

SHEILA LAUDER

## AROUND THE BEATLES

*One of the outstanding events of recent years has been the phenomenal success of the Beatles, who have earned themselves a tremendous following on both sides of the Atlantic. In America recently the American Broadcasting Company screened a show called Around the Beatles. It was networked coast-to-coast at the peak viewing time on Sunday 15th November.*

*It was the first TV show to be specially scripted and built round the Beatles and had been originally produced by Rediffusion in London earlier in the year. The programme was produced by Jack Good and directed by Rita Gillespie, both of whom were flown over from America for the production. As 1964 was the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth the Beatles played the Mechanicals in a sequence from A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

*The author, Sheila Lauder, who normally works as production assistant for the crime series No Hiding Place was transferred to the production to assist. Her bewildered reactions form the following article, which originally appeared in Rediffusion London's house magazine Fusion.*

**I**T'S FLYING in the face of nature for an aged, highly respectable drama PA like myself to be thrust head-long into the land of song and dance. But when asked to do the Beatles show I cried "yeah, yeah" and before I could say *No Hiding Place* I was very much *Around the Beatles*.



Fig. 1. The Beatles.



Fig. 2. Paul McCartney and George Harrison.

The latter is not strictly true—because getting around the Beatles is not the easiest thing in the world. In fact, at one point in the production Jack Good, Rita Gillespie and myself began to doubt that they were in the show at all. It was so difficult to get to see them, speak to them or get them for rehearsal. This was mainly due to the fact that they were filming all day and when they weren't filming we couldn't persuade anyone to tell us where they were anyway. Finally, we got a message that John Lennon would be coming to Television House to see us that very evening. I duly explained to security that John Lennon was coming to see us. No reaction! How clever of them, I thought, they are so secure they don't even

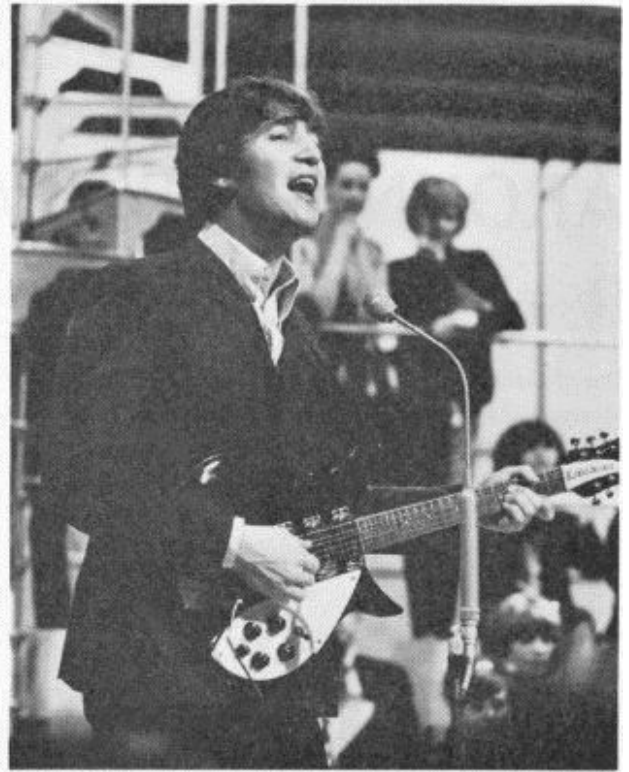


Fig. 3. John Lennon.

