"She's Telling All the World:" The Agency and Legacy of Female Beatles Fans in *Beatles Monthly* Correspondence

by

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A Master's Research Paper
Presented to the University of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
research paper requirement for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
History

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada

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Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this research paper. This is a true copy of the research paper, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my research paper may be made electronically available to the public.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thank you to my supervisor, Dr. Jane Nicholas, for being an exemplary mentor during this process and keeping me on track. Her feedback and careful consideration made this paper what it is, and I am very grateful to have learned from such a distinguished historian.

Appreciation is in order for other faculty members of the Tri-U History Program. Thank you to Dr. Andrew Hunt for inspiring parts of this research and for being a foundational part of my academic experience at Waterloo. Dr. Gary Bruce and Dr. Catherine Carstairs, thank you for your encouragement in my coursework writing. Thank you to my peers Christine Trivino, Chase Norton, Daniel Berry, and Beatrice Lawson for the cherished memories, advice, and friendship.

Thank you to my parents, Matthew and Theresa Clarke, for loving and supporting me throughout my educational journey. To my sister Sydney, for being there when I needed her, especially for a Beatles sing-along in the car. To my grandparents, Sheila and Clifford Brown (my Nana and Papa), this paper is for both of you. A special dedication goes to Papa for playing *Sgt. Pepper's* for me when I was a little girl, forever changing the trajectory of my life. If nothing else, I'm lucky to have a grandfather with exceptional music taste.

To my love Alex and my darling cat Presley, for being my best friends.

Love to all my wonderful friends and family near and far, who checked in, asked me how things were going, cheered me on, and didn't laugh in my face when I told you I was writing a research paper on Beatles fans – I appreciate your candor. Thank you for sharing this with me.

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Introduction

For the female fans of the influential British band, the Beatles, their labour within Beatles fandom has largely been overlooked by music historians. The fan community they created, not unlike the fan clubs for other male musicians of the mid-twentieth century, emerged as dynamic outlets which allowed young women to not only express their love of the Beatles but to articulate and project their agency as supportive fans and members of a community. By leveraging the leadership and unwavering dedication of female fans during Beatlemania from 1963 to 1966, the Beatles strategically propelled their careers. This research explores this symbiotic relationship, arguing that the triumph of the Beatles as internationally renowned male musicians was linked to the agency of female fans who engaged as members of fan clubs and the wider fan community through print media.

Although the Beatles themselves need no introduction, the band formed in the lower-class dugouts of Liverpool in the late 1950s by founding members John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and later recruit Ringo Starr are widely cited as the most influential music group in history. These four men altered the course of how music was written, recorded, and produced, pioneering rock music and changing the course of what music could and would sound like forever. While their seven-year output as a band remains the soundtrack of the 1960s, their fans were the background music - harmonies you may not notice immediately but formed the foundation for their success. The earliest Beatles fans, consisting mostly of young women, are the reason the Beatles' phenomenon reached such heights. Their enthusiasm and dedication propelled the band to global fame, making their impact on music history important.

This study examines how gender stereotypes and societal views intersected to encourage reflection on the changing narratives around young women and their varied roles as fans, consumers, and individuals in cultural and economic contexts during the early 1960s. Women and girls often face stereotypes in the media, being labeled as overly enthusiastic fans due to gender biases and social expectations. As the media perpetuated a narrative that oversimplified and diminished young women's interests and pursuits during Beatlemania, I intend to highlight their agency within the fandom by focusing on the experiences of the young women themselves, thereby rectifying these biases and providing a more nuanced understanding of their contributions to Beatles culture. Their experiences as fans in the early mid-twentieth century, specifically as fans of the Beatles, show that young women have often faced judgment and scrutiny, with their actions unfairly characterized as excessive or irrational. While perceptions have evolved over time, newspaper articles, specifically male broadcasters and journalists' attitudes towards female fan women reflects a complex interplay of gender roles, cultural shifts, and media influence.

I use *Beatles Monthly*, the fan magazine published in part by the official British fan club for the Beatles, to examine this dedication and enthusiasm of female Beatles fans. Specifically, 'Letters From Beatle People,' the fan letter section of the magazine, will be used as the primary source base to analyze the female agency, gender identity, and trajectory of the Beatles' career between the first edition of the magazine, published in August 1963, to the editions in late 1966. The book was published by Beat Monthly, based out of London, England, by Sean O'Mahony under the pseudonym Johnny Dean, who worked as the editor. He approached the band's manager, Brian Epstein, in 1963 about a magazine dedicated solely to the group. It worked in tandem with the fan club and was the only authorized fan magazine of the Beatles.

Agency: Historical Framing Device

Historical agency is the ability of individuals or groups to exert influence and effect change within the historical context they inhabit, to understand how people act independently and make choices that impact historical events and processes. It encompasses the actions, decisions, and behaviors that contribute to shaping historical outcomes. For young women who self-identified as Beatles fans, they shaped the upwards trajectory of the band's musical career while simultaneously making supportive decisions, such as writing letters, buying records, and creating community surrounding the band based on their own volition. In her classic essay on children's agency, historian Mary Jo Maynes asserts that "In short, girls do make history."[1] Maynes' work supplements the foundation of this research paper by addressing the "feminist problem of thinking about how women's everyday activities embody historical agency,"[2] focusing on the nuanced ways in which women and girls navigate and influence their social environments through daily actions.

Maynes emphasizes the significance of women's everyday activities as sites of resistance and empowerment. Through this lens, the seemingly mundane aspects of women's lives are reinterpreted as vital expressions of historical agency, revealing the complexities and subtleties of their roles in shaping societal changes. Maynes addresses girls' agency throughout history in their labour, politics, and cultural contributions, arguing that girls have been "active participants" in their communities since the mid-eighteenth century, but their active participation was reduced to "relative powerlessness, marginality, and invisibility."[3] Maynes argues that the labour of

[1] Mary Jo Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis: History, Agency, and Narratives of Childhood," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1, no. 1 (December 1, 2008), 116-117.
[2] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 116.
[3] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 116.

young girls was responsible for the economic growth of Europe during the Industrial Revolution as the first factory labour force. Without girls as perceived useful workers, Europe may have been slower to grasp this economic growth.

With this, Maynes states that there is a historical tendency to overlook or undervalue the roles and contributions of women (and by extension, children and youth) in shaping history. Recognizing the contributions of young women to history challenges the traditional notion of historical agency, because it prompts a reconsideration of how historical agency is defined and understood. Since the usual ways of discussing historical change do not adequately account for the roles played by girls and children, their actions and decisions overlooked and are not seen as actively influencing and effecting change in history. While it is evident that the concept of agency can hold different meanings for different individuals and groups depending on the social, economic, political, and cultural context in which individuals or groups exist, it is also clear that the exercise of agency can be both empowering and constrained by these same contexts. These constraints can include factors such as laws, social norms, economic conditions, and power dynamics. One aspect of these factors is the influence of gender roles, as young women have often been excluded from historical narratives, despite their significant contributions in shaping those histories.

Traditional gender roles and societal expectations throughout the early 1940s and 1950s often dictated that young women should be reserved, demure, and focused on domestic roles. However, it is crucial to discern between these ideological expectations and the diverse realities of our history, as evidenced by scholarly works like Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* and Stephanie Coontz's *The Way We Never Were*, which reveal how these ideals often failed to align with lived experiences. Christine Feldman-Barrett notes that the late 1950s and early 1960s

remained a period where teenage girls were perceived as emblematic of modernity and consumerism, yet young women still had to push against the expectation that their leisure activities should be based at home.[4]

As the 1960s began and the Beatles rose in popularity, these expectations and perceptions had already begun to shift. Female fans who exhibited intense passion for artists were sometimes seen as deviating from these domestic expectations, leading to judgment, and labeling. Media representations played a crucial role in shaping public opinion, as a "blending of fandom, celebrity and presumed media influence" significantly fueled fan passion in the mid-twentieth century.[5] During Beatlemania, journalists often characterized Beatles fans as "hysterical girls," perpetuating a stereotype that undermined the genuine passion and enthusiasm these fans had for the band's music.[6] Furthermore, some journalists edited soundbites to focus on the superficial aspects of the band members' appearance, reinforcing a narrative centered around the "female affliction" rather than the musicians' talent and their appeal to a dedicated fanbase.[7] Sensationalized stories, often fueled by stereotypes and sexism, portrayed enthusiastic female fans as overly emotional, irrational, or hysterical. This contributed to the perception that their admiration for artists was extreme or obsessive.[8]

For the Beatles, although the band and their management were comprised by men, their dependence on young women to support them as fans was vital to their growing success and later

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[4] Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2016), Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), Christine Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), 27.
[5] Joli Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Characterization," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1992), 11.
[6] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.
[7] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 47.
[8] Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs, "Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa A. Lewis, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1992), 87.

worldwide stardom. This is reflected in the letter's fans wrote and, in the case of the fan clubs, in the work young women contributed to the band. At a time where female agency was not always embraced, this expression of autonomy was viewed with suspicion and labeled as excessive or irrational. This research project asserts that the passionate dedication of female fans can be interpreted as a form of agency, where young women actively expressed their desires and preferences. In this context, agency is defined as a feeling of ownership over the success of the Beatles and is understood as the young women's action and intervention in ensuring their fame, which is acknowledged within several of their letters to *Beatles Monthly.* In the March 1967 issue, Margaret from Sussex wrote that "us fans…helped a great deal in boosting the Beatles' fame…that's what we're here for."[9] Certainly, young women like Margaret felt a sense of power and involvement in the Beatles' success.

In her article, Maynes argues that the contributions of girls to history brings us to question the very notion of historical agency because there are few sources which speak directly from the experiences of girls themselves.[10] Maynes emphasizes the need to avoid oversimplification when understanding agency in historical contexts. It is crucial to recognize that comprehending people's actions requires a nuanced examination that goes beyond merely analyzing their words or expression.[11] The letters in *Beatles Monthly* sent by fans, along with the roles of women employed by the fan club, provide insight into how young women perceived the Beatles' career from their perspective. However, this also calls for a deeper examination of why these fans wrote in and why they wanted to be involved.

[9] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* March 1967, 19.
[10] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 116-117.
[11] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 117-118.

For the purposes of this paper, it is important to note that while most letters to *Beatles Monthly* were signed with feminine names, the ages of the writers were rarely mentioned. Based on the author's analysis of these letters, the fans were generally female, between 8 and 18 years old, with some letters written by women in their late teens and early twenties. This is due to information and mentions of common youth associations of school, dances, radios, and concerts. Therefore, the term "young women" in this paper refers to most Beatles fans who were unmarried and actively engaged in the *Beatles Monthly* community. Maynes notes that historians "cannot properly understand agency without understanding its subjective dimensions, including, significantly, those structured in and by childhood, as these vary across particular social and historical contexts and locations and across the life course… [and] fully capturing historical dynamics and historical agency requires attention to childhood."[12] Although not all female Beatles fans were children, their fan base encompassed a range of young women who asserted their presence and influence, demonstrating that their voices and actions were an essential part of the band's success. The childhood experiences of these young women, particularly growing up in a sexually repressive society, played a crucial role in shaping their passion as fans.[13] Their longing for an outlet for their emotions and desires found expression in their fervent support for the Beatles. For clarity, this paper will use "young women" as an inclusive term for the age range of approximately 10-22 years old to encompass as many fans as possible.

Further, this paper cannot analyse in-depth the letters contained from the years 1967 to 1969 due to length constraints, as it would be a significant expansion of this research to delve into this period. The letters from these years offer valuable insights into the evolving dynamics

[12] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 119-120.
[13] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 90; 96.

of Beatles fandom during a transformative period in the band's career. Analyzing these letters could provide a deeper understanding of how fan sentiments and interactions with the band and each other evolved over time. Specifically, exploring the content and tone of these letters could illuminate shifts in fan priorities, attitudes towards the Beatles' changing music and image, and the impact of cultural and social changes on fan engagement. Such an analysis could enrich our understanding of the Beatles' enduring cultural influence and the complex relationship between artists and their fan communities. The select few shown here are evidence of continued female Beatles fan support of their artistry and underscore the enduring bond between the band and their female fan base. As well, more research could be done on Beatles fans who represented minority groups, or fans who represented the LGBTQ+ community. There is significant space for such research to be done using not just *Beatles Monthly* letters but other fan-written sources and testimonies as well.

In analyzing fan letters from *Beatles Monthly*, it is essential to consider that while these sources are valuable, they can also be biased and not tell the whole story about fan agency, and the young women themselves. Historical records, including which letters are chosen for publication in *Beatles Monthly*, might not accurately represent the experiences of all young women. Therefore, it is important to critically evaluate the letters and what societal factors might have influenced the editor's selection of each submission that was published.

Magazine and Fanzines: Background and Methodology

Print and periodical studies is an interdisciplinary field that examines print media, such as magazines, as cultural, social, and historical artifacts. Magazines, and specifically women's magazines, have a long and plentiful history, providing a unique look into the development and cultural constructions of gender. Research from the past two decades indicates that contemporary

representations of femininity in popular culture outlets, including women's magazines, mirror broader social transformations.[14] English scholars Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith note in their 2015 book *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture,* which focuses on Canadian women's magazines from the 1920s through the 1950s, that the "mainstream magazine functioned as a cultural and commercial force,"[15] with each one developing "its own distinctive identity."[16] Magazine studies therefore offer valuable insights into the role of magazines in society, their impact on culture and public opinion, and the ways in which they reflect and shape social norms and values. Furthermore, employing magazine ethnography as a methodology can aid historians in comprehending the complexities of media influence and its contributions to the cultural landscape, thereby advancing fan-historical research.[17]

In a 2023 study on the connections between women's magazines and the politics of gender, media culture scholar Rafaela Orphanides and her co-authors found that magazines directed at women specifically "can influence the construction of social norms and reinforce ideas about what is perceived as desirable and 'authentic' feminine behaviour."[18] The authors further argue that women's magazines "leads to the construction of a woman who, while being true to herself and considering her own personal aspirations, still needs to abide by limited constructions of womanhood."[19] For teenage girls, the magazine *Seventeen*, first published in 1944, is noted by scholars to be the first publication that recognized girls "not only as an important readership

[14] Anna Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines: Publishing, Markets and Readerships* (London: Routledge, 2003), 6; 10.
[15] Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith, *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture: Canadian Periodicals in English and French, 1925–1960* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), 3.
[16] Hammill and Smith, *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture,* 4.
[17] Lies Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!' Finding Fan History in Movie Magazines," in *A Fan Studies Primer: Method, Research, Ethics,* ed. Paul Booth and Rebecca Williams (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2021), 163.
[18] Rafaela Orphanides, Line Nyhagen, and Emily Keightley, "Constructions of Self and the Pursuit of 'Authenticity' in Women's Magazines: A Study of British and Greek Discourses," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 26, no. 6 (December 15, 2022), 823.
[19] Orphanides et. al, "Constructions of Self and the Pursuit of 'Authenticity' in Women's Magazines," 834.

demographic but also as a valuable target for advertisers…reflecting the rise of youth culture in British society."[20] Although most women and teen magazine research is conducted on fashion, beauty, and health magazines, there is very little scholarship directed towards music magazines and women, or studies on teen music magazines and fanzines.

The 2016 book by sociologist Rosemary Lucy Hill, *Gender, Metal and the Media*, explores how the experience of rock music, and rock music media, are inherently gendered. She highlights how women are often excluded from the narrative in rock magazines, despite their significant role in shaping cultural interactions within their fandoms and their contributions to music communities.[21] Media and film scholar Matt Hills asserts that fan magazines "have acted as community-building paratexts,"[22] while media scholar Andrea McDonnell notes that "readers use fan magazine content as a mechanism for bonding with other readers, expressing their values and beliefs, and engaging in sociable conversations with friends and acquaintances."[23] For *Beatles Monthly*, as a fan magazine directed primarily towards young women, it is evident that female Beatles fans could create an authentic presentation of themselves through their fandom while simultaneously expressing their femininity, build friendships and community, and promote the band.

Magazines can provide insight into not only the representation of gender, race, class, and other social categories, but also can show the role of fan communities and reader contributions, such as letters to the editor and fan art, especially regarding young audiences and the magazine's

[20] Joy Jenkins, "Magazines' Construction of Life Markers: From Youth to Old Age*,"* in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, ed. Miglena Sternadori and Tim Holmes (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 229.
[21] Rosemary Lucy Hill, *Gender, Metal and the Media: Women Fans and the Gendered Experience of Music*. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 2-3.
[22] Matt Hills, "Magazines and Interpretive Communities: Approaching the Commercial Media Fan Magazine," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies* (see note 20), 293.
[23] Andrea McDonnell, "Gatekeepers and Gal Pals: *The Narrative Strategies of Celebrity Magazines*," in *The Handbook of Magazine Studies*, (see note 20), 198.

role in shaping youth culture and identity. Whereas magazines are consistent periodicals, with paid staff and mass-produced and marketed, specific magazines called "fanzines" were developed for fan communities. In his 1973 publication *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication*, American psychiatrist Fredric Wertham defines a fanzine as "uncommercial, nonprofessional, small-circulation magazines which their editors produce, publish, and distribute…their writers and readers belong chiefly to the under thirty group."[24] Wertham considers fanzines as something "positive" and instead of them being trivialities, they were "unpolluted by greed…intensely personal…unmanipulated from above."[25] Further, these fanzines "exist as genuine human voices outside of mass manipulation."[26] Although fan-made magazines were first developed in the early 1930s, dealing with science and science fiction,[27] they evolved into various niches of music, movies, and celebrity themes. As media scholar John Fiske notes, "fan culture is also related to the commercial interests of the culture industries… on the one hand serve the economic interests of the industry and on the other the cultural interests of the fans,"[28] arguing that magazines allow fans to participate in fandom.

