of the magazine's profits. In return, O'Mahoney benefited from the magazine's authorized status and the privileged access it had to the band.

Writers for the magazine included O'Mahoney and Barrow and The Beatles' trusted lieutenants Mal Evans and Neil Aspinall. It was characteristic of the somewhat propagandistic nature of the publication that many of the contributors and names within the magazine were fictitious. The two fan club secretaries, Bettina Rose and Anne Collingham, were actually NEMS employees Maureen Payne and Valerie Sumpter. One regular contributor, Billy Shepherd, was in fact *Record Mirror* editor Peter Jones. The name Billy linked him to the young, Liverpool born singers of the day, including Billy J. Kramer and Billy Fury, much as the O'Mahoney's *nom de plume* 'Johnny Dean' conjured up affinities both to James Dean and the crop of 'Johnny' singers (Burnett, Gentle, Goode and Johnny and the Hurricanes). It also signified that someone young had editorial control and was talking directly to the fans, with a cheery 'Hi' at the beginning of each issue.

Their audience (and fellow contributors) were 'Beatle People'. The term was coined by Barrow, occasionally used by The Beatles themselves to describe the loyal fans as in their 1963 Christmas record and appeared in the first issue when the fan club page began with a cheery 'Dear Beatle People...'. The phrase is simple but memorable, again making a link between the group and the fans: a subset of fans who were not just casual listeners or fair-weather followers, but the *real*, dedicated fans. Subscribing to *Beatles Monthly* provided a strong sense of belonging.

During its original run from August 1963 to December 1969, *Beatles Monthly* kept to a basic template for layout and content that would become familiar to fans each month. Fans would know where to go for fan club information, news about 'the boys' and letters from fans. Regular features included:

- Front and back cover photos and a centre photo spread showing individual or group portraits evenly spread between each individual Beatle.
- An editorial written by Johnny Dean in a chatty, informal style. Fans were told of specific information about (or in later issues commenting on) news of the day that had involved The Beatles.
- A fan club newsletter written by Anne Collingham or Bettina Rose.
- 'A Tale of Four Beatles'. Written by Billy Shepherd and running from BB02, September 1963, to BB09, April 1964, this section examined how the band had met and the details behind when they started touring and recording. These columns formed the basis of the first authorized biography of the band (Shepherd 1964).
- 'This Month's Beatle Song'. The lyrics to a Beatles album track or single were illustrated by a Bob Gibson cartoon and included details of authorship and publishing information. Early issues also included a brief piece of copy describing the song, its source recording and its chart placing.
- 'Behind the Spotlight'. Written by Dean and Shepherd, this column was a behind-the-scenes look at a day in the lives of The Beatles. It morphed in August 1964 into a 'Two Years Ago' retrospective series looking back at events in the band's career. 'Two Years Ago' ended in September 1968 with the comment that 'we leave them with no hint into what direction they'll be heading in two years' time' (BB62, September 1968: 22). While this ostensibly referred to the end of The Beatles' live performances in 1966, it was just as relevant in September 1968 when (unbeknownst to fans) the band was beginning to fracture.
- 'Letters from Beatle People'. This was the major forum for fan communication in the magazine with names printed along with full addresses. Up

to mid-1967, comments after some letters were even 'written' by a particular Beatle. This reinforced a kind of parasocial relationship: a feeling of intimacy between celebrity and fan.

- 'Beatles News' containing information about tour dates, record release dates, track listings, cover versions, general news, and news that would today be termed 'celebrity gossip'.

The relatively unchanging format belied the substantial shifts in how fans were addressed, and how they were allowed to express themselves, in the magazine. This can be seen in an examination of the letters pages and photographs, which evolved in response to the transformation of The Beatles during the second half of the 1960s.

'P.S. I love you': letters

The letters page, which was entitled 'Letters from Beatle People' and headed by Bob Gibson's cartoon of The Beatles opening mail, was the central method of communication between the fans and the group and between the fans themselves. The sense of being able to communicate directly to the band on a one-to-one basis is crucial in building up a relationship between the fan and object of the fandom. In the first four years, letters were regularly 'answered' by a named Beatle, with a comment underneath the printed letter. For example, a letter from a fan thanking The Beatles' parents for answering fan mail received the following reply from Harrison: 'I think my Mum and John's Aunt Mimi are great for helping us out with our mail. In fact, I'd like to thank all our relations for being so wonderful about everything' (BB10, May 1964: 18). Sean O'Mahoney states that in the early days of the publication, the group responded to fan mail and questions enthusiastically, and that 'if we knew the answer to a fan's question, we would give it' (O'Mahoney 2014). However, increasing pressure on their time for tours and recording from 1964 onwards meant that replies had to be added by editorial staff, generally Anne Collingham or Johnny Dean. Individualized replies stopped around mid-1967, and no replies were printed from August 1967 until the last issue in December 1969, which included some uncredited lines as an ironic sign-off. There were no more 'Beatles' to write them.

