



The Beatles: The Biography

Bob Spitz

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Even before the Beatles hit the big time, a myth was created. This version of the Beatles legend smoothed the rough edges and filled in the fault lines, and for more than forty years this manicured version of the Beatles story has sustained as truth - until now.

The product of almost a decade of research, hundreds of unprecedented interviews, and the discovery of scores of never-before-revealed documents, Bob Spitz's *The Beatles* is the biography fans have been waiting for -- a vast, complete account as brilliant and joyous and revelatory as a Beatles record itself. Spitz begins in Liverpool, a hard city knocked on its heels. In the housing projects and school playgrounds, four boys would discover themselves -- and via late-night radio broadcasts, a new form of music called rock 'n roll.

Never before has a biography of musicians been so immersive and textured. Spitz takes us down Penny Lane and to Strawberry Field (John later added the *s*), to Hamburg, Germany, where -- amid the squalor and the violence and the pep pills -- the Beatles truly became the Beatles. We are there in the McCartney living room when Paul and John learn to write songs together; in the heat of Liverpool's Cavern Club, where jazz has been the norm before the Beatles show up; backstage the night Ringo takes over on drums; in seedy German strip clubs where George lies about his age so the band can perform; on the lonely tours through frigid Scottish towns before the breakthrough; at Abbey Road Studios, where a young producer named George Martin takes them under his wing; at the *Ed Sullivan Show* as America discovers the joy and the madness; and onward and upward: up the charts, from Shea to San Francisco, through the London night, on to India, through marmalade skies, across the universe...all the way to a rooftop concert and one last moment of laughter and music.

It is all here, raw and right: the highs and the lows, the love and the rivalry, the awe and the jealousy, the drugs, the tears, the thrill, the magic never again to be repeated. Open this book and begin to read -- Bob Spitz's masterpiece is, at long last, the biography the Beatles deserve.

The Beatles: The Biography Details

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From Reader Review The Beatles: The Biography for online ebook

Joy H. says

Added 1/13/17. (audio, abridged) (First published in 2005)

Interesting biography about The Beatles but sad the way their lives went. Their lives went through so many stages. This audio makes one realize how hectic their lives must have been.

The reader was Alfred Molina, whose voice and expression give the story a mysterious and dark atmosphere.

Believe it or not, I never realized before this that the word "beat" in "Beatles" was related to the "beat" of music. In fact, they first spelled the word as: "Beatal". They were once known as "The Quarrymen" (Named after Quarry Bank High School, per Wiki). Before choosing the name Beatles, they were also known as: the Silver Beats, the Silver Beetles, and the Silver Beatles. <http://entertainment.howstuffworks.co...>

References:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bea...

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Le...

It occurs to me that I should read the above-linked Wiki pages which, now that I've heard this audio, might have more meaning to me, since I now have a certain perspective on their lives. But who has time? :)

Duffy Pratt says

The opening chord of A Hard Day's Night. George, on a twelve string, plays a Gsus chord. From bass to treble that's G,C,F,A,C,G. On a twelve string guitar, the bottom four notes get doubled at the octave, while the top two are doubled in unison. Underneath, Paul plays a D. And John strums a Dsus chord, ADADG, leaving out the bottom string. So from bass to treble we get the following: D, G, A, C, D, F, G, AA, CCC, DD, F, GG, A. The result is a perfect collaboration, and a beautiful example of the Beatles ability to come up with something that is both chaotic and suberbly balanced all at once. If you've heard it, you remember it, and you know what I mean. If not, then why are you reading this far?

Spitz describes this chord in some detail, and quite differently. He says George plays a G7 chord with an added ninth, and a suspended fourth, and leaves it at that. I bring this up for two reasons. First, if Spitz gets this wrong, then it casts into doubt the accuracy of much of his "definitive" biography. This example is important for me, because I have always cared most about the Beatle's music, and much less about all the surrounding stuff.