Fanzines for music stars were less common than movie or television zines for Hollywood actors but still catered to their fan audience, for "popular music, songs, records, jazz concerts, rock music,"[29] as Wertham notes, and "rock and roll receives special attention."[30] In her article on "Fan History In Movie Magazines," fan studies scholar Lies Lanckman discusses how the

[24] Fredric Wertham, *The World of Fanzines: A Special Form of Communication* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1973), 33.
[25] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 35.
[26] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 35.
[27] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 36.
[28] John Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. Lisa Lewis (London: Routledge, 1992), 46-47.
[29] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 116.
[30] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 117.

Hollywood fan magazine "originated in the 1910s and knew its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s…it was created for (and not by) fans by publishing companies…aimed at a general fan…who was more often than not, female."[31] Lanckman theorises that fan magazines are the most efficient way to study fans to analyse the relationships women formed with their favourite stars, particularly using the letters to the editor section in each edition of these film magazines, a useful research tool because of their accessibility. Lanckman notes:

> These letter pages, published in regular sections with names like "What the Fans Think," allowed readers in the United States and abroad to share their views on their preferred stars and films with thousands of other fans – and allowed these fans to write responses, which in turn might get published and attract their own responses, sometimes across a span of months or years. In this sense, by the mid-1920s the letter page came to serve as a real public forum, a form of analogue social media, which was second to none in terms of immediacy and interactivity at this pre-internet moment in fan history.[32]

Lanckman further praises the accessibility of magazine letter pages, despite their heavily mediated nature, noting that the selection and omission of letters still make them an ideal resource for historians.[33]

Early music magazines, unlike those dedicated to Hollywood cinema stars, often focused on early radio music stars like crooner Rudy Vallée, who were popular with youth in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[34] Later, in the early 1940s, crooners such as Perry Como, Bing Crosby, and most notably Frank Sinatra garnered significant attention from "bobby soxers," a term used

[31] Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!'," 164.
[32] Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!'," 165.
[33] Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!'," 167.
[34] Katie Beisel Hollenbach, "Teenage Agency and Popular Music Reception in World War II-Era Frank Sinatra Fan Clubs," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 31, no. 4 (January 1, 2019), 145.

for Sinatra's young female fans who passionately consumed his pop music.[35] According to the Hoboken Historical Museum, thousands of Sinatra's fan clubs published their own newsletters, originally called journals and later referred to as fanzines. Musicologist Katie Beisel Hollenbach considers these early Sinatra fan magazines a form of dedicated teenage agency, where "teenage girls used fandom not only in creative ways, but also to develop productive and professional skills."[36] One example, "Sinatra-ly Yours," was published quarterly and put together by numerous young women in the Semper Sinatra Fan Club, who wrote and sent out the journal.[37] There was a Pen-Pals section, a Letter from the Secretary, and individual articles, all composed by his fans to promote Sinatra's music and movie career. A decade later, as Elvis Presley exploded in American culture in the late 1950s, he experienced a similar wave of supportive, young female fans, who created their own fan clubs and magazines that followed a similar structure to Sinatra's. Both Sinatra and Presley graced the covers of multiple radio, television, and movie magazines and fanzines in their respective eras. In short, these magazines which focused on young male pop stars were not just profitable, but easily marketable, trendy, and catered to a niche of young women who dedicated a significant amount of time and money to their fan activities.[38]

Beatles Monthly: An Evolution of the Pop Magazine

Beatles Monthly sits comfortably between the definitions of a magazine and a fanzine. Within its pages, these terms were often used interchangeably to describe itself. Unique in its

[35] Hollenbach, "Teenage Agency and Popular Music Reception in World War II-Era Frank Sinatra Fan Clubs," 151; 155.
[36] Hollenbach, "Teenage Agency and Popular Music Reception in World War II-Era Frank Sinatra Fan Clubs," 143.
[37] "Newsletter: Sinatra-Ly Yours. Published by Semper Sinatra Fan Club (Always Sinatra Fan Club 1), V.1, N.3, Aug.-Sept.-Oct., 1944 [Highland Park, Illinois.]," *Sinatra-Ly Yours*, August 1944, https://www.hobokenmuseum.org/collections-item-detail/?search=frank+sinatra+fan+club&page_number=1&entry_id=06cc1340-f8b5-11ed-ab39-a329634b091a.
[38] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 97.

inception, *Beatles Monthly* was started by Sean O'Mahony, a young entrepreneurial man from London. O'Mahony worked for the larger magazine company Pop Weekly and later Beat Monthly. Recognizing the potential success of a magazine dedicated to the Beatles - like the successful *Elvis Monthly* less than a decade earlier - O'Mahony contacted Epstein at EMI Studios.[39] He acted quickly to secure a deal and later met with the Beatles to confirm their interest and assure them that the magazine would positively impact their image, with O'Mahony representing both a fan and editor of the magazine.[40] Wertham notes that for fanzines, "writers and artists have contributed to both,"[41] noting that sometimes editors and smaller-scale musicians sometimes worked in tandem to produce a DIY fanzine. For *Beatles Monthly,* this collaboration was certainly the case.

O'Mahony's idea for a dedicated Beatles magazine aimed to ensure a collaborative effort between himself as the editor and the band as the subject. As readership grew in 1963 and 1964, *Beatles Monthly* rapidly became a mass-produced periodical by the Beat Monthly publishing office, but much of its content, including the handling of the fan mail letters, was still formulated by the Official Beatles Fan Club, representing a "symbiotic relationship" between the two.[42] In the magazine industry, letters from fans are often included and taken seriously by editors "from fans who try to participate in and thus influence the production of the text or its distribution,"[43] something O'Mahony saw at the time as vitally important to portray the voice of Beatles fans.

Beatles scholar Richard Mills uses *Beatles Monthly* fan letters as a primary source in the first chapter of his 2019 book *The Beatles and Fandom: Sex, Death, and Progressive Nostalgia.*

[39] Sean O'Mahony, "The End of an Era," *Beatles Monthly,* December 1969, 10.
[40] Tom Adams, *Looking Through You: The Beatles Book Monthly Photo Archive* (London: Omnibus Press, 2015), 3.
[41] Wertham, *The World of Fanzines*, 76.
[42] Adams, *Looking Through You*, 4.
[43] Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," 40.

But his use of the "Letters From Beatles People" section is limited to exploring young women's enthusiasm over the sexual characteristics of the Beatles themselves, not the women's influence as ambitious, careful consumers. Mills notes that "Beatles fans were empowered by *Beatles Monthly*," but as a forum "where fans appropriated the Beatles into their own private sexual fantasy"[44] as they shed expectations of past gender roles. Although sexuality could be considered an important aspect of the agency of young female fans, this chapter stereotypes them by assuming they have little self-control over themselves and their feelings.[45] Mills asserts that "even the most asinine comments or letters from fans had a highly sexualized subtext,"[46] which is an overt misanalysis of the experiences of the young women who wrote into *Beatles Monthly*.

Young women who were fans of Sinatra, Presley, and the Beatles deserve more than to be overlooked for their efforts in promoting the standout artists of their generation. Just as journalists like O'Mahony realised how valuable marketing that recognized the importance of teenage Beatle fans as consumers, in turn, allowed these young women to become self-aware of themselves as important, aware of their impact not just on the band but as micro-influencers of 1960s fashion, trends, and, of course, music. What Beatles fans did for the band was extraordinary, creating an unprecedented level of devotion and enthusiasm that played a significant role in the band's success and cultural impact. Their dedication went beyond just buying records; they wrote letters, organized fan clubs, and even influenced media coverage, making the Beatles a global phenomenon.

Using Beatles fan letters published in *Beatles Monthly* as a primary source base shows that young women were not fanatical or blind consumers but rather thoughtful, engaged

[44] Richard Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom: Sex, Death and Progressive Nostalgia* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 44.
[45] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 33.
[46] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 31.

individuals with ambitions and determination, whose fan activities constituted an integral part of their personal development and cultural engagement. Within these letters, young women were part of a collective while sharing ideas and collaborating with their peers and other young women from around the world. In Candy Leonard's 2016 *Beatleness: How The Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World,* she argues that this "youth movement" was reflected in the fandom of the Beatles, and further, the social and political change of the 1960s that these young women contributed to directly with the media they supported and consumed.[47] The letters offer significant insight to the minds of these young women who were aware of their impact and importance of their fandom, not just an expression of their developing sexuality.

Fan Studies: An Evolving Historical Field

Historiography on fandom culture has seen significant development since the mid-1990s, and is both "fast moving and multidisciplinary."[48] Studies on Beatles fandom specifically is considered a "twenty-first century invention," noted by historian Andrew Hunt in his 2023 book *Beatlemania in America.*[49] *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media,* published in 1992, was one of the first humanities-centered studies on fan culture, with a collection of scholars attempting to define what fandom was before widespread accessibility of the internet. In her article "Fandom as Pathology: The Consequences of Charaterization," fandom and fans are defined by sociologist Joli Jensen as groups or individuals who "display interest, affection and attachment, especially for figures in, or aspects of, their chosen field."[50] Further, Jensen asserts that "the fan is defined as a response to the star system…he or she is seen as being brought into

[47] Candy Leonard, *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (New York: Arcade, 2016), 65.
[48] Paul Booth and Rebecca Williams, eds., introduction to *A Fan Studies Primer: Method, Research, Ethics* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2021), 1.
[49] Andrew Hunt, *Beatlemania in America* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), 3.
[50] Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology," 9.

(enthralled) existence by the modem celebrity system, via the mass media."[51] Jensen's definition, accounting for the importance of mass media within the modern fan, emphasizes how mass media (such as *Beatles Monthly*) not only shapes the content fans consume but also provides the platforms and communities through which fans connect, share, and amplify their passions.

One of the first published analyses on Beatles fans, cited by many contemporary Beatles scholars, is Barbara Ehrenreich, Elizabeth Hess, and Gloria Jacobs' article *Beatlemania: Girls Just Want to Have Fun.* They analyse the sexual environment for young women in America during the 1960s, arguing that it was the young girl's responsibility to control her sexuality to fit in amongst the status quo. "Compared to Elvis," the authors note, "the Beatles were almost respectable. They wore suits; they did not thrust their bodies about suggestively; and to most Americans, who couldn't tell a blue-collar, Liverpudlian accent from Oxbridge English, they might have been upper class."[52] In a highly sexualized society, where young girls were still pressured to remain chaste, the authors argue that the Beatles were "liberating" for young fans: "Beatlemania was the first mass outburst of the sixties to feature women - in this case, girls, who would not reach full adulthood until the seventies and the emergence of a genuinely political movement for women's liberation… to protest the sexual repressiveness, the rigid double standard of female teen culture. It was the first and most dramatic uprising of women's sexual revolution."[53] Like Mills, Ehrenreich *et al.* attribute the fans' excitement solely to their sexual energy, diminishing any agency these young women may have had, and any substantial contributions female Beatles fans made to the band are reduced to sexual, "rebellious"[54] urges. Similarly, Mills considers *Beatles Monthly* significant to fan studies solely because it was a

[51] Jensen, "Fandom as Pathology," 10.
[52] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 101.
[53] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 85.
[54] Ehrenreich et. al., Beatlemania," 90.

forum for fans to "express their sexuality."[55] Of course, there was a physical attraction to the Beatles from young women, which contributed to their appeal. However, the excitement and dedication of the young women who adored the group went beyond mere physical or sexual attraction. Their devotion encompassed emotional, social, and cultural dimensions, creating a deeper and more complex connection with the band.

Along with Hunt, notable historians that have engaged with fandom studies of the Beatles and their impact are Christine Feldman-Barrett with *A Women's History of the Beatles* (2021), Kenneth Womack and Kit O'Toole's *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years* (2021), and Leonard's *Beatleness: How the Beatles and Their Fans Remade the World* (2016), among others.[56] Most scholars publishing on Beatles fandom draw from fields such as sociology, musicology, cultural studies, psychology, and media studies to provide nuanced understandings of fandom practices and communities, making it an enriched, transdisciplinary topic. As fan studies as an academic field grows, the visibility of fandom and fan studies reflects a "vast array of perspectives…outside of [just] media and cultural studies."[57] This offers a fresh, exciting perspective on cultural history through the lens of fandom, revealing aspects of culture that have not been deeply explored in traditional research.

However, what is often missing from recently published scholarship is a specific analysis of young women as a distinct group between the years 1963-1966 (what Hunt and Feldman-Barrett define as the years of "peak Beatlemania")[58] and their connection to *Beatles Monthly* as a

[55] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 27.
[56] Leonard, *Beatleness*, (2016), Kenneth Womack and Kit O'Toole, eds., *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021).
[57] Booth and Williams, *A Fan Studies Primer*, 2.
[58] Hunt, *Beatlemania in America*, 5, 39; Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.

hub for their agency and community, and even an expression of their femininity. Specifically, there is a gap in understanding how these girls used fan clubs and fan magazines to assert their agency and influence within Beatles fandom. This study aims to address this gap by examining the unique experiences and contributions of teenage female fans, shedding light on their role in shaping the Beatles' cultural legacy. This alliance highlights a fascinating interplay between fan culture, young womanhood, and the professional trajectory of an iconic band.

Moreover, an examination of the extensive female role models presented in *Beatles Monthly*, particularly identified by the pseudonym Anne Collingham, reveals that the fan club secretary role was actually comprised of multiple young women collaborating at the fan club office. Their collective efforts included organizing thousands of letters and managing various background tasks essential for the magazine's production, using one name for fans to address their letters to. Through their involvement in fan clubs, these individual office workers, and the fans themselves, actively shaped their identities, expressed their aspirations, and contributed to the cultural landscape in meaningful ways. This nuanced perspective challenges stereotypes and acknowledges the agency of fangirls in their interactions with iconic musicians and within broader societal contexts.

This essay will, therefore, contribute to the broader discourse on the social and cultural significance of female fandom, illustrating how it successfully functioned in tandem with *Beatles Monthly*, not only as a hub for collective community, but also as an empowering outlet that catalyzed the success of the Beatles. A deeper understanding of the nuanced intersections between music, gender identity, and societal dynamics in the 1960s are necessary for addressing the cultural contributions of young women in the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter 1: A History of The Beatles Book and Official Fan Club

By mid-1963, Beatlemania was in full swing throughout Britain. The band had achieved unprecedented breakthrough success following their debut single "Love Me Do," and debut album *Please Please Me* in March of 1963. Their fanbase was becoming more fervent each month as their local and national popularity expanded. The magazine *Beatles Monthly* (referred to then as *The Beatles Book*), initially a subsidized section within *Beat Instrumental,* was a London-based monthly publication featuring pop and beat groups of the 1960s. The overwhelming number of letters to *Beat Instrumental* about the Beatles inspired the creation of a dedicated magazine for the band. *Beatles Monthly* became the first mass-marketed fan magazine ("fanzine") dedicated to a single musical group.[59]

Sean O'Mahony, a journalist, (under the pseudonym "Johnny Dean") was the editor and creator of the magazine. As Dean, he commented on the fan letters influencing the magazine's creation in first edition of *Beatles Monthly*: "I must begin my first editorial of THE BEATLES BOOK by thanking all of you who wrote to me, or to the Beatles themselves, because it was your letters more than anything else, which helped to give George, John, Paul, and Ringo their very own monthly magazine."[60] These fan letters, as we will explore in each chapter, became an integral part of the magazine's structure, appearing each month. The early letters from young women played a crucial role in ensuring the band's success at the beginning of their career, providing them with an excellent marketing advantage in the form of a widely consumed publication, formulated, in part, by the fans themselves.[61] As Mills notes, the "home of the

[59] André Millard, *Beatlemania: Technology, Business, and Teen Culture in Cold War America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 124.
[60] "Editorial," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 2.
[61] "Editorial," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 2.

Beatles fandom in the 1960s was *Beatles Monthly*…it was one of the few cultural spaces where fans could express their opinions on the Beatles."[62] It is notable that without fans writing letters about the Beatles, a magazine promoting the group might not have existed. These letters not only provided content that fueled the magazine's popularity but also created a mutually beneficial relationship between the fans and the band. By sharing their personal experiences and interactions, fans helped shape the public perception of the Beatles, while the magazine served as a platform that celebrated and amplified these voices, benefiting both the fans and the band.

