

= Neil Aspinall =

Neil Stanley Aspinall (13 October 1941 ? 24 March 2008) was a Welsh @-@ born English music industry executive . A school friend of Paul McCartney and George Harrison , he went on to head the Beatles ' company Apple Corps .

The Beatles employed Aspinall as their road manager and personal assistant , which included driving his old Commer van to and from shows , both day and night . After Mal Evans started work for the Beatles , Aspinall was promoted to become their personal assistant , later becoming chief executive of their company , Apple Corps .

On behalf of Apple , Aspinall was involved in notable court cases against Allen Klein , EMI and Apple Computer . He supervised the marketing of music , videos and merchandising , as well being a director of Standby Films , which was run from his home in Twickenham , London . On 10 April 2007 , Aspinall retired from Apple Corps and died of lung cancer in New York in 2008 .

= = Early life = =

Aspinall was born in Prestatyn , North Wales , after his mother had been evacuated from the family home in Liverpool because of the air @-@ raids on Liverpool during the Second World War , while Aspinall 's father was away at sea with the Royal Navy . Aspinall and his mother returned to Liverpool later in 1942 after the bombing had subsided . Aspinall later attended West Derby School , where he passed his 11 @-@ Plus exams . When he was twelve years old , Aspinall gained a place at the Liverpool Institute in Mount Street , and was in the same class as Paul McCartney for English and Art lessons .

Aspinall later commented about his first meeting with George Harrison , who also attended the Liverpool Institute : " My first encounter with George was behind the school 's air @-@ raid shelters . This great mass of shaggy hair loomed up and an out @-@ of @-@ breath voice requested a quick drag of my Woodbine . It was one of the first cigarettes either of us had smoked . We spluttered our way through it bravely but gleefully . After that the three of us did lots of ridiculous things together By the time we were ready to take the GCE exams we added John Lennon to our ' Mad Lad ' gang . He was doing his first term at Liverpool College of Art which overlooks the Liverpool Institute playground and we all got together in a students coffee bar at lunchtime . " Aspinall took nine GCEs at the Institute and passed eight of them , but failed the French exam . He left school in July 1959 , and studied accountancy . Aspinall worked for a Liverpool company for two years , receiving a wage of £ 2 @-@ 10s ? 0d . (£ 2 @-@ 50 decimal equivalent) per week as a trainee accountant .

= = The Beatles = =

The Beatles played at the opening of the Casbah Coffee Club on 29 August 1959 , which was in the cellar of Mona Best 's house . Aspinall later rented a room in the house and became very good friends with then @-@ Beatle Pete Best . The Beatles had previously used public transport to get to local gigs , but by February 1961 , they were playing two or three concerts per night at different locations and needed someone to drive them . Best asked Aspinall to be a part @-@ time road manager for the band , so Aspinall bought an " old , grey and maroon Commer van " for £ 80 , and charged each of the group five shillings (25p) per concert . Harrison later said : " Our early van became the centre of attention every time it pulled up . It was brush @-@ painted red and grey and from head to foot was covered in graffiti ? girls ' names , and things like ' I love you , John ' . It looked interesting , but the moment anybody saw it they would feel free to write all over it . ? The Beatles returned from their second trip to Hamburg in July 1961 , and Aspinall left his job to become their permanent road manager , as he was earning more money driving them around than he was earning by being an accountant .

The Beatles were driven down to London by Aspinall on New Year 's Eve in 1961 , for the now @-@ famous Decca audition , but Aspinall lost his way , and the trip took ten hours . They arrived at

10 o'clock at night , and John Lennon said that they arrived " just in time to see the drunks jumping in the Trafalgar Square fountains . " In 1963 , he was joined by Mal Evans , who also helped set up the Beatles ' equipment (and acted as a bodyguard) which freed Aspinall to concentrate on other duties , like arranging appointments or buying things for them , such as suits , boots , meals , or drinks .

