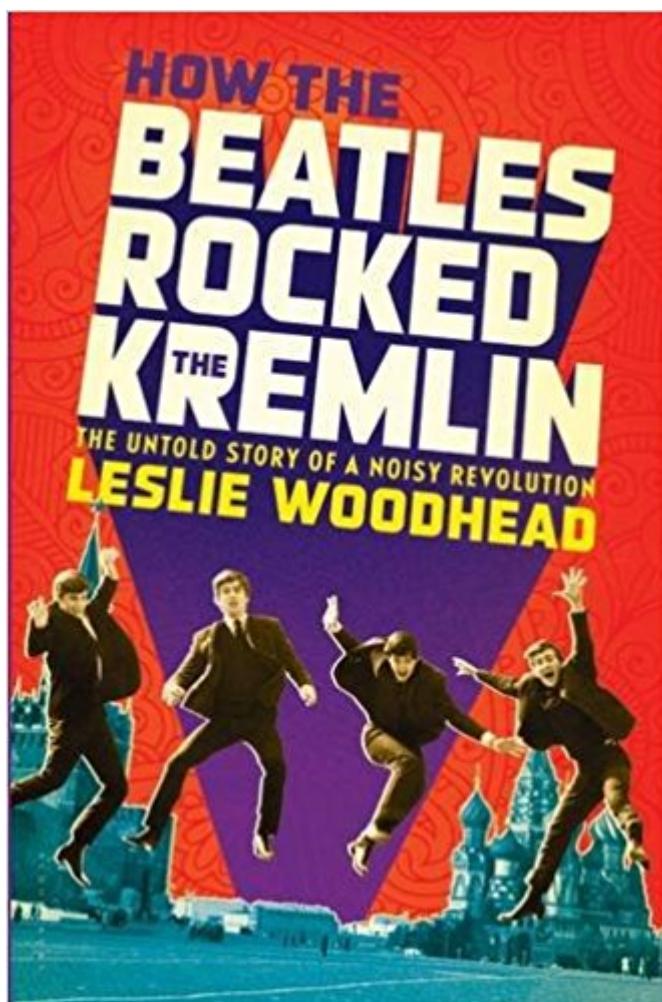


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# How The Beatles Rocked The Kremlin: The Untold Story Of A Noisy Revolution



## Synopsis

Imagine a world where Beatlemania was against the law-recordings scratched onto medical X-rays, merchant sailors bringing home contraband LPs, spotty broadcasts taped from western AM radio late in the night. This was no fantasy world populated by Blue Meanies but the USSR, where a vast nation of music fans risked repression to hear the defining band of the British Invasion. The music of John, Paul, George, and Ringo played a part in waking up an entire generation of Soviet youth, opening their eyes to seventy years of bland official culture and rigid authoritarianism. Soviet leaders had suppressed most Western popular music since the days of jazz, but the Beatles and the bands they inspired-both in the West and in Russia-battered down the walls of state culture. Leslie Woodhead's *How The Beatles Rocked the Kremlin* tells the unforgettable-and endearingly odd-story of Russians who discovered that all you need is Beatles. By stealth, by way of whispers, through the illicit late night broadcasts on Radio Luxembourg, the Soviet Beatles kids tuned in. "Bitles," they whispered, "Yeah, Yeah, Yeah."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Who really tore down the Iron Curtain? British documentarian Woodhead suggests it may have been John, Paul, George, and Ringo. Woodhead was a young researcher when he led a Liverpool TV crew into the Cavern Club to film the Beatles for the first time. He had eavesdropped on Soviet and East German pilots from West Germany during 1950s military service, so when Gorbachev's liberalization brought Soviet tourists west who proclaimed the Beatles had

freed their minds, Woodhead wanted to know more. This book is the product of many trips to the USSR and, later, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and encounters and interviews with people, young and old, in the mainstream and far outside it, all of whom viewed the Beatles as their saviors. In a USSR ruled by fear and belief, contemporaries told Woodhead, the Beatles dissolved their fear and undermined their political faith. Sadly, this celebration of the joy and freedom the Beatles brought to the Khrushchev-era USSR closes with Woodhead’s Russian friends organizing against the 2012 prosecution of Pussy Riot for all-too-familiar cultural “crimes.” --Mary Carroll

“Leslie Woodhead has given us a priceless addition to Beatle literature--and a beautifully observed and witty insight into the cultural underbelly of the Soviet Union.” Paul Greengrass, director of *The Bourne Supremacy*, *The Bourne Ultimatum*, *United 93* and *Green Zone* “How the Beatles really did come and keep their comrades warm” a fascinating lost chapter in their history. “Forget the triumph of market capitalism. According to Leslie Woodhead, it was the subversive power of art and cultural connection that stoked the fires of freedom and popular revolution, which ultimately brought down the Iron Curtain. A deliciously appealing premise!”

“Fine on-the-ground reporting here” [A] worthwhile addition to the Beatles bookshelf.