Second, Spitz attributes this chord to George, instead of highlighting what a brilliant group effort it was. That's about the only time in the book that George gets put in the forefront, and on this rare occurrence, Spitz gets it wrong. This book is mostly about John, then Brian Epstein. Paul is still a large figure, but not as much as the first two. George is a strong supporting character, and Ringo hardly gets much attention at all. The amazing thing about this is that the amount of attention a person gets is inversely proportional to his

likability.

John is a dick. Spitz tries to attribute much of this to his various drug addictions. But he was being a dick to his audiences even before the drugs became an issue. It's pretty amazing that such an inconsiderate asshole could write and perform such brilliant, sensitive music. Well maybe not so much. I have a whole list of artists whose work I adore, but who I would never want to meet, and Lennon doesn't even get close to the top of this list.

Epstein didn't interest me back then, and he doesn't interest me all that much now. I guess it's worth seeing how he screwed up so many deals for the Beatles. But his character seems almost stereotypical. If someone made him up for a novel, I think most people would roll their eyes at the clichés. And that's pretty sad for him.

Paul comes across as controlling, a perfectionist, self-centered, terrible to women, but mostly a decent mate to his buddies. Except then there is the point where the new manager has Paul's longstanding assistant fired. The guy worked for Paul basically all the way back when they played in the Cavern in Liverpool, for over seven years. And when the manager had him fired, Paul refused to even return the guy's phone calls. So, in the end, Paul showed no loyalty at all. But his music, when not corny (does anyone actually like "Someone's Knocking at the Door"?), can be glorious.

George is painted as insecure, but growing and spiritual. By the end, he is at least acknowledged as a good song writer. But as the Beatles retreated into the studio, John and Paul treated him more and more as a hired hand. And Ringo is barely seen here as a full Beatle. He doesn't enter the scene until the book is half done, and he doesn't fit. He treats his wife well, and cares about her. And he seems like a nice and stable person. What Spitz does show about Ringo, is how important he was for their live sound. He wasn't the most technically accomplished drummer, but he had an uncanny musical sense and the ability to fit himself in perfectly.

The book inevitably tries to answer two questions: First, why the meteoric rise? Here, I don't think the book comes up with any good explanation. In *Outliers*, Gladwell attributes the rise to the Beatles' time in Hamburg, where they put in the 10,000 hours needed for mastery. That certainly helped them, but there were lots of other groups with their own 10,000 hours. In the end, I think the Beatles were just a black swan. There really isn't any explaining the sudden mass hysteria that surrounded them. If it had not happened to them, it probably would have been someone else. But I have to admit that it's awfully difficult for me to imagine some others in the same role.

The second question is why the break-up. The book mostly blames John's envy of Paul, and Paul's need to control things. Add to this the drugs, and their seclusion, and the break-up becomes almost inevitable. The book also lays out another scenario. The Beatles became a truly great live band with all of their experience in Hamburg and at the Cavern and on tour through England. Once they hit the big time, their shows topped out at 35 minutes or so, instead of several hours a night. They played in huge venues to girls who threw jelly bellies at them, and screamed over the music. No-one listened, and the Beatles couldn't even hear themselves. The shows were unsatisfying and became more and more dangerous to them. So they quit.

But the energy, and their first love, came from the live playing. Once they retreated into the studio, George and Ringo were no longer as much a cohesive part of the group. And Paul and John could go more and more their separate ways. So they lost their energizing source, and they lost the feeling of being a band. And that led to them breaking up. Spitz doesn't put it in so many words, but that's what I was left with. In the end, the fans broke up the Beatles.

Amelia Smith says

A great, thorough read on the world's most famous band. Spitz started and ended this hefty biography with the same word. Well-rounded and well done!

Meg says

Still finishing this up, but it's certainly the most comprehensive Beatles bio out there, and very well-written and readable. The best chapters are probably the school years and the Hamburg period which the author fleshes out with much more detail than I've ever encountered. He also has a talent for making it feel immediate when you are reading, with great descriptive passages that give you a sense of what the dives in Hamburg were like and just how grueling the Beatles early touring schedule was (for example). Their drug use is also chronicled in more detail (I don't think I knew that the Beatles smoked their first J with Bob Dylan). Not a book for someone just looking for the Beatles story (you get the full family tree of each Beatle), but fans who have read several Beatles books will find compelling new vignettes here, and be pleasantly surprised at the quality of the prose.

e.a. says

I'm a huge Beatles fan. HUGE. And this book was telling me things I didn't know. This is a brilliant book that made me completely bereft when I was finished with it.

