



**K** THEATRE **L N**

**PLEASE PLEASE ME**  
**VISUAL STORYBOARD**

# CAST AND CHARACTERS



**Calam Lynch**

plays **Brian Epstein**, the founder of North End Music Store, who becomes the manager of The Beatles and several others. A gay, Jewish man from Liverpool.



**Noah Ritter**

plays **John Lennon**, a singer, song-writer and musician and the self-proclaimed 'leader' of The Beatles.



**Eleanor Worthington-Cox**

plays **Cynthia Powell**, John Lennon's girlfriend then wife. She is an art student and aspiring teacher who has a baby (Julien) with John Lennon.

**Aunt Mimi**, John Lennon's aunt and **Cilla Black**, the only female artist Brian signed

**William Robinson**

plays **Peter Brown**, a business associate, ex-lover and close friend of Brian Epstein. He starts as working with Brian at North End Music store, and continues to work with Brian as he becomes manager of the Beatles.

**Mike Collins**, a young teddy-boy from Liverpool that Brian meets cruising at the docks.

and **Dizz Gillespie**, an American street-hustler.

**Arthur Wilson**

plays **Geoffrey Ellis**, a close friend of Brian Epstein, an ambitious law graduate and an articulate conservative gay man. Later in the play he joins Brian working for NEMS and the Beatles.

and **Harry Epstein**, Brian's father, who founded and ran a successful furniture store in Liverpool, which became the home of NEMS record stores.

# OVERVIEW AND REFERENCES

Elvis Presley, Little Richard and The Everly Brothers are all modern rock and roll artists of the 1950s mentioned in Scene 1. Rachmaninoff is a classical artist mentioned by contrast.

North End Music Store (NEMS) was founded by Brian's father, Harry Epstein, as a successful furniture store in Liverpool. In 1957, Brian was put in charge of opening the record department in the NEMS store on Charlotte Street, which then grew to an entire store on Whitechapel. NEMS Enterprises became the name of the management company Brian set up to manage the Beatles, and other artists including Cilla Black, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Billy J. Kramer etc.

Teddy Boys were a 1950s-60s British working-class youth subculture, characterized by a love for rock and roll and a distinct fashion inspired by the Edwardian period.

Cavern Club is a music venue in Liverpool, which opened in 1957. It became a home of the rock and roll scene, and the "Merseybeat" sound. It was where the Beatles played many of their early gigs, and where Brian Epstein first saw them play.

Sexual Offences Act 1967 was a landmark act which decriminalised private homosexual acts between men aged over 21. Until this time homosexuality was illegal in the UK.

# OVERVIEW AND REFERENCES

Cruising is moving about certain public areas looking for sexual partners. These meetings are usually one-off anonymous encounters. Cottaging describes anonymous sex meetings in public toilets.

Decca, Epsilon, Capital Records are all record labels mentioned, that Brian tried (unsuccessfully) to get to sign the Beatles.

EMI Records is the record group, led by George Martin, who signed the Beatles on a five year contract in June 1962.

Please Please Me is the debut studio album by the Beatles, released in the UK on 22nd March 1963.

Torremolinos is an area in southern Spain that Brian and John go on holiday to.

The Merchandising Deal was a landmark deal signed by the Beatles and Nicky Byrne in 1963. This deal gave 90% commission to Byrne and the merchandisers, leaving the Beatles and NEMS with just 10% commission. While the deal was later renegotiated to a 45% share for the Beatles, this deal likely cost the Beatles around one hundred million dollars.

# OVERVIEW AND REFERENCES

Beatlemania was the intense fandom surrounding the Beatles.

The original members of the Beatles were Paul McCartney, George Harrison, John Lennon and Pete Best. Pete Best was replaced by Ringo Starr in 1962.

Menlove Avenue is the street in Liverpool that John Lennon grew up.

Bob Wooler was the compère and resident DJ at the Cavern Club, and an important figure in the Merseybeat scene.

Merseybeat (or “beat music”) is a genre of music that developed in and around Liverpool in the 1950s and 1960s and popularised by the Beatles Gerry and the Pacemakers, The Searchers and Cilla Black.

