

## **Rebirth of the Fab Four**

Essen-Steele: The Beatles tribute band *Help!* sends the fans in “Freak Show” back to the days when the legendary Liverpool quartet began to conquer the world.

What was it like in the early 60s, when the Beatles were still a secret playing in the Star Club on the Reeperbahn in Hamburg, or in Liverpool at The Cavern? Luckily, Benny Nordvall’s “Freakshow” is a young brother whose club has the spirit of the legendary English rock and roll clubs. And there on Thursday night was the British Beatles tribute band *Help!* who gave the audience a little of this feeling of having been there at the time.

Okay, let’s be honest, I’m referring to the very rough early days, which is not indicative of the concert at the Freakshow . Although the Freakshow Club is affectionately referred to as the “cellar” by its regular customers and is also atmospherically somewhat reminiscent of Liverpool’s dim ‘Cavern,’ the four performers of the mop top band did not come on stage in leather jacket costumes that they wore in their wild years.

## **Dark Suit and Tie**

No, the cover band with bass player and singer Ernie Mendillo, and guitarist and singer Robert McKenzie have opted for the famous look that was designed by their manager Brian Epstein: chic, dark suits with ties. From today’s perspective, not really what one would call Rock ‘n’ Roll, but the England of the early ‘60s was an important step to catapult The Beatles from the underground to the mainstream. And of course, the legendary hairstyles notwithstanding, originally brought the nickname “Fab Four” to this country.

The look is ever so perfect – sometimes you see in the smallest detail that the Paul McCartney impersonator Ernie Mendillo is not like his role model – left-handed – and therefore holds the bass guitar with the wrong hand. Despite this, he and his three teammates have fully planned the sound of the “Fab Four.”

They started with no frills rock: The opener “A Hard Day’s Night,” with which The Beatles also ushered in a film career in 1964, proved how close these four are to the original. The electric guitars retain their somewhat quirky sound, as heard through the speakers, but the music goes straight to the feet. In “Love Me Do” of course, the use of the harmonica is not missing. The attention to detail distinguishes their entire performance.

The quartet was actually quite enthusiastic about the location: They named the Freak Show the “Cavern from Hell” – probably because of the adorable iconic props like the Frankenstein on a bench, the stage in the form of a monster’s mouth, and the guitar playing skeleton, introduced the Neo-Fab Four as the “fifth Beatle.”

English humor can be shocking, if anything. For over two hours, the band played a cross-section of the entire musical history of the Fab Four, playing hit after hit. The audience sang during “Yellow Submarine,” and especially loudly during “Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da” and even did conga line through the club. Exuberant joy of a successful journey.

“Here Comes the Sun,” “Mr. Postman,” “Come Together,” “Help”... made me ask how many hits did The Beatles have anyway? Although the band is really dirge-powered, almost every fan after the concert could name one song he would have liked to have heard. I, for example, missed “Helter Skelter”. Oh well, you can’t have everything. Hopefully *Help!* will come back soon - then I’ll have them perform my request. Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!

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