

Easton, Bethany (2023) 'Reatlemania': new fan opportunities through Paul McCartney's solo activities between 2018 and 2022. *Journal of Beatles Studies*, 2023 (Spring). pp. 41-64.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/7304/>

*Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.*

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

**provided that**

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
  - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

**You may not**

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing [insight@cumbria.ac.uk](mailto:insight@cumbria.ac.uk).

# 'Reatlemania'

## New fan opportunities through Paul McCartney's solo activities between 2018 and 2022

Bethany Easton  
*University of Cumbria, UK*  
*bethany.easton@cumbria.ac.uk*

**Abstract:** This article considers the re-emergence of Beatles fandom, here labelled 'Reatlemania', in the past five years, galvanized in particular through Paul McCartney's solo material and promotional events. Since their dissolution in 1970, a number of significant media campaigns have occurred that have invigorated a posthumous market and interest in the Beatles. These include those focused on the CD releases of original vinyl material in the 1980s and *The Beatles Anthology* TV series, book and compilations in the 1990s. Most recently, McCartney's activities and promotional events between 2018 and 2022 have been key in creating a resurgence in popularity. McCartney's ongoing career continues to be linked with the Beatles' legacy he helped create and has continued to curate. This legacy offers newer generations novel ways to access the group and be a part of twenty-first-century Beatles fan activity. This article argues that through McCartney's active role in particular, Beatles fans are given opportunities for intimate encounters and to emulate the experiences of their first-generation antecedents during 1960s Beatlemania.

**Keywords:** Beatles, Reatlemania, Liverpool, Paul McCartney, fandom

Although a variety of Beatles content has been released since their breakup, this article focuses on Paul McCartney's continued publication of new material and involvement in events in the public eye over the last five years. I argue that these activities facilitate

contemporary Beatles fandom. The substantial amount of content release and promotional events that McCartney was involved in between 2018 and 2022 is in stark contrast to the more isolated moments in earlier Beatles' history. These include the retrospective *Beatles Anthology* (1995), a key event that reviewed and continued the Beatles' legacy, consolidating their relevance for the twenty-first century. These events should continue to be explored as they offer an understanding of contemporary consumption of the group, of fandom and of the popularity of the Beatles at different periods. However, this article argues that McCartney's creation of new content and related promotional events starting in the summer of 2018 were a catalyst in invigorating a form of contemporary Beatlemania, the name given to the highly visible and passionate responses to the band in the 1960s. In this article, I suggest how this twenty-first-century form and resurgence of Beatlemania, or 'Reatlemania' as I have termed it, is a renaissance that stems from McCartney's continuing Beatles' legacy.

Key McCartney promotional events from 2018 will be explored, including the visit to his childhood home presented in the 'Carpool Karaoke' segment of *The Late Late Show with James Corden* (first broadcast 21 June 2018), and the intimate gig at the historic Liverpool Beatles site, the Cavern, on 26 July 2018. Through an examination of prominent events between 2018 and 2022, this article highlights how the cultural value of the Beatles has been furthered by McCartney's contemporary creative projects, and how this demonstrates Reatlemania. From the release of McCartney's picture book *Hey Granddude!* (2019) to Peter Jackson's documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back* (2021), I argue that these contributed to a resurgence of Beatles interest, of general consumption and of committed fandom. To understand this period and process, I draw on and explore my own role in and experience of these events, as a form of auto-ethnography. First, this article explores ethnography and auto-ethnography, discussing its usefulness in fan research. There follows an examination of the Beatles' legacy and what the term Reatlemania means within Beatles fandom. The article then discusses several key McCartney promotional events from the past five years.

## Ethnography

The ethnographic method is often utilized to give insight into fan activity and observe fans who are 'engaged in meaningful action' (Pack 2020: 30). This article utilizes observation and digital ethnography of other Beatles fans alongside my personal experiences, using a form of auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnographic approaches are useful when studying fandom as they allow us to explore individual fan experiences (Sandvoss 2005), noting our own involvement and analysing it in a wider context of practice. However, as auto-ethnography focuses on an analysis of the self, there are objections to its subjective limitations (Garner 2018). Yet it is a worthwhile method, as by exploring our own fandom and the practices we undertake as fans, we can develop insights into wider fan identities (Hills 2002).

In tandem with my fandom, I was also a part of the Beatles heritage industry in Liverpool, which gave me a unique perspective from which to view fans' reactions and to reflect on my own role and responses as cultural intermediary and consumer. My role as a locum custodian of McCartney's childhood home, owned by the National Trust, reaffirmed my insight into the Beatles' continuing legacy. As an academic and fan, or 'Aca-Fan' (Jenkins 2013), I have first-hand experience of both studying and engaging with the Beatles. In recent research, there has been discussion of the utility of this label, questioning, for instance, whether academics exploring Shakespeare would need to address their own passion for his work in their research and teaching (Brooker et al. 2018). Yet when utilizing an ethnographic approach, 'it is important to acknowledge the personal bias and involvement as fans and how that affects our choices, and opinions' (Busse 2018: 14). Alongside detailing his own fan status, Garner (2018: 92) discusses how having a 'period of detachment' from personal fandom offers opportunities for the academic to explore it with a new perspective. As a teenager, I lost my initial interest in the Beatles and chose to follow other bands of the time in the 2000s: my own detachment period. This space allows further perspective as I now explore the Beatles

and McCartney through a renewed interest. Hence, when it comes to fandom, melding the personal with the academic is not without its issues, and these must be considered carefully. In this instance, it is important to be fully aware of my position as cultural worker, fan and researcher, exploring documents and sources that discuss the topic while utilizing my encounters and personal perspective to add depth to the research.

