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John Lennon's sister unveils statue of The Beatles on Liverpool waterfront

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Julia Baird said of her singer-songwriter brother, slain in New York in December 1980, would be delighted with the new work of art in the epicenter of Liverpool's UNESCO World Heritage site.

She predicted the sculpture of John, Paul, George and Ringo would become a new focal point for Beatles' fans from around the world.

The Beatles are credited with changing the face of pop music and half a century on their music is as popular as ever.

Neither of the two surviving Beatles, Sir Paul McCartney and drummer Ringo Starr were at Friday's unveiling ceremony.

McCartney, 70, who still performs at pop concerts, is likely to take a peek at the statues away from the public glare. Starr lives in the United States.

The idea for the statue came about when Chris Butler of the Castle Fine Art Foundry was walking through the city center and was inspired by the huge image of the band outside a record store.

Butler said: "This is a statue that needs no title, no explanation, no instruments, no gimmicks. It's a monument to a moment and the moment started in Liverpool."

"There's a real joy in knowing that this idea has come to fruition thanks to The Cavern Club. Together we present, to all the people, with love, our Beatles," he said.

Edwards said: "Our image of them seems to bring past, present, and future together, like a time machine. I think the statue will quickly become a place of ritual. It will be a place to come together, have a think, meditate and play."

The newly commissioned work by British sculptor Andy Edwards depicts the Beatles walking along the famous Pier Head waterfront.

The sculpture has been gifted to the city by the legendary Cavern Club, the venue where The Beatles were discovered in the early 1960s.

"The team at the Cavern wanted to acknowledge how synonymous the band is with the city, and the new addition to the waterfront will undoubtedly prove to be a must-visit location for fans across the world," said a city hall spokeswoman.

Cavern Club director Bill Heckle said: "(Liverpool's) most famous four sons have played a pivotal role in bringing people here. We are proud that we have been able to finance this project on behalf of fans from all over the world."

The bronze work weighs 1.2 tonnes, and was cast at a foundry less than a kilometer from its new home.

Baird said: "I am honoured to be unveiling this statue in our wonderful city of Liverpool. It stands in loving memory of the best band in the world; the band that leapt from the Cavern stage to world-wide recognition.

"The timing reflects the 50 years since The Beatles final public appearance in Liverpool on Dec. 5, 1965. I was present at that event and am proud to be at the unveiling."

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