



# TV / FILM

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## REVIEW

### DVD Review: *The Beatles - Destination Hamburg: The Early Years*

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*The Beatles - Destination Hamburg: The Early Years* is a film that attempts to document the Beatles' history from their early years through their time in Hamburg, Germany, and beyond.

For those who are under the age of ten, or not from this planet, the Beatles were a pop and rock group from Liverpool, England, and are considered to be one of the most commercially and critically acclaimed bands in the history of popular music. The band was formed in March of 1957 by John Lennon and Paul McCartney, then known as The Quarrymen. In 1958 they added George Harrison. In 1960, a friend of Lennon, Stewart Sutcliffe, joined on bass and eventually they became the Beatles. Pete Best was added as the drummer.

*The Beatles - Destination Hamburg: The Early Years* is a 45 minute documentary that breaks down the early history into short time periods. After a brief introduction, you get the history of the migration from The Quarrymen to The Beatles and how the band got started. It also goes into detail about the aftermath of World War II and the rise of the [Skiffle](#) movement in England.

It then takes us through their time in Hamburg, the entry of manager Brian Epstein, the death of Stuart Sutcliffe, and follows them out of Germany. They talk about the dismissal of Pete Best, the addition of Ringo Starr, and the rise to the world stage. According to the disclaimer on the jacket, this program contains no Beatles music, the program is unofficial, and that basically it's an unauthorized accounting.

Much of this documentary is highlighted by interviews with Tony Sheridan and Howie Casey, early Beatles collaborators. They talk about the time in Hamburg, and how the time that they spent in Germany really improved their music. There are tidbits of information: this is also the time that they began to get into drugs since they used stimulants to keep up with the grueling schedule that they were keeping; they were required to play six or seven hours a night seven days a week; and that it had the added benefit of not having to spend so much on food.

The film claims to include never before seen footage, and I would say that is true. Some of it consists of generic street scenes of Hamburg and Liverpool and there are some stills of the Beatles included as well. There is no discussion with anyone with ties to the group after their rise to fame, and the music that is played is from Tony Sheridan and the Beat Brothers. Sheridan was a guitarist who often employed backup bands while in Hamburg — one of those being the Beatles, with whom he recorded a single called "My Bonnie"

In the overall scheme of things *The Beatles - Destination Hamburg: The Early Years* is not of great quality, and while it offers a couple of interesting morsels to those interested in the early history of The Beatles who have never studied it, it really doesn't have the depth of many of the unauthorized histories that I have reviewed in the past.

The bonus material contains audio files of songs done by Tony Sheridan and the Beat Brothers as well as an interview with John Lennon, Paul McCartney, and Ringo Starr done on June 6, 1968 by Kenny Everett. This is an audio recording and is recorded at a speed that makes everyone sound like chipmunks. I think that this might have made the overall appeal of this DVD better, if it weren't for the bizarre sound quality.

All in all, I found *The Beatles - Destination Hamburg: The Early Years* marginally interesting. It might be informative for the new fan who wants to find out about the early years. It does have some clips of the clubs that they played at and you can get a feel for how these places looked at the time. Those who know this time period and the band's history will not learn much from this DVD.

T. Michael Testi is a photographer, writer, software developer and ardent fan of fantasy football and horse race handicapping. He also blogs at [PhotographyTodayNet](#) and at [All This and Everything Else](#).

## Comments

