

The impact of the Beatles on pop music in Australia: 1963–66

LAWRENCE ZION

For young Australians in the early 1960s America was the icon of pop music and fashion. This was the result of the projection of America through the mass media and the numerous American rock'n'roll acts that were brought to Australia by Lee Gordon, an American entrepreneur who lived in Sydney (Zion 1984). This overall tendency led the American, A. L. McLeod, to observe when writing about Australian culture in 1963 that

in general, Australian popular music is slavishly imitative of United States models; it follows jazz, swing, calypso or whatever the current fashion is in New York or San Francisco at a few months distance. (McLeod 1963, p. 410)

Yet by late 1963 the potency of America was in decline. For while the Californian surf music craze made a somewhat delayed impact, especially in Sydney, the popularity of the Beatles was gathering momentum. This can be traced crudely through the Top Forty lists of the day: in Sydney the song 'From Me To You' entered the charts on 12 July 1963 and eventually reached number six (Barnes *et al.* 1979, p. 50). The Beatles had their first number one in Sydney in the second week of January 1964, with 'I Want to Hold Your Hand', and from then on their records held that position for seventeen consecutive weeks (Barnes *et al.* 1979, p. 396). Meanwhile in Melbourne radio station 3UZ's annual lists show that the top six chart hits of 1964 were all by the Beatles and so frequently were their records played on the radio that in early 1964 one newspaper pointed out that Beatles songs would average two and a half playings an hour on each station 'if all Melbourne's radio stations were on air twenty-four hours a day'.

This diffusion of Beatlemania through the media was reinforced by the Beatles' tour of Australasia in June 1964. The tour had been organised in mid-1963 by a Melbourne entrepreneur, Kenn Brodziak, and is regarded as the 'greatest entertainment coup Australia has ever witnessed' (Baker 1982, p. 11). Brodziak was in London in mid-1963 and through his London theatre agent, Cyril Berlin, secured the Beatles' services for the following year. At the time even Britain had yet to experience Beatlemania, and for Brodziak the Beatles were a risky proposition, albeit – at £1,000 a week – not a very expensive one. Most pop music acts touring Australia were still American: *Young Modern* pointed out in May 1963, that the only successful tour by a British pop performer was Mark Wynter's and Brodziak, by then fifty years old and no pop music enthusiast, decided not to import all six acts that Berlin offered him. He took a chance on just one of them in response to Berlin's advice that the new beat music trend in Britain might be marketable in Australia. As he recalls: 'I looked at a

scrap of paper Cyril [Berlin] had written the names on and decided I liked the sound of the Beatles best. It was as simple as that' (Baker 1982, p. 11).

For Beatles fans – and for Brodziak – the tour could not have been better timed. The fact that Ringo Starr missed the first few shows while he recovered in England from a tonsilectomy did not diminish the enthusiasm of crowds that inevitably packed out each of the fifteen appearance dates. (The temporary replacement drummer was Jimmy Nichol of Georgie Fame's band and the Shrub Dubs.) Not surprisingly, the tour was enormously financially rewarding for Brodziak: estimates of the profit he made range from \$500,000 to \$600,000. One outcome of the perception at the time that he was 'sitting on a goldmine' was the attempt by other entrepreneurs to both pre-empt and upstage Brodziak's success. The most notable was the 'Liverpool Sound Show' that was organised by the New Zealand born entrepreneur Harry M. Miller. Headlined by Gerry and the Pacemakers, the show toured Australia several weeks before the Beatles arrival. Although their popularity never eclipsed that of the Beatles, Gerry and the Pacemakers, no doubt benefiting from the pre-Beatles hype, provided something of a dress rehearsal for Australian teenagers.

For the acts that warmed up local audiences the tour was, at best, a mixed blessing. Included on the bill was Melbourne rock'n'roll singer Johnny Chester and New Zealand rocker Johnny Devlin. As Baker points out, with Devlin's 'current success in Sydney (to balance Chester's Melbourne standing) and God-like status in New Zealand he was the perfect addition to a support roster which, seen in retrospect, underlined the degree to which overseas trends had left Australia behind' (Baker 1982, p. 12). Of particular significance here is the inclusion of Melbourne instrumental group the Phantoms as a backing band for both Chester and Devlin. For although Chester would have preferred to be accompanied by his regular group, the Chessmen, it was still common practice in Australia in 1964 for solo stars to work relatively autonomously from backing groups, especially on tours when local musicians often played for visiting singers. The ideology of 'the group' without a front man, epitomised by the Beatles, was still foreign to local performers.

Discontent with the arrangements for support acts led one singer, Del Juliana, to turn down the spot she was offered on the bill, complaining that the fee offered was 'ridiculous' (Baker 1982, p. 11). Baker adds that: 'In 1964 even a top-line rock tour was expected to be staged like a cabaret night with a full and varied bill of entertainment.' Yet while Chester also had reservations about the conditions under which he would appear with the Beatles, his misgivings were outweighed by the widely held belief that any association with the Beatles would enhance career prospects (interview with Johnny Chester). As the magazine *Everybody's* enthused at the time: 'any artist appearing with the mop-tops can't help but have a lot of the magic and gold dust rub off on them, both in solid cash and reputation' (29 April 1964).

In reality the benefits accrued from appearing with the Beatles were far less tangible: both Chester and Devlin soon faded from prominence, and at the concerts themselves they were inevitably overshadowed by the spectacle of Beatlemania. While wild teenage enthusiasm was not unknown at 1950s rock'n'roll concerts, the constant screams of fans at the Beatles' performances rendered the music inaudible. At the Adelaide concerts the hysteria was uncontrollable despite the efforts of top disc-jockey, Bob Francis, to 'cajole his myriad young disciples not to scream when the Beatles sang for them in person' (*Sun-Herald*, 14 June 1964). This response

contrasted to many of those received by 1950s popular singers, as one writer points out:

No longer was it necessary for entrepreneurs to pay fifteen and sixteen year olds to sit in selected spots and scream as had been the case with the earlier Australian tours of Johnny Ray and Frank Sinatra. Beatlemania had struck and the eleven plus brigade supplied all the action spontaneously. (Porter 1980, p. 151).

Indeed, so strong was the general reception given to the Beatles that it might be assumed that reactions to them were uniform. A closer examination of the various responses to them, however, shows that such an assumption would be misleading. Although variations were more of degree than of kind, an awareness of them nonetheless provides valuable clues to an understanding of developments in the pop music scene in Australia for the rest of the 1960s.

One noticeable variation was in the crowd sizes that welcomed the Beatles in different cities notably in Adelaide. Press estimates varied from 'more than 120,000' (*The Age*) to 300,000 (*Sun-Herald*) but even by the lowest about a quarter of the population was on the streets. This confounds what might normally seem an appropriate suggestion that about 10 per cent of the population, most of them youth, were actively interested in pop music at that time (Porter 1980, p. 151). In contemporary reports, Paul McCartney claimed it was 'greater than our New York reception', while George Harrison 'described the wild spontaneous reception as "the biggest we've ever received".'

Whatever the actual size of the crowd, it appears that the Adelaide greeting far exceeded what the Beatles were accustomed to; certainly it was much larger than any other Australian welcome. Several factors help explain this: firstly, Adelaide was originally excluded from the tour itinerary, and it was only after a massive publicity campaign, spearheaded by a popular local disc-jockey, that this situation was reversed. According to the *Sydney Sun-Herald*: 'Bob Francis got to work and organised a petition with eighty thousand signatures begging that the Beatles extend their tour to the city of Churches. The signatures were . . . sent to the tour organisers and finally Adelaide was put on the list.'

This process took several months and undoubtedly heightened public consciousness about the tour. *Everybody's* for instance, reported in May of that year that Adelaide was a city that could not be out-Beatled. In this context the tour of Gerry and the Pacemakers was seen as a warm-up for the Beatles' arrival. When the group arrived at Adelaide airport in April 1964, there were 10,000 fans to greet them, in contrast to the mere forty that had turned out at Sydney airport. So sustained was the public interest in the Beatles' visit that a half holiday was declared in Adelaide, while good weather was a further factor that helps explain the size of the Adelaide greeting. 'It was the welcome Sydney was expected to give them but couldn't because of the rain,' said the *Sun-Herald*.