## The Beatles' legacy

With McCartney being highly active in recent years, there is a stark contrast between his status and that of John Lennon. Lennon's 1980 murder and its legacy still 'haunts our culture' (Elliott 1999: 4). Although Lennon has been dead for over forty years, due to his mediated persona and 'star' image he has been kept alive through nostalgia and the feeling of collective loss by Beatles fans, the music business and the Beatles industry. For McCartney, as a still active artist, the nostalgia remains but is changeable, as fans see McCartney ageing and adapting through his new content. McCartney has inherited the Beatles' legacy and this will continue to follow him for the rest of his career. As Roessner writes:

More than any of his bandmates, McCartney maintained the career of a relatively normal, though immensely wealthy, touring and recording musician. But he too remains acutely aware of the perils of his fame and the overwhelming shadow cast by his legacy. (2022: 266)

At every solo event McCartney undertakes, the legacy of the Beatles follows him, and fans flock in the hope of seeing him. This has not changed in 2023 as we can still see the Beatles' popularity.

As legacy recording artists, the Beatles are unparalleled in the digital ecosphere: still selling records (or 'album equivalents' as they are calculated today) at charting speed. They outsell most current artists and top the list of any legacy artist. (Rapolla 2022: 325)

This article explores McCartney's work in comparison to the less active position of the other remaining Beatle, Ringo Starr. Even

Starr himself in the 1970s was quoted as noting McCartney as highly driven:

McCartney has always been a doer. 'He used to be the one to get things moving,' Starr said after the band's break-up in 1970. More driven and more cautious than the others, he became a kind of parent and taskmaster. (Lynskey 2022)

As such a paternal and driving force, it is perhaps no wonder that McCartney has been gifted with, and chosen to carry, the Beatles' torch through his given inheritance of the group. 'By the 2020s McCartney and Starr, and to an extent the Lennon and Harrison estates, had established strong measures for preserving and continuing the legacy of the Beatles, through Apple' (Jones and Podrazik 2022: 87). McCartney continues this through his solo work and by undertaking events linked to them.

## Reatlemania

Beatles fandom is a popular topic in fan studies, with decades of research exploring the activities and attachments of the original audiences of the 1960s (Ehrenreich et al. 2001). Recent research has explored twenty-first-century Beatles audiences by delving into how modern listeners are accessing and responding to the group, and how contemporary fandoms are formed. From fan fiction (Mills 2021) to conventions (O'Toole 2021), Beatles fandom and opinions about it have been well documented, noting how first-generation Beatles fans now access the group and celebrate their fandom in new ways. Leonard comments that, 'regardless of age, fans continue to find new meaning in the music, approaching it with more life experience, wisdom and maturity as they've grown older' (2014: 265). Whether part of the original generation of listeners, or having discovered the band more recently, the availability of new Beatles material, mediations and experiences offers new ways of being a fan and revises the meaning of 'Beatlemania'. Connection with the Beatles is enabled via social media, such as McCartney's Instagram account, online fan channels and through new technologies of

circulation and consumption. These include Spotify and YouTube, which have supported re-releases of albums, such as *Revolver* in October 2022. The term Reatlemania, then, can be applied to these new opportunities for Beatles fandom, invigorated by new releases and McCartney's activities. Reatlemania denotes these continuing ways of experiencing fandom, including the enthusiasm generated in response to McCartney himself.

As a fan without first-hand experience of the height of Beatlemania in the 1960s, accessing twenty-first-century Beatles content and being part of the related tourist industry allowed me not only to actively engage in my own fandom but also to feel closer to the group. Accessing new related content via McCartney's solo work created an experience I imagined to be similar to that which the original 1960s fans would have had. First generations of fans such as my mother benefited from the opportunity to see the Beatles in person and attend public events. As a child, I would hear stories about my mother's time spent waiting outside Beatles haunts such as Abbey Road studios. To me this sounded thrilling, and yet we younger fans can only semi-replicate this experience for ourselves via McCartney's delivery of new content and attendance at events. What I witnessed both in person, in the media and online via fan discussions was a new form of Beatles fandom – a re-emergence of excitement and energy about McCartney and the Beatles. This was particularly evident in 2018, when McCartney undertook a series of promotional events for his upcoming album, *Egypt Station*, released on 7 September 2018.

