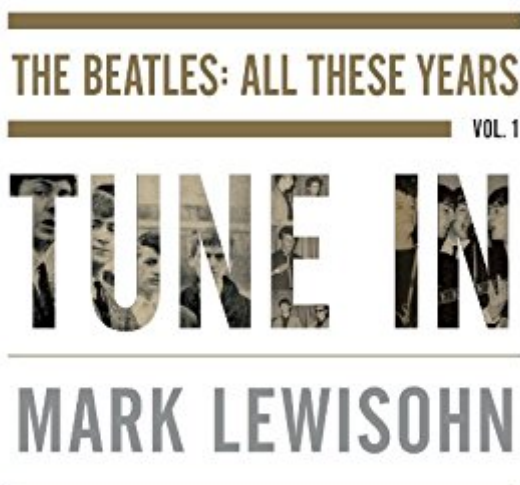


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Tune In: The Beatles: All These Years



Synopsis

Tune In is the first volume of All These Years - a highly-anticipated, groundbreaking biographical trilogy by the world's leading Beatles historian. Mark Lewisohn uses his unprecedented archival access and hundreds of new interviews to construct the full story of the lives and work of John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Ringo Starr. Ten years in the making, Tune In takes the Beatles from before their childhoods through the final hour of 1962 - when, with breakthrough success just days away, they stand on the cusp of a whole new kind of fame and celebrity. They've one hit record ("Love Me Do") behind them and the next ("Please Please Me") primed for release, their first album session is booked, and America is clear on the horizon. This is the lesser-known Beatles story - the pre-Fab years of Liverpool and Hamburg - and in many respects the most absorbing and incredible period of them all. Here is the complete and true account of their family lives, childhoods, teenage years, and their infatuation with American music; here is the riveting narrative of their unforgettable days and nights in the Cavern Club, their laughs, larks, and adventures when they could move about freely, before fame closed in. For those who've never read a Beatles book before, this is the place to discover the young men behind the icons. For those who think they know John, Paul, George, and Ringo, it's time to press the reset button and tune into the real story, the lasting word.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Over the years I have read more books about the Beatles than I care to admit to and they vary in

quality from pretty good to absolutely terrible. However, when Mark Lewisohn announced that he would be writing the 'definitive' biography of the band, fans believed him. Lewisohn is not only THE Beatles expert, but he is also someone who has an obvious love for them. In other words, he is also a fan and the little details, which intrigue us, also interest him. This first volume looks at their family history and childhood, then splits into five chapters; taking detailed looks at the years 1958, 1959, 1960, 1961 and 1962. From the first, two things become abundantly clear - that the author understands the relationship between John and Paul and that he is keen to debunk myths that have become almost accepted - especially ones built around John's childhood. Yes, his childhood was difficult, but films such as "Nowhere Boy" have created a totally fictional account of what happened and even recent books, such as "When They Were Boys" by Larry Kane, simply repeats them. Stories of Mimi dodging bombs to visit the baby John in hospital or John's mother and father forcing him to choose between them in an emotional 'tug of love' are just that - stories. Mimi also gets a much more sympathetic portrayal and we learn how, rather than trying to keep John's father away from him, she even allowed him to write to his son from prison. They may have lost touch, but it was certainly not Mimi's fault that they did. Having established that he wants to tell the story as the truth, Mark Lewisohn is certainly not portraying the band in a better light, or concealing their flaws. They were young boys at this time, each with their own character traits and faults, as everyone has. He also ties in what was happening to other people who enter the story at a later date - Brian Epstein, George Martin and other musicians are there, sometimes almost within touching distance, but their paths not quite intersecting. Most interestingly for fans, he has tracked down people that have simply not been heard from before - school friends, those who worked with them in early jobs, fans, people who were there but have not been considered perhaps important enough to be interviewed before - as well as the more obvious characters in the Beatles story. This, then, is the complete timeline of those early years - the founding of the Quarrymen, John and Paul meeting at the St Peter's Fete, George joining the band, Ringo becoming part of Rory and the Hurricanes, early auditions, success and failure, and of that first trip to Hamburg, which honed their sound and changed them into a band - even if they were always, "John, Paul, George and a drummer" at this stage. Lewisohn is not afraid to state what most fans have always known - that Pete Best was asked to go to Hamburg simply because they needed a drummer in order to fulfil the contract and that, almost from the point the poor man packed his kit into Allan Williams van, he was on borrowed time as a member and certainly never a Beatle. Returning to Liverpool, there is the show at Litherland Town Hall which showcased how good they had become, as the Liverpool scene took off and the Beatles - sneered at before leaving - were undoubtedly now the top band in the city. They

