

## Fashioning the Beatles: The Looks That Shook the World

**Deirdre Kelly**

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Deirdre Kelly's cultural history book *Fashioning the Beatles* is insightful in revealing the Fab Four's influence on fashion and popular culture throughout the 1960s.

Tracking the band's development year by year, the book reveals how the band members developed from inexperienced youngsters who did everything together to grown men with distinct preferences and tastes. They started out as a tough-looking foursome dressed in leather; even early on, they had a keen eye for fashion, and their transformative 1964 performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show* changed the industry overnight.

With innate knowledge of the importance of a band's image in their making it big, the group mixed and matched continental trends with British bespoke suits and created the infamous Beatles look: mop top hair, collarless suits, and high-heeled boots. These uniforms made sense in the early stages of the band's career. But, refusing to rest there, the group also adapted this style to complement their music as it evolved; and their fans followed, launching the Swinging Sixties in the process. The men's beards, knitted sweaters, and psychedelic colors took over toward the end of the decade, revealing the splinters within the band as each member began to follow their own path.

Across their time as a band, Kelly makes it clear how much the Beatles influenced music, fashion, art, and commerce, even becoming the first artists to launch their own brands and boutiques. And the band's changing fashions are illustrated with precision throughout; the book makes use of standout photographs that are embellished with fresh context. The men's changing tastes are further couched in terms of social changes—the recovery of British society from the destruction of World War II among them.

*Fashioning the Beatles* is fascinating in revealing the distinct and consequential personal tastes of the Beatles.

ERIKA HARLITZ KERN (September / October 2023)

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