### ***Egypt Station* promotional events**

The prompt for this article was my experience in 2018, when I witnessed a renewed excitement around the Beatles through Paul McCartney's multifaceted promotional campaign for his album *Egypt Station*. Although these events were organized to generate interest in McCartney's solo project, they also created an opportunity and platform for a media focus on the Beatles. On 9 June 2018 McCartney visited several Liverpool Beatles locations, including the

Cavern, to undertake promotional duties for the new album. The excitement generated in the city by the visit was evident on social media and in news articles, highlighting a continued fascination at the prospect of seeing McCartney. The *Liverpool Echo* newspaper published an article titled, 'Paul McCartney stuns fans with surprise Liverpool visit' (Mintz 2018) which included quotes from fans on social media about their excitement. This article is typical of many in which McCartney was described as the 'Beatles legend', reinforcing his legacy.

Although this article explores a range of significant moments from between 2018 and 2022, four key moments from 2018's *Egypt Station* promotional events will be considered, due to their quick succession and joint promotional nature. We start with McCartney's appearance on the US television programme *The Late Late Show with James Corden*, in the 'Carpool Karaoke' feature.

## 'Carpool Karaoke'

One of the most wide-reaching and impactful events during the *Egypt Station* promotional tour was McCartney's appearance on the American late-night television programme *The Late Late Show*, in which presenter James Corden has a popular segment titled 'Carpool Karaoke'. The format allowed for an informal interview, coupled with McCartney and Corden singing along to songs from McCartney's back catalogue as they drove around Beatles sites in Liverpool. For McCartney, this was a poignant moment as he visited familiar haunts, including his childhood home at 20 Forthlin Road. This was the first time McCartney had been inside the house since it had been taken over in 1995 by the National Trust, a UK conservation and heritage organization. Tourists flock to Liverpool each year to visit Beatles sites, and for many fans, the houses in which the band members grew up are an important part of their individual pilgrimages (Brocken 2016).

At the time of his appearance with Corden I worked at the property as a locum custodian and watched from behind the camera as McCartney took time to talk about his early years. The discussion



naturally fell to recollections of the other Beatles, showing Corden where they wrote some of their songs, and reflecting on their inspiration and the stories behind the writing process:

Describing how he and Lennon had played *She Loves You* to his father, McCartney recalls him asking if they could change the refrain to 'yes, yes, yes' because there were already too many Americanisms in common use. (Topping 2018)

In his telling, McCartney links his past with current heritage practice. This particular anecdote is familiar, and one that custodians regularly retell during the National Trust tour of Forthlin Road, a feature noted by academic observers such as Kruse (2005) in his article on visiting Beatles sites. It was evident that McCartney faced his own history and potential nostalgia during this visit along with a moment of recollection, as confirmed in an interview for *MOJO* magazine:

The main thing for me was just realising, wow, I lived like that. As a real human being, in Liverpool, with all the concerns of a normal person. And here I was, coming back, after that amazing tsunami of The Beatles. Here I was coming back to that same space. (quoted in Cameron 2018: 78)

McCartney effectively led the tour that day for a viewership watching via their televisions. In doing so he not only reinforced the importance of the Beatles tourist industry in Liverpool, but also reminisced nostalgically about the band's formative years with the audience. In this process, McCartney was akin to the tourists whose own visits to Liverpool's Beatles sites allows them a closeness to the group and the ability to bathe in their own nostalgia. As Fremaux and Fremaux comment:

If the tourists cannot spend time with their favourite musician or literary figure, spending time in their childhood home, the cottage where they worked, or their grave may allow for a sense of closeness or an understanding of their 'greatness'. (2013: 305)

In visiting the house for 'Carpool Karaoke', McCartney further cemented his legacy through this contemporary physical

connection, placing the National Trust tour firmly on the list of key heritage sites devoted to the group. Now Beatles fans visit the house not just because of the connection with the Beatles, but also because of McCartney's visit. Visitors can stand in the room in which McCartney recently played the piano, increasing their proximity to his presence and in turn to the Beatles. This allows an intimacy with the group, sharing the space that is now not just popular because of its Beatles history, but also because of its television appearance and role in contemporary McCartney mythology. At the time of the visit, when word spread across social media and local news channels, crowds of people congregated in the hope of seeing and indeed meeting McCartney. Witnessing this situation, I not only saw but also felt the excitement and desperation of fans to see him, speak to him and follow him on to the next stop. For newer fans like myself, experiencing events such as this one felt like a way of relieving the 1960s responses to the band, participating in a mode of Reatlemania, or a resurgent Beatlemania.

Brocken (2016) notes that a vital part of the Liverpool tourist industry is celebrating and maintaining the Beatles' legacy, and this now includes recognition of McCartney's 2018 visit. McCartney's 'Carpool Karaoke' appearance was extraordinarily popular, with over 69 million people having viewed it on YouTube (at the time of writing), and the event has become a talking point on the tours themselves. Having the video available for free on an international platform allows people to engage with their fandom wherever they are in the world. This ease of access to McCartney's content highlights how important technology has been in the development of Reatlemania.

