

Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America

By Jonathan Gould

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Nearly twenty years in the making, *Can't Buy Me Love* is a masterful work of group biography, cultural history, and musical criticism. That the Beatles were an unprecedented phenomenon is a given. In *Can't Buy Me Love*, Jonathan Gould seeks to explain why, placing the Fab Four in the broad and tumultuous panorama of their time and place, rooting their story in the social context that girded both their rise and their demise.

Beginning with their adolescence in Liverpool, Gould describes the seminal influences—from Elvis Presley and Chuck Berry to *The Goon Show* and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*—that shaped the Beatles both as individuals and as a group. In addition to chronicling their growth as singers, songwriters, and instrumentalists, he highlights the advances in recording technology that made their sound both possible and unique, as well as the developments in television and radio that lent an explosive force to their popular success. With a musician's ear, Gould sensitively evokes the timeless appeal of the Lennon-McCartney collaboration and their emergence as one of the most creative and significant songwriting teams in history. And he sheds new light on the significance of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band as rock's first concept album, down to its memorable cover art.

Behind the scenes Gould explores the pivotal roles played by manager Brian Epstein and producer George Martin, credits the influence on the Beatles' music of contemporaries like Bob Dylan, Brian Wilson, and Ravi Shankar, and traces the gradual escalation of the fractious internal rivalries that led to the group's breakup after their final masterpiece, *Abbey Road*. Most significantly, by chronicling their revolutionary impact on popular culture during the 1960s, *Can't Buy Me Love* illuminates the Beatles as a charismatic phenomenon of international proportions, whose anarchic energy and unexpected import was derived from the historic shifts in fortune that transformed the relationship between Britain and America in the decades after World War II.

From the Beats in America and the Angry Young Men in England to the shadow of the Profumo Affair and JFK's assassination, Gould captures the pulse of a time that made the Beatles possible—and even necessary. As seen through the

prism of the Beatles and their music, an entire generation's experience comes astonishingly to life. Beautifully written, consistently insightful, and utterly original, *Can't Buy Me Love* is a landmark work about the Beatles, Britain, and America.

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Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America By Jonathan Gould Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Signature Reviewed by Mark Rotella As a teenager, I collected every album the Beatles put out, starting with their first U.S. release, 1964's *Meet the Beatles*, to their last, *Let It Be*, in 1970. As Paul sang Mother Mary comes to me/ speaking words of wisdom, I heard the wisdom of an aged sage. But as Jonathan Gould states in his brilliant biography of the Beatles, the band had effectively ended before any of them had reached the age of thirty. There have been several biographies of the band (including two outstanding ones, Bob Spitz's *The Beatles* and Devin McKinney's *Magic Circles: The Beatles In Dream and History*), but Gould leaves the gossip to others and instead relies on their music to tell the story, starting with the early days as a band in Liverpool (with Paul McCartney on guitar and Stuart Sutcliffe on bass) to the recordings at the Abbey Road studios in London (where Yoko became everpresent and George stormed out threatening to quit). They got their start in Hamburg, Germany, and were soon managed by a young, eager former furniture salesman named Brian Epstein, and produced by George Martin, a recording executive known for novelty records. Gould, a former musician, has written an engrossing book, both fluid and economical (aside from one overlong section on the concept of charisma). Page after page, you can hear the music; Gould's deft hand makes the book sing. This is music writing at its best. It begins with a musical wake-up call, Gould writes of A Hard Day's Night—the harsh clash of a solitary chord that hangs in the air for an elongated moment, its densely packed notes swimming into focus like eyes adjusting to the light. On Here Comes the Sun, Gould describes George's music, written as he became more steeped in Indian philosophy amidst turmoil within the band, as rays of sun cutting across the melting ice of winter... of coming through a long and arduous experience and emerging whole at the end. Focusing on the Beatles' influences, musical (Elvis, Chuck Berry, Bob Dylan, the Beach Boys) and otherwise (marijuana, LSD, the Maharishi Mahesh yogi), Gould elucidates the mystery of the band that changed the course of Western popular music. (Oct.) Mark Rotella, senior reviews editor at Publishers Weekly, is the author of *The Saloon Singers, about the great Italian-American crooners, to be published by FSG in 2008.*

