In early 1964, Harry Benson was getting on a plane for a foreign assignment in Africa when he got a call from the photo editor of London newspaper The Daily Express. He was now going with The Beatles to Paris to document French Beatlemania and what followed was the biggest (ticket to) ride of his life.

Benson was warmly welcomed into The Beatles’ inner sanctum, resulting in some of the most intimate photographs ever taken of the band, then on the cusp of world domination. In Paris, he took the iconic photograph of the Fab Four having a pillow fight at the George V Hotel; he shot their groundbreaking first visit to the United States, the full impact of New York hysteria, their famous appearance on The Ed Sullivan Show, the band in Florida, including their surprising encounter with Cassius Clay; as well as on the set of A Hard Day’s Night. The relationship continued in 1966, including George’s honeymoon in Barbados and their notorious US tour, under the shadow cast by Lennon’s comment that the Beatles were “bigger than Jesus Christ.”

Benson’s luminous black and white photographs show at close quarters The Beatles composing, performing, encountering their fans, relaxing, and engaging with each other, while trying to cope with their increasingly isolating fame. In addition to hundreds of photographs, many previously unseen, there is an introductory essay by Benson as well as quotes and newspaper clippings from the period.

“In these photos convey a really happy period for them and for me. It all comes down to music, they were without a doubt the greatest band of the 20th century, and that’s why these photographs are so important.”

— HARRY BENSON, 2011
ON THE ROAD WITH THE BEATLES
THE FAB FOUR AT THEIR MOST CANDID AND CHARMING

“It is now 6:30 AM Beatle time. They left London 30 minutes ago. They’re out over the Atlantic Ocean heading for New York. The temperature is 32 Beatle degrees.”
—NEW YORK RADIO STATION WMCA, FEB 7, 1964

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Bedtime with the Beatles

Picture and story by HARRY BENSON

Here are some magic moments from the new documentary film, “The Beatles: Eight Days A Week - The Touring Years.” In the midst of their 1964 tour, the band stopped in Las Vegas for a one-night stand. Headlining the show was the dynamic duo of the Stones and the Beatles, but they didn’t get much of a chance to hang out. As they arrived, the Stones were already on stage, and the Beatles were rushed through the crowd to get to their dressing room. The Stones were in the thick of things, and the Beatle fans were just starting to arrive. The cameras were rolling, and the music was blaring. The Stones were uncharacteristically rowdy, and the Beatle fans were in awe. The two groups barely spoke to each other, but the atmosphere was electric. The Stones were in the middle of their set, and the Beatle fans were cheering them on. The Stones were enjoying themselves, and the Beatle fans were living their dreams.