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REMOTE PATROL

TUESDAY, AUGUST 31, 2010

4,000 Holes in New Beatles Conspiracy DVD

A week ago, John Lennon's toilet bowl was auctioned off for nearly \$15,000. It's safe to say there's still a market for all things Beatles-related.

But fans of the Fab Four may find the new DVD **"Paul McCartney Really Is Dead"** (Highway 61 Entertainment, release date Sept 1, 2010) a trip too far down the long and winding road of gullibility and conspiracy.

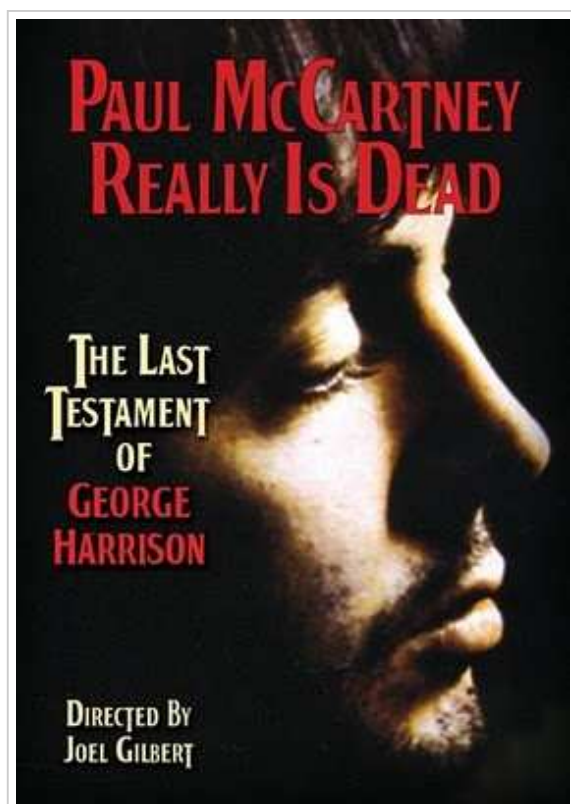
"Paul" embroiders the memory of the wild 1969 rumor of Paul's demise with "new" evidence from beyond the grave. Step right up for the macabre mystery tour.

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The filmmakers claim to have received a mysterious package containing audio cassettes of "The Last Testament of George Harrison," an oral history, recorded in by the former Beatle in 1999, right after a well-reported attempt on his life. It claims to be the greatest conspiracy and cover-up in pop culture history.

The narrator explains that these tapes were examined by forensics experts who can neither confirm nor deny that they reflect George Harrison's actual speaking voice.



ABOUT ME

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Kevin McDonough is a television critic syndicated to more than 65 daily newspapers nationwide.

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I'm no expert, but as a frequent viewer and reviewer of Beatles documentaries, I found this "George" to sound closer to the exaggerated Liverpoolian dubs of the Saturday morning Beatles cartoons than the actual voice of the quiet Beatle.

And what this "George" goes on to say will throw further cold water on any semblance of authenticity.

According to his testimony -- accompanied by vintage photos, footage and reenactments -- Paul McCartney was killed in a car crash in November 1966. Faced with the death of such a popular entertainer, British Intelligence feared an international rash of suicides, or worse, and hatched a plot to cover things up.

The surviving Beatles were sworn to secrecy and a false Paul (referred to hereafter as "Faul") was chosen and subject to the best plastic surgery MI5 could afford. A woman named "Rita," the only eyewitness to Paul's horrific crash, also took the official vow of silence. A gruff MI5 handler named "Maxwell" was there to make sure Rita and the Fab Three kept their lips sealed.

"George" further explains that the rebellious John Lennon chafed at government interference and the presence of "Faul," and went to to load the Beatles

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songs and record jackets with clues about the death of the real Paul.

We're told that John composed the mournful "Eleanor Rigby" was an elegy to Paul and "Father McKenzie" referred to Paul's dad, "Father McCartney," one of the few non-Beatles to see Paul's actual funeral. "George" explains how the covers to "Rubber Soul," "Revolver" and the American LP "Yesterday and Today" became laden with elaborate clues.



This is where the movie dovetails with the 1969 rumor/hoax and also where it stops making any sense -- particularly in terms of its own "facts."

The film establishes Paul's death date in November 1966. But a twenty second internet search shows that "Rigby" and "Revolver" were released on August 5, 1966; "Rubber Soul" on December 5, 1965 and "Yesterday and Today" on June 20, 1966. All well before Paul's "death."

But these fact-checkable discrepancies are mere quibbles compared to a whopper still to come

According to "George," after the increasingly hysterical "Rita" threatened to divulge the awful truth, MI5 dispatched a hit man to terminate her.

But he only nicked her with his motorcycle and she later lost her leg. Frightened, "Rita" changed her name to "Heather," and -- you guessed it -- went on to become Heather Mills, the woman who would marry and divorce Paul/Faul all those years ago.

One would really have to turn off one's mind, relax and float downstream to buy that. After all, Heather Mills wasn't even born until January 12, 1968, more than a year after a grown-up "Rita" supposedly witnessed Paul's car crash.



So just who is the audience for this weird little film? Don't count on Beatles fans. In addition to its brazen mistakes and absurd chronology, the movie hijacks the voice of a now-dead Beatle and goes on to trash the memory of the living and the dead. "George" says nasty things about Ringo's talent and John's sanity and dismisses the deceased Linda McCartney and the widowed Yoko Ono as mere beards, window dressing for men lost in a wilderness of mirrors.

And if it doesn't work as nostalgia, it certainly falls short as a conspiracy theory. Conspiracies tend to appeal to people who feel oppressed or defeated by the present and look to fables about the past to explain their predicament. Oliver Stone couldn't

understand how the idealism of the early 1960s ran aground in Vietnam, so he concocted a counter-version called "JFK." It was lousy history, but a compelling movie.

"Paul McCartney Really Is Dead" is just plain lousy. Really. In grafting a ludicrous cloak-and-dagger story onto the "Da Vinci Code"-like symbol-hunting of the 1969 "Paul is Dead" craze, the film dissolves into a laughable hash suitable only for the terminally gullible. Do we really need a spy thriller to explain how the composer of "Yesterday" went on to record "Silly Little Love Songs"? I think not.



At very best, "Paul McCartney" may be enjoyed as a perverse satire of a Beatles documentary, a dark riff on "The Rutles." But even that's a stretch.

POSTED BY KEVIN MCDONOUGH AT 10:36 AM 

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