

= Bill Harry =

Bill Harry ( born 17 September 1938 ) , is the creator of Mersey Beat ; a newspaper of the early 1960s which focused on the Liverpool music scene . Harry had previously started various magazines and newspapers , such as Biped and Premier , while at Liverpool 's Junior School of Art . He later attended the Liverpool College of Art , where his fellow students included John Lennon and Stuart Sutcliffe , who both later performed with the Beatles . He published a magazine , Jazz , in 1958 , and worked as an assistant editor on the University of Liverpool 's charity magazine , Pantosphinx .

Harry met his wife @-@ to @-@ be , Virginia Sowry , at the Jacaranda club ? managed by Allan Williams , the first manager of the Beatles ? and she later agreed to help him start a music newspaper . After borrowing £ 50 , Harry released the first issue of Mersey Beat on 6 July 1961 , with the first 5 @,@ 000 copies selling out within a short time . The newspaper was published every two weeks , covering the music scenes in Liverpool , Wirral , Birkenhead , New Brighton , Crosby and Southport , as well as Warrington , Widnes and Runcorn . He edited the paper in a small attic office above a wine merchant 's shop at 81a Renshaw Street , Liverpool .

Harry arranged for the future Beatles ' manager , Brian Epstein , to see them perform a lunchtime concert at the Cavern Club on 9 November 1961 . Epstein subsequently asked Harry to create a national music paper , the Music Echo , but after disagreements with Epstein about editorial control , he decided to become a P.R. agent ; working for many solo artistes and groups , including Pink Floyd , Jethro Tull , Procol Harum , David Bowie , Led Zeppelin and the Beach Boys , as well as many others .

= = Early years = =

Harry was born in Smithdown Road Hospital ( now demolished ) , in Liverpool , Lancashire , on 17 September 1938 . He came from a poor Liverpoolian background and was brought up in a rough neighbourhood near Liverpool 's dockyards . His father ( John Jelicoe Harry ) , was killed during the war on the SS Kyleglen British Steam Merchant ship , which was torpedoed in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean by a German U @-@ boat . None of the crew survived , and Harry 's father died on 14 December 1940 , aged 25 . Harry attended the Catholic St. Vincent 's Institute , but had to get used to the priests dispensing corporal punishment on a regular basis . Because of his small stature , Harry was beaten by his classmates , being once kicked in the appendix and " left for dead " . His mother had no option but to transfer him elsewhere .

Harry became interested in science fiction and read comics by candlelight ( as the house had no electricity ) , eventually joining the Liverpool Science Fiction Society . At the age of 13 , he produced his own science fiction fanzine , Biped , using a Gestetner machine to print 60 copies . His pen friend at the time was Michael Moorcock ; the writer of science fiction and fantasy novels . After winning a scholarship to the Junior School of Art in Gambier Terrace , Liverpool , Harry started his first school newspaper , Premier .

= = Liverpool College of Art = =

At the age of 16 , Harry obtained a place at Liverpool 's College of Art at 68 Hope Street . After studying typography and page layouts , he borrowed the college 's duplicating machine and published a newspaper called Jazz in 1958 , which reported concerts at the Liverpool Jazz Society club , the Temple Jazz Club and the Cavern Club . He also worked as assistant editor on University of Liverpool 's charity magazine , Pantosphinx , and on a music newsletter for Frank Hessy 's musical instruments store called Frank Comments . The title was suggested by the owner , Frank Hesselberg , as a play on his own comments , but was abandoned after a few issues .

Harry received a National Diploma in design while at the Liverpool Art College and became the first student in the new Graphic Design course , eventually winning a Senior City Art Scholarship . Harry maintained that students at art college should be bohemian in their thoughts and actions and not like

the " dilettantes and dabblers " , whom Harry disapproved of for wearing duffle coats and turtle neck sweaters . One of the college 's artists and teachers , Arthur Ballard , later stated that Harry and Sutcliffe both overshadowed Lennon at college , explaining that they were both " extremely well educated , and very eager for information " . Harry organised a students ' film society , where he showed Orphee , by Jean Cocteau and Salvador Dalí , and Luis Buñuel 's , L 'Age d 'Or .

