

THE WEEK FROM MY VIEW

Am I shamelessly brown-nosing our one and only advertiser (so far), **Taschen Books**, by kicking off the week in review with an item about the launch on Wednesday evening of their book *Harry Benson. The Beatles?* Hell, yeah. What, we're supposed to kiss up to **Groupon** like other sites? Um, no. This is PFC. We [loved](#) Taschen before they even knew we existed, so we're thrilled for any attention they give us.

While **Tuttle**, **Dame Bea** and I waited for local radio station **KCRW** to muddle through technical difficulties before their interview with Mr. Benson, I looked around the store and said to Tuttle, "Taschen really are a good match for us. It's what we're about visually and philosophically. Look at how they mingle tits and ass with intellectual fine art, and are so big and bold about it." And in that moment my gaze landed on one of the blown-up **Albert Oehlen** collages that decorate the store's walls, an image of a leering **Tom of Finland** fetish cop groping the ass of a boy from what looks like an early **Pablo Picasso** painting.

Just. So. Us.

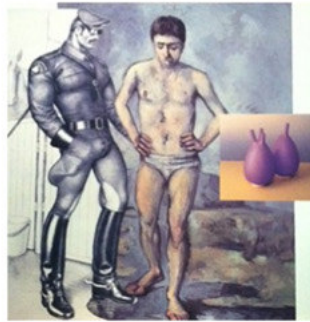


Photo: Nicholas Cloutman

The best radio station in the whole wild world—KCRW is the only one I allow to intrude on my precious silence on a regular basis—was unable to resolve the technical issues, meaning Benson had to do the whole thing without a mic. He's now elderly, his eyes so rheumy he has to wipe them every so often, so the lack of a microphone meant he had to shout his answers as loud as he could, and that wasn't very loud. I'm never good at guessing people's ages, but I figure he must have been in his early to mid-thirties when he went on tour and photographed The Beatles in 1963, almost fifty years ago, when they were just breaking out.

I wasn't prepared to be so charmed or to be so caught up in the significance of what Benson witnessed and what he was able to capture on camera. The Beatles saturated my life from early childhood until early adulthood, when they ducked behind their pots of money and started marrying strange and dangerous creatures. I am more attracted to obscurity than relentless fame; I'm a terrible fan.

I'd thought that I would go to the Benson event to meet the Taschen guys properly, catch up with Dame Bea and Co. and then head off to something else. Instead, I found myself hanging on Benson's every word, and the next thing I knew I was actually taking notes like a proper journalist.

When Benson was asked what his favorite image was, he replied in his soft Glaswegian accent, "The pillow fight. For me, The Beatles were the greatest composers of the twentieth century. In the future they might look back on that image as a pillow fight between Mozart and Bach.... I mean, after The Beatles, who can listen to Hall and Oates, know what I mean?" Half the room Oh, Snapped after that comment, but I chuckled: it's clear when the last time Benson paid attention to popular music was. Personally, I might have made a reference to **Justin Bieber**, what with the Beatles-ish fringe mop hairdo and all, not to mention the clouds of hysterical tweeting tweens following him like exhaust fumes from a Mexican truck.

One thing we had noticed walking into the store was that the book itself wasn't anywhere to be seen. After the interview, they hauled it out. It was one of them there Texas-sized XXL Taschen books that will also protect you from a nuclear attack, which need to be hoisted with a forklift.

As he signed away and posed with fans and buyers for photographs, you could tell old Benson was thrilled. It was his turn now, just as it was the Fab Four's way back when. What a way to have your work honored with such a big, gorgeous tome.



"Dear Lord, keep my hand steady. This book is bloody expensive!" Photo: S. Keenan.