

## Beatles-Signed Wall From First Appearance on 'The Ed Sullivan Show' Rocks Heritage Auctions in September

*George Harrison's Beatle boots, original 'butcher cover' photo and a Texas Stetson share top billing with this keepsake from The Day Everything Changed*

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**DALLAS, Texas (Sept. 1, 2022)** – When you Google “Feb. 9, 1964,” it’s as though only one thing happened on that date: “America meets the Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.” At 8:04 p.m. Eastern time, give or take.

It’s the introduction that lives in legend: “Ladies and gentlemen, the Beatles!” said the avuncular host. The audience squealed. Some 73 million were watching, 60 percent of all American TV sets dialed in – record-shattering and ear-splitting. And there, on a stage surrounded by giant arrows pointing in their direction, were the four lads from Liverpool, armed with “All My Lovin’,” the first of five songs John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr performed that night.

The Beatles on *Sullivan* “changed everything,” Tom Petty once said. “It was a huge event, like the lunar landing,” said Heart guitarist Nancy Wilson. “That one performance changed my life,” Billy Joel recalled years later. Bruce Springsteen once said that on that night, “rock and roll came to my house where there seemed no way out ... and opened up a whole world of possibilities.”

From *The Night That Changed Everything*, Heritage Auctions is thrilled to offer one of the few tangible keepsakes – and, easily, the largest and most significant. In the [Sept. 24 Beatles Memorabilia Signature Auction](#), Heritage presents a four-foot-by-one-foot portion of *The Ed Sullivan Show*'s moveable, plastic backdrop wall

autographed by all four Beatles, each of their signatures – including “Uncle” Paul McCartney’s – accompanied by cheeky doodles.

The framed (and fragile) piece even bears the date of the band’s appearance, along with the hand-written notation that “THE ‘BEATLES’ WERE HERE.” Here, too, are the autographs of later performers on the show, among them Elaine and Malynn Brooks of the Denton, Texas-based Brooks Sisters, who shared the *Sullivan* stage on May 10, 1964, with the likes of Dusty Springfield, Gerry & the Pacemakers and Itzhak Perlman.

“Put simply, no other autographed piece of Beatles memorabilia is as historic and well-documented as the wall from *The Ed Sullivan Theater*,” says Garry Shrum, Director of Entertainment & Music Memorabilia. “It’s the very definition of ‘museum-quality,’ a treasure from the day music changed forever.”

According to Hunter Davies in his 2016 *The Beatles Book*, the band signed the wall at the request of *Sullivan* stagehand Jerry Gort just before its second set. But it was never intended to survive: On Sept. 6, 1964, at season’s end, the plastic staging was removed, Davies writes, and “put in the bin ready to be dumped” until it was “rescued by an alert Gort,” who cut out the section and gifted it to a wheelchair-using Beatles fan named Lofton Sproles. Decades later Sproles sold it to Rodney Cary, the owner of Southdowns Lounge in Baton Rouge, La., where it was displayed until 2002, when it was sold to a dealer and then, later, a Beatles collector. Hence its long and winding road to the auction block.

The small but mighty auction also counts among its highlights something better than an old brown shoe: a pair of George Harrison’s worn – and signed – Beatles boots, which he gifted to Stray Cats drummer Slim Jim Phantom in 1985 during the making of *Blue Suede Shoes: A Rockabilly Session*. The boots are accompanied by a letter in which Phantom describes how he got the boots – directly from Harrison’s closet at his Friar Park estate in Henley-on-Thames.



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“George knelt down in front of it, opened it up and I saw that it was filled with shoes and boot[s],” Phantom wrote. “Towards the bottom he pulled out the original Chelsea boots that were obviously well worn. He handed them to me & offered them to be as a gift. I, of course accepted. George handed me boots, just as quickly, he asked for them back, my heart sunk. Before I could get too bummed out, he produced a ball point pen, inscribed the inside & handed them back to me.”

In one boot, Harrison wrote, “To Fat Jim from Slim George.” And in the other, he signed, “To Slim Jim with love from Fat George XMAS1985.”

Here, too, is the only thing rarer than a “butcher cover” from 1966’s *Yesterday and Today*: an extremely rare and unretouched print of longtime Beatles photographer Robert Whitaker’s photo taken on March 25, 1966, in a London studio.

The image itself, of the band covered in raw meat and baby dolls, has proved among the most infamous album covers in rock history – which is not exactly what Whitaker intended. In fact he imagined this single image as part of a never-completed triptych that was “to be retouched to make The Beatles appear as religious icons,” as [The Beatles Bible notes](#).

“The actual conception for what I still call ‘Somnambulant Adventure’ was Moses coming down from Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments,” Whitaker later recalled. “He comes across people worshipping a golden calf. All over the world I’d watched people worshiping like idols, like gods, four Beatles. To me they were just stock standard normal people. But this emotion that



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fans poured on them made me wonder where Christianity was heading.”

Eventually Capitol Records decided to use it for the *Yesterday and Today* album cover, until retailers cried foul over the terrifying image. A new photo, also by Whitaker, was pasted over the original, and unpeeled copies have become among Beatles collectors' Holy Grails.

This print from Whitaker's original negative, gifted to one-time Capitol Records Studio director Michael Frondelli, is even more extraordinary than the published (and pasted-over) cover. You can clearly see McCartney's chipped front tooth, the result of a moped accident three months earlier.



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Here, too, is a [Stetson Open Road gifted to the band's manager Brian Epstein upon the Beatles' arrival in Dallas on Sept. 18, 1964](#), before the Fab's show at Memorial Auditorium downtown. McCartney can be seen in numerous photos sporting the cowboy hat; [all four men were given the hats upon touchdown at Love Field](#). This one comes from the collection of the late Alfred Blackburn, who served as Epstein's chauffeur and assistant.

This piece pre-dates Beatlemania: [a Beatles-autographed program from the Southern Area Fan Club Convention at the Wimbledon Palais in London](#), where, on Dec. 14, 1963, the Beatles held a meet-and-greet with fans and played a few songs. This one is signed by all four lads for one lucky fan who got to meet the Beatles – all of them.

This auction also features original album artwork and several Lennon-signed lithographs from 1970's *Bag One Portfolio*, including [the highly coveted "Bed-In For Peace."](#) Don't pass it by.

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