were the Kings of Liverpool but, as always, wanted more. Enter Brian Epstein, who Bob Wooler remarks, came to the Cavern to watch them - "he came, he saw and he was conquered." There follows the long road towards a recording contract, a changing image with the arrival of suits, the death of Stuart Sutcliffe and the beginning of George, in particular, conspiring to get Ringo in the band. It was also the beginning of girls hanging around their houses, which would never stop from that point on. With the Beatles finally achieving that recording contract, it was essential to change drummers. They were then no longer "John, Paul, George and a drummer" , but changed to "John, Paul, George and Ringo"- four equal members. "Love Me Do" peaked at number 17, but considering the lack of exposure and the resistance to the Beatles it was amazing the record ever took off. "So, what's from Liverpool?" sneered Dick James, when George Martin told him about 'the boys'. That North-South divide was about to be smashed down, as Merseybeat would explode on a jaded British pop market. If London was uninterested at first, then the US certainly resisted anything from England. However, even they would succumb to the charm, charisma, enthusiasm, energy and talent of the Beatles. For the Beatles itself, it was no surprise. As John Lennon said, they always knew they were "the best" and "it was just a matter of time before everybody else caught on." Sadly, Mark Lewisohn has not yet written the second and third parts of this trilogy, but if they are anything as complete, well written (his dry humour can almost rival the Beatles themselves) and his desire to tell the story as it should be told, then they will be worth waiting for. In the meantime, there is an extended, two volume edition of this book due out soon. I cannot imagine what Lewisohn may have left out, but I am quite sure that I will enjoy reading it to find out. This book has been needed for a long while, it is a triumph and I am sure it will become the definitive biography of the Beatles.

A review in a national newspaper criticized this book as being bogged down in too much detail. I disagree. The basic story of the Beatles is very well known, and it is this depth of detail that brings new insights, new revelations; so that the history you thought you knew becomes a whole new story. Reading the book you never get the feeling that you're wading through a mass of detail. This is because, firstly, the book presents you with so much new information. There is virtually a surprise on every page. Secondly Mark Lewisohn has such an easy narrative style, full of humour and with an obvious affection for the subject. The book was ten years in the writing, and it shows. He must have read every book, magazine, interview, article, contract, invoice, and scribbled beer mat. However, the author hasn't just accepted everything en masse; he's rejected anything that was embellished or exaggerated, in order to present the most complete history of the era. Some of the things that struck me include:*** The role of luck in the story. The government abolished National

Service just before John Lennon was due to be conscripted. Without this lucky timing, instead of being in Hamburg, John would have been in the army [or, more likely, living in exile in Ireland. A similar dose of luck allowed John to obtain a passport in record time, literally at the last minute, which enabled him to take part in that all-important first visit to the Hamburg clubs. It was really good luck which gave them two key management figures in Brian Epstein and George Martin; a couple of decent chaps in an industry full of sharks.*** The book not only gives us the story of the individual Beatles, but is also a snapshot of Liverpool life in the period. In particular, for a writer from outside the area Mark Lewisohn displays a complete grasp of 1960s Liverpool idiom and slang.*** Following their return from Hamburg the Beatles appeared on the bill at the Litherland Town Hall on 27th December 1960, an event widely praised as being the real launch pad of their Liverpool fame. Mark Lewisohn estimates that, at the time, they were the most experienced Rock group in the world. He captures well the excitement of these early live appearances, where audience members became lifelong fans after seeing them just once. This period, from the Litherland gig until the end of the book, was the pinnacle of the Beatles live act, performing for fans in smoky, sweaty cellars, before they were drowned out by the screams of Beatlemania.*** I found the relationship between the group and their fans really touching. While the Beatles were over in Hamburg they regularly kept in touch with a band of loyal fans, mainly young girls, with letters, postcards and photos.*** The author puts a whole new light on the infamous Decca audition, and explains why rejecting the group was a stupid idea, not with hindsight, but at the time. Truly fascinating reading.*** For the first time I really understand why Pete Best was sacked, and why his position with the group was always tenuous.*** The significance of "Love Me Do" has been largely downplayed in previous Beatles books. To have a first record, by an unknown group, make it into the top twenty, and stay there longer than most others, despite absolutely no promotion by the recording company, was huge. It was during this period that the Beatles battled the London-centric show business establishment, who were not merely indifferent, but actually hostile. They detested the name Beatles, their clothes, hair, and accent. The basic structure seemed to baffle them. Up to now there were vocal groups or instrumental groups, but here were these lads from up North who did both. It was new, it was different and it upset the status quo. To sum up, I can't recommend this book too highly. The word awesome is overused, but Mark Lewisohn has truly done an awesome job with this first volume. I eagerly await the next.

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