In the early 1960s, the Beatles were hired to play in several music clubs in Hamburg, Germany. They lived in this city for many months, and played almost every night. Each night, these clubs would fill with young people who wanted to dance, and the band would typically play for hours. The quotes below document some of their reflections on this experience.

(1) George Harrison: In Hamburg we got very good as a band because we had to play eight hours a night and we started building a big repertoire of some of our own songs, but mainly we did all the old rock songs. In fact, we did everything... Of course, we had our favorites, which we'd play a couple of times in the night in the main sets when most of the crowd were there. But we got very tight as a band... We just kept playing the rock and roll things and the stuff from records we used to get from Brian Epstein's shop before we met him.

(2) George Harrison: When you think about it sensibly, our sound really stems from Germany. That's where we learned to work for hours and hours on end, and keep on working at full peak even though we reckoned our legs and arms were about ready to drop off... It was all that work on various club stages in Germany that built up our beat.

(3) George Harrison: Our peak for playing live was in Hamburg. At the time, we weren't famous and people came to see us simply because of our music and the atmosphere we created.

(4) Paul McCartney: We had to actually invite the audience in, because we would be playing to a completely dark and empty club. The minute we saw someone we'd kick into 'Dance In The Street' and rock out, pretending we hadn't seen them. And we'd perhaps get a few of them in. We were like fairground barkers: see four people - have to get them! It was good training...we built a little audience. We would grab two people and do anything they wanted - our whole repertoire: 'You want a request?' (There was only one table filled.) 'Yes.' We would do all the jokes and try to be marvellous and make them want to come back.

(5) John Lennon: In Hamburg we had to play for hours and hours on end. Every song lasted twenty minutes and had twenty solos in it. We'd be playing eight or ten hours a night. That's what improved the playing. And the Germans like heavy rock, so you have to keep rocking all the time; that's how we got stomping.

(6) George Harrison: We had to learn millions of songs. We had to play so long we just played everything. So it was all the Gene Vincent - we'd do everything on the album; not just a lazy 'Blue-Jean Bop', whatever. We'd get a Chuck Berry record, and learn it all, same with Little Richard, the Everly Brothers, Buddy Holly, Fats Domino - everything. But we'd also do things like 'Moonglow', which we used to play as an instrumental. Anything, because we'd be on for hours - we'd make up stuff....Hamburg was really like our apprenticeship, learning how to play in front of people.
(7) Paul McCartney: We never thought to write our own songs over there. There was so much other stuff. I had written a couple of little things but I didn't dare show them to anyone because they were little. There was always a Chuck Berry song instead. 'A Taste Of Honey' was one of my big numbers in Hamburg - a bit of a ballad. It was different, but it used to get requested a lot. We sang close harmonies on the little echo mikes, and we made a fairly good job of it. It used to sound pretty good, actually.

(8) John Lennon: It was Hamburg that did it. That's where we really developed. To get the Germans going and keep it up for twelve hours at a time we really had to hammer. We would never have developed as much if we'd stayed at home. We had to try anything that came into our heads in Hamburg. There was nobody to copy from. We played what we liked best and the Germans liked it as long as it was loud.

(9) John Lennon: We repeated the shows many, many times, but never the same. Sometimes we'd go on with fifteen or twenty musicians and play together and we'd create something that had never been done on stage by a group before. I'm talking about before we were famous, about the natural things that happened, before we were turned into robots that played on stage. We would, naturally, express ourselves in any way that we deemed suitable.

Source: The Beatles Anthology, 2005