

DVD Review: Magical Mystery Tour Memories



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You may not know this, but Beatles fandom rivals Trekkiedom and the more desperate sects of sports team obsession for sheer passion and investment.

There are, as a matter of fact, a few annual Beatles fan conventions across the United States. I know this because I have on occasion attended them. In addition to being a sci-fi geek, a comics geek, a movie geek, a music geek, and biting the head off the occasional chicken, I am a Beatles geek.

Beatles conventions aren't all that different from other fan gatherings. Everyone wears a costume (mostly "aging hippie," though you also catch plenty of "children of aging hippies who are rebelling against Mom & Dad with a nipple ring and a gigantic black mohawk"). You can spend lots of money on things you don't NEED, but that you WANT REALLY BAD.* Mostly, everyone spends hours sitting in a hotel convention room listening to anecdotes from aging quasi-celebrities.

More than anything else, watching the *Magical Mystery Tour Memories* DVD reminded me of afternoons spent at Beatlefest . It's a compilation of interviews with people tangentially involved in the Beatles' *Magical Mystery Tour* film, which originally aired as a TV special in Britain. As one of the first projects attempted by the Fabs after the death of their manager Brian Epstein, the special was a disorganized mess, in which the Beatles and a coterie of friends, hangers-on, and oddball performers traveled the English countryside in a giant bus and filmed all the action.

You won't find any interviews here with the key players in the action, namely John, Paul, George, or Ringo. But much like Beatlefest, if you're interested in an extended chat with a guy who appeared in a photo on the back of the *Magical Mystery Tour* album sleeve, then you'll find yourself fascinated. Hosted and narrated by Victor Spinetti, who appeared himself in *Magical Mystery Tour* but is perhaps best known as the hypertense TV director from *A Hard Day's Night*, this is one for the die-hards. Casual fans need not apply.

In fact, it's so hardcore deep into Beatle minutiae that it became a bit of a slog, even though I consider myself to be a pretty big Beatlemaniac. It doesn't help that it's a relatively low-fi documentary, professional but not much more, that's basically a series of talking heads. There's the occasional bit of incidental background music, instrumental pieces designed to sound just enough like the Beatles in their psychedelic era to fit with the period of the film.