

Dec. 9, 1961

## The Beatles in Aldershot<sup>1</sup>

The Fab Four play for an audience that barely outnumbers them

[by Alex Q. Arbuckle](#)



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS

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<sup>1</sup> <http://mashable.com/2016/02/25/beatles-aldershot/#mUeNI1pXB8q3>

In December 1961, Sam Leach landed his musician friends from Liverpool a series of gigs at the Palais Ballroom in Aldershot, Hampshire. This would be the first gig in the south of England for Paul McCartney, John Lennon, George Harrison and Pete Best, who called themselves the Beatles.

The hope was that the gig would attract the attention of London record executives — unfortunately, Leach did not realize that Aldershot was a military town 37 miles outside of London.

Additionally, the advertisement that Leach had paid to have appear in the local papers never materialized, because Leach paid with a check instead of cash and did not provide contact information.

The gig was billed as a battle of the bands between Liverpool's Beatles and London's Ivor Jay and the Jaywalkers. The opponents never showed.

When the Beatles arrived after being driven nine hours from Liverpool by Leach's friend Terry McCann, their posters were nowhere to be found, and they had to wait to be let into the venue.

That night, the Beatles played their usual covers of Chuck Berry and Jerry Lee Lewis to about 18 very bored people.

**We got in, unloaded the stuff, and the boys set up their amps and waited for the crowds to come flocking – and waited, and waited, and waited.**



# **BIG BEAT SESSIONS**

AT

**THE PALAIS BALLROOM  
QUEENS ROAD  
ALDERSHOT**

**EVERY SATURDAY**

**COMMENCING THIS SATURDAY  
DECEMBER 9th**

**Presenting a "BATTLE OF THE BANDS"**

**LIVERPOOL v LONDON**

*LIVERPOOL'S No. "1" ROCK OUTFIT  
Direct from Their German Tour*

**THE BEATLES**

**VERSUS**

*ONE OF LONDON'S TOP "BEAT" GROUPS*

**IVOR JAY & the JAYWALKER**

**PLUS TWO OTHER STAR GROUPS**

**ROCKING 7-30 p.m. to 11-30 p.m.**

**BAR**

**BUFFET**

**ADMISSION 5/-**

**EVERYONE WELCOME—TELL YOUR FRIENDS**





IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS

[Sam Leach] was stopping anyone passing by to tell them about the gig. Of course, they would come in, have a quick look, and say 'boring,' and clear off somewhere else.

TERRY MCCANN



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS



George, John, and Paul perform, with Pete Best on drums.

IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS





IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS





IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS

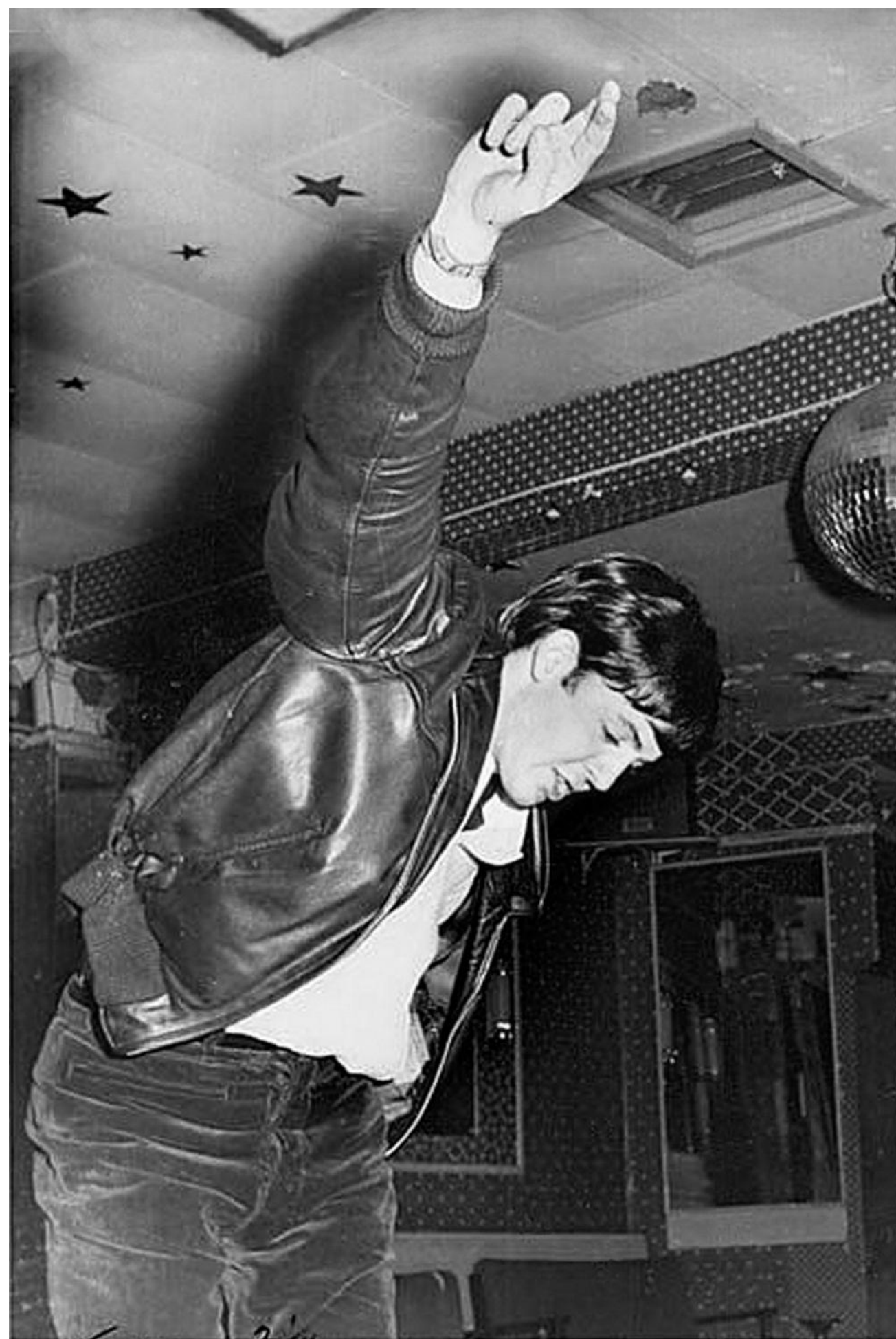
Halfway through one number, George and Paul put on their overcoats and took to the floor to dance a foxtrot together, while the rest of us struggled along, making enough music for them and the handful of spectators. We clowned our way through the whole of the second half. John and Paul deliberately played wrong chords and notes and added words to the songs that were never in the original lyrics.

