

V CULTURAL SPOTLIGHT

By Helen Marketti

The Magical Beatles Museum

A conversation with curator and owner Roag Best

In October of 2018, I had the pleasure and privilege of traveling with great companions to England. I could not wait to immerse myself in all The Beatles history and profound moments in their career. Time spent in Liverpool and London with points in between made a remarkable journey to remember for years to come. One special place that we made a visit to was The Magical Beatles Museum located on historical Mathew Street which is the heart and pulse of Liverpool as it was back in its hey day.

Upon returning to the states, my mind drifted back to the museum and its impact on our visit. I decided to contact the man behind the creation of this special place, Roag Best, for an interview.

Before we delve into the interview, Roag's mother was Mona Best who is responsible for opening the club called, The Casbah in Liverpool, which gave The Beatles their humble beginnings. He is the younger brother to original Beatle drummer Pete Best. Roag's father was Beatles road manager, Neil Aspinall who later became chief executive of their company, Apple Corps. These are important pieces to an intricate puzzle where the history of the most famous band in the world has an incredible story to tell. NCV: Please share how the idea for the museum got started.

RB: The museum came about due to my Beatles memorabilia collection and a conversation I had with a friend called Mike Southon. I told Mike I had always fancied doing a Beatles Museum. A real authentic, unique, original museum. Mike said, "Why don't you?" and I told him I always seem to get side tracked. Again, Mike looked at me quite seriously and said, "It's a great idea. Nobody has what you have. Stop getting side tracked. Do it!" So, I put my mind to it. I didn't allow myself to get side tracked and now here we are, The Magical Beatles Museum.

NCV: How were the items on display acquired?

RB: I had been given numerous items from my mother Mona Best who opened the Casbah Coffee Club in Liverpool. The Casbah opened in 1959 and gave The Beatles their first start. They played there regularly for almost two years prior to the Cavern. Of course, my brother Pete Best is the original Beatles drummer. Pete gave me some items. My dad, Neil Aspinall began as the Beatles roadie and became the managing director of Apple Corp. Yes, some items are from my dad and on top of all this, I have collected in my own right. So, there is a lot of Beatles memorabilia.

NCV: Did you want the museum to be located on Mathew Street? Did you wait for an opportunity or had you scouted around for other locations? It seems to be the perfect location.

RB: I spent ten years trying to get a building on Mathew Street. Mathew Street is the heart of Liverpool and tourism central. Consequently, nobody who owns a building is willing to sell. Then luck intervened when I was about to give up. I bumped into a friend of mine, Patrick Gannon, who told me he had been offered a building on Mathew Street. He didn't want it. I told him about my idea of the museum and we bought the building together. It is a five floor Victorian warehouse.

Drum cases that belonged to Pete Beat from 1959 - 1962



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NCV: Can you please talk about some of the items on display at the museum? There are so many wonderful artifacts. I have seen that items are always being added to the exhibit.

RB: We are always adding to the Magical Beatles Museum on a daily if not weekly basis. It's always changing. I will name a couple of items on each floor. First floor, 1959-1962 has the ski jackets The Beatles wore in Hamburg, Germany and George Harrison's Futurama Grazio Guitar. On the second floor, 1963-1966, there are two Beatles drum kits, Cello from Blue Jay Way. On the third floor, 1967-1970, John Lennon's Sgt Pepper Medals, Beatles Diamond Award for 100 million sales and that is just the tip of the iceberg!

NCV: Your mother, Mona Best, played such a key role in the early days for The Beatles. You are still welcoming guests to tour The Casbah and now The Magical Beatles Museum. What do you think she would have to say about this project?

RB: Mo would love what we are doing. If she were still with us, she would be the boss.

NCV: School groups are starting to tour the museum. I think this is an excellent source of Beatles/music history. Why is it important to tell today's youth about The Beatles and their history and music contributions?

RB: The Beatles are interwoven into popular culture. They influenced music, fashion, even political views. They inspired their generation and generations



who followed. The Beatles have sold over 2 billion in record sales. If you started counting from 1 to 2 billion it would take you 64 years! People know about Shakespeare, Beethoven and Karl Marx. They need to know about The Beatles.

NCV: How does Pete feel about the museum? It is great that he stops in now and then to greet fans and share his thoughts. Fan can see a "real" Beatle...

RB: Pete loves the museum. He doesn't pop in on a regular basis but when he does, it's a real treat for the fans.

NCV: Is there a continued vision for the museum's future and longevity?

RB: Yes, we want to continue to add to it, improve it and make it something people will talk about the world over.

For more information on The Magical Beatles Museum:

www.magicalbeatlesmuseum.com