## **Jarvis Cocker interviews McCartney**

McCartney also took part in a talk at the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts (LIPA) on 25 July 2018, in which he was interviewed by the English musician and radio presenter Jarvis Cocker. This was predominantly organized for the benefit of students attending LIPA,

which was co-founded by McCartney, who is Lead Patron, and stands on the site of the Liverpool Institute High School for Boys, where he received his secondary education. I had the good fortune of being near LIPA at the time of the event and went along to see what was happening. Having remembered my mother's stories about waiting outside Beatles haunts in the late 1960s, I found myself reflecting on how she must have felt at the excitement of seeing or speaking to a Beatle. This experience was shared with a group of other fans, all waiting for a glimpse of McCartney. Realizing that this was a unique and rare moment, I approached the door staff and enquired about the possibility of entering the event. I had never been so courageous before, often too worried about how I would be perceived. Yet the thought of my mother doing something similar in the 1960s pushed me and my confidence paid off; before I knew it, I was heading inside.

During the interview with Cocker, McCartney discussed his career, recalling intimate moments with the rest of the Beatles along with his own Elvis fandom animated by the space itself:

I remember sitting back there with a copy of a music newspaper, the *NME*, and seeing a picture of Elvis Presley and it was like ... wow! We were just enthralled with this guy and when we heard his records, that was it. (McCartney 2018)

In sharing anecdotes like this, McCartney makes public his inspirations and own fandom, which in turn have the potential to validate the experience of his fans. This is significant in terms of documenting McCartney's legacy as the moment of memory takes place. The talk was titled 'In Casual Conversation', inviting a closeness and intimacy between McCartney and his fans, particularly for those present. This is a perception reinforced when McCartney spoke candidly about personal yet well-known moments of his life, and many members of the audience showed their acknowledgement of these stories, nodding as though these were experiences that they themselves had witnessed.

During the conversation, McCartney merged the old with the new, connecting his Beatles past of the concept album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* with his own solo music:

I can't compete with that Taylor Swift thing. She's got better legs than me, marginally. So I thought maybe what I can do is just to do what used to be called a concept album. So it's an album that if you want to, you can listen all the way and it should roll through and take you somewhere so that's what I've done with this new one. (McCartney 2018)

McCartney merges the old with the contemporary, bringing the Beatles' legacy with him while moving forward. This echoes what fans have also done in the twenty-first century, as they bring their Beatles fandom and the legacy of the group with them when accessing McCartney's new content.

## The Cavern gig

On 26 July 2018 McCartney held an intimate gig at the Cavern venue, for which tickets were released to the general public. The original Cavern Club is famous as the site where the Beatles originally established their local reputation between 1961 and 1963. A local radio station announced that tickets were only available for collection at the Liverpool Echo Arena box office. Being close to the location, I rushed down to the arena in the hope of getting a ticket. Unfortunately, many others had done the same thing. I was struck by how many people wanted a ticket, and why they would go to such lengths. I spoke to other fans about their motivations for taking part in the rush for tickets, revealing a powerful drive to see one of the two remaining Beatles play in the historically significant and intimate Cavern – perhaps for the last time. The process of running across the city to try and purchase a ticket in person, rather than online, acted as an echo of the zealous fandom of the 1960s.

For a fan born after Lennon's death such occasions are few, yet when they arise they offer opportunities to experience a feeling similar to that of first-generation fans. In the documentation of this event, for instance, it is noticeable how reports referenced ideas of Beatlemania in the committed responses of fans to the chance

to see McCartney play. The BBC's article reporting on the gig, for example, stated:

Tom Gilchrist, 28, from Liverpool, started waiting outside the Cavern first thing after hearing rumours of the gig. But they jumped in a taxi when they heard they had to get to the arena. They joined others running to the box office, and saw one woman faint in the process. 'It was like Beatlemania all over again,' he said. (Youngs 2018)

Although I had not personally experienced the original Beatlemania, I can attest to the excitement this contemporary visit generated and how it resonated with accounts of the exhilaration felt by those first-generation fans in the sixties. Beatlemania appeared to have returned to Liverpool, and those of us engaged in it felt akin to the sixties' crowds running from location to location to catch a glimpse of the Beatles. In undertaking activities such as this, McCartney is using his current position and merging it with the excitement of the original Beatlemania days.

## **Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts graduation**

McCartney's attendance at the summer 2018 LIPA graduation on 27 July caused a large number of fans to gather outside. The fans held up their phones to capture the moment on camera, with a few holding out records in the hope of having them signed. A fan in the crowd recorded McCartney's arrival, evidencing the noise and excitement (Nelsonimp 2018). McCartney did not stop to sign anything, but he turned around to acknowledge fans and allow further photo opportunities. By choosing not to sign autographs at the graduation, we may infer that McCartney was pausing his usual engagement with the Beatles' legacy to keep the focus on the day. However, by just attending, fans felt an intimacy with the Beatles. I went along to observe this moment and took some photographs which captured the level of excitement still present for Beatles fans today (Figure 1).