Yet a third factor is more telling: although Beatles songs dominated all Australian charts in 1964, it was only in Adelaide that their records held the number one position from the start of the year until the tour itself. And an observation that there were 'pockets of resistance' (interview with George Young) to the Beatles in Sydney until the late 1960s does not appear to correspond with the situation in Adelaide.

Response to the Beatles

Pockets of resistance notwithstanding, one curious factor about early responses to the Beatles in Australia is that they cannot be explained simply in terms of Australia following American trends. Australia, contends one contemporary observer, 'might have been slow to tune in to the early beat of rock'n'roll but it was being turned on by the Beatles months before the music began to stir the American public' (Rogers 1975, p. 175). While American music still dominated American charts, the early Beatles hit 'She Loves You' entered Sydney's 2UE Top Twenty 'only a month after its release in England' (Rogers 1975, p. 175). If one assumes, as McLeod evidently did when he wrote about Australian culture during the 1960s, that Australia had become something of a 'final filter' for American cultural fashions, then such precociousness needs to be accounted for. If Australia was no longer following America, was its deflection to Britain different in kind? Or was it merely consistent with a tendency to adapt as quickly as possible to the latest overseas trends, heightened perhaps by a post-colonial hangover?

The clues to developing an understanding of these issues appear to be related to the patterns of British immigration to Australia. Between 1954 and 1966 almost a quarter of a million British-born immigrants arrived in Australia, which while only marginally increasing the British-born proportion of the population, still maintained a strong British contingent within Australian society. Of particular significance is the uneven spread of these new immigrants. Over a quarter of them settled in South Australia, which almost doubled their proportion of the population in that state to over 11 per cent, which far exceeded the national figure of less than 8 per cent. And of special importance was their intense concentration in Adelaide's new satellite city, Elizabeth, where, by 1966, almost 45 per cent of the population had been born in Britain.

Evidence that British-born immigrants identified more closely with the Beatles and other British groups than did their Australian peers might account for the fact that Australia took to the Beatles ahead of America and explain why this enthusiasm was strongest in Adelaide. Pop papers of the period such as Adelaide's *Young Modern*, Sydney's *Everybody's* (especially the *Disc* supplement), and by 1966 the Melbourne based *Go-Set*, all make sporadic references to the involvement of newly arrived immigrants in the pop scene. In one *Go-Set* article from September 1966, for instance, it was suggested that 'the style of clothes worn by the Adelaide teenager is way ahead of any other city, mainly due to the influence of British migrants'.

Yet the connection between immigration and enthusiasm for pop music from Britain is more dramatically confirmed by the foreign origins of a high proportion of members of 'Australian' pop acts of the 1960s. Most of the successful groups that emerged in the wake of Beatlemania had at least one British-born member: Sydney's Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs and Melbourne's Groop are two examples of groups that were updated, in ways that will be discussed later in this article, by the involvement of new arrivals. More striking is the fact that most of Adelaide's Twilights and all of Sydney's Easybeats were born overseas, for it was these groups that quickly became dominant forces in pop music in Australia from the time of their emergence during 1965. The Aztecs and the Easybeats had seven number one hits between them in Sydney from 1964 to 1966 (Barnes *et al.* 1979, pp. 396–7). The Groop started to have chart hits in 1965 and the Twilights in 1966, but both were prominent live attractions for at least a year beforehand in Adelaide and Melbourne respectively.

If the first two stages of Beatlemania can be located respectively in the popularisation of the Beatles through the media and in their Australian tour, a third stage of Beatlemania can be identified in the proliferation of Beatles-inspired groups in Australia during the mid-1960s. This third stage was a more sustained if less immediately visible response to the Beatles, and, as this article aims to show, the roles of British immigrants here were crucial. What follows is a discussion of the extent and significance of this third stage of Beatlemania in Australia.

Elizabeth, Adelaide

Elizabeth, by design, was the frontierland of post-war Australian suburbia. Founded in 1955 by South Australia's Premier Playford, it was set up to house those working in new secondary industries such as General Motors Holden and a weapons research establishment that was involved with atomic testing in South Australia during the 1950s. By default Elizabeth became 'Pommytown', (Galbreath and Pearson 1982, p. 7) as at that time it was chiefly British immigrants who were prepared to work in manual industrial jobs, or, in the case of skilled jobs, who were suitably qualified. Yet while it was the only suburb in Australia in the post-war period where the Australian-born population would for a time be outnumbered by the British born, it is difficult to imagine an Australian urban environment that was physically more removed from that with which British immigrants would have been familiar. Built seventeen miles to the city's north in the hotter and dryer plains that eventually become desert, the 'extremely low density' of the generally featureless residential areas contributed to a sense of isolation for its residents (Herbert 1963, p. 16). Glenn Shorrock, who was to become lead vocalist with the Twilights and Axiom in the 1960s and the Little River Band in the 1970s, was not quite in his teens when he moved to Elizabeth with his family in 1956. The Shorrocks were one of the first hundred families to settle there and Glenn remembers that Elizabeth at that time was 'desolate, absolutely desolate. There was a big field with about 100 houses built, about 200 being built. The brightest light was a telephone box.' (Shorrock interview). Shorrock became self-conscious about his national identity because he faced hostility from native Australians ('you were called a pom all the time') and because of the constant stream of new arrivals from Britain. Agreeing that English youth were in some respects different from their Australian contemporaries, Shorrock suggests that this was partly 'because we were picked on'. His reaction to what amounted to verbal abuse was 'to try to be different and try to dress different . . . But I admit it's not a large thing in my childhood. I don't remember it being really heavy or anything' (Shorrock interview). It wouldn't have needed to be. Living in Elizabeth there was always an alternative to Australian youth fashions in both dress and music because of the teenage immigrants of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Shorrock observed the new teddy boy phenomenon at first hand as few others in Australia could:

In Elizabeth, because it was a strong English enclave, there were Teddy boys that had come straight out from England, and they came out with these little bum-freezer jackets, little Italian things, you know, button up here, very tight trousers and Winkle Picker shoes that sort of came out. (Shorrock interview)

According to Shorrock it was also new arrivals who created an awareness of the Beatles before any of their records had been played on Adelaide radio:

Well I was in Elizabeth so you get people arriving from Liverpool and that's when I heard of

the Beatles. There was a guy who came up to Elizabeth and he was singing at this dance and playing . . . he said: 'Have you seen these guys here?' and shows them a copy of *Merseybeat* from last week. And on the front was a picture of the Beatles. (He said) 'They're really FUB!' and I said 'What?' 'Fub!' (Shorrock interview)

In Elizabeth the importance of new arrivals continued even after the Beatles could be heard on the radio. To quote Shorrock once again: 'You needed to come from Elizabeth basically. Yeah, I mean I didn't realise it at the time but looking back that's how it was, because they'd just arrived. You know every day you'd meet someone new' (Shorrock interview). This comment is supported by a contemporary account of Elizabeth which claimed in 1964 that:

the most common accent in the shops is not South Australian but Midland: even the native-born girls acquired a North Country overtone to their nasal drawl. 'I'm nearly assimilated,' explained a local Australian, 'I don't turn around when I hear a Gracie Fields accent any more. People just turn around and look at me!' (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1964, p. 2)

The Twilights

Although this constant stream of new arrivals was to have a decisive impact on the local pop music scene, Shorrock's group, the Twilights, was not initially distinguishable from other Australian groups of the day in either its format or in the sort of repertoire it performed. For initially the Twilights (like the Beatles) did not play much original material, and nor was their line-up as a group quickly consolidated. When the Beatles emerged late in 1963, the Twilights were essentially a vocal trio that sang with back-up bands on the dance hall circuit, and made occasional guest appearances on television shows. The Twilights were originally known as the Checkmates, and became a vocal trio when Shorrock and two of his friends, Mike Sykes and Paddy McCarthy, discovered they all enjoyed singing. While a vocal trio they changed their name to the Twilights and began to get regular work at weddings and parties, sometimes without instrumental accompaniment. But they were often joined by friends in bands, and here they came into direct musical contact with new arrivals: even before 1964 several groups in the Adelaide area were showing that they were familiar with recent developments in Britain. Shorrock remembers, for instance, that the first person he ever saw playing electric guitar had then just arrived from Britain (Shorrock interview).

