

**A  
Cellarful  
of  
Noise**

# A Cellarful of Noise

Brian Epstein



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# Introduction

With his polite side-parting, unflashy suits, diffident manner and public-school accent, Brian Epstein appeared much more mature than the Beatles. In interviews, he would call them ‘my boys’ or ‘the boys’; they, in turn, would always refer to him as ‘Mr Epstein’.

So it comes as a surprise to realise he was only six years older than John and Ringo. In April 1964, when he embarked on this memoir, he was twenty-nine. That same month, the top five places in the American top ten were all occupied by the Beatles, and there were a further seven Beatles’ singles in the top one hundred, along with two songs about them – ‘We Love You Beatles’ by the Carefrees and ‘A Letter to the Beatles’ by the Four Preps.

Since February, they had become the four most famous young men in the world. Even Ringo Starr, the least prepossessing of the Beatles, had been made the subject of

a song, 'Ringo, I Love You', written and produced by Phil Spector and sung by Bobbie Jo Mason, soon to become more famous as Cher.

Having engineered all this fame, Epstein was clearly in no mood to play it down. In *A Cellarful of Noise* he describes the Beatles as 'a worldwide phenomenon, like nothing in any of our lifetimes, and like nothing any of us will ever see again'. Mixing condescension with a dash of hyperbole he writes, 'The haunted, wonderful wistful eyes of little Ringo Starr from Liverpool's Dingle are more instantly recognisable than any single feature of any of the world's great statesmen.'

*A Cellarful of Noise* is a period piece. At times the period seems much earlier than the 1960s, exhibiting the muscular snobbery of John Buchan or Baden-Powell. At one point Epstein declares that the Beatles 'never sit while a woman stands' and at another that 'their naturalness ... wins them the admiration of people like Lord Montgomery'. Of one of his artistes, Gerry Marsden, he boasts that 'Princess Alexandra twice requested him for cabaret at society balls'. Many of his observations about the world of pop are now as dated as the National Milk Bar in Liverpool where he and the boys tucked into four packets of biscuits to celebrate the promise of a recording session at EMI. 'The disc charts cannot stand very many girls,' he writes, 'however gorgeous they may look on stage.'

Nearly sixty years on, the Beatles are still part of the air we breathe, but some of Epstein's other artistes, as he always called them, have vanished without trace. Who remembers Tommy Quickly? Epstein confidently predicts

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'he is going to be a star', but alas he never was. Taken up by Epstein, he left his job as a telephone fitter, changed his name from Quigley to Quickly, took part in three Beatles tours and recorded five singles, all flops. He retired from the music business in 1965.

Michael Haslam – 'he, I believe, is going to be very big' – was part of the Beatles Christmas Show at the Hammersmith Odeon for three weeks in 1963. He recorded two unsuccessful singles, both produced by George Martin, the last of which was called, ominously, 'There Goes the Forgotten Man'. Eventually, he fell out with Brian Epstein over an expenses claim for a pair of socks. Epstein let him go, and in 1966 Haslam returned to his £15-a-week job on a fleshing machine at Walker and Martin's tannery in Weston Street, Bolton. His fellow workers greeted his return with a jaunty banner that read, 'Welcome back Mike. Top of the Flops.'

In contrast to the devil-may-care merriment of the Beatles, Brian Epstein cultivated a reserved, fastidious air. He wore a Burberry raincoat, well-polished buckled shoes, gold cufflinks, a monogrammed shirt and a Christian Dior silk tie or a polka-dot cravat. 'He was immaculate from head to toe, like Cary Grant,' recalled Cilla Black. 'He was everything you wanted a posh fella to look like.' His Liverpool tailor, George Hayes, maintained that he always looked as if he'd just stepped out of the bath.

Epstein would have preferred Godfrey Winn or Beverley Nichols, well-manicured household names, to ghost-write his memoir, but his publisher, Ernest Hecht, vetoed

them for being 'far too pricey and the wrong image'. In the end, Epstein settled for Derek Taylor, then a showbiz journalist on the *Daily Express* but soon to become the Beatles' press officer.

