Lennon, who can be heard provoking, the issued records, especially from John charming humour with which they would rude – rather than the dashing and mostly described as unpolished – and sometimes just record releases. Their dialogue with the than on the many official or semi-official even more evident in their unedited form few self-penned songs in their set. This was musical plays or films, and with surprisingly rock adaptations of romantic songs from rock band, doing covers of US acts or obscure recordings still show them as a rather rough not far from the truth. The Star-Club wouldn't have liked them”. This is probably the slogan, “The Beatles when your granny NATURE INTENDED THE BEATLES’ RECORDINGS THE REEL STORY

The Hamburg scene in the 60s is a vital part of rock history. It was here, according to legend, that The Beatles, and other acts, developed from boys to men – on and off stage. Here is the first half of a two-part story about the Fabs’ fabled live recordings on stage at Star-Club, Hamburg, in December 1962, and the legendary scenethat surrounded them. Written by Dr Hans Olof Gottfridsson. Technical adviser: Richard Moore

THE BEATLES AS NATURE INTENDED
When releasing The Beatles Star-Club recordings in the mid-70s, Lingasong used the slogan, “The Beatles when your granny wouldn’t have liked them”. This is probably not far from the truth. The Star-Club recordings still show them as a rather rough rock band, doing covers of US acts or obscure rock adaptations of romantic songs from musical plays or films, and with surprisingly few self-penned songs in their set. This was even more evident in their unedited form than on the many official or semi-official record releases. Their dialogue with the audience and on-stage chat could best be described as unpolished – and sometimes just rude – rather than the dashing and mostly charming humour with which they would later win over the world. Such bad behaviour is even more evident on the raw tapes than on the issued record, especially from John Lennon, who can be heard provoking, mocking or being plain nasty to the audience, living up to his bad-boy reputation.

The atmosphere at the Star-Club was very exciting but rough, and on these recordings The Beatles really are brazen, tough and loud, as Lingasong promised in their advertising. But, perhaps first and foremost, the Star-Club recordings are a document of the very final days of The Beatles as they originally sounded before the firm of George Martin and Brian Epstein completely took over and every attempt to communicate with the audience on stage was drowned in a wall of sound.

During the second half of December 1962, The Beatles shared the stage at the Star-Club with US star act Johnny & The Hurricanes, fellow Liverpool bands The Strangers and Kingsize Taylor & The Dominos, plus London-based dancer and socialist Carol Elvin, brought in as a special Christmas guest. Also appearing at the club was Roy Young and Tony Sheridan & The Star Combo, who had just come back from Israel after a disastrous tour with Gene Vincent (September to October 1962). In his black Gestapo-like leather outfit, Vincent, for obvious reasons, had not gone down all that well in the nightclubs of Haifa and Jerusalem.

By the end of the month, Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rousers had arrived a couple of days early for their January shift at the club and though not billed, they also played a few sets. More British bands appeared at the clubs close by, the Top Ten and the Pigmies. They also turned up at the Star-Club for a chat or even a brief appearance on stage when they had the opportunity.

Colin Melander (Star Combo): “The Beatles seemed to get a lot of credit for the Hamburg scene, but there were many bands in the city who preceded them. While they were in Hamburg they were regarded as a minor band. They were just one band of many. They would spend hours in the Star-Club listening to our band, The Star Combo, and asking Tony Sheridan how he’d play this riff and how he played that sequence. Tony was always willing to help.”

THE STAR-CLUB – HOME OF LOST SCOUSERS AND MANY OTHERS...