Each edition of *Beatles Monthly* was 30 pages long, with about half of those pages being black-and-white photos of the band, curated by the magazine. There was always an Editor's Note from "Johnny Dean," a letter to fans from the Official Fan Club, a four-page article about Beatles history or an update on a project they'd been working on (such as a movie, album or tour), the 'Letters from Beatle People' section, the lyrics for 'This Month's Beatle's Song,' and a section for 'Beatles News,' where short news bits would be shared. This structure remained relatively consistent throughout the last edition in December 1969. The Beatles' Official Fan Club was heavily involved in the composition of the fanzine. O'Mahony had his office at the Beat Publications Limited publishing company, and although not connected with the Fan Club directly, he oversaw, wrote and published many articles for the actual magazine document, which allowed the club to function more economically, leaving the fan women employed by the Fan Club to control the influx of fan mail.[63] The Beatles themselves were also engaged with both the club and the fanzine through manager Epstein, giving interviews, posing for photographs,

[62] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom,* 18-19.
[63] Tony Barrow, "Whatever Happened to Anne Collingham?", *Beatles Monthly,* May 1983, 20.

and contributing exclusive collectibles, such as their annual Christmas record, which was sent out free of charge to registered members of the Official Fan Club every December.

The magazine often published 'responses' to the fan letters 'from the band' themselves. While it cannot be verified whether the Beatles themselves responded, *Beatles Monthly* nonetheless encouraged, like many celebrity-based magazines, for "readers to think of the [Beatles] as members of their own friend, or even family, circles."[64] This feeling encouraged intimate letters to be sent, therefore building a bridge of trust and connection between the band and their readers. As Beatles Press & Publicity Divisions employee Tony Barrow noted in the May 1983 edition on these responses from the Beatles:

> To be truthful, the Beatles had seldom visited the Fan Club offices. They had been persuaded to climb to the second floor at Monmouth Street to pose with sacks of mail occasionally used for publicity pictures. But that was about all. Usually they climbed no further than the first floor where they used to do all their press interviews in my office. But those P.R. visits gave the Fan Club girls adequate opportunity to check facts personally with specific Beatles before answering members' queries…It's all very well having devoted fans of a band running a fan club from home on a voluntary basis…but any operation like that would have gone completely out of control in the case of an 80,000-strong membership.[65]

As Barrow addresses, most of the early days of *Beatles Monthly* were conducted and operated by young female fans, employed by the office, ensuring fans' queries were answered, if not in the magazine itself than as a letter from the fan club. Therefore, when it is noted throughout this paper that a specific Beatle 'responded' to a fan's letter, it is just an acknowledgement of the

[64] McDonnell, "Gatekeepers and Gal Pals," 209.
[65] Barrow, "Whatever Happened to Anne Collingham?," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1983, 20.

printed reply on the page, and not a factual reflection of the individual members' true thoughts or feelings.

Although the Beatles were more engaged with the Official Fan Club earlier in their career, their availability likely diminished as the decade progressed. Regardless, throughout its publication, it was important to the readers that *Beatles Monthly* remained a trusted place for fans to write in, as a response from their favorite Beatle to their letters made them feel seen and heard. However, O'Mahony's role as editor required ensuring an appearance of intimacy, and in one way their pseudonyms of "Johnny Dean" and "Anne" (discussed later in this chapter) to deliver a personal connection. The language of the letters from fans implied a trust and friendship between the magazine's editors and their readers, and the Beatles themselves. As Mills observes about *Beatles Monthly*, "credibility always has to be tempered with the chase for an audience,"[66] inferring that editors held a key role in ensuring that the content of *Beatles Monthly* was perceived as both credible and appealing, perhaps pressuring editors to compromise in how stories are reported, or which letters were chosen for publication.

Historian Valerie J. Korinek writes in her 2000 book *Roughing It in the Suburbs* that letters to the editor of the Canadian magazine *Chatelaine* reflected "a belief on the part of the writer that the editors would be both interested and sympathetic,"[67] while also using the letters to form community amongst subscribers.[68] Faye Hammill and Michelle Smith also assert in their 2015 study *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture* that mid-20th century "magazine editors intervened in a way…[that] helped advertisers appear trustworthy."[69] In the case of *Beatles*

[66] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 32.
[67] Valerie J. Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs: Reading Chatelaine Magazine in the Fifties and Sixties* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 82.
[68] Korinek, *Roughing It in the Suburbs*, 83.
[69] Hammill and Smith, *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture*, 36.

Monthly, however, the Beatles themselves were the advertisements and product, and maintaining connections with fans ensured the magazine's continued sales. Although it is doubtful that the Beatles had absolutely no involvement with the magazine, especially at the beginning, intervention by the editors at the publishing office likely involved exercising "control over how readers and their concerns were represented, embedding in them their own rhetoric about the process and vision of the editorial department."[70] Thus, the concept of the band actually 'responding' to certain letters were pushed in the 'Letters from Beatle People' section, in order to keep young female fans engaged and sending in their correspondence, hoping for a response to their letter, too. As Barrow noted, it was likely that the young female staff were the ones ensuring the Beatles seemed engaged with their fans through these responses. Although the band themselves may have had little direct involvement with the composition of the magazine, full-time Beatles touring staff Neil Aspinall and Mal Evans also wrote several articles for the publication, nonetheless making it an important artifact of the Beatles' career.[71]

The first edition of *Beatles Monthly* was published at a unique time in the Beatles' history, in August 1963. By this time, they had achieved national popularity in the U.K, but not yet international stardom. With the magazine, the Beatles' image and music could be directly formulated by their female fans, as Beatlemania was a phenomenon predicated by their support and interest. The letters fan women sent in articulated their own desires and expectations for the Beatles, actively shaping the band's early public image. In tandem, the fanzine relied on this intense fan interest to promote and sell the Beatles, creating a symbiotic relationship between the fans' passions and the magazine's content. This dynamic not only sustained the fanzine's popularity but also amplified the Beatles' early cultural impact. By creating this magazine, the

[70] Hammill and Smith, *Magazines, Travel, and Middlebrow Culture*, 40.
[71] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 28.

Beatles could have a jumping point for introducing themselves to new fans in an accessible way as they grew.

The Women of the Fan Club

The first true Beatles fan club was formed in September 1961, during the Beatles' regular performances at the Cavern Club in Liverpool. It was a "grotto-like club…where the band played nearly three hundred times between 1961 and 1963," quickly becoming an "an important space for growing their audience."[72] Here, the Beatles would play a lunch-hour session for local teenagers and office workers, mostly young women, who would come on their lunch breaks to hear live music. Young women, many of whom were entering the workforce and had "reached the peak of their disposable income before marriage," dominated these early audiences.[73] However, some were as young as eleven and still in school, but still enjoyed performances by the group. Dorene Hannah, a former Cavern fan, wrote an article titled 'How Different from the Cavern Days' for the March 1964 edition of *Beatles Monthly*. She divulges that this small group of fans would even queue from 8am to 12pm on the days of these shows. She discussed the community that formed: "Everyone knew everyone and if girls came who had only just heard of the Beatles, well all us "scousers"[74] made them welcome."[75] Therefore, this "exciting music scene not only offered exposure to charismatic performers…but also allowed [young women] to be full participants and co-creators of it."[76] The Beatles themselves, specifically McCartney, Lennon, and Harrison, became acquainted with repeat fans during these shows as they interacted with them regularly. This informal friendship meant the band fostered a sense of connection

[72] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 13.
[73] Millard, *Beatlemania,* 121.
[74] 'Scouse' is slang for someone from Liverpool; see Collins Dictionary, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/scouse#google_vignette
[75] Dorene Hannah, "How Different from the Cavern Days," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1964, 7.
[76] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 13.

between their female fans, becoming what Beatles historian Christine Feldman-Barrett considers "fan-friends."[77] As a *Beatles Monthly* article reflects, "The boys and their fans were friends…Girls would eye the boys, just amble and straight up chat to them."[78]

Hannah confirms this in her article, noting that sometimes her and her friends would "meet a Beatle" before a performance on the street, stop for a chat, and then head to the Cavern.[79] Lennon further affirms this in a later 1964 interview with *Beatles Monthly*, about the concept of having fans he didn't know. He "never thought of the girls at the Cavern as fans. They were friends we'd met and chatted up at the club."[80] One of these fans, Mary "Maureen" Cox, Starr's future wife, was a regular in the Cavern Club in 1962 when she was 15. Feldman-Barrett describes their love story as a "local celebrity falling in love with one of his admirers."[81] Clearly, the Beatles (or Starr, at least) were close enough to their fans in the early days of their career to date them. With a significant local following, a few dedicated young women fans, introduced to each other by the Cavern Club's compère Bob Wooler, decided to establish a makeshift fan club, as Wooler was unable to coordinate this himself.[82]

Recognising the importance of organized fan support, McCartney and Epstein asked Roberta "Bobbie" Brown, a well-known fan who followed them from gig to gig, to manage the rapidly growing club in May 1962.[83] Bob Spitz comments Brown intended to "ingratiate herself with the band" with these responsibilities.[84] She sent out monthly newsletters to local girls who paid a five-shilling fee, and the girls wrote back to Brown regularly requesting information on

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[77] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 17.
[78] "Behind the Spotlight," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1964, 21.
[79] Hannah, "How Different from the Cavern Days," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1964, 7.
[80] "What They Think of You: John Lennon," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 6.
[81] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 84.
[82] Sara Schmidt, *Dear Beatle People: The Story of the Beatles North American Fan Club* (Houston: Texas Book Publishers, 2023): 13.
[83] Schmidt, *Dear Beatle People*, 13.
[84] Bob Spitz, *The Beatles: The Biography* (New York: Back Bay Books, 2006), 321.

the band. It was a small group at the time of about "thirty or forty in number."[85] By mid-1962, bulging sacks of letters were arriving, and Brown was overwhelmed with the money and time managing a fan club alone would take.

Freda Kelly: The Original "Fan-Friend"

Brown stepped down in 1962 due to her engagement, and Freda Kelly, her friend, assumed the role of Fan Club Secretary at the beginning of 1963.[86] Kelly had pitched in to help, and persuaded Epstein to get more involved. Kelly was an important part of the fan club's operations, holding the role as Fan Club President of the Northern Branch, in Liverpool, from 1963 to 1972. She was a regular Cavern lunch-time and evening show attendee, working at the Princes Foods Office Dept. in the Liverpool City Centre.[87] In a 2013 interview, she estimated she was there for 190 of the 264 performances.[88] Kelly's journey from fan to employee within the Fan Club highlights her and other secretaries' dedication to supporting the Beatles, even when the band's success was uncertain. Kelly, a Liverpool native, understood the band's backgrounds intimately, as their families lived within walking distance of her home.

As the British fan base expanded, Epstein understood the need for a professional-looking club and was willing to absorb any financial losses to maintain fan support. This understanding and commitment was noted by Spitz, as the club "gave [Epstein] a pipeline directly to hard-core Beatle fans that he could flush with propaganda."[89] As a businessperson, Epstein "recognized the value of a loyal consumer base," and Kelly remembered that "[Epstein] said if we gave him the postal orders, he would pay our bills for the postage and stationery."[90] And about how the

[85] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 321.
[86] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 3," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1966, 13.
[87] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 3," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1966, 13.
[88] Elizabeth Day, "Good Ol' Freda: The Beatles' Secretary Tells Her Story," *The Guardian*, November 16, 2013.
[89] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 321.
[90] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 321.

Beatles felt about the club at this time, Kelly said in 1966 that "They were overwhelmed…this was the first fan club formed for a Merseyside group…but they showed terrific interest. One of the four was nearly always on-hand to help out. Ringo was a great one for answering letters personally. He'd come up to the office, grab a handful and say 'leave these to me.' Paul was another…he was so knocked out that he sat down and wrote pages and pages in reply."[91] From the beginning, the band was aware of the value of the Official Fan Club and the young women, their fan-friends, who ran it.

Cavern Young Women Running the Show

Initially operating from Epstein's home, the club eventually relocated to 13 Monmouth Street, London, as Beatlemania surged.[92] The London office managed the central operations with branches and secretaries nationwide. As Schmidt observes, these early fans were pivotal in establishing the organisational and professional structure of the fan club. From the outset, young female fans laid the foundation for Beatlemania, working tirelessly and without adequate – if any - pay to promote the Beatles, and foster a sense of community through their music. As Feldman-Barrett notes, in those early Liverpool days, "Being a part of this growing community around the Beatles also inspired young women to think about how they could further contribute to it."[93] As Maynes argues, the concept of age, like gender, highlights issues in "historical argumentation," particularly regarding agency. It struggles to explain the actions of powerful adult men, and moreover, the personal narratives of young women show how people understand their own agency throughout their lives.[94] By exercising their agency, young women, like Kelly, now in a leadership role, asserted their presence among the men around them, taking on roles that neither

[91] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 2," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1966, 13.
[92] Schmidt, *Dear Beatle People*, 14.
[93] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 15.
[94] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 122-123.

Epstein nor Wooler could fulfill, making them especially valuable during this special time in the Beatle's career.

A letter to *Beatles Monthly* from "the original Beatle-ettes" from Liverpool shared their experience "about their early days at the Cavern." It stated, "we could go down about half-an-hour before the session began and get a seat at the front…you could always go and talk to them in the band-room by the stage or in the snack-bar at the back…then they became more famous and we used to queue all day for front row seats…they've probably forgotten all about us now."[95] Despite their rising stardom, the Beatles' response to the letter, printed in *Beatles Monthly*, emphasised their appreciation for the early supporters, stating, "Course [sic] we haven't forgotten the early days and everyone who helped start us going. We wish sometimes we could go back to The Cavern."[96]

This exchange underscores the importance of the young female fans in the Beatles' rise to fame. Their early and unwavering support provided the band with a dedicated audience, creating a buzz that was essential for the Beatles' growing popularity in and around Liverpool, which extended itself across the United Kingdom (U.K) and eastern Europe. The band's acknowledgment of these fans also illustrates a mutual appreciation, highlighting how critical this fanbase was in building the band's early momentum and contributing to their enduring legacy. Lennon observed this himself, noting, "If these people, few though they are, like us and our music, one day we might get through to thousands more."[97] Regardless, whether the band was really responding to the letters printed in *Beatles Monthly*, they seemed acutely aware of the fans' importance in their success.

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[95] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* October 1963, 17.
[96] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* October 1963, 17.
[97] "Behind the Spotlight," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1964, 21.

Furthermore, there was a notable female presence at the Official Beatles Fan Club, as evidenced in the first issue of the magazine. Three names frequently appeared in the magazine, the first being "Anne Collingham." "Anne" served as the National Secretary of The Official Beatles Fan Club, signing under this title. However, "Anne" was a pseudonym who represented the office staff at the Fan Club and was not a real person.[98] In the May 1983 issue of *Beatles Monthly*, this fact was revealed by Barrow, who worked in the press office that published the magazine and closely with the band:

> The name of the new National Secretary was given as Anne Collingham. In fact, no such person ever existed. The "Collingham" part came from part of my secretary's home address in Earls Court, and Anne was my wife's middle name. It wasn't done in order to deceive the fans. It was intended to be helpful. Clearly as the membership grew, a full-time office staff of clerks and helpers would be needed. There was little to be gained from confusing members by letter them receive replies from an assortment of people, especially as staff were coming and going all the time. So, the simplest answer seemed to be to have "Anne Collingham" as the regular signature on all individual reply letters, on newsletters, and on all the Club's printed stationery.[99]

To have "Anne" as the centralised image of the fan club gave young female fans someone to relate to, and write to, as a leader and representative of them. A woman representing Beatles fans shows how relevant they were to the success of the fanzine. As Barrow notes, the Fan Club was indeed run by up to "half a dozen" women at a time throughout the decade, who did their part in organising and responding to the mail fan letters and phone calls from fans inquiring about the Beatles – all playing the role of "Anne" in their own way. As young women themselves, they

[98] Millard, *Beatlemania*, 127.
[99] Barrow, "Whatever Happened to Anne Collingham?," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1983, 16-17.

understood the dynamics between the band and their fans. This understanding enabled them to create a supportive and enthusiastic community, developing a connection that was crucial to the band's early success. Their efforts went beyond mere fan activities, as they took on significant organisational roles, ensuring the fan club's smooth operation and growth by opening hundreds of letters, mailing gifts to fans, and organising local "Get Together Conventions" for fans in Liverpool and London.[100] Eventually, by late 1963, these positions became paid secretary-like roles as the volume of work grew and the fan club itself became more streamlined by Epstein, and it was moved to 13 Monmouth St., London, the address which was printed in the magazine and where fans would send their letters. However, for the women who did hold paid roles at the fan club, their insight and dedication emphasised the essential role of fan support in the Beatles' rise to fame.

