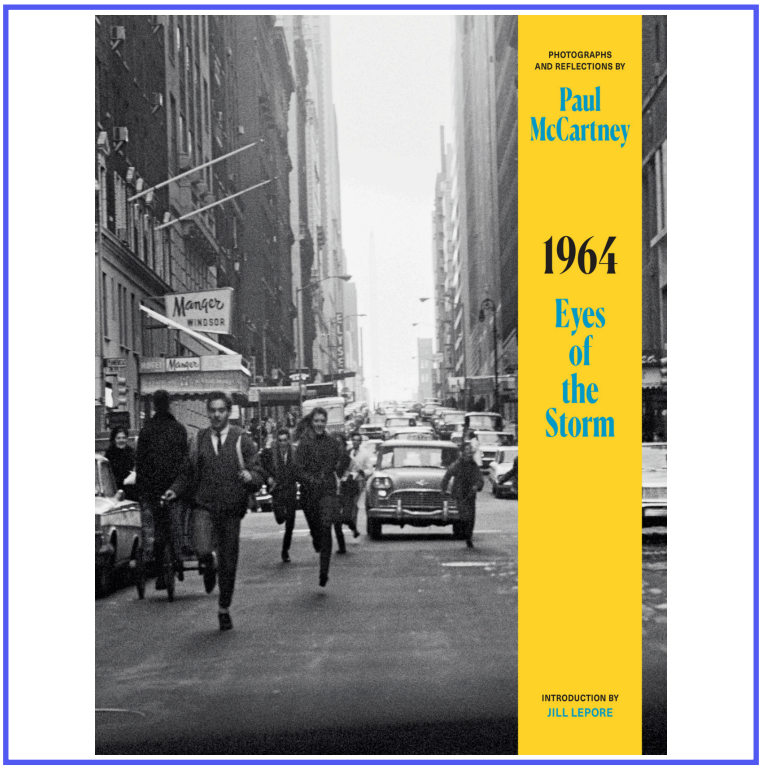


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Foreword

Paul McCartney

To look at the strength, to look at the love and the wonder of what we went through that's captured in these photographs is the whole thing. It's what makes life great.

Somewhere in the back of my mind, I always knew I had taken some pictures in the 1960s. At first, I couldn't pinpoint the year, but I was certain we were quite young, just when The Beatles were really taking off. I never tried to find this collection – consciously, that is – but I kind of thought that it would just surface at the right time. There's often a certain amount of serendipity involved. And while we were preparing for an exhibition of my late wife Linda's photographs in 2020, I mentioned having taken my own, which, I then learned, had been preserved in my MPL archives. So, when I first saw them after so many decades, I was delighted that these images and contact sheets had been lovingly preserved and finally located.

Anyone who rediscovers a personal relic or family treasure is instantly flooded with memories and emotions, which then trigger associations buried in the haze of time. This was exactly my experience in seeing these photos, all taken over an intense three-month period of travel, culminating in February 1964. It was a wonderful sensation because they plunged me right back. Here was my own record of our first huge trip, a photographic journal of The Beatles in six cities, beginning in Liverpool and London, followed by Paris (where John and I had been ordinary hitchhikers just over two years before), and then what we regarded as the big time, our first visit

as a group to America – New York, Washington and Miami – to the land where, at least in our minds, music's future was being born.

Now, no one can doubt that these three months were something of a crucible, but at the time we didn't know that a new sound, a new movement was happening. We were strangely at the centre of this global sensation, which had ignited in 1963 in the U.K., with what the press dubbed 'Beatlemania'. It was a period of – what else can you call it? – *pandemonium* that exploded in British concert halls, on television shows and in the charts, where our music was suddenly what all the kids were listening to.

We four guys from Liverpool couldn't possibly realise then the implications of what we were doing. By the end of February 1964, after our visit to America and three appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, we finally had to admit that we would not, as we had originally feared, just fizzle out as many groups do. We were in the vanguard of something more momentous, a revolution in the culture, especially as it affected the youth. This was something we might have felt in some primal, unconscious way, but that is a realm that would be taken up later by rock critics and historians, even well into the twenty-first century, as Jill Lepore describes in her introduction.

The fact that these photographs, most of them mine but a few snapped with my Pentax camera by my bandmates, roadies and managers, have been taken by the National Portrait Gallery, London, for their reopening after a lengthy renovation is humbling yet also astonishing. While I admit they possess historical value, I have to emphasise that I'm not trying to claim to be a master, only an enthusiastic photographer who happened to be in the right place at the right time. That a senior curator like Rosie Broadley can contextualise what became nearly a thousand photographs, of which 275 are in this book, means a lot to me. I have to add that I have huge respect for all the professional photographers out there who busted their limbs, sadly quite literally at times, to capture the madness of the 1960s. I hope that these photos complement everything they did.