Best was sacked from the Beatles on 16 August 1962 , by manager Brian Epstein acting on behalf of Lennon , McCartney and Harrison . Accounts vary of Aspinall during this event . According to MerseyBeat editor Bill Harry , Aspinall was waiting downstairs in Epstein 's NEMS record shop , and was the first one to talk to the by then ex @-@ Beatle in the Grapes pub , across from the Cavern . Aspinall was furious and said that he would stop working for the band as well , but Best strongly advised him not to . Aspinall asked McCartney and Lennon at the next concert why they had fired Best and was told , " It ? s got nothing to do with you . You ? re only the driver . " However , in a 2007 interview , Aspinall provided Beatles historian Mark Lewisohn with a distinctly different version of events , saying that he was physically present when Epstein sacked Best , that he told Best unprompted that he planned to continue working for the band , and that on his first subsequent encounter with the other band members , their first question to him was how Best had taken being sacked . At any rate , Aspinall stayed with the band , but he ended his affair with Best 's mother , a relationship that had led to the birth of baby Vincent " Roag " Best . Aspinall denied the story for years before publicly acknowledging that he was indeed Roag 's father .

Aspinall worked closely with Epstein , who provided weekly notes for Aspinall to give to the group 's stage act , their concert appearances , and the fees they would receive . The Beatles had to travel in Aspinall 's van along with their equipment , but British roads in the early 1960s were notoriously pot @-@ holed and slow to navigate . Ringo Starr remembered that the travelling never seemed to stop during the early tours of Britain in Aspinall 's van , as they would be driven up and down Great Britain with one of the group in the passenger seat , but with the other three on a hard bench seat in the back .

= = = Personal assistant = = =

Aspinall 's job as personal assistant consisted of driving to concerts and meetings , but mostly meant just being there whenever someone needed something . Aspinall went on the first trip to America , and when George Harrison became ill with a fever and had a temperature of 102 ° F (39 ° C) , he was ordered to stay in bed , so Aspinall stood in for him for The Ed Sullivan Show camera rehearsals . ; however , Harrison was back in time for the final shooting . Before the cover of Sgt. Pepper 's could be completed by Peter Blake , Aspinall was sent out to find photographs of all of the people that were to be shown on the front cover . Aspinall suggested the idea of Sergeant Pepper being the compere , who would introduce the group , and the reprise of the title song near the end of the album .

After recording sessions , Lennon , Harrison and Starr would be chauffeured back to their houses in the ' stockbroker belt ' of Southern England , but Aspinall would often drive McCartney and Evans in an Austin Princess limousine to a late @-@ night club to eat . The Bag O 'Nails nightclub was one of their favourites , at 8 Kingly Street in Soho , London , as it also presented live music . They would eat steak , chips and mushy peas , but Aspinall would always take out a torch from his pocket (in the dimly lit club) to inspect the portions on each of their plates . This was to make sure that the portions were exactly as they had ordered , which McCartney always found amusing . Whilst Harrison , McCartney and Starr passed their driving tests , Lennon didn 't pass his driving test until 1965 ; however , he rarely drove himself due to being a notoriously bad driver by poorly navigating roads and failing to notice other traffic , and as a result , he was usually chauffeured to and from recording sessions and appointments by his own personal chauffeur .

= = = Musical contributions = = =

Although not a musician , Aspinall made minor contributions to a handful of the Beatles ' recordings

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== = Manager == =

Following the death of Epstein in August 1967 , there was a vacuum in the management of the Beatles ' affairs . The Beatles asked Aspinall to take over the management of Apple Corps in 1968 , which had been founded in April of the same year . Aspinall later said that he only accepted the position after being asked , but did not want to do it full @-@ time , and would only do it " until they found somebody else . " George Martin (The Beatles ' record producer) was against the idea , as he thought that Aspinall did not have the necessary social qualifications to be able to speak to the upper class executives at EMI . Aspinall accompanied McCartney and Lennon to New York on 11 May 1968 , to announce the formation of Apple to the American Media . Apple Corps had five divisions : electronics , film , publishing , records and retailing . Aspinall later spoke of the Beatles ' business arrangements :

We did not have one single piece of paper . No contracts . The lawyer , the accountants and Brian , whoever , had that . The Beatles had been given copies of various contracts , maybe , I don 't know . I didn 't know what the [recording] contract was with EMI , or with the film people or the publishers or anything at all . So it was a case of building up a filing system , find out what was going on while we were trying to continue doing something .

Derek Taylor (Apple 's press officer) said that Aspinall hated being stuck in the Apple office (at 3 Savile Row) all through the recording of The White Album and Let It Be album . Life in the Apple office , however , was improved by having a chef and various assistants at hand : " The liquor bill was £ 600 per month and the food bill was close to that . " This was mostly due to Aspinall 's and Peter Brown 's four @-@ course lunches with expensive wines in the dining room at Apple . After Allen Klein was brought in to be the Beatles ' manager Aspinall was dismissed , but reinstated after complaints from the group , and because Klein realised that Aspinall was no threat to his control of the company . Klein lost a High Court action in 1971 (started by McCartney) but lawsuits between Klein and Apple kept Aspinall busy until 1977 .