From the outset, however, the Twilights were only precocious in Australia in the ways in which they imitated the Beatles. Such imitation was usually of the Beatles repertoire and of their hair and clothes; as a group they never resembled the actual Beatles format. Even when they became a group and not just a vocal trio during early 1965 their two vocalists, four instrumentalist line-up was at best an unresolved outcome of their attempt to transform from a vocal trio to a 'Beatles-style' group. Until late 1964 their most regular back-up band was the Vectormen and it was within this framework that their attempts to imitate the Beatles began. In local press write-ups, the Vectormen were given the status of 'witness' to the Beatles phenomenon: it was even suggested that 'two of the Vectormen had actually played with the Beatles before they became famous' (*Ready Steady Go*, No. 6, pp. 16-17). Whether or not this was true is less important than that the groups could enhance their status in the Elizabeth area by attempting to show links between their own backgrounds and the Beatles. The Twilights/Vectormen combination was the most

convincing local musical exponent of this outlook, and together in April 1964, they won the £100 prize at the 'Beatles Hop' in the Palais Royale in Adelaide (*Ready Steady Go*, No. 6, p. 16).

During mid-1964, however, the Vectormen ceased supporting the Twilights and were replaced by the Hurricanes. The Hurricanes were a group fronted by a singer known as John Perry, (and in later years as Rupert Perry) and eventually the Hurricanes would back-up John Perry for one part of the evening and then the Twilights for another bracket. As Shorrock explains: 'In those days your entertainment package was a band which was usually a guitar band: bass, rhythm, drums – no keyboard – and a lead singer and a vocal group' (Shorrock interview). If this sort of arrangement was similar to the pre-Beatles dance-hall format, it was discarded in early 1965 when the Hurricanes and the Twilights effectively merged forces. Mike Sykes left the Twilights to join the air force and at the same time John Perry left the Hurricanes. What remained was a four-piece group with two vocalists. By then, however, the ideology of the group had begun to become an important consideration – albeit in an *ad hoc* fashion – and in this respect the influence of the Beatles on the Twilights was becoming more evident. As Shorrock points out: 'There was no longer a lead singer, there was the group, you know. The drummer and the bass player were just as important as . . . the singer'.

With this new format the Twilights were better equipped to carry out what had been their aim from the outset: to look and sound like the Beatles in a way that emphasised imitation rather than original composition. Their earliest response to the Beatles had been to delete American songs from their repertoire and play covers of Beatles' numbers and 'anything that came from England'. Shorrock recalls that: 'We were conscious of being trend-setters. But we weren't. We were following every trend that was set up in England really. We were just translating it into Australia quicker than anybody else. That was a thing we liked to do.'

Insofar as they attempted to copy Beatles songs, the Twilights were hardly unique: groups such as the Flies in Melbourne also tried to resemble the Beatles. The Flies were formed in March 1964 to enter a Melbourne pop competition (McGrath 1984, p. 127,2) and, according to McGrath, they soon became the most popular act on Melbourne's dance circuit. Billed as 'Victoria's Top Beatle Group' they supported the Rolling Stones on their first Australian tour during that year.

Yet if the Twilights were unexceptional in attempting to imitate the Beatles, it seems that they outshone all of their rivals in this respect. According to Shorrock this first became evident when the Flies came over to South Australia and performed as guests at the Twilights dance:

The Flies were shit. We couldn't believe it because we'd heard about the Flies, you know, 'Australia's Beatles', . . . cause they came to our dance to guest perform . . . They walked into the back door to the dressing room and thought it was Beatles records being played out there. And somebody came running in. They said: 'It's not records, it's a band!' And they all went: 'Fuck! It's a band – they sound like that.' And they got completely – they got terrified and couldn't play. They tried to play for about two numbers; the crowd booed them off. And Gary Spry who was managing them said to us: 'Hey, do you want to come to Melbourne?' (Shorrock interview)

This account can be supported by the observation made by the Melbourne pop weekly *Go-Set* in June 1966 that Melbourne groups were astounded when they first played in Adelaide. That the presence of immigrants is a reason for this is evident from both the contents of *Young Modern* as will be discussed shortly, and from

interview responses. One interviewee in particular voluntarily emphasised that Elizabeth was 'the cultural centre of rock music in Australia' (Beard interview) because of the attitudes of people who were listening to and dancing to the music, and not just because of the performers. Colin Beard was *Go-Set's* photographer from its earliest issues in 1966, and while based in Melbourne he travelled extensively around Australia's major pop scenes of the day and was in a position to notice the idiosyncracies of each place. His reflection here is therefore of particular interest:

I haven't thought a great deal about it but I remember thinking at the time that Elizabeth was – I mean I'm English anyway – . . . and I sensed . . . the tremendous sense of rightness about Elizabeth at the dances there; the way that they reacted to everything, and it was far more warm, far more heartfelt. It was almost like jungle music! And I think the Twilights played like they did because people reacted that way. It was a natural expression, a natural reaction to it. (Beard interview)

Beard goes on to discuss the dance hall atmosphere in Elizabeth, emphasising the enthusiasm of audiences: Crowds would 'come up talking to the stagemen and then they'd disperse and they'd dance and clap around and dance a different way'.

I remember thinking at the time that they seemed to be enjoying it more; I mean they seemed to be allowing themselves to go more, it seemed to be their music, whereas in – say – Melbourne, . . . it was more a kind of a place to go and meet somebody . . . and I'm sure that English kids in Elizabeth felt the same way but there was a sense of going to a tribal centre. (Beard interview)

Beard's account is reinforced by a response by Ronnie Burns in a *Go-Set* interview during 1966. Burns was from the, by then, vanquished Flies when he said of the Adelaide pop music scene: 'I like the kids . . . they're a more receptive audience. The groups put more feeling into the music, they're more interested in the sound than the audience or the money.' (*Go-Set*, 22 June 1966, p. 1)

Burns' reference to the Adelaide scene in general should not detract from the specific importance of the Elizabeth/Salisbury area. While not totally isolated from the rest of Adelaide there is evidence that Elizabeth and Salisbury had a dance circuit that operated quite independently from Adelaide's, and that many of the performers and much of the audience were British immigrants. The importance of this circuit is confirmed by a *Young Modern* article in August, 1964, which pointed out that a chartered bus was operating every Saturday night from Elizabeth to the Salisbury youth centre, where the local dance was attracting 'the biggest crowd within a ten-mile radius'.

It was there that the Twilights/Hurricanes line-up had been playing after shifting from the smaller Matelot Club in Elizabeth where they had been attracting 500 people a week as early as June 1963. The rejection of the Flies by the much larger crowd at Salisbury can be seen largely as an outcome of the particular critical and competitive environment at the youth centre, which was without parallel in Melbourne at that time.

The contention that the environment in Elizabeth and Salisbury was competitive requires further explanation. Groups playing in this area during 1964 and 1965 aimed to reproduce the remembered pop environment of Britain as closely as possible, an ideal that was shared with their audiences. It was within this rubric only that one could be successful. This can be inferred from the way an evening would proceed at the Salisbury Youth Centre. By 1965 the Twilights were not the only group playing there; the Vectormen had by then re-established themselves as John Broome and the Handels and played alternating brackets with the Twilights (*Ready*

Steady Go, No. 6, p. 17). That this provided a competitive atmosphere is suggested by Shorrock's comment about John Broome and the Handels that 'they decided to go the Rolling Stones way. The Rolling Stones had broken then and they thought: "Oh they're cool." So the Twilights were playing Beatle material and John Broome and the Handels were playing Rolling Stones at the other end of the hall' (Shorrock interview).