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From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gould's combination group biography, cultural history, and musical criticism artfully places the Beatles in their time and social context while examining with great skill how they became an international phenomenon comparable only to themselves. He examines cultural and historical moments on both sides of the Atlantic—the impact of John Osborne's epoch-making play *Look Back in Anger*, the arrival of Elvis Presley and the rise of rock and roll, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the Summer of Love, Woodstock—while limning Liverpool, the working-class port city in England's industrial north from which the Beatles hailed, and the individual Beatles' strong senses of regional solidarity and fierce local patriotism. To understand the Beatles, Gould implies, you must understand where they came from. He follows them through their roller-coaster career: Hamburg, early days at Liverpool's Cavern Club, their "conquest" of America, the hysteria that came to be called Beatlemania, Sgt. Pepper's, and the eventual breakup. All bases are covered, but setting Gould's book apart are his careful dissection of cultural history and his astute critical eye (his masterful critiques of "Eleanor Rigby," "Penny Lane," "Strawberry Fields Forever," and "A Day in the Life," in particular, are miracles of economy). Long on history, short on gossip, he gives nuanced assessments of the world's most admired rock band and of its era. Sawyers, June

Review

'Gould has written a scrupulous, witty and, at times, appropriately skeptical study... As a clever person once

said... "Writing about music is like dancing about architecture." Gould, it turns out, is an astute and sensitive choreographer... If I had the space I'd cite dozens more examples of Gould's graceful unfolding of various Beatle tunes. At his best, he lets you hear with keener ears the way a great novelist lets you feel with keener emotions. He even made me want to listen to "Eleanor Rigby" again. I can't think of higher praise.'

—Bruce Handy, *New York Times Book Review*

"Gould, a former musician, has written an engrossing book, both fluid and economical (aside from one overlong section on the concept of charisma). Page after page, you can hear the music; Gould's deft hand makes the book sing. This is music writing at its best."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred, signature review

"What separates writer and musician Gould's first book from the multitudinous others is his threefold focus; Gould deftly mixes biography with social commentary and musical and lyrical analysis, illustrating how the band crafted its groundbreaking songs and how its achievements impacted, and were impacted by, the tumultuous 1960s. Highly recommended for all academic, public, and music libraries."

—*Library Journal*

"Gould's combination group biography, cultural history, and musical criticism artfully places the Beatles in their time and social context while examining with great skill how they became an international phenomenon comparable only to themselves. ... Setting Gould's book apart are his careful dissection of cultural history and his astute critical eye. ... Long on history, short on gossip, he gives nuanced assessments of the world's most admired rock band and of its era."

—*Booklist*, starred review

"Every so often – every rare once in a while – it is good and cleansing and necessary to have one compact volume that sums everything up, hitting the heights and depths and sticking with the facts all the way to the bitter end. Jonathan Gould's Beatles biography 'Can't Buy Me Love' is that book – and, aware as it is of the fact that even titling the book 'Can't Buy Me Love' is something so completely simple and banal, it tells the sprawling, complicated Beatles story in a refreshingly straight-forward manner. ... Gould succeeds in not only expertly telling that tale, but infusing it with a voice that's all his own."

—*Santa Barbara News-Press*

"Gould excels at depicting the complexities involved in creating songs destined to become classics...He juxtaposes their personal history, the genius, the outrageous statements, the women, the drugs—with the arc of world events then. If you loved the Beatles, you'll love this book."

—*Dayton Daily News*

"It's been said that not only did the world want the Beatles in the 1960s, it *needed* them. Gould, for the first time, really explains why....Gould has written a book that both fans and rock historians will enjoy."

—DailyVault.com

"*Can't Buy Me Love* provides a thrilling account of how four nowhere kids from Liverpool translated their love of American rock and blues into a body of popular music unmatched in the nearly forty years since they ended their careers as Beatles. Writing with a scholar's attention to history and a musician's interest in songcraft, Gould meticulously charts the group's evolution from three-chord sprints like "She Loves You" to multi-partite, symphonic masterpieces like 'A Day in the Life.' If you've ever wanted to know why the Beatles' music is great and how better to appreciate it, look no further than this brilliant book."

