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The Rutles Anthology

1978

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This is Spinal Tap has been heralded as being perhaps one of the greatest rock n' roll mockumentaries ever crafted. Even those who haven't been in the music business can see the humor that it brings but before Spinal Tap was brandishing their heavy metal humor there was another mock band that took to the stage. From the minds of Eric Idle and Neil Innes, two names best known for their work on Monty Python, comes a jab at the United Kingdom's own Fabulous Four.

The Rutles is of course a parody of The Beatles. Originally the idea was presented as a part of Idel's own comedy series *Rutland Weekend Television* and then was rebroadcast in the United States on *Saturday Night Live*. The success and popularity of the skit lead to the creation of a television special *All You Need Is Cash*, an obvious title parody of The Beatles own All You Need Is Love. The film itself doesn't necessarily have a plot but instead is meant to chronicle the career of the fictional band. You might consider it as being something of a Behind the Music type of program only decades before VH1 brought the series into existence. Over the course of the movie there are interviews with the likes of Mick Jagger and Paul Simon, both of whom claim to be fans of the band or worked with them in some capacity. Member of SNL appear in the cast as well such as Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray, John Belushi and Gilda Radner.

The Rutles themselves consists of Dirk McQuickly (Eric Idle) who is a parody of Paul McCartney, Barry Wom (John Halsey) or Ringo Starr, Stig O'Hara (Ricky Fataar) is George Harrison and finally there is Ron Nasty (Neil Innes) as the counterpart of John Lennon. Aside from the interviews with people who "know" the band the movie works in a variety of different footage taken from live performances, news reels, as well as the bands other "films" including an animated sequence designed to parody *The Yellow Submarine*. As with many spoofs the intent to parody The Beatles isn't hidden and is very obvious.

I know that The Beatles have been a band which is highly influential to many but I've never been a fan. In fact I've gone as far as stating that they are incredibly overrated and while many will say that they ushered in modern rock n' roll I would argue that in reality they just got lucky. There were many other bands doing music of a similar fashion but it was The Beatles who managed to get their name out their first and in turn influence a new generation of music. They might have changed music but they certainly aren't the great pioneers that many seem to think they are. My distaste for the band is probably what taints my opinion of *The Rutles* movie.

This is a mockumentary which I feel that you really need to be a fan of the band in order to appreciate what is being presented. This is Spinal Tap is much different since it's not necessarily trying to imitate one band in particular but instead is

since it's not necessarily trying to imitate one band in particular but instead is taking absurdities from existing artists and creating something completely different. *The Rutles* is poking fun at the career of The Beatles in many ways and while there are some minor amusing bits it's not anything that I would consider to be incredibly hilarious.

The video quality for this blu-ray really isn't very good. While some of the visual noise that is found throughout the presentation is intentional, there are spots where I don't believe that to be the case. The overall picture doesn't look bright or vibrant and definitely isn't the quality that most have come to expect from high definition.

The disc features commentary with Eric Idle as well as an interview. The original sketch has been included on the disc as well. The follow up movie, *Can't Buy Me Lunch*, is also found in the collection however it's only on the DVD.

Unless you're a huge fan of The Beatles and enjoy seeing parodies done of their career, I'd suggest simply skipping this release. Even as a fan of *Monty Python* I didn't feel that the movie even came close to capturing the same degree of comedy. I don't mind good parodies but *The Rutles* fails to even come close to being remotely funny in my opinion and while some consider this to be a classic piece of work I'll have to humbly disagree.

-mike-

Directed by:
Eric Idle
Gary Weis

Written by:
Eric Idle
Neil Innes

Cast:
Eric Idle
Neil Innes
John Halsey
Ricky Fataar
Michael Palin
George Harrison
Bianca Jagger
John Belushi
Dan Aykroyd
Gilda Radner
Bill Murray

Blu-ray Features:
Aspect Ratio: 1.78:1, 1.33:1
Audio: English DTS-HD Master Audio 5.1,
English LPCM 2.0
English Subtitles
Commentary with Eric Idle
Commentary/Interview with Eric Idle
SNL Rutland Weekend Television Sketch
Can't Buy Me Lunch (DVD Only)
DVD Copy