The letters page of *Beatles Monthly* is a fascinating historical archive where fans praise, argue and comment about the changing times of that decade. Each month moves on through what are now familiar landmarks in the narrative arc of The Beatles' story and popular culture including the films, the release of *Revolver* and the end of touring in 1966, the appearance of facial hair, *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* and the death of Brian Epstein in 1967, the 'White Album' in

1968, the proposed live show at the Roundhouse in 1969, Lennon meeting Yoko Ono, McCartney getting married to Linda Eastman, and the release of *Abbey Road* in 1969. Over the time of the magazine, there were some negative letters, and during the last two years of the run, O'Mahoney was not afraid to print cutting comments about certain songs and albums, their dress sense and their girlfriends, Jane Asher in particular. The idea of Beatles fans being critical of, and in some cases, openly hostile, to members of the group, was a new phenomenon, a side of Beatles fandom not previously seen.

Fans' behaviour was one issue exercising letter-writers, as in this early plea from Valerie Payne in Leyton:

In your next newsletter, couldn't you tactfully ask members to check their screams when going to one-nighters, etc.? I know the yells must upset The Beatles—they looked very worried when they played Walthamstow [on 24 May 1963] ...their heartthrobs don't spend all their time perfecting a routine—for the benefit of fans—just to be drowned out when they come to put their act into practice (BB02, September 1963: 16).

Valerie shows concern for the group as people (she does not want to see them look worried), and as professionals (having their stage act ruined). The idea of some members of The Beatles' audience *not* screaming seems bizarre today, given the familiar (perhaps overly familiar) images of Beatlemania screaming, shouting and weeping. The letter is a good example of how *Beatles Monthly* worked as a communication tool between fans as well as between them and the group and their management. Anne Collingham duly replied that 'I know The Beatles are disappointed when their act is drowned out by certain sections of the audience.'

A further glimpse into the social mores of the early 1960s is provided by a letter from January 1964, in which Anthea Wellington from Birmingham describes her concern over unruly behaviour reflecting on herself, her parents and their friends:

where the hardship comes in is when a few unruly youths decide to make a show of themselves and go wild to attract the newspaper cameras [my emphasis]. Then we all get a bad name and people start using the word 'Beatlemania' as a smear rather than as a compliment (BB06, January 1964: 18).

Her connection between bad behaviour and the media brings to mind Stanley Cohen's (1972) work on moral panics which focused on the Mods and the Rockers violence at Clacton and Hastings in 1964. Anthea laments that 'Some of my parents' friends said things like "Do you really associate with those roughs and hooligans?"' and appeals to fellow fans to not behave badly outside the theatres and scream 'pointlessly' inside them (BB06, January 1964: 18). Anne Collingham replies equivocally. She relays The Beatles' opinion that fans have 'paid their seat money and if they want to scream they should be allowed to'. However, she adds

that 'Personally, I hope that thousands more will make a New Year resolution to join the non-screechers' and cites fan mail as proof that 'there are thousands of Beatle People WHO DON'T WANT TO SCREAM' (BB06, January 1964: 18).

Given the acclaim accorded to The Beatles' canon during and after the 1960s, it is surprising that The Beatles' music was the most fertile ground for fan criticism in *Beatles Monthly* from mid-1967 onwards, reaching a crescendo in 1969. Specific targets for criticism were 'Yellow Submarine' (1966), *Sgt. Pepper* (1967), 'Revolution 9' (1968), 'Get Back' (1969), Lennon and Ono's collaborative albums, *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins* (1968) and *Unfinished Music No. 2: Life With the Lions* (1969) and Harrison's two solo albums *Wonderwall Music* (1968) and *Electronic Sound* (1969). 'Yellow Submarine' is the first Beatles song to be specifically criticized by fans in the magazine (albeit humorously), when Pauline from Aldershot describes it as a 'Sally Army bash on a Saturday afternoon' (BB38, September 1966: 18). Two serious points are brought out by this letter. One is the idea that anything recorded by The Beatles will sell, no matter what it sounds like. The second is the reference to attacks in the press, something that had seldom been seen in almost three years of blanket coverage:

Could you please tell me if you recorded 'Yellow Submarine' to see if it would sell because YOU were singing it?... I just don't believe you take this recording seriously because your [*sic*] usually such perfectionists. Please, please, we want our Beatle music, not a third-rate, amateur tin-pot band. For pity's sake don't give the newspapers a real chance to tear you to pieces (BB38, September 1966: 18).

Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band (1967) provoked a new wave of fan criticism, which was surveyed in a *Beatles Monthly* article called 'Is *Sgt. Pepper* Too Advanced for the Average Pop Fan to Appreciate?' (BB49, August 1967: 24–27). In his re-examination of the album and its cultural influence, Clinton Heylin (2007: 202) suggests that the comments published in *The Beatles Monthly* show that the band had 'overplayed their hand' with the fans. Yet the published letters ran the full gamut from condemnation to praise. An example of a negative reaction came from Karen from Long Eaton, who wrote that 'I really enjoyed everything The Beatles recorded before *Revolver* but it's impossible to understand half the stuff they do today' (BB49, August 1967: 24). Joanne in Welling likewise complained that

I can't tell you how disappointed I was when I played it [the album] through. Out of all the songs only 'When I'm 64' and 'Sgt Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' itself came up to standard. Everything else is over our heads and The Beatles should stop being so clever and give us tunes we can enjoy (BB49, August 1967: 24).

These comments bring in the idea of the 'past' Beatles compared favourably to 'current' Beatles—'the stuff they do today', 'give us some tunes', and 'everything

they recorded before *Revolver*—with these fans looking back to simpler, more tuneful songs. The clichéd parental joke of old songs being superior to contemporary pop music is in play here, but is being voiced by the younger generation themselves.

Harrison's 'Within You Without You' attracted particular scorn. 'It's dreadful, just a crazy lot of noises with no tune at all', stated Jean from London (BB49, August 1967: 24). Claire from Bebbington likewise declared it to be 'Atrocious! Horrid! I can't hear the words and there isn't a tune at all. Let George make an album of his own instead of wasting five minutes of Beatle Time!' (BB49, August 1967: 27). A personal attack on a particular Beatle and his song was unprecedented. Harrison's earlier Indian-influenced effort, 'Love You To' on *Revolver* had elicited no such criticisms. On the contrary, there had been numerous supportive comments including a request that Harrison should create a sitar sonata (BB42, January 1967: 19) and play sitar on the 1966 American tour (BB39, October 1966: 19).

For some fans, such as Judy from Leytonstone, The Beatles were *passé* because their natural replacements had already arrived. She wrote that 'The records I used to play most were *Help!*, *A Hard Day's Night* and *With The Beatles*. Now I've put these away and I love the Monkees' (BB49, August 1967: 27). While she seemed content to swap one boy band for another, Jan from Caernarvon appeared upset when writing that 'It's like The Beatles we used to know before they went stark raving mad and started to write rubbish' (BB49, August 1967: 27). Jan's comments highlight how The Beatles' evolution was experienced not simply as a cultural change by some fans, but as an emotional wrench. They were losing their Beatles and were not happy hearing them play new sounds or sing strange new words with opinions on controversial 'adult' topics such as politics, drugs and religion.

Other fans relished the challenge posed by the complexities of *Sgt. Pepper*. Peggy from Essex noted that '*Sgt Pepper* contains words and ideas which are far above anything anyone else is capable of creating' (BB49, August 1967: 24), while Valerie from Chertsey wrote that

I listened again and again. Finally I was overwhelmed by what I heard. Not just impressed but overpowered. It's all marvellous music. Particularly 'A Day in the Life' and 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds'. But it's no good just half-listening. You've got to concentrate hard and let The Beatles hypnotise you... (BB49, August 1967: 24)

In contrast to those who pined for the earlier Beatles, aficionados of *Sgt. Pepper* viewed the band's past musical legacy as an important part of The Beatles' identity while appreciating the band's maturing style. As Wendy from Ealing noted, 'I, for one, wouldn't want to hear *Please Please Me* re-hashed a hundred times over the

years' (BB49, August 1967: 24). Jackie from Chesterfield argued that *Sgt. Pepper* had something for everyone with a variety of 'simple, catchy little numbers like The Beatles used to do' as well as the 'more advanced' numbers (BB49, August 1967: 24) There were even those fans that loved 'Within You Without You', with Brenda from Morecambe acclaiming it as 'the most beautiful music George has ever made' (BB49, August 1967: 27). In the previous issue Johnny Dean stated that '95% of Beatle People were completely happy with what the boys' were doing (BB48, July 1967: 2). Of the 5 per cent who did not like *Sgt. Pepper*, Dean stated that 'they would have liked a few more early-Beatle-type-numbers to be included' (BB48, July 1967: 2).