“Did the Fab Four bring down the Soviet Empire single-handed? It’s a wonderful thought” Woodhead’s book is rather more about Russia than it is about The Beatles, but it’s also about the most socialist of concepts, historical inevitability

In this story the true believers won, and they still believe. You’ll read the book with a smile on your face, and a song“possibly written by Lennon and McCartney” in your heart

“In 1962, as a young TV producer, Leslie Woodhead made a short film at Liverpool’s Cavern Club about a local pop group who had caught his eye. The Beatles, of course, went on to conquer the musical world. More startlingly, according to his new book, they might also have helped demolish the vast totalitarian edifice that was the Soviet Union” Could a few three minute songs really threaten a superpower? Suddenly the claims of Woodhead’s Beatlemaniacs “the Russians for whom Lennon trumped Lenin” don’t seem quite so absurd after all

“Effervescent” This tells the remarkable story of precisely how and why Woodhead explains, ‘the Beatles came to mean more, and were more important, to that generation of Soviet youth that they were here, or in America” for several reasons”

I gave it as a Christmas gift to my brother, who is a follower of the Beatles since His youth hood. He informed me that He loved it.

What can I say? My husband loves anything about the Beatles. Most of the books share the same stories but my husband was very impressed with the history that was attached with this one.

well written, entertaining. a great gift for anyone interested in the great music of the sixties!!! I totally recommend this book.

Subtitled, "The Untold Story of a Noisy Revolution", this is the remarkable story of a youth revolution centred around a seemingly unquenchable passion for the Beatles. In 1962, the author was working as a young researcher for Granada television. A jazz fan, he was nevertheless looking for a local rock and roll band for a programme, and a friend directed him to a cellar in Mathew Street, where he filmed the famous clip of the Beatles playing at the Cavern ('Some Other Guy', "We want Pete!" - yes, that one). Without having any real fondness for rock and roll before, he was, like countless others before and since, interested enough in the band to see other concerts and helped arrange their first live spot on Granada television. By the end of that year they had their first single out, by the end of the following year Beatlemania had begun and by the year after that, they had more or less conquered the whole world. Except in the Soviet Union, where they were considered a bad influence and banned by the powers in charge. Years later, Leslie Woodhead found himself filming documentaries in Russia and he was fascinated by the loyal legion of underground fans of those four boys from Liverpool. This then, is the story of the Soviet Union's love affair with the Beatles. "They changed everything," asserts Stas Namin, a Russian musician. "They were very dangerous for the regime, because (the leaders) knew the Beatles gave Beatles kids some kind of freedom inside." As well as discussing the fans and the obsessive lengths they went to in order to hear the Beatles music (flexi discs produced on x-rays for example and sold on street corners, with the risk of arrest if caught) this is also a history of the cultural musical assault from the West. The author studies the effect of jazz, dance music and rock and roll within the context of Stalin's Great Terror, the second world war and the years of the Cold War. The Beatles were seen as so dangerous that young people could be arrested for playing in a rock and roll band, have their head shaved if their hair was considered too long; and there were even propaganda films and show trials

in schools, with the Beatles held up as a bad influence on youth. However, there is no doubt that things that are banned become ultimately even more attractive and Beatles fans became more and more adept at getting round the restrictions. Despite the difficulty of hearing the music, with only grainy black and white pictures of the band and no hope of seeing them live, Russian fans are some of the most obsessive in the world. The author introduces super fan Koly Vasia, who has a temple to all things Beatle and was arrested many times for his love of the band. There is a great scene at a birthday party held for John Lennon, there are Beatles competitions and an outpouring of love when Paul McCartney finally arrives for a concert (the author discusses the Red Square concert and Kiev). It is also the story of how fans, such as Andrei Makarevich, made their own music. A pioneer of Soviet Rock, Makarevich began with secret gigs, keeping one step ahead of the police, before finally becoming a star in his own right. Ironically, when he finally made the pilgrimage to Liverpool, he was shocked by how poor the city was. For indeed, to many of these fans, the Beatles became something quite 'other worldly', almost mystical in their eyes. What is clear though, is that the band somehow did become a symbol for dissatisfied youth, filling a gap that Soviet society failed to and helping to push through change. This is a fascinating read and if you manage to see the documentary of the same name then please do so, as it is well worth a watch. Fans owe Leslie Woodhead two debts now - one for capturing the only footage of the band at the Cavern and this book, which shows their influence did create change and how important they were, and still are, in popular culture.

This is a very interesting and historical look at The Soviet Union and how western influences, most specifically The Beatles, changed a generation. But instead of beginning the story in 1964 when the mop tops were first being heard by fans outside of England, the book traces the influx of jazz and big band music on pre World War Two Russia before communist leaders slammed shut the iron curtain to block out these musical and cultural influences. It was a way to maintain strict loyalty to the party and cast an untrusting suspicious eye toward their western enemies.

...so much as a book about the Russians who loved the Beatles, the various Russian rock & roll artists they spawned, and the culture that was often driven underground or persecuted, finally splitting open the Iron Curtain. Personally, I loved the insight into life in Russia...the culture...the history lesson. The author's writing style is casual, conversational, non-obtrusive. That said, the first 60 pages or so involves a lengthy history of the jazz influence in Russia prior to 1960, making me wonder if I'd been mislead. Sixty pages is quite a sidetrack. The book itself is more of a sociological

study of (Western) music's influence on a closed/repressive society than a revealing of inside Beatle information. Around pg 164 (60% through the book), I quit on it; didn't seem to be covering any new ground and was getting repetitious.

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