Meeting Lennon had been a shock for Harry , as Lennon often dressed like a Teddy boy , and was a disruptive influence at the college . Despite his misgivings about Lennon , Harry introduced him to Sutcliffe , who was a small , softly spoken and shy student , who had painted a portrait of Harry . The three often spent time together at the Ye Cracke pub in Rice Street , or on the top floor of the Jacaranda club ( run by Williams , who later managed the Beatles ) . Harry met his then 16 year old future wife to be , Virginia Sowry , at the club . Harry , Lennon , Sutcliffe and Rod Murray saw the poet Royston Ellis at Liverpool University in June 1960 . Having been disappointed with Ellis ' performance , Harry proposed the idea that they should call the assembled quartet of friends the Dissenters , and make Liverpool famous : Sutcliffe and Murray with their paintings , Harry 's writing and Lennon 's music .

= = = Music and journalism = = =

A fellow student , John Ashcroft , introduced Harry to rock ' n ' roll records , and the members of Rory Storm & the Hurricanes and Cass & the Cassanovas . Harry carried notebooks with him , collecting information about the local groups , once writing to the Daily Mail : " Liverpool is like New Orleans at the turn of the century , but with rock ' n ' roll instead of jazz " . He also wrote to the Liverpool Echo about the emerging Liverpool music scene , but neither paper was interested in stories about music that was popular with teenagers . The classified ads in the Liverpool Echo for local groups were always under the heading of Jazz , but the paper refused to change this policy , despite pleas from the promoters and groups who actually paid for them . Harry planned to produce a jazz newspaper called Storyville / 52nd Street and contacted Sam Leach , the owner of a club called Storyville . Leach promised to fund the newspaper , but failed to turn up for three meetings with Harry , leaving him no other option but to find another investor . Harry thought starting a fortnightly newspaper covering Liverpool 's rock ' n ' roll music scene would be more successful , and would differ from national music newspapers such as the New Musical Express and the Melody Maker , which only wrote articles about current chart hits and artists .

= = Mersey Beat = =

Photographer Dick Matthews , a friend from the Jacaranda , heard about Harry 's problems with Leach and introduced Harry to a local civil servant , Jim Anderson , who lent Harry £ 50 . This enabled Harry to found Mersey Beat in 1961 . Harry decided to publish the newspaper every two weeks , covering the music scene in Liverpool , Wirral , Birkenhead , New Brighton , Crosby and Southport , as well as Warrington , Widnes and Runcorn . He thought up the name Mersey Beat by thinking about a policeman 's ' beat ' ( the area of duty ) , which had nothing to do with a musical beat . Virginia gave up her accountancy / comptometer operator job at Woolworth 's and worked full time for £ 2 @ 10 / - a week ( also contributing a Mersey Roundabout article ) , while Harry lived on his Senior City Art Scholarship funding . Matthews photographed groups , while Anderson found a small attic office for £ 5 a week above David Land 's wine merchant 's shop at 81a Renshaw Street , Liverpool . Anderson and Matthews helped with the move to the new office , with Anderson providing a desk , chair and an Olivetti typewriter .

Harry asked printer James E. James ( who had printed Frank Comments ) , if he could borrow the printing blocks he used for photos , as they were too expensive for the fledgling company at the time . Harry also borrowed blocks from the Widnes Weekly News , Pantosphinx and local cinemas , but contributed to charities by printing free charity advertisements at the side of the front cover page . After taking Virginia home to Bowring Park in the evening , Harry would often return to the office and work throughout the night , pausing only to go to the Pier Head to buy a cup of tea and a hot pie at

four in the morning . Virginia 's parents helped the paper during this time , as they paid for classified ads , and arranged for Harry and his future wife 's first photographs together .

= = = The first issue = = =

Splitting the price of the newspaper ( three pence ) , with retailers , Harry arranged for three major wholesalers , W.H. Smith , Blackburn 's and Conlan 's , to sell Mersey Beat . Harry personally delivered copies to more than 20 newsagents as well as to local venues and musical instrument and record stores , such as Cramer & Lea , Rushworth & Draper and Cranes . The paper released its first edition on 6 July 1961 , selling out all 5 @,@ 000 copies . The paper 's circulation increased rapidly as Harry started featuring stories about groups in Manchester , Birmingham , Sheffield and Newcastle , with circulation growing to 75 @,@ 000 . As the newspaper 's sales rose , it became known as the " Teenagers Bible " . Local groups were soon being called " beat groups " , and venues started advertising concerts as " Beat Sessions " . With circulation rising , the paper 's offices were moved downstairs to a larger two @-@ roomed office . The Cavern Club 's doorman , Pat ( Paddy ) Delaney , was employed to deliver copies , a secretary , Pat Finn , was hired , as well as Raymond Caine to promote advertising space ,