In April 1962 the Star-Club opened. Situated in an old cinema at Grosse Freiheit 39 in the notorious St Pauli district of Hamburg, from the day it opened the Star-Club was the No 1 club in Hamburg. For the better part of the 60s this club, boasting its own magazine, record label, radio programmes and a franchise concept allowing branches to be opened all across Germany, was the most famous rock venue in Europe. When it closed on New Year’s Eve 1969, almost 400 different groups had graced its stage, most of them British, Merseymania hit Hamburg long before anywhere else. The first wave of Liverpool acts had arrived in the city in late 1960, but the real flood came with the opening of the Star-Club in 1962. The Beatles, Gerry & The Pacemakers, The Big Three, The Undertakers and The Searchers are just a few of the bands that performed there. It wasn’t just Liverpool acts that played the Star-Club that year. So did Johnny Kidd & The Pirates, The Japbirds and Buddy Britten, and, when their popularity had faded back home, many original US rockers found opportunities in Europe and the Star-Club was a natural place for them to play. Gene Vincent, Bill Haley, Little Richard and Fai Domino all appeared at the Star-Club in ‘62. Others, like Pat Boone, came to watch, but never played. The club would also become a hangout for various celebrities, and guests in the autumn of that year included, amongst others, no less than Italian-French movie star Sophia Loren.

Bobby Thomson (Kingsize Taylor & The Dominos): “The Beatles always went down great at Star-Club, as did Gerry & The Pacemakers. The Undertakers and The Big Three. They all worked hard, long hours, the crowd loved them.”

The Beatles had arrived for their third and final stint at the Star-Club on 18 December. By then the band was on the threshold of fame. Their new drummer, Ringo Starr, had almost completed his four-month stint with the band and their debut single, Love Me Do/PS I Love You, reached No 17 in the Music Week Top 20 (20 December) when they were in Hamburg. By late 1962 the city didn’t seem as sweet to them as it had before, and the beatles had time to complete their stint at the club with as little fuss as possible and...
get home to carry on promoting their own thing and to the studio to complete what was to be their first LP, Please Please Me.

On New Year’s Eve, 1962, Barber had played their final set at the Star-Club and packed up their things – never to play at the club again.

George Harrison's letter:

“Thanks for your letter, which I received just before Christmas. I hope you had a good one, or at least better than we had only three more days to go, and then will be away from this place for good (I hope).”

(letter home to Liverpool. 28 December 1962)

ROLL THE TAPE, PLEASE...

In October 1962 King size Taylor and his band The Dominos had returned to Star-Club after a radio show in Berlin. With him he had brought a brand new Philips RK 14 four-track mono tape recorder (also known as EL3541), which was at that time the latest in technology. Originally King size and The Dominos had used the machine to record their own rehearsals. However, when Taylor returned to Liverpool, who, during the autumn of 1962, had taken up the position as stage manager at the Star-Club. The guitarist had been given a free hand to build a first-class sound system and a recording set-up at the Star-Club. At the time, however, Barber had not yet accumulated all his equipment and was happy to team up with King size and use his tape recorder. Barber set up Taylor’s reel-to-reel at the side of the stage as a temporary recording studio. He then gave the machine to a Senheiser microphone hung from the ceiling of the club. After having set up, Barber had begun to sing and play the drum stage throughout December for anyone to use. According to Taylor, the normal way was to leave the machine running all night, with anybody just turning the tape over while they noticed it had come to a stop.

Frank Allen (Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rouser/The Beatles):

“When a tape recorder was used for the recording of The Beatles at the Star-Club, it was used to record the performances. However, the decision to record was made by the producer, usually in consultation with the artist. It was a common practice to record the sessions in advance of the dates at which they were performed live. Often, the material recorded would be used in the studio to create a finished product for release. This was especially true for the early sessions, when recording technology was still developing. The Beatles were among the first to benefit from this practice, as their early recordings helped to establish their reputation and set the stage for their later success. Taylor had the idea to record the band to see how they sounded in a packed club. To do this, he asked the sound engineer, who, during the autumn of 1962, had taken up the position as stage manager at the Star-Club, to hand over the tape recorder to him. Barber had not yet accumulated all his equipment and was happy to team up with King size and use his tape recorder.

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Early January 1963, Taylor packed up his recorder, together with the tape, and headed back to Liverpool. He’d captured three hours of material, including not only his own group and Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rouser, but also almost two hours of material with The Beatles. After Taylor had brought the tape recorder back to Liverpool, it was never used again to record at the club, even when Taylor himself returned. Adrian Barber, however, carried on with his project of building a sound system and recording set-up at the club. His project included the first use of direct injection boxes, allowing him to take signals straight from guitars, cutting out the need for microphones in front of guitar amps. It’s alleged that when Barber left the club in early 1964 for a successful career as a producer in the US, about 40 tapes had been recorded on the system, none of which have been heard since.

