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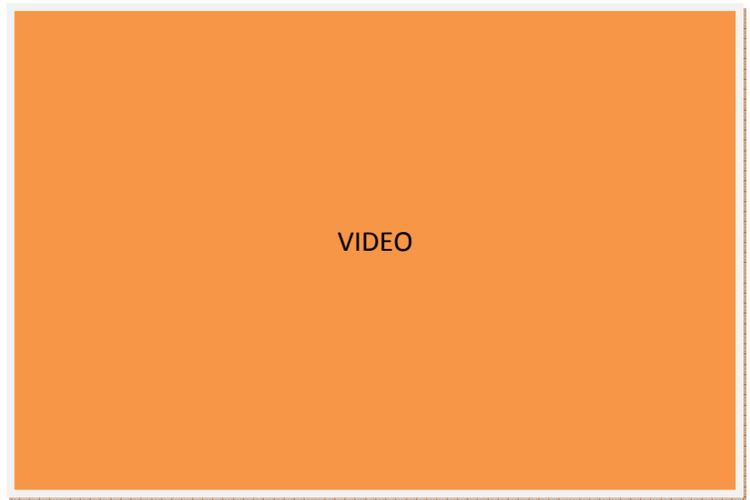
The Beatles Were First Example of Modern Globalization

Feb. 7, 2014

Professor Mike Weis teaches courses in U.S. Foreign Relations, Latin American history, and recent United States history. One of his favorite courses to teach is “The Beatles and their World.”

Q: You see the Beatles as the first example of modern globalization. How so?

Globalization is a characterization from 1990s to describe a world in which capital and culture move freely and almost automatically across borders. One key component of globalization is technological innovation. But there's a cultural component to globalization that began in the 1960's. Most people aren't aware, but the very first satellite broadcast that was simulcast all over the world was the Beatles' performance of “All You Need Is Love.” And they chose the Beatles because they were the most recognizable people on the planet Earth, with the possible exception of Mohammad Ali.



Professor of History Mike Weis says the Beatles' appearance on “The Ed Sullivan Show” on Feb. 9, 1964 was “an event that unified an entire culture.”

[See a video](#)

The Beatles, in a lot of ways, were the first truly globalized entertainment act. Their records had sold millions and millions of copies. They performed live and had done TV appearances in all of the countries in the world. They had even made records in other languages. They released a couple records in German, where they performed before they became famous. They had already made movies that had been shown in all the countries in the world. The Beatles themselves had traveled the world already by 1967 when this broadcast occurred. So they were recognizable and they knew that they were and when they performed “All You Need Is Love,” they had little placards of “All You Need Is Love” in French and Portuguese and various languages, so that people could identify with the song. And they also were wearing Nehru jackets. They were dressed up psychedelically, but in a style that was very comfortable in India.

In both their music and message the Beatles aspired to be universal. Virtually all of their songs deal with universal themes such as the desire for love, the search for happiness or peace or the essential unity of the human experience. Musically, they borrowed freely from all types of music, rock, blues, R & B, British folk, and Caribbean styles, along with their experiments in Indian sounds. Within a couple of months after George Harrison's visit to India, he'd begun to assimilate Indian instruments into a rock song. He wasn't the only one to bring in the sitar. The Rolling Stones did it with “Paint It Black.” The Kinks did it with a song called, “See My Friends.” But George Harrison began a love affair with Indian music that never ended until he died. He was respected in India. He had a lot of Indian friends. He was always trying to learn and improve his instrumentation in Indian music. He wasn't just dabbling.

Q: So the Beatles were the chicken or the egg?

I ask my students that question. I think the Beatles are both. In a lot of ways, they took advantage of all of these technological changes. But they were also promoting these kinds of ideas, a global culture, a global youth culture. It's not an accident that all four of the Beatles ended up marrying people who were not British. I'm sure they thought themselves as citizens of the world

and not just merely Englishmen who had made good.

Q: Do other countries or other cultures feel kinship the Beatles? Or always consider them a British import?

All art, actually, is a way of feeding our souls, but music is one that's particularly made for being able to transcend boundaries and borders. Almost everybody my age sort of considers the Beatles part of the family. I think they're that important. Everybody remembers where they were when Kennedy was assassinated just three months before the Beatles came to the United States, but everybody remembers that Beatles' appearance on "The Ed Sullivan Show." It was an event that unified an entire culture.

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