The two men motored down to the Imperial Hotel, Torquay in Epstein's chauffeur-driven Rolls-Royce. Taylor was particularly impressed by the electric windows. 'I'd never seen such a thing.' The two men got on well. In their first session Epstein opened up about his uneasy childhood and troubled adolescence, but he hesitated before revealing his greatest secret. There came a point when he realised he would have to broach the subject. Over lunch, he suddenly asked, 'Did you know that I was queer?' 'No, I didn't,' replied Taylor. 'Well, I am, and if we're going to do this book I'm going to have to stop bugging about saying I was with this girl when I would not be with a girl, it would be a boy. Does that make any difference?'

It must have been an agonising confession – in 1964 homosexuality was still an imprisonable offence – but Taylor was unfazed. 'No,' he remembered saying, 'it doesn't make any difference. It'll make it a lot easier. So you mustn't worry any more, difficult as it may be to convince you perhaps, but I won't ever let you down.'

Between the two of them, they conspired to render everything seemly. The book makes no mention of Epstein's sexuality or the deep torment it caused him. Of his time in National Service, for instance, we hear simply that he was 'the lousiest soldier in the world'. Wearing a pinstriped suit and a bowler hat, he was charged with

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impersonating an officer and confined to barracks. This caused his nerves to become ‘seriously upset’. Psychiatrists decided he was ‘a compulsive civilian and quite unfit for military service’, so he was ‘discharged on medical grounds’.

The truth is both more fraught and more interesting. Stationed at the Albany Barracks in Regent’s Park, Epstein had hated his ‘hideous’ private’s uniform and had asked his tailor to run him up a rather more elegant officer’s outfit, which he then wore to cruise the West End in search of young men. At the Army and Navy Club on Piccadilly, military police arrested him and charged him with impersonating an officer. His parents employed lawyers, who succeeded in saving him from a court martial. He was eventually discharged for being ‘emotionally and mentally unfit’ – code for homosexuality.

Elsewhere in the book Epstein claims, ‘I lost a girlfriend called Rita Harris who worked for me and who said, “I’m not going to compete with four kids who think they’re entering the big time”.’ In reality, ‘Rita’ was a boy.

In his unpublished diaries he was much less guarded, confessing that, after leaving the army, ‘My life became a succession of mental illnesses and sordid, unhappy events bringing great sorrow to my family.’ It now seems probable that his sexuality led to his torment and his torment led, eventually, to his death. John Lennon’s school friend Pete Shotton noted, ‘Not only was Brian homosexual; he was sexually aroused by precisely those traits that otherwise most affronted or menaced him: qualities like vulgarity, insolence, callousness, and aggressiveness, all

so abundantly on display in the persona of the Beatles' rhythm guitarist ... Brian Epstein was irredeemably mesmerised by the one whose demeanour most resembled that of a caged animal.'

True to character, John Lennon taunted him about the memoir. When Epstein was wondering out loud what to call it, Lennon said, 'Why don't you call it *Queer Jew?*' Later, when Epstein said it was called *A Cellarful of Noise*, Lennon replied that he would be better off calling it *A Cellarful of Boys*.

The self-portrait in *A Cellarful of Noise* may be partial, but it is not untrue. Epstein portrays himself as lonely, businesslike, scrupulous, obsessive, shrewd, awkward and pernicky, all of which he was. Now that we know how his story ended, the odd phrase flashes on the page like a fork of lightning. Quite late in the book, he confesses that the strain of being in sole charge of management 'continues and increases and thrives like a malignant disease'. Soon after, he talks of the pressures he is under. 'The chief of them is loneliness, for ultimately I must bear the strain alone, not only in the office or the theatre, but at home in the small hours.'

He was fanatical, in both senses of the word. When he writes 'I can think of no warmer experience than to be in a vast audience at a Beatles concert' he is guilty only of understatement. The four Beatles were everything he could never be. He told an interviewer in 1964 that the Beatles 'represented the direct, unselfconscious, good-natured, uninhibited human relationships which I hadn't found and had wanted and felt deprived of. And my own

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sense of inferiority evaporated with the Beatles because I knew I could help them, and that they wanted me to help them, and trusted me to help them.’