L O S T & F O U N D

King size Taylor and his band had played in Hamburg from October to December 1962. In January he was back in Liverpool for another stint at the Star-Club. After the band had packed up their things – never to play at the club again.

The Beatles’ experience of recording at the Star-Club was minimal and, in a letter dated 9 May 1963, he writes to Taylor: “Thank you for giving us the opportunity to buy your tape recording of The Beatles. As there does not appear to be any commercial value to the recording I can only offer you £20 for your time and effort in producing the tape recording.” For obvious reasons Taylor, by then back again at Star-Club with his band, turned down the offer.

With his own career to tend to, it’s not until 1967/68 when he had left the music business, going back to his old trade as a butcher, returns his attention to the recordings once more. In an attempt to do something about the poor sound quality, he gave the tape to John Seddon, a record producer who ran a small private studio called Studio One on Temple Street, Liverpool. In the end not much comes out of the project and when Seddon’s studio is closed down, the tape is forgotten and left lying in the abandoned studio.

The first Mersey Beat reunion took place at the Top Rank Ballroom in Liverpool (24 February 1971). At the reunion, John Williams, who had been a retained royalty interest. On 31 October 1988, he had left the material recorded when The Beatles were already under contract with EMI, they backed out.

Harry next contacted his friend Bob Dick, and through him managed to get in touch with Taylor. The band had found a clause allowing the recordings to be released and was interested in a deal which would have secured both Taylor and Williams some good money. They insisted the deal was to be kept a secret until everything was ready. Unfortunately it all fell apart when news about the Star-Club recordings, through Allan Williams’ carelessness, hit the media in the summer of 1973.

In July, reporter Ed Blanche, writer for the Associated Press, wrote an article about the Star-Club recordings. It was originally published in the New York Times on 11 July, but repeated in several papers in the UK, Europe and North America in the following days. At about the same time journalist Mike Evans invited journalist Mike Evans to his home in Liverpool to play him the old Star-Club tape. Evans is allowed to hear it in entirety, and his article, Beatles Backtracks – The Strange Story Of The Hamburg Tapes, published in Melody Maker (4 August 1973), is the most detailed on the material to that time. It confirmed that Taylor and Williams’ plans to put out the recordings stalled.

In 2005 auction firm CooperOwen offered for sale a three-page draft contract, set up between Brian McDaniel John Secunda (record producer) and Anthony Michael Secunda (manager/promoter) and Allan Williams and Edward Taylor for the release of The Beatles’ Hamburg Star-Club recordings. The contract is not dated or signed, and the reason for deal’s termination remains unknown.

THE RETURN OF MR MURPHY

In 1975, old Beatles’ associate Tony Sheridan teamed up with his former producer from Hamburg, Paul Murphy, now head of London-based BUK Records (a subsidiary of Polydor) on an attempt to relaunch his career. Paul Murphy had himself been a part of the early Mersey scene and was also something of a “ghost of the past” in The Beatles’ story, as he was responsible for Polydor releasing The Beatles’ Tony Sheridan recordings, as well as Sheridan’s re-recording of the tongue-in-cheek vocals for his and the Beatles’ Sweet Georgia Brown at the height of Beatlemania in 1964. While working for Polydor in Germany, Murphy had also recorded King size Taylor and his band.

On 5 September 1975, Murphy was in Liverpool for Sheridan’s performance with the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra at the Philharmonic Hall. To cut a long story short, while in the city, Sheridan and Murphy met
Paul Murphy: “And then Allan said, ‘You know we have these tapes. I’ve had them since 1972 ([1971] but there is nothing we really can do with them.’ As I’d been out of the country for a long time, we said, ‘What tapes?’", "The Beatles Tapes!’” (Beatles Unlimited No 13, 1977)

Paul Murphy immediately started working on the recordings at Chappell Recording (Record Collectors Studios, London) and by late November he had finished going through the material identifying which tracks were by The Beatles and which could be used. He’d done his best to improve the sound quality and transferred the 11 tracks he considered for release onto a master tape. His original plan was to release a single LP.