In interviews with the author, two correspondents to *Beatles Monthly* in the 1960s reveal the complexity of fan attitudes towards the band's change of image. Cath Westerbrook wrote to *Beatles Monthly* in February 1968 praising the *Magical Mystery Tour* film, describing it as a 'fantastic success...a change only the BEATLES could execute... I'm sure you would find the majority of the public appreciated your work of art' (BB55, February 1968: 18). However, 44 years later she admitted that because her then boyfriend hated it, she felt she had to write in to defend the film. She recalls, 'I had no idea what it was about, but I distinctly remember thinking that I *should* like it because it was The Beatles' (Westerbrook 2012). Westerbrook's fan worship also affected her attitude to The Beatles' experimentation with drugs and Eastern religion. Although she displayed her loyalty to the band in letters to *Beatles Monthly*, she now reflects that 'I would never admit to myself that they were druggies because they were my heroes... I also thought the clothes were ridiculous and quite embarrassing' (Westerbrook 2012).

Like Jan from Caernarvon, Cath felt that she 'didn't get' a lot of the later music and thought they were writing 'rubbish'. By the time of the 'White Album' in 1968, she 'felt they were just trying to see what they could get away with and put out any kind of tripe' (Westerbrook 2012). But another fan, Linda Taylor, had the opposite point of view with reference to The Beatles' changing image:

Looking back, I felt that as I changed fashion, they [The Beatles] followed me. We were walking around Newcastle in late 1966 in Afghan coats, and then I saw them on TV with their hippy gear on and thought 'they're like us'. I always liked them so their change didn't bother me (Taylor 2013).

The next phase of critical letters in *The Beatles Monthly* came after the release of *The Beatles* (aka *The White Album*) in November 1968. Much of the debate concerned the avant garde sound collage 'Revolution No. 9'. Some fans praised the experimental piece but others felt alienated and one fan, Elaine from Gillingham, was almost apologetic for not being able to understand it:

I feel disappointed that the boys chose to include 'Revolution No. 9'... I listened to this particular sound [*sic*] and kept asking myself what the purpose of it was, but I came to no logical conclusion... Maybe if someone could enlighten me I'd be able to understand and therefore appreciate it more (BB66, January 1969: 18).

Criticism of the more obscure Beatles' releases was also evident in later issues of *Beatles Monthly*, particularly those by Harrison, and Lennon and Ono's collaborations. One fan went so far as to dare O'Mahoney to publish his letter attacking Lennon as a greedy rock star:

I know this letter will never be published, but I must fill you in... They have reported what the fans want to hear instead of the truth. The truth is quite evident: John is a wise and shrewd man. He is out for money first and to please his fans second. He wanted to stop touring because there's more money in recording and now he wants to tour America (not Britain) because that's where the money is. I guess he could use the extra 'pocket money' after buying a new home, Tittenham [*sic*] Park, for \$360,000. Only John could produce something like *Two Virgins*, call it art, and cart his money off to the bank laughing (Bob, Rhode Island, BB72, July 1969: 18).

The majority of letters at this time, and indeed from the first issue onwards, was enthusiastic and praiseworthy of the band and their music. However, these defiant fans, putting their point of view across, are refreshing to read in a fanzine. It was not just the positive letters that were printed, something O'Mahoney made a point of reiterating in editorials. The fans seem to be angry or disappointed in a number of ways. Some fretted that the 'old' Beatles had gone and were not 'being Beatles' as the fans had come to know them. Others felt that the new experimental Beatles were not being understood because they were a 'bit too way out', as Ann from Edinburgh stated in her letter (BB48, July 1967: 19). Either way, the expectations of some of The Beatles' fanbase were not being met by the band themselves.