Simon Napier-Bell, manager of the Yardbirds, Wham! and many others, once recalled Epstein telling him that at a Beatles stadium concert in America ‘he went into the crowd of girls and he just screamed like one of the girls, which he said is what he’d always wanted to do from the first minute he’d ever seen them. He had spent his whole life being restrained and wearing suits and suddenly he just screamed and became the mad fan he wanted to be.’

John, Paul, George and Ringo sometimes went wild, and sometimes behaved foolishly, but they were always able to adapt and move on. They were survivors. Each of them was equipped with a safety valve. But for all his extraordinary abilities, for all his carefully buttoned-up exterior, Brian Epstein was not. He could manage others, but he could never manage himself; he lived in perpetual jeopardy. He took drugs – uppers, downers, acid, heroin, coke – far more recklessly than his boys, and was known to gamble away £20,000 in a single night. Nor could he resist picking up the type of young man who would steal from him, beat him up and blackmail him.

‘Eppy seems to be in a terrible state,’ John told Pete Shotton one night. ‘The guy’s head’s a total mess, and we’re all really worried about him.’ John then played a tape. Pete described it as ‘one of the most harrowing performances I’ve ever heard’, adding,

The recording was barely recognisable as that of a human voice,

alternately groaning, grunting and shrieking words which, even when decipherable, made no apparent sense whatsoever. The man on the tape was obviously suffering from great emotional stress, and very likely under the influence of some extremely potent drugs.

‘What the fuck’s all that, John?’ I said incredulously.

‘Don’t you recognise the voice? That’s Brian. He made the tape for me in his house. I don’t know why he sent it, but he’s trying to tell me something – fuck knows what. He just can’t seem to communicate with us in his usual way any more.’

Three years after the publication of *A Cellarful of Noise*, on Sunday 27 August 1967, Brian Epstein was found dead in the bedroom of his house in Belgravia. Two brief suicide notes were found, hidden away in a book, but they were both dated several weeks before. At the inquest his psychiatrist Dr Flood reported that ‘his main complaint was insomnia, anxiety and depression’. Epstein had, he said, ‘always shown some signs of emotional instability ... The patient was homosexual, but had been unable to come to terms with this problem.’ Recording a verdict of accidental death, the coroner said that it was due to poisoning by the sedative Carbitral, caused by an incautious self-overdose.

Together, the Beatles went round to comfort Brian’s mother, Queenie. They wanted to attend his funeral, but Queenie dreaded it turning into a media circus, and thought it best if they stayed away. ‘They were like four lost children,’ she recalled.

In the vast Beatles Story Museum in Liverpool, just

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around the corner from the cabinet containing the four *Sgt. Pepper* costumes and housed in a glass case of its own, stands a dapper knee-length blue coat with three shiny buttons. It dresses a headless mannequin. A little triangle of sharp white shirt and a paisley tie poke out through the top. The caption on the cabinet reads, 'Brian's wool and cashmere coat made by Aquascutum of Regent Street'.

Had he lived, Brian Epstein would now be pushing ninety. He would probably control the Beatles Story Museum and have ensured the Beatles a decent share of the profits. He would undoubtedly have expanded his empire. Over the past fifty-odd years society's misgivings about his homosexuality would have transformed into qualifications. By now he would be Sir Brian Epstein, or perhaps even Lord Epstein of Belgravia, a valued board member of the Garrick Club, Tate Modern and the Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts.

Instead, he lies buried in Everton Cemetery, while his Aquascutum coat, spick and span as ever, retains a life of its own, resplendent under a spotlight in its glass case, admired by 300,000 people a year. It is a modern relic or, in sacramental terms, an outward sign of inward grace. In gold letters, embossed on the bottom of the case, is a quote from Paul McCartney: 'If anyone was the fifth Beatle, it was Brian.'

—Craig Brown

# Author's Note

Reading through my proofs it occurs to me that I'm going to be asked why in the midst of a busy life I should take time off from the personal management of my artistes, to whom, after all, I have signed myself, to write my own autobiography when I'm not yet thirty. Like every pointed query of that nature, the answer can be manifold. But principally it is simply that I wanted to put down at an early stage an accurate account of the emergence of the Beatles and others from my own point of view. So much has been said that is exaggerated, inaccurate, extravagant and open to misinterpretation that I thought that a detailed account could only help and, I hope, prove of considerable public interest. Anyway I enjoyed doing it and I sometimes think that the essence of a creation, be it a book, a disc or a live stage performance, is just that.

