

# Assignment TV

By **TERRENCE O'FLAHERTY**

The recent invasion of Britain's Beatles — a triumph of publicity over talent — was commented upon in this space last month. This innocent and happy quartet (off stage) impressed me as being totally free of both guile and ability. One can merely smile and acknowledge that Barnum was not only right but improved upon. There is a sucker born every minute — and FOUR to take him.

But the mail response from the youngsters has been interesting because of one constantly recurring comment among hundreds of letters: "How can you say that the Beatles don't have any talent when they are making so much money?"

So, I guess it is up to me to point out something that their parents failed to tell them: Success in the field of popular entertainment often has nothing to do with talent. The amount of money earned is not a true measure of accomplishment in a field where the audience does not demand skill.

THE MOVIES, television, and recording business are awash with stories of great success accompanied by no real talent. The effect of this combination on the happy-go-gullible public is not nearly so fascinating as it is on the performer himself.

After several years in the dough, the Cadillacs and the heated pools, the champagne and fruits-out-of-season begin to pall. The easy squeals of the audience become embarrassing when given so lavishly for so little. At this point the performer yearns for the greater satisfaction of rewards based on accomplishment.

There is no person so empty as an actor who is rich and famous but without honor among the real actors in his profession. You can see their names up there on the marquee and among the television credits.

EVEN THOUGH they've made it with the mass audience, there isn't one of 'em who wouldn't chuck it all for a real compliment from a fellow

actor for whom they have respect. The same is true of musicians, singers, dancers, and writers.

Sure, the Queen Mother of England said she likes the Beatles, but she's just trying to be a good fellow. She didn't say she admired them.

Buy their records, laugh at their haircuts, and follow the gang — but don't confuse a freak success with talent. The only talent they have is for hiring a dozen press agents and obeying their advice. In the long run, it isn't really enough.

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