

ALL YOU NEED IS LUCK...OR

HOW I GOT
A RECORD DEAL
BY MEETING
PAUL
McCARTNEY



by Paul Tennant
with John Willis

HappyAbout.info



“All You Need Is Luck...” Book Excerpt

How I Got a Record Deal by
Meeting Paul McCartney

**By Paul Tennant
with John Willis**

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P r e f a c e

Preface

1968. I was a working-class kid from the streets of Liverpool, suddenly living in a house in London, with a job as a songwriter and recording artist for the **Beatles'** brand-new company, Apple.

The **Beatles**, the greatest rock stars in the world, were totally accessible to me and my band, recently christened “**Focal Point**” by the **Beatles'** manager, Mr. Brian Epstein himself. All of our expenses, our clothes, our rent, even our haircuts were paid for by the **Beatles'** organization.

As you can imagine, girls were never a problem. Not when you're 20 and every club in London has you on its VIP list. When you know the **Beatles** and run with the likes of Robin Gibb of the **Bee Gees** and Mick and Keith of the **Rolling Stones** as well as a dozen other rock stars of the era.

Decca Records quickly signed us to a five-year deal. We borrowed the **Beatles'** instruments anytime we wanted. Yes, even Paul's famous left-handed guitar. The great John Lennon himself even helped us write a song. And we blew it. We screwed it up. We let it ALL slip away.

I could offer many reasons for our blunders, but the truth is we didn't understand how good we had it. Maybe we secretly felt that we didn't deserve the amazing stroke of luck that struck us the morning we followed Paul McCartney into the park.

1968. There was enough excitement for a lifetime. It was mad, exhilarating, but with all that was happening to us we grew cocky and arrogant. Worst of all, we didn't bother to learn how the music business really functioned. We didn't want to know. Why should we? There was wine to consume and girls to be had and parties to go to.

They say, hindsight is 20/20. It's true. If I could just turn back the hands of time to have that opportunity again. I can tell you this—I wouldn't take it for granted. I wouldn't put my fate in the hands of others.

But never mind. Things happen for a reason. Karma takes care of karma. It all works out in the end.

I'll never forget 1968. What an amazing year it was for a naive young musician from Liverpool.

Paul Tennant

Chapter

6 I Could Get You a Recording Contract Just Like That



Paul with Martha

On that not-to-be-forgotten day in 1967, I was reading one of my mum's magazines. There was only one magazine that my mother read on a regular basis: "The Woman's Own." It was usually full of crap. The first thing I would normally do when I picked it up was to go

straight to the problems page and read the situations that people had gotten themselves into. Compared to the things you read about today, they were pretty tame, but for 1967, they were pretty hot.

In that particular issue of the magazine, I stumbled on a feature about famous people's houses. There were pictures of houses in Hollywood, New York, Paris and London. Glancing through, I realised there was an article on one house that interested me more than any of the others: the house belonging to Paul McCartney in St. Johns Wood in London. The article did not give the address, but it did say it was close to Lord's Cricket Ground. It went on to show you pictures of luxury beyond my comprehension. How could anyone afford a house like that? Then it went into detail on how much Paul McCartney made from song writing. It was amazing. I knew you made a few bob, but enough to buy a house like that? I had no idea.

I read the article, and then immediately put it to the back of my mind, as I had no reason to remember it. At the time, I had no idea what a major influence it would have on my life and this story.

Dave Rhodes, Peter McKenna, and I were the best of *mates* at the time. We hung around with each other at every opportunity—unless I was seeing Jenny. My romance was definitely back on again, and she came around to my house on many occasions. We would sit in the front room playing music, while mum and dad and my sister Jane were watching television in the other room. It was not a serious relationship at that time and it left me with plenty of time to attend to my musical aspirations. I was determined, after Lynne, that I would never again get seriously involved with a woman.

The weather was getting better now and, before I knew it, we were well into May. Dave, Peter, and I decided that we needed to take a holiday, but where were we going to go? We eventually decided on Torquay. It was a major holiday destination at the time; Cornwall and Devon were the place to be. In addition, the weather would be much better down there in the sunny south of England.

