

HOME VIDEO REVIEWS *Mark Voger*

Idle, left, and fellow Rutles

The Rutles: Anthology

\$24.95 (Blu-ray/DVD), VSC

It would have seemed petty for John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr to sue the Rutles.

But they had grounds. "The Rutles: Anthology" raises the question: Where is the fine line between spoof and ripoff?

How, and why, did Monty Pythonite Eric Idle's one-joke skit — the (fake) Rutles are exactly like the (real) Beatles, but with jokes and less talent — get upsized into a 73-minute mockumentary?

In audio commentary, Idle explains: Collaborator Neil Innes (who plays a Rutle) wrote songs for Idle's '70s BBC series; Idle deemed one of the songs Beatle-esque, and married it with a "Hard Day's Night" parody; when Idle hosted "Saturday Night Live" in 1976, Lorne Michaels played the clip; Americans went wild for the Rutles; Michaels, flush with NBC money, produced the mockumentary.

But like many of Michaels' movie adaptations of "SNL" skits ("MacGruber" and "It's Pat: The Movie" come to mind), "Can't Buy Me Lunch" amounts to one thin gag ridden into the ground.

That said, it's a marvel how Idle and company faithfully re-create each (familiar) touchstone of the Beatles' odyssey: Hamburg, the Cavern Club, the landing at JFK; "The Ed Sullivan Show"; the movies;



the psychedelic lunacy of "I Am the Walrus"; the "Let It Be" rooftop set. Iconic photos of the Beatles are re-staged with care. (Then again, they cheat by pasting the Rutles onto actual, recognizable Beatles album covers.)

So, Beatles fans must see the Rutles films at least once.

Thanks to Michaels' participation, there are cameos by "SNL" stars John Belushi, Dan Aykroyd, Gilda Radner and Bill Murray. (Only Belushi scores legitimate laughs as an Allen Klein-like character.) Mick Jagger and Paul Simon came as themselves.

An extra is "All You Need Is Cash," a 2002 followup with Idle recreating his TV journalist from the original, but no new footage of the Rutles save for the odd outtake. Playing themselves are David Bowie, Bonnie Raitt, Jewel, Conan O'Brien, James Taylor, Salman Rushdie, Gary Shandling, Carrie Fisher, Steve Martin, Tom Hanks and Graham Nash, each talking about the Rutles as if they're (yawn) the Beatles.

Judge not, lest ye be judged?

Bronies: The Extremely Unexpected Adult Fans of My Little Pony

\$39.99 (Blu-ray/DVD), MVD

There's nothing wrong with grown men loving "My Little Pony." There's nothing wrong with them buying Pinkie Pie plush toys. There's nothing wrong with "Bronies" — that's what grown-up "My Little Pony" fans call themselves — congregating in costume.

Maybe *you're* the one with the problem. Did you ever think of that? How do you fill the hole in your heart? Let he who is without an excruciatingly embarrassing guilty pleasure throw the first Kajagoogoo CD.

Sure, "My Little Pony" is a cartoon for little girls. So, yes, the Brony phenomenon might seem a bit weird. But *this* little girls' cartoon teaches you something. It teaches you that friendship is magic. Do

you have something against friendship? Or magic?

I know what you're thinking. Bronies are socially inept misfits. The guys can't get girls. Even at "Bronycons." To be fair, the gentlemen far outnumber the ladies at such events. That doesn't help. Then again, neither does wearing a plush toy on your head.

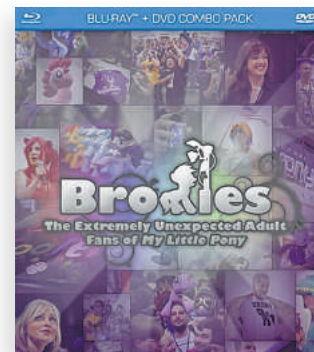
If you tune into this documentary hoping to get your righteous indignation on, you might be surprised. "Bronies," the documentary, doesn't play fair. When you see a 12-year-old boy, who was diagnosed with a brain tumor at age 6, receive donations and messages of support from fellow Bronies — "stay strong, stay Brony" — you'd be a pretty cold individual indeed to remain unmoved. When you see an Asperger's sufferer tamp down his infirmities in order to attend a Bronycon, you've gotta cheer him on.

Then again, there's plenty of stuff that just seems off.

There's a fella who goes by DustyKatt who calls himself the "world's manliest Brony." DustyKatt's mustache is ... how should I put it? You know the cop in the Village People? *He* thinks DustyKatt should reign in his 'stache.

And the converted are so fervent, you can't help but be weirded out. Says one interviewee: "'My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic' is about a bunch of tiny, little, cute, little herbivores that are facing down these titanic personified evils, and I think some days, we all feel like that."

Many Bronies speak of the heartache of "coming out" to their families. One says a pack of bat-wielding goons bashed in the back window of his car, on which he'd affixed a large "My Little Pony" decal. Says another: "If you choose to be a Brony in the Appalachian



Mountains, you're going to have problems."

The documentary has an agenda — Bronies aren't freaks of nature — but its bizarre subject is pure brain candy, and the doc tirelessly pursues interesting Bronies in England, Tel Aviv, Germany ... and the Meadowlands Exposition Center. Still, the doc fails to answer its central question: Um, why would grown men love a cartoon for little girls?

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"Bronies" are perfectly normal — if wearing a plush toy on your head is normal.