

'REAL GONE TOWN':

POPULAR MUSIC AND YOUTH CULTURE IN 1960s BRISBANE

by RAYMOND EVANS

*An' we gazed upon the chimes of freedom flashing
—Bob Dylan.*

*Mashed Potato ...Yeah!
—Billy Thorpe.*

Eras and decades rarely, if ever, correspond. The concept of "the decade" as a neat "pack of ten" provides no more than a poor and faulty explanatory tool for divining socio-cultural change. Certainly, feelings of expectation or foreboding at each decade's end can provide a semblance of a new beginning, but such decimal packaging is, at best, a slick heuristic device for inattentive minds. In reality, the decades glide as imperceptibly into each other as do the weeks and the hours. Nevertheless, there are clearly signal historical moments that, in retrospect, become the irruptions that divert the course of time's lava-flow. Donald Horne in 1980 located the onset of Australia's "Sixties" – "a time of hope, a time of threat" as he called them – beyond the half-way mark of that decade, in January 1966, with the ending of Robert Gordon Menzies' seemingly interminable, Fifties-style Prime Ministership. More recently, Dennis Altman has counter-intuitively found that decade's sluggish Australian start at its actual end, years behind the rest of the Western world. The defining moments he selects are the staging of the rock musical, *Hair* in Sydney in 1969, with its scandalous "thirty-second nude scene" (a precise moment indeed); and the protest explosion of the anti-Vietnam moratoria, out of Melbourne, from 1970. Yet, arguably, such undeniably striking events were the culmination of forces already well in train rather than moments of monumental disrupture from which a new era is forged.

In my estimation, "the Sixties" began in Brisbane – as they arguably did in many other parts of the world - on the bright, warm, late-spring morning of Saturday, 23 November 1963. It seemed a normal day. I was travelling in a rattling tram-car along George Street in the inner-city, on my way to the State Library, to cram for my second-year exam in Political Science at the University of Queensland the following week, when I think I saw that decade begin. For I witnessed something in that moment I had never seen before in Brisbane, nor have ever again. There were people – lone pedestrians – standing distractedly along the footpath, individually lost to their surroundings and openly weeping in the street. The stark headline on the newspapers they held explained it all: "KENNEDY MURDERED".

This death was more profoundly felt, even in remote Queensland, than Menzies' coming retirement ever would or could be. For John F. Kennedy's cruel fate suddenly altered the balance of probabilities. Everything lurched sideways into unknown territory as old certainties subsided. I went on to the Library, but could not study. Politics had become anything but Science. If you truly inhabited the Sixties, it is said, you are not obliged to remember them; but it is also said that everybody remembers their precise whereabouts at the moment they learnt of President Kennedy's assassination. Paul Smith, a baker's son in his early teens living at Strathpine, a semi-rural centre on Brisbane's outskirts, recalls:

I broke the news to my father ... He had just woken up and ... he just stopped and said, 'What!' Then he said, 'Well, that's it then; we're all done for'... I remember the mood that day. It was like a dark cloud over the town. People were acknowledging each other but not talking. The whole day was just a haze. I can remember it very clearly ... After Kennedy died, it all stepped up a gear ... the whole colour of the decade changed. There was a certain amount of innocence that went – that was taken away.

Kennedy's passing presaged a new era in all manner of unexpected ways. It ushered in the massive US military re-escalation (and thereby Australia's) in Vietnam – a conflict that, as "a moral issue of supreme importance", defined my generation. It accelerated the race to the moon. It cleared the way for tacit western acceptance of Israel's secret nuclear weapons programme, further destabilising the Middle East. And it set a precedent for the gunning-down of other political "heroes" – Martin Luther King, Robert Kennedy, Malcolm X, Che Guevara... The entire sequencing had undeniably horrendous global consequences. The decade had begun with both a bang and a whimper.

The uncertainties that still cohere to this assassination (and to others that followed) encouraged plausible conspiratorial analyses, drawing upon complicity at the highest level, and shattered much of what remained of my generation's naïve faith in officialese and mainstream reportage. It was a naiveté that required shattering. And, as an antidote to monumental grief and bewilderment, the music of the Beatles, taken at first in repetitive two-minute dosages across Britain, America and the world, transformed the entire cultural landscape. What began as compensatory and escapist

gradually became galvanic and consciousness-altering. Soon, as Bob Dylan later observed, "There was music in the cafés at night/ And revolution in the air". But, in Brisbane, in particular, music played in only some cafés and revolution in only certain minds.

