

The Beatles Rock Band: An Inside Experience

The Beatles broke-up the year before I was born, so for me the Beatles have always been something from the past. My mother, on the other hand, lived through the Beatles emergence as a teenager in the 1960s. In 1964, at age 14, she took a bus from Watertown, NY to Montreal to see the Beatles play in their first North American tour. They opened with “I Want to Hold Your Hand.” She followed the Beatles script, which meant a lot of screaming, beating the people in front of her with her hands, and even more screaming. When it was over she cried all the way home, knowing that she'd never get a chance to see them again (and she didn't). Nonetheless, she *experienced* the Beatles, and the memories for her will last a lifetime.

Compare that to my early *experience* with the Beatles, which involved a rickety old record player and a very used forty-five of “I Am The Walrus.” Needless to say this didn't have a very lasting effect on me. I never really *got* the Beatles (goo goo g'joob??). Fast forward to 9-9-09.

George, Paul, John, Ringo,Tony? OK, so maybe I'm not the long lost fifth Beatle, but it sure felt that way. I opened in 1963 in “The Cavern Club” in Liverpool with a four song set. For my efforts I was treated with a very nice animated transition video animation (the graphics, by any measure, are amazing, especially the virtual Beatles band members and transition videos). The next stop on the virtual historical tour was 1964, on the Ed Sullivan Show, where I burst on stage with....wouldn't you know it: “I Want to Hold Your Hand.” Again, true to form, the teenage girls in the audience started screaming. And this is where it gets very cool: the better I sang, the louder they screamed. Before I knew it my tour was over, and I was singing on the rooftop in London in a farewell concert.

I'd like to thank the folks at Harmonix for making more than a game, but a Beatles *Simulation*. For the first time in my life I actually *experienced* the Beatles. Sure, it wasn't the same experience that my mother had, but it was certainly better than my scratchy forty-five record, but I got to experience The Beatles from the *inside*. I experienced what it was like to sing in front of a sellout crowd at Shea Stadium. I let my fingers dance up and down the fret of my replica Rickenbacker 325 while reproducing the bass rhythms of “Octopus's Garden.” I took the time to read the back-stories that are embedded as rewards throughout the game. For example, I loved reading how George Harrison skipped an Apple business meeting to hang out in Eric Clapton's garden on a Spring day in London, borrowed his guitar, and wrote “Here Comes the Sun.” Most importantly, I now *appreciate* who the Beatles were and how their music matured over time.

Two months ago I really had never experienced the Beatles, and I would have to say I didn't know what I was missing. Now, having played the game, the tables are turned. If you are a Beatles fan but haven't yet played this game, *you* don't know what you're missing. Goo goo g'joob.

Dr. Anthony Betrus
Faculty Advisor, SUNY Potsdam Video Gaming Club
betrusak@potsdam.edu