PETE BEST



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS



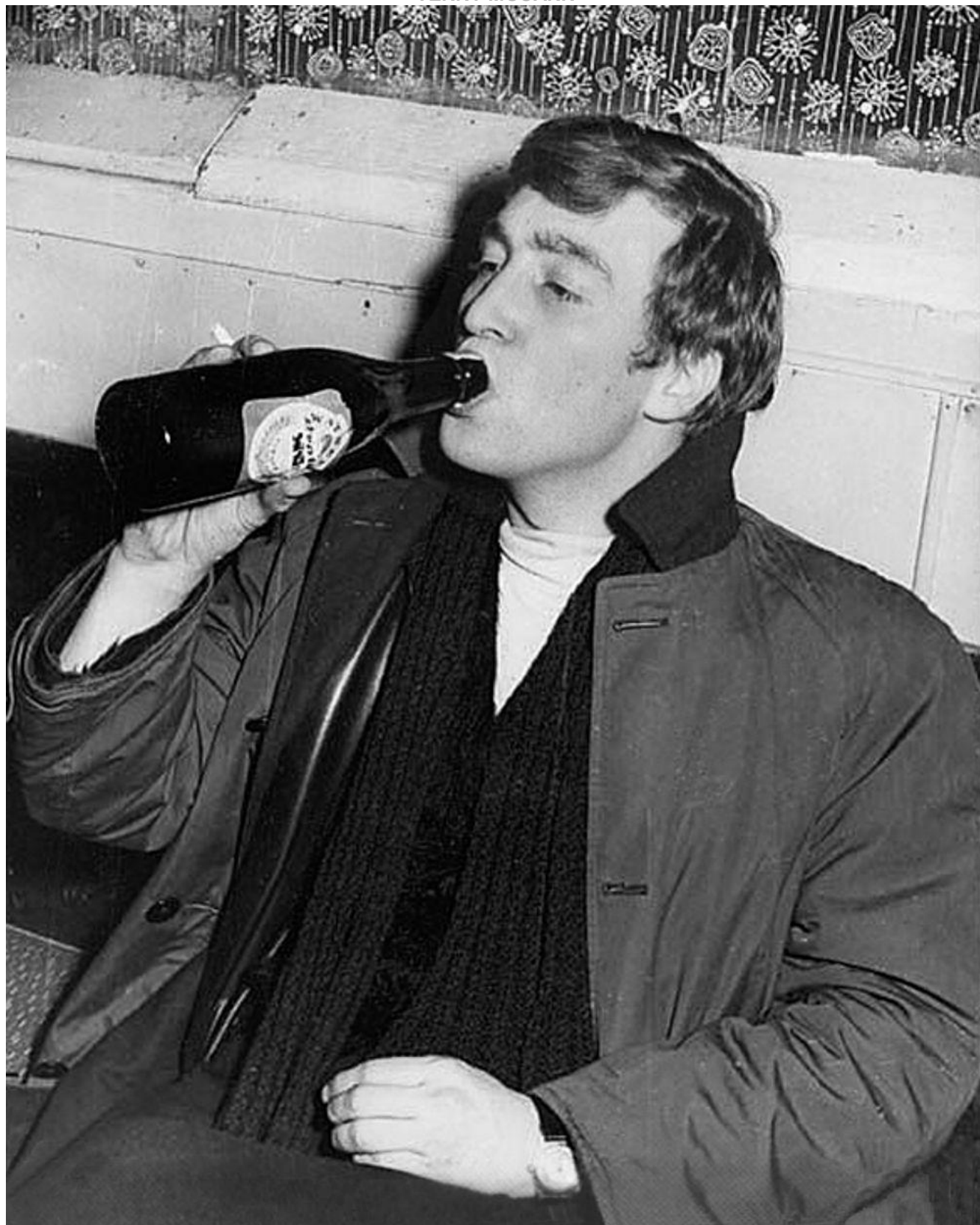






You can imagine what it was like for the Beatles with about four people dancing and six miserable faces standing around the edge looking on. They did their best, but it was no use. They packed up at about 9:30 pm. Then Sam produced the beer, and the bingo balls started getting kicked around the floor: Liverpool versus Aldershot.

TERRY MCCANN







I often wonder what happens when those youngsters now talk about the night the Beatles came to Aldershot and hardly anyone turned up to see them. I can just hear it. 'Oh, there we were, all 18 of us, watching the Beatles on stage... and they did an encore.'

SAM LEACH



IMAGE: DICK MATTHEWS