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## Dig those sixties vibes, man or "How the Beatles changed my life"

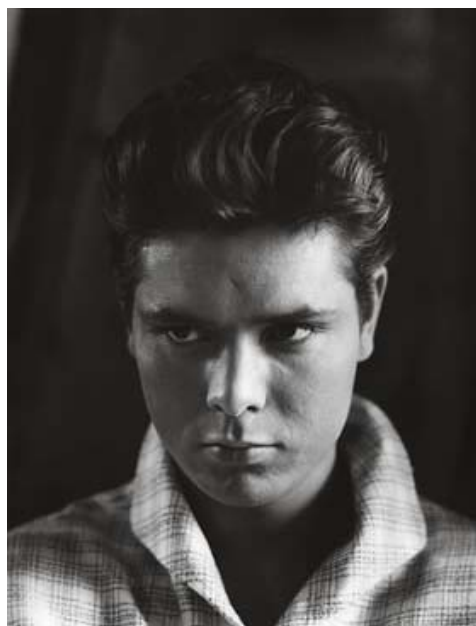
Fabulous images of musicians and fashion at the National Portrait Gallery capture a unique era, says Robin Richmond

The Beatles changed my life. Now I know there are a lot of late middle-aged women who say that, but my life was literally changed by the Fab Four. In 1963, having lived in Rome already for two years, my right-on parents fell out with my American school over its draft policy for the war in Vietnam. They wanted me to be educated in English, and they saw me as a young Daisy Miller – an American abroad.

But much to their horror I had bought a copy of *Please Please Me* on a family visit to London and had other ideas about my future. And so I moved across the Eternal City, Beatle-mad and mini-skirted, to the English school and stayed there until I went to Chelsea School of Art at the fag end of the 60's when King's Road was still tottering, if not exactly swinging. I have stayed in England ever since. Thus are momentous decisions made – in total arbitrariness. I met my partner at a Julie Driscoll gig in 1968. Steve Hiett's portrait in the exhibition of Julie in the same year, demure and hugely-eyelashed in all her elfin finery is as exquisite as a painting by Manet. And reader, I married him in a "completely unsuitable" dress by *Foale and Tuffin* and changed into *Biba* later, "even more unsuitable" according to my grandmother. Marion Foale and Sally Tuffinclamber with a young Jean Muir and Mary Quant (among others) on a lamppost on Chelsea Embankment in a delightful photograph by Norman Parkinson for *Life* magazine in 1963. Fashion and music are inextricably intertwined in the history of this time and the show pays ample testimony to this phenomenon.



The Beatles, 1964 By Robert Whitaker©



Cliff Richard, 1960 By Cornel Lucas©  
National Portrait Gallery, London

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In 150 images, including over a



**Marianne Faithfull Battersea Park, London, 1965**

By Tony Frank ©

Fiona Adams's work in the show is particularly fine. A young photographer in 1963, her image of the Beatles jumping like manic semaphores on the Euston road (used on the EP of *Twist and Shout* which I treasured) is splendid. Explaining the genesis of the image to me, she told me that the great Richard Avedon's advice was that people were at their most uninhibited when jumping, and uninhibited is what they are. ("Such nice boys they were" she said). This is an image of pure joy. Her portrait of Hendrix of 1967 is also a rare treasure. He gazes out like a groovy, shy faun from the protection of a bucolic soft-edged garden – not the weirded-out Jimi I saw at the Palazzo dello Sport a year later. The iconic images abound. Cornel Lucas' 1960 picture of Cliff brooding smokingly, Marianne Faithfull in faux-innocence and knee socks by Gered Mankowitz, Bailey's wind-blown Jane Birkin and serious Beatles, the Stones in all their glorious decadence, Bowie with bed-hair in what looks like silver pajamas. Dylan buying shoes in Topper (was he really going to buy those hush-puppies?) ... these are just a small tasting of very rich pickings. The show is just the right thing for a rainy Autumn afternoon. It's a gas, gas, gas.

23 October 2009

hundred never seen before, the show celebrates the 50th anniversary of the start of the 60's in 2010, and its stated aim is to show how music changed the world. I don't think this claim is exaggerated. There is a collection of ephemera from album covers, pop mags to cut-out paper dolls (why did I not keep my copies of *Fabulous*?) but it is the iconic images which stand out. The famous rivalry between The Beatles and the Stones is well documented. Michael Joseph's gloriously decadent photo for *Beggar's Banquet* is legend. He told me this shoot took three days as the goat kept eating the cherries. I refrained from asking him why they were not removed until the critical moment but that is missing the point. This was 1968 after all.



**The Who, 1966** By Colin Jones ©

National Portrait Gallery, London

*From Beatles to Bowie: The 60s Exposed* National Portrait Gallery until 24 January 2010

- [Robin Richmond's website](#)



