

LIFE With the Beatles: Inside Beatlemania, by their Official Photographer Robert Whitaker (Life Great Photographers Series)



In the mid-1960s, when so much was happening in the world and the volume everywhere seemed dialed up to 11, the Beatles were the biggest thing on the planet. Their fans screamed from the fences as the Fab Four walked across the airport tarmac or into a vast stadium. They wanted to touch the Beatles. They wanted to know the Beatles. Who might help them? One photographer was inside. The young Australian Robert Whitaker had been noticed by Beatles manager Brian Epstein, who then hired him. When Beatlemania exploded, Whitaker was along for the wild ride. He was backstage, he was in the studio, he went to the boys homes, he became their friend and confidante (He grew particularly close to John). Robert Whitaker fashioned many of the iconic Beatles images, and all his pictures of the band were taken in the period that Beatles fans most like to remember: when they were fab, when they changed our culture. Bob Whitaker—a great photographer, after all—was a friend of LIFE's and made contributions to earlier books on John Lennon and George Harrison. In the months before his death in September 2011, he was collaborating with us on this book, his Beatles magnum opus. In these pages are rarely or never seen photographs and his personal reflections, which add resonance to the images. For those who once wanted to touch the Beatles, wanted to know them, this is an essential document. It is full of vitality. Beatlemania was a crazy, crazy place to be, and it is captured here in all its nutty glory. Then, too, there are the famous Whitaker album covers, including the early drafts of the notorious—and banned—Yesterday and Today jacket. It is LIFE's good fortune, and it will be our readers, that Bob Whitaker talked about all this with us and others through the years. His testimony is that of a proverbial fifth Beatle: He was there, part of the scene. He saw it all, he recorded