The first hundred pages gave me the impression that it was going to be yet another John-worshipping biography, but if anything, Spitz pulls no punches when it comes to Lennon, while also managing to portray Paul as much more than the cheery one (or the Machiavellian one, which is the other typical McCartney you see in band biographies).

Another aspect I thoroughly enjoyed was the attention paid to the women in the Beatles lives, particularly Cynthia Lennon, and Paul's first serious girlfriend, Dotty. While Maureen Starr gets shafted, Jane Asher, Yoko Ono and George's first wife Patti Boyd all get attention from Spitz.

In my mind, this biography surpasses Mark Hertsgaard's *A Day In The Life*. Yeah. It's good, people.

Rebecca says

This Beatles biography (now considered the "definitive" one) is very well-written and full of a lot of colorful, interesting detail. As a long-time Beatles fan, I thought I was already pretty familiar with the Beatles' trajectory, but I learned many things I hadn't known about the boys before. And a lot of it I kind of wish I had remained ignorant about.

While this book gave me a new appreciation for the Beatles as musicians, I felt really disappointed and even

a little disgusted at who they were as people. I learned awesome facts about their innovative musical techniques -- for example, they were the first pop/rock group to use a synthesizer, the first band to print the lyrics to their songs on the album sleeve, and the first band to ever make a music video for their songs. They also did all kinds of things in the studio that no one had ever tried before. In terms of their professional skill, I couldn't have been more impressed.

But, alas, the Beatles -- especially John and Paul -- were not very nice people. Most of them (Ringo being the pretty consistent exception) were extremely greedy, self-centered, egotistical, impractical and naive with money, materialistic, ambitious, misogynistic, and unkind. They all treated their wives and "friends" very crappily. And John didn't just experiment with drugs, like the other three did, but became a full-on violent alcoholic and heroin addict, to the point that he could barely function and write music anymore. And while I had gone into the book with a pre-conceived dislike of Yoko Ono, I had no idea just how self-indulgent, bossy, manipulative, and superficial she was until reading in detail about how she derailed John's musical and personal life.

So my recommendation of this book is ambivalent. On the one hand, it has everything you could want to know about the Beatles in it, which is wonderful in many ways. And the author couldn't have done a better job of presenting his material. But on the other hand, you'll never be able to think of the band with quite the same level of respect again. And at 850 pages, it's kind of a beast to get through, so you'd have to be *really* committed to finish it. So thumbs half-up/half-down?

Chris Q. Murphy says

having spent the better part of the last 15 years ingesting any written documentation of the Beatles' lives and careers that I could get my grubby paws on, I was fully prepared to be undwhelmed by yet another lengthy Beatles book; so it was thrilling for me to find a text that not only provided me with new Fab Four facts, but also offered new insight into the same stories I have been reading for so long. While this book is decidedly "John-centric" and spends far more time documenting the first-half of the Beatles' career than the later stuff, the childhood histories Spitz provides are better told than those in the individual Beatles bios and the sheer volume of information on the pre-fame Liverpool and Hamburg days is invaluable.

John says

Good info on the pre-stardom Liverpool/Hamburg stuff; after that, it's pretty hard to come up with info that hasn't been written a zillion times before. One annoyance: the author had the habit of ending chapters with such portentous clichés as: "Little did they know all that was about to change", which were doubly ill-conceived since anybody shelling out the cash for this book already knows what's coming next.

