

with DEZO

Pop images have never been so sharp and so acceptable than since Nick Logan's *FACE* revived the concept of a pictorial based pop scene magazine echoing the colourful *FAB* and *Record Mirror* that exalted the sixties stars and defined the decade's style — the acceptable face of the sixties.

Visiting New Zealand in April was one of that decade's key image makers, Dezo Hoffman, photographer for *Record Mirror* from 1956 to the early 70s. He was promoting a book of his early Beatles photos — hundreds of images from their EMI audition to filming *Help* in 1965.

When asked whether he'd like there to have been a *FACE* magazine a few years back, he wasn't sure.

"It all depends on how much freedom I would have had. I'm a big individualist. I don't like bosses behind my shoulder."

Did you have much freedom with *Record Mirror*?

"Yes, I had a lot to do with the layout but unfortunately the editorial staff had much more. We always quarrelled — on every issue."

After he left *Record Mirror*, Hoffman learnt that the money behind the publisher was in fact Decca Records.



Dezo Hoffman

Did *Record Mirror* initially have to battle with magazines published by the English conglomerate, IPC?

"No, IPC didn't have anything in competition in the early days. *FAB* started with the Beatles. It got the name from the Beatles. That was an IPC publication — their answer to break in against *Record Mirror* — they suddenly saw a new market. Then IPC bought *New Musical Express* in the late sixties."

When it came to publishing a collection of his Beatles photos, Hoffman left the choice to the editor but did not allow the use of his colour images. (He always worked with two Rolliflex cameras, one in colour, plus a 35mm camera.)



EMI audition, June 1962 (George has black eye).

"I selected nothing. There are hundreds of much better pictures. I personally didn't want to do colour because modern printing does something to a sixties type image."

Hoffman took photos of the Beatles in most instances not specifically on assignment for *Record Mirror*.

Did you think then that they were going to be so big?

"Nobody could see that. I knew they would make it. They had the magnetism I'd found with nobody else. I'd already covered Cliff Richard, the Animals etc."

"I did it for pleasure — to be with the boys before they became the so called big Beatles. Half the book is before they made their recordings."

"I'm actually making money now from the Beatles. It looks like I was precalculated. Now I'm being paid double for pictures I

was not paid for — the merchandising were all my pictures. I've never been paid — the crooks disappeared."

In Hoffman's June 1962 photos, the group's first with their new drummer, a surly George Harrison sports a black eye. Who was responsible?

"He didn't know himself. It was a fight at the Cavern. It was mainly because of Ringo joining and the crowd being for Pete. There was a fight — he wanted to separate them — he got a beauty."

Like Alfred Wetheimer's *Elvis '56*, Dezo Hoffman's photos as represented in *With The Beatles* are innovative in using a 35mm camera to create an intimate, casual portrayal in a field where intrusive 5x4 cameras were the norm.

Hoffman learnt his craft in movie work in his home country Czechoslovakia and as a news



Beatles in Soho, 1963.

cameraman during the Spanish Civil War and World War II.

How easy was the transition to the entertainment world?

"To me it was challenging. I saw it in terms of serious work. I had a big success straight away because I was never taking flash pictures like the other photographers with their big 5x4 cameras and their flash bulbs."

"My technique I learnt through filming — you can't have electronic bulb boards in the trenches. As I had to develop newsreels I cut them when I had night shots and I developed them longer. That technique I applied to stills. I cooked it a bit longer in the developer. It's no secret."

Dezo Hoffman had with him a box of old prints — a portrait for a teenage David Bowie looking for modelling work, a multi exposure *Easybeats* record cover etc.

An agent, Rex Features, actively

sells Hoffman's photos to music and feature magazines, keeping the photographer and a printing assistant busy. Hoffman still takes photos. Two recent experiences:

"Just before I came I photographed Cliff Richard for his next album. It was very funny. I have the same approach with him as 20 years ago. It's very funny. I still see him as a young boy. I was middle aged when I started. The Beatles — I could've been their father. It's just lucky that I have a young outlook all the time."

"Not even a year ago I went down to the Adam and the Ants concert. I just couldn't take a picture. When somehow there's a barrier between the artist and myself they have to send someone else. Anybody can dress up as an Indian — there was nothing to it at all. I'm not a circus photographer."

Murray Cammick



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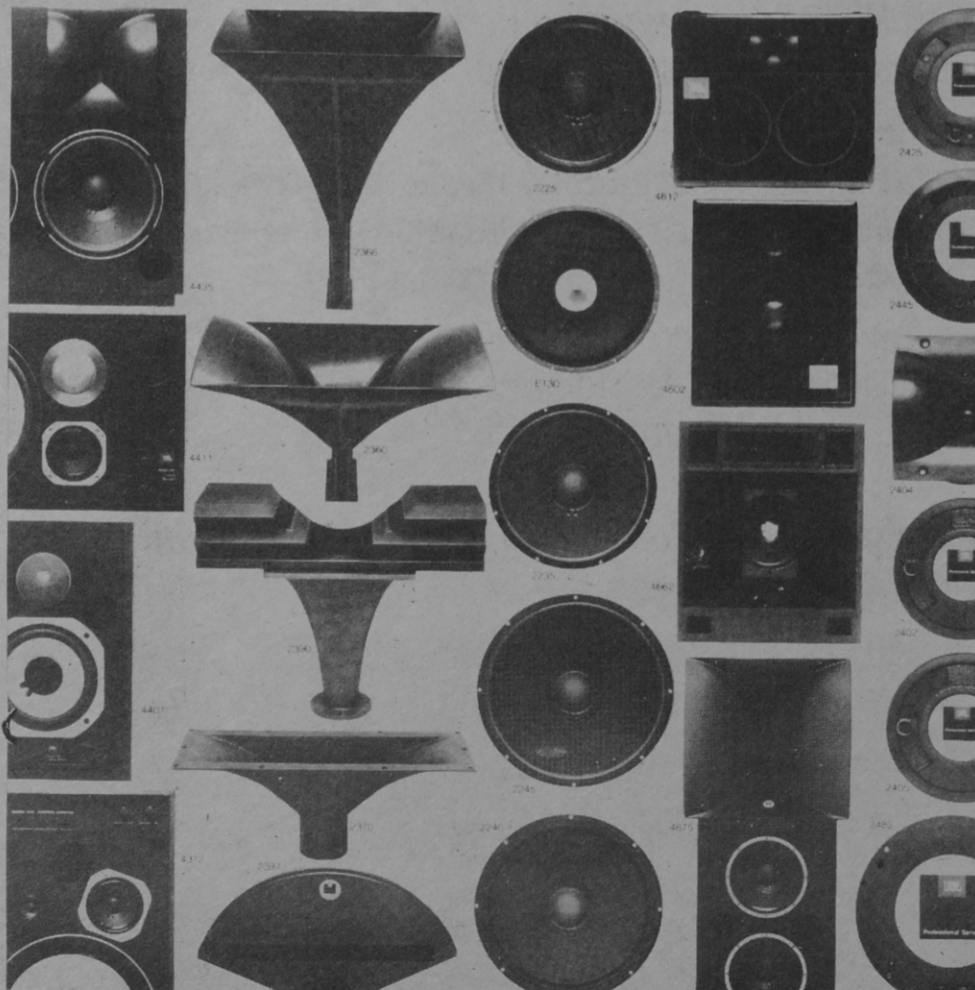
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