

Pop

THE BEATLES

THE BEATLES LIVE AT THE BBC

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A friend of mine in college once said The Beatles were overrated and I nearly slugged him on the spot. You'd have to have a cement-and-*mochi* cocktail in your ears not to hear the greatness of these guys, but that hardly needs to be said here. Rock and roll was seriously on the ropes in the early '60s, especially in the U.S. where the chain of events from Elvis' entry into the military, Chuck Berry's conviction for tax evasion, Little Richard's outrageous lifestyle coming out in the press, Jerry Lee Lewis marrying his 13-year-old cousin and Buddy Holly dying in an airplane crash led the record companies and radio stations to pull the reins in on the free-swinging rock and roll scene. Pretty boys like Paul Anka and Cliff Richard were groomed for the top and suddenly a good haircut and clean (and white) look were more important than the music. Thank god for England. The Beatles came out of a burgeoning club scene that was devoted to the rock and R&B that the States had invented but then seemingly abandoned.

The Beatles' pre-recording stints in raucous Hamburg, the Las Vegas of Europe at the time, forced them to toughen up and develop a well of material to fill the endless nights of performing. After jamming on the "Let It Be" sessions, Billy Preston said the band was an incredible musical jukebox and "Live at the BBC" captures The Beatles pouring out the covers that kept them alive on the stages of Hamburg. Things may sound way-retro at first, as the band chunk-a-chunks without the incredible atmosphere of their early albums, but gradually the genuine goodwill of these songs and the chance to hear the band go through the major influences of their early career will sweep you away. Between 1962 and 1965, The Beatles recorded 52 live shows for the BBC and the cheeky friendliness that endeared them to a nation and eventually the world is well in evidence, as is the devotion to rock and roll and melody that would soon revolutionize the pop world ... 9