'You can't see me': photographs

Exclusive photographs were a major selling-point of the publication. Pictures taken at recording sessions or photo shoots were used almost immediately in the next issue. Photographer Philip Gotlop was used for the first issue (BB01, August 1963) to shoot The Beatles recording 'She Loves You' on 1 July 1963, allegedly against the band's wishes (Dean, BB88, August 1983). This demonstrates that The Beatles wanted to feel relaxed in the studio, surrounded by people they felt most comfortable with and perhaps they were even beginning to think about their image by this point in terms of how they would be perceived from the 'outside'. The photographs from issue 2 (September 1963) until mid-1967 were taken by Leslie Bryce.

After that photographs were used by members of the band's inner circle such as Mal Evans and Tony Bramwell.

In the first issue of *Beatles Monthly*, Johnny Dean pledged to give each Beatle equal representation:

I'll always try and give each of them one quarter of the Book. In some issues this may not be possible and you will find that one of the boys hasn't got as many pics as the others. But don't worry because I'll make it up to him in the following edition (BB01, August 1963: 3).

As Table 1 indicates, he kept to his word, with McCartney the only member who received somewhat preferential treatment. This demonstrated the importance of democracy within the group as The Beatles had always maintained there was no single leader. It also demonstrated that all of the fans were loved and appreciated equally; there was no one favourite kind of fan.

Table 1: Photographs of band members in *The Beatles Monthly*, 1963–69

	Front cover	Centre spread	Back page	Total
Group	19	9	11	39
Harrison	14	16	18	48
Lennon	15	18	16	49
McCartney	19	20	16	55
Starr	14	17	18	49

But the magazine's reliance on authorized photographs became a problem at the beginning of The Beatles' hippie period. For six months between their last American show on 29 August 1966 and the broadcast of the 'Strawberry Fields Forever'/'Penny Lane' promo films in February 1967, The Beatles were almost completely out of the public eye for the first time over three years. They did not perform as a band live or on TV, there were no new singles to promote and contemporary images of the band were largely absent save for some images of Lennon getting his hair cut for *How I Won the War* (Lester 1967). However, at the end of December 1966, the country saw a very different looking Beatles from the mop-tops of the past five years. The ITN programme *Reporting 66*, which was broadcast on 28 and 29 December, included a section about The Beatles' activities and speculated about whether they were breaking up. The group were filmed individually entering Abbey Road on 20 December. All had moustaches (Harrison sported a beard) and all dressed very differently, with John wearing his 'granny glasses'. The transformation of these erstwhile mop-tops into four bewhiskered musicians

disinclined to perform again in public must have been a shock: one reinforced the following month when McCartney characterized his new moustache as being 'part of breaking up The Beatles' (cited in *Crawdaddy*, March 1967).

Readers of *Beatles Monthly*, who were usually kept up to date with photos of the band no more than a month old, did not get to see group images of the new-look Beatles until the April 1967 issue. That was over three months after the ITN broadcast and two months after their restyling featured in the 'Strawberry Fields Forever'/'Penny Lane' promo films and record sleeve. The magazine did print some recent images, unveiling Lennon in his glasses (BB42, January 1967: 28), a moustachioed Harrison in India (BB40, November 1966: 6) and McCartney sitting with George Martin (BB43, February 1967: 11). In addition, the February and March 1967 issues carried rather different pictures of moustachioed Beatles. They appeared to be contemporary pictures of the band with facial hair, but upon closer inspection it is evident that hair has been added to previously existing photographs, mainly from photo sessions in late 1964, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Sources of doctored photographs in *The Beatles Monthly*, 1967

Airbrushed Photograph	Photo Session Source
BB43, Feb. 1967	
Harrison, p. 8	Photo shoot at Harrison's house, early 1966 (see also BB31, Feb. 1966 cover and p. 10)
Harrison, p. 30	UK autumn tour 1964 (see BB17, Dec. 1964, p. 14. NB: he has a moustache in his reflection in the mirror, but not on his face)
McCartney, back cover	Suggests 1965 due to hairstyle and similar photographs from that year
BB44, March 1967	
McCartney, front cover	Suggests 1965 due to hairstyle and similar photographs from that year
Starr, p. 3	Suggests 1964 <i>Beatles For Sale</i> sessions
Harrison, centre pages	UK autumn tour (see BB17, Dec. 1964: 25)
Harrison, p. 27	Suggests <i>Help!</i> sessions
Starr, p. 28	Suggests summer tour, 1966

