

# Beatlemania returns with rollout of CD, Video Game

(AP) -- Beatlemania is back with the rollout Wednesday of the Fab Four's remastered CDs and first-ever video game, reaching out to a whole new generation decades after their parents - and even grandparents - first succumbed.

It's been nearly 40 years since John, Paul, George and Ringo announced their breakup, but the new game and discs caused a worldwide buzz as the Beatles returned to the top of the charts in Britain, the land where it all began.

Fans flocked to get their hands on the long-awaited sonic masterpieces, with lines snaking outside record stores in London and Liverpool. Some die-hards jammed the streets outside Abbey Road, the landmark studio where the Beatles recorded many of their groundbreaking albums.

About 50 people gathered outside the HMV music store on London's Oxford Street early Wednesday - some, like university student Daniela Gutierrez, waiting in line since 3 a.m.

"My parents were huge Beatles fans and I grew up listening to their music," said Gutierrez, 25. "I can't wait to have the game and start playing the songs."

It's not exactly 1964 - there were no fainting teens or other visible signs of feverish Beatlemania - but the long-awaited release brought the long-gone band to the top of the charts maintained by online retailer Amazon.co.uk.

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Or, as John Lennon liked to say, "to the toppermost of the poppermost."

Uma Nolan, an Irish nurse visiting London, came to the Abbey Road studio to be photographed at the pedestrian crossing made famous on the "Abbey Road" album cover. She plans to buy the entire set of 17 CDs - even though she already has all the songs in the collection.

"I will absolutely go out and buy them," she said. "I'm a huge Beatles fan and have every single LP in original first edition copies. They were the first real pop group. The entire generation was waiting for that to happen. They sent worldwide pop culture off into orbit."

Nolan, 50, said remastering the Beatles albums will introduce them to a new generation.

"It brings them up do date and modernizes their music," she said. "You're enhancing what was really to begin with, so that can't be a bad thing."

High prices are apparently no deterrent - Amazon.com sold out its allotment of pre-orders for the Beatles box set, priced at \$260 (170 pounds) and has a waiting list of buyers.

The robust sales are expected to add to the already considerable wealth of Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr, the "thank my lucky stars" drummer who joined the band just before it had its first hit, as well as Yoko Ono and Olivia Harrison, the widows of the late John Lennon and George Harrison. Court records publicized last year put McCartney's net worth at about \$800 million.

It's also expected to boost the value of the estate of the late Michael Jackson, who owned a substantial share in the

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publishing rights to the Beatles' fabled back catalog.

"The Beatles: Rock Band" video game also is expected to sell well, opening a new revenue stream for the band.

Adam Liversage, spokesman for the British Phonographic Industry, said video games offer well-known bands a way to reach a wider audience and increase their earnings in the process.

"It's great for music - it is a new revenue scheme and a way for people to explore music that they otherwise might not have had access to," he said.

"These games have been around for a while, the Beatles' one isn't the first one, it is the latest in a series," he said of the new release, which follows the success of "Guitar Hero" and other music-oriented video offerings.

And, Liversage said, the Beatles' fan base extends far beyond the teenage boys who are traditionally heavy video game users and may end up introducing older people to gaming.

Other bands may follow the Beatles' lead, he added. "If you're a guitar band with a global presence then it has to be worth looking at." As for McCartney, the ex-Beatle says he hasn't tried the game and acknowledges some purists may be offended by the licensing of the Beatles' music for it.

But the tradeoff is worth it because the game will help the band reach a younger audience, McCartney said.

"For me, the most interesting thing is that it will introduce the Beatles music to people who might never have heard it because they game all the time, they don't listen to the radio, and they haven't

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got much of a record collection," McCartney said in an interview with New Musical Express magazine.

The magazine, which targets younger music fans, is using the releases as a chance for a major critical review of the band with the goal of getting a new generation to listen to the Beatles with fresh ears, said reviews editor Hamish MacBain.

"If we can get a bunch of 14-year-olds in 2009 to really hear them, that's a very good thing," he said.

And while some fans may shy away from spending hundreds of dollars for a complete new collection of songs they already have, MacBain said the Beatles have more devoted fans than any other musicians.

"It takes a certain class of fan to replace things time and time again," he said. "But the Beatles have a lot more of these kind of fans than any other band in the world. And having heard all the remasters ... it made me appreciate the band more."

Not everyone agrees. Rory Mulcahy, a retiree visiting Abbey Road, said he was not convinced he needed remastered CDs.

"I appreciate the songs and I love the Beatles, but I'm happy enough with the CD collection I've got," he said. "I think there is a bit of moneymaking in there."

And some young people said they don't want anything to do with the new Beatles video game.

"I don't think it would be any fun for people my age, I don't even know the words," said Sofie Lochner, a 17-year-old visiting London from Amsterdam. "That's something my dad would buy, I'm sure."

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