Kennedy's passing thus begat not only the Beatles but also profound thematic changes in popular music and youth culture generally. His youthful persona, his encouragement of campus activism and his adulation at an intensity "formerly reserved for a singing star or movie hero" meant that his loss was most deeply felt among adolescents. Child psychologist, Martha Wolfenstein uncovered in 1965 "the sheer intensity of their response, which conformed to the standard psychological profile of deeply personalised grief, feeling that did not appear to diminish or resolve nearly as quickly" as those of other age-groups. Notably then, from 1964, the character of youth music altered perceptibly. The dominant themes of teen dating and romantic love, cars, school, surfing and vacation ceded to more mature, adventurous, rebellious and intellectually challenging preoccupations. Message songs about war and protest, injustice and prejudice, sex and drugs burgeoned in the Top 40 charts. Researcher Paul Hoffman notes a twelve-fold increase in such themes between 1956-63 and 1964-71; while behavioural scientist, Russel Cole found that, whereas between 1960 and 1964, no music with political or social protest lyrics entered the charts, a full ten percent of post-assassination hits fall into that category.

Furthermore, the nature of top recording acts altered from a preponderance of individual stars (mostly male) to group ensembles; from black American vocalists to white British ones (often to the music's detriment); from singers and musicians interpreting the creations of professional songster factories (Tin Pan Alley, Brill Building, Tamla Motown) to singer-songwriters presenting their own creations; and from a popular music driven more by saxophone and piano to arrangements privileging electric guitars and drums. Music itself grew more experimental, free-flowing, diverse and rule-breaking, its former sharp, pop-music "hooks" beaten out into exploratory meanderings. The long-playing album thereby emerged as a coherent, integrated statement to challenge the 7-inch single, rather than remaining simply an eclectic amalgam of a hit or two, sustained by ten or so filler tracks. Long-standing demarcation lines between folk, blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, country and pop were collapsing, demolished by such flexible performers as Dylan and The Band, the Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Joni Mitchell and the Byrds. Musical fusions produced fascinating hybrids. The overall trend was towards greater complexity. Performers now became performing artists, as rock music began to acquire sufficient pretension, gravitas, proficiency and esteem to be considered, by the end of the decade, as quintessentially an artistic practice, replete with its own journalism and serious critics – something that would have been beyond consideration in 1960.

The two records dominating the Brisbane Top 40 in November 1963, the month of Kennedy's death, were the poppy MOR number, "Dance On" by Britain's Kathy Kirby and the saccharine US throw-away, "Sugar Shack" by Jimmy Gilmer and the Fireballs. Twenty-two of the thirty "number one" hits that year were from the USA. Yet, in 1964, there were only ten American chart-toppers out of thirty-four in Brisbane. Nineteen of the "number ones" were British; and eleven were by the Beatles. There was additionally, one Canadian hit, two from New Zealand and one lone Australian chart-topper from Brisbane's Billy Thorpe, with the Sydney Aztecs. The Beatles had already charted three times locally before Kennedy's assassination, with "She Loves You" reaching number eight in September 1963. But, from December 1963 until November 1964, the group would enjoy twenty-three Brisbane listings, including thirteen "top 10s". Clearly a revolution of sorts had occurred in local listening and record-buying tastes. In mid-February 1964, the Brisbane Telegraph published an unprecedented "Top 10" chart: five of the songs were British (three by the Beatles, plus the Dave Clark Five and Dave Berry) and the rest were all Australian performers (Little Pattie, Frank Ifield, Jimmy Hannan, the Renegades and Digger Revell). For the first time since pop charts were introduced in 1956, no records from the USA were featured.

Beatlemania and, more broadly, an ensemble of creations gathered under the rubric of the Liverpool Sound or Mersey Beat provided the central thrust for this sudden metamorphosis. For several more years, this was the music that would drive forth the narrative. Frank Chalmers remembers, upon his first exposure to Beatles' music at a girlfriend's home, experiencing a sense of "pure joy", rather different from the more complicated visceral feelings of excitement laced with apprehension that Elvis Presley had earlier invoked in him. Paul Smith was walking into his sister's bedroom when "Love Me Do" came on the radio...

and it was like getting hit by a bolt of lightning ... That harmonica solo: It was just mind-shattering... I carried a transistor radio around with me after that ... and every time it came on: Bang! I was gone.