If groups were competing against each other to make the British pop world seem real in Australia's newest suburb, the Elizabeth/Salisbury area was in another sense competing against what was seen as the far less authentic Adelaide pop scene. The particular target in this instance was the Princeton Club. This was not a venue, but an organisation that hired dance halls in the Adelaide (but never Elizabeth) area. It continued to operate in the wake of Beatlemania and advertisements for dances it organised contained 'hair forward' instructions for prospective (male) patrons. If this was an attempt to ward off undesirable rockers, it was also, implicitly, an expression of distaste at the styles that were emerging in the nascent Elizabeth scene. Yet although *Young Modern* was controlled by the same interests as the Princeton Club, it occasionally ran feature articles on the Elizabeth area, and sometimes printed letters that expressed the sense of difference felt by Elizabeth pop fans. One of these letters (from March 1964) reflects both an attention to exact detail, and a rejection of what was seen as the Princeton Club's failure to understand Beatle fashion, and, by extension, the British pop scene. The letter began:

Dear Editor,

Why does everybody bother to buy Beatles jackets, thinking they look like Beatles? The Beatles don't wear them any more, they haven't worn them for months! They're wearing ordinary dark suits with suede collars (and sometimes cuffs too). In a local Sunday paper it had the winner of the Beatles Princeton contest. That was no Beatle cut! The Beatles have got sideburns and all, Paul's are one inch long, Ringo's are 1½ inches long, John's are two inches, and George's are just over 2½ inches long. That guy didn't have ANY, some Beatle cut! Nobody in town wears Beatle (Mod) Italian leather waistcoats, Cuban heels, etc. Don't be an old Beatle bug wearing Beatle coats, get an ordinary one with suede collar; get a knee length coat and Be a Beatle – not to mention thin knitted tie (black) and woollen polo neck jumper, also black. If they don't come to Adelaide you will miss something. I only hope the fans control themselves.

Lancashire Mod
Klenzig, SA

The last two sentences of this letter hint at how new arrivals could attempt to exploit the fact that they had witnessed the Beatles phenomenon at first hand. In 1964 the potential for capitalising on this witness status was at its height. The Beatles had become popular but had yet to tour Australia, and the contrast between recent immigrants and those who had not been out of Australia was at its peak. While immigrants from Liverpool were usually regarded as the most genuine 'witnesses' of the Beatles phenomenon in Britain, recent arrivals from other British centres were also important agents in the diffusion of the latest British pop trends in Australia. It would be an exaggeration to speak of a generic British pop background, but it is worth stressing, nonetheless, that the vitality of the various British pop scenes since the skiffle boom in the late 1950s had not been paralleled in Australia. And although the impact of styles such as skiffle was minimal on the British pop charts, it was a crucial phase in the gestation process of groups like the Beatles. As Harker asserts, 'the commercially dead period around 1960 was one of the most potent and creative times for adolescent working-class musical culture' (Harker 190, p. 75). He goes on to argue that the competitive energy of gangs in Britain was channelled into playing,

and even before the Beatles started recording in late 1962, the usual line-up of drums, bass, rhythm and lead guitars became the starting point for many of the British groups of the 1960s; while the cultural resources that were drawn from across the Atlantic were precisely the roots of rock'n'roll – rockabilly and country and city blues.

British immigrants and Beatles-inspired bands

The examples of Tony Barber and Peter Bruce serve to illustrate how this sort of background was different from those of Australians during the early 1960s. Barber arrived in Sydney from England in 1963, and sang briefly with another band before joining Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs who were then a basically a surf music outfit (*Livin' End*, No. 1, pp. 4–5). In his hometown of Manchester Barber had been in a band called the Elections which 'weren't much. Pretty big locally. We supported the Searchers and other big names on tour'. The importance of this was that Barber had been active at a time when beat music and the Beatles were already strong forces in Britain but still relatively unknown in Australia. Barber had 'seen them before I left England – and in Australia there was all this surfy crap!' 'I couldn't believe it! Young people walking around in Bermuda shorts, and around the dances with no shoes or socks on. Yuk! They didn't have ties on. That was absolute culture shock for me!' Once he joined the Aztecs, Barber told the others that the Beatles would soon 'hit Australia like nothing else they had seen before', but in order to get the Aztecs to change their music he had to convince 'the rest of the guys that this was the direction we had to take', as local kids still thought it uncool to be British.

The timely updating of the Aztecs with the incorporation of Tony Barber was paralleled by the influence that Peter Bruce had on the Melbourne group, the Groop, when he joined them in 1964. While the Aztecs had grown out of Sydney's surf music scene the Groop had evolved from a folk music outfit known as the Wesley Trio (*Livin' End*, No. 1, p. 11). Its members shared a common background at one of Melbourne's more elite private schools, Wesley College, and after changing their name to the Oxford Trio while still at school, they became known in turn as the Groop in the wake of the initial stages of Beatlemania.

This attempt to change their image, however, fell far short of any kind of authentic reproduction of Beatles styles, or, for that matter, any of the trends in pop music that had developed in Britain at that time. Needing a guitarist they placed an advertisement in a shop window and soon gained the services of Peter Bruce, who had recently arrived from Liverpool where he had played in skiffle bands, and, according to one account, also the Dave Clark Five before they had become famous (*Livin' End*, No. 1, p. 11). The Groop's first manager, Tony Dickstein, asserts that Bruce's knowledge and experience with rock'n'roll helped to professionalise the band: 'He knew what it was all about; he was good. He was serious about it, he'd thought about it, whereas the others were playing a game.' According to Dickstein the Groop wouldn't have become successful without Bruce, who went on to become the driving force behind the band. 'The other guys were the basis of it but he made it' (Dickstein interview).

This view is supported by Richard Wright, the Groop's drummer, who points out that Bruce had a 'Scouse accent that people loved'. More important however, was the fact that with Bruce the Groop could 'go electric' – 'and quickly became popular playing lots of parties and balls' (*Livin' End*, No. 1, p. 11). For while electric

instruments were certainly not unknown by 1964, it would have been unlikely that any of the members of the Groop would have known how to play them. With a collective background more in common with that of the folk-oriented Seekers than with rock'n'roll, there was little chance of the Groop becoming prominent outside of the jazz or folk genres without the involvement of the very different background of Peter Bruce.

Another group that benefited from the presence of a new arrival was the Easybeats, who became one of the best known Australian groups in the 1960s with the international chart success of their record 'Friday on My Mind'. Unlike the Aztecs and the Groop, the Easybeats were all immigrants. Their drummer, Snowy Fleet, was the most experienced and the most recent arrival when the five man line-up consolidated during 1964. Fleet was born in Bootle, near Liverpool, in 1945 in a neighbourhood that included several people who were to become prominent pop stars in Britain. Among these, according to Fleet, were Billy J. Kramer, who had lived across the road, and around the corner at that time were two of The Searchers. By the time that Fleet was fifteen in 1960, 'Liverpool was alive with music although the world had not yet noticed' (*Everybody's*, 15 June 1966, p. 12).