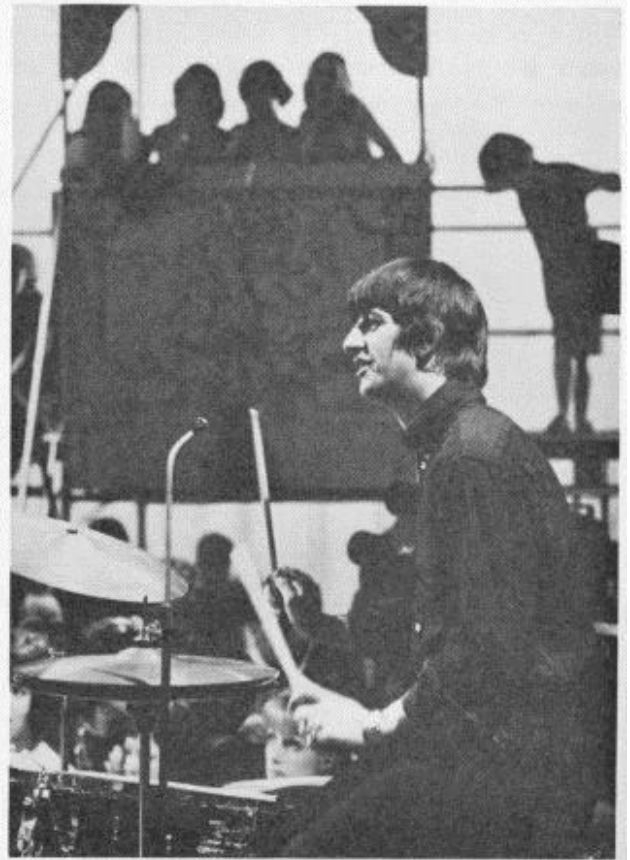


Fig. 4. Ringo Starr.

want me to know that they know that I know. It was arranged that the moment he arrived, he was to be taken to our office and we were to be informed. We retired to the club and waited.

Not half an hour later the call came through. "Your visitor has arrived and is in the office." Producer, director and PA leapt to their feet, clutching tiny glasses in hot little hands, and dashed downstairs. Trevor Peacock, who was doing an acting bit for us, has never had such a reception. He stood there thunderstruck by this mass onslaught, and was most upset when we blamed him for not being John Lennon.

We were not disappointed though. Four hours later John rang to ask Jack where he was. Exit Jack and Rita to see Mr Lennon, having first written his address on a piece of headed paper, which they ate on arrival at his doorstep.

The Beatles did eventually turn up and on that first rehearsal with them, as they arrived, I introduced myself, and as he shook my hand, from the lips of Paul McCartney dropped this gem "Hello Jack".

To begin with rehearsals were a bit of a strain, because they were tired and we were tired and it was very late. However, we all got used to each other and eventually settled down to work. They're not bad lads at all, even though they do drink coke with their scotch. Rehearsing the "Dream" was very funny, although none of the boys were too keen at the thought of wearing tights. They really shouldn't have worried because, as it transpired, I thought they turned a very pretty ankle.

Jack Good and Rita Gillespie were getting less and less sleep as the production wore on. Jack seems to become inspired as darkness falls and will work all night quite happily and seem none the worse for it the next day. Rita always went home to sleep eventually, but Jack never had the strength to go all the way to Palmers Green and so all sorts of unlikely people were able to find him the next day sleeping in the Guest Room, or tucked up in the first-aid room. Security once woke him up there with a cup of tea.

Things progressed and off we went to record the music. To quote Mr Lennon "it was a hard day's night" but at the end of it we had something tangible — we virtually had the show.

Now that things were finally committed and we had the tapes to prove it, Rita was able to give me the camera script and Jack even went home to Palmers Green once in a while. The day of the crew rehearsal came and went and we had a final rehearsal with the Beatles. I will gloss over the bit where the master tapes got lost, because the memory of it turns me

white even now. Needless to say they were found, having never been really lost in the first place. And so we say farewell to the rehearsal studio at Remembrance Hall, Chelsea, and are received into the bosom of Studio 5 at Wembley.

This bit is difficult to write about because it all happened so quickly and everything went so well. We had no great dramas so the best I can offer you is the sad tale of a young lady in our first-day audience who had her leg and/or foot run over by the Mole crane. No doubt she still has a mesh-pattern there from the guard to prove it. She was duly attended to and came back screaming as loudly as ever, possibly more loudly because she must have been in some pain. As it is terribly difficult to tell a scream of agony from a scream of ecstasy, it's possible there were more casualties which never came to light. However, there were no spare arms or legs about at the end of the day (unless props struck them!) and I for one was thankful.

Jack Good did a final, marvellous, warm-up and it was time for transmission. As I counted the show in I still couldn't believe we were actually doing it, but



Fig. 5. Paul, George and John.



Fig. 6. Ringo and George.

from the moment I said "take it", I had no more time to ponder on that. Transmission is the ultimate effort and when it's all working and everything is going for you, there is a communication of excitement and concentration between everyone and everything, which is



Fig. 7. John Lennon.

the most stimulating feeling I know. The Beatles show was like that. What you saw was the result of the most tremendous effort and care of Jack Good and Rita Gillespie, coupled with the best that every person working on the show could offer.