Early in 1964, a seven-minute technicolour "short": "The Beatles Come to Town", playing at the Regent cinema in Queen Street, attracted enormous queues of teenagers, winding around the block. When I saw it with friends on Saturday morning, 22 February (as recorded in a diary I was keeping), "the theatre was torn by screams like seven years ago [i.e. the euphoria greeting early rock 'n' roll movies] all over again." We sat

through the entire programme twice to reabsorb the fleeting performance. By early April, I was queuing again in the early morning to buy tickets for the Beatles in person (coming in late June); but before that arrival, Gerry and the Pacemakers, Brian Poole and the Tremeloes and Dusty Springfield played Festival Hall (dubbed "Mersey City" for the evening) after landing to a riotous welcome at Brisbane Airport, in which police and fans were crushed and knocked over, and teenagers hospitalised. Police had also experienced trouble controlling the Beatle-tickets queue. Its several hundred members persisted in stomp dancing, after a successful petition to a local radio station resulted in "two-hours non-stop" Beatles" music after midnight (no mean feat considering their slim recording repertoire at this point). "Police who tried to get the volume of the transistors down found that as soon as they reached one end of the queue, the music started up again at the other", the Brisbane Telegraph reported: It was Brisbane's "first great look at the Beatle Bug – and we've got it bad." When the group at last arrived in Brisbane just after midnight on Monday, 29 June, they were greeted by around 10,000 fans (not 200,000 as erroneously claimed in Jonathan Gould's acclaimed history, *Can't Buy Me Love*). "Extreme examples of mass hysteria busting out all over the city today", I noted succinctly in my diary.

Thus far, Brisbane's responses appear unexceptional, solidly within the mainstream of other Western and Asian cities on the tour. Proportional to population, Brisbane's turnout may be roughly located between Adelaide's massive mobilization, built on over-hyped publicity and its high proportion of recent British migrants, and the more laconic reaction of less easily impressed Sydney. Yet Brisbane managed, nevertheless, to emerge as different from every other urban centre visited – indeed radically different. Even before the group's Ansett ANA flight landed, there was so much disorder at Brisbane Airport that the Department of Civil Aviation threatened to divert the plane elsewhere. "Smoke bombs, fire crackers and bottles" were hurled onto the tarmac, several brawls had broken out and the thirty police had ejected a "dozen or so of the more vocal "Beatle-6 Feature Contribution haters" [from the terminal] ... at least an hour before the plane arrived". Anticipating nothing of this, Paul McCartney and John Lennon began a silly dance on the back of the obligatory flat-back truck that was to ferry them slowly past the screaming fans, while George Harrison "lay on his back on the truck tray, looning like Spike Milligan". They were obviously in high spirits, expecting an entirely friendly reception. Glenn A. Baker describes what happened next:

As the truck inched towards the fence, a fierce and suddenly black rain of projectiles crashed down upon the unsuspecting Beatles. As eggs, tomatoes, pieces of wood and rotten fruit showered [down] ... George took refuge behind the cabin, while the others ducked and kept smiling. Cretinous placards made an instant appearance – the likes of 'Haircuts Only Five Bob'.

It was a yahoo-like response, unique in the world. In ultra-conservative Christchurch, New Zealand, two days earlier, some rotten eggs had been thrown in the direction of the Beatles' hotel-balcony, but that was nothing like this. Even during their first Festival Hall concerts that evening, "the nits", as Lennon dubbed them:

...turned out in force, lobbing a steady stream of food and drink containers, coins, sweets and rubbish onto the stage. At one point during the second show, two youths raced down the centre aisle and hurled a large metal biscuit tin [!] on stage ... One press report claimed the Beatles 'ducked and gestured angrily at the audience.'

Such attacks ensured that the group generally lay low in Brisbane. After the tour manager, Derek Taylor issued a challenge for the protesters to "take us on, face to face", four or five of them met with the Beatles in their hotel suite. They were all University of Queensland students, mostly country youth from the colleges who claimed, rather lamely, to be mounting a protest against materialism and commercialism. Lennon challenged them, "Why didn't they throw eggs into the crowd if it was Beatlemania they were against". Harrison later recalled, "They were just typical eggheads from a university. Just as we thought, they were right schmucks and they admitted that they were being childish". One of the demonstrators was Bob Katter Jr., later a minister in the Bjelke-Petersen government.

