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Pop culture enregisterment of rhoticity: British bands and American audiences

(1) Beatlemania Timeline (1962 — 1964)

			• Tour Australia (June)
			• Tour US (February)
		• RCVP (November)	
		• “She Loves You” hits #1 (September)	
		• Records song for <i>Please Please Me</i> (February)	
	• First perform on the BBC (March)		
	• Unsuccessfully audition for Decca Records (January)		
1962	1963	1964	1965

(2) John Lennon, the *Tomorrow* interview with Tom Snyder, 8 April 1975

Tom Snyder: But in any event, your message was subliminal. You didn't uh have any axe to grind with social injustice, or did you?

John Lennon: No, our only axe was uh, we were the first working class singers that stayed working class and pronounced it. Didn't try and change our accents, which in England are loo-, were looked down upon, probably still are. Like a Bronx accent, it's equivalent to that, now. We, the only change was our image, you know, [getting slightly “What do you want, what do you want?”

Tom: [mock Bronx accent] “Get me off the hook. Get me off the hook.”

John: Yeah, [your right

Tom: [a Bronx, a Bronx accent. It could be a Brooklyn accent, it could be...

John: Oh yeah, Brooklyn was the one I meant, actually.

Tom: Okay, all right, fine. [mock Brooklyn accent] “Just get me off the hook.”

John: [Because that sounds like Liverpool, <mock Northern/Liverpool accent> “they talk like that there, do they”, you know? I mean, all the stars in England before, there were a couple of sort of rock and roll stars before us, but any major star in England had to change his voice. They do it in America to get on TV and radio, right? <mock American Broadcast Standard accent> “Hi, I'm from nowhere” the one George Carlin does. Well, that goes in England too.

(3) Paul McCartney, *The Beatles Anthology*

“I think we gave some sort of freedom to the world. I meet a lot of people now who say The Beatles freed them up. If you think about it, the world was slightly more of an upper-class place till The Beatles came along. Regional actors had to have also a very good Shakespearean voice, and then it started to be enough just to have your own accent, your own truth. I think we set free a lot of people who were blinkered, who were perhaps starting to live life along their parents' authoritarian lines.” (Beatles 2000: 356)

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(4) The Beatles, *Easy Beat* (BBC) interview with Peter Woods, 16 October 1963

Peter Woods: George, d'you think all this success is just a one-night stand, or can you settle down to a permanent life in show business?

George: Well, we'll just have to wait and see. I think in a few months' time it'll probably level out a bit. I mean, it can't go on the way it has been going, but uhm, I think we may last a little longer, or we're hoping anyway.

Woods: Paul, I don't know whether you know, but Mr. Edward Heath, the Lord Privy Seal, has said that he couldn't distinguish the other night what you were saying as Queen's English. Are you going to lose some of your Liverpool dialect for the Royal Show?

Paul: No, but, you know, we don't all speak like the BBC (??).

John: <mock Northern accent> "Ah, we don't all speak like that, do we?"

Paul: <mock Northern accent> "Thank God we do [not]."

Woods: [Well, with that, all I can do, lads, is to wish you <mock Liverpool accent> "lots and lots of luck" at the Royal Show.

Paul, George and Ringo: Thank you very much. Thank you so much. Thanks a lot.

John: <mock Standard Southern English> "Jolly good."

Paul: <mock Standard Southern English> "Cheerio."

(5) John Lennon, London Airport interview, 31 October 1963

Reporter: John, in this Royal Variety Show when you're appearing before royalty, you're language has got to be pretty good obviously – this thing about Teddy saying that he couldn't distinguish your... The Queen's English.

John: <mock Standard Southern English accent> "I can't understand Teddy! I can't understand Teddy saying that at all, really." <natural accent> I'm not going to vote for Ted.

Reporter: But you're not going to change your act for the Lord Privy Seal?

John: <exaggerated mock Northern/Liverpool/working class accent> "Ah no, like, we'll keep, like, the same kinda thing, like. Won't we?"

