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Pete Best says Hamburg got Beatles ready to rock



Drummer Pete Best, a member of the Beatles in the band's early days, says the marathon performances in Hamburg, Germany, helped the Beatles develop their distinctive sound.

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By [DAVID YONKE](#)
BLADE STAFF WRITER

For two years, Pete Best was in the eye of the hurricane. Actually, it was more like the eye and the wall and the tidal surge and every cubic inch of the storm's awesome power.

In August, 1960, the 18-year-old British drummer joined a raw but talented group known as the Beatles as they were getting ready to leave Liverpool for a gig at the Indras and Kaiserkeller clubs in Hamburg, Germany.

By the time Best and the boys parted ways two years later, the Beatles were poised to rock the world.

"We went there a young band. But when we came back from that first trip to Hamburg, we blew the lid off of Liverpool," Best said in a phone interview last week from Liverpool. The Pete Best Band performs at 8 tomorrow night in Maumee.

The marathon performances in Hamburg helped Best, John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison, and Stuart Sutcliffe develop a distinctive sound that blended American blues and rock, British skiffle and folk music, and the musicians' own creative energies.

While most band gigs lasted an hour or maybe two a night, the Hamburg clubs wanted the Beatles to play from early evening until the bars closed in the wee hours of the morning.

"It was something we weren't expecting until we went out there," Best said. "Then we were told we'd be playing six to seven nights a week, six to seven hours a night. But you were young and it was the task set before you. There was no complaining. It was very much a case of, 'That's what we've got to do.' "

The lengthy shows provided a musical education for the adventurous lads.

"Playing those long hours consistently made the band so tight and so prolific. It was like practicing every night for three months solid," Best said. "We were so tight and the sound had that explosive, savage element."

When the Beatles returned after their lengthy engagements in Hamburg, Sutcliffe stayed in Germany and the group decided in August, 1962, to replace Best with an older, more experienced drummer named Richard Starkey, aka Ringo

Starr.

"Yeah, you've been knocked down, but you've got to pick yourself up and get back in the game," Best said of being fired.

He formed his own band but in 1968 quit the rock and roll business to raise a family, working as a baker and a British civil servant until 1988, when he revived his music career.

He said the Pete Best Band plays songs from the 1960s including his favorite Beatles tunes of the era as well as many classics by other rock artists. "We're not a Beatles copy band or a Beatle tribute band," he said.

Now 63, Best is not one to look back and evaluate his place in music history. "I'll let other people think it out for me, to be quite honest," he said. "I'm very much of the today and tomorrow brigade. It's OK if other people want to constantly remind me that I was part of that band and a legend and all that. But at the end of the day I say, 'Thank you very much,' I go to bed, and hopefully get up in morning and wash my face, and I'm still Pete. I'm just a regular guy."

The Pete Best Band will be in concert 8 p.m. tomorrow in the Maumee Indoor Theater, 601 Conant St., Maumee. Tickets, \$25, are available in the box office. Information: 419-897-8902.

Contact David Yonke at:
dyonke@theblade.com or
419-724-6154.
