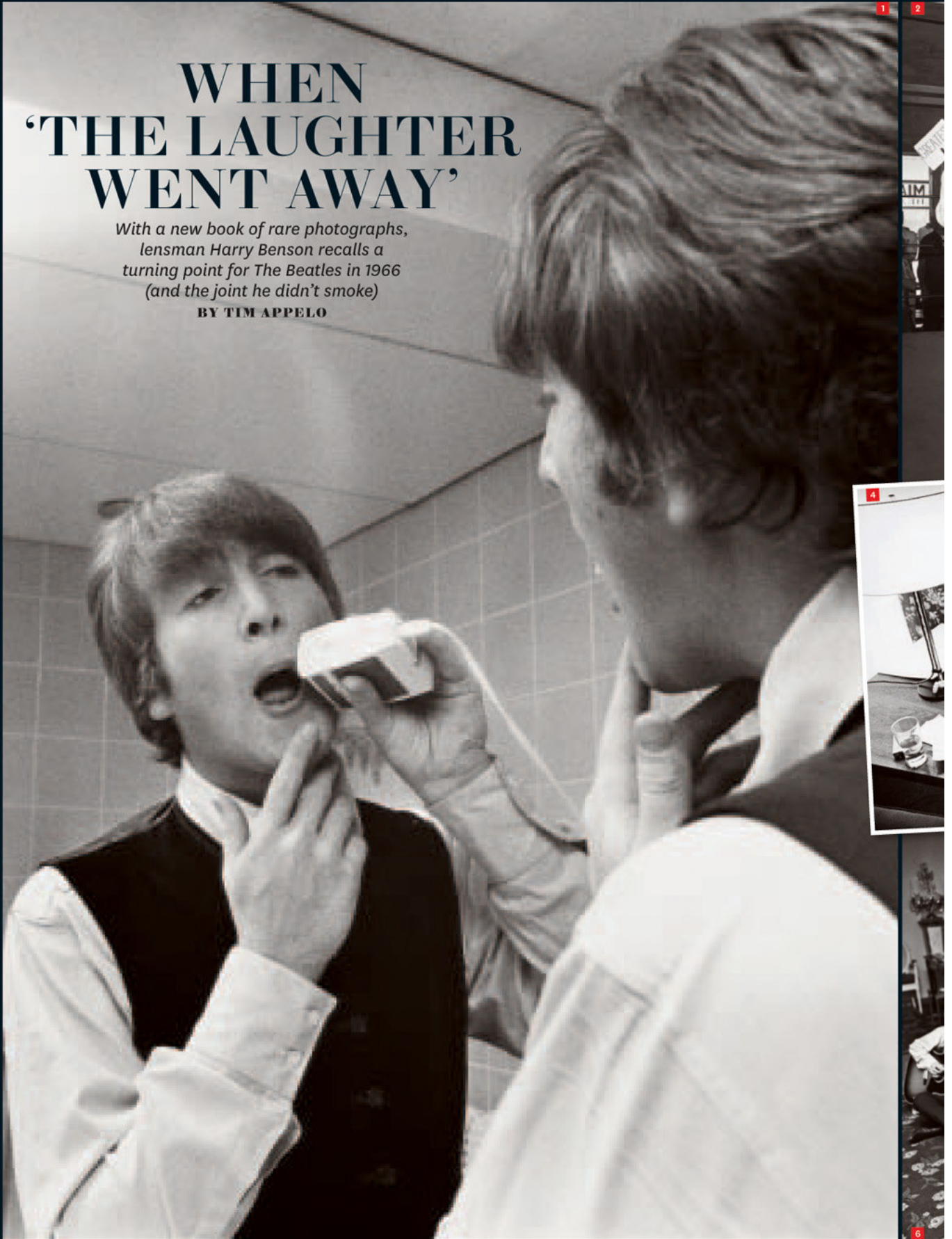


# WHEN 'THE LAUGHTER WENT AWAY'

*With a new book of rare photographs,  
lensman Harry Benson recalls a  
turning point for The Beatles in 1966  
(and the joint he didn't smoke)*

BY TIM APPELO





1. Lennon at Hotel George V in Paris, 1964. "John was the best-looking," says Benson. "Very refined nose." 2. Boxer Cassius Clay reduced The Beatles to his jesters in Miami (1964). "John said, 'He made us look like fools, and it's your fault, Benson!'" 3. McCartney (who turned 70 on June 18) sipped tea during the shoot for 1964's *A Hard Day's Night*. 4. Lennon in Chicago after his 1966 Jesus diss made fans throw shoes at him. "He got hit in the head. He was frightened. He said, 'I don't want to do this anymore.'" Elizabeth Peyton's paintings of this and other Lennon photos sell for as much as \$800,000. 5. Harrison on the *Hard Day's Night* train. 6. The Beatles in Paris in 1964. "John and Paul were writing nose to nose, talking seriously." 7. Ringo Starr befriends fans in Miami (1964). "Who do you think got the most fan letters? Ringo — big pile. Then George, then John. Paul got a little teensy pile. There'd be a row. They went on like children."

**F**EW PHOTOGRAPHERS were more trusted by The Beatles than Harry Benson, sent to Paris in 1964 to shoot them for England's *Daily Express* newspaper. He shared a room with George Harrison and captured a Beatle's-eye view of Beatlemania. When teens mobbed their limo, Benson was on John Lennon's lap, snapping away. They composed "I Feel Fine" before his eyes (*photo No. 6*). When they hit No. 1 in America, Benson suggested a pillow fight to celebrate. "It went on for half an hour — they were laughing," says Benson. Now he has collected hundreds of iconic moments, including many previously unseen images, for his new book, *The Beatles: On the Road 1964-1966* (Taschen, \$700, 1,964 numbered copies). Benson had more laughs as the Fabs conquered America and made *A Hard Day's Night* in 1964. "But by 1966, the laughter went away," he says. He visited the band in Chicago and caught Lennon's reaction to the scandal he sparked by saying, "We're more popular than Jesus" (*photo No. 4*). Recalls Benson: "John was sobbing. People were burning Beatles records. The others were fed up with him. Ringo turned his back. John said, 'Harry, why did I open my big mouth?'"

The Beatles opened up to Benson, who respected their privacy while fistfights and orgies raged all around. "I never dealt with gossip," he says. "I'm a journalist, not a groupie." He stayed intimate yet professional: "In the '70s, Linda McCartney handed me a joint, but I didn't inhale." The pictures, though, produce a contact high. **THR**

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