

Positive Feedback

By Lisa Wheeler

For record collectors, The Beatles are certainly one of the most collected, most sought-after groups of all time. A rare copy of just about anything with the group's name on it can fetch thousands of dollars at any given time. Past auction results, both from Internet and in-person sales, prove that their popularity isn't about to wane anytime soon. Finding any Beatles item for a steal is just about impossible — or is it?

"I picked up a Capitol issue of 'Hello, Goodbye' for a penny, on eBay recently," said a very pleased Kevin Thomas, a Miami-based Beatles enthusiast. Granted, the sale was not for the 1967 DJ release (P 2056), valued at up to \$250, but instead for the 1978, purple label issue (2056, valued at between \$2-\$8), but Thomas was ecstatic all the same. "I mean, it's one cent, please!"

Yes, it's true. Bargain shoppers can actually buy Beatles items for a penny. On any given day you can find hundreds of items up for grabs on eBay — and some collectors don't think twice at plunking down their hard-earned Lincoln (the coin kind) to nab them.

"I've been a Beatles collector since 1998," said New York City resident Brad Firminger, who has more than 200 pieces in his collection and who already knows how to spend the big bucks on John, Paul, George, and Ringo. "I paid \$2,575 for an *Abbey Road* album signed by all four." But even with money to spend, he couldn't resist the allure of an almost-free opening bid. He recently added to his stash a brand-new sealed copy of the two-CD U.K. import, *The Fab Four Collection*, for one cent. "I stumbled onto it and couldn't believe that no one had bid more than a penny for it, so I bid on it and got it."

Although the release features a literal hodge-podge of everything from Tony Sheridan And The Beat Brothers to Wings cuts intermingled with interview outtakes, the purchase has opened Firminger's eyes to the joys of penny bidding. "I never even thought



about it, but I do now — come on, it's a penny," he said.

However, the instant rush of a penny deal is sometimes too good to be true. "I screwed up," said Janet Gold, who was hunting for items for her husband when she spotted what she thought was labeled a "collectible single." "I didn't read the auction description correctly, and when I got the record it wasn't this rare item that I thought it was." Instead of thinking that she had stumbled onto a "collectible" version of the Beatles "A Taste of Honey," she actually purchased the Collectables label version of the song (1505/1982 \$3 NM). "I was blinded by the fact that it was only a penny."

"The one cent price definitely gets me to look at a record, even if it's one I already have," said Beatles collector Jim Ambrosino. The Tampa Bay, Fla., area collector recently purchased George Harrison's *Somewhere in England* LP for a penny. "The advantage of getting an item this cheap is that if I ever get a better copy of this record and wish to sell or trade this one, it should be fairly easy to recoup or surpass what I paid for this one." But even he admits he is very careful about one cent deals that often add up. "I only bid if the shipping price is reasonable also. I've seen one-cent records with shipping prices of \$10 or \$15 — I don't even bother clicking on those."

Have you found a deal on an online auction site? I'd love to read about it. Contact me at my Web site, www.isleofwrite.com or via the good ol' post office at Lisa Wheeler, P.O. Box 27633, Austin, Texas 78755.