As membership to the fan club grew, fans became interested in meeting this mysterious "Anne," a part "played" by Mary Cockram from 1963 to 1966. Cockram herself was Joint Secretary, who was first to be interviewed for the job in 1963 and consequently became Anne Collingham, until she departed from her role in 1966.[101] Cockram would meet fans as "Anne," while completing secretary duties. Later, according to Barrow, a young woman named Bettina Rose was hired by the London Fan Club at the end of 1963. She worked at 13 Monmouth Street with "Anne," and in later editions of the magazine, the two women signed themselves as the "Joint National Secretaries of the Official Beatles Fan Club." Barrow recounts that "Bettina's physical appearance at Monmouth Street meant that at least one of the Club's chiefs was on hand to meet visitors in person."[102]

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[100] "Their Fan Club Secretaries: Anne Collingham and Bettina Rose," *Beatles Monthly,* December 1963, 23.
[101] Schmidt, *Dear Beatle People*, 39.
[102] Barrow, "Whatever Happened to Anne Collingham?," *Beatles Monthly,* May 1983, 17.

The August 1963 edition of the magazine references Kelly and Rose, both serving as secretaries, and unlike "Anne," both real fans. Before establishing a central headquarters in London, Kelly and Rose managed the North (Liverpool) and South (Surrey) branches of the Official Fan Club from their homes, respectively.[103] Upon the opening of the central office in London, the Club's operations were consolidated. The inaugural letter from the central Fan Club office, written by "Anne," states, "Now these two branches are brought together and, no matter what part of the U.K. our members live in, everybody's file cards are kept in my office in London,"[104] with a later edition of the magazine clarifying that "Anne" "…helped set up the network of Area Secretaries."[105] These representatives of Beatles fandom, particularly women, demonstrated the real and tangible work fans contributed. As Kelly remembers, "All we sent out to early members was a photograph and typed biography. Yes, typed – we had no duplicator then, so we had to work with carbon paper."[106] Their dedication to their hobby-turned-job not only showcased the influential role of fans in the music industry, but also highlighted the significant contributions of women in shaping and sustaining the cultural phenomenon surrounding the Beatles.

[103] "The Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 3.
[104] "The Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 3.
[105] "Their Fan Club Secretaries: Anne Collingham and Bettina Rose," *Beatles Monthly,* December 1963, 23.
[106] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 2," *Beatles Monthly,* February 1966, 13.

Chapter 2: The First Year of Beatles Monthly: August 1963-August 1964

The First Magazines of 1963

August 1963's edition of *Beatles Monthly* and the "Letters from Beatles People" section is uneventful, as the letters were not specific to the magazine itself. However, it shows how passionate the fans were, expressing their love, requesting autographs, performances, and even asking if they can come and "do the housework" for the band.[107] A few of the letters were poems or short sonnets, a type of creative writing on the Beatles by their female fans which appear in almost each edition thereafter. In a profile by Barrow in the inaugural edition, it is mentioned that in 1961, upon signing the band, Epstein was "Fascinated by the name and obvious reputation" of the group, while local fan women had already begun clamoring for records of the Beatles.[108] Epstein's prior management experience in several of Liverpool's largest record retail stores likely contributed to his understanding of the band's potential appeal. The persistent demand from young women for Beatles records caught his attention, prompting him to seek them out.

Recognizing their potential and burgeoning fan base, Epstein decided to manage the Beatles, a decision that significantly contributed to their rise to fame. This success was partly due to the passionate promotion by local young women who fervently supported the band. The November 1963 issue notes in its "A Tale of Four Beatles" article that when the band began writing their own material instead of performing covers of pop songs, "…they still weren't conscious of their ever-growing popularity…If they had not been given this big boost by their

[107] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 16.
[108] "Their Manager Brian Epstein," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1963, 19.

early audiences…because of the reception that their own material received."[109] This early support was crucial in propelling the band to stardom.

The September 1963 issue is where the magazine hits its stride. Previously, in the August issue, the fan letters were only from fans in the United Kingdom, and all signed with feminine names. In the September issue, the first international fan letter is featured, from Gula Lindroos in Finland. She requests the Beatles come to Finland, saying that she has "heard and read a lot about them," and asked for a recording of their songs so she can hear them. Lennon responds to this letter, saying that "He's arranging for a copy of their new single to be sent to Gula."[110] As previously mentioned, instead of Lennon 'responding' himself, is more likely is that the young women working at the Fan Club Office on Monmouth Street used their own knowledge of the Beatles to print a response from the band and send a copy of their record to her.

The band frequently visited Epstein's personal office in Liverpool and at the very least, were aware of fan letters that had been delivered there. The Beatles' calculated interaction with their fans through the magazine exemplified excellent marketing, precisely as Epstein had foreseen. Later in 1964, a few fans questioned the validity of these responses, such as Lesley King, a fan from London, who asked "whether the Beatles ever get to read the letters from their fans?"[111] Lennon and McCartney acknowledge that they do in their printed response. Another fan, Lynda from Sheffield, tells the band to "prove me wrong" as she thinks all the letters on the letter page are "made up."[112] Lennon responds to this with a joke, saying he "Made up the other Beatles too."[113] Based on the images of the band present in the London fan club headquarters, it

[109] "A Tale of Four Beatles: Part III," *Beatles Monthly,* November 1963, 13.
[110] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* September 1963, 16.
[111] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* February 1964, 19.
[112] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* July 1964, 19.
[113] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* July 1964, 19.

can be concluded that they were – if informally – responding to these letters, as Barrow noted in his article, even if they presented themselves for public relations reasons only. The young female staff at the office would likely still have fact-checked and perhaps recorded the Beatles' answers for re-printing. Each band member also received several letters themselves to their residences, and, although it was impossible to read them all, they were acknowledged in the magazine. In a later 1964 interview with Starr, he states that "It gives me a tremendous kick to read all the letters and cards the fans send me…the closer we are to the fans, the better."[114] Harrison and McCartney have similar ideas, thanking the fans for the birthday, get well, and Christmas cards and letters addressed to them or the group.[115] It was important for the band to appear as if they were indeed responding to a selection of letters for the magazine, which did a great deal promoting them positively and lucratively, even though they were far too busy to actually do so themselves.

Some of the other fan letters in this issue request information on fan club membership, with Kay McGregor of Inverness, Scotland asking what the procedure is when one becomes a member, and what the status of her membership card is. Two additional requests come from June Davis in Yorkshire and Margo Higginson from Staffordshire, both English counties. June asked for tickets information for Beatles shows, and Margo hopes that her fan club memberships might grant her backstage access.[116] One other letter, signed from Margaret Newham, "a faithful Beatles fan," makes her suggestions to improve *Beatles Monthly*, noting that baby photos should be included.[117] The tone of these letters is noteworthy; although polite, it also conveys a sense of assertiveness and determination. These fans are not passive admirers but active participants

[114] "What They Think of You: Ringo Starr," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 8.
[115] "What They Think of You: George Harrison" and "Paul McCartney," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 7; 9.
[116] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1963, 16.
[117] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1963, 17.

willing to assert their desires and act to fulfill them. Their confidence and directness suggest a strong sense of agency within the fan community, indicating desires for clarity, connection, and a sense of belonging.

A curious letter in this edition is directed at the audience themselves. Valerie Payne, from London, asks the magazine to "tactfully ask members to check their screams...it isn't much to ask the fans to be quieter, after all, their heart-throbs don't spend all their time perfecting a routine – for the benefit of the fans – just to be drowned out."[118] Valerie acknowledges that the concerts are for the benefit of fans, pointing to a wider concept in fandom studies that allowed female fans to be "full participants and co-creators" of a music scene they were a part of.[119] What's more, "the band's most devoted female fans...as a fully participatory audience, commanded the social and musical space."[120] This is an early example of how the letters provided a space for fans to engage in dialogue and explore differing opinions.

Valerie's perspective touches upon a deeper theme within fandom studies: the idea that fans are not merely passive consumers, but active participants and even co-creators of the cultural phenomena they adore.[121] By asking for quieter screams, she is suggesting that fans have a responsibility to respect the performers they admire. As active participants in the audience, they exerted influence over both the atmosphere of concerts and the direction of popular music. This challenges stereotypes of female fans as mere spectators or hysterical screamers, instead portraying them as influential contributors to the music scene.

"I Think 'She Loves You' Is Fab"

[118] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1963, 17.
[119] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 14.
[120] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 14.
[121] Womack and O'Toole., introduction in *Fandom and the Beatles*, 2-3.

Between October and December 1963, the fans writing in were reflective about the songs they had been hearing at local Beatle concerts. Martina Paling, from Warwickshire, writes, "the one the audience seemed to receive the best was 'I Saw Her Standing There.' In my opinion and the opinion of many of my friends this is the best track that they have ever made."[122] Sheila Watt, from Southgate, writes that "…you are the greatest, dreamiest, most fantabulous thing that's happened to pop music…thank you for being like you are and for making such wonderful music."[123] Finally, excited about the song "Twist & Shout," Elaine Jones of London comments that "the Beatles had made it so popular by singing it on the television and on the radio…I know loads of people who were just waiting for the Beatles to release it as a single."[124] And, Theresa Wareham, from Essex, comments "P.S…I think 'She Loves You' is fab."[125]

The Beatles' first albums, *Please Please Me* and *With the Beatles* (released November 1963) were certainly reflective of the band's fanbase at the time. Christine Feldman-Barrett comments that the Beatles' early "'feminized' pop audience" was due to the Beatles tending "to write songs that were girl-and-woman positive."[126] Further, these early songs were deemed "friendly, inclusive and welcoming," the band themselves perceived as "sensual and fun-loving."[127] This positive representation and the inclusive nature of their music helped cultivate a devoted female fanbase, which played a crucial role in the Beatles' rise to fame. This understanding is expressed in the February 1964 edition of the magazine in the fan club letter, stating "We love you and your music because the songs you sing are original and

[122] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1963, 16.
[123] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1963, 16.
[124] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1963, 17.
[125] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1963, 16.
[126] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 5.
[127] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 7.

exciting…[they] are just the things we've all been longing to say but we've never had anyone to put forward our own ideas so perfectly on our behalf until you came along."[128]

These early songs on *Please Please Me,* and later, *With the Beatles*, were unmistakably directed at their female audience. "Love Me Do," "Please Please Me," "I Want To Hold Your Hand," "I Feel Fine," and "She Loves You" were catchy love songs, with simple, memorable hooks that allowed their female listeners to imagine themselves as the girl in the songs, complete with lyrics that were general enough to resonate with a wide audience of women. In their 1964 song "I Feel Fine," the lyric "She's telling all the world" suggests that the girl in the song is openly and proudly sharing their love and happiness about a romantic relationship with everyone she knows. This public declaration of affection is certainly reminiscent of how Beatles fans loved the band. Other songs, like "From Me to You," "All My Loving," and "P.S. I Love You" come across as responses to love letters, mirroring the correspondence the band received in *Beatles Monthly* which they saw as integral to their success, certainly enough to write a song about it.

One song, "Thank You Girl," was even written as a direct message to their fans – this means the Beatles were keenly aware of their audience and how to capture their attention and fuel their interest. As Ian McDonald notes in his book *Revolution in the Head: Beatles' Records and the Sixties*, "The lyrics show Lennon and McCartney cultivating their audience by encouraging each of their female fans, to hear it as gratitude for her part in the Beatles' success," and comments on Lennon's experience being chased by fans in December 1963, "When fans mobbed his Rolls-Royce one night [in 1963], he told his chauffeur not to worry: 'They bought

[128] "The Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly,* February 1964, 4.

the car. They've got a right to smash it up.'"[129] Lennon's comment shows he was aware of the purpose of the young women who contributed much of their time and effort to buying their records and merchandise. In his 2021 documentary series *McCartney 1,2,3,* McCartney echoes this acknowledgment, stating, "We'd started off with songs that were just for the fans, [such as] 'Thank You Girl'…we were writing to our fan audience."[130] McCartney attributes the authenticity of these early songs to their core female fanbase, viewing the songs as sincere expressions of gratitude directly aimed at them. These compositions were likely perceived as direct responses to the letters received from fans via the fan club.

Pre-America Visit and Early Beatlemania

By December 1963, the Official Fan Club members were treated to increasingly special treatment from the band. Two club conventions in Liverpool and London were held, a Northern and Southern edition, respectively, each featuring a concert from the Beatles, advertised in *Beatles Monthly* to the excitement of fans.[131] The Northern Convention is where Kelly was "brought into the limelight very deservedly" for her work up to that point with the Official Fan Club.[132] Following the success of these conventions, Epstein made a deal with O'Mahony to make *Beatles Monthly* the official organ of the fan club to save on costs, and Epstein "continued to think up new ways to communicate with fans."[133] He recognised the importance of this relationship for marketing and promotion, especially as the Beatles readied for an international tour.

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[129] Ian Macdonald, *Revolution in the Head: The Beatles' Records and the Sixties* (New York: Random House, 2005), 96.
[130] *McCartney 3, 2, 1*, episode 3, "The People We Loved Were Loving Us," directed by Zachary Heinzerling, written by Mark Monroe, featuring Paul McCartney and Rick Rubin, aired July 16th, 2021 on Hulu https://www.disneyplus.com/play/4fa448e8-4926-471a-8a6a-8d829473a953.
[131] Millard, *Beatlemania*, 128.
[132] Barrow, "Whatever Happened to Anne Collingham?," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1983, 18.
[133] Millard, *Beatlemania*, 128.

A transition reflected in the late 1963 issues of *Beatles Monthly* is the increasing number of international fans writing to the magazine, just before the height of Beatlemania across the Atlantic Ocean. The November issue features the first letters from American fans, indicating the band's growing global reach and foreshadowing their imminent explosion in popularity in the United States. Elizabeth of Surrey writes, "I recently wrote to my Canadian friend, telling her how fab and gorgeous the Beatles are, and I also enclosed a photograph of them."[134] Elizabeth's letter shows international promotion and communication between fans.

In the same issue, Janie, from Illinois, explains in a lengthy letter that her family recently moved from England to the United States for a year, and that she was homesick, "especially for the Beatles." She concludes that she is surprised that "Americans have neither heard of or sell Beatles records," bur decides to invite her new American teenage girlfriends over to her house hear that "Liverpool sound." In response, her new friends hound her with questions; "Who are they? What are their names? Where do they come from? Where can I write to them?" Janie concludes that "the Beatles now have two new loyal fans."[135] Janie's letter demonstrates free, word-of-mouth promotion of the Beatle's music by their female fanbase, who wanted the world to hear their album.

Beatlemania in journalism was full of generalizations of who Beatles fans were, even though not all of them would have "gathered in large crowds and screamed."[136] The term Beatlemania was coined in October 1963 at the stage door before the Beatles' appearance on the British television show *Val Parnell's Sunday Night at the London Palladium*.[137] This London Palladium show is widely cited as the birthplace of Beatlemania due to media reactions, and

[134] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* November 1963, 16.
[135] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* November 1963, 16.
[136] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.
[137] Spitz, *The Beatles,* 426.

"star-centered hysteria" in reaction to seeing the Beatles.[138] Hordes of "frenetic girls" were there to spot their favourite Beatle, with the crowd growing as word spread, journalists and photographers hoping to "salvage a story" on the "madness."[139] By highlighting the wild antics of young women's reactions to the Beatles and capitalizing on and exaggerating these reactions for headlines, the media once again used their young female fans as a means of promotion, which the band also benefitted from.

Concert promoter Andi Lothian connected Beatlemania it to the "frenzy" that had followed the group, with young women at the "forefront of this fandom," surrounding the theatres before, during, and after the show.[140] The Beatles and their fans captivated nationwide attention and, by year's end, became an international talking point, because it was a girl-dominant phenomenon. It generated significant public interest as young women's interests were not taken seriously in mainstream culture, only thought of as "peripheral to what boys enjoyed," and their involvement in youth subcultures often went unrecognised.[141] Music scholar Sheila Whiteley notes that progressiveness in gender equality was not always extended to women involved with the music industry, and that traditional roles were often prioritized, such as a "continuing emphasis" on women as home-makers.[142] For young women, this meant "to be popular with boys and girls - to be universally attractive and still have an unblemished 'reputation' - a girl had to be crafty, cool, and careful. The payoff for all this effort was to end up exactly like Mom - as a housewife."[143]

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[138] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 85-86.
[139] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 427.
[140] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.
[141] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 43.
[142] Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity, and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 2000), 10.
[143] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 91.

As historian Stephanie Coontz argues, it was during the 1950s that the youth market was first produced, as consumerism exploded for American families.[144] For advertisers, "from a marketing viewpoint, teens were potentially much more interesting than children," as they had money of their own to spend.[145] The idea of female fans in youth culture area began as early as the 1930s and 40s with fans of Rudy Vallee and Frank Sinatra, and later Elvis Presley. A Presley fan named Grace Jackson had written into *National Police Gazette* in November 1959, defending herself and fellow fans for their love of Presley, saying "I think your [article] is unfair to Elvis and the other singers like him. You should remember that in the 1920's the teenagers (who are grandmothers now) went wild over Rudy Vallée and in the 1930's, the mothers of today's Elvis worshippers were crazy over the dozens of crooners who were popular in that era."[146] As the traditional courtship system of dating became dismantled throughout the 20th century, social norms surrounding relationships and personal interactions began to shift, which Grace acknowledges in her letter. As Ehrenreich *et al*. note, by the early 1960s, "the vision of a suburban split-level, which had guided a generation of girls chastely through high school, was beginning to lose its luster."[147] This transformation, beginning with Presleymania in the late 1950s, created a more relaxed and open social environment, making it easier for fans of the Beatles to assert themselves and connect with others who shared their enthusiasm, allowing individuals to express their admiration for the Beatles openly and collectively.