Last night I returned from a hectic 72-hour trip to New York. I went to tie up final details of the Beatles' US tour and

to arrange another jointly by Gerry and the Pacemakers and Billy J. Kramer with his Dakotas in the fall. Also to see about what may prove to be the most exciting American venture ... Cilla in cabaret in Washington and New York.

It's not impossible that having smugly written an account of the advent of so many successful discs, my luck may change. If it does, it does, and I shall devote my endeavour to ensuring the continuance of my artistes as major entertainers as long as they may wish me to do so.

And I'd like to put on record that I'm very much aware that this book could not possibly have been written without some people who I most sincerely and gratefully acknowledge:

My Mother, Father and Brother  
All the artistes I manage  
The young people of Merseyside

And last but very much not least Derek Taylor, for whose invaluable help with the preparation of this book and his professional experience I am greatly indebted.

*Belgravia, London, August, 1964*

# Prologue

At about three o'clock on Saturday, 28 October 1961, an eighteen-year-old boy called Raymond Jones, wearing jeans and black leather jacket, walked into a record store in Whitechapel, Liverpool, and said: "There's a record I want. It's "My Bonnie" and it was made in Germany. Have you got it?"

Behind the counter was Brian Epstein, twenty-seven, director of the store. He shook his head. 'Who is the record by?' he asked. 'You won't have heard of them,' said Jones. 'It's by a group called the Beatles ...'

# Beatles – USA

The group of young musicians who could neither read music nor write it, and who are known as the Beatles, conquered the United States of America on 7 February 1964, and by implication – since America is the heart and soul of popular music – the Beatles ruled the pop world.

By May this year the Beatles had become a worldwide phenomenon, like nothing in any of our lifetimes, and like nothing any of us will ever see again. If there was a turning point in their career – a specific date on which the breadth and scope of their future was to be altered – then it was the day their Pan-American Clipper touched down at John F. Kennedy Airport, in New York, to a welcome which has seldom been equalled anywhere in history.

Nobody – certainly not me, though my optimism was persistent from the very start – could have foreseen the excitement and the drama, and the incredible curiosity aroused by the arrival on American soil of these four long-haired lads from Liverpool.

I remember very well the night earlier that month in Paris, when a cable arrived from New York which said simply, 'Beatles Number one in Cashbox Record Chart, New York with "I Want to Hold Your Hand".' We simply could not believe it. For years the Beatles, like every other British artiste, had watched the American charts with remote envy. The American charts were the unobtainable. Only Stateside artistes ever made any imprint. And yet I had known that if the Beatles were to mean anything in America, and if the Beatles were to make a record which would sell in America, then 'I Want to Hold Your Hand' was that record.

At all stages of the Beatles' career, I and they seemed to have reached what we believed to be the ultimate – first of all it was the recording contract with EMI, way back in 1962. This, to us, was the greatest thing that could happen. Then it was the success of their first record; but this of course was only the beginning. The next ultimate was the number-one position of 'Please Please Me'. There could be, we believed then, nothing more important or dramatic or thrilling than to be number one in the British record charts. But one goes on and on and – with the qualities of the Beatles – upwards and upwards, and our next high spot was the first appearance on *Sunday Night at the London Palladium* – the top television show in Europe.

So what's left? Came November 1963 and the Beatles were selected for the *Royal Variety Show* before the Queen Mother. Another ultimate ...

With all this behind us so few things seem to remain for them to conquer. Always America seemed too big, too vast,

too remote and too American. I remember the night we heard about the number-one position in Cashbox, I said to John Lennon, ‘There can be nothing more important than this,’ adding a tentative, ‘Can there?’

A journalist sitting nearby, eavesdropping as journalists do, said, ‘Well, Carnegie Hall would be fairly big.’ And even then, though we knew we were on the way to some sort of eminence in America, we rejected this because Carnegie Hall was surely the world’s greatest concert platform, rarely, so far as we knew, accessible to pop artistes, however great.

