

The Beatles Play Shea Stadium

AUGUST 15, 1965

These days, it's not uncommon for major touring artists like U2 and Bruce Springsteen to perform at major sports arenas. But the idea of staging a rock concert at a venue larger than a concert hall was revolutionary when The Beatles took a helicopter from Manhattan to New York's then-new Shea Stadium on Aug. 15, 1965. It was the height of Beatlemania—a phenomenon that had already made the four lads from Liverpool, England, into international superstars.

Now, two days after releasing the soundtrack to their second movie, *Help!*, the band would be kicking off a U.S. tour with an unprecedented performance on a makeshift stage in the middle of the stadium's baseball diamond. (Shea was home to the New York Mets from 1964–2007.) Television host Ed Sullivan—whose show had played such an important role in breaking the band in America—introduced the group to 55,600 fans, at the time, a record for the largest audience to attend a rock concert.

Conditions were primitive. Drummer Ringo Starr,

guitarists John Lennon and George Harrison, and bassist Paul McCartney set up the same way they would in a concert hall. But although they had new 100-watt Vox amps specifically designed for the group, their equipment wasn't loud enough to compete with the screaming crowd, which drowned out the 12-song set. And, even though their vocals were sent through the same stadium P.A. system used to announce Mets players during games, the quartet could barely hear themselves play or sing.

But it didn't matter: In addition to the attendance record, the show set records for gross revenue, with more than \$300,000 in ticket sales. The stadium rock era had begun. The Beatles would return to Shea during their final tour a year later. In 2008, Sir Paul McCartney would make a guest appearance at the Billy Joel concert that closed Shea. The following year, he became the first artist to perform at Citi Field, the Mets' new ballpark.

Read more at beatlesbible.com/1965/08/15/live-shea-stadium-new-york.



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