Paul Dinger says

It's all Yoko's fault the Beatles broke up and Bob Spitz does take the time to explain why. Actually, she just brought out the discontent that was already there. My cousin once told me success was the kiss of death to a rock band. The money comes in, you began to believe your own press, etc. What made the Beatles great is that they never rested on their laurels, but that also brought about their demise. They reached a pinnacle no

other band will ever reach. They stopped touring, they stopped releasing singles, and yet their popularity never died. They were above the ratings and the charts. Yet, they weren't above themselves. This book makes for compelling reading. Yoko does come off the worst, but why not? She did latch on to the John Lennon train and never truly got off. What would she have been without him? She changed him, this is true. But not always for the better. Their relationship however is compelling for all of its disfunction. John was a portrait of contradictions. I won't listen to my Beatles and John Lennon records in the same way again.

Paul Bryant says

Well, I only read the last half, to see what jolly Bob Spitz could do with the tale of hippy woe which is the decline & fall of the four jolly boys. I was expecting a whole lot of fun to be had in the style of Bob's outrageous biography of the other Bob, Dylan. In that one, Spitz makes up whole conversations, assumes things when he hasn't got any facts or sources, jumps into Dylan's head to riff on what he "probably" would have been thinking, kicks him when he's down, and all in all has a right good laugh. But in this Beatles tome disappointingly he plays it completely straight. So it comes off as pretty good, pretty comprehensive, nothing that you didn't already know but you can probably give half of your other Beatles books to Oxfam now because it's all in here.

Russ says

It's not a perfect book, but I think this is a decent enough Beatles biography.

It's certainly a long one. I can't believe I just read an 800-page book. It took a little under a month to read.

The good: Spitz really captures the insanity of Beatlemania and the craziness that came with being a Beatle. With all the strange goings-on during the latter part of their career, it's amazing that they pulled it together enough to create such magic on record. Spitz touches on all the biggies - Hamburg, Sgt. Pepper, Paul is dead, Ed Sullivan, the trip to India. The detail is overwhelming, although it starts to lack in the last part of the book.

The bad: This really should have been called John Lennon, Brian Epstein and three other guys: A Biography. John seems to be the 'main character' in the story. I realize he and Paul were the two geniuses in the band, but I was under the impression that The Beatles were four men. Not one, not two, but four. I really could have used fewer depressing details about Brian Epstein (although they help you understand the tragedy of his life and death) and more details about George Harrison and Ringo Starr! Ringo, in particular, comes across in this book as simply a hired hand who was brought out for cheeky laughs and studio drumming. He was certainly much more than that!

Also, some parts of the book could have used much more detail. No discussion of the second-side medley of Abbey Road? Come on.

The ugly: Reviews on Amazon.com make it clear that this book is flawed and contains many errors. This is the first Beatles book I've read, so I know not what is fact and what is not. However, out of 860-some pages, Spitz must have got something right. Is his book any more flawed than any of the hundreds of other Beatles books? Also, when reading nonfiction, it is a good policy to take everything you read with a large grain of

salt. Even first-hand accounts will be biased. The best thing to do is read more than one book to get all possible sides to the story.

The presence of errors, though, keeps me from scoring this book higher.

Did I enjoy it? Mostly. The Beatles aren't portrayed as good people. When possible, Spitz will point out a flaw over a virtue. The end of the book, of course, is a downer. But the behind-the-scenes stories and the mostly-good details of the creation of the music make this book worthwhile.

Last thing I'll say - I consider this to be a beginning to my quest for Beatles knowledge. I will not stop here, nor should I.

Michael Finocchiaro says

The Bob Spitz biography of The Beatles was the first musical biography that I read a few years back. Not sure that I would be all that interested and yet having read some very positive reviews, I picked up this one and had a really hard time putting it down. The story is absolutely fascinating - from their humble beginnings, the sad and shameful way they disposed of Pete Best for Ringo Starr, the song writing teamwork of Paul and John and the charm and genius of George...it is just amazing the revolutions and evolutions of music that these four musicians achieved in such a relatively short recording career. One thing I found particularly interesting was the tension between the romantic Paul McCartney who was always looking for the big commercial hit or love song and John Lennon who - if he had had the choice - would have made The Beatles into the first punk band like the Sex Pistols. It was also a bit shocking that both love song Paul and sleep/love-in John were so incredibly abusive of their women early in their careers. Of course, we also learn of how their original and ill-fated manager Brian Epstein screwed them over forever on the rights to their music but also how the production by George Martin gave them the freedom to experiment and create masterpieces like Rubber Soul, Revolver, and Sgt Peppers. The book is a page-turner and the reader learns something on nearly every page. My first musical biography became my favorite musical biography in this case!