The truth is that I have always been interested in photography, from the time I was very young, when our family owned a little box camera in the

1950s. I used to love the whole process of loading a roll of Kodak film into our Brownie camera. I would ask my brother Mike to take a picture of me outside a hot dog store – an American export to a country that had never previously known hot dogs. And from those early years, we would use the camera to take pictures of each other. This was not just a McCartney family hobby. Every family we knew would take a camera on holiday, as in 'Here we are on holiday in Blackpool' or 'Here I am with Auntie Dilys and Uncle Harry,' as we did when we went to Butlin's holiday camp.

In looking back at these photographs, I have even greater regard for the photographers around The Beatles back then. They would have to frame the picture, guess the lighting and then just go for it – the madness that enveloped us everywhere making their work ever more difficult. Since we were surrounded by journalists, I often took pictures of them, not so much for revenge but because they were an interesting group of people. I would often say to them, 'What's the right lighting?' because they were professionals and would automatically know. Despite the simplicity of the camera, the process, at least to me, was challenging, since with each roll, you had only twenty-four or thirty-six images, which you had to get right, because there wasn't a second chance. This is such a contrast with the process today of taking pictures on your phone. You couldn't be lazy then. You had to take the right picture, actually compose the image in the frame without the safety of knowing you could crop it later. When I watched my wife Linda work, she was very old-school in that way. She had the discipline to spot the picture and then take it. She understood that she had only one opportunity and she had to get it right.

This kind of traditional photography has more relevance to music and the recording process than you might think. Nowadays, some people will come into the studio without a song, without any idea of what they're going to do – and they'll just jam around until something 'appears'. I often think that this can prove to be a great waste of time, and I advise people to have some idea of what they're going to do before they come in and make a piece of music. But just as with phone pictures, they'll record various pieces of music, mix them and choose later.

Looking at these photos now, decades after they were taken, I find there's a sort of innocence about them. Everything was new to us at this point. But I like to think I wouldn't take them any differently today. Some

of them are soft and I could say, ‘Well, I wish I’d taken a bit more time to focus them up.’ But we didn’t have that time. And I’m quite glad of it now. I think of the work of Julia Margaret Cameron; much of her work is soft. Many of her great portraits, they’re not sharp at all. So, perhaps I can get away with it too. We were moving at such speed that you just had to grab, grab, grab! It meant some of these shots were not as sharp as others. But I kind of like that, I like the mixture. We’ve got some very sharp pictures and we’ve got some more romantic photos with that softness which really captures the time.

Things were happening so wildly that I cannot say that photography was in the forefront of my mind as we toured. Even though we wanted to transform from a little band to a big one, and even though we hoped for international acceptance when we went to France and then the U.S., no one could have predicted what I describe as the ‘Eyes of the Storm’. At first, I was tempted to call it the ‘Eye of the Storm’, because The Beatles certainly were at the centre, or the eye, of a self-generated storm, but when I looked at all these photographs, I realised it really should be in the plural, the ‘*Eyes* of the Storm’, because of all the pictures that others were taking, the photographs I was taking and also the eyes of the fans that greeted us, the security that looked after us. Who is looking at who? The camera always seems to be shifting, with me photographing them, the press photographing us, and those thousands and thousands of people out there wanting to capture this storm.

The good thing was that our success did not come overnight but developed in a way that I like to describe as a ‘staircase to the stars’. As if by design, we had a steady build-up to 1964 and were ‘prepared’, though who can ever be prepared for fans ripping at your clothes or taking scissors to your hair, as Ringo experienced in, of all places, the British embassy in D.C.? Still, it’s true this international phenomenon didn’t just come out of nowhere – there was a trajectory – from going to newspaper offices on our own turf, to playing theatres in the U.K., to appearing on radio programmes, before being invited to do TV work, after which we’d be stopped on the street for autographs, especially after a Saturday night show. At first, it was really flattering, and we’d be pleased to stand in line for a little crowd of girls, asking them, ‘What’s your name, who should I write this out to?’ But

as the insanity built, we no longer had the time, despite our best intentions, and could no longer be who we really wanted to be.

America was without question the big prize, where most, if not all, of the music we loved came from. This was true for films too, and it was the American movies that attracted not only my generation but my dad's as well. Even the singing stars, long before Elvis, were all American. You may think I'm nostalgic, but you have to remember that this was less than twenty years after the end of the Second World War, and to us, America was 'the land of the free', the land that took in 'your huddled masses' – a phrase I like to remind people of when they start banging on about immigrants. It was, I still like to tell people, a land where immigrants helped to create the American cultural scene, one we loved and then picked up in England.

All the early rock and roll stuff was American. These were the records we loved to hear. When you look back on it, America had a huge advantage because of its Black music – early blues and jazz – which was simply lacking in European culture. The whole thing came from Black people, who were the pioneers of it all, singing in cities, in the kind of clubs where Elvis listened from the outside, hearing songs that he would later take and mould into his own renditions, things like 'That's All Right' and 'Lawdy Miss Clawdy'. That was – and still is to this day – the most popular American music, with things like hip-hop just extending the sensibility into a new century. Anyone who sings in this vein is imitating Black musicians in one form or another. I love to trace where this music came from, much of it from the South, especially Memphis. Anyone who reads the history knows that such music originally emerged out of slavery, from what was sung in the cotton fields, music that was then filtered through gospel into a kind of sound no one had ever heard before. Our fascination with all these forms of music, including our own, was building to a crescendo, as if a star was exploding.