Getting there was going to be a problem, because none of us had a car. So we had to hire one from a local rental company. We booked a new Ford Corsair, in British Racing Green. It was ideal for the three of us, and pretty good on the petrol, too.

I had to get time off work. That was not a problem, and as soon as I got to work the next day I booked some holidays. I had not had a holiday for quite a while.

On a Saturday morning, we loaded up our luggage and said our goodbyes. My mum and dad were not due back until the evening, so I left them a note. We hadn't booked any accommodations; that was the last thing on our minds. It was summer, the weather was warm, and the car had nice comfortable seats. It would be a perfect place to sleep. Three guys *kipping* in a car for a week, with no access to a shower or bath—Yuk! But we didn't worry about things like that in the '60s. It was the summer of love, flower power, flared trousers, kaftans, hippies, and beads.

Something happened on the road that made us change our plans completely. I don't know who instigated the idea, but, somewhere along the way, we made the major decision to divert from Torquay and head for London. We all agreed it would be a good idea. After all, London was the capital of the music world; that's where it was all happening. We had no idea what we were going to do in London, but we did know we were going to have some fun. Hell, it was only about a 200-mile diversion!

I needed to get the last terrible trip Mike McKenna and I had to London out of my mind. I needed to have a good memory of London rather than the awful one of the “girls, girls, and girls” incident.

I had not mentioned the story about Paul McCartney's house to Dave or Peter. It had been forgotten, put to the back of my mind, into that filing cabinet full of useless facts and information. The one that contains all the things you learned in school and forgot about—algebra, for instance. I don't know anyone who has ever used algebra in their normal daily life. It was so much useless information. The story about McCartney's house was in the same category.

The trip to London from Liverpool took about 5 hours. We arrived there in early afternoon. I had no idea which way to go, so I just followed the signs. The car had no radio, nothing to relieve the boredom of the journey, so the three of us just talked and talked and talked.

I drove past a tube station that said “St. Johns Wood” and then saw a sign that said “Lord's Cricket Ground.” That was when that filing cabinet opened, and the Paul McCartney story came out.

“I read that Paul McCartney lives by Lord's Cricket Ground,” I said. Then I told them the story about his fantastic house and the luxurious lifestyle that he lived. Either Dave or Peter asked, “Where does he live?” I did not know exactly. “I haven't got a clue,” I said. “But it's around here somewhere.”

On a hunch, I turned the car around and made my way toward Lord's. We drove down a few roads that were full of massive houses, all surrounded by trees. Then, as if by magic, we found ourselves in Cavendish Avenue. It was as if there was a magnet pulling us, dragging us to the most fateful day of my life.

Cavendish Avenue is situated immediately behind Lord's Cricket Ground. I knew straight away that we had found the McCartney residence. How did I know? Well, there was this house set back off the road, a large mansion surrounded by a six-foot wall, with a pair of large black gates. No different from all the other houses in the road with one exception—this house was surrounded by about 50 girls all hanging around, waiting.

We parked the car and walked back to speak to some of the girls. They were all standing around with autograph books and pictures of the **Beatles**. Some of them were looking through the cracks in the gates; others were trying to climb up the wall. One of the girls confirmed the obvious. This was Paul McCartney's house—7 Cavendish Avenue.

“Paul's in there at the moment with Jane,” said one of the girls. I think we said something like “How do you know?” A stupid thing to say; how did they know? Probably because they had been there for days and had seen him go into the house.

Dave and I then had some instant telepathy, and we headed back to the car. But not before I had taken a peek through the gates. I could see a couple of cars. One of them was a small Mini. I also noticed a gas lamppost in the garden—the kind that used to stand in the street years ago. The same kind we used as a wicket or goalpost all those years ago in Dorset Road. I remembered the lamppost from the picture of his house in “The Woman's Own” magazine.

Back in the car, Dave and I started talking about the situation. Here we were, outside the house of the biggest star in the world, and maybe this was an opportunity not to be missed. Why don't we tell him about our songs? Ask him what can we do to get someone to listen to them? How can we get a break?