Still several years after reading this, Spitz' bio of the Fab Four still reigns over the other rock n roll biographies I have read. The anecdotes, the disastrous tour, the recordings (one of which a deceased aunt of mine was actually in the studio for, it os all vivid in my memory and has incredibly enhanced my listening experience of this, the greatest band of the 60s and probably most influential of all time. A must!

Sandra Ross says

I grew up after The Beatles had already disbanded, so most of what I knew about them was from the music they left behind when they were together.

I found their early music trite and sophomoric and still can't figure out why that music catapulted them to fame as the godfathers of the Liverpool sound (I was surprised at how many bands I did not realize came from Liverpool who went on to make it big here in the US during the British Invasion).

I found their later music very uneven - from really good ("A Day in the Life," "You've Got to Hide Your

Love Away," "Eleanor Rigby," "She's Leaving Home," "Girl," "While My Guitar Gently Weeps," and "The Long and Winding Road," to name a few) to, if not really bad, just really weird or asinine ("A Little Help From My Friends," "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds," "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da," and "Yellow Submarine," etc.).

This biography - it's a tome at almost 1000 pages - gave me a background to each of The Beatles and an in-depth look at how their lives and their music were so inescapably intertwined.

I never cared much for John Lennon as an artist (I always thought he got too much credit within The Beatles and his solo work just never resonated with me). I never thought much of Paul McCartney because he seemed to embody "Silly Little Love Songs" as a songwriter and as a musician. Ringo Starr I probably underestimated (although I liked all his solo work). And George Harrison was always my favorite (fantastic guitarist, deep and intelligent lyrics, and his well-known altruism).

Not much of that has changed after reading this biography in terms of which Beatle I like the best. However, I have a better understanding of the dynamics personally and lifewise that connected these four men.

Surprises? The sheer volume of different kinds of drugs combined with alcohol for a long time should have fried everyone's brains, if not outright killed them. It's mind-boggling to read. Paul McCartney was a massive jerk and a control freak unparalleled. Ringo Starr was perhaps the sanest and the most grounded. George Harrison had a nasty temper and didn't hesitate to show it.

John Lennon, which I already knew because of previous biography I'd read, was on a collision course from an early age with the delusional paranoia and insanity that he descended into the last half of his life, in part from heavy LSD, cocaine, and heroin use (enough that would have killed a normal human being), and in part because of the beyond-insane-craziness of Yoko Ono. That combination just makes me shudder thinking about it. It's still a tragic story though.

Paul McCartney was an sickeningly-sweet optimist - sort of - but he was also the glue that held The Beatles together as long as they were actually together. He was the fixer, the mediator, the prodger.

Ringo Starr lived the most normal and least affected life of any of The Beatles. Unlike the other three, his ambitions were Liverpool working-class ambitions and as soon as his life exceeded those, he was satisfied. I think of the four, he was also the happiest.

George Harrison was enigmatic and under-valued in the band. He was younger than Lennon and McCartney and they treated him, throughout the band's duration, like a nuisance kid brother, instead of valuing his contributions as a guitarist and a songwriter.

The things that became issues throughout their time together led to their breakup and affected their relationships for the rest of their lives (Lennon died in 1980 and Harrison in 2001). They wore the hurts and bitterness of offenses in their lives after The Beatles to the extent that they had little to no contact after the band broke up. When you read how close they were starting out, that is perhaps the biggest tragedy.

Definitely a good read...sad on some many levels, but informative. In the hindsight of reading, the inevitable outcome is obvious to us, but sadly everyone within the band was too close to it all to see it coming and to be able to stop it.