The Waldorf Hotel is a luxury hotel in New York that Brian Epstein stays in.

The Ed Sullivan Show is a popular American television variety show.

# OVERVIEW AND REFERENCES

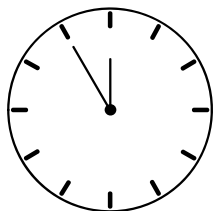
“Bigger Than Jesus” was a controversy that surrounded the Beatles in 1966, after John Lennon had claimed they were “more popular than Jesus” in an interview in the Evening Standard. This led to the Beatles music being banned in multiple countries.

LSD is an illegal, hallucinogenic drug.

Maharishi, also referred to as “the guru”, was the creator of transcendental meditation. The Beatles first met the Maharishi in 1967 and became fast followers.

Sitting Shiva is a seven-day Jewish mourning period following a funeral, where close mourners stay at home and are visited by friends and community.

# SHOW NOTES



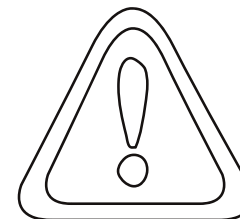
## **Running Time**

The show is approximately 2 hours and 10 minutes, including a 20-minute interval

Please note this production contains haze, flashing lights and the smoking of cigarettes.

Age Guidance: 14+

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## **Content Advice**

Language: Swearing, sexual language, homophobic and anti-Semitic slurs

Nudity: Yes

Violence: Acts of violence

Themes: Sex, sex work, kink, homophobia, alcoholism, drug abuse, suicide, murder, misogyny, classism, blackmail, abortion, anti-Semitism, anti-Christianity, religion and atheism

# THE STORY IN BRIEF

## ACT ONE

Prologue - Cilla speaks fondly at Brian Epstein's memorial service.

Scene 1- 1957 - Brian opens NEMS record store. Brian's Father is told he is gay.

Scene 2 - 1961 - Brian sees the Beatles at the Cavern Club for the first time and asks to be their manager. At the NEMS office, Brian wins the approval of John Lennon's skeptical Aunt Mimi. Geoffrey Ellis gets the Beatles signatures on the management contract.

Scene 3 - 1962 - Brian goes to the Cavern Club to watch a new act, who turns out to be the cloakroom girl, Cilla Black.

Scene 4 - 1963 - Geoffrey confronts Brian about favouring John over the other Beatles. Cynthia visits the NEMS office to tell Brian that she and John are pregnant and want to have the baby.

Scene 5 - 1963 - Brian and John are on holiday in Torremolinos. They celebrate the success of Please Please Me, the Beatles debut number one album. John signs the merchandising deal Brian has arranged. John flirts with Brian and tries to have sex with him. Brian resists at first but eventually they kiss and have sex.

INTERVAL

## **ACT TWO**

Scene 6 - 1963 - Brian watches Cilla rehearse at the Cavern Club, distractedly. He hasn't heard from John since their trip to Torremolinos.

Scene 7 - 1963 - John is pulled out Paul's 21st Birthday Party by Cynthia after fighting someone for making a joke about Brian. Cynthia suggests they move to London. John denies having sex with Brian.

Scene 8 - 1964 - The Beatles go to New York for the first time. Geoffrey finds Brian at 6am at the Waldorf hotel, partying, doing drugs, drinking, and having sex with Dizz Gillespie. Geoffrey tries to get Brian out, while Dizz and Brian continue to flirt and play sexual games. Dizz punches Brian and leaves with his suitcase full of money, drugs, and nude photos of men.

Scene 9 - 1966 - John and Brian are at Abbey Road studios. Brian gets a reluctant John to apologize for saying the Beatles were "more popular than Jesus". John announces the Beatles won't tour anymore

Continued on the next page

Scene 10 - 1967 - Brian visits Cilla in her dressing room for a TV show screentest. Cilla had fired Brian as her manager, so Brian tries to win her back. Cilla calls him out for his unreliability and for always focusing on the Beatles. She asks him to leave.