In email correspondence with the author, publisher Sean O'Mahoney said that hair had been added because it was hard to get as many up-to-date photographs of the band at this time (O'Mahoney 2014). However, one could argue that this was a way for the fans to become slowly acclimatised to the manner in which The Beatles were changing from boys into men via their growing of moustaches and beards. As Harrison pointed out, 'a moustache on a Beatle was kind of unexpected' (cited in Badman 2000: 266). A similarly conservative approach could be seen in

Bob Gibson's *Beatles Monthly* cartoons. A more up-to-date picture was eventually used for The Beatles News section in BB65, December 1968, showing longer hair and Lennon with his glasses on, but only Starr was drawn with a moustache. In the very late issues of BB75, October 1969, and BB76, November 1969, there are portraits of the band from more innocent days when they are clean shaven with slightly longer mop-tops. In this way, the early and middle-period Beatles lingered in *Beatles Monthly* long after they had been superseded in real life.

'And in the end': publisher as fan

The final issue of the original *Beatles Monthly* was published in December 1969. It featured a valedictory article concerned with the subject of The Beatles' transformation from mop-topped entertainers to long-haired experimentalists. 'The End of an Era', which was written by publisher Sean O'Mahoney under his own by-line and addressed directly to the fans, discussed how the magazine started and brought together several strands of opinion about the group, their career, their image and the press. O'Mahoney was refreshingly honest about each Beatle, acknowledging for example that Harrison disliked the magazine. O'Mahoney admitted that he preferred The Beatles before what he called 'their hairy period', stating that they were 'tremendously photogenic, or at least they were in the days when you could see all of their faces' (BB77, December 1969: 14). He was also candid about what he describes as 'the drug problem'. In a passage directed against The Beatles but aimed at the fans, he warns about the 'pro-pot brigade' and describes drug takers as 'stupid' (ibid.). In what was the magazine's final communication to its readers, the message is clear: do not slavishly copy The Beatles in this particular regard.

O'Mahoney ended the piece regretting the lack of humour around 'the modern Beatles', and we now know with hindsight that this was a bitter time in The Beatles' career, largely hidden from the fans, rife with personal animosity and legal arguments around financial matters. O'Mahoney concluded that '*The Beatles Book* belonged to the Sixties—it can't do the right job for the Seventies' and signs off with a poignantly brief 'Bye' (BB77, December 1969: 15). Also, O'Mahoney writes as his alter ego, Johnny Dean, in the final editorial where he specifically mentions the fans describing the fans as 'retain[ing] a sense of proportion, and most important of all, a sense of humour about the world around them', again focusing on the seriousness of the legal situation at Apple Corps. Dean continues by mentioning he has enjoyed The Beatles' era, but 'that it has given me many problems'. Not going into any more detail, O'Mahoney could mean the later years of the magazine, when input from the group became scarce to non-existent and in some cases rather hostile, as was the case with Harrison's thoughts on the magazine (BB77, December 1969: 2).

Arguably, The Beatles created the first modern pop mass fanbase, with the full power of the press, the record industry, television and radio. Even non-fans knew them, their story and their music, and the force of that fandom even had a name ('Beatlemania') that likened it to a disorder. It is still a global phenomenon, 45 years since the band last played in a studio together. In 'The Future of Fandom', Henry Jenkins asks the question 'who *isn't* a fan?' (2007: 364). In this age of hyper mass-media, where audiences are saturated by every latest popular group/sound/dance routine/TV show/film franchise not only by the traditional media channels, but through media actually produced and distributed by fans themselves, Jenkins's contention that 'there may no longer be a normal way of consuming media' is right (Jenkins 2007: 364). It is impossible to escape being a fan of anything, even if one wanted to. For Beatles fans, from August 1963 to December 1969, *Beatles Monthly* was the only direct line between fans and the group. It began as an information service, a way of getting messages to the fans in the way the management wanted, but very quickly it developed into the voice of the fans themselves. Fans' opinions are the dominant feature of the original *Beatles Monthly*, with their delight, their fears, their humour, their obsessions and their fanaticism. In order to understand their perspective, we should strive to read *Beatles Monthly* without the benefit of hindsight: to actively forget that when we are reading BB39, October 1966, that they'll never tour again and that their next album will be *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*; or that, after August 1969, the four Beatles will never again be in a recording studio at the same time. In this way, we can come closer to perceiving The Beatles' story through the eyes of those original fans. As we are all fans too, it is arguably an invaluable experience to reflect on the nature of that fandom and our relationship to that band forty years on.

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