Jason Coleman says

This was a Xmas gift that sat on my shelf for a few years before I gave it a chance, and what do you know, it's really good. Spitz did an absolutely hellacious amount of research, but the book has to survive as a narrative, and does. Although a little slight on the music, it evokes the day-in/day-out experience vividly, as well as the dynamics behind this greatest of show-biz myths.

I have to point out that Spitz, rather incredibly, uses the adjective "horseshoe-shaped" three times in just two pages. It comes during the 1965 American tour and is used to describe:

1. Shea Stadium
2. The rental house in Bel-Air where John and George dropped acid with the Byrds and Peter Fonda
3. Elvis Presley's couch

It gets a little compulsive after awhile; you could practically make a drinking game out of it. The way Spitz tells it, America must have seemed like a giant horseshoe to the Beatles. And I guess it kind of was.

Molly says

This is an excruciatingly poorly written book that still manages to tell a great story. Tiresomely exhaustive near the beginning, it forces you to wade through much flowery language and such unnecessary flourishes as tracing John and Paul's respective ancestry back to Ireland and a discourse on the Liverpool shipping industry; given how much of it is filler, it's unconscionable that the book runs nearly 900 pages. Quotations are unforgivably mangled, with far too much fussily inserted in brackets or (sic)'d; numerous quotations are plunked into the text totally without attribution. A former music manager, Spitz gets the music business abundantly well, which may be why the best drawn character by far is Brian Epstein (with the glaring exception of Epstein's homosexuality, with which Spitz evinces maximum discomfort, handling it as if with tongs). He does not, however, get music or musicians. Attempts at critical explication of the Beatles' catalogue are ham-handed at best and are noticeably less frequently attempted as the book wears on. Having met the boys as children, we never really get a picture of their adult personalities or what drove them as artists. In contrast to the detailed early picture, more and more is glossed over as the Beatles' lives and careers become more complex. It is as if Spitz were writing the book from beginning to end all at once and got more and more tired, until finally he couldn't go on, and the book ends before the release of Let It Be. Nonetheless, even in purely superficial chronicle, the story of the Beatles is a great and powerful one, and this fan, at least, put on Abbey Road and cried while reading the epilogue.

Amie says

Inconsistent, riddled with errors, inaccuracies and wrong information. Lots of mistakes. Such as photos from 1960 and 1961 being labeled as being at the Star Club, which didn't open until '62. States that George met Pattie Boyd on the set of "Help!" when they actually met on the set of "A Hard Day's Night". Just a couple of examples. Terrible book. And when the list of errors was pointed out to the author, he just insulted those who were telling him. Isn't that nice? Wanker.

Rich Meyer says

One of the better rock biographies I've read as of late, this one really gets down into the history of the Fab Four and all the dirt and eccentricities that came out of the Beatles, Beatlemania, and the eventual personality clashes as they grew older.

Personally, I've never quite understood the popularity; until Rubber Soul and Revolver, their music was pretty staid and lackluster - some good riffs and licks, a good backbeat, but nothing out of the ordinary. I know it was their Beatlemania arrival that "changed" pop music all over the world, but until they started experimenting in the studio, I didn't really hear anything that special. But when they started raising the bar, they opened the floodgates for everything and everyone out there, as they legitimized rock music as art.

Bob Spitz's book covers all aspects of their careers, from their individual life histories in Liverpool, the myriad early groups and gigs they performed there and in Germany, to Pete Best, Stu Sutcliffe, Brian Epstein, George Martin, and all the major figures in their lives, and to the strangeness: The drug use, Yoko Ono, and the blatant fear for their own lives they had when performing on some tours.

This is definitely a good read for any Beatle fan, and I think it provides a good look as to how the pop music industry used to work (originally and post-Beatles), which shows a marked contrast to the pap of today.

Caroline says

Rating for the quality of the book: 4 out of 5

Rating for how much I enjoyed the book: 2 out of 5

I realized as I was finishing this book that I wished I hadn't read it. Don't get me wrong - it was well-written and well-researched and I learned a great deal I didn't know about the Beatles. And therein lies the problem.