But on Wednesday, 12 February, the Beatles topped the bill at this great hall, and a few days earlier I had been forced by pressure of commitments to turn down an offer of several thousand pounds for the Beatles to appear at Madison Square Gardens in New York! We were living in a state of extreme turbulence and excitement which left everybody, except the bland, down-to-earth Beatles, reeling and dazed.

Operation USA started in November 1963, so far as I was concerned. The Beatles have always been happy to leave timings, plots, plans, schemes and the development of their career to me because they were good enough to trust me and because they knew that if there was some important decision to make I would consult them to sound their remarkable instincts and to gauge their reactions.

In November, I took Billy J. Kramer – another very successful British artiste whom I had signed in Liverpool – to New York, first of all to promote him and secondly – and more importantly as it turned out – to find out why

the Beatles, who were the biggest thing the British pop world had ever known, hadn't 'happened' in America.

As I said, I did not imagine that they would be the immediate answer to Sinatra, but I did think they would have made some little mark on show business over there because their charm and their musical ability were undeniable, and in America there has always been a receptivity to talent.

The trip for Billy J. Kramer cost me £2,000 because I booked into an extremely good hotel and we lived demonstratively and well in order to impress the Americans that we were people of some importance. Actually, of course, we were people of no great importance to the Americans. We were two ordinary travellers – nobody knew me and I didn't know anybody over there beyond three contacts whose names were in my pocketbook.

It was like London in the early days and, as in London in 1962, I started the rounds of the various companies – the television people, the recording firms – and the first people I spoke to were Vee-Jay. During this time, of course, the Beatles were becoming very big in England.

The press had started to write about what they termed Beatlemania in October as a result of the Palladium and the *Royal Show*, and little news items were beginning to filter through to New York and into the American press, and I learned that it was pretty well decided that the next Beatles record – previously they had had no success on the two labels for whom they had recorded – was going to be issued on Capitol.

I went to Vee-Jay, however, because they had done a

very good job for Frank Ifield who was a successful young British star. But of course Ifield had only limited success in America, like every other British artiste since the war. There had always been some curious deficiency in British pop stars as far as the Americans were concerned. The view was that whatever the British did at their best, an American at his best would do very much better.

Moving around New York I found that there was without question an American ‘sound’ on disc which appealed to the American public. If you have an instinct for this sort of thing – and I believe, modestly, that I have – you can sense these things. I believe I know a British hit and in November I felt that there was a certain American *feeling*. This feeling, I was certain, existed in ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’.

Recording is the core of pop music and I felt very strongly that ‘I Want to Hold Your Hand’ was going to be a success – however moderate – in the USA.

But I still persisted with other companies because one had learned not to rely on one outlet. I contacted Walter Hofer who has since become my American attorney, and, more important than anything else so far as the Beatles’ visual impact was concerned, I met Ed Sullivan.

This came about because there was an enquiry from the Talent Officers’ Room at CBS almost on my arrival in New York. I made an arrangement to see Sullivan and on the same day had a call from a leading British agent asking me if I would like him to fix an *Ed Sullivan Show* for the Beatles. I turned this down because I preferred to do direct business and this policy paid off.

I went to see Ed Sullivan at his hotel in New York and I found him a most genial fellow. After a lot of discussion we arranged bookings for three *Ed Sullivan Shows* for the Beatles and two *Ed Sullivan Shows* for Gerry and the Pacemakers, and a fine working and personal relationship was set up between the two of us.

There were contractual difficulties and it took all of four days to resolve a certain point. My point was that the Beatles should in fact receive top billing on each occasion. This was contested vaguely by Sullivan who seemed to sense the importance or coming importance of the Beatles but who rejected my view that they were going to be the biggest thing in the world. His producer – a friend of ours now – has told me since that he told Sullivan that it was ‘ridiculous’ to give me top billing because a group hadn’t made it big in the States for a long, long time and certainly not an English group.

However, we got our top billing and I returned to England with these contracts.

I came back to England delighted and excited and told the Beatles what was to come. They were pleased because they learned that one of the shows was from the Deauville Hotel in Miami, Florida, which meant that they would have a very pleasant few days in the sunshine. In fact they did have a small holiday there, but by the time they arrived the Beatles were so hot in America that I agreed to do the Carnegie Hall show and also a very big concert in Washington DC. So their planned holiday was brief.