By the end of 1975, Paul Murphy had devoted considerable time, effort and money to reconstructing the Star-Club material. He now desperately needed to get it released. Though Lingasong had by then been out of the country for a long time, Murphy knew they existed. They had a master tape. His original plan was to release a single LP. Grossberg scrapped his work. He says he never even saw the 16-track/2" tapes, and so started from scratch, this time content with the original recordings to eight-track/1" tape. He then attempted to separate the different instruments and vocals by filtering each channel of the tape differently with the idea of relinking the sound and bringing forward the vocals. Grossberg had the advantage of owning a professional audio company in NYC (Martin Audio-Video), giving him access to technology no one else had at the time.

During this process they also attempted to restore songs by combining different performances, repeating sections and creatively editing recordings to create complete-sounding versions of material which only existed on the original tape in partial form. This was mainly achieved through crossfading rather than physical editing to ensure the edits were less noticeable. The sequence of tunes was also changed, with applause, crowd noise and on-stage announcements used to give the impression between songs. Crowd cheering was also reinforced (since audience tapes were always overwhelming on the original tape). Finally the recordings were mixed back to mono and then processed to simulate stereo using an Orban/Parasound stereo synthesizer. The intention was to create the feeling of The Beatles in front of an audience in a Hamburg beer hall. The result was planned to be highly commercial rather than exclusively for diehard fans. (How different the released records are with transferring the material to records in early January, however, showed that the sound was not yet up to the desired standard and another round of work in the studio had to be done. In late January, work was finally completed and test pressings could be distributed to potential record labels.

In October 1976, Paul Murphy/Douglas Williams had put the word out that they had paid to release the Star-Club recordings, something that made the headlines and stirred some media interest. By early December 1976, however, Double H was still undecided whether they should release a single or a double-LP. This was partly due to a three-record package including a book. Finally, by the end of the month it was reported that Happy had for a double-LP with a release date early the next year.

**DOUBaILE TAKES OVER**

In mid-1976, Lingasong signed an agreement with Lee Halpern and a US company called Double H Licensing Corp. Through Double H, both new money and energy was brought into the project.

Independent producer Larry Grossberg, with the assistance of Jim Zieg and Kathy Dennis, got in touch with the Star-Club material for release. Work took place at Sound Ideas Studios (151 West 46th Street, New York – the site of the former Capitol Studios). In the pre-digital era everything was created using tape – copying from one machine to another.

When Grossberg took over the work, Paul Murphy had already started the process of reworking the recordings by copying them onto several 16-track/2" tapes, but Grossberg scrapped his work. He says he never even saw the 16-track/2" tapes, and so started from scratch, this time content with the original recordings to eight-track/1" tape. He then attempted to separate the different instruments and vocals by filtering each channel of the tape differently with the idea of relinking the sound and bringing forward the vocals. Grossberg had the advantage of owning a professional audio company in NYC (Martin Audio-Video), giving him access to technology no one else had at the time.

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After four-and-a-half months of hard and expensive work in the studio and at a reported cost of $12,000 per track, the process was thought to be complete. Tests with transferring the material to records in early January, however, showed that the sound was not yet up to the desired standard and another round of work in the studio had to be done. In late January, work was finally completed and test pressings could be distributed to potential record labels.

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**AT LAST - THE BEATLES LIVE IN HAMBURG!**

Early in 1977, Lingasong had acquired the right to the Star-Club tape from Kingsize Taylor. By February that year negotiations were well underway to release the recordings. The recordings were issued in the US in June of 1977 on CDs, both tracks being produced at the same time. The album was released to the general public. Later the recordings were licensed to other companies and a large number of reissues on various labels followed, sometimes with slight differences. One notable variant is the 1979 US/Canadian album ‘The Beatles Live Recordings Hamburg, Germany, 1962’, Volume One (Pickwick SPC-5661). This included for the first time Hully Gully, a recording that is from the Star-Club tape, though it is actually by Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rousers.

Dave Wendels (Cliff Bennett & The Rebel Rousers): “Hully Gully is indeed us. One of the first things I noticed playing at the club was that the sound was not yet up to the desired standard and another round of work in the studio had to be done. In late January, work was finally completed and test pressings could be distributed to potential record labels.