University culture in Brisbane was infused with a dismissive disdain for popular music. Rock 'n' roll was regarded as moronic entertainment. Students patronised the Dixieland jazz of the Varsity Seven and some supported traditional folk music, though Bob Dylan was diffidently viewed, sounding, as I was then assured by campus colleagues, "like a hillbilly". In the month before the Beatles' arrival, students during University Commemoration Week had conducted a number of anti-Beatles pranks; in one instance they placarded the city with "Beatles Tour Cancelled" posters, leading to near-meltdown at the telephone exchange. In the annual Commemoration procession, the group were lampooned as Liverpool "undesirables", transported to Australia like convicts; while placards complained "The Beatles get the pounds – but we get the coppers". Violence with the police erupted several times during the festivities, where eggs and other refuse was thrown. The Beatles' physical appearance, however, was also raising alarm. What was seen as their "long hair",

particularly their shaggy fringes, was widely identified as eroding masculinity and challenging the sharp gendered demarcations then existing. The students' preoccupation with offering the Beatles haircuts reveals this concern; but the phobia was more widely spread than the St Lucia campus. As the Sunday Mail warned in May 1964, longhaired men overseas, seduced by mod music, had begun favouring feminine fashions, wearing cosmetics and polka-dot blouses, sporting high-heeled shoes and carrying handbags. Where would it end?

Paul Smith, who was by now gamely emulating the Beatles in appearance at Strathpine (where everything remained as stolidly black-and-white as the local Frisian cows) recalls:

To live in a country town and to walk past that Country Club Hotel: there wouldn't have been an afternoon that I wasn't harassed or have some sort of physical contact ... in retaliation for the way I looked to the point where my father was harangued that much by locals he forcibly took me down to the barbers ... I didn't speak to him for nearly two months ...and he felt really bad about that and never came between me and my hair again. But it was very difficult for my parents too because nearly everybody ... had short back-and-sides and wore conservative clothes – and here I was, you know, hair way down below my collar and buckles on my boots and flares and Beatles caps ... In those sort of areas if you looked or acted differently you were either a queer or you just didn't fit into the mould; you weren't right – you were an alien, you know – you were a danger ... I lost old school friends. I had family members turn their back on me because of my long hair ... and it wasn't all that long. But it was frightening to them – all combed down at the front ...

Official policing assiduously targeted long-haired males, who were seen as threatening masculinist hegemony. Bundaberg-born Mark Moffatt, who came to Brisbane to join such bands as The Iron Web and Stop Press 8 Feature Contribution (and who later produced the epochal singles, "I'm Stranded" by the Saints and "Treaty" by Yothu Yindi) writes:

The memory which sticks from that period is driving my black MK2 Zephyr, long hair, amps in the back seat, getting pulled over every other day and searched by the Queensland Police. They never found a thing, but their 'punishment' for long hairs was always a trip to the vehicle inspection station. After a while the inspectors get to know the deal and just sent me home.

This was 1969. Such over-reactions were virtually cloned across the decade and beyond. As Smith tells it, in relation to experiences in 1964-65:

I was terrified of the police ... When I went into Brisbane with long hair, I'd be walking along ... and detectives would hop out of this car and ask me to stand still and search me. And gym boots were in at the time. They'd say, 'What are you wearing these things into town for?' and stand on the ends of my toes with their heels, adding, 'And what are you doing in the Valley at 5.30 in the afternoon?' ...

Les Clayton (another putative "long-hair" from St John's Wood) was arguing outside a Club with a female friend when he was arrested:

And I had a studded belt on ... and they said, 'Is that what you've been whipping her with, you pervert?' I said, 'You're the perverts for thinking that'; and one of them was going to hit me and the other stopped him. And just then Robert Perkins ["Tex" Perkins" elder brother] walked in and bailed me out.

There are also accounts of policemen hacking into the long hair of apprehended youths with gardening shears. Male band-members earned great respect from fans for their bravery in sporting long hair in Brisbane. The simmering conflict between police and activist or "problem" youth may be traced back to at least 1956, when over-policing at a Stadium rock 'n' roll concert provoked Australia's first teenage riot associated with the new music. William Stokes, author of the autobiographical exposé of official brutality, *Westbrook*, remembers another clash when Little Richard, played the Brisbane Stadium in October 1957:

Police presence ... was massive... when a couple of kids left their seats to dance in the aisle, police rushed them in force and manhandled them out ... This led to much boo-ing, more kids leaving their seats to dance and further police intervention. Scuffles broke out everywhere ... Whilst outside others climbed the roof and lifted [it] ... apart, trying to get in. After the concert the scuffles intensified. Kids were bundled off in police vans ... Throughout the city streets, rubbish bins were set alight and parked cars were damaged ... I picked up a copper's hat that landed at my feet amid the scuffles. Police were everywhere, seemingly grabbing kids at random.