In her memoir *Wonderful Tonight*, Pattie Boyd, Harrison's first wife, remembers that the "records [the Beatles] had released [in America] had done nothing until the American

[144] Coontz, *The Way We Never Were*, 70.
[145] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 97.
[146] Grace Jackson, "An Elvis Fan," *National Police Gazette*, November 1959, New York edition, sec. Letters from Readers, 2.
[147] Ehrenreich et. al., "Beatlemania," 95.

newsmagazines *Time* and *Newsweek* had published articles about Beatlemania in Europe. Suddenly America was interested."[148] It was true; once newspapers in Britain had drawn attention the hordes of screaming young women in Britain, others became curious. Young women had begun requesting Beatles songs to radio disc jockeys in America, such as Marsha Albert in Washington, D.C., who "launched the Beatles into American airwaves for the first time ever" with "I Want to Hold Your Hand."[149] Carroll James, the D.J. working for the station, was completely unprepared for the reaction towards the song, playing it "again in the next hour…every night that week,"[150] therefore convincing Capitol Records, the Beatles' American label, to move up the official American release of "I Want to Hold Your Hand" up by a full month, an unprecedented reaction to a British musicians by an American audience.

In the December 1963 issue, there is a notable increase in letters from international fan women, reflecting their growing excitement about the Beatles. These dedicated fans were eager to share the Beatles with the world, stressing the essential role that young woman played in the band's international success. The Beatles Christmas record, a 5-minute audio disc released for fan club members, hears the Beatles thanking their fans and fan club secretaries for their success; "It's your reactions to the records that really matters…it's all due to you!"[151] For the fans, their enthusiasm and communication networks were instrumental in creating the widespread phenomenon of Beatlemania. For example, Kim Howell from Essex writes how she has been reading about "how popular the Beatles are in America…I didn't think it was possible for Americans to rave over any British stars as this…I wrote to my pen-pal in Erie [Pennsylvania]

[148] Pattie Boyd and Penny Junor, *Wonderful Tonight: George Harrison, Eric Clapton, and Me* (New York: Harmony Books, 2008), 59.
[149] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 450.
[150] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 451.
[151] "The Beatles - Complete Christmas Records - 1963 to 1969 - 45 RPM - Flexi-Disc," *Dailymotion*, https://www.dailymotion.com/video/x55pif7, 00:54; 04:33.

who replied 'I've got news for you girl, the Beatles are the hottest things since Elvis recorded 'Hound Dog!'"[152] Comparisons to Presley, the American rockabilly artist who rose to fame in the mid-1950s, became increasingly common as the Beatles approached their 1964 arrival in America, as the mania that followed the band was similar to Presleymania less than a decade earlier.

In the December 1963 issue, "The Tale of Four Beatles" article quotes Epstein in 1961, sensing this musical phenomenon and stating: "This could easily turn out to be the greatest show business attraction since Elvis Presley,"[153] foreshadowing their imminent success. Like Presleymania, some journalists thought of Beatlemania as another "…out-of-control 'youth fad' in need of adult surveillance…instigated by 'hysterical' schoolgirls rather than delinquent boys."[154] These stereotypes about the interests of young women remained prevalent in discussions surrounding the Beatles and Beatlemania. Publications were eager to understand the phenomenon and see what all the fuss was about, prompting further media coverage and analysis. This curiosity from the press not only perpetuated the stereotypes but also fueled the band's visibility, as journalists and commentators sought to explore and explain the fervent adoration of their young female fanbase.

1964 and International Beatlemania

January 1964 was an exciting time. The Official Fan Club letter from Bettina and "Anne" states, "It seems incredible that the Beatles hadn't had a number one hit a year ago. 1963 is a year we shall always remember, for it was a period of unprecedented success."[155] Later, they write, "Already the group's fame has spread across Europe and there are fast-swelling gangs of

[152] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* December 1963, 19.
[153] "A Tale of Four Beatles: Part IV," *Beatles Monthly,* December 1963, 11.
[154] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.
[155] "The Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly,* January 1964, 4.

new fans springing up all over the world – in South Africa, Australia, Iceland, Malta, Sweden, Canada, and many more far-flung territories…but the 30,000 Beatle People who belong to the official fan club in Britain will know that they were the first to recognise the true quality and potential of this wonderful Liverpool group."[156] During this period, it seemed important for the fan club to emphasize that the young female British fans felt a sense of ownership towards the band and recognized their role in the Beatles' growing international success. One illustrative instance of this is reflected in the January 16, 1964, edition of Manchester's *Daily Express*, where Harrison and journalist Derek Taylor (who later became the Beatles' press officer) co-wrote columns about the band's growing popularity. In this column, 13-year-old English girl Jeanne Collinson remarks, "Paris is getting ready to go crazy. The English over here have made sure of that," as Harrison signed an autograph for her.[157]

Within the letters to the fan club, there was some hesitation expressed from the young women about this changing time in the Beatles' career. Anthea Wellington, of Birmingham, who had been camping out for multiple Beatles performances, writes that "…a few unruly youths…go wild to attract newspaper cameras. Then we all get a bad name and people start using the word 'Beatlemania' as a smear rather than a compliment."[158] Further, Wellington expresses discontent with her fellow fans about their screaming, saying, "Can't all *genuine* Beatle People make a couple of extra New Years [sic] resolutions this year, such as 1) Not to give us all a bad name OUTSIDE [and] INSIDE the theatres by screaming quite pointlessly from the start to the end of every Beatles performance."[159] By criticizing the unruly behavior of some

[156] "The Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1964, 4-5.
[157] Ashley Kahn, ed., *George Harrison on George Harrison: Interviews and Encounters* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2020), 15.
[158] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1964, 18.
[159] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1964, 18.

fans and the negative connotation of "Beatlemania," as well as urging genuine fans to refrain from excessive screaming during performances, Wellington highlighted the internal tensions within the fan community and sought to preserve the integrity and respectability of Beatles fandom.

Other fans expressed a growing passion for Beatles music; about their exclusive Christmas album, Sheila Barry of London wrote "I've never stopped playing it for all my friends," Carolyn Seabrook of Kent wrote that "[The Beatles] have even got my mother appreciating 'Pop' music," and Margaret McCabe of Edinburgh wrote that "Petitions have circled around the city and over 13,000 names have been collected…applying for the Beatles to play there."[160] These letters show the broadening appeal of Beatles music across different demographics and the active efforts of young women to bring the band to their cities, showcasing the widespread and fervent enthusiasm that characterized Beatlemania.

Between February and April of 1964, most letters to the fan club focused on Beatlemania itself, in addition to the usual inquiries about fan club memberships and subscriptions to *Beatles Monthly.* In February 1964, the Beatles arrived in New York City to play the iconic *Ed Sullivan Show*, therefore bringing the "British Invasion" and Beatlemania to America officially. Letters referring to screaming and fainting fans in New York, as well as stampedes to catch a glimpse of the group, are common.[161] For Spitz, the "formal acknowledgement" of the Beatles' "heartthrob status" appeared during their performance on *Sullivan* with a close-up of Lennon and a postscript below his name; "Sorry girls, he's married."[162]

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[160] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1964, 18-19.
[161] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1964, page 18-19.
[162] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 472.

Furthermore, there are more and more letters from international fans as opposed to just British young women. An American fan, Louise Hauser of Ohio, writes that "Lately in our American newspapers and magazines there have been lots of articles about the Mersey Beat and photographs of you four. I simply fell in love with your sound and bought the 'Please Please Me' LP…at home I have been playing them to all my friends. All of them think you have a "tuff sound" as we say here."[163] Although there was no guarantee of the Beatles' success in the American market prior to their arrival, it can be concluded, in part, that they received such unprecedented recognition due to the tireless promotional efforts of fans who spread the word of their music, when so many British musical acts before the Beatles had tried and failed to succeed in the American music scene.[164]

During this time, tension arose between British and American fans. British fans claimed the Beatles as their own and felt frustrated with American fans taking credit for the band's success. Irene Pask of California's letter, in defense of Beatles music being unique and not copying American sound, states, "Why is it when the English get a fabulous group the Americans claim part or all of their success?"[165] A response from McCartney to Pask's letter was printed, thanking her for standing up for the band.

Another California fan, JoAnne from Los Angeles, wrote that she had been calling radio stations to play Beatles songs, and that finally, "…the biggest [radio] station in Hollywood introduced your song, 'I Want to Hold Your Hand.' It went over like no record ever has in the history of popular teenage music…this week it debuted on the Fab Forty as Number ONE! I guess this is going to be a pretty British year for us!"[166] Working tirelessly to promote her

[163] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1964, 18.
[164] Millard, *Beatlemania,* 16-17.
[165] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1964, 18.
[166] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, March 1964, 19.

favourite band, JoAnne is just one example of likely thousands of other young women demanding from their local radio stations to play this up-and-coming British group.

Post-America Visit, Peak Beatlemania, Movies, and Tours

The remainder of this "first year" of Beatlemania was incredibly busy, and it is unlikely the band themselves was able to process much of this evolution in their fame. The group had filmed a musical-comedy film called *A Hard Day's Night* in April, releasing an album of the same name that July. Singles were released in anticipation of the summer release. Further, tour dates were announced internationally, in Asia, Europe, and Australia, for June and July, followed by North American dates in the fall. The band did remain engaged with their fans through the magazine, with more letters being crammed onto the pages each month. Many young women began referring to themselves as 'Beatlenuts' like Elaine from Australia,[167] or 'Beatlemaniacs,' such as Eileen from California, who tells the band she plays "*Meet the Beatles* over and over again" at school during her lunch hour.[168] If Eileen is one example, young women took pride in having a label or name for their passion for the Beatles.

More fans were writing in requesting signed photos to be sent to them or asking for responses from the band, and the magazine continued to print humorous quips and responses to fans' queries. The Beatles were perceived by young women as "great fellas"[169] for this reason, and the responses were acknowledged and appreciated by fans. It remained important for Epstein and the wider fan club that every letter be responded to, to maintain top-quality communication and accurate information on the Beatles. Clearly, this fan base was continually seen as vital to the success of the band.

[167] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1964, 18.
[168] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1964, 19.
[169] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1964, 18.

Fans were continually impressed with the way the Beatles handled themselves in public settings. An anonymous devoted fan wrote that "…the Beatles give you more attention if you don't scream yourself hoarse…when they were filming…we ended up talking to George, Paul, and Ringo for about 10 minutes. They couldn't have been more friendly."[170] Another fan, Barbara from Middlesex, defended the band's fame and potential bad reputation, and wrote that when she tried to meet the band while they were filming, "They were talking to us quite naturally…Paul seemed very regretful about [not signing autographs] as it would hold up filming and even asked if there were any photographs for us. I thought this was one of the nicest gestures I have ever seen from anyone I have ever met."[171] One fan even writes in about have a two-hour tea session with Starr's parents, writing that she found Starr's address and went over to his home, received a tour from his parents, and "…[Mrs. Starky] wrote in my autograph book and gave us both photos signed by Ringo."[172]

The May 1964 issue of *Beatles Monthly* addresses the growth of the fan community, with Johnny Dean's editorial of this issue stating, "My biggest problem every month is deciding what letters to print in the next issue of your book. The Beatles always give me loads to go in…there's only room for a dozen each time."[173] Here, O'Mahony acknowledges that there is a decision he must make about what letters are published, as magazine letter pages were "heavily mediated"[174] and only printed a small selection of the letters sent. This is important because the narrative within the *Beatles Monthly* 'Letters From Beatle People' section shaped by these editorial choices, reflecting the perspectives and interests deemed most relevant or appropriate by the

[170] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 18.
[171] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1964, 18.
[172] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, July 1964, 18-19.
[173] "Editorial," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 2.
[174] Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!'," 167.

magazine's editorial team. As Hill notes on this subject, "which letters appear needs to be regarded in order to understand the power that the magazine's staff have in choosing how fans appear to one another…the letters are the words of real women, but because they are selected by the magazine in such a way as to portray a version of the community, they stack up to create a particular representation."[175] Consequently, the published letters not only represent a small selection of the female Beatles fan base but also display the influence and construction of the public image and discourse surrounding the Beatles during this period, framed by the *Beatles Monthly*'s male editorial team.

Following this, Bettina and "Anne" write in their letter from the Official Fan Club that there are over "fifty thousand fans" and counting with memberships,[176] and that "umpteen mailbags every week are filled with letters of praise" to the band that the fan club sifts through for the magazine.[177] O'Mahony, Bettina and "Anne's" use of the word "you" in their editorial and letters each month, a practice they often employed in each edition, clearly signals to the young women reading the magazine that *Beatles Monthly* is for them, directed at them, and shaped by their contributions. Without them cultivating it with their opinions enclosed in the letters, the magazine would not be able to exist.

By August 1964, a year after the first fanzine was launched, the Beatles' career was in full stride. Excitement about the band's upcoming movie and album littered the discourse in their letters, and that young female fans, such as Florence from Paris, were "…expecting 'A Hard Day's Night' as impatiently as English fans."[178] Jill Hammers, from Florida, writes that "Our

[175] Hill, *Gender, Metal and the Media,* 52.
[176] "Official Beatles Fan Club Newsletter," *Beatles Monthly,* May 1964, 4.
[177] "What They Think of You," *Beatles Monthly,* May 1964, 5.
[178] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1964, 18.

whole viewpoint about British 'teens has changed (for good, mind you)!"[179] The Beatles, successfully capturing the uneasily conquered American music market, had done so because of their popularity and influence on their young female fans, marketing directly to them.

Conclusion and the Beatles' Reactions to Beatlemania

In its first year, *Beatles Monthly* was inarguably directed towards female fans who consumed the magazine. These letters reflect a young women's perspective on fandom, counter to Mills' view that they were inherently sexual in nature; typical letters were instead inquisitive, interrogative, and even demanding. Although the fanzine's tone was tabloid-like or "journalese," its clear intention was to market this standardised boy band with an appeal to young women.[180] In response, these fans used the magazine as a tool to promote the band on their own—by engaging with the Official Fan Club, music, and radio stations, and interpreting the Beatles within the context of their own lives. By marketing directly to young female fans, *Beatles Monthly* quickly became an essential aspect of Beatlemania, allowing fans to write in and become an integral part of the machinery of the music business, the dedication and enthusiasm of these young female fans that propelled the Beatles to unprecedented fame in the first place.

By mid-1964, the Beatles were likely thrilled by their growing musicianship and fame, yet it is worth noting that they also faced significant pressures and challenges by their fanbase during this period; it was "unlikely that the band could stop and truly analyze what was happening."[181] McCartney, in an 1964 interview with *Beatles Monthly*, does claim this, stating "Everything happened so quickly last year we didn't get a chance to sit back and take it all in."[182] Although the Beatles were certainly "very grateful, very honoured by the way fans treated

[179] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1964, 19.
[180] Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 33.
[181] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 47.
[182] "What They Think of You: Paul McCartney," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 9.

[them],"[183] Spitz notes that "none of the Beatles liked how success had reshaped their appearance…John bristled when a fan described the Beatles' music as 'genuine.'"[184] Further, about the Beatles' ecstatic female audiences, Lennon complained "bitterly,"[185] frustrated that their artistry had taken a backseat to their celebrity role as the Beatles.

This dichotomy - between the image presented by *Beatles Monthly*, the music they wrote to appease their female fanbase, and each member's internal desire for more creative control - would profoundly affect the band in the years to come. Still, they insisted on reporting to *Beatles Monthly* that they were grateful for the conversations and role the young women fans had in their lives, including acknowledging the letters they send to the fanzine, and for their "loyalty and friendship."[186] The next two years would be just as fervent as the first year of the magazine, as the Beatles' musicianship and song writing evolved, their album output became more frequent, and their grueling tour schedule intensified. Female fans continued to passionately support the band by reading the *Beatles Monthly* magazine, writing in about their experiences following the artistic development of the band and attending concerts in droves, further solidifying the Beatles' status as global superstars.

[183] "What They Think of You: Ringo Starr," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 8.
[184] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 453.
[185] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 456.
[186] "What They Think of You: Ringo Starr," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1964, 8.