There is a whole lot I learned in this book that I wished I didn't know. I mean, I knew there was drug use. I knew there were countless affairs. I knew that none of them were standup human beings. But I guess I didn't know just how bad things got. John, in particular, I found to be utter repulsive. Incredibly talented, true, but reprehensible. I think he is the most selfish person I have ever read about this extensively. Not that any of the rest (with the possible exception of Ringo - who knew?) are that much better. But John's treatment of his wife, child, manager, and bandmates was awful. I could continue with the adjectives, because there's a long list, but I won't, don't worry.

I think one of the reasons I feel this way so strongly is there is no redemption for anyone at the end of the book. The book ends with the end of the Beatles, when everyone was behaving badly. I think that if I'd been able to follow their lives a little longer, they generally clean up their acts a little bit and become a bit more tolerable. However, I understand that this is outside the book's purview. It just would have given me a bit of catharsis.

I will give a tip of the hat, though, to the last line, which manages to re-instill in me a bit of the respect that I've always had for my favorite band. These are the closing words from Spitz regarding the Beatles:

"And from them, a flood of song and love and pain and beauty, a flood that cascaded out of the Cavern and Hamburg and London town, into the world, a flow that pushed aside what had come before, that cleansed and battered and in the end nourished. Water."

Beautiful.

Brian Levinson says

Holy crap is this book long. And informative. Also fun to read, so yay. Here's some fun stuff I learned:

1. They all had gonorrhea when they recorded "Love Me Do."
 2. John was a huge asshole.
 3. Brian Epstein would invite really rough dudes back to his house to beat the crap out of him.
 4. Yoko was even worse than John.
 5. Paul was kind of a dick, too.
 6. But Ringo was a nice guy.
 7. During early Beatles concerts, theater owners or whoever would wheel retards into the front row until John started making fun of them by putting a plastic bag on his foot and limping around like a spaz. Also, sometimes the parents of said retards would like, bring their kids backstage and then leave them alone. With the Beatles.
-

Mike says

A threshold book. If your interest in The Beatles is only so-so, you'll be bored stiff by the book and I suspect you won't make it to page one-hundred. The writing is only fair--in style not quite historical, not quite journalistic, and not quite pure tabloid-y entertainment--and the substance is frankly too thin to warrant eight-hundred plus pages of reading for all but the most maniacal of Beatle maniacs. For good or bad, I am such a one. And so I raced through it over a long weekend.

It doesn't lack for effort. In an effort at contextualizing the story and following good historiography, Spitz provides more than enough details of early Liverpool, of each of the families of the Beatles, and their early school experiences. I remarked to my family that I was on page 340 and the Beatles had yet to make their first single, Love Me Do.

Despite the read, the Beatles as a phenomenon are still mystifying. Regardless of a near day-by-day account of every significant decision of the members of the band and their select inner circle, the meteoric rise of Beatlemania remains a mystery. Nor, finally, can the avalanche of tawdry stories of personal lapses and petty feuds satisfactorily account for their dissolution at the height of their creative powers. And despite the author's truly heroic efforts at getting into the musical mindset of the Beatles, the book cannot adequately explain how, even in the midst of their bitter rancor and drug abuse and unwillingness to communicate with one another, the group continued to produce sublime music—music that always transcended their own respective individual prodigious talents.

The book did nothing to diminish my musical appreciation of The Beatles, but I came away admiring only Ringo more. Not only do I now better appreciate his musical contribution to the group, but I came to

appreciate him as the sole likable member of the group. Ringo alone seemed to appreciate that the stars aligned with fantastic good fortune in his favor, and that the fame and money that came with that fortune were not entitlements. George's eccentric if heartfelt spiritualism was marbled with a mixture of second-banana diffidence, smoldering resentment and, ironically, excessive hedonism. And as for Paul and John, their respective musical talents were genuinely unmatched by anyone else in the 20th century, Dylan included. Except for by one another. And that competition of egos—so instrumental early for fueling the Beatles' rise to prominence--was in time enough to undo the group, as neither man could stand to recognize the obvious: each man was smaller than The Beatles as a group. In the end, the only thing larger than Beatlemania was their egos.