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Larry Grossberg: “Lee [Halpern] knew I had experience in producing and specializing audio electronics and he was advised by one of his sons, Larry, who was working for his dad, that I should have a listen, make lemonade – which made sense on a commercial scale, and not only to be heard. The project, my first impression was, the recordings were piss poor, I don’t know why I thought shouldn’t be produced as a ‘continuous live show’...” When I heard a tape, make lemonade – which made sense on a commercial scale, and not only to be heard. The project was thought to be complete. Tests with transferring the material to records in early January, however, showed that the sound was not yet up to the desired standard and another round of work in the studio had to be done. In late January, work was finally completed and test pressings could be distributed to potential record labels.

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In 1991 Sony Music released parts of the Star-Club recordings as the CD box set ‘Hully Gully’, on CD. In February 1996, Lingasong, possibly with the intention of riding the slipstream of Anthology’s success released a CD box set ‘Anthology’ (LING 95) including the 26 tracks originally on the European version of their double-LP. The CD was released in March 1998 (LING 96) without the box.

When due for release in 1977, there were still questions about when the material was recorded. The sleeve notes to the original record indicated that it was recorded while Pete Best was still their drummer, though, on the particular night of the recording, Ringo Starr was sitting in. This is obviously wrong and the attempt to separate the recording to early 1962 was probably written with The Beatles’
In the process of releasing the Star-Club recordings, many record labels were contacted, but they all turned down the offer because they expected legal problems and saw it as impossible to release them without permission from EMI and Apple as The Beatles were already under contract when the recordings were made.

In late 1976, Paul Murphy told the press that legal clearance had been obtained from Apple and initially the news about the recordings being due for release did not cause any legal problems as Apple had nothing to fear from The Beatles' camp, possibly because, like George Harrison had said when asked about the recordings and a possible legal battle, they were under contract with the company Fuego Entertainment Inc tried to launch some of the Star-Club recordings at a new found tracks, alleged to have been recorded by a DJ working at the Star-Club.

When Sony Music released the Star-Club recordings on CD in 1991, it sparked renewed legal attention. The Beatles and in 1992 Sony withdrew the titles. The new action was possible due to changes in the Copyright Act in 1989 which gave artists greater rights to prevent unauthorized manufacture and sale of their live recordings.

With their 1996/98 CD Linga Song opened up the field for a new legal battle between them and Apple. In early May 1998, a few days after a hearing at London’s High Court where George Harrison personally gave evidence on behalf of The Beatles, Apple won the case, effectively banning any further releases of the Star-Club material.

In court in 1998 George Harrison denied any knowledge of the Star-Club recordings before they were released in 1977, something which Kingstone Taylor has strongly disputed. It has been shown here that The Beatles had already been offered a law making bootleg records illegal. The track, strangely not listed on either the Anthology clipped from the Star-Club tape on the Anthology soundtrack. The argument was never officially commented, but rumour has it that he was not that bothered by them.

The question remains to this day why The Beatles failed to see the qualities of the Star-Club material and instead put so much effort and money into stopping them, especially in 1998 when these recordings had already been made available on record worldwide to millions and been bootlegged by so many. Then the group had themselves, within the framework of the Anthology project, released material of varying sound quality from their vaults under The Beatles’ name, as well as including clips from the Star-Club tape on the soundtrack of the Anthology documentary. No answer can be given here. Clearly, from a fan’s perspective Kingstone Taylor and Adrian Barber have at least given us the

Our stars from Liverpool, The Beatles... Though the members of The Beatles, especially John Lennon and George Harrison, always held their days in Hamburg in very high regard, they apparently never cared for the only extant recording from that time. Harrison was, from the beginning, of the opinion that the quality of the recordings was too inferior for release and, when issued in 1977, Lennon expressed very strong negative feelings against them calling them a "fucking fake". Ringers in his turn has expressed the same views as George - the sound is simply too bad for them to be marketed as a Beatles record. Paul McCartney has never officially commented, but rumour has it that he was not that bothered by them.

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