—*People* magazine

“Essential...his narrative literally sings itself off of the pages.”

—*The Boston Globe*

“Excellent and engrossing....Gould has the two gifts essential to a critic—passionate expertise plus a bulletproof sense of humor—and his descriptions of the music are hilariously on target....Yet Gould also possesses that third essential gift: the capacity for awe.”

—James Marcus, *The Los Angeles Times*

“Excels by providing what’s been missing from many biographies: context.”

—*USA Today*

“Volumes have been written on the Beatles....Now comes one of the best, Jonathan Gould’s *Can’t Buy Me Love*, a smashing group biography that doubles as a masterful cultural history.”

—*Play-Taste*

“Offers a fresh vision that, like the Beatles, brims with enterpy, wit and charm.”

—Glenn Frankel, *Washington Post Book World*

“*Can’t Buy Me Love* the book is not just a book, it is an experience and if I had to name must-read/must-own books on the subjects covered, it would be in the Top Ten of all my lists. Don’t miss one of the best music history books ever written!”

—Fulvuedrive-in.com

“If what follows in this book review reeks of juvenile gushing, I won’t even attempt to apologize for it. ... Gould has created in this, his ... *first* publication, what can only fairly be described as the ultimate musician’s guide to song writing and producing. ... I’m about to re-read and re-savor this writer’s work, this time in an effort to shake-off self-doubt, and siphon off some of that determination and talent.”

—Antimusic

“In *Can’t Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain and America*, author Jonathan Gould presents perhaps the most comprehensive, enjoyable read concerning the Fab Four ever written. More importantly, Gould’s book illustrates how events influence our thought processes, and how we turn to idols to make sense of it all. This isn’t just a good book—it should be required reading for anybody interested in the influence of the sixties, and how we perceive ourselves now.”

—Ray Ellis, Culture Salad Online

“In *Can’t Buy Me Love*, freelance writer Jonathan Gould has produced the best book ever written about the Beatles. An elegant and economical stylist, Gould is a brilliant narrative historian, with an archaeologist’s ability to re-create the world inhabited by his subjects. *Can’t Buy Me Love* is a magical mystery tour that must not be missed.”

—Glenn C. Altschuler, American studies professor at Cornell University

“*Can’t Buy Me Love* joins the late Ian MacDonald’s *Revolution in the Head* (released last year in a third edition by Chicago’s A Cappella Books) on the very short shelf of essential Beatles reads... Prickly, smart, loving without being blind to its protagonists’ follies, and comprehensive without resorting to mounds of pointless minutiae, *Can’t Buy Me Love* is an involving, wildly intelligent book that allows us to experience anew the band’s great moment in all its glorious, world-shaking velocity. A better title may have been *Re-Meet the Beatles*.”

—Los Angeles City Beat

"A nearly 20-year labor of love by a first-time writer, it's a fascinating, witty, and highly original take on Beatles music and mystique, and a worthy addition to 'Beatle lit.'...Gould delivers a multifaceted gem of a book that should delight and surprise even the most oversaturated fan."
—Christian Science Monitor

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Karen Lawless:

As people who live in the particular modest era should be update about what going on or info even knowledge to make these keep up with the era and that is always change and progress. Some of you maybe will certainly update themselves by looking at books. It is a good choice for yourself but the problems coming to anyone is you don't know which one you should start with. This Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America is our recommendation so you keep up with the world. Why, since this book serves what you want and need in this era.

Kevin White:

The feeling that you get from Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America is a more deep you excavating the information that hide inside the words the more you get thinking about reading it. It doesn't mean that this book is hard to comprehend but Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America giving you thrill feeling of reading. The copy writer conveys their point in specific way that can be understood by anyone who read it because the author of this reserve is well-known enough. This specific book also makes your own personal vocabulary increase well. Therefore it is easy to understand then can go to you, both in printed or e-book style are available. We highly recommend you for having this kind of Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America instantly.

Santa McNabb:

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Russell Howell:

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Imaging each word written in a publication then become one contact form conclusion and explanation that will maybe you never get previous to. The Can't Buy Me Love: The Beatles, Britain, and America giving you another experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful facts for your better life within this era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will likely be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

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