This was not what we had intended to do. We were supposed to be on holiday, supposed—at that moment—to be arriving in Torquay!

We came up with a plan to wait outside his house and try to talk to him when he came out. What the hell, what did we have to lose? Nothing at all, and that is precisely what we did. We did not have to wait very long.

All of a sudden, the gates of the house opened, and the Mini that we had seen earlier shot out and turned right into Cavendish Avenue. Our plan was now in tatters. I decided that the only thing to do was to follow the car. We did not know who was in it. Maybe it was the butler, for all we knew.

I drew closer to the Mini as it neared the main road. When it stopped, I pulled up as close as I possibly could. At that moment, we could see who was sitting in the back seat. There was a large dog and a guy in a candy-striped jacket with black hair. On closer inspection, you could see it was Paul McCartney himself.

The Mini then started to pull away into a break in the traffic, with me in pursuit. It was like a chase in a James Bond film. We nearly lost it on a couple of occasions. At one point I had to run a red light to keep up with it. It was a harrowing drive, taking us up toward Baker Street and eventually up the Edgware Road to Marble Arch. The Mini then turned right, making its way toward Paddington. Where was he

headed? It was all a mystery, but we were soon to find out. All of a sudden, the Mini stopped. We stayed back a little way, as we observed the scene.

The door opened and the dog jumped out, followed by Paul McCartney. He leaned into the car, said something to the driver, gave a wave and the car was gone. We had stopped in Hyde Park, right next to a large grassy field. Paul headed off into that field, walking the dog. Hyde Park is probably the biggest park in London, and there were lots of people around, doing all the usual things. Some were kicking a football around, others playing with a dog, and some just relaxing in the warm sunshine. We made an instant decision yet again and just abandoned the car. Paul and the dog were getting farther and farther away, so we started to follow.

As we caught up with him, I could see that he was taller than I remembered, and his hair was short—well, short for a Beatle—and it was black. I had always remembered it as brown from seeing him all those years before. He was wearing a candy-coloured striped blazer and flared trousers.

I didn't know what we were going to do, didn't know what we were going to say. I don't think Dave or Peter did, either. I recall some small talk among us as we followed from a distance. Then the moment of truth arrived.

Dave Rhodes made the move. His brain was the quickest, and he was the cheeky *Scouser*, the cocky one.

“Paul, hang on a minute, *mate*. Can we talk to you?” he shouted. Yes, he shouted at the Great Man, expecting him to respond. Peter and I wanted the ground to swallow us up. We cringed! There he was, all alone. Nowadays, he would be surrounded by minders. You would never get near him now. But that is not the way it was in 1967, on that fateful sunny day in Hyde Park.

Paul McCartney turned around and stared at us as we approached him. “Alright, Paul,” said Dave. “Can we have a word?” Paul must have recognised Dave's accent. This apparently made him feel a little at ease because he said to Dave, “What do you want?” I just stood there and said nothing. I left it all to my best friend, Dave.

“We write songs and we were wondering if you could give us any idea how we can get someone to listen to them?” asked Dave. The Great Man looked at Dave and said something like “Yea, but why should I?” Dave immediately hit back with “Because they're good songs.”

I don't recall the ensuing conversation, but one phrase stuck in my mind.

Paul said something that was a little arrogant to say the least. “I could get you a recording contract, just like that,” and *Macca* flicked his fingers together.

Dave continued to tell him about how we were a duo and were writing songs and wanted some help. He was repeating himself over and over. Paul continued listening and then showed himself to be human by scratching his nose—for some unknown reason.

It was obvious that he had enough of the “three amigos from Liverpool.” He took a pen out of his pocket, wrote something on a piece of paper, and handed it to Dave.

“Give this guy a call and tell him I sent you. He will listen to your songs. We are forming this new company called Apple. It will be OK.” He then turned around, shouted “see ya,” and continued walking the dog.

We were mesmerized and couldn't believe what had happened. Dave put the piece of paper in his pocket, and we watched as our hero walked away across the field. As we made our way back to the car, I think we were all shaking.

