

Blame It On THE BEATLES

AND Bill Shankly

Advertiser Life People In Pictures

My close encounter with Paul inspired new novel

WEST Lancashire author John Winter has used his experiences of life in Liverpool for his new book.

Blame It On The Beatles... And Bill Shankly is set in 1960s, post-war Liverpool.

Liverpool FC are stuck down in Division Two, looking up at the mighty Everton, and for Tony and his teenage friends life is predictable and dull.

Then The Beatles and Bill Shankly come along. And everything goes completely crazy.

John, who lives in Aughton, was born in Liverpool and was a student in the city during the 1960s.

Although the characters in the story are fictional, much of the novel is based on fact.

John was lucky enough to meet Paul McCartney in 1968 when he made a secret visit to The Cavern Club.

"It was towards the end of October, in the mid-afternoon, when a figure wearing a full-length, dark coat wandered into The Cavern Club in Mathew Street.

"His face was partly hidden by a hat with a wide, floppy brim.

"At the time I was combining my university studies with writing pop songs, and I was sitting at a piano in the club with my co-writer.

"The hat was removed and the figure introduced himself to us as Paul McCartney, before going to fetch his new girlfriend, Linda, who was waiting outside in the car.

"He told us he was showing Linda round his old haunts in Liverpool and that the press mustn't find out.

"Linda asked Paul to play Hey Jude, which had just been released as a single, so he sat down at our piano and did exactly that.

"Back in 1968 it was like meeting God!

"I did mention it to a couple of friends some days later but they wouldn't believe me. So I gave up talking about it.

"I even started to think I must have imagined the whole thing."

The story of Paul's



● John Winter with his new novel, also inset right



● Paul McCartney at the Cavern in 1968 with Debbie Greenberg, whose dad, Alf Geophagan, owned the club



John Winter

unannounced visit to The Cavern that October afternoon remained untold for a long time.

It is now included in the book.

And for anybody doubting that the visit took place, there are a couple of black and photographs from 1968 just by the bar in the reopened Cavern Club.

They show Paul and Linda in the club, and Paul playing the drums with a Liverpool band called Curiosity Shop who were rehearsing on stage that afternoon.

John said: "Through my song-writing I got to know quite a few of the musicians and poets who were putting the city on the map."

Faith Brown recorded a couple of my songs when she was still performing as a singer with her two brothers.

"As did David Hamilton, the Radio One DJ."

Blame It On The Beatles... And Bill Shankly

describes the teenage years of Tony and his friends, who watch as music and football transform the city.

In just a few short years The Beatles become four of the most famous people on the planet, and Liverpool FC emerged from the Second Division to hold their own with the best in Europe.

"As far as I'm concerned," John said, "Bill Shankly was a genius who inspired players and fans alike, and turned Liverpool into champions."

"To me it feels very much the same with Jürgen Klopp right now."

The background to the story is the vibrant and exciting Liverpool of the '60s.

Less well-known places like The Casbah in West Derby and The live Hive in Crosby, as well as the small recording studio that Percy Phillips ran from his terraced house at 38 Kensington, feature in the book, alongside

famous sites such as The Cavern and The Kop, Penny Lane and Strawberry Field.

"Many books have been written about The Beatles," John said. "But I don't think very much has been said about the effect of all this sudden fame upon the city, and upon the ordinary people who were just trying to get on with their lives."

"It was an amazing time to be young and living in Liverpool."

"But as can often be the case with sudden and unexpected fame, the effects were complicated."

"Mostly they were positive. But not always."

"That's what interested me, and why I decided to make the characters fictional. It allowed me to show what they were feeling about what was going on in the city and in the wider world."

"And it wasn't just The Beatles. There was Bill Shankly and Liverpool

FC, and all the other Liverpool bands.

"And Liverpool poets such as Adrian Henri, Roger McCough and Brian Patten, along with acts like The Scaffold with Paul McCartney's brother, Mike.

"It was a tidal wave of popular culture which had a massive effect upon the city and its people."

"And half a century on the effects still reverberate."

For those who weren't lucky enough to have been there, Blame It On The Beatles... And Bill Shankly tells you what it was like to be a teenager, living in Liverpool, at that time.