On 7 February, they arrived at Kennedy International Airport to the sensational welcome from 10,000 fans.

As we waited until the passengers got off the plane and the four Beatles made their first appearance on American soil, there was a tumult of wild screams and applause from a fantastic crowd.

It seemed the entire building – the whole of the top of the airport – was filled with people. It was tremendously exciting and one of the most memorable moments of my life. I have never before or since seen so many photographers lined up anywhere in the world, except perhaps when the Beatles actually returned to England from the American tour.

From then on it was crowd scenes, wild demonstrations and that extraordinary ‘We Love You Beatles’ song, from New York to Washington. There were vast seas of faces in front of the Plaza. American DJs were on the phone by the minute, and the Beatles were beside themselves with delight and amazement. I had a suite on the twelfth floor of the Plaza Hotel, and it seemed that even from the moment I got there this room was filled with people, all talking, all selling, all buying, all very much in business with me and my Beatles.

This was my first experience actually of the extraordinary number of telephone calls which come to any hotel where I am staying when on tour with the Beatles.

If radio interest in the Beatles in the US was hysterical and youthful out of all proportion to the ages of the DJs, then press interest was no less extensive. Tens of thousands of words were written in serious newspapers and magazines, and searching attempts were made by star writers to probe the immediacy of the Beatles’ success.

In the *Saturday Evening Post*, Vance Packard wrote:

The Beatles – under Mr. Epstein’s tutelage – have put stress on filling other subconscious needs of teenagers. As restyled, they are no longer roughnecks but rather lovable, almost cuddly, imps. With their collarless jackets and boyish grins, they have succeeded in bringing out the mothering instinct in many adolescent girls.

The subconscious need that they fill most expertly is in taking adolescent girls clear out of this world. The youngsters in the darkened audiences can let go all inhibitions in a quite primitive sense when the Beatles cut loose. They can retreat from rationality and individuality. Mob pathology takes over, and they are momentarily freed of all of civilization’s restraints.

The Beatles have become peculiarly adept at giving girls this release. Their relaxed, confident manner, their wild appearance, their whooping and jumping, their electrified rock-’n’-roll pulsing out into the darkness makes the girls want to jump and then scream. The more susceptible soon faint or develop twitching hysteria. (One reason why Russia’s totalitarian leaders frown on rock-’n’-roll and jazz is that these forms offer people release from controlled behavior.)

In the same edition the bearded, questing Alfred Aronowitz followed the Beatles from New York to Miami and described his first impressions thus:

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 indistinguishable beneath their manes of mop-like hair.

Later in his article he wrote:

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 Beatles' entourage had been ensconced. Still others, with the names and pocketbooks 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.

My new American secretary and I coped as best we could with an indescribable volume of interest which poured into the hotel by cable, telephone and personal representation. I could not believe what was happening around me. Of course, it is part of life now, but at that time it seemed as if the whole Beatle business was almost beyond control.

It was and still is impossible to attend in detail to every single enquiry about the Beatles because it is not an overstatement to say that the whole world wants the Beatles. And in America it seemed that every American wanted them. It was marvellously exciting but the strain was immense.

On the Tuesday after the *Sullivan Show* the Beatles went by train in a snowstorm to Washington to perform to 8,000 people. They had intended to fly of course, not because they enjoy flying but because it is the only way to conserve time. Snow, however, prevented the flight, and after a very frightening and violent fight to the station through hysterical crowds, they attempted to relax on the train for their first visit – and mine – to the American capital.

I was looking forward to the visit because I felt I might be able to absorb some sense of American history as an antidote to the 1964 Beatle-type tumult of New York.

In fact, neither the Beatles nor I had much opportunity to see Washington because if anything it was wilder than

New York. The reception at the British Embassy was given by the British Ambassador Sir David Ormsby-Gore, later Lord Harlech, and his very charming wife.

Both Lord and Lady Harlech are extremely nice English people but, as is so often the way, their friends and guests were not quite as pleasant as the hosts, and the Beatles loathed the reception, the people, the atmosphere, the attitudes and since then they have refused practically every invitation of this type because they know what happens.

