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September 2010

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Screen Reviews

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 Really Is Dead

x-Reference

Documentary  
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 Paul McCartney  
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 M15  
 conspiracy  
 documentary  
 Indie film  
 Bob Dylan  
 Aluminum Foil  
 Beanies.

# Paul McCartney Really Is Dead: The Last Testament of George Harrison?

directed by Joel Gilbert

starring The Beatles

Highway 61 Entertainment

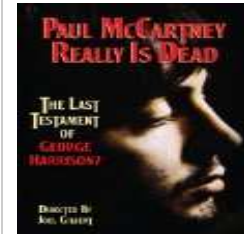
Conspiracy theories -- you've got to love them. The grassy knoll, William Shakespeare's authorship, Vril, Phoebus, and my latest favorite: the Deepwater Horizon explosion is a secret plot to detonate the seafloor methane ice and create a tidal wave to wipe out illegal Mexicans waiting to cross the border. Given that THAT particular honker is in the air, the issue of Paul McCartney's supposed death in 1966 seems quaintly dated, but still makes for an interesting if overly obsessive indie film. Like all good conspiracy documentaries, there are tons of facts, semi-facts, and speculations, but very little attempt to challenge the central premise.

I suspect a few readers might recall grandparents speaking reverently of the Fab Four, and at the time they really were bigger than the Backstreet Boys, the Jonas Brothers, and the Bay City Rollers balled up into one giant orgy of teen heartthrobbing. Every teenaged girl on the planet was in love with John, Paul, George, and sometimes even Ringo. Here's what supposedly happened: Paul dies in a



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car wreck late at night, and British Intelligence MI5 is called in as the Queen fears there will be mass suicides of his hormonally enraged fans. A double is quickly brought in, and plastic surgery turns McCartney Lookalike Contest winner William Campbell into False Paul. The remaining Fab Four Less One contracted "False Paul" to "Faul" which they could say publicly without fear. Enough of McCartney's original songs remained unpublished to carry the band through their next five albums, and they stopped touring until False Paul's guitar fingering got good enough to match Dead Paul's. Under MI5 death threats the band clammed up about Faul, but John Lennon obsessively plants clues in album art and song lyrics and backward audio samples. A trip to India fails to insert Paul's astral soul into Faul's body, but they all learn about pot and LSD. The stress is too much and the band breaks up. Fourteen years after the accident, Lennon decides to announce The Truth, and MI5 sends Mark David Chapman to assassinate him. Take THAT, you traitors!

We've heard all these theories over the years. When they are all rolled up into a single linear story, they begin as semi-reasonable yet eventually end up in the Land of the Aluminum Foil Beanies. Despite the wobbly Liverpoolian accent of the unnamed narrator, there's an air of plausibility in this collection. Still, it's curious Harrison would send his audio cassette *Last Testament* to an obscure video producer who didn't make his first film until four years after Harrison's death, but those sorts of CSI 101 questions are best left behind the green fabric screen.

Even if conspiracies aren't your preferred form of political discourse, this *Last Testament* is a great rock and roll curio. As to whether the death of a pop star merited direct intervention by James Bond's supervisors, or the boys in the band were simply screwing with the minds of their fans will never be known. And THAT's what makes a truly GREAT conspiracy.

**Paul Really Is Dead: [paulreallyisdead.com](http://paulreallyisdead.com)**

**Carl F Gauze**

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