Chapter 3: Peak Beatlemania, End of the Touring Years, and Continuing Musicianship, September 1964-August 1966

In December 1964, feminist activist Gloria Steinem – at the time "a young and aggressive reporter"[187] – had interviewed Lennon for a *Cosmopolitan* article titled "Beatle with a Future." In her article, Steinem referenced a poll held earlier in the year by the by ex-secretary of American Beatles fan club, Feather Schwartz, who discovered that "The average Beatles fan was thirteen to seventeen years old, a girl, middle-class, white, Christian, a B-minus student, weighed 105 to 140 pounds, owned a transistor radio with an earplug attachment and had Beatles photographs plastered all over her room."[188] This stereotype had certainly been perpetuated in media portrayals of British and American Beatle fans up to that point, especially of the early Cavern audiences who attended lunch hour shows.[189] In her article, Steinem's misjudgment of Beatles fans in the article is discernable, dismissing them as ridiculous, and describing them as "single-minded."[190]

Prior to Steinem's December interview, the whirlwind of the Beatles' career in the years leading up to and including the first year of *Beatles Monthly* had transformed them into full-fledged rock stars, on the verge of becoming household names. To keep up with the ever-increasing demand, their music, movie, and touring output was expedited, aiming to capitalize on the hype that had surrounded them since the fall of 1962. This period, between 1964-1966, is

[187] Gloria Steinem, "'Beatle With a Future': *Cosmopolitan*, December 1964," in *Read the Beatles: Classic and New Writings on the Beatles, Their Legacy, and Why They Still Matter*, ed. June Skinner Sawyers (New York: Penguin, 2006), 60.
[188] Steinem, "Beatle With a Future," 62; Elizabeth Thomson and David Gutman, eds., *The Lennon Companion: Twenty-Five Years of Comment* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1988), 32.
[189] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44.
[190] Steinem, "Beatle With a Future," 61.

considered "peak Beatlemania"[191] by Beatles scholars. These years saw the Beatles' female fans growing and evolving with the group. The band's image transitioned from an almost "androgynous" and "feminine"[192] girl-focused musical group, to one that increasingly diverged from their original "mop-top" image and fan base.

Regardless of their evolving image, during this time, young women continued to exercise their agency by writing letters to *Beatles Monthly*, actively participating in and promoting the fan community, especially regarding concert tours and album sales. This engagement allowed them to attempt to shape and influence the representation of Beatles fans in the media. However, as media and culture scholar Anna Gough-Yates notes, "By setting the 'feminine agenda' within the 'scripture' of women's magazines, the editors were in a powerful position – occupying a pulpit from which they could decree the character of femininity."[193] Thus, the editors continued to play an important role in shaping the wider media representation of Beatles fans within the pages of the *Beatles Monthly* magazine. This interplay between *Beatles Monthly* and its perception by its female audience underscores how print media shapes and is shaped by the cultural identities and experiences of the young women who read and engaged with it. Through their correspondence, these fans not only expressed their devotion but also contributed to the broader cultural narrative surrounding the band, demonstrating their role in the phenomenon of Beatlemania.

Continuing Media Interpretations of Female Beatles Fans

[191] Hunt, *Beatlemania in America*: 5 and 39; Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 44; Sawyers, *Read the Beatles*, xliii and 37.
[192] For androgynous, see Mills, *The Beatles and Fandom*, 34 and 40; For feminine, see James Patterson, Casey Sherman, and Dave Wedge, *The Last Days of John Lennon* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020), 75-76.
[193] Gough-Yates, *Understanding Women's Magazines,* 14.

In September 1964, the band's first movie, *A Hard Day's Night*, was released. Recognizing the need to capitalize on their immense popularity, Epstein ensured that new products were produced quickly and successively.[194] The period from 1964 to 1966 was characterized by rapid releases, with no album or project spaced more than six months apart. The news remained dependent on the narrative of 'crazy girl' fans to sell papers. Since October 1963, about a year earlier, that narrative was still commonplace, and things hadn't let up by late 1964. *Melody Maker*, one British music magazine, reported in the fall of 1963 time that "Girls have fainted…hundreds slept in the streets…waiting for box offices to open,"[195] "girls fainted – and got hurt,"[196] there were "rampaging fans,"[197] and the *Daily Herald* noted that "screaming girls launched themselves against the police-sending helmets flying and constables reeling."[198] Though there were young male fans present, the young women fans seemed to be the forefront of what journalists considered an important and interesting reaction to the Beatles on the front pages of newspapers. Steinem's article describes the fans in California as "thousands of weeping, screeching girls."[199] When they landed in New York in early 1964, the *New York Times* published a story stating, "three thousand teenagers stood four deep on the upper arcade of the international arrivals building…girls, girls, and more girls."[200]

Repeatedly, these news publications stressed how unprecedented and shocking these reactions and the commotion the young women made were. After the fateful *Ed Sullivan Show,* young women were certainly ecstatic and flustered, but reports of "crazy girls, who were going

[194] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 538-539.
[195] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 429.
[196] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 429.
[197] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 444.
[198] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 428.
[199] Steinem, "Beatle With a Future," 61.
[200] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 459.

bananas…screaming tearing out their hair" were hyperbolic, as no one actually leaped towards the stage.[201] Further, there is evidence that when journalists asked female fans to discuss why they loved the Beatles, their responses were often edited into soundbites focusing on the band's physical appearance as opposed to comments about their music.[202] Comments about the attractiveness of the band's physical appearance did appear frequently in letters *to Beatles Monthly* from young women, which could support the common narratives framing Beatlemania as primarily driven by female infatuation. However, most of the letters published in *Beatles Monthly* instead express the emotional impact the Beatles had on them, opposing media narratives.

One fan, Monica of Kent, criticizes the validity of some news reports regarding her fellow fan community. "It's maddening! When we came out in full force to welcome you back from America, there were nothing but complaints about our behavior…we were afraid it was earning [the Beatles] a bad name. So when less fans turned up at the airport the reporters started knocking, with suggestions that – well, you know; and it's all rubbish what they are saying, cos we all love you just as much."[203] Monica continues, "We'll just let those maddening reporters and BBC blokes go on their misled way of life, and we'll go on loving you as much as ever."[204] Monica's letter highlights the disconnect between media portrayals of Beatles fans and the fans' own experiences and sentiments. Her criticism of the press's negative coverage underscores the active role young women played in defending the band's reputation and affirming their lasting

[201] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 472.
[202] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 47; Paul Gardner, "The Beatles Invade, Complete With Long Hair and Screaming Fans," *The New York Times*, February 8, 1964, https://www.nytimes.com/1964/02/08/the-beatles-invade-complete-with-long-hair-and-screaming-fans.html.
[203] Patterson, Sherman, and Wedge, *The Last Days of John Lennon*, 75, Spitz, *The Beatles*, 432; 464; 473, Steinem, "Beatle With a Future," 68. It is likely Monica is referencing the common predictions from journalists at the time that the Beatles were a fad, and wouldn't last very long.
[204] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1964, 18.

devotion, countering the narrative that their enthusiasm was merely a fleeting fad. Further, by sharing her personal experience, Monica exemplifies what Maynes considers "individual life and the sense of agency,"[205] illustrating how life stories help us understand historical dynamics by linking personal experiences and agency with the broader direction of society. This connection, rooted in specific ideas about causality, shows how individual lives contribute to larger historical trends, such as Monica's unique explanation of her participation in global Beatlemania.

Other letters show a growing connection to the Beatles, and the influence they had on their daily lives. One fan, Jean from Sussex states that her life is "very dull and ordinary" but that "listening, watching, and reading about the Beatles" makes her very happy.[206] Jean further explains that she gave up smoking in order to save up for a ticket to the London Royal Premiere of *A Hard Day's Night,* in order to be "a part of the magic that surrounds George, Paul, John, and Ringo."[207] Jean's experience at the premiere was clearly quite meaningful to her, and her use of the word "magic" in her letter to describe the Beatles exemplifies how Beatlemania - and by extension, *Beatles Monthly* - cultivated a sense of shared identity and community among fans. For Hill, since "the letters pages produce an imagined intimacy between fans and magazine staff," *Beatles Monthly* worked to generate a sense of "sameness" between fans and musicians."[208] This phenomenon enabled young women to feel a sense of belonging by attending Beatle events. It motivated shyer individuals, like Jean, to seek connections and address feelings of loneliness or "ordinariness" by abandoning detrimental habits, such as smoking, to support a music group that held significant meaning for her and interact with fellow fan women.

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[205] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 119.
[206] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1964, 18.
[207] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1964, 18.
[208] Hill, *Gender, Metal and the Media*, 54.

The loyal Cavern fanbase remained committed to them, with fans Anne, Vicky, and Marie from Liverpool, self-described "three old Beatles fans," wrote to the magazine about their experience at the *A Hard Day's Night* premiere, where the Beatles made an appearance. "We couldn't believe we were so close to them, it was the nearest we have been to them, since the good old Cavern days…we didn't think they'd remember us. The next morning in the *Liverpool Echo*, George said, 'The best welcome I had was when entering the theatre, I saw six girls that used to sit on the front row of the Cavern.' It just goes to show that the Beatles still remember their old Cavern friends who have been friends for years."[209] McCartney 'responded' to this letter, reaffirming as usual that they'll "always remember the Cavern days" and recognize "old friends."[210] Although McCartney may not have directly responded to this letter, it allowed the young women who supported the Beatles to feel seen and encouraged a narrative of indebtedness of the band to their supporters, acknowledging that without their dedication, the band's ascent to stardom would not have been possible. Fiske argues that "fan magazines often play up and encourage this sense of possession, the idea that stars are constructed by their fans and owe their stardom to them… The industry takes seriously letters from fans who try to participate in and thus influence the production of the text."[211] This recognition highlights their role in propelling the band to greater fame.

Global Beatlemania

The previous chapter mentioned that as Beatlemania spread from Britain and wider Europe to America, that some British fans, especially the local Liverpool young women, felt like

[209] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1964, 18.
[210] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1964, 18.
[211] Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," 40.

they had "lost" their "ownership" of the Beatles.[212] These feelings of loss remained present in fan letters. Fiske notes in 1992 that "fans are particularly productive…any example of fan productivity may well span all categories and refuse any clear distinctions among them."[213] In this way, Beatles fans were productive in their letter-writing and communication, admonishing the Beatles to visit them or to otherwise claim the fans as their own; fans around the world conducted themselves in the same way. Further, Jenson notes that "'good' [fandom] affinities are expressed in a subdued, undisruptive manner, while 'bad' affinities (fandom) are expressed in dramatic and disruptive ways." The following selection of letters from young female Beatles fans showcase their desire to affirm their fandom in various ways by addressing deep emotional connections to the band, sharing personal anecdotes, and sometimes even challenging societal norms in their letters.

Kris Norris, from California, addresses this in a letter to *Beatles Monthly*, stating, "In most English teen-type magazines about English Beatles and their fans I find there is a large mistake concerning the fans. Whenever 'the boys' come home from an overseas trip…there are signs and letters awaiting them asking 'Why did you leave us?'...at no time have they ever left you!...They have taken a great big beautiful part of Britain to the rest of the world. How I'd love it if they did leave you for us – but they probably wouldn't love it, so none of us really would either."[214] Kris concludes her letter by clarifying how excited she is for the Hollywood Bowl show at the end of August 1964.

One British fan, Elizabeth, composed a poem on a similar topic of where the Beatles "belonged," rhyming that "Beatles 'round the world, with 'X-ceptional' fame, Whenever they

[212] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 33.
[213] Fiske, "The Cultural Economy of Fandom," 37.
[214] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1964, 19.

leave us, It's always the same, We yearn for our Beatles, To zoom home again!!"[215] Elizabeth and Kris' letters suggest that the Beatles' influence transcended mere entertainment and had profound implications for national identity and cultural representation. About her own experiences as a "first generation" Beatles fan in the early 1960s, American sociologist Candy Leonard addresses feelings like Kris and Elizabeth's in her 2014 book *Beatleness*, "It made me realize that there was a big world out there…that many, many people around the world could share an experience even though they don't know each other."[216] In this regard, Kris' letter demonstrates that the Beatles held significant importance for young women in both Britain and America, and Elizabeth's acknowledges the Beatles' importance to her as a resident of the United Kingdom. It illustrates that the experience of being a Beatles fan is not confined to a particular geographic location. Furthermore, it highlights how the band has opened the eyes of young women to a broader, shared cultural phenomenon, fostering a global sense of community and connection among them.

Throughout late 1964 and early 1965, there was a growing number of young women writing in from various parts of the world, not just the United States and Britain. Although it was announced in late 1963 that fan clubs in different locations had been formed, there had been little notice of them published within *Beatles Monthly*. There seemed to be a growing awareness and excitement from Beatle fans about how popular the band had become. Many fans were overjoyed about gaining international pen pals in different parts of the world, such as Josephine from Oxford, who "got twenty replies from the States" after her address was published in the magazine's Pen Pal column.[217] Another, Susie from Montreal, said that her friend Marilyn Alkin,

[215] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1964, 19.
[216] Leonard, *Beatleness*, xviii – xix.
[217] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1964, 18.

who won a *Beatles Book* Competition, "got two letters from Britain and one from a girl in Sweden!"[218] Young women were eager to share their devotion with others around the world. A young woman from Poland, Maryta, lets the Beatles know "the teenagers over there think of you…and think you're simply great" even though, she adds, most teens there couldn't speak English, but understood her when she tried to talk to them about the music.[219] Julie from Salisbury recounts meeting new friends from Czechoslovakia (modern day Czech Republic and Slovakia), who are "Beatles mad over there too," with Julie giving them, "at a great personal loss, the record 'Can't Buy me Love' as they can't buy Beatles records in their own country…how awful!"[220] Finally, Dora from France thanks her pen-pal in England who sends her copies of *Beatles Monthly*, stating "it helps me a lot with my English, as it's the only thing I translate willingly."[221] For Maryta, Julie, and Dora, their love of the Beatles transcended just politeness and promotion, but showcases the generosity and kindness that was common within the Beatles fandom, with young women sharing records, copies of *Beatles Monthly*, and even their money to send letters around the world.

One example of the Beatles bringing together different groups of people and illustrating the duality of young women is a letter from Christine Brown of Warwicks, England, published in the October 1964 issue. She describes her anxiety before a speech exam with a deaf girl, Wendy, Christine's "exam subject," at the Manchester School for the Deaf, noting that both she and Wendy were nervous. They had trouble bonding, and Christine continues, "We simply had to calm down somehow…I thought we'd take a little walk around the playground…Wendy pulled me towards the cloak room…she tugged down her coat and pointed to a tiny brooch on the

[218] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1964, 19.
[219] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1964, 18.
[220] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1964, 18.
[221] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1964, 19.

collar. There it was – a tiny photograph of George! What happened next was fantastic. Within minutes we were talking about you all…Wendy was lipreading marvelously. We forgot all about the exam and just chattered together like any couple of ordinary fans!...Thanks a million for your help."[222] This letter from Christine exemplifies the Beatles' role in fostering a sense of connection, community and bridging gaps between diverse groups of people.

More fans were writing in about Beatles performances in their home countries. A New Zealand fan, Marionneke, writes that she "hasn't yet seen a letter from one of your fans from New Zealand…you have got hundreds of fans here," in hopes of encouraging the band to tour there again.[223] A fan from Nishinomiya City, Japan, named Miss Midori, writes that she "zealously hopes [the Beatles] will visit us someday in the future and see their Japanese fans…we are sure they will be pleased to meet us," and thanks her Australian pen-pal for sending her the address to the fan club's mailing office.[224] One young woman from Malaysia, Beulah, writes to let the band know that "they have heaps of fans in Sarawak…we all love you so much and are dying to see you…Sarawak is only 420 miles from Singapore, do come here PLEASE!"[225] Brenda from South Africa composed a poem, writing that she is "Infected with the Beatle pest…the only cure for us I fear, is when the Beatles come out here!"[226] Serena, Penny, and Helen write from Rhodesia (modern day Zimbabwe) for the Beatles to "please please us and your fan club members by coming out here"[227] because "they don't seem to realise how many fans they have in this part of the world."[228] Finally, a letter from Helene in Bradford, Canada

[222] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1964, 18.
[223] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, November 1964, 18.
[224] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1964, 18.
[225] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1965, 18-19.
[226] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1964, 19.
[227] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1965, 18.
[228] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1965, 19.

tells the Beatles that "Hundreds upon hundreds of fans bought tickets for your dual performances in Toronto…your popularity in Canada has not diminished!"[229] This collection of letters underscores the widespread and international nature of Beatles fandom, and the agency of fans in expressing their desires in hopes of influencing the band's activities. These "personal narratives show how individuals strategize and act, not alone, but rather always embedded in social relations, in institutions, and in history,"[230] with Marionneke, Miss Midori, Beulah, Brenda, Serena, Penny, Helen and Helene using their voices to advocate for Beatles tours in their respective countries, demonstrating their active participation in the global fan community.

Other fans from non-English speaking countries wrote in their letters that the Beatles helped them learn English, such as Carinosamente Rita, from Argentina, who wrote that "You are very liked by the teenagers, who, believe it or not, practice their English by translating the words to your songs!"[231] A Brazilian fan, Angela, tells the band that they should visit "Rio de Janeiro…you're the only English group known here…the ONE and ONLY!,"[232] which is likely a reflection of the language barrier the Beatles crossed there, too. The correspondence also illustrates how the Beatles serve as a unifying cultural force, bridging geographical and cultural divides, and fostering a sense of shared identity among diverse young female fans worldwide. As fan Annabella from London reflected, "It does not matter what country I come from, we are young people, we are friends, we are 'The Beatle People.'"[233] This engagement not only reflects the fans' dedication but also their empowerment through communication and collective enthusiasm.

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[229] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1965, 19.
[230] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 119.
[231] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1965, 18.
[232] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, July 1966, 19.
[233] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1965, 19.