Again, in May 1959, trouble between patrons and police at an Everly Brothers concert escalated, according to Red Hill bodgie informant, Eddie Monaghan, into "running battles along Albert Street". Such were the precursive disturbances that paved the way for the "Beat riots" at Festival

Hall in the mid-sixties. As Frank Neilsen, a photographer later working for Go-Set, comments:

Young people had had enough of the bullying tactics of the Queensland Police, especially since it was widely known that the educational requirements for entry to the force were the lowest in the land. Provided you were a certain minimum height and were not colour-blind, you were in.

Police tended to behave as a force undisciplined by any regard for the civil freedoms of others or for minority rights; and were always quite demonstrative – and, increasingly, unrestrained – in venting their spleen against street youth, Aborigines, strikers and student protesters. As historian and activist, Jim Prentice points out, public support for political and cultural liberalisation among an active middle class was nowhere to be found in Queensland; thus “there was no room for freedoms outside the bounds of economic practicalities”. The heady mixture of volatile fans at rock concerts and policemen ever-ready to take them on therefore proved an incendiary mixture.

Clashes climaxed initially in a showdown between police and teenagers at an Easybeats/Normie Rowe concert at Festival Hall in mid-1965. This package, which toured Australia, “created pandemonium wherever they appeared”. The odd, audacious couple rising to dance had now mushroomed into scores of delirious concert-goers – mostly overwrought female teenagers – rushing the stage to touch or kiss their new pop idols. Police employed heavy-handed crowd-control measures and, as a last resort, would close down the show. Paul Smith was there, “going nuts” as he remembers:

Police would be lined up sometimes arm in arm ... It just got mad ... They were throwing punches. They were throwing people every which way but loose. Chairs were being hurled around. It was like a rock 'n' roll riot. I vaguely recall out front a taxi attempted to be tipped over and people just being grabbed.

Smith managed to gain his feet on the edge of the stage before being thrown bodily back into the crowd:

I got manhandled. I was dragged downstairs and this monster cop said to me, 'This is something to remember the Queensland Police by'... and he got hold of the front of my shirt and ripped it to shreds. I had nothing else to wear. And I just broke away from him and went straight back into the fray. Didn't think twice about it. It was insane.

In late November it was on again when fans rioted at a 4BC Sound Spectacular when police stopped the show. After local performer, Tony Worsley had whipped the crowd into a frenzy, the headliners, the Easybeats were brought to a halt only 17 minutes into their set. A melee then ensued. Audience members broke down barriers, stormed the stage, smashed chairs and equipment, and fought with police.

Some youthful followers of popular music, however, were ambivalent towards the new mod sound. Les Clayton, an avid record collector in his late teens, was troubled by the challenge the “British Invasion” posed to Black American rhythm and blues. To his ears, groups like the Beatles were producing inferior covers of classic American originals, sounding amateurish in comparison, while undermining the career prospects of the more polished artists they emulated. On the Beatles’ first two albums, twelve of the twenty-eight tracks were Motown, classic rock ‘n’ roll or show tune covers. Almost half of their short Australian stage act had followed suit. Clayton states:

Well, that's why I didn't like them so much. Their first albums had so many covers: "Boys" from the Shirelles and "Chains" from the Cookies. There was the Isley Brothers' "Twist and Shout" and Smokey Robinson's "You've Really Got a Hold On Me". And they're not as good, either performance or production-wise ... The Rolling Stones did the same thing, going for even more obscure bluesy stuff ...

Behind such misgivings lay a quiet, on-going battle over African-American music that had been proceeding for some time. Most of Brisbane’s white, male, middle-class disc jockeys eschewed the records of Black singers, finding their sound too raw, wild and disturbing for airplay. Very few had charted locally. As dj Bob Rogers states, “If we didn’t play a record, you could bet it wouldn’t be a hit”. A culturally conditioned reflex about what constituted “good music” or “mainstream listening pleasure” motivated this, based on a scarcely concealed bias towards white melodics and vocal inflections as well as a strong conservative reflex to stick with the safe and the known in the markedly racist society that was Queensland at this time. By the early 1960’s, however, a small number of media crusaders for African-American music were beginning to emerge. Ian Annable, a young Brisbane journalist with a passion for Tamla Motown, Phil Spector and New Orleans music observed in late 1962:

... rock 'n' roll is getting wilder every day. But most Brisbane teenagers never hear [it] ... There are exceptions ... but usually if the dj's find the sound a little loud for their aging ears out it goes. Take for example ...