For the rest of the Easybeats, the importance of this background was partly symbolic. As Harry Vanda, one of the group's former members, comments: 'You see Snowy was from Liverpool and the Mersey sound was just "wow baby". I mean anyone with an accent that resembled it had to be a musical expert, so in came Snowy Fleet' (Vanda interview). Yet it seems that Fleet did have knowledge that was genuinely useful for the rest of the group. Vanda goes on to say that:

He was cluey because he'd hung around that scene for quite a while . . . he was aware of this vast repertoire of songs you know, and aware of image which . . . I suppose is one of the reasons why we became far more aware of what a band should be doing about its image and how it should behave, and that it should be different. (Vanda interview)

There is little doubt, then, that Fleet and other new arrivals were highly active within the process of the diffusion of pop music styles from Britain in ways that operated independently from the influence of the mass media in Australia. Yet even if this is accepted, there remain questions about the reasons why so many immigrants became involved with pop music in Australia in the mid-1960s. Here, I would suggest, it is important to bring into focus the nature of the immigration experience itself. In this respect it is worth drawing attention to Fleet's reasons for joining the Easybeats. He had played drums with a Liverpool band called the Nomads in the early 1960s but by the age of eighteen he was 'fed up with bands' and had decided 'never to play again':

And I probably wouldn't have if I had not migrated to Australia a year later. I had a good job with an engineering firm, but I was lonely. It was this loneliness that pushed me back into music. One night I found a note under my door at the migrant hostel where I was staying. 'Come and see us', it read and was signed by Dick. I saw him, and I saw Harry and George and Stevie. They had formed a group, playing Shadows' style music which in England was nowhere. They seemed good blokes. I didn't know anyone and in a few weeks they became the only real friends I had. I gradually got them to change their style of music into the type I knew in Liverpool. In a few weeks we were playing r & b, probably the first group in Australia to do so. And before I fully realised it I was committed. I left my \$80 a week job at the beginning of 1965 to become an Easybeat. (*Everybody's*, 15 June 1966, p. 12)

The immigrant experience and the Easybeats

It is obvious that the links between involvement with pop music in Australia and immigration cannot be explained simply by referring to the more intimate knowledge immigrants may have had of the Beatles and of pop music in Britain. Rather, the sense of displacement suggested by Fleet's account demonstrates the particular relevance of the immigration experience itself. Just how common such feelings of displacement were amongst British immigrant youth at the time is difficult to verify, however, due to the relative lack of interest taken in their adaptation to Australia by contemporary researchers and social scientists. For instance, C. A. Price, writing about the experience of adjusting to Australia during the 1960s, suggested that the children of European migrants needed to make much greater adjustments than those who had recently arrived from Britain. He added that:

My own opinion, and this is not shared by everybody, is that although British parents may have trouble in adjusting, the majority of their children have little difficulty and for all practical purposes can be left out of the discussion of the complex problems confronting migrant youth today. (Price 1963, p. 13)

Such comments are consistent with a general absence of curiosity about the experiences of post-war British immigrants by analysts of the migration to Australia, even though 1,086,500 of the 2,646,000 immigrants who arrived in Australia with the intention to settle between 1947 and 1970 were from Britain (Jupp 1966, p. 17). With European immigrants experiencing more obvious difficulties during this period, it seems as if much of the research into immigration has proceeded with an implicit assumption that the British are not *real* migrants. Yet from the few existing studies of the experiences of British immigrants in Australia, it is clear that there were considerable variations in the ways in which they adapted to Australia, and that such variations can be linked to the arrangements under which they migrated to Australia, both for adults and teenagers.

Most British immigrants were sponsored by relatives or churches, and these new arrivals had accommodation guaranteed by their sponsors (Jupp 1966, p. 17). By contrast, about a quarter of new arrivals from Britain were Commonwealth nominees, and most of these began their new lives in Australia in hostels. By 1968 there were twenty-seven migrant hostels in Australia operated by Commonwealth Hostels Ltd, a government-sponsored company. Migrants were officially allowed to stay in these hostels for a year but many stayed longer (Wallis, 1968, p. 7). There is evidence to suggest that many of the British immigrants who experienced hostel accommodation upon arrival were soon dissatisfied with Australia (see Jupp 1966, p. 17).

The Easybeats were formed at Villawood which, with its capacity of 2,750, was the largest of these hostels. In 1964 it was described in a report in the *Bulletin* newspaper as 'one of the better, less pot-holed and neater gardened hostels in the country'. Yet whatever advantages it offered, it seems that staying there would have contributed to a sense of displacement for immigrants:

Just 18 stops from Central Railway, the Sydney suburb of Leightonfield with its red-brick horrors, scrubby palms and untidy look of sudden suburban growth, looks just like the kind of place to make Robin Boyd [an Australian architect] wake up screaming in the middle of the night. (*Bulletin*, 18 January 1964)

This picture of Villawood is affirmed by the Easybeats' George Young, who recalls

that new arrivals 'were well aware the Prisoners of War were accommodated in the same standard of accommodation. Nissan huts, and people who'd just come out of the . . . war' were put 'into what was perceived to be the losing sides' accommodation . . . My old lady, that was one of the first things that registered with her . . . "We're not war prisoners!" In a simple sense that was what it was all about' (George Young interview).

Both Young and Harry Vanda (also an Easybeat) recall the general strangeness of their new environment. Vanda comments that at the hostel:

the first guy to come in with shorts was seen as a traitor. The thing that hit me straight away was the climate. It would force you to be entirely different. You couldn't wear the clothes that you were used to wearing. (Vanda interview)

Young remembers that his Glaswegian dialect was fairly incomprehensible, and that a cultural gulf existed: 'there was no football here at that time, no soccer, and the pubs were vastly different' (George Young interview).

An examination of the origins of members of the Easybeats adds further weight to the argument that the group's formation was closely linked to a sense of displacement. That two of the Easybeats were Dutch is especially significant for it illustrates how under certain circumstances British immigrants could find more in common with Europeans – one of whom spoke very poor English – than with Australians. Further, the Dutch members of the Easybeats hardly had the sort of pop music backgrounds that could explain their inclusion in a group with people that had grown up much closer to the British beat boom: Vanda recalls that Dutch groups tended to copy the Shadows at the time that he left Holland (Vanda interview).

What the various individuals who made up the Easybeats had in common was their sense of isolation from the rest of Australia. Hostility from Australians towards youth in hostels no doubt contributed to this: the Easybeats, according to Baker, frequently encountered visits from 'sadistic tattooed louts who considered it a high spot of their week to verbally and physically molest the poms'n'wogs residing in the converted water tanks that passed for housing' (Baker 1980).

If the sense of displacement experienced by members of the Easybeats forged a solidarity between them, their subsequent emergence as one of the most successful 'Australian' groups of the decade – by any standards – was ironic. In this respect, the Easybeats' situation had parallels with the diffusion process of other cultural forms within Australia. One example is *Musica Viva*, a chamber music society that had become 'part of the respectable Australian cultural world' by the 1970s (Wilton and Bosworth 1984, p. 134), but was founded by a group of predominantly central European immigrants at a time when European credentials failed to gain ready recognition 'in the higher echelons of Australia's dominant purveyor of classical music, the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation) (Wilton and Bosworth 1984, p. 134). *Musica Viva*'s founder, Richard Goldner, 'was a Romanian-born Jew who grew up and played music in Vienna, with experience in local chamber and radio philharmonic orchestras' (Wilton and Bosworth, 1984, p. 133).

Goldner arrived in Australia before the war and was unable to gain work as a musician due to the ban on all non-naturalised residents by the Musicians' Union. Through money earned in business enterprises during the war, however, he was able to finance the first *Musica Viva* concert in December, 1945. It consisted of a performance by seventeen musicians who had been rehearsing for three months:

They were an unusual group, not a chamber orchestra but four string quartets and a pianist

and there was no conductor. Goldner had resurrected a style of performance he had learned in 1930s Vienna. And 1930s Austria and Germany were also present in the audience. Participants recollect that there was a large contingent of central Europeans there, Jews and others, who had escaped from Hitler's Europe. (Wilton and Bosworth 1984, p. 133)

My argument here is that, without wishing to force comparisons, the Easybeats and other 'immigrant' groups shared with the founders of *Musica Viva* a desire to reinvent their respective cultural backgrounds in Australia due to feelings of displacement from their new home environment. For while both the Easybeats and *Musica Viva* have been seen as successful institutions within their respective contexts, the motivating forces behind their inauguration and development had more to do with these feelings than with professional aspirations or desire for Australian recognition. As Wilton and Bosworth point out: *Musica Viva* 'has often seemed as though it was an organisation run by refugee migrants for refugee migrants', and they go on to quote the remarks of a visiting German musician in 1963:

I wish to mention that which moved us most deeply of all, even more deeply than the experience of successful performances . . . [is] meeting so many of our former fellow-countrymen as well as Australians, Poles, Hungarians and Czechs. (Wilton and Bosworth 1984, p. 133).