Scene 11 - 1967 - Brian and John are high on LSD in John's Rolls-Royce at Brian's home in Sussex. John criticises Brian for the merchandising deal, and Brian defends himself. Brian tries to kiss John who rejects him.

Scene 12 - 1967 - Geoffrey and Peter visit Brian in Sussex after his father's death. Brian is manic, switching from elated to angry, and Geoffrey and Peter try to soothe him. Brian leaves to drive to London.

Epilogue - Cilla speaks at Brian's memorial service. She says he died at home in his sleep, in his London home, leaving a contract for Cilla's TV show on his bed.

Coda - John Lennon is being interviewed by a journalist. Brian appears to John who expresses anger and confusion about his death. Brian reassures him, saying his legacy will live on through John's work.

# THE STORY

## SCENE BY SCENE

The play takes place in a variety of places including the NEMS store, the Cavern club, a hotel in Spain, and more. Transitions between scenes often represent time passing and the characters going to different places. The set and props are moved to represent these different settings.

### ACT ONE

#### Prologue

Cilla Black speaks at Brian Epstein's memorial service. She describes the impact he had on people and the opportunities he created.

#### Lighting and Sound Notes

A dark stage with light on the radiogram, when Cilla enters - soft light on her.

Music plays as the play begins

#### Transition

Bold warm backlight from centre stage

Grand, orchestral music plays



## Scene One - 1957

Brian prepares to open North End Music Store (NEMS), with his father Harry.

Harry welcomes Mike, a customer, and as he browses records they talk about Brian.

Once Harry leaves, it's clear Brian and Mike know each other. Brian demands Mike leaves but Mike refuses, flirting with Brian, and trying to kiss him, before turning threatening.

Brian rejects Mike then offers him money to leave. Mike punches him, tells Harry that Brian is gay, and demands payment.

When Harry tries to call the police, Brian reveals he has a criminal record and an upcoming court case. Ashamed and furious, Harry leaves Brian alone and humiliated.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Warm wash - interior of a record store.

Brian plays Hound Dog on the record player, Harry switches it off.

Transition

Lights come up on small sections, drawing focus to different areas of the stage during the transition

Transitional music, upbeat, time passing, with more ethereal undertones coming in at moments.



## Scene Two - 1961

Brian visits the Cavern Club to see the Beatles for the first time and is captivated.

At the NEMS offices, he tells his employee and friend Peter Brown that he has offered to manage the band and is waiting for Geoffrey, a lawyer, to return with a signed contract.

They are also waiting for John's Aunt Mimi, who Brian believes they must win over.

Peter questions Brian's decision and hints at Brian's personal interest in John.

When Mimi arrives, she is extremely skeptical.

Desperate to impress, Brian presents his business plan- improve the bands image, invest his own money, and take no profit at first.

Geoffrey returns with the signed contract. Aunt Mimi gives in, and leaves. Brian is officially the Beatles manager.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Cavern Club

Applause, drum and upbeat music transition into an ethereal sound. Upbeat music returns transition out of cavern club.

Dark stage, with John backlit by pulsing lights, and light on Brian at front of stage.

Backlight brighten during transition

NEMS Office

Warm light forms a room - interior of office.

Transition

Lights close in and then dim

Upbeat transition music



## Scene Three - 1962

At the Cavern Club, Brian is greeted by a bubbly cloakroom attendant. Brian mentions that he's there to see a new act, having signed a handful already.

Brian's ex-boyfriend Mike enters - Brian tries to leave, but Cilla is called to stage. Brian realises the cloakroom attendant is Cilla Black, the performer he's come to see perform.

## Scene Four - 1963

Geoffrey confronts Brian for favouring John over the rest of the band. As Geoffrey leaves, Cynthia Lennon arrives and reveals she's pregnant.

Cynthia says they want to keep the baby as the record deals Brian promised aren't happening.

Brian says John must marry her and offers a flat he owns to Cynthia and John to start their life together.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

s3

Warm wash, dark around the edges, dim colourful lights on the "cavern stage" at the back of the space

Transition

Upbeat transition music

Backlights on the "cavern stage" become bright. Shift to warm light stage right.

