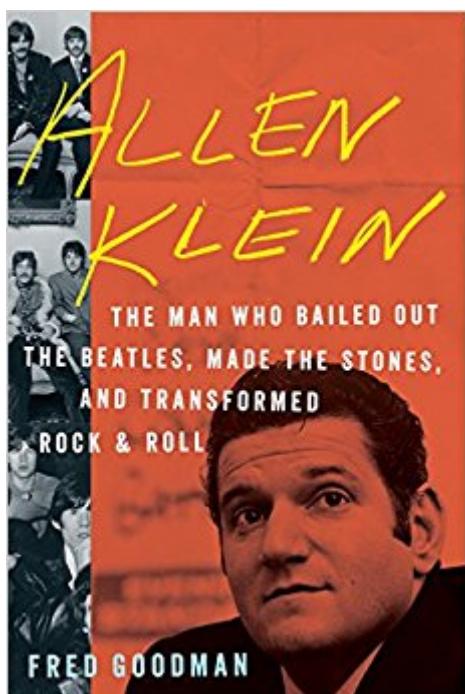


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# Allen Klein: The Man Who Bailed Out The Beatles, Made The Stones, And Transformed Rock & Roll



## Synopsis

The story of notorious manager Allen Klein, revealing new, behind-the-scenes details about some of the biggest rock bands in history. Allen Klein was like no one the music industry had seen before. The hard-nosed business manager became infamous for allegedly catalyzing the Beatles' breakup and robbing the Rolling Stones, but the truth is both more complex and more fascinating. As the manager of the Stones and then the Beatles—not to mention Sam Cooke, Donovan, the Kinks, and numerous other performers—he taught young soon-to-be legends how to be businessmen as well as rock stars. In so doing, Klein made millions for his clients and changed music forever. But Klein was as merciless with his clients as he was with anyone else, earning himself an outsize reputation for villainy that has gone unchallenged until now. Through unique, unprecedented access to Klein's archives, veteran music journalist Fred Goodman tells the full story of how the Beatles broke up, how the Stones achieved the greatest commercial success in rock history, and how the music business became what it is today.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

[View larger](#) A Conversation with Fred Goodman (Photo: Allen Klein with John Lennon and Yoko Ono in New York, 1972. Credit: ABKCO Archives) We asked the author of Allen Klein a few questions about his new book and its fascinating subject. What inspired you to write a biography of Allen Klein? If you grew up a Beatles or Rolling Stones fan, as I did, Allen Klein was a name you heard of—and not in a good way. He was notorious as the business manager who supposedly broke up the Beatles and robbed the Rolling Stones. That was still pretty much the

public perception in 2009 when Klein died. I wondered if that wasn't a bit simplistic. The rock world is certainly full of terrible stories about artists getting ripped off and if Klein was a snake oil salesman he likely could have roped in a couple of suckers. But the Beatles and the Rolling Stones? He also managed an unusually business savvy artist in Sam Cooke and worked with Phil Spector, the Kinks, Pete Townshend, the Animals, and others. I wondered if Klein's story might be more intriguing than the demonic portrait. Was Allen Klein a rogue and a rascal? Absolutely. Did he always put his clients' financial interests above his own? No. And he certainly cultivated a reputation as a rough customer. He loved nothing so much as a good lawsuit, and some of his legal battles particularly with the Rolling Stones and George Harrison went on for decades. But he was hardly a cartoon villain. He was a complicated and sophisticated businessman who recognized that record companies systematically infantilized and financially abused artists, and he became a staunch artists' advocate. Klein greatly admired the creativity and originality of his clients and turned the balance of power in the music business on its head, helping artists to gain control over their work and careers. And because he delivered like no one else, he expected to be paid like no one else. What are some business practices Klein made prominent that are still in use today? As an accountant and business manager, Klein brought many innovations to the music business including aggressive audits, seeking reversion of rights, maintaining an artist's ownership of masters, and questioning virtually every facet of a contract as a matter of course. But the biggest change is the way he transformed the relationship between performers and labels. Before Klein, few artists and producers questioned the underlying suppositions inherent in record company contracts. Klein, who presented himself to artists as a hired gun, recognized that the artists were creative, original and thus valuable, and took an extremely confrontational tone in negotiations. He did as much or more than anyone else to show artists that the record companies needed them and that they shouldn't be in a hurry to bargain away the leverage their talent gave them.