It is available now from bookshops and online. RRP £8.99.



● Bill Shankly was an inspirational genius who helped make the city great, says John Winter

Book Reviews

'A wonderful read'

This book is a wonderful read for anyone who was a teenager in America in the 1960's and can remember the first time they heard 'She Loves You'. The city of Liverpool features in the story, and as an American who has never been there I was able to immerse myself in the travels of Tony, the fictional main character, to The Cavern, The Kop, Lennon's Art School, Penny Lane, and the coffee and record shops in the city centre. The author, John Winter, writes with great empathy about Liverpool's bomb sites and post-war deprivations while revealing how the younger generation brought joy into their lives through the sexual energy of their music and the ascendancy of Liverpool Football Club. Tony endures personal tragedy against this life affirming background. His story parallels the events of the 1960's and, by the end of the book, he has grown up – as we all have to. His eventual happiness provides an uplifting ending. **D.A.**

'I am completely enthralled with this book'

Having loved The Beatles' music, played soccer for ten years, and visited Liverpool several times, I am completely enthralled with this book. Winter very effectively takes fictional characters and weaves them into a story that illuminates the history of Liverpool in the tumultuous 60's. I could feel the vibrations of The Beatles' music and the excitement of the crowd at the Cavern Club, and I was there with the fans on the Kop at Anfield as they went wild for every Liverpool goal. In addition, the life lessons learned by the main character, Tony, are as applicable today (maybe more so) as they were then. I highly recommend 'Blame It On The Beatles ... And Bill Shankly'. **J.K.**

'I really enjoyed reading this'

I really enjoyed reading this. I live relatively close to Liverpool so it was good to read about various areas from a bygone era. Enjoyed the fiction interlaced with it too. **K.S.**

'An excellent read ... a real page turner'

This made an excellent read for me and proved to be a real page turner. I moved to the West Country 45 years ago having spent my formative years in Liverpool. I enjoyed the story John Winter has woven against the factual backdrop of the time. It transported me right back to the 60's. I was there and I can vouch for the authenticity. Indeed I can identify in parts both with Sarah and Fiona. **R.J.**

'A coming-of-age tale that describes the impact events had upon a whole generation'

I have just been transported back in time and place by the book 'Blame It On The Beatles... And Bill Shankly'. In 1964 I was one of those screaming teens who couldn't get enough of the four moppets from Liverpool and only imagined what life was like in the city which spawned The Beatles and the musical groups who followed. As an adult I have been privileged to visit Liverpool where I was also exposed to the unabashed enthusiasm and loyalty of the fans of Liverpool Football (Soccer) Club. As an American my musings fell short of the descriptions and events portrayed in this book. From an adult perspective I now have a new appreciation of how music and sport drastically changed a city. This is a coming-of-age tale that describes the impact events had upon a whole generation. **K.K.D.**

'A story rich in detail of time and place'

As an American, this book allowed me to experience the very beginnings of The Beatles in their environment of Liverpool. I was able to walk around the city, visiting all of the places where they gained their inspiration, like Penny Lane and Strawberry Fields, and the clubs where they played. It's a story rich in detail of time and place; the fictional characters give the book its emotional tone, from the dullness of post-war living, to the energy of music, and from the success of the soccer team. I highly recommend it. **Steve**

'A really pleasant nostalgia trip ... I enjoyed it'

This is a really pleasant nostalgia trip, filled with real-life incidents of the rise of The Beatles and Liverpool Football Club. The fictional story forms a framework on which to hang a factually accurate account of the exciting times that were the early 1960s, which the author actually experienced. My husband is from Liverpool and was a young teenager at that time also, so it felt very real to me. Thanks, I enjoyed it. **A.F.**

'I enjoyed this as a fan of The Beatles. Good read.'

I enjoyed this read as a fan of The Beatles. I only knew a little about Liverpool before reading. Good read. **A.D.**

'I loved the fictional story. A definite five star book.'

I loved the fictional story and all the background information about what it was like in Liverpool back in the sixties. Great read. A definite five star book. **C.B.**