



Got That Something! How the Beatles' "I Want to Hold Your Hand" Changed Everything

Allan Kozinn

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THE BEHIND-THE-SCENES STORY OF THE HIT SONG THAT TOOK AMERICA BY STORM.

By the fall of 1963, the Beatles were cruising at the top of the British pop charts, girls were screaming—and often literally fainting—and huge crowds were swarming airports and any other place the mop-topped lads from Liverpool were expected to turn up. The English press had already coined a term for this madness: Beatlemania.

But while their conquest of Britain was no longer in question, the band had yet to captivate America. Then came “I Want to Hold Your Hand,” a burst of bubbly, cheerful energy with an infectious tune and enough original twists and suggestive wordplay to catch even a skeptic’s ear. Suddenly John, Paul, George and Ringo had the country in a swoon and the rock ’n’ roll world was a very different place. Fifty years later, the Beatles remain the most beloved band of all time.

In “Got That Something!” Allan Kozinn, a “New York Times” music critic and reporter and noted authority on the Beatles, chronicles the birth of this iconic Lennon-McCartney song, painting a vivid picture of the legendary songwriting duo at work, and the emergence of this distinctively British-sounding tune that—contrary to the assumptions of American record labels—became beloved in the United States, paving the way for the invasion to come.

In this definitive, vividly detailed portrait of a song and its legacy, Kozinn, who has taught at the Juilliard School and New York University, geeks out over chord progressions, double-tracked vocals, and the two simple words “You” and “I,” which together would carry the group to the top of the charts over and over. His fascination is contagious, bringing to life a seminal moment in rock history, when this “two-and-a-half-minute miracle” forged new possibilities for pop music in the sixties and beyond. Modern-day Beatlemaniacs will also appreciate the comprehensive discography/filmography/bibliography related to the song. If you thought you knew everything about the Fab Four, this book will change your mind.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Allan Kozinn (@kozinn) began writing about music for “The New York Times” in 1977, and joined its culture staff in 1991. A classical music critic for much of his career, he is currently a cultural reporter. His previous books include “The Guitar: The History, the Players, the Music” (William Morrow/Quill, 1984), “Mischa Elman and the Romantic Style” (Harwood, 1990), “The Beatles: From the Cavern to the Rooftop” (Phaidon, 1995) and “The New York Times Essential Library: Classical Music” (Times Books, 2004). He was born in New York and studied music and journalism at Syracuse University.

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