I firmly believe in fate, and I am absolutely positive that this was meant to happen; it was written in our stars.

It was Karma; his Karma and our Karma.

The piece of paper had three words on it—Terry Doran, Apple, and a phone number. That piece of paper would now be worth a couple of pounds if sold on eBay, but it ended up in someone's waste bin.

For some reason, we did not make the phone call immediately. I think, we all came to the same conclusion that there would be nobody there on a Saturday afternoon. We decided to call on Monday.

We also made another decision, to head off immediately to Torquay and our holiday. Wow, did we have a lot of things to tell our friends back home! Nobody was going to believe what had happened to us. Paul McCartney talking to you in a park? Don't make me laugh.

Appendix

A Glossary of Merseytalk and UK Slang

<u>Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
Anfield	A district in Liverpool where the beloved and famous football ground is located.
bacon butties	Bacon sandwiches.
bacon sarnies	Bacon sandwiches.
big trad	A big tradition; an accepted thing.
busking	Sitting in the street playing an instrument and hoping people will give you money for it.
chuffed	To be pleased; to be happy with life.
commi waiter	A trainee waiter.
do bits and pieces	Odds and ends, or a miscellaneous gathering of things.
dogs' home	A city dog pound.
easy as a doddle	An easy achievement; in America would be called “a snap.”

estate car	Station wagon.
feet under the table	To feel accepted; to feel at home.
go down a treat	To be welcomed and enjoyed.
gobsmacked	Amazed, astounded, surprised.
joss stick	Incense stick burned to conceal the smell of cannabis.
kiping	Sleeping.
Macca	Nickname for Paul McCartney.
mate	A friend.
mooch	To idle away time, to loaf around.
naff thing	Unfashionable.
paper round	The route a paper delivery boy takes.
piece of piss	Very easy to do.
piss off	Go away, be gone.
pissed	Drunk.
plumbed	Chose; selected; opted for.
poofter	An effeminate male; a homosexual.
poser	One who struts or parades to impress onlookers.

posing	Strutting, parading, or showing off to impress onlookers.
Pratt	A person that is fraudulent or hypocritical; an objectionable person.
pulling the girls	Getting girls to have sex.
punter	A client, a customer.
return	Round trip.
right scrubbers	Coarse and sexually amenable or promiscuous women.
sausage	A small amount of money, enough to buy a link of sausage.
Scally	A term for Liverpudlian youths, used in and around Liverpool itself (derived from “scally-wag”).
scouse	Of, or from, Liverpool. Derived from the name of a local stew, an abbreviation of lobscouse.
Scouser	A Liverpudlian.
scrان	Food.
shorts	A short (of liquor) in the UK would be called a shot in America.
skiffle group	A band that plays country/Cajun type music.
skint	Having no money.

street cred	Having fashionable awareness, acceptable on the 'street'.
subs	Subsidies; gifts.
taking the piss out	To pull someone's leg; to jeer at someone; to be critical or contemptuous; to put someone down.
Teddy	A Teddy boy; a youth who affects flashy dress, especially of a neo-Edwardian style, popular in the 1950s and 1960s.
Teds	Dressed as Teddy boys; see "Teddy."
took to shank's pony	Traveled on foot, walked.
wacky backy	Marijuana.
wanker	Implies general contempt for or displeasure with someone.
winkle picker shoes	Very long shoes, popular in the 1950s and 1960s.

A u t h o r

About the Author



Photo Credit: Peter Foldy

Paul Tennant was born in Liverpool in 1945 and has been a musician for most of his life. He witnessed the birth of the **Beatles** first hand, watching them perform in the smallest of Liverpool venues before they achieved world-wide fame. By a random twist of fate, he was lucky enough to become one of the first musicians signed by the fab four to their brand new music company, Apple. Paul and his band, “**Focal Point**” spent 1968 writing and recording for Apple, as well as Decca Records. That year, he worked and associated with not only the Beatles, but many other huge stars of the era. Mr. Tennant was a part of and a witness to rock music history.

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