Harry later said : " The newspapers , television , theatres and radio were all run by people of a different generation who had no idea of what youngsters wanted . For decades they had manipulated and controlled them . Suddenly , there was an awareness of being young , and young people wanted their own styles and their own music , just at the time they were beginning to earn money , which gave them the spending power . Mersey Beat was their voice , it was a paper for them , crammed with photos and information about their own groups , which is why it also began to appeal to youngsters throughout Britain as its coverage extended to other areas . " Because of the employment situation in Liverpool at the time , The Daily Worker newspaper denounced the enthusiasm of younger people in Liverpool by saying " The Mersey Sound is the sound of 30 @,@ 000 people on the dole . "

= = = Liverpool groups = = =

Between 1958 and 1964 , the Merseyside area had about 500 different groups , which were constantly forming and breaking up , with an average of about 350 groups playing concerts on a regular basis . In 1961 , Harry and the Cavern Club 's DJ , Bob Wooler , compiled a list of groups that they had personally heard of , which had almost 300 names . In 1962 , Mersey Beat held a poll to find out who was the most popular Merseyside group . When the votes were counted , Rory Storm & the Hurricanes were in first place , but after looking through the postal votes again , Harry noticed that forty votes were all written in green ink , in the same handwriting , and from the same area of Liverpool , so the dubious votes were declared void . This was suspected to have been Storm himself , but Harry had no idea that the Beatles had done exactly the same thing .

The results were announced on 4 January 1962 , with the Beatles in first place . The results were printed in issue 13 of Mersey Beat on 4 January 1962 , with the front page announcing , " Beatles Top Poll ! " Such was the popularity of the poll , Rushworth 's music store manager , Bob Hobbs , presented Lennon and George Harrison with new guitars . At the time , many groups in Liverpool complained to Harry that his newspaper should be called Mersey Beatles , as he featured them so often .

Harry asked a local singer , Priscilla White , to contribute a fashion column after writing an article called " Swinging Cilla " , in which he wrote , " Cilla Black is a Liverpool girl who is starting out on the road to fame . " Harry 's mistake came about because he could not remember her surname ( which he knew was a colour ) , but White decided to keep it as a stage name . Two years later Harry arranged for her to sing for Epstein at the Blue Angel club , leading to a management contract .

In late 1962 , Harry wrote an article called " Take a look up North " , asking for A & R men from London to travel up to Liverpool and see what was really happening with the music scene , but not one record company sent an A & R representative to Liverpool . Journalist Nancy Spain once wrote

an article for the News of the World newspaper , stating that " Bill and Virginia Harry were Mr. & Mrs. Mersey Beat " , and when Bob Dylan visited Liverpool to appear at the Odeon , he specifically asked for Harry to act as his guide to the city .

= = = The Beatles and Brian Epstein = = =

Harry often heard Lennon , McCartney and Harrison rehearsing or playing in the Art College canteen in the basement , but after Sutcliffe joined the Quarrymen , Harry complained that Sutcliffe should be concentrating on art and not music , as he thought he was a competent , but not brilliant bassist . As Harry and Sutcliffe were members of the Liverpool College of Art 's Student Union committee , they put forward the idea that the college should buy its own P.A. system for college dances , which the Quarrymen often played at , but the equipment would later be appropriated by the group and taken to Hamburg . As late as 7 March 1962 , the Students ' Union sent Pete Mackey to ask Lennon to either return the equipment or pay for it , but Lennon told him it had been sold in Hamburg . Harry asked Lennon to write a short biography of the Beatles for the first issue of Mersey Beat , which Harry titled , " Being a Short Diversion on the Dubious Origins of Beatles , Translated From the [ sic ] John Lennon " :

Lennon was very grateful that Harry printed his ' Dubious Origins ' piece without editing it and later gave Harry a large collection of drawings , poems and stories ( approximately 250 ) , telling Harry he was free to publish whatever he liked ( under the pseudonym of " Beatcomber " , which was appropriated from a Daily Express column , Beachcomber ) .