In taking a photograph, I produced a form of digital ethnography. As Pink (2011: 1) notes, 'When ethnographers produce photographs



Figure 1. Paul McCartney arriving at LIPA graduation ceremony on 27 July 2018  
Photo by the author

or video, these images, as well as the experience of producing and discussing them, become part of their ethnographic knowledge.' The image enabled me to revisit memories and observations of the event and subsequently analyse it further to explore aspects that might have been missed without it. In this image, the range of records offered to McCartney for him to autograph evidences the wider Beatles fandom with which McCartney must necessarily engage. Although a Wings record was presented to him, the

majority of the records there that day were Beatles ones. As *Rolling Stone* magazine states, ‘First, he was a Beatle; he can’t change or deny that’ (Fong-Torres 1976), and fans continue to view McCartney’s newer solo ventures as something linked to his Beatles career. Speaking about Wings, Bumsted comments on how all of the Beatles’ solo work has arguably been unfairly assessed, ‘as they are compared to the Beatles or each other, thus re-evaluated by comparison to prior collaborative efforts’ (2021: 103). Their solo and post-Beatles’ efforts were compared, maybe unfairly, to their work with the Beatles, but they also benefited from the publicity, and inherited and carried over fans from that time into their solo projects.

If critics naturally compare the work of the solo Beatles to their prior work, it is no surprise that fans also do this. They bring their Beatles fandom with them when viewing McCartney, adapting their affection into a mutable fandom. This is, as Mills (2021) terms it, a form of progressive nostalgia, where Beatles fans look backwards at the Beatles in the 1960s while also looking forward by accessing McCartney’s new content and events. As one fan commenting on ‘Carpool Karaoke’ said, ‘It’s so weird... I wasn’t alive to listen to the Beatles but this video gives me a bitter sweet feeling. I really love the Beatles’ (Riley F 2021). This false nostalgia is prevalent in many twenty-first-century Beatles fans, myself included, as we missed out on the exciting, original Beatlemania. However, new content and access to McCartney offers fans a way of creating a new version of the original Beatlemania.

## ***Hey Grandude!* book release**

On 5 September 2019 McCartney published his children’s picture book *Hey Grandude!*, the book’s title loosely alluding to the song ‘Hey Jude’ (Empire 2019). Although this project is not directly linked with the Beatles, the band is consistently discussed in relation to this text in its reviews. One on Goodreads states, ‘You can definitely tell this was written by “the cute Beatle” because that’s what it is’ (Lexi 2019). Indeed, even the back cover implies

this legacy: 'From the legendary Paul McCartney – an action-packed picture-book adventure' (McCartney 2019a).

To promote the book, McCartney attended a signing at Waterstones in Piccadilly, London, on 6 September 2019, where crowds were waiting to get a glimpse of him. In a video from the singer's YouTube channel, fans can be seen wearing Beatles merchandise and shouting to get McCartney's attention. One fan even takes McCartney's hand and bows his head to it. Even at an event promoting a non-musical project with a very clear target audience, Beatles fans of all ages attended to meet and support McCartney, arguably not for his recent book, but rather for his legacy and to feel closer to him. Once again, this desire for closeness (Nikoghosyan 2015) is particularly important for those newer generations of fans who want to gain an intimacy with McCartney and in turn the Beatles.

Alongside older fans' desire to follow new Beatles content as driven by McCartney's active role, younger people can participate in a resurgence of fandom compelled by the closeness and intimacy offered by promotional events outlined here. Having missed the opportunity to see the Beatles live in the 1960s, a continued stream of Beatles releases and events offers younger fans the opportunity to participate in a twenty-first-century form of active Beatles fandom. Closeness to the Beatles is often discussed in terms of visiting Beatles locations in Liverpool, as stated by Young:

fans are given the opportunity to experience a circumstance that is out of the ordinary; as they have now had an encounter that can only be felt within a place directly connected to the Beatles. Thus for Beatles fans, a trip to Liverpool constitutes an act of pilgrimage. (2022: 10)

As one of the remaining Beatles, McCartney is a real-life human representation of a Beatles heritage site. Fans who see him can access the Beatles through him as though visiting a Beatles site. Few people are likely to have this experience of closeness, and in seeing McCartney they take part in a small-scale form of Beatlemania.



## ***The Beatles: Get Back* premiere**

New or updated content related to the Beatles continues to be released, which keeps existing fans engaged and generates new affiliations. A momentous event in 2021 was the release of Peter Jackson's documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back*. A revisiting of the 1970 film *Let It Be*, never-before-seen footage offered a new depiction of the making of the Beatles' album. As Campbell writes, 'In recent years, the Beatles' legacy has also continued to thrive because of intelligent and strategic marketing that has offered new ways to experience the Beatles, even for their longtime fans' (2021: 219). For newer fans, this enables the feeling of receiving content as if new, and understanding what it would have been like for first-generation followers. *Get Back* in particular caused much excitement, generating widespread discussion on social media which captured what a poignant moment it was for fans. For example:

'This is the "Holy Grail" of Beatles' movies... The one we've been waiting for decades. Not just "Let it be", but hours and hours of unseen footage, with pristine image and audio. Near paradise for a Beatle fan.' (PaulMacca15 2021)

On 16 November 2021 McCartney attended the London premiere of the documentary: once again a large crowd gathered. Here, he delivered a speech to introduce the film in which his continuing deep attachment to the Beatles was evidenced when he spoke about the rest of the group:

For me, it's lovely because it brings back to me my mates, my fallen heroes, who aren't here. It's great to see them on the film, to be able to study them. Cos normally I'm just, I'm just singing and I can't you know really study them but with this, I can. So erm it's fabulous for me. I love it. I love Peter, I love all the people involved. (McCartney 2021)

McCartney's voice appeared to break slightly with emotion, although he pivoted to become more light-hearted in tone and entertainment-focused, 'I love the Beatles, great group! So, thank

you and enjoy the show.' McCartney was highly aware of the legacy he carries in such moments, being the only Beatle in attendance and with the world watching. McCartney shares his pleasure at witnessing the film and being able to carry the Beatles' gauntlet for the rest of the group members.

## Glastonbury

In June 2022 McCartney headlined the Glastonbury music festival for the second time, just a week after his 80th birthday. This was in the form of a three-hour set which included a wealth of Beatles songs alongside his solo work. As ever with McCartney's sets, he offered the audience surprises including cameos from Bruce Springsteen and Dave Grohl. A moment that embodied the way in which McCartney has become a curator and conduit for the Beatles' heritage and fan experience was when he performed a duet with Lennon on 'I've Got a Feeling'. This performance was facilitated by using footage from the Beatles' rooftop concert recorded for *Let It Be* and technological advances that isolated Lennon's voice. McCartney celebrated this reunion by acknowledging, "I know it's virtual," telling the crowd, "But there I am singing with John again, we're back together" (quoted in Chilton 2022). In building an innovative and poignant Beatles moment into his set, McCartney further cemented his connection with the Beatles' legacy:

The digital duet between McCartney on stage and Lennon larger-than-life on the screen behind him was an explicit nod to fans who had recently been immersed in the eight-hour *Get Back* film. Among those fans: McCartney himself was both performer and an aficionado of the Beatles. (Jones and Podrazik 2022: 68)

Issues of authenticity come into view here regarding this fabrication, even as fans relish seeing McCartney in this Beatles guise, one more authentic than a tribute band or a recording. Audience members who were present described the joy at witnessing this event: "It was incredible. Musically it was up there with one of the most seminal moments of my life," said James Jack, 35 [...] a moment

he said was fulfilling a childhood dream' (Halliday et al. 2022). For other younger fans, witnessing this moment was the closest they would come to seeing the Beatles perform together:

'It was phenomenal,' said 25-year-old Sorcha Ingram. 'I had the time of my life. I've never experienced anything like it. I was obsessed with the Beatles when I was younger [...] It's a historic moment, a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.' (Halliday et al. 2022)

The Lennon duet gave fans the closest opportunity of experiencing what it must have been to see the band playing live together.

Contemporary rhetoric and hyperbole describing McCartney in such moments is repeatedly linked to the Beatles' legacy. To promote the Glastonbury concert on its website the BBC wrote of McCartney as a 'living legend' and 'one of the founding members of the Beatles [and] considered to be a national treasure and one of our most important British cultural icons' (BBC 2022). At Glastonbury, McCartney had an audience of 100,000, and nearly 4 million people tuned in on television, which highlights the power of his legacy and continued appeal. As Campbell (2021: 216) writes, 'One could argue that the Beatles now belong as much to the popular culture of 2021 as they did to that of their own decade of the '60s.'

## Conclusion

Between 2018 and 2022, Paul McCartney set out to promote several solo projects, causing a form of Reatlemania to occur, and evidencing the way in which the legacy of the Beatles follows him. McCartney does not appear to resent this legacy, and arguably it is this that has contributed to his long-lived solo success. In visiting Beatles sites such as Forthlin Road, McCartney undertook his own form of Beatles pilgrimage. While visiting the Beatles heritage sites, McCartney renewed the historical significance of the band. Through his visit, McCartney underwrote their relevance and added to the historical record by offering anecdotes and memories attached to them. In exploring twenty-first-century Beatles fandom

and Reatlemania, it becomes apparent how important nostalgia is for Beatles fans as they look for opportunities to journey back to Beatles moments. It is not only first-generation fans who revisit their Beatles memories but also newer fans who partake in a desired nostalgia. Without an original connection, there are substitutes and searches for authentic fandom. Beatles fans naturally do not want the legacy that McCartney and Starr carry with them to end, and while we still have these two remaining Beatles, we can hope that more Beatles content will exist through them. Yet as Jones and Podrazik note, "fewer and fewer people can claim to have "been there" at various moments in Beatles history. What might happen when none of the four Beatles remain to tell their story?" (2022: 85). We can but assume that the Beatles' legacy will continue through second-hand accounts and previous content which will be released or adapted.

In seeing McCartney, new generations of fans can imagine they are a part of traditional Beatlemania. Fans want to feel a part of what first-generation Beatles fans had – living through the Beatles' original content and history. Lacking this, second-, third- and fourth-generation fans are looking for their own ways of being a part of the Beatles' history and cementing their own fandom. Through McCartney moving forward in terms of his content while bringing his Beatles legacy with him, newer fans have the opportunity to construct a new version of Beatlemania, one that is not far removed from the original but incorporates the Internet as a platform for sharing excitement through social media and networking. What we can now ask ourselves is, what is next for new Beatles content and what will happen in terms of Reatlemania – will it happen again?