This kind of process has been noted in other contexts: Tulloch, for instance, suggests that 'the motives for the export of American media products have often been intentional and personal', and he refers to Tunstall's argument that 'many of the first generation Jewish immigrants who became Hollywood moguls had "psychological scores" to pay off for their families' earlier poverty and persecution in Europe' (Tulloch 1982, p. 15).

While the role of such psychological factors was probably less intense in the case of young British immigrants in Australia, they should not be dismissed lightly. Interview responses from Vanda and Young suggest that the Easybeats retained a sense of difference from the local pop scene that kept them isolated both socially and stylistically from other performers of the day. Decisions about their stage presentation for instance, not only reflected a familiarity with trends and conventions in Britain, but could also be seen as a rejection of the local scene. One example is their decision to call themselves the Easybeats. As a five-member group they had a lead vocalist in Stevie Wright who, playing no instrument, could function as the group's front man. The Easybeats, however, were not keen to cultivate this image, as the concept of the solo star with a backing band was still fashionable in Australia during 1964 and 1965. The main objection here was the way in which the backing band was seen as dispensable, and of secondary importance. While Johnny Chester, for instance, was annoyed that he would not be allowed to use his group, the Chessmen, to complete his support act for the Beatles during 1964, he was still able to work with the Phantoms.

For the Easybeats this sort of compromise would have been unthinkable. Referring to the solo star images of Australian performers such as Johnny O'Keefe and Johnny Chester, Young emphasises that: 'We very consciously steered away from and poo-pooed that whole scene you know because to us being the age we were they were just so incredibly old-fashioned' (George Young interview).

A dilemma remained for the Easybeats, however. In Britain both the beat scene and developments in rhythm 'n' blues had overtaken the trend for solo stars in a more pronounced fashion than in Australia. However, not all of the emerging British

groups had abandoned the practice of drawing attention to their lead singer. Gerry and the Pacemakers, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes, the Dave Clark Five, and Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas were all chart-topping acts during late 1963 and early 1964 (Rice et al. 1984) which had evolved as groups that functioned as cohesive entities while still retaining the singer as a focal point in the projection of their image through the name of their act. This was an option open to the Easybeats because Wright, as lead vocalist, and unhindered by any instrument, was a natural front for the group. The question was, should this be exploited or played down?

Young's response here illustrates how the Easybeats sought to distance themselves where possible from what they saw as local Australian conventions:

There was a big debate that went on for about two or three months about whether or not Stevie Wright should be shoved up front and even possibly get his name in 'Stevie Wright and the Easybeats'. But it all got knocked on the head for the purpose of being a united front and being different – different from everybody else. So yeah we were conscious of it. We didn't want that to happen! (George Young interview)

Certainly within Sydney the Easybeats were different from everybody else. Although some of the popular acts of the day could be seen to be following British developments, the Easybeats were unique to the extent that they opted for an implicitly 'Beatles' united front format. For example, when Billy Thorpe joined the surfie-instrumental outfit known then simply as the Aztecs, they presented themselves as Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs, while another act that emerged at that time was Ray Brown and the Whispers. For reasons that will be discussed shortly, it was at least partly because these groups were considered anachronistic by the Easybeats that they decided to omit Wright's name, thereby distancing themselves from the image they felt the other acts were presenting.

Ray Brown in particular was seen as anathema. An Australian, Brown and the Whispers had three consecutive number one records on the Sydney charts during 1965. (Barnes et al. 1979, p. 149). George Young described Brown's repertoire as 'wimpy lightweight songs' and went on to argue that: 'At that time he had it all going for him as far as commercial success was concerned, but as far as people like us were concerned he had no musical credibility at all. Zero. Zilch. He did not have one iota of what we were all about' (George Young interview).

It is worth stressing here that such criticism was not based on misgivings about their musicianship as such. Vanda explains that

In reality there were probably tons of guys who were far better musicians than we'll ever be, but that wasn't the point. The point was what you stood for and how you looked and what you did, and I mean that was the whole thing that was happening, and when you looked at a guy like Ray Brown it – the warning signals that George would say were like a 'ring in' – would come off, because what the guy was playing was so patently alien to what he was all about that it was like bubblegum. He didn't have the credibility. (Vanda interview)

'Credibility' here refers to both the ideology of the group and to fashion. Vanda's suspicions about Brown's commitment to the idea of the united-front group format were well founded. As Brown admits, he was seeking to retain a different identity from his group, the Whispers: 'It was a group project but the front man has got a different job to do than the band has. We were two separate identities' (*Living End*, No. 6, p. 6). It is clear from this that the Beatles provided, at least implicitly, a model by which credibility could be measured. This was also the case with fashion, and for young males in 1964 and 1965 the most salient fashion indicator was long hair. Because long hair was not grown overnight, new arrivals from Britain who had kept

up with the longer hair styles that began to emerge during 1963 and 1964 gained kudos from what must have seemed like their commitment to style once the popularity of the Beatles became established in Australia. One Melbourne musician of that time, for instance, recalls that a duo known as 'Andy and Johnny' lasted as dance venue attractions for a short time due to their long hair and Dave Clark Five T-shirts. According to one former musician, 'they were fashion' . . . recently arrived from Liverpool, 'they were the first guys with long hair singing all this Mersey stuff and the chicks were going mad' (Wayne Duncan interview).

In Sydney, the Easybeats were able to retain an edge over other groups in fashion terms simply by refusing to have their hair cut. Possibly because the overall influence of British immigrants was weaker in Sydney than in Adelaide and Melbourne (Vanda interview), television stations in Sydney would insist that only short-haired performers could appear on the screen. As the Easybeats saw it, Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs came unstuck by complying with this policy.

Vanda and Young acknowledge, for instance, that Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs had 'more credibility than Ray Brown', partly due, it would appear, to the efforts of the newly arrived Tony Barber, whose efforts to update the group's repertoire have already been discussed. Yet his influence evidently did not extend far enough. Vanda stresses that as a cultural package Billy Thorpe and the Aztecs were unconvincing, and although a capable self-promoter, Billy Thorpe

didn't quite suss out the trends at the time. I mean one particular example would have been his decision to fall for the establishment line that long-haired guys were poofas, so they all had their hair cut short. Now that was the most stupid thing they ever could have done. They might have established a certain amount of credibility of being associated with what was the new wave at the time I suppose, but he didn't. He decided to play safe and get on television and sort of, you know, do songs like 'Over the Rainbow' and all that sort of thing and that's where he blew it. (Vanda interview)

These comments from Vanda and Young illustrate how far the sense of distance they felt from their Australian peers helped to consolidate their position as a vanguard that was detached self-consciously from other agencies of cultural diffusion such as television. That a gap existed between the Easybeats' outlook and the policy of television towards long hair is not startling in itself: the media in other countries at this time were also panicking about the supposed effects of various combinations of pop music and youth fashions. The crucial point here is that the Easybeats perceived that they were taking a stand on a number of levels, including hair length, in ways that were related to their identities which, collectively, were certainly non-Australian. Leaving their hair long, therefore, had less to do with wanting to become popular than with fulfilling a need for self-definition that was linked to their experiences as recently arrived immigrants.

Maintaining links with home

The respective experiences of the Twilights and the Easybeats also draw attention to the uniqueness of the Elizabeth environment in Australia, and the extent to which living in a migrant hostel could intensify – rather than dispel – feelings of displacement. To extrapolate an unqualified Adelaide/Sydney contrast from these accounts, however, could be misleading: the Easybeats' experiences may have had more to do with their stay in the Villawood hostel than with Sydney itself. For while I am not aware of any parallels to the gestation process of the Easybeats within migrant

hostels in the Adelaide area, it seems plausible to suggest that some young British immigrants in Adelaide, like the Easybeats, set up Beatle-style groups partly in reaction to the strangeness of their new environment. Further, although Sydney did not have a suburb with the same scale of British immigrant concentration as Elizabeth, it should be acknowledged that there was at least one 'British' dance venue in the Sydney area. As the Sydney pop paper *Drift* commented in 1967:

British migrants or visitors who come to Union Jacks . . . could be excused for thinking they'd never left home! This is a club specifically for young England, Scottish or Irish migrants and its walls are covered with British flags or 'pop' art. The latest London 'mod' styles are worn here, and everything is geared to almost make the young people forget they're in Australia. (*Drift*, 28 July 1967, p. 8)

Yet there is no doubt that the sense of a British immigrant network was more pronounced in Elizabeth, and that this had a direct impact on the diffusion of Beatle styles within Australia. While the importance of this was most vividly manifest before the Beatles toured Australia, the impact of 'immigrant' groups, as already suggested, was not realised until 1965, and in the case of the Twilights, 1966. For the rest of the decade groups a significant proportion of pop music performers in Australia were British immigrants who had settled in the Adelaide/Elizabeth area.

