

In 2020, a trove of nearly one thousand photographs taken by Paul McCartney was rediscovered in his archive. Taken on a Pentax 35 mm film camera he acquired in fall 1963, these photographs stand as a personal record of his time with The Beatles at a critical moment in the group's evolution. The musician documented the "eves of the storm." providing a unique perspective into the band's meteoric rise, from November of 1963, to Paris, and on to February of 1964. The photographs capture what it was like to be a Beatle at the start of Beatlemania-from gigs in Liverpool and London to performing on the Ed Sullivan show in New York to an unparalleled television audience of 73 million people. McCartney notes, "It was a crazy whirlwind that we were living through, touring and working pretty much every day and seeing loads of people who wanted to photograph us. There were loads of eyes, and cameras, at the center of this storm."

The photographs reveal the intensity of touring and of long days spent in rehearsal, in hotels, and on the road, being followed by the media at every stage. They evoke an affectionate family album, picturing his fellow band members—John Lennon, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr—at a time when their lives were changing irrevocably. Where McCartney appears in the photographs, he had handed his

camera to a member of The Beatles' team, enabling us to catch glimpses of him performing onstage or posing for pictures.

The Beatles started playing together in 1957 in Liverpool, a working-class port city in Northwest England. Because of its location, Liverpool had strong connections to US ports, and records by American musicians became popular among the Liverpudlian youth. The Beatles were heavily influenced by American jazz, rock and roll, and rhythm and blues. In 1960, the group—then consisting of John Lennon, McCartney, George Harrison, bass guitarist Stuart Sutcliffe, and drummer Pete Best-visited Hamburg, Germany, a transformative trip that set The Beatles' course in developing their rock-and-roll sound. In these early years, The Beatles covered many American songs, mainly by Black musicians, including Little Richard, Chuck Berry, and John Lee Hooker, as well as the Shirelles, the Marvelettes, and the Miracles. The band was discovered in 1961 by Brian Epstein of North End Music Stores, who became their manager. By 1962, The Beatles' iconic four-man lineup was finalized with the addition of Ringo Starr on drums.

The earliest photographs in this exhibition were

taken during a tour that began at the Odeon cinema in Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, in Southwest England, on November 1, 1963. The term "Beatlemania" had recently been coined by the British press to describe audiences' rapturous responses to the band. McCartney captures The Beatles' opening acts onstage, including Peter Jay and the Jaywalkers and the Vernons Girls, a singing group who went on to record a song entitled "We Love The Beatles." The photographs also show McCartney's bandmates backstage, along with their entourage and fellow performers.

The next selection of photographs documents their arrival in Paris on January 14, 1964 (fig. 1). Their schedule was intense: photo shoots and recording sessions were planned around an eighteen-day run at Paris's Olympia Theatre that sometimes included three sets a day. They shared the bill with American singer Trini Lopez and Bulgarian-French singer Sylvie Vartan, who was then engaged to French rock star Johnny Hallyday, France's version of Elvis Preslev.

McCartney remembers telling his bandmates, "I don't think we should go to America until we've got a number one hit." Soon after arriving in Paris, the band received a telegram announcing their single

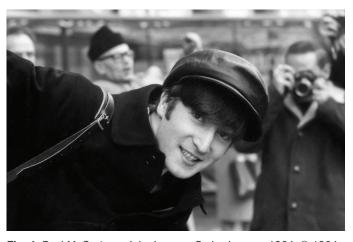


Fig. 1: Paul McCartney. John Lennon. Paris, January, 1964. ⊚ 1964 Paul McCartney under exclusive license to MPL Archive LLP

"I Want To Hold Your Hand" had reached number one in the United States. This signaled a turning point for The Beatles, demonstrating that their fame had spread internationally. Photographs in the next section show the band as they traveled from Heathrow Airport in London to John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York, where they arrived on February 7, 1964. McCartney's first images of Manhattan were taken through the window of the band's chauffeur-driven car, capturing the fans who pursued them down West 58th Street. The Beatles were booked to stay at the luxurious Plaza Hotel



Fig. 2: Paul McCartney. West 58th Street, crossing 6th Avenue. New York, February, 1964. © 1964 Paul McCartney under exclusive license to MPI Archive LLP

"The crowds chasing us in A Hard Day's Night were based on moments like this."

-Paul McCartney

on Fifth Avenue, and McCartney photographed the horse-mounted police controlling the crowds from the car as they approached the hotel. In New York, The Beatles were scheduled to appear on the popular *Ed Sullivan Show*, where the first of three televised performances on February 9, 1964, was watched by seventy-three million people, transforming them into global superstars.

The band had a busy schedule on this first visit to the United States. On February 11, 1964, they took a train to Washington, DC. McCartney took photographs while on the train and from the window of their car as they were driven from Union Station to the Washington Coliseum, where The Beatles would perform their first US concert. Returning to New York the following day, again by train, the band performed two shows at Carnegie Hall.

As the month of February progressed, screaming fans met The Beatles at each train station or

airport (fig. 2). McCartney directed his lens toward these fans, the workers, the police, and the press photographers, who responded to his attention with surprise and delight (fig. 3). In these photographs, McCartney connects with the everyday people he sees, capturing their humanity with empathy. He has said that he has always been drawn to representing the lives of ordinary people in his creative work due to his background. He was raised in a working-class family in Liverpool, where his father worked as a cotton merchant, one of the city's major trade industries.



Fig. 3: Paul McCartney. Photographers in Central Park. New York, February, 1964. © 1964 Paul McCartney under exclusive license to MPI Archive LLP

Having taken the country by storm with their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show in New York, The Beatles were booked to appear on the show for a second broadcast live from the Deauville Beach Resort in Miami Beach on February 16. McCartney's photographs show some of the seven thousand fans waiting in the sunshine at Miami International Airport. When The Beatles arrived in Miami, he switched from black-and-white to color film to capture the blue skies, palm trees, and golden sands, a sharp contrast to the blizzards in Washington, DC, just a few days before. He says, "The color pictures start when we get to Miami . . . it's like we were living in a black and white world on the rest of the tour and suddenly we're in wonderland, Florida, the sun, the swimming pools."

In Miami Beach, The Beatles were finally able to take a few days off work, and McCartney photographed his friends relaxing by the pool, taking a boat trip, swimming, and even attempting to water ski. Imbued with the spirit of holiday snaps, McCartney's Miami photographs reflect the fun and novelty of their time there (fig. 4). The band relaxed their usual sartorial standards, swapping suits for Beatles-branded caps and toweling shirts, provided by the Deauville.

After their extraordinary three-month journey, The

"George looking young, handsome and relaxed. Living the life."

-Paul McCartney

Beatles returned in August 1964 for their first full North American tour, performing thirty-two shows across twenty-five cities in the United States and Canada. McCartney was no longer photographing the band's touring with the same intensity as during their first visit, but a small number of photographs taken during this tour record some of the musicians who traveled with them as opening acts. The Beatles would again return to New York on their subsequent North American tour, including for their famous performance at Shea Stadium on August 15, 1965, in front of a massive crowd of more than fifty-five thousand people.

Adapted by Mark Scala, Frist Art Museum chief curator, from text provided by the National Portrait Gallery, London



Fig. 4: Paul McCartney. George Harrison. Miami Beach, February, 1964. @ 1964 Paul McCartney under exclusive license to MPL Archive LLP

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