[View larger](#) (Photo: Klein with Mick Jagger & Keith Richards in 1967. Credit: Daily Mail/Solo Syndication) How would you describe Klein's relationship with The Rolling Stones? Klein was first brought on by the Stones' manager, Andrew Loog Oldham, in 1965 to negotiate a new recording contract and give the band guidance in America. The record deal was a whopping success: Klein negotiated contracts worth a guaranteed \$2.6 million. Klein's

the first real money they'd ever gotten for records and a far better deal than the Beatles had. In America, he was able to help them ratchet up their tours significantly, leading Richards to declare Klein's work "magnificent." Recalled Richards, "He was brilliant at generating cash." Over the next five years, the relationship slowly soured — partly because Klein had become the business manager for the Beatles and was paying less attention to the Stones, but also because Jagger was growing increasingly sophisticated as an artist and businessman and unhappy with Klein's level of involvement and control. You describe some epic clashes between Klein and The Beatles, especially Paul McCartney. Becoming the manager of the Beatles was Klein's white whale. Like Ahab, he stalked his target relentlessly for years. The death of original Beatles manager Brian Epstein and the precarious financial position of Apple — which threatened to bankrupt the group — finally gave him his opening. But by that point, the Beatles were barely a group, and I suspect even Klein, who thought he knew everything there was to know about them, didn't realize how wide the rift was between McCartney and Lennon. Believing that getting Lennon's approval was the key to getting the Beatles, Klein successfully wooed him and Yoko Ono. Only then did he discover that the group had recently retained the father-and-son legal team of Lee and John Eastman — soon to be Paul McCartney's in-laws — as advisers. Klein and the Eastmans were soon fighting a proxy war for McCartney and Lennon over control of the group. They battled each other constantly, and whatever one side wanted, the other fought. Klein eventually became the business manager of the Beatles, although McCartney declined to sign the agreement. McCartney never trusted Klein — he called him "a cheap New York crook"; and eventually brought suit to break up the Beatles in order to wrest control from Klein. The trial, which painted Klein in the blackest hues possible, severely tarnished his reputation.

Klein came from very humble beginnings. How do you think this fueled his ambition? In Klein's case, the child was certainly father to the man. His mother died shortly after Allen was born and his father, a kosher butcher struggling to make a living in Depression-era Newark, put Allen and a sister to an orphanage. They remained there until his father remarried five years later. Klein's years in the home left him with a chip on his shoulder — as did his difficult relationship with his father, a distant and disapproving man. Yet Allen was also remarkably resourceful and clever: later, during a hitch in the Army, he discovered that others didn't view his foundling past as shameful — on the contrary, many of his fellow soldiers found

it intriguing and viewed him as something of a Dickensian exotic. And while he never shook the feeling that he'd been abandoned as a child — he had a lifelong abhorrence of being alone and would go to extraordinary lengths to keep people close or prove his worth to a client — he was soon playing up his orphanage childhood. It was a key piece of his appeal to John Lennon, who nursed a similar sense of himself as an underdog and outsider and viewed Klein as a kindred spirit, at least initially. He was so quick to play up his notorious persona. Do you think this portrayal is accurate? Klein was a brawler and advertised the fact. One record company owner recalled Klein as a bully and this despite the fact that Allen simply handled the books for the label and was therefore working for them rather than their opponent. Ray Davies of the Kinks — hardly a shrinking violet — recalls Klein being so aggressive and belligerent in negotiations on behalf of his band that even the Kinks' own lawyer started to cry. Instilling fear was certainly a part of Klein's strategy. A lot of artists liked that: they wanted someone who could scare the pants off record company executives. But it also served a second, equally important purpose: it masked the fact that Klein prepared tirelessly for these sessions and always knew what he was after. His bullying hid his brilliance, which was his greatest weapon. What do you think is Klein's most important contribution to music today? Klein swung the balance of power to the creators. Brian Epstein was a marvelous advocate for the unknown Beatles, a gifted impresario who forced the world to recognize their creativity and opened the door for a world of wonderful music. But he was not a hard-nosed businessman. Under the contract he signed, the Beatles were paid a farthing each — that's one-quarter of a penny — per single sold. Klein recognized that the record companies and music publishers were grossly underpaying performers and was the right man to swing the pendulum in the opposite direction.

"[A] savvy, evenhanded biography...Goodman makes the nuts and bolts really interesting...Sharp thumbnail sketches of various performers, managers, and record company executives also liven things up." — The Daily Beast — "A compelling work of rock-and-roll history." — Wall Street Journal — "Fred Goodman makes this world come alive and any fan of rock or insider tales of the music industry will be in heaven reading about this fascinating, troubling character." — Judd Apatow — "Writing about contracts, percentages and deals can be tedious, but Goodman makes it as exciting as reading about an artist's sex life. The book explodes with inside dope." — Jim Farber, New York Daily News "In this thoroughly researched biography,

Goodman (a former Rolling Stone editor and author of *The Mansion on the Hill*) gives a much more complete, balanced look at the man . . . who has mostly been viewed as a cartoon villain, and fleshes out his portrait with more nuance and brush strokes than even before. *GOODMAN* •Houston Press "One highly engrossing read. . . . Fred Goodman is a superb writer and his account here of one of rock n roll's most polarizing figures could not be more readable. [A] triumph." •Yahoo! Music "I want you to read it, so you can see how the world really works. Allen Klein reinvented the wheel." •Bob Lefsetz "Goodman's eye-opening biography of a pivotal insider reveals the record-company machinations behind some of the biggest names from the 1960s." •Booklist "In this balanced, fascinating, and well-written biography, Goodman gives [Allen Klein] credit where it's due." •Kirkus, STARRED