Of course, Beatlemania and news coverage of fans as a topic still popped up as a controversial topic in letters during this time. A fan named Karen, from Kent, writes a letter to Harrison, frustrated that "D.J.'s, pop reporters who go on and on corrupting our minds with slogans like 'The Beatles are slipping…,' 'The Beatles can't be the same again…,' but the moment a new Beatles single is released and skips to No. 1., they are all over you saying 'We made the Beatles, and we've been with them since the start'…I hate hypocrites and it really makes my blood boil. Some D.J.'s seem…unable to talk to you as if you were normal (though very wonderful) human beings. If I saw you in the street, I don't think I would scream or faint…I'd shout out 'Hello George!' as if you were some old friend of mine." She continued, "Believe me I do appreciate how hard you work for your fans, and how trying it must be for you. I should think your life must be very frightening at times…I am a bit upset at the thought of coming to see the show…I don't want anyone to think that I could ever go completely hysterical and half kill you while trying to make myself happy."[234] Maryanne from Suffolk responded to Karen's letter in a later issue, thanking the magazine for printing it, similarly angry about the fabricated articles about the Beatles that filled American magazines. She wrote, "This sort of thing makes me furious and I don't see how anyone can put up with such rubbish. I don't even read the articles because I know they're all lies."[235] Karen and Maryanne's letters illustrate how female fans exercised agency by critically engaging with media representations, asserting their individuality, and expressing thoughtful and respectful fandom. This is an example of what Lanckman emphasizes is important about letter pages, as they allowed fans to "share their views…with thousands of other fans – and allowed these fans to write responses…[serving] as a

[234] "Letter to George," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1965, 15.
[235] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1965, 19.

real public forum."[236] This communication between young women solidified *Beatles Monthly*'s significance within 1960s Beatles fandom. They used the platform to criticize media representations they felt were inaccurate and to find agreement and validation among fellow fans.

Specifically, Karen's reflections on how she would interact with Harrison if she saw him in the street—greeting him as an old friend rather than reacting hysterically—demonstrated a conscious rejection of the stereotypical image of the frenzied, irrational female fan. Another fan, Brenda from Greenford writes to McCartney about the banners and t-shirts they made upon the band's return to London, and says, "I've done a lot for you. Did you enjoy your airport receptions?...We were an hour late for school that day [to greet you] but we didn't care!"[237] Brenda also opted not only to counter negative stereotypes but also reinforce the fans' role as active, discerning participants in the cultural phenomenon of Beatlemania. Like Karen's statement about not wanting to go completely hysterical and potentially harm the band underscores her desire to maintain a balanced and respectful relationship with the Beatles, Brenda ensures the Beatles know the hard work her and her friends put in to greet them at the airport, highlighting their self-awareness and consideration for the band's well-being.

Kris from Ohio writes to *Beatles Monthly* about the stampede that occurred at their Cleveland show in September 1964, where her and "her friend Jill…paid $5.50 for worse seats than the $4.50 kids…We just couldn't see…When they started their third song we could hold back no longer. Every $5.50 seat rushed the stage. Not to hurt the Fab Four but to be able to get a look at them since we knew we would never get the chance again. Now our mayor has

[236] Lanckman, "'They Took Our Jobs!'," 165.
[237] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1965, 18.

proclaimed no rock n' roll groups can perform in public places saying they stir up mass hysteria and riots, which isn't the individual groups [sic] fault!"[238] Kris also writes that one hundred thousand girls tried to get tickets to the show for just under ten thousand seats in the venue. Kris and her friend Jill showcased agency by taking decisive action by rushing the stage to see the Beatles better, despite having paid more for worse seats. This act of defiance against the constraints of the concert seating demonstrates their determination and resourcefulness in seeking a better concert experience. Additionally, Kris' letter criticizes the mayor's decision to ban rock 'n' roll performances, arguing that the hysteria is not the fault of the bands. By voicing her perspective, Kris actively participates in the discourse surrounding Beatlemania and challenges the negative stereotypes and policies targeting fans.

The Beatles' Personal Engagement with the Magazine

A further interesting development was young women writing into *Beatles Monthly* about their experiences meeting or communication with the Beatles' extended family members. Jean from Newcastle writes to McCartney that, "I only want to tell you how nice your dad was to me when I met him at your house in July…I realised what he must have to put up with from fans like me…do me a favour by thanking him for cheering me up to no end."[239] McCartney replied, stating his dad likes meeting people as much as he does. Sue from Derbyshire met "Dear Sweet Ringo's mum," saying "She is gear (sic)…since that night I have not washed my hand!" Starr 'responds' to this letter and acknowledges Sue's appreciation.[240] Lynne, another fan of Starr's, met his mother in Liverpool who "answered our knock…and kindly autographed pictures of Ringo for us," concluding her letter that her and her friends finished their day in Liverpool by

[238] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1965, 18.
[239] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, November 1964, 19.
[240] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1965, 19.

visiting the Cavern Club.[241] A fan from Toronto, Sandi, wrote to Lennon's Aunt Mimi, who wrote back to Sandi's excitement, "She thanked me for the drawing I sent…inside was enclosed autographs of all the Beatles! I'm still in a fit…But, John, I had to tell you that I really think your aunt is a really wonderful person."[242] Writing letters to the magazine to express gratitude demonstrates fans taking control of their narrative and publicly sharing their appreciation, making their voices heard and influence the band's perception of their audience.

By reaching out to the Beatles' family and then writing about it to *Beatles Monthly*, young women feel acknowledged and valued, which further strengthens their bond with the band, and therefore the magazine itself, continuing to contribute to its pages. These letters can impact the band's understanding of their influence and the importance of their interactions with fans. The Beatles' awareness of such gratitude might encourage them to continue or even increase such interactions, highlighting the role of fans in shaping the band's actions. Or, with their busy schedules, encouraging their family and friends to take on the role of responding to letters to ensure the continued positive reception of the band.

Female Responses to the Increase of Male Fans during Beatlemania

As discussed in chapter 1, the growth and promotion of female fans were pivotal in broadening the Beatles' appeal to a wider audience, which increasingly came to include men. The enthusiastic support and visibility of female fans not only validated the band's popularity but also created a cultural phenomenon that transcended gender boundaries. This dynamic allowed the Beatles to achieve a more diverse fan base, as the initially female-dominated fandom set the stage for a broader demographic appeal. Consequently, the influence of female fans played a

[241] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1965, 19.
[242] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1965, 19.

critical role in shaping the Beatles' universal appeal and solidifying their status as a global cultural icon. By mid-1965, as the Beatles' career was evolving rapidly, their music began to shift, too. *Beatles for Sale* (1964), *Rubber Soul* (1965), and *Help!* (1965) included increasingly diverse and unique musical experimentation. One example is boy who led the Nigerian Beatles Fan Club, as a fan named Celia Stewart writes to correct *Beatles Monthly* that "The person is in fact a boy, Mr. Dapo Odesanya…I have a relation who knows him very well."[243] The fact that the leader of the Nigerian fan club was a boy challenges traditional Western perceptions of Beatles fandom of hysterical young women, and illustrates the band's appeal across cultural and geographical boundaries. In fact, the fan clubs that were initially established by young women had evolved into communities that welcomed boys from around the world as well.

One female fan, Mary from London, writes about her experience in seeing *A Hard Day's Night* on vacation in Italy with her mom, where "there were about three hundred boys and only a few girls…they charged through the curtains…and made such a terrible noise the police were called in to keep them under control."[244] Mary's experience watching *A Hard Day's Night* in Italy with her mother illustrates the contrasting behavior of male and female fans. Despite being outnumbered by boys, who caused such a disturbance that the police were called, Mary's letter emphasizes the composure and enthusiasm of many female fans. As Lewis notes, fandom print media can reiterate "gender discrimination by revealing how the patterned characterizations of female fans are designed to deride women as a group."[245] In this way, it was easier for media outlets to deride female fans as unruly, when Mary's recollection of male Beatles fans in her letter shows this was not the case for the young women who were present. Further, as Feldman-

[243] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly,* August 1965, 19.
[244] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1964, 19.
[245] Lewis, introduction in *The Adoring Audience,* 4.

Barrett notes, not all female fans took part in what was perceived by the media as hysterics or poor behavior, as for many of them, "the point of the Beatles was their music."[246]

The Beatles' fanbase was becoming more inquisitive about the output and quality of the music released on these albums, and there is an increase in letters from male fans, like Chris, a presumed male fan from Rochdale who tells *Beatles Monthly* that "you wanted ideas and letters [for the magazine] from boys…I suggest you allocate one page each month for one of the Beatles to talk about their instruments…as I am sure a greater percentage of girls read [*Beatles Monthly*] now."[247] James Stocke wrote in 1965 if the magazine had ever considered including content on "Beatles style of dress, suits, sports jackets, shirts, etc., as I am sure this would interest the boys who read the 'Beatles Book.'"[248] Graham from Kent writes to tell McCartney "How much I admire your more recent 'Beatle type' hair style."[249] These letters reflect the expansion of the Beatles fandom and its growing reach beyond its initial female-dominated audience. In late 1966, 13-year-old Richard tells the magazine that "the letters in the Beatles Books are always written by GIRLS! So next time I HOPE there'll be a boy in it."[250] Of course, as Richard acknowledges, the letters published in the magazine up until the end of 1966 are still overwhelmingly written and signed by feminine monikers, showing that woman still made up a core part of the Beatles fan community.

"Good Ol' Freda": An Update on the Women of the Fan Club

On the Beatles' 1963 Christmas record, which they made exclusively for their fan club, Harrison shouts a thank-you to their fan club secretaries Anne Collingham and Bettina Rose,

[246] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles*, 45.
[247] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1965, 19.
[248] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, July 1965, 18.
[249] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1965, 19.
[250] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1966, 18.

and, "Not to mention Freda Kelly in Liverpool," with the three other Beatles following with a triumphant, "Good ol' Freda!"[251] Since 1963, the women of the fan club remained important to the Beatles' career trajectory. The band went out of their way to publicly acknowledge the secretaries' role in their success. Specifically, Kelly's role, briefly outlined in the first chapter, had not let up by the mid-1960s. The January to April 1966 editions of *Beatles Monthly* hosted an four-part article titled "The Liverpool Fan Club" which provided readers with an inside look at the history of the fan club. Kelly, the secretary of the Northern Branch of the Fan Club, discusses her involved role as a woman in the office in these articles for the fanzine. Despite her close connection and significant contributions, the Beatles' former press officer Tony Barrow notes in the 2013 documentary film, *Good Ol' Freda*, "Freda is one of the few 'backroom boys' who's never got the recognition she deserves for all the hard work she put in on behalf of the Fab Four."[252] She had previously quit her office job to work for the Beatles' fan club, despite her father's insistence she work for a more conventional company. This underscores Kelly's determination and autonomy, prioritizing her commitment to the fan club over conventional career expectations. Kelly had carved out a unique and influential role for herself within the Beatles' inner circle with her hard work and admiration of the band.

Kelly's experiences with the Official Beatles Fan Club, and with the band themselves, means she is considered one of the most important female figures in Beatles history, because she "created a pathway for new and exciting possibilities of participation and engagement."[253] As Maynes argues, "analyses based on personal narratives can help social scientists to rethink the problems of historical agency and social action," with life stories specifically providing "a

[251] "The Beatles - Complete Christmas Records," 04:17-04:25.
[252] Day, "Good Ol' Freda," 2013.
[253] Feldman-Barrett, *A Women's History of the Beatles,* 32.

unique perspective on the intersection of individual…they link the individual life and the sense of agency that structures it with the collective destiny…an author's moment in the life course and in time affects how s/he remembers, relates, and interprets historical events."[254] Kelly's work within the Beatles fandom and her involvement with *Beatles Monthly* provides context to the operations and importance of fan women within the success of the Beatles' career trajectory.

The office in Liverpool employed her full-time and five other young women part-time. Freda "works right into the evening by taking sacks of mail home with her to sort through…a lot of local girls pop in and help me. They are generally very helpful."[255] By this time, the "average mail for the Fan Club is about 400 letters a day," with Kelly remembering, "we got two letters on the first day and I was really delighted."[256] She communicated with the Beatles' families often, requesting "buttons, old shirts and plectrums to give away. She also has some of their hair!"[257] Being a fan herself, Kelly went to great lengths to fulfill the requests of other young women like her. Kelly also noted she keeps a "Funny File" of funny letters and keeps in touch with Maureen (Starr's wife) and Starr himself, who were a "great help when the club first started," with Maureen even coming to help decorate the office in 1964.[258]

In January 1965, Bettina Rose stepped down from her position as co-president alongside "Anne," who congratulated Rose upon her marriage. Mary Cockram, who played "Anne," left her role as secretary in late 1966. Still, before and after Cockram's departure, Kelly always played a crucial role in the Official Beatles Fan Club success, eventually becoming the President of the main fan club in London after Cockram left her role. Lynda, a fan from Cheshire, wrote a

[254] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 119.
[255] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 3," *Beatles Monthly,* March 1966, 14.
[256] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 2," *Beatles Monthly,* February 1966, 13.
[257] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 2," *Beatles Monthly,* February 1966, 13.
[258] "The Liverpool Fan Club: Part 3," *Beatles Monthly,* March 1966, 13.

letter to *Beatles Monthly* thanking Kelly for her hard work. "We hear a lot of mentions about Anne and Bettina in London, but we rarely hear mention of Freda Kelly, doing such a wonderful job of 'holding the fort' by herself in Liverpool. I have been to her office and seen the many hundreds of letters she receives each week…I know many people who are most grateful to her for all her help she has given in so many ways. Nothing seems too much trouble to her. If you find room to print my letter…may I, on behalf of us all, say a very sincere 'Thank you, Freda, for all your help and kindness.'"[259] This letter shows how important Kelly was to the Official Fan Club's operations, and to the fans themselves. Lynda's letter can be interpreted as a reflection of the thousands of fans who communicated with Kelly, acknowledging her vital role in the Beatles fandom.

Still, Kelly understood that her career progression would be limited as a young woman in a male-dominated industry.[260] Maynes suggests that "the history of girls, and by extension, of children and youth…is actually the history of the ways in which adults tried to shape or characterize the young or remember their own or others' youths. The discourses and definitions of authorities and other dominant players are, of course, invaluable. Yet at the same time these discourses are profoundly problematic, tied as they are to particular forms of definition, particular (and highly gendered) notions of private and public concerns."[261] Kelly's awareness of her career limitations as a young woman in a male-dominated industry underscores the broader issue Maynes identifies: the historical tendency of adults to shape and define youth through biased and gendered perspectives, which often marginalize the experiences and potential of young women. Nonetheless, Kelly remained a secretary throughout the 1960s, even while other

[259] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, July 1965, 18.
[260] Day, "Good Ol' Freda," 2013.
[261] Maynes, "Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," 117.

men around her at the publishing offices were promoted to assistants. Her dedication nonetheless remained evident to both the Beatles and their fans, who all developed strong working relationships with the woman whose career was shaped by the band. Kelly's commitment and hard work earned her the respect and appreciation of the Beatles, while her efforts to fulfill the fans' requests and maintain their engagement solidified her integral role within the Beatles' world.

The End of Beatlemania

The female fans writing into the magazine still worked to make it clear how much dedication they were providing to the Beatles. By this time, the Beatles' personal musical tastes were shifting. By late 1965, their music was drifting from audience-centered, female love pop-songs to more experimental and adventurous music. *Help!* is considered by Beatles scholars to be the last "pop" album they produced, due to it being associated with their second theatre film release of the same name, another comedy like *A Hard Day's Night.*[262] *Rubber Soul*, released in December 1965, is the earliest example of their progression as lyricists and instrumentalists, with aspects of psychedelia and progressive rock. The "creative momentum of the previous year, buttressed by marijuana and a powerful [Bob] Dylan influence,"[263] meant that as the Beatles drifted from their 'mop-top image' and female-centered pop music, they drifted further from the close connection they had with the female fans who made them stars.

Further, the Beatles had grown increasingly frustrated with their grueling tour schedule and the overwhelming demands of their fame. They privately longed for more creative fulfillment and enjoyed spending time in the studio far more than the exhausting cycle of touring.

[262] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 552.
[263] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 552; 595.

Since their early days at the Cavern Club and their extensive tours in Germany, their live performance schedule had been almost constant for about six years, contributing to their mounting stress and desire for change. Their August 1965 North American tour, which peaked at their show at Shea Stadium in New York City, saw the band play to 56,000 fans and earned them $304,000, a record for the time.[264] In March 1966, a recording of the show was released in the U.K. As Karen from Yorkshire wrote into the magazine, "I saw and taped the Shea Stadium show…I must congratulate you all…I have never seen anything like it before and I would have given anything to be there."[265] Heather from Iverness, Scotland tells them "how great you were…Thank you for a really great night."[266] Stadium shows saw the Beatles turn their concerts into more of an event, but one that was hard to manage; dealing with difficult crowds and juggling the more intricate music they wanted to create simply didn't align with them any longer.