S4

Downstage space is warmly lit, inside office



## Scene Five - 1963

John and Brian are on holiday in Torremolinos, Spain. John jokes and teases Brian loudly, and gives Brian pills to “take the edge off”. He refuses to talk about business.

Cynthia calls and John speaks to her reluctantly. John worries having a baby was a mistake. John asks Brian to be his son’s godfather.

John rejects Brian’s proposal for merchandising to be sold worldwide.

John plays the guitar, trying to write a new song, teasing Brian with lyrics about him. John mocks Brian for being commissioned to write an autobiography.

John tells Brian he’s been trying to seduce him.

John signs the contract to try and win Brian over.

John keeps pursuing Brian. They argue.

John begs Brian not to reject him, Brian gives in - they kiss and undress.

INTERVAL

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Transition into scene

Spotlight centre, dimly lit rest of stage.

Then camera flash. Then backlit “cavern club stage”. Then light opens out.

Upbeat transition music. Camera flash.

Scene - Torremolinos Hotel Room

Warm light - hotel room. Two bedside lamps on side table on.

Phone rings. Music builds and intensifies at the end of the scene.

Blackout.



## Scene Six - 1963

In the Cavern Club, Brian watches Cilla Black rehearsing “You’re My World”, but is clearly distracted.

When confronted by Cilla, he blames the pressure and the work the Beatles give him.

Brian talks about giving up but Cilla insists that he can’t.

Cilla pushes Brian to open up, and he admits that John hasn’t spoken to him since their trip.

Cilla tries to offer him comfort.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

The Cavern Club is dimly lit with lights shining on Cilla on the “Cavern Club stage” at the back.

Cilla sings “You’re my world” in the mic at the top of the scene.

Transtion

Very dimly lit, so we can only just see what’s happening on stage. Then a corridor of light on Brian

Melancholy music, shifts to happy birthday to Paul and smashing of glasses and shouting



## Scene Seven - 1963

Cynthia Lennon pulls John out of Paul McCartney's 21st birthday party. John screams through the door at someone for suggesting something had happened between him and Brian.

Cynthia confronts him about his behaviour, reminding him of his responsibilities as a partner and a father.

John admits he's struggling, and that he feels sad for Brian. Cynthia says they should move to London like Paul.

As they embrace, Cynthia asks John if anything happened with Brian, and John says no, and that he'd never leave her.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Dim light at the front of the stage, nighttime outdoors

Transition

Upbet transition music

Dark stage with a very dim light on Brian at the front, then as they move through the space, lights widen creating silhouettes across the space



## Scene Eight - 1964

A radio broadcast describes the frenzy as the Beatles arrive in America for the first time.

Geoffrey Ellis enters a lavish suite at the Waldorf Hotel, trashed by partying, drugs, and sex, and starts cleaning up in frustration.

Brian, wearing only a dressing gown, bursts in with Dizz, a man he pays for sex.

Furious after being woken by the hotel, Geoffrey demands Brian leave soon and warns him his reckless behaviour is threatening his career.

Brian pushes back and boasts of his success. He tells Geoffrey he left Liverpool to stop feeling ashamed of who he is.

As the argument escalates, Brian insults Dizz who punches him. Geoffrey cleans Brian up.

Dizz discovers Brian's briefcase with cash, pills, and naked photos of men, and steals it.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Cold white light across the stage, indoors of a hotel room at night with the lights on Transition

Upbeat transition music, lots of drums. Then news radio recording about "bigger than Jesus" controversy.

Dim stage, then backlighting creates a shadow of John on the curtains which then open creating a corridor of light down the stage



## Scene Nine - 1966

At Abbey Road Studios, John reads a scripted apology for publicly comparing the Beatles to Jesus.

He stops the recording, refusing to apologise. Brian pushes him, stressing how serious the backlash is.

Peter comes in and tells John the offices have switched off the phones due to death threats.

John tries the scripted apology again, but Brian demands he does it genuinely. John records an apology in his own words.