== = Apple Corps executive == =

In 1978 , Aspinall instigated the first of three lawsuits on behalf of Apple Corps against Apple Computer , Inc . (now known as Apple , Inc .) for trademark infringement . The first suit settled in 1981 with an amount of £ 41 @,@ 000 being paid to Apple by Apple Computer . As a condition of the settlement , Apple Computer was allowed to use its logo as long as it did not enter the music business . The second suit with Apple Computer arose in 1989 , when Apple Corps sued Apple Computer over its Apple IIGS (which included a professional synthesiser chip) claiming violation of the 1981 settlement agreement . In 1991 , a settlement of £ 13 @.@ 5 million was reached . McCartney praised Aspinall for trademarking the Apple name worldwide , and called Aspinall " Mr. X " in the Apple Corps organisation .

In September 2003 , Apple Computer , Inc. was again sued by Apple Corps , this time for the introduction of the iTunes Music Store and the iPod , which Aspinall and Apple Corps believed was a violation of the previous agreement for Apple Computer to not distribute music . The trial began on 27 March 2006 in the UK , and ended on 8 May 2006 in a victory for Apple Computer ; the judge ruled the company 's iTunes Music Store did not infringe on the trademark of Apple Corps . Aspinall was also involved in several court cases in which Apple Corps took action against EMI :

We have tried to reach a settlement through good faith negotiations and regret that our efforts have been in vain . Despite very clear provisions in our contracts , EMI persist in ignoring their obligations and duty to account fairly and with transparency . The Beatles and Apple are , once again , left with no choice but to sue EMI .

In the early 1990s , Aspinall became the executive producer for The Beatles Anthology ; he ,

producer George Martin , and press officer Derek Taylor are the only non @-@ Beatles seen in new footage for the documentary . He continued to advise the surviving Beatles , as well as Lennon 's and Harrison 's estates , and to supervise the marketing of music , music videos and merchandising . On 10 April 2007 , it was announced by Apple that Aspinall had " decided to move on " and Jeff Jones ? a longtime VP at Sony Legacy ? was hired as CEO to oversee the back @-@ catalogue . One of Aspinall 's final tasks at Apple was to oversee the remastering of The Beatles ' back @-@ catalogue for an anticipated 2008 release .

= = Personal life and death = =

In 1961 and 1962 , Aspinall had become good friends with Pete Best and subsequently rented a room in the house where Best lived with his parents . During one of the extended business trips of Best 's father , the 19 @-@ year @-@ old Aspinall became romantically involved with Best 's mother , Mona Best , who was 17 years his senior . As a result , during this period , Aspinall fathered a child by Mona : Vincent " Roag " Best . Roag Best was born in late July 1962 , and just three weeks later , on 16 August 1962 , Best was dismissed from the Beatles .

On 30 August 1968 , Aspinall married Suzy Ornstein at the Chelsea Register Office , London , with Magic Alex as best man . McCartney , Starr and his wife attended , and were also at a surprise party held later in the King 's Road , London . Suzy Aspinall is the daughter of Bud Ornstein , the late chief executive of United Artists Pictures (UK) . Aspinall had met her during 1964 / 1965 when her father was the United Artists representative overseeing the production of the first two Beatles ' films : A Hard Day 's Night and Help ! . They went on to have four children : daughters Gayla , Dhara , Mandy and son Julian . As well as his work for Apple Corps , Aspinall and his wife were the sole directors of their own Standby Films Ltd. company , which is run from their home in Twickenham , London . In 1999 , Standby Films released a film about Jimi Hendrix , called Hendrix : Band of Gypsies .

Aspinall died of lung cancer in New York City in 2008 . His funeral was at the Church of St Mary the Virgin in Twickenham . Stella McCartney , Yoko Ono , Barbara Bach (wife of Starr) , George Martin , Pete Best and Pete Townshend attended the funeral , with Townshend playing Bob Dylan 's " Mr. Tambourine Man " as a tribute . The private service was followed by Aspinall 's burial at Teddington Cemetery . Aspinall left a sum of nearly £ 7 million in his will in a trust , with the income going to Suzy , his wife of 40 years . After her death it will be inherited by his five children : Roag , Gayla , Dhara , Julian and Mandy Aspinall .