Their letters in *Beatles Monthly* seemed to understand this stress. One anonymous letter writes that "I think it's about time I wrote to thank you all for the fabulous times I've had each time I've seen you…Us fans take so much from you so on behalf of us all I'd like to say a huge THANK-YOU!"[267] This specific letter is unsigned, but it is likely from a female fan, as a romantic poem follows the note of thanks. Another fan, Catherine from Hertfordshire, writes that "In the lull between every record the Beatles make, a few newspapers publish columns of cynical remarks with such headings as 'Are the Beatles on the wane?' and 'The golden boys are losing their magic touch'…as soon as another record is released at the top of the charts these hypocrite reporters' headings to their stories turn to once more to 'The Beatles do it again' and 'Another great hit for the Beatles...*Help!* holds the traditional magic and mystery of yet another deserving

[264] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 576; 578.
[265] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1966, 19.
[266] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1966, 19.
[267] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1965, 19.

hit.'"[268] Fans like Catherine seemed acutely aware of the media narratives that surrounded the band, while also praising their evolving musical output (and, curiously, half-predicting the title of a future Beatles release, *Magical Mystery Tour*, in 1967).

For the Beatles' Christmas record for the fan club (which had by 1965 become a yearly exclusive release) and their other performances on television, Phillipa from London thanks the band for recording it, because "all this, just for your fans…no other group, but you, bothers to make a special record for your fans at Christmas. Thank you for making me very happy."[269] Elaine from Kent writes that she enjoys reading the articles in *Beatles Monthly* "which the boys wrote themselves. I love to read what they think of us, because they are always being told what we, the fans, think of them, whether it be good or bad."[270] Finally, Moira tells the Beatles in her that she's frustrated no one ever seems to thank them for the "pleasure you have given to so many millions of us…I feel personally that it is a debt I can never repay."[271] Catherine, Phillipa, Elaine, and Moira's letters are still consistent with previously explored facets of the fandom's culture; young women took an active role in influencing the Beatles, while still expressing their appreciation for the work the band put in to make them happy. Two fans from Cheshire, Janet and Susan, even wrote a letter to the Beatles' tour crew, Mal Evans, Neil Aspinall, and Alf Bicknell, thanking them for multiple times for their work in the Beatles' management, concluding that "we know that the Beatles do depend on you."[272] It was clear not all Beatles fans were hysterical, screaming young women in the stands, many were very thoughtful and appreciative of the group as individuals, even acknowledging the other staff who had become

[268] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1965, 19.
[269] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, February 1966, 19.
[270] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, January 1966, 19.
[271] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1966, 18.
[272] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1966, 18.

famous for their role in the band's entourage.

The Beatles' personal and professional lives also evolved as they navigated increasing fame throughout 1966. Lennon had married and fathered a young son in 1962, Starr had married his fan-turned-wife Maureen in early 1965, who birthed their first son shortly after, and in early 1966 Harrison married his wife, model Pattie Boyd. The spring of 1966 saw the group recording *Revolver*, their most ambitious project yet, and the album that would set the stage for their critically acclaimed productions of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), *The Beatles* (affectionately nicknamed the *White Album* by fans) (1968), and *Abbey Road* (1969). It became clear with the experimentation of *Revolver* that touring was no longer possible; the music they were making in the studio simply could not be replicated on stage.

Beatles Monthly, for obvious reasons, did not report on anything inherently negative about the band. The letters published in the magazine remained positive and chipper, and congratulations about the band's marriages, children, performances, and music remained prevalent. The magazine did their best to make it seem like the Beatles were directly responding. Monica of New York writing to the magazine that she sent McCartney a present, never expecting an answer from him, but she received a "thank-you note from him in the mail a few weeks later…I never thought they would really answer their mail…this proves beyond a doubt that the Beatles care for their fans as much as their fans care for them."[273] Another fan, Susan from England, sent McCartney a birthday card and received a reply from him, saying that "the Beatles are great…because they make the time to say thank you."[274] Even though McCartney's reply was likely sent by the Official Fan Club office, Susan's letter of thanks to *Beatles Monthly* shows her

[273] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1966, 18.
[274] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1966, 18.

engagement and the reciprocal appreciation between the fans and the Beatles that the magazine encouraged. However, it was more likely at this stage that secretaries like Kelly were the ones organizing and responding to these letters for their fellow fans.

One fan, Audrey from Connecticut, the President of Danbury Beatles Fan Club, writes that she is so excited for the show at Shea Stadium, where the Beatles would be playing for a second time in August 1966. Audrey expresses her desire to hear Starr sing more, and says she is "getting hysterical just waiting for August 23rd to come...by the way, the rest of the kids in the Club send love, too." Audrey's use of hysterical can be interpreted as not having a negative connotation in this context, but rather conveys her intense excitement and anticipation of the event, as well as her agency as a fan. Barbara from Italy writes to tell the group that she is flying to see them at Shea Stadium, and she is "really excited…can't wait, just can't wait to see you."[275] Audrey's ability to articulate her excitement and the collective anticipation of her fan club, and Barbara's determination to see the band perform overseas, illustrates how fans are not passive recipients but active participants who contribute to the band's success. By organizing fan club activities and maintaining high levels of engagement, Audrey and Barbara helped sustain the Beatles' momentum and public presence – though perhaps this momentum was waning for the band themselves.

Conclusion of Touring

It is likely that the Beatles fans were not fully aware of the toll touring took on the Beatles, and further, of the "creative tension"[276] that began to plague their interpersonal relationships with one another. Letters from fans into the fall of 1966 remained positive, with

[275] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, August 1966, 19.
[276] Spitz, *The Beatles*, 555.

many young women appreciating their new music styles. Leslie from New York tells the band how much they've matured as musicians and that the new album brings out the best in them.[277] Susan and Janet from Cheshire write in a poem about the Beatles albums that "Each one is better than the one in the past, *Revolver* may you always last…Congratulations!,"[278] or Valerie from St. Thomas, Canada, who tells them, "you haven't lost your touch…'Yellow Submarine' is great and tremendously funny!"[279] Diana from Lanes tells McCartney that "'Eleanor Rigby' is really gorgeous…It's so sad and appealing. I get the feeling that there is meaning behind the lyrics. Is this so?" McCartney's response to this letter tells Diana that "too many people are neglected in this world – and look at the outcome of it."[280] A fan named Helen from Coventry thoughtfully acknowledges that the Beatles have broken away from "love" songs and that she "likes the change…as the 'love' theme has been done such a lot in the pop industry…the Beatles songs have always contained more real and down-to-earth words than others…their originality will remain with them, as it always has."[281] Sue from Lanes adds that "your music is better and people just don't know how to appreciate it."[282] Out of this handful of examples, of which there are many more, thousands of female Beatles fans were still listening, buying, and enjoying the new records, even though they weren't overtly simple, audience-centered pop songs. One fan, Pauline, was upset by this and strongly disliked 'Yellow Submarine,' saying "You are usually such perfectionists…please, please, we want our Beatles music, not third-rate…For pity's sake don't give the newspapers a real chance to tear you to pieces."[283] Plenty of Beatlemania-era fans were growing and evolving with the group, capable of hearing new and exciting music just as the

[277] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1966, 18.
[278] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1966, 19.
[279] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1966, 19.
[280] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1966, 18.
[281] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1966, 18.
[282] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, October 1966, 18.
[283] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, September 1966, 18.

Beatles were creating and experimenting with it, while fans like Pauline may have been a bit shocked with the transition, yet personally defensive of the band in the wake of harsh critic reviews of the Beatles' music.

In October 1966, Kelly was promoted to Joint National Secretary, and the Fan Club offices moved from Monmouth St. in London to bigger headquarters to accommodate the demand. "Anne" appeared as the signature in the magazine for a handful of issues over the next 6 months, but Kelly remained stable in her role, writing a solo letter from the Fan Club for the magazine each month. Although the Beatles had stopped touring, this development had not yet been promoted to fans and the December 1966 issue contains several letters from young women asking when they are next visiting America on tour, with Eileen from New Jersey begging the band to "Please come back next year, we need you. I need you," and Melissa from Boston asking the magazine "Where can I write and buy a ticket?"[284] Fears of the band breaking up were consistent as well, but many still pledged their loyalty to the group, wishing them well in their marriages, relationships, and newborn children.

For young women, being a fan of the Beatles had helped to shape their identities, with a fan named Jackie describing the feeling perfectly, "They may be idols, but you're not a fan. You're closer than that – you're a friend."[285] The later Beatlemania and touring years were a time of "*accruing* authority and fan trust,"[286] allowing them to create art that resonated with the 1960s counterculture and profoundly impacted the youth who embraced their later music. As Sheila Whiteley notes, although women increasingly participated in institutions such as higher

[284] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1966, 18.
[285] "Letters From Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, April 1965, 19.
[286] Candy Leonard, "Beatles Fandom: A De Facto Religion," in *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years*, ed. Kenneth Womack and Kit O'Toole (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 28.

education and the workplace, their presence was still limited compared to men. The contradictions between the politics of counterculture, which emphasized personal freedom, and the reality of women's lives were evident. Music served as "an audible badge of belonging," highlighting the role of women and their contribution to "group consciousness."[287] Young women, particularly through their participation in *Beatles Monthly*, demonstrate the active role female fans played in shaping the narrative not only about the band but also about themselves. These fans contributed letters, stories, and reflections that highlighted their perspectives and experiences, and even as the Beatles' music evolved and became less directly influenced by the fans who initially propelled them to fame, the female fans maintained their presence and impact. *Beatles Monthly* allowed them to engage and assert their identities, underscoring their ongoing significance in the Beatles' growth and cultural presence.

[287] Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music*, 28-29.

Conclusion: End of an Era and Later Letters

The Beatles remain undoubtedly one of the most influential rock and roll bands to ever record music. As they always did, the Beatles advanced music, always bounds ahead of their peers, exploring (and even pioneering) genres like psychedelic rock, Indian classical, folk, metal, carnival, vaudeville, and more, seamlessly fusing together stories and sounds with expert precision. But as they advanced musically, their public image and personal values shifted distinctly to accommodate not only their growing stardom but individual desires for a more fulfilling career. The group, wrought with years of internal interpersonal and external turmoil dealing with everything from business deals to songwriting, fell apart after ten years together as a group, and less than eight years after the release of their first official single.

Beatles Monthly, in turn, was forced to evolve with the band. The last issue was printed in December 1969, four months prior to the public announcement of the Beatles breakup in April 1970, devastating the public.[288] In this final issue, O'Mahony, in an article titled "End of an Era," explains his reasoning for ending the magazine:

> Let me start off by saying right away that THE BEATLES BOOK is not ceasing because it is not selling anymore…Nothing can succeed unless there is a great need for it. So there must have been a great need for the Beatles in 1962…Before he died, Brian Epstein told me that he thought THE BEATLES BOOK should change and I think the readers who stayed with us will agree with me that the magazine did change quite a lot during the past three years. But we have not been averse to publishing letters which were critical of the Beatles' records or activities, and I think the boys accepted this as a logical

[288] Mark Lewisohn, *The Complete Beatles Chronicle* (London: Hamlyn, 2006), 341.

> development…George stated quite some time ago that he did not like the publication, whilst the other three, as far as I know, showed varying degrees of approval. While accepting George's attitude, I obviously continued to follow the wishes of the majority of the Beatles. But now, even this is really no longer possible.[289]

O'Mahony also explains in this article that the Beatles, in the early years of the magazine, were happy to oblige to photographs and meetings about the magazine, but after 1966 their involvement almost ceased entirely.[290] The last printed response from any of the members is from the June 1967 edition, from Harrison. Following this response, there is no direct acknowledgement from the Beatles themselves, nor any direct interviews from the band that populated the early pages of the 1963-1966 editions.

O'Mahony's acknowledgement of more critical letters of the band from fans are certainly present in the later issues. Although many Beatles fans praised their experimental releases of *Sgt. Peppers*, the *White Album* and *Abbey Road*, many fans were confused or apprehensive about these evolutions. Many poked fun at the Beatles' new appearances, which constituted long, scruffy beards and hair, or their solo releases, such as Lennon's controversial *Unfinished Music No. 1: Two Virgins* (1968).[291] Some thanked the Beatles for introducing them to Indian culture, including the sitar and meditation.[292] What remained consistent, however, was the fan community that *Beatles Monthly* continued to foster.

O'Mahony's article, "End of an Era," suggests that the success of *Beatles Monthly* largely relied on the Beatles' early image as handsome male pop stars, which was strategically

[289] O'Mahony, "End of an Era," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1969, 8; 10; 14.
[290] O'Mahony, "End of an Era," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1969, 14.
[291] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, July 1969, 18.
[292] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1968, 18.

marketed to young women. This standardized image played a crucial role in the magazines and band's initial popularity. However, as the Beatles' career evolved, this image began to alienate their original female fans and attract more male fans. Initially, female fans were pivotal in the Beatles' rise to fame, as they empowered the band through their support. In return, the Beatles offered these fans an outlet to express their agency and explore their gender identity. In the later years, the "Letters from Beatle People" section remained a way for fans to feel connected to the band and bond with one another through this experimental and often unknown era.

One interesting development is the direct acknowledgement of fans in their role within the Beatles' fame. A fan named Sheryl Pringle from Lancaster asked *Beatles Monthly* in May 1968 to dedicate pages to Beatles fans:

> I was thinking about the Beatles and their fans the other day…we hardly ever hear from their fans…The point I'm trying to make is that us fans have made the Beatles what they are (I don't mean absolutely everything, I mean, they've worked jolly hard), and now I think it would be nice if the fans could have a bit of fame, as Beatle People, through *Beatles Monthly*.[293]

Sheryl's direct acknowledgement of Beatle fans playing an important role in their success, even in 1968, reveals the fans' desire for recognition and their sense of agency. A fan named Linda in June 1968 agreed with Sheryl's letter, writing that it is a good idea to "pay special attention" to "Beatle People," and "make us all feel very important to be a Beatles' fan."[294] By seeking recognition through *Beatles Monthly*, Sheryl, Linda, and others like them asserted their influence and expressed their identity within the larger narrative of the Beatles' success. One anonymous

[293] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1968, 18.
[294] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, June 1968, 19.

fan, writing from the 32nd Regiment Royal Artillery, pushed back on Sheryl's claim that the fans made the Beatles, writing, "IT DOES NOT MATTER HOW MUCH MONEY YOU PUT INTO A PRODUCT – IF IT'S NO GOOD IT WON'T SELL. The Beatles made themselves – no one else did it for them. So what if a couple million people bought their records?"[295] What this anonymous fan misses is that although the Beatles were undoubtedly talented, the fans' support, the young women who supported their first shows, records, and performances, was crucial in amplifying their success. The dedication and enthusiasm in the Fan Club, local, and international fans helped propel the Beatles to unprecedented levels of fame, creating a cultural phenomenon that talent alone could not have achieved. The symbiotic relationship between the Beatles and their fans was integral to their journey, demonstrating that the fans' role went beyond simply purchasing records—they were active participants in the band's rise to global stardom.

As the magazine's publishing ended, the tone of the letters evolved. There were notable tributes to the Fan Club secretaries, like Diana from Burradon who thanked Kelly in May 1969 for all her hard work for "the boys to keep in contact with their fans,"[296] and Kathy from Minnesota who thanks Sandi, the president of the BEATLES (U.S.A) LTD. Fan Club because "there are many of us who do appreciate the hard work that is being done running the fan club!"[297] These fan women acknowledging other fan women shows the strong sense of community and solidarity within the Beatles' fan base. It highlights how these women not only supported the Beatles but also each other, recognizing the significant efforts made behind the scenes to maintain their connection with the band. This camaraderie among fans underscores the collective identity and mutual appreciation that were central to the Beatles' enduring legacy.

[295] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1968, 18. [Emphasis in original]
[296] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, May 1969, 18.
[297] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1968, 19.

While the Beatles never lacked talent or drive for the musical conquests, the young women who dedicated their time and effort to their fandom activities are worthy of their space in the story of the Beatles. Through *Beatles Monthly*, their contributions to the fan community are evident, their passion ensured throughout the decade. Without the eager young women waiting at the Cavern Club to hear them play, the clamoring for records that caught the attention of their late manager, Epstein, their roles – paid and unpaid around the world – as fan club secretaries and office workers at the Official Fan Club, and their free promotion to young women around the world allowed the Beatles to go from mop-topped sweethearts to rock and roll legends. It seems appropriate that the final letter published in *Beatles Monthly*, by Newcastle fan Barbara Clark, writes, "Everything they have done in the past has suited me fine, and everything they will do in the future will suit me too, whatever direction it moves in."[298] O'Mahony concludes his article "End of an Era" with a hopeful wish, that "It would be nice to think that there will always be copies of the magazine around to remind people of the biggest show-business stars of this century."[299] This is certainly so, 55 years later. As this paper argues, *Beatles Monthly* served not only as a fan magazine, but as a historical document chronicling the phenomenon of the Beatles and their impact on popular culture. Its existence preserves a tangible connection to the band's era and legacy through the young women who undeniably made them stars.

[298] "Letters from Beatle People," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1969, 19.
[299] O'Mahony, "End of an Era," *Beatles Monthly*, December 1969, 14.

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