

# Is this the all-time

## Top Pops?

IS THE Beatles' "Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" the greatest rock album of all time?

Paul Gambaccini, rock critic and Radio One disc jockey, asked more than 50 of his colleagues for their opinions. Some, like John Peel and Jimmy Savile OBE, refused — but the others voted overwhelmingly for "Sergeant Pepper." Four of them gave it the No. 1 spot in the top tens Gambaccini asked them to compile, and several others gave it a placing. No less than 35 of the 48 contributors included at least one Beatles album in their lists.

The results of Gambaccini's research has now been published as "Critics' choice top 200 albums" Omnibus Press, (£2.25), and it seems to reflect a common view that the 1960's were the most interesting period in rock music.

### Surprising

"Music then bore some relation to the times we were living in," says the compiler. "Many feel that today's music bears no relation to anything but itself"

The overall top ten includes, not surprisingly, four Beatles albums and two each by Bob Dylan and the Rolling Stones. The other two, less predictably, are by Belfast's own Van Morrison and American Bruce Springsteen.

Van Morrison has been for years a favourite of the critics, though the record-buying public has tended to be less enthusiastic. "The

general public don't really get a chance to hear Van Morrison," explains Gambaccini. "The critics have an advantage over everybody else because they are exposed to more music."

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### By ALBERT WATSON

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Bruce Springsteen, was voted into the top ten largely by the American jocks and critics. "Britons who are unfamiliar with urban New York cannot fully appreciate the power and perceptiveness of Springsteen's work," says Gambaccini.

"Conversely, most Americans will be baffled by British votes for "The Clash," a punk rock album not even released in the United States."

### Important

Two British critics gave "The Clash" as their No. 1 album, and it reached No. 24 on the overall chart. Critic Mark Perry writes "This album says more about real British life than the Beatles. Dylan and Hendrix all rolled into one. "Blonde on Blonde" of "Sergeant Pepper" will probably come top — but "The Clash" is far more important."

British fans may also be surprised by the lack of emphasis given by American critics to the original rock 'n' roll sounds of the 1950's. Even Elvis gets no higher than No. 11 with "The Sun Sessions"; Buddy Holly's highest entry is "Legend" at No. 20; and there are no other 1950's artists in the top fifty.

The Shadows, considered by many to be one of the most influential groups in the 1960's music are not mentioned in anyone's top ten.

Others would appear in a slightly longer list — the Bee Gees' first album, for instance, would probably be in my top twenty.

### Respect

"As for Cliff Richard, I'm afraid that to American ears his records just aren't good enough. Americans respect him as a singer, but they never seemed to be anything behind him, as if the backings lacked soul." Paul himself is American, though he has lived in Britain for eight years.

Gambaccini says that most of the people he invited to contribute did so "with enthusiasm." Most of the people who declined pleaded "either laziness or lack of expert judgement" — quite an admission for a rock critic.

The book is bound to be controversial among informed rock fans, but it will serve as a useful guide to which records of the last twenty odd years are generally thought to be "the greatest."