President Kennedy had been murdered only a little over two months before our arrival, and his assassination had ricocheted throughout the world, so we figured the atmosphere in the States might still be subdued. But the minute we landed in New York, we knew instantly that we were not in store for any kind of funereal time. It was a Friday in early February

when we touched down, and it felt like thousands, and later, through television and *The Ed Sullivan Show*, millions of eyes were suddenly upon us, creating a picture I will never forget for the rest of my life.

The airport scene that February was bedlam, mass hysteria. Not in Liverpool or London, not in Paris was there anything comparable. But the airport (which had only recently changed its name from Idlewild to Kennedy) was just the start of it, because caravans of folks lined the streets and highways to get a glimpse of us as our car crawled into Manhattan. The journalists and photographers followed us in vehicles and mini-trucks, well-wishers thronging both sides of the road, as if we were some sort of triumphant athletes celebrating a victory lap. The cover photo of this book, which I managed to shoot after escaping through a side entrance at the Plaza where we were staying, communicates both the frenzy of the visit and the power of New York, with all those skyscrapers soaring above the buildings on West Fifty-Eighth Street. There's something seemingly dire about this need for flight or *escape*, as if we could end up trapped, though if you think about it, it was really *pursuits* like this one that put The Beatles in the middle of the storm. It was a kind of consciousness we were just getting used to.

You might think that all this was terrible, that it was painful, and that we felt like animals in a cage. I can only speak for myself, but I did not feel that way. This was something we had always wanted, so when it actually happened, when the mounted policemen held back the crowds outside the Plaza, I felt like we were the stars at the centre of a very exciting film. And the good thing was that there was never any malice. The people running after us just wanted to see us, just wanted to say hi, just wanted to touch us.

That is not to say that we were unaware of other dangers. When I look back at these photos, I'm surprised that my eye was drawn to so many policemen and their loaded guns. In Oliver Cromwell's day, in the mid-1600s, there might have been a lot of old flintlocks in England, but we're really not a land of guns. Growing up, I don't recall ever having seen a gun, and I was certainly never handed one. I soon learned that America had this Second Amendment tradition, but it was still jarring for me to be in the midst of this land of contrasts: first the glamour, with all those pictures of palm trees in Miami, and then the policeman accompanying us as he pulls up right next to the car, his guns and ammo right next to my camera lens.

Particularly in the wake of President Kennedy's killing, I came to realise that this was something that was so American.

Yet other things that were also quintessentially American drew me in. There was an innocence that still remained. You'll see as our group made its way to D.C. and then to Miami that my camera was attracted to this new American universe of common people. Just look at the man with the shovel in front of the Pennsylvanian freight car in Washington, standing raptly watching, or those four aeroplane mechanics clad in white at the Miami airport. These are my people. This is where I'm from. I grew up in a working-class family in Liverpool, so I could never detach myself from people like these. I wanted to be right in the middle of them. My relatives were exactly like these people. You'll find them – the bus driver, the postman, the milkman – not only in my songs but in many of these photos. You might think someone on the street is just some ordinary Liverpool guy, that he's just an ordinary insurance salesman, so what's the big deal? Thinking like this would be a big mistake, as in the case of my cousin Bert, a very intelligent guy with an amazing sense of humour, who actually compiled crosswords, quite cryptic crosswords, for three of the top newspapers in England. Still today, I tell people all the time that there is such great value in the common people.

That America remained a land of contradictions became apparent during the Miami leg of the tour, with all that colour coming after the grey drabness of New York and Washington, where the grounds of the White House and the Capitol Building had been buried in slushy snow. I had yet to pull out the colour film roll, but you can feel the intense excitement as we touched down at the Miami airport, jammed to the roof and the rafters with well-wishers of every sort. There are the mechanics readying the gangplank for us to disembark, while a crowd stands at the ready, as if they want to take part in the new history playing out right in front of them – don't miss those drum majorettes in uniforms. And then comes that explosion of colour as we get the chance to relax and play in the green-blue waters of the Atlantic Ocean, even though we know we still have one more live appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* to come. These are some of my favourite photos, and they speak to the luxury of Miami. Coming from Britain, where we didn't get a lot of warm weather, even in summer, it was exciting to be able to take some time off from our punishing routine, to

actually sit down, enjoy a day off, and have a drink and a cigarette by the pool. One of my favourite photos in the collection shows George Harrison, his face hidden by sunglasses, being handed a drink – probably a Scotch and Coke – by a girl, and although we don't see her face, we do see her dazzling yellow swimming costume. The composition was deliberate, and I'm glad that I didn't move farther away but kept George as the focus of the image. In looking back on these photos of the good life, I'm not at all surprised that the colour pictures started happening when we got to Miami, because, suddenly, we were in Wonderland.



Photographer: Mike McCartney