McCartney continues to explore other avenues in his career to which he brings his Beatles legacy. In June 2023 an exhibition of his original photography opened at the National Gallery, London. In *Photographs 1963–64: Eyes of the Storm* 'never-before-seen images offer a uniquely personal perspective on what it was like to be a "Beatle" at the start of "Beatlemania" – and adjusting from playing gigs on Liverpool stages, to performing to 73 million Americans on The Ed Sullivan Show' (National Portrait Gallery 2023). This shows

a further side to his talent and curation of the Beatles' legacy and promises to generate further Reatlemania. Reatlemania, then, is a term we can use to describe continuing ways of experiencing fandom. In expressing responses to McCartney, fans are taking part in Reatlemania. This is not something new per se, but rather a new way of being a fan in the time after the Beatles.

As twenty-first-century Beatles fans, we cannot attend the Cavern Club of the 1960s, see the Beatles on tour or wait outside Apple hoping to see the band. Now that only two members remain, that era of Beatles fandom is over. Instead, fans now construct a new form of Beatles fandom, one that merges the old and the new. This article has explored how this version of Reatlemania is different to those that came before, because of the scale of the promotional events and content that McCartney has been involved in over the past five years. The passing of time makes content and events more noteworthy, as fans are aware that McCartney will not be active forever; as he ages, content and promotional events are more poignant. For Beatles researchers it will be interesting to see how Reatlemania develops as McCartney continues to promote new ventures.

## Bibliography

- BBC (2022) 'Paul McCartney at Glastonbury', BBC, 25 June, <https://www.bbc.com/mediacentre/proginfo/2022/26/paul-mccartney-at-glastonbury-2022> (accessed 25 March 2023).
- Brocken, Mike (2016) *The Twenty-First Century Legacy of the Beatles: Liverpool and Popular Music Heritage Tourism* (Abingdon: Routledge).
- Brooker, Will, Mark Duffett and Karen Hellekson (2018) 'Fannish identities and scholarly responsibilities: a conversation', in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. M. A. Click and S. Scott (Abingdon: Routledge), 63–74.
- Bumsted, Allison (2021) 'Which side is this ex-Beatle on? A reassessment of the 1970s rock press' framing, interpretation, and consideration of Paul McCartney and Wings', in *Words, Music, and the Popular*:

- Palgrave Studies in Music and Literature*, ed. T. Gurke and S. Winnett (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), 87–107.
- Busse, Kristina (2018) 'The ethics of studying online fandom', in *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, ed. M. A. Click and S. Scott (Abingdon: Routledge), 9–17.
- Cameron, Keith (2018) 'Nobody does it better', *MOJO*, October: 68–80.
- Campbell, Kenneth (2021) 'The Beatles: today ... and tomorrow', in *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years*, ed. K. Womack and K. O'Toole (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 213–229.
- Chilton, Louis (2022) 'Paul McCartney "duets" with John Lennon', *The Independent*, 26 June, <https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/glastonbury-paul-mccartney-john-lennon-b2109581.html> (accessed 30 March 2023).
- Corden, James (2018) 'Paul McCartney Carpool Karaoke', *The Late Late Show*, 21 June, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvzCTqkBDQ>. (accessed 26 March 2023).
- Ehrenreich, Barbara, Elizabeth Hess and Gloria Jacobs (2001) 'Beatlemania: girls just want to have fun', in *The Adoring Audience: Fan Culture and Popular Media*, ed. L. A. Lewis (London: Routledge), 84–106.
- Elliott, Anthony (1999) *The Mourning of John Lennon* (Berkeley: University of California Press).
- Empire, Kitty (2019) 'Hey Grandude! by Paul McCartney and Kathryn Durst review – no magical mystery tour', *The Guardian*, 8 September, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/sep/08/hey-grandude-paul-mccartney-kathryn-durst-review> (accessed 27 March 2023).
- Fong-Torres, Ben (1976) 'Yesterday, today and Paul', *Rolling Stone*, 17 June, <https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-news/yesterday-today-and-paul-74010/> (accessed 30 March 2023).
- Fremaux, Stephanie and Mark Fremaux (2013) 'Remembering the Beatles' legacy in Hamburg's problematic tourism strategy', *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 8(4): 303–319.
- Garner, Ross (2018) 'Not my lifeblood: autoethnography, affective fluctuations and popular music antifandom', in *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, ed. P. Booth (Chichester: John Wiley), 91–106.
- Halliday, Josh, Nadia Khomami and Sophie Zeldin-O'Neil (2022) 'Paul McCartney's Glastonbury show hailed as "phenomenal"', *The*