Harry convinced Epstein to sell 12 copies of the first Mersey Beat newspaper at his North End Music Stores ( NEMS ) , which sold out in one day , resulting in Epstein having to order more copies . After ordering and selling 144 copies of the second issue , Epstein invited Harry to his office for a glass of sherry , proposing the idea that he ( Epstein ) , should write a record review column . It was published in the third issue on 3 August 1961 , entitled " Stop the World ? And Listen To Everything in It : Brian Epstein of NEMS " . Epstein saw numerous posters around Liverpool advertising concerts by the Beatles as well as in the second issue of Mersey Beat , which had " Beatles sign Recording Contract ! " on the front cover , as the Beatles had recorded the " My Bonnie " single with Tony Sheridan in Germany . Some months after its release , Epstein supposedly ( as stated in his biography ) , asked his assistant Alistair Taylor about the single , because a customer , one Raymond Jones , had asked Epstein for the single on 28 October 1961 , which made Epstein curious about the group . Harry and McCartney repudiated this story , as Harry had been talking to Epstein about the Beatles for a long time ( being the group he promoted the most in Mersey Beat ) , and by McCartney saying , " Brian [ Epstein ] knew perfectly well who the Beatles were , they were on the front page of the second issue of Mersey Beat . "

The Beatles were due to perform a lunchtime concert at the Cavern Club on 9 November 1961 , not far from Epstein 's NEMS store . Epstein asked Harry to arrange for him and Taylor to watch the Beatles perform without queuing at the door . Harry phoned the owner , Ray McFall , who said he would inform the doorman on the day , Delaney , to let Epstein in . Epstein and Taylor bypassed the line of fans at the door and heard a welcome message announced over the club 's public @-@ address system by Wooler : " We have someone rather famous in the audience today , Mr. Brian Epstein , the owner of NEMS ... "

Lennon had once given Harry a collection of photos taken in Hamburg , showing Lennon standing on the Reeperbahn reading a newspaper and wearing nothing but his underpants , performing on stage with a toilet seat around his neck , and one of McCartney sitting on a toilet . After Epstein became the Beatles ' manager , Lennon rushed into Harry 's office and asked for them back , saying , " Brian [ Epstein ] insists I 've got to get them back ? the pictures , everything you 've got . I must take it all with me now . " When Epstein finally secured a recording contract with EMI , he sent Harry a telegram from London to the Mersey Beat office to announce the news .

= = = The last issues and London = = =

On 13 September 1964 , Epstein approached Harry to create a national music paper , so Harry coined the name Music Echo , and gradually merged Mersey Beat into it . Epstein had promised Harry full editorial control , but then hired a female press officer in London to write a fashion column and a D.J. to write a gossip column , without informing Harry of his intentions , leaving Harry with no other option but to resign . The paper subsequently ran into financial problems , and Epstein had to merge it with another paper , becoming the Disc & Music Echo . When Harry and his wife moved to London in 1966 , he was already contributing a column for the magazine Weekend and also for the teen magazines Marilyn and Valentine . He then became the feature writer , news editor and columnist for Record Mirror ( using various pseudonyms such as ' Brenda Tarry ' and ' David Berglas ' ) , and wrote features for Music Now ( under the name of Nick Blaine ) for Record Retailer .

= = P.R. and present = =

Harry and his wife moved to London in 1966 and was engaged as a public relations ( P.R. ) for the Kinks and the Hollies . During the next 18 years he was the P.R. to many artists , including Pink Floyd , Jethro Tull , Procol Harum , David Bowie , Led Zeppelin , the Beach Boys , Clouds , Ten Years After , Free , Mott the Hoople , the Pretty Things , Christine Perfect , Supertramp , Hot Chocolate , Suzi Quatro and Kim Wilde . During his time working as a press officer , Harry started a monthly magazine called Tracks , which reported the latest album releases , and another magazine , Idols : 20th Century Legends , which ran for 37 issues , from 1988 to 1991 . Harry also compiled a 34 @-@ track compilation , Mersey Beat , for Parlophone records , which was released on 31 October 1983 .

Harry was presented with a gold award for a ' Lifetime Achievement in Music ' by the British Academy of Songwriters , Composers and Authors ( BASCA ) in 1994 , has taken part in over 350 international television / radio shows , and was hired by Rediffusion to be programme assistant for the documentary Beat City . He was a programme assistant for the BBC 's Everyman documentary about Lennon : A Day in the Life , and The Story of Mersey Beat . The British Council asked him to represent them in Hong Kong , promoting the Beatles . Mersey Beat returned to publication in August 2009 with a 24 @-@ page special issue to celebrate the Liverpool International Beatle Week . He was an Associate Producer of the film The City That Rocked the World . Harry and Virginia have a son , Sean Harry , who is an adult movie actor , director , and producer .

= = Books written or co @-@ written by Bill Harry = =

Harry once commented on his numerous books : " The hundreds of interviews I have conducted over the past 40 years have been utilised . I have always been a hoarder of clippings in addition to collecting magazines , fanzines , newspapers and books . I 'll never tire of it . "

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