And what happens is that the Beatles, who are originally invited to see and to be seen, to hear and to be heard, to enjoy and to be enjoyed, become, in fact, simply autographing-automatons and a butt and a receptacle for every type of challenge, insult, demand and query imaginable and that, when the guests believe themselves to be important or very significant young Englishmen with marvellous educations, can be extremely difficult and unpleasant.

What happened at the embassy was that Ringo had a lock of his hair snipped off, that John was told 'Sign this' by a pink-faced young Britisher and said 'No', which I thought quite justifiable but the response from the Englishman was 'You'll sign this and like it'. 'Oh,' said John, and he left the reception and went home in a considerable temper. Ringo, Paul, George and I stuck it a little longer, buffeted, pulled and pushed, and only left when the writer's cramp became too much to bear.

Lord and Lady Harlech were very sorry and said so to the British press, who reported the event in full on

their front pages. If we made a few friends at the British Embassy we made millions on the air through the wild hysterical comedian of American Radio. I was incredibly overwhelmed by the high-pressure salesmanship of Americans and by the techniques that they employ generally in gaining news and interviews and tapes.

I cannot say that I admired this enormously but nevertheless it was there and it was something which was quite stunning in its way. Since the visit, numerous attempts have been made to produce interviews, long-playing records which are not legal and which our lawyers have dealt with fairly severely, but it was interesting to notice that even the road manager, the transport managers and anyone else in any way involved with the Beatles were devoured by the DJs and by the interviewers for their views. This has since become a feature of Beatleism – that it is considered an asset to have some contact with someone who knows the Beatles. One of my staff tells me that his father was asked for an autograph not of the Beatles but of his own because he was the father of a member of the staff which was connected with the Beatles. Tenuous, but, in the extraordinary context of the Beatles, quite everyday.

America taught the Beatles one lesson and that was not to be taken for a ride if they could possibly help it – and if they were, to make it as gentle a ride as possible. The DJs – the folk heroes of the airwaves – had them in the palms of their microphones on the first tour.

The Beatles and the road managers could be secured for a handshake to say anything at all to a microphone. Paul would say ‘And listen to the 1, 2, 3 Show, it’s the greatest’,

and John would say ‘Listen to the 3, 4, 5 Show, it’s the most’, and Malcolm Evans, the road manager, likewise. With four, strong, temperamental people like the Beatles and the lively young men around them, it was difficult to convince them that what they were doing was promoting commercial enterprises, not only without any reward but without any discernment or discrimination.

The DJs had a grand time but within a few days I had to stop it very severely. This warning was heeded and now they themselves refuse at all times to do promotions or to isolate one product from another, whether it is a commercial radio station or a toy balloon. It is extraordinary that the Beatles were taken in for so long, but then America is the land of the hard sell and their sales resistance at that time was not as strong as it is now. Now it is the strongest and most solid block of sales resistance in the world, and it is just as well because everyone in the world has something to sell to the Beatles, and not always are the products very good.

One of the problems of organising the lives of pop artistes and planning their careers is that interest must be sustained even when the artistes are not in the country, or on television, or on radio in person. The difficulty is how to maintain disc sales without personal appearances. I was not at all sure that when the Beatles left America interest could be maintained, although the DJs promised that because the Beatles were so good they would keep up the output and activity on their behalf.

I need not have worried. When ‘Can’t Buy Me Love’, their sixth hit record, was released in America it went

immediately into the number-one position, topping five other Beatle discs which had previously occupied the first five places in the charts. Thus one group occupied all six places and we knew that when we next entered the USA by the back door – that is through San Francisco – we were going to be a sensation, and the challenge and the responsibility was a little frightening. We learned that a ticker-tape welcome was planned and the Beatles – not being demonstrative people and still maintaining a sort of bland modesty – wondered whether this was quite the thing for them.

We decided to agree to the open-car drive through this very beautiful city because, we argued, it was part of show business.

Our recollections of the first American tour still dominate what has happened since November 1962, when the first Beatles record was issued. For although there had been many important events – chief among which was the royal premiere of the Beatles' first film in July this year in London – and though the Australasian tour was, in terms of crowd numbers, wilder and bigger than the American reception, there is, undeniably, something about the USA which exceeds every other nation in practically every respect.

We knew that America would make us or break us as world stars.

In fact, she made us.