That immigrants were able to sustain their impact in pop music in Australia can be explained partly by the continued contact many maintained with friends and relatives in Britain. In this sense the cultural advantages new arrivals had in relation to the Beatles and the British pop scene in general did not simply evaporate once they had been in Australia for some time. Even immigrants who were relatively established in Australia could benefit from correspondence. Angela Letchford, for instance, had been in Australia for three years when – at the age of sixteen – she became the president of the Australian Beatles club. To keep up to date with the Beatles she did not rely on local media reports but also on her sister who was still in England and sent her 'all the latest pictures and information about the Beatles' (*Teenagers' Weekly*, 1 April 1964, p. 11).

Another Liverpool immigrant was less enthusiastic about the usefulness of his English relatives. Tony McNicholls was a twenty-one-year-old member of the Beaumen in 1964 and had emigrated to Australia five years earlier. An interview in *Young Modern* quoted him as saying: 'I could have got me grandma to write me all this information – she lives in Liverpool, see, but she's not with it. Y'know, not young enough to tell us the things we want to know'. However, there was an alternative to relying on grandma. McNicholls had lived in Elizabeth when he arrived in Australia 'and when he was there met a Liverpool friend, John Knight, who was playing in top Liverpool bands when he left in 1959'. It was in Elizabeth that Knight taught McNicholl to play guitar before the former moved back to Liverpool. His return to Liverpool if anything strengthened his value to the group, for according to the McNicholl: 'John's our best informant . . . we try to keep right up with the Beatles, and regular letters from John keep us right in front of the other Beatle bands in Adelaide.'

Not surprisingly some actual contact with the Beatles provided a suitable excuse for writing to Australia, as Tony McNicholls pointed out to *Young Modern* (13 May 1964):

'As a matter of fact,' he said, 'he wrote the other day telling how he went into a shop in Liverpool and there was a real long, tall gent in there buying some fags. There were some

other guys playing a record in the juke box up the end of the shop. He suddenly recognised George Harrison and the other boys. He told me he went to school with George and together they had a great old yarn.'

Whether this was true or not, McNicholls' group, Hayden Burford and the Beaumen, set out accordingly to capitalise on their contacts by advertising their dance appearances with the claim that their Top Forty music was played the 'Liverpool Way'.

If these examples illustrate some of the cultural advantages of being an immigrant, it should be stressed that the dynamic involvement of British immigrants within the pop music scenes in Australia during the 1960s did not occur in a vacuum. Although local 'Australian' performers were often overshadowed by them in the period that followed the emergence of the Beatles, the presence of immigrants was superimposed on what were already complex and varied pop environments. While it would be overly schematic to force categorical distinctions between British and Australian pop performers, it is worth addressing some of the continuities between the pop music scenes of the 1950s and the 1960s in Australia in order to appreciate the context of the Beatles' impact more completely.

The indigenous pop-scene

One such continuity was the solo star phenomenon. The arrival of Beatlemania in Australia did not mean an immediate end to the careers of performers who had become popular during the rock'n'roll era. In general, however, circumstances were becoming more difficult for solo singers such as Jimmy Hannan, who at best understated the severity of his predicament when he told *Everybody's* in October, 1964 that: 'I've just recorded six new numbers for single releases. I'm still not satisfied that this is the way to do things. By the time the second or third single reaches the market the music fashions will have changed.' In fact Hannan's releases were never again to approach the success of his biggest hit 'Beach Ball' which reached the number two position in the Sydney charts early in 1964.

Certainly it wasn't only in Australia that performers were persisting with pop music styles that were, by 1964, increasingly anachronistic. In Britain Cliff Richard, for example, continued to have top ten hits throughout the 1960s despite the fact that he did not copy Beatles styles (see Rice et al, 1984, p. 106). What was different in Australia was the extent to which the old guard became role models for new performers. For of the pop acts that emerged during the mid-1960s a significant proportion were presented as solo performers in keeping with the styles that had emerged in the late 1950s (Walker 1981, p. 33).

The best known of these was Normie Rowe. He began singing in Melbourne's northern suburbs dances at the age of fourteen; by 1965 – while still a teenager – he was Australia's most popular performer (McGrath 1984, pp. 286–8). Although usually backed by a band called the Playboys, Rowe's stage act lacked the kind of cohesion that the Beatles displayed. And while his hair was long enough to get him sacked from his job, he differed from the Easybeats in that he did not reject the styles of the Australian solo acts of the pre-Beatles era. Instead Rowe argues that singers such as Johnny Chester were a 'giant influence' on him (Rowe interview).

Other singers also cultivated the solo star image throughout the 1960s. The persistence of this trend can be seen in part as an outcome of the relative weakness of the skiffle craze in Australia during the 1950s, for whilst in Britain skiffle was an

important stage in the gestation process of many groups that emerged in the 1960s (see Chambers 1985, pp. 44–8), most pop music enthusiasts growing up in Australia at this time were exposed to singer and backing band combos both in Town Hall dances and, crucially, on the early pop television shows. As rock'n'roll became sanitised through this medium (see Rogers 1975, p. 68), rock'n'roll singers on shows such as *Bandstand* and *Six O'Clock Rock* became identified as entertainers rather than rebellious youths, and it was this sort of stardom that many performers aspired to attain; a successful solo singer, Johnny Young, performed on – and compered – television shows from the outset of his career (McGrath 1984, p. 374).

Beneath the surface of apparent domination by the Beatles there were other continuities. In Melbourne, especially, there were persisting links between musical taste and class that provide grounds for challenging the truism that the overwhelming popularity of the Beatles 'declassified' musical taste. Certainly there was no discernible reaction against the Beatles in Australia that could be linked to class background, but in Melbourne particularly middle-class jazzers did not immediately abandon the musical tastes they had acquired before the emergence of the Beatles. As late as 1966 *Go-Set* still featured regular coverage of the local jazz scene, which, although in decline, had continued to exist on the margins of pop.

One group that emerged in the wake of the jazz scene were the Loved Ones. A discussion of their background demonstrates complex correlations between class and musical taste, and illustrates how Beatles' influences were integrated with other musical backgrounds in ways that reflect both local and international continuities. The Loved Ones were formed in Melbourne in October 1965; three of its members came from the Red Onions Jazz Band which had recently split up. The Red Onions Jazz Band was no pop group; the isolation of its members from the latest pop styles is suggested by an article in *Young Modern* in May 1965, where it was asserted that they 'could be defined technically as a two-beat revivalist jazz group which takes its inspiration from the recordings made during the "Classic" era (1920–30) by King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong'. This style featured 'the fluid New Orleans ensemble passages, hot solos, and . . . tastefully constructed arrangements and harmonies'. During the early 1960s the Red Onions won *Traditional* magazine's poll for the most popular jazz group in Melbourne, and the three members of the group that went on to form the Loved Ones had, by 1965, become accomplished playing instruments that were hardly pop music staples: Ian Clyne was a pianist, Gerry Humphries a clarinetist and Kim Lynch played the tuba. Humphries became the Loved Ones' lead vocalist, while Lynch learnt how to transpose tuba lines to the bass guitar.