- Guardian*, 26 June, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/jun/26/paul-mccartney-glastonbury-show-hailed-as-phenomenal> (accessed 26 March 2023).
- Hills, Matt (2002) *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge).
- Jackson, Peter (2021) *The Beatles: Get Back*, Apple Corps and Wingnut Films.
- Jenkins, Henry (2013) *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge).
- Jones, Steve and Walter Podrazik (2022) 'Streaming through a glass onion: curation, chronology, control and the Beatles' legacy', *The Journal of Beatles Studies* 1(1): 67–96.
- Kruse, Robert J. (2005) 'The Beatles as place makers: narrated landscapes in Liverpool, England', *Journal of Cultural Geography* 22(2): 87–114.
- Leonard, Candy (2014), *Beatleness: How the Beatles and their Fans Remade the World* (New York: Arcade Publishing).
- Lexi (2019) 'Goodreads review', *Goodreads*, 3 September, <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/42041751-hey-grandude> (accessed 26 March 2023).
- Lynskey, Dorian (2022) 'At 80, Paul McCartney still makes genius look effortless', *The Guardian*, 18 June, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2022/jun/18/paul-mccartney-at-80-still-makes-genius-look-effortless> (accessed 30 March 2023).
- McCartney, Paul (2018) 'Paul McCartney in casual conversation with Jarvis Cocker at LIPA', YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-gxdjrjRqcZQ> (accessed 31 March 2023).
- McCartney, Paul (2019a) *Hey Grandude!* (London: Penguin).
- McCartney, Paul (2019b) "'Hey Grandude!' visits Waterstones Piccadilly", YouTube, 13 September, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ozJrmeoZFmU> (accessed 26 March 2023).
- McCartney, Paul (2021) 'Paul at the London premiere for *The Beatles: Get Back*' [Twitter post], 25 November, <https://twitter.com/PaulMcCartney/status/1463917576740872194?s=20> (accessed 28 March 2023).
- McCartney, Paul (n.d.) <https://www.instagram.com/paulmccartney/> (accessed 31 March 2023).
- Mills, Richard (2021) *The Beatles and Fandom: Sex, Death and Progressive Nostalgia* (London: Bloomsbury).
- Mintz, Luke (2018) 'Paul McCartney stuns fans with surprise Liverpool visit', *Liverpool Echo*, 9 June, <https://www.liverpoolecho.co.uk/>

- news/showbiz-news/paul-mccartney-stuns-fans-surprise-14764368 (accessed 22 May 2023).
- National Portrait Gallery (2023) *Paul McCartney Photographs 1963–64: Eyes of the Storm*, <https://www.npg.org.uk/whatson/exhibitions/2023/paul-mccartney-photographs-1963%E2%80%9364-eyes-of-the-storm/> (accessed 7 June 2023).
- Nelsonimp (2018) 'Sir Paul McCartney arrives at L.I.P.A awards 27.7.18', YouTube, 27 July, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8OfqljCDSk> (accessed 30 March 2023).
- Nikoghosyan, Nuné (2015) "'But who doesn't know the Beatles anyway?' Young fans of new Beatlemania today", in *Keep It Simple, Make It Fast! An Approach to Underground Music Scenes, Volume 1*, ed. Paula Guerra and Tânia Moreira (Porto: University of Porto Press), 569–580.
- O'Toole, Kit (2021) 'Magic circles: the fan sites, fanzines, and festivals at the heart of Beatles fandom', in *Fandom and the Beatles: The Act You've Known for All These Years*, ed. K. Womack and K. O'Toole (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 107–138.
- Pack, Sam (2020) 'The intended vs. the unintended audience: deconstructing positionality in fandom', in *Fandom, Now in Color: A Collection of Voices*, ed. R. Pande (Iowa City: Iowa University Press), 29–47.
- PaulMacca15 (2021) Twitter, 25 November, <https://twitter.com/Macca15Paul/status/1463925365768957957> (accessed 1 April 2023).
- Pink, Sarah (2011) *Doing Visual Ethnography* (London: SAGE).
- Rapolla, Joe (2022) 'Rebooting Beatlemania in the digital age', in *The Beatles in Context*, ed. K. Womack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 314–328.
- Riley F (2021) Comment, YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjvzCTqkBDQ> (accessed 1 April 2023).
- Roessner, Jeffrey (2022) 'The rise of celebrity culture and fandom with the Beatles in the 1960s', in *The Beatles in Context*, ed. K. Womack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 259–267.
- Sandvoss, Cornel (2005) *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption* (Cambridge: Polity).
- Topping, Alexandra (2018) 'Paul McCartney serves up surprise show in Liverpool pub', *The Guardian*, 22 June, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/jun/22/paul-mccartney-serves-up-surprise-performance-in-liverpool-pub> (accessed 22 May 2023).



- Young, Rebecca (2022) 'Roll up! For the magical mystery tour: an examination of Beatles fandom, pilgrimage and identity', *Networking Knowledge: Journal of the MeCCSA Postgraduate Network* 15(2), <https://www.ojs.meccsa.org.uk/index.php/netknow/article/view/612> (accessed 27 March 2023).
- Youngs, Ian (2018) 'Sir Paul McCartney rolls back the years in Cavern comeback (but no phones please)', *BBC News*, 26 July, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-44964710> (accessed 30 March 2023).