(6) Examples of rhotic and non-rhotic varieties

	American English (Rhotic)	British English (Non-rhotic)
explore	ɪk'splɔːɹ	ɪk'splɔː
star	stɑːɹ	stɑː
floor	flɔːɹ	flɔː

(7) Linking [r] (adapted from Cruttenden 2014: 316)

a. explore	explore at night	explore in the sky
ɪk'splɔː	ɪk'splɔːɹ ət naɪt	ɪk'splɔːɹ ɪn ðə skaɪ
b. star	star at night	star in the sky
stɑː	stɑːɹ ət naɪt	stɑːɹ ɪn ðə skaɪ
c. floor	flooring	near nearer

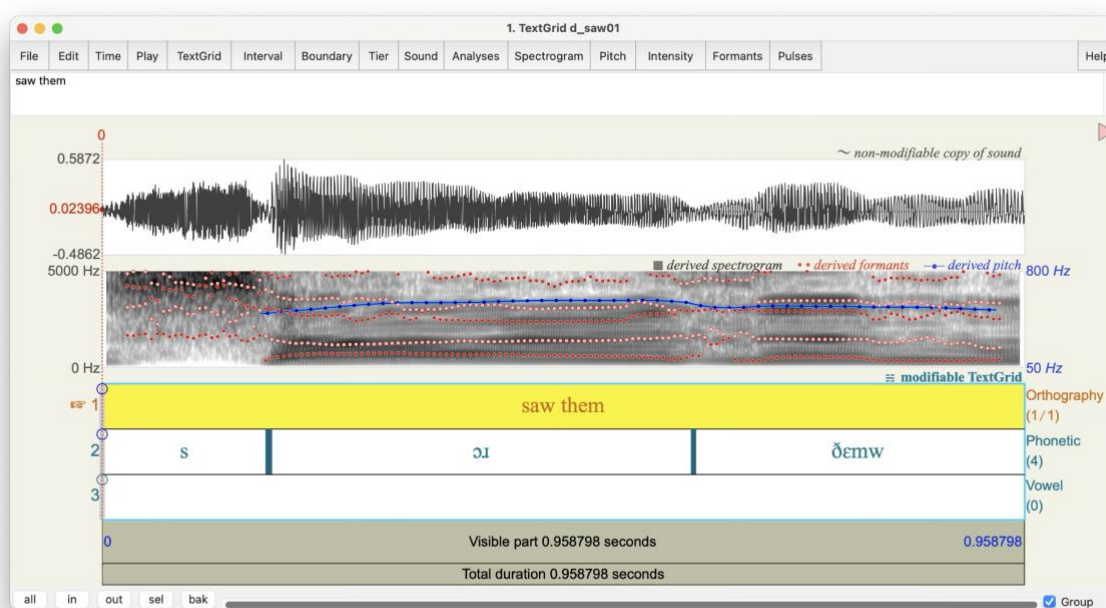
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flo: 'flo:ɪŋ niə 'niələ

(8) Intrusive [r] (adapted from Cruttenden 2014: 316)

- | | | |
|---------|---------------|---------------------|
| (a) saw | saw a bird | saw it there |
| sɔ: | sɔ:ɪ ə bɜ:d | sɔ:ɪ It ðeə |
| (b) spa | spa at night | spa in the hotel |
| spɑ: | spɑ:ɪ ət naɪt | spɑ:ɪ In ðə həʊ'tel |

(9) Sample spectrogram of first instance of “saw them” in “Till There Was You” from *With The Beatles* (LP)



(10) Distribution (time and space) of rhotic and non-rhotic saw in “Till There Was You” recordings

	Recording Description	Date	Vowel	Location
1	Decca Audition Tape	1 January 1962	ɔ:ɪ	UK
2	Star-Club Recording	December 1962	ɔ:ɪ	Germany
3	BBC ‘Pop Go The Beatles’	10 July 1963	ɔ:ɪ	UK
4	With The Beatles	18 and 30 July 1963	ɔ:ɪ	UK
5	Royal Command Variety Performance	4 November 1963	ɔ:ɪ	UK
6	Ed Sullivan Performance	9 February 1964	ɔ:	US
7	Washington Coliseum Concert	11 February 1964	ɔ:	US
8	Big Night Out Show	23 February 1964	ɔ:ɪ	UK
9	BBC ‘From Us To You Say The Beatles’	28 February 1964	ɔ:	UK
10	Australia Tour	17 June 1964	ɔ:	Australia
11	Paul McCartney’s 2005 US Tour	12 November 2005	ɔ:	US

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