Writing about contracts, percentages, and deals can be tedious, but Goodman makes it as exciting as reading about an artist's sex life. The book explodes with inside dope. *New York Daily News* Allen Klein was like no one the music industry had seen before. Though he became infamous for allegedly causing the Beatles breakup and robbing the Rolling Stones, the truth is both more complex and more fascinating. As the manager of the Stones and then the Beatles not to mention Sam Cooke, Pete Townshend, Donovan, the Kinks, and numerous others he taught young soon-to-be legends how to be businessmen as well as rock stars. While Klein made millions for his clients, he was as merciless with them as he was with anyone, earning himself an outsize reputation for villainy that has gone unchallenged until now. Through unique, unprecedented access to Klein's archives, veteran music journalist Fred Goodman tells the full story of how the Beatles broke up, how the Stones achieved the greatest commercial success in rock history, and how the music business became what it is today. Fred Goodman is a superb writer . . . and his account here of one of rock n roll's most polarizing figures could not be more readable. The even-handed tone, the supposition that readers are moderately intelligent and sophisticated, and the rather astounding involvement Allen Klein had with pop music's largest legends put all that together, and you've got one highly engrossing read. *Yahoo! Music* Succeed[s] both as a compelling work of rock n roll history and as a cautionary business primer. *Wall Street Journal* FRED GOODMAN, a former editor at *Rolling Stone*, is the author of the books *Fortune's Fool*, *The Secret City*, and *The Mansion on the Hill*, which was a *New York Times* Notable Book and received the Ralph J. Gleason Award for the best music book of 1997. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Loved it... What a character...

Very insightful and interesting. Great for anyone interested in learning more about Klein, and a must for all going into the music industry!

In my extensive Beatle blogging over the years, I have tried to be fair and balanced with regard to Mr. Klein. In other words, it wasn't all bad. Yes, McCartney's very prescient forensic examination of the books and his freezing of all assets until the Apple mess could be straightened out did reveal Klein was a crook. Not surprisingly, this was ignored in the book. However, on the plus side, Klein: 1) Freed the Fabs from Triumph Management that included paying the Epstein's 25% gross of their earnings until 1977, 2) Resuscitated the moribund "Get Back" tapes and helped turn them into the "Let It Be" LP and movie which incidentally copped a Grammy and an Oscar for best movie soundtrack (which Paul IRONICALLY accepted on each occasion), 3) Negotiated a significantly higher royalty rate from EMI for the band, 4) Released the Come Together/Something Double A sided single, both of which got to #1 and brought in much needed cash for the boys, 5) Release the American only "Hey Jude" LP of big hits most of which never appeared on an album before bringing in more cash. Klein's downfall, which McCartney proved, was that he was taking 25% of EVERYTHING COMING INTO Apple at the time including solo albums. His contract was specific: 25% of any INCREASE he brought in over and above what the Fabs were already making and that was only supposed to be in the UK, not the entire planet earth. None of this was brought out. However, the book shed much needed light on Klein's upbringing and his singularly unique niche in recording history: A bulldog artist's advocate. He was the first and they broke the mold afterwards. Still an excellent read. Recommend it. John H.

Great music history!

Just as expected.

I enjoyed the book but did not come away with the feeling that Klein was as significant a player in the music industry as Goodman posits. Also the book has extended passages detailing serpentine negotiations which are hard to follow and not too exciting. Finally, I wish Goodman had delved more into Klein's personal life. Still an interesting story.

Loved this book. Now we know why The Beatles really broke up, and it wasn't Yoko. A great look at a very complex man who changed the music business forever. If you're in the music business, this is a must read. Even if you're not, you'll still find it interesting, and at times, a real page turner.

If you're looking for juicy sex tidbits in this book, don't bother. It really covers more of the financial, deal making/breaking negotiations between Allen Klein, the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. Allen Klein was a complicated, some might say, crazy manager whose early life defined who he became, i.e. one of the smartest, yet most mercurial characters in Rock n Roll history. There are a few surprises, and the reader is left to realize that the Beatles demise was not due to Yoko Ono, but to business, growing apart, and that Paul McCartney had a vindictive streak when it came to getting what he wanted, i.e. his first Wife's Linda family to manage the band, even though the rest of the members opposed this. The Rolling Stones story is much more interesting, and it's nice to read that the band, who many gave about 5 years, is still going strong. Fred Goodman puts together a very interesting book about a troubled, brilliant man who got what he wanted, but paid a price for it. Well worth reading.

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