

1957-
1960

ENTER THE BEATLES

1. The Silver Beatles on stage in 1960 in Liverpool. The drummer Johnny Hutch was sitting in as they did not have a regular drummer that day.



Faced with another dull city summer, a young Liverpool lad named John Lennon had found a way around the boredom. His skiffle group, The Quarry Men, were named for the school he loathed. They played wherever they could find an audience, although they were rarely received with enthusiasm.

The Fab Three

On July 6, 1957, the Quarry Men played St Peter's Parish church fete in Woolton. Ivan Vaughan came just to watch, bringing a friend from the Liverpool Institute. He wanted John to meet his friend — Paul McCartney. John and Paul's first meeting started out as a cool affair, until Paul revealed a winning secret — he could tune a guitar. John and Paul slowly began to spend more and more time together. Despite very different personalities, they shared a love of music and guitars. The other Quarry Men were unconvinced, finding McCartney bossy and big-headed.

Skiffle had been a short-lived fad: rock and roll was the real thing. Rising stars like Eddie Cochran were not only brilliant performers, they also wrote their own songs. So John and Paul started to create new material. They became extremely competitive, each one trying to outdo the other.

Around the same time, Paul befriended another pupil at the Liverpool Institute. George Harrison was 18 months younger but although just 14, he became one of the band's most faithful followers. He was always at their gigs, guitar in hand. John even let him take the odd solo. George, however, had a trick up his sleeve — he had somewhere to rehearse at weekends. George gradually eased himself into the Quarry Men.

The Silver Beatles

By the start of 1960, the Quarry Men were down to John, Paul and George. John had met another art student, Stuart Sutcliffe, a brilliant artist. They quickly became close, and John persuaded Stu to buy a bass guitar and join the band. Local promoter Allan Williams gave them some gigs at his tiny Jacaranda club, and found them a drummer, 36-year-old professional Tommy Moore. It was Moore who recommended a proper name — something like Buddy Holly's Crickets. Stu jokingly suggested the Beatles, which John twisted to Beatle. Everyone at the Jacaranda hated that, and they became the Silver Beatles.

When Billy Fury needed a backing group, the Silver Beatles tried out. They didn't get the job, but Larry Parnes, the impresario behind Fury, was impressed enough to offer them a tour of Scotland with another singer, Johnny

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Gentle. The tour wasn't long, but Moore was injured on only the second night. He limped through, but quit music immediately afterwards.

Williams had placed a couple of bands in a German nightclub, and was in need of a third. The Beatles — as the Silver Beatles now insisted on being called — seemed viable. The band members leapt at the chance. As drummer, they recruited acquaintance Pete Best, who they knew from their time in his mother's venue, the Kasbah Coffee Club. Then they charged off to Hamburg.

The German Adventure

Germany was a trial by fire for the Beatles. Initially, the band worked on a very cramped stage in the miniscule Indra club, and lived jammed together in one small, noisy room above a cinema across the road. Four-hour sets added to everyone's exhaustion. John's manic stage capering won increasing interest though. When the Indra was closed down because of noise complaints, the band moved to the owner's other club, the Kaiserkeller. Here they worked alongside fellow Williams placements Rory Storm and the Hurricanes. Rory's flamboyant drummer, Richard Starkey, insisted on wearing gaudy rings on every finger, and was known to everyone as Ringo Starr.

Gradually friendships formed between the bands. When the Hurricanes' bass player Lou Walters wanted to cut a record as a singer, John, Paul and George went to help. Ringo was there too. It was the first time the four ever played together. Stu meanwhile had made some art friends, including a talented photographer and artist, Astrid Kirchherr. The two quickly fell in love, and it was Kirchherr who suggested the Beatles needed a style. She made them clothes, and invented the famous mop-top look.

Meet The Quarry Men

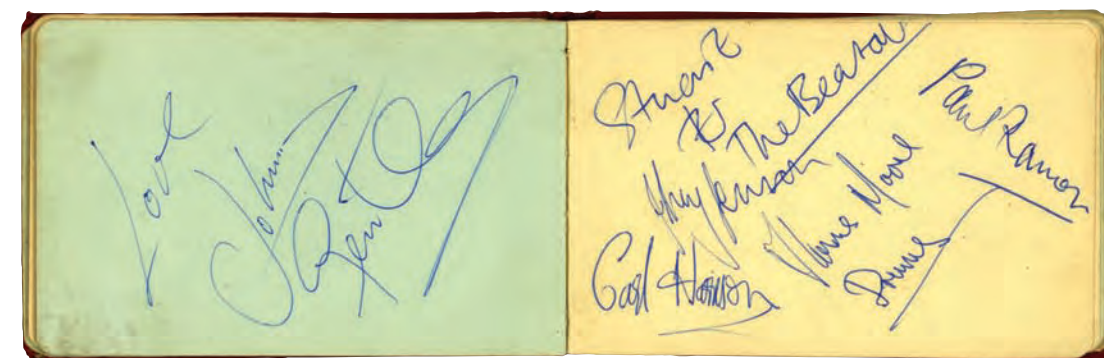
By mid '57, John Lennon was well ensconced in the rock and roll lifestyle. Mustering all the enthusiasm that they'd failed to put into their school work, Lennon and his close friend Pete Shotton, Quarry Bank School's resident teenage rebels, had gathered a growing number of enthusiasts: Nigel Whalley and Ivan Vaughan, who shared duties on the tea-chest bass; Rod Davis, whose parents had just bought him a banjo; guitarist Eric Griffiths; and drummer Colin Hanton. Shotton played the washboard, and Lennon his beloved guitar.

The Quarry Men performed Lonnie Donegan songs, as well as American rock and roll hits. They got engagements at school dances and youth clubs, but were rarely received with any great enthusiasm. Although there were differing views on the direction they should take, there was no disputing that John Lennon was the boss.

Things were starting to look up. Towards the end of their Kaiserkeller gig, the band were offered a much better deal at the Top Ten club. They accepted, but the Kaiserkeller's owner was furious. A 'surprise' police passport check the next day revealed George was underage, and he was deported. A few days later John and Paul were booted out too, for some minor accidental arson. Stu had little choice but to follow. It was a bleak moment.

2. Stuart Sutcliffe and Astrid Kirchherr. Stuart was the original bassist of The Beatles for two years, he left the group to study art which was his main passion.

3. Autograph book containing signatures of Johnny Gentle (the headline act) and all the Silver Beatles, the drummer at the time was Tommy Moore.



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