

## Magical Mystery Tour Memories

A DVD review by John Whelan,  
the Ottawa Beatles Site, September 28, 2008



Transport yourself back into the height of the fabulous psychedelic 60's and the making of the Beatles "Magical Mystery Tour" film is what you will discover in this new DVD from Wienerworld called "Magical Mystery Tour Memories."

The new DVD, eloquently narrated by Victor Spinetti\* who played the "Recruiting Sergeant" in the Beatles first self-produced movie, provides passionate, thoughtful recollections of the "behind-the-scenes antics" that occurred during production. Victor also discusses the part that he portrayed in the film.

Supporting his narration, we are introduced to many key players and not so famous ones who in one way or another, got themselves caught up in the making of the film. We are introduced to Tony Barrow, the Beatles Press Officer, who explains how the film came about right on the heels of the passing of the band's manager, Brian Epstein in August of 1967. His comments are pretty congruent to what he's previously said both in print and on radio interviews, so there are no surprises here. If you haven't heard it, the gist of it is that Paul McCartney was

concerned that the band was not going to get back together after Brian's death, that the Beatles would disband if they up and left with the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi again regarding meditation. Also, McCartney wanted to try his hand in movie production.

Frieda Kelly, the Beatles Official National Fan Club President for Britain, fondly recalled how she was recruited by the Beatles for the movie and how she ended up being seated right behind Ringo on the bus, much to her chagrin. The DVD has a Special Features section where the guests comment on other facets of Beatles history which turn out to be interesting to watch. In this section, Frieda revealed that John Lennon had fired her for going to the lounge room where the Moody Blues were staying. Lennon quickly makes amends with Frieda, done in the usual Lennon tongue-in-cheek humour and hires her back as the Fan Club President. It should be noted here that Frieda had more than just the role of the Beatles Official National Fan Club President. In a recent correspondence to this reviewer, Frieda states: "I did run the Official National Fan Club for 13 years and also worked in the offices in Liverpool with Brian Epstein working as a secretary doing usual routine admin. - wages, contracts, letters etc. People only think that I ran the Fan Club, but I did work in the offices as well!! for quite some time." Frieda also recalled how the Magical Mystery Tour bus got stuck on a narrow bridge and thereby created a traffic jam, much to the consternation of the Beatles entourage.

Coming back to special appearances, Mike McCartney (Paul's brother) talks about how Paul came to him with a diagram of how the movie was to be made and discusses later his contribution regarding a special camera shot that was used in the making of the "Magical Mystery Tour." We also find out that it is Mike who came up with the suggestion to include the Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band for a part in the film. During this sequence, Neil Innes is interviewed and explains how "Death Cab for Cutie" was created, then later reviewed by Paul for inclusion

for the burlesque stripper sequence that appears in "Magical Mystery Tour." Mike also makes additional comments in this video which are interesting to watch.

Tony Bramwell, the Beatles tour manager, provides insightful commentary about the film locations, the pre-screening of the movie, the Beatles work-ethic during the first three years of touring, and the chaos that reigned in the making of the film since their manager Brian Epstein was no longer around to take care of things for the band.



Some interesting vignettes connects up with the Beatles and their fans. For example, during filming the Beatles found themselves in a town where they actually meet up with a real "eggman" by the name of Ted O'Dell whose job it was at the time, was to make local deliveries of eggs. How ironic it must of been for the Beatles since the phrase "eggman" appears in the "I Am the Walrus" track for Magical Mystery Tour. Another example is when Tim Boldock explains how Sam Brown, a West Malling businessman, allowed his tobacco shop to be transformed "into a big ticket office" for a sequence in the film. We also discover where Lennon got the hat that he

used as the ticket master.

Miranda Ward, who is a journalist, interviewed George and Ringo during a break in production. Both interviews are heard on this film but it is George's interview that turns out to be the best of the two as he explains the origin and concepts for the shooting of "Magical Mystery Tour." There are some excellent still photographs in this video segment of Miranda conducting the interview with Beatle George.

Have you ever wondered who was that Policeman in the opening sequence of movie and in the special 24-page colour booklet that came with the LP? Beatle fans will now discover that it is constable Alan Russell of Newquay. He delightfully explains how he ended up in the film -- and with a twist of irony, how his appearance in the movie impacted on his professional career as a constable.

Making an appearance in this documentary is pop performer Spencer Davis. Both he and his family were invited by the Beatles to join in the festivities at the Atlantic Hotel, which they did. Spencer recalls how he invited the Beatles later that day to go for a drink. Paul and Ringo decided to go with Spencer and so they ended up at Tywarnhayle Inn -- which was a beer garden that served food and real ales. There, Paul immediately became the pub piano man and entertained the locals while Ringo got "sloshed."

"Your Mother Should Know" became the last song for "Magical Mystery Tour" which involved a very elaborate dance sequence, choreographed by Peggy Spencer of the Peggy Spencer Formation Team. Three dancers, Valerie Underdown, Colin and Jean Eames explain how they suddenly got the call to dance in the film. The viewer will see lots of still photographs from that movie sequence along with the voice of Peggy Spencer explaining how she went about organizing what became (as nicknamed) "the Beatles can-can."

Apart from these excellent guest appearances and more, there are lots and lots of rare, never-before-seen video material. The producers of this new video takes you to the actual locations where the Beatles filmed. And the music performed in this new release comprises mostly of instrumental Beatle cover versions with only a few tracks being both vocal and instrumental and is done so very convincingly. In conclusion then, the material contained on "Magical Mystery Tour Memories" is rich in historical relevance and is very entertaining to watch from beginning to end. It is a welcomed addition in terms of new releases for any serious Beatle

collector.

Running Time: 60 minutes plus 30 minutes bonus features.

Released in the USA by: [MVDvisual](#) DVD specification, NTSC, Region 1 only.

Released in the UK by: [Wienerworld](#) DVD specification, PAL, Region 2 only.

**Rating: \*\*\*\*/5 star rating**

\* Victor Spinetti also appeared in two other Beatle films: "A Hard Day's Night" and "Help!" He also directed "Jesus Christ Superstar" and "Hair."