Although formed with the intention of becoming popular as a pop music act, the Loved Ones didn't take rehearsing very seriously at first, according to Clyne, because 'we'd been playing more complex stuff. We didn't know anything about electronics or amplification though' (Walker 1981, p. 34). Another former member of the group suggests that this was a typical middle-class predicament in the 1960s because before the Beatles middle-class youth simply weren't in electric bands (Lovett interview). It follows that even if the Beatles' appeal transcended existing correlations between social class and musical taste, it is more likely that musical responses to them were linked to class background, due to pre-existing connections between class background and the sort of music and instruments played by young people.

This argument, though difficult to verify, is supported by available evidence.

The only other prominent pop group in Australia by the end of 1965 that contained mostly middle-class members were the aforementioned Groop from Melbourne, and their dependence on the Liverpoolian Peter Bruce was certainly symptomatic of their unfamiliarity not only with current music and fashion trends, but also with the technical skills required to play electrified pop music.

The Loved Ones, unlike the Groop, had no recent arrivals: Gerry Humphries was their only British-born member and he had been in Australia since the age of fourteen. According to Lovett, Humphries had no links with the beat music developments in Britain during the early 1960s (Lovett interview). In 1965 Lovett left the blues group, the Wild Cherries, and with the addition of drummer Gavin Anderson the line-up was complete although none of them had had experience playing in rock'n'roll or pop groups despite their previous musical involvements. Their first hit record, 'The Loved One' reflected this. Featuring off-beat handclaps set against a chorus in a different time signature, it was according to one group member, written in one evening 'almost as a throwaway', and 'we used to laugh, because we'd win awards for originality and we were trying to sound like everybody else. The only reason we didn't was because we were from a different direction' (quoted in Walker 1981, p. 34).

The awkward fusion between this 'different direction' and the Loved Ones' attempts to adapt the musical styles of the Beatles had its own idiosyncratic outcome: the emergence of the Loved Ones in Melbourne, it follows, was no more accidental than the Beatles' Liverpool origins and illustrates the complex interplay of local and transnational determinants in the process of the diffusion of Beatles style. Within this process immigrants played crucial roles which varied according to the date of their immigration, the places they settled initially in Australia and their own knowledge and interpretations of Beatles style. The impact of immigrants, in this stage of Beatlemania, was not, therefore, an episode of British domination of Australian culture, but rather part of a more complicated pattern that interacted decisively with local factors, while in many respects bypassing the mass media.

Endnotes

This article is based on two primary sources: interviews and the newspapers and magazine reports of the time.

The following people were interviewed in 1985 and 1986: Pat Aulton, Colin Beard, Lilly Brett, Kenn Brodziak, John Chester, Wayne Duncan, Tony Dickstein, Bob Francis, Mick Hamilton, Tweed Harris, Jim Keays, Rob Lovett, Lynne Randall, Normie Rowe, Glenn Shorrock, Harry Vanda, Bruce Woodley, Richard Wright, Gary Young and George Young.

The magazines and newspapers include:

The Age, Melbourne.

Drift, Sydney, 1967–68. This was a short-lived publication edited by a group of students from the University of New South Wales.

Everybody's, 1961–67. This was a weekly magazine that published a pop music section called 'Disc'.

Go-Set, Melbourne, 1966–72. This was the most widely circulated pop paper in Australia during the 1960s. It was published weekly and sold up to 85,000 copies of each issue.

Sun-Herald, Sydney. A Sunday tabloid.

Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney.

Teenager's Weekly. This was a weekly lift-out section of the *Women's Weekly* during the 1960s.

Young Modern, Adelaide. This was a fortnightly teen magazine published in Adelaide between 1962 and 1965.

The dates of the quotes are given in the text to avoid too much repetition.

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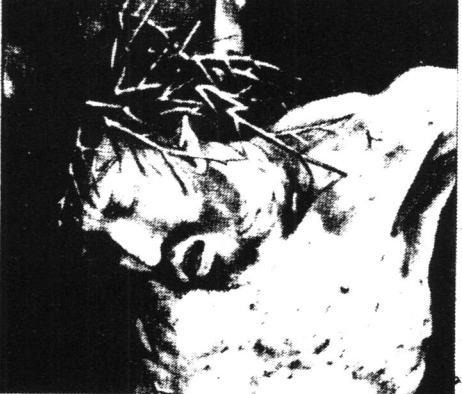
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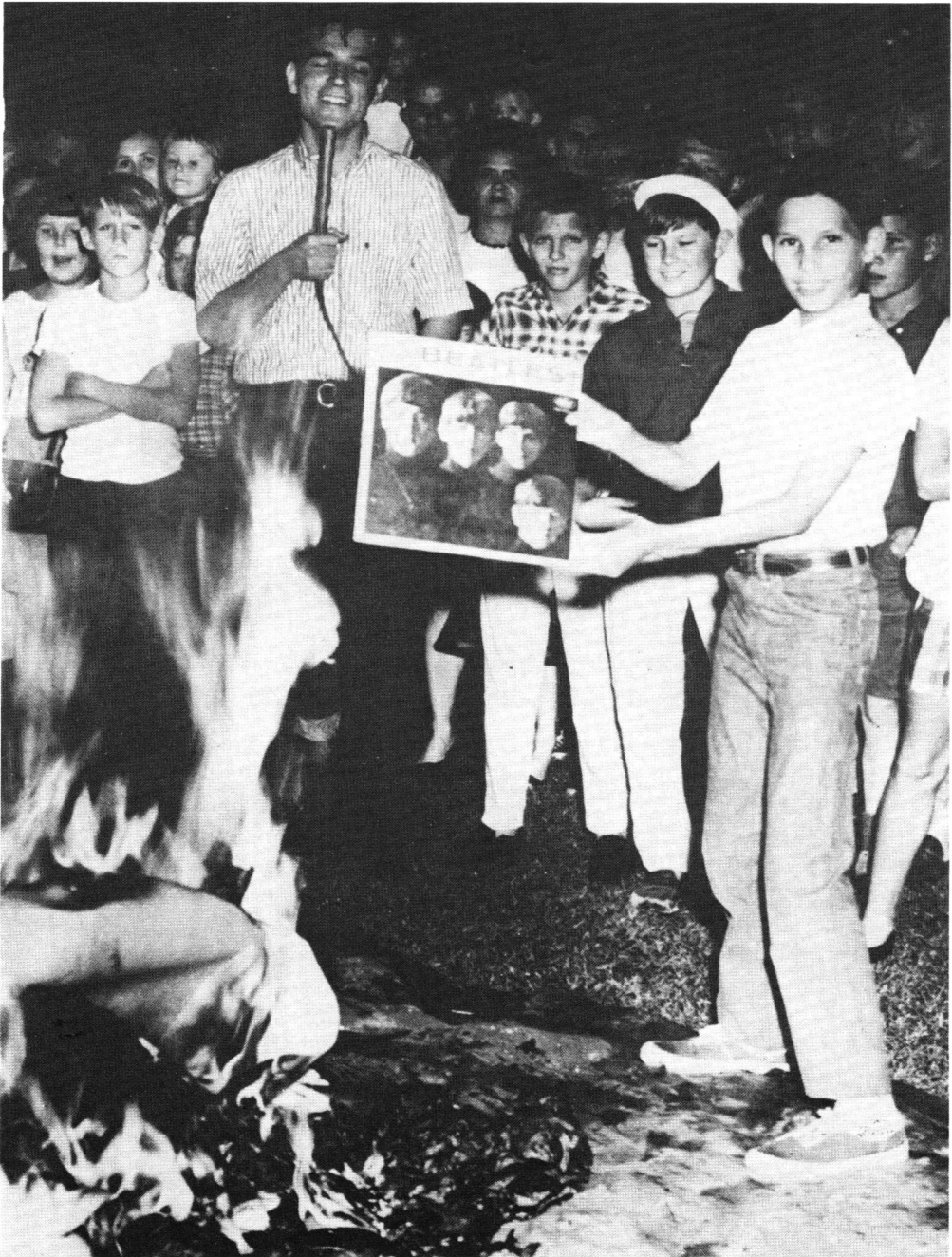
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UPI

Beatles album-burning, Waycross, Georgia, August 1966