"Twist, Twist Senora" [Gary US Bonds], "Please Mister Postman" [the Marvelettes] ...and "Bongo Stomp" [Preston Epps]: All big sellers in the US, these ... didn't rate here because they were not played enough (or not at all) on the air in Brisbane.

Early in 1964, Annable, while working as a Saturday dj on radio station 4GR, played "Little" Stevie Wonder's "Fingertips, Part Two", then topping the US charts. On Monday, he was called into the manager's office and warned to "never play that nigger shit again". Consequently, the following Saturday, Annable locked himself in the broadcasting booth and played the record on air eight times in a row before management broke in and sacked him on the spot. He soon left what he terms "the sub-tropical 19th century penal colony town of Brisbane" for more fertile pastures overseas. Re-inventing himself as Richie Yorke, he became Canadian editor of Billboard magazine and wrote for most leading music journals, including Rolling Stone. He was among the last to interview Jimi Hendrix before his death and one of the first to meet John Lennon and Yoko Ono at their Bed-in-for-Peace in Montreal in May 1969. In 1970, he became the Lennon's roving International Peace Envoy, illegally entering Red China with the "War Is Over" message years before the American ping-pong team, Richard Nixon or Gough Whitlam.

If any African-American artists did enjoy moderate record sales locally, it was largely due to the quieter, persistent efforts of 4BC's Geoff Atkinson. Clayton, who also befriended Annable at this time, remembers of Atkinson:

He was the one I used to go after school and talk to ... and ring up the most. And I used to listen to him constantly ... Because I'd get Cashbox magazine to see what was up there in America and I'd be thinking why isn't this played here? What's this? I've never heard this ... And Geoff Atkinson was the only one playing them.

He was responsible for charting several soul and rhythm and blues records in Brisbane that had no showing elsewhere in Australia. Atkinson also promoted such music at his weekly Cloudland record hops. Clayton experienced a different reaction to the cultural liberality of such evenings when he attended one of the more popular, "white-bread" O'Connor Boathouse dances, run by 4BH dj, Bill Gates. After he requested the Marvelettes' "Please Mr Postman", he was informed, "I won't play that. They're a bunch of wailing niggers." This song would eventually chart in Brisbane, but only after the Beatles recorded their version in July 1963. For many local consumers, such numbers were uncritically absorbed as Beatles' creations, the often superior originals never having been heard. Were such white groups therefore acting as "a major conduit of black energy, style and feeling into white culture"; or were they simply usurping the creativity of others and blighting their commercial chances?

Another local disc jockey acting as an important pipe-line for progressive music was 4BC's Tony McArthur. McArthur was the nearest thing Brisbane possessed to a rock intellectual at this time. He played African-American and British performers fairly even-handedly, artists such as Otis Redding, Chuck Jackson and Brenda Holloway sharing his play-lists with Long John Baldry, Chris Farlowe and Lulu. Smith recalls:

I first heard the Blues through Tony McArthur: Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters ... You just hung on his every word. He was a few steps ahead of everyone else in the area. You know, he introduced the Righteous Brothers to Brisbane - and Jimi Hendrix. He just wouldn't play a disc and say, 'This is happening overseas'. He would give you background, say who sang the song originally and who wrote it...

When McArthur compered Ray Charles's second Festival Hall concert in 1965, he ashamedly told a less-than-half capacity audience, "Brisbane, you don't deserve real talent."

He was credited with conducting the most intelligent Australian interview with the Beatles on their visit, chatting at length with George Harrison about the Motown sound. It was substantially due to such unsung cultural heroes as Annable, Atkinson and McArthur - knowledgeable and passionate men who fought for autonomy over their play-lists - that certain advanced tastes and moods were being fostered in Brisbane among a discerning sub-section of young listeners that would burgeon, as the Sixties progressed, into an entire sub-culture of musical production and reception that was serious, sophisticated, exploratory and cutting-edge.

Source:

<http://www.c-s-p.org/Flyers/978-1-4438-3639-5-sample.pdf>

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