John tells Brian that the Beatles will stop touring and focus on recording. Brian is upset, feeling they are giving up something huge.

John leaves to go on holiday.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Warm lights of the studio room, a box of light on John to separate the recording booth and a red recording light hangs at the back of the stage. When they stop recording this goes off.

Sound of the recording light going off.

Transition

Dark stage, with corridors of light as Brian moves through it

Frenetic, fast transition music, becomes ethereal and lighter after Brian drinks



## Scene Ten - 1967

Brian is in Cilla's dressing room at the screentest for her TV show. She's startled to see him there, as he's not her manager anymore. He convinces her to let him stay.

He compliments her endlessly, and talks about all the work he has done for her.

She confronts him about his unreliability, his focus on the Beatles and tells him her parents don't want her associating with him after he defended LSD.

He lies that he's stopped drinking, but she finds a hip flask in his jacket. After someone knocks on the door to the dressing room, Brian desperately begs a final time, even offering to have sex with her.

She leaves, insisting that she doesn't want him here when she's back. When she goes, he takes a handful of pills.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Box of warm light on the floor to show the dressing room. Lightbulbs around Cilla's mirror.

Beginning of the scene - sound of a stage manager saying there is a break

2 x knocks on the door

Transition

Flashing blue and yellow spotlights on a dark stage

Party music, intense, slightly disorientating and distorted



## Scene Eleven - 1967

Brian and John are in the back of John's psychedelic Rolls-Royce outside Brian's country house in West Sussex. They've both taken LSD.

John criticises Brian for losing them money with his merchandising deal, and that Paul is angry.

John mentions the end date of Brian's contract is coming up. Brian talks about how hard he has worked for the Beatles success.

Brian asks John to kiss him but John rejects him. John tells Brian his relationship with Cynthia is over, and that he's met someone new.

John speaks about spiritual enlightenment with the Maharishi, and Brian questions whether he can ever be saved.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Strip of light creates box and edges of rolls royce

Transition

Slow, eery music plays

Different parts of the stage are lit up in a dim green as the actors move around it



## Scene Twelve - 1967

Brian and Peter are in the sitting room of Brian's house in West Sussex when Geoffrey arrives. Brian greets him chaotically.

Brian is grieving the recent death of his father. They celebrate homosexuality now being legal.

Brian tells them he's invited male sex workers and Simon, a prospective suitor, to the house.

Geoffrey warns that Robert Stigwood is damaging NEMS, and tensions rise when Geoffrey and Peter admit they expected to inherit the company.

Simon calls to say he isn't coming, upsetting Brian. Swinging between anger and elation, Brian toasts the Beatles and insists John loves him.

Peter suggests meditating, but Brian rushes off for more champagne, gets in his car and drives away.

Soon after, the sex workers arrive, and Geoffrey and Peter let them in.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Warm, interior light of a living room across the stage

Smash of a glass offstage. Phone ring. Car driving away. Car arriving. Door bell.

Transition

Phones ring, eery music

Stage becomes very dim, and the record player lights up.



## Epilogue - 1967

Cilla Black is speaking at a memorial service in London for Brian. She describes him as funny, kind, complicated, and says how lost she feels without him. She recalls how Brian died on his own, in his sleep, in his London home.

She says that as a final gift, Brian left a BBC contract for “Cilla”, her first TV show, on the bed next to where he died.

## Coda

A recording of John Lennon being interviewed by a journalist outside Maharishi’s retreat in Wales just after Brian’s death.

Brian and John appear. Brian appears to him.

John expresses confusion around Brian’s death and the impact on him.

Brian reassures him, saying his legacy will live on through John’s work, his greatest achievement.

Brian asks John to keep playing for him.

## Lighting and Sound Notes

Epilogue

A dark stage with light in the radiogram, and a soft light on Cilla

Coda

Transitional, eery, string music. Recording of John being interviewed after Brian’s death.

When Brian & John enter, they are dimly lit  
Soft music plays under them. Final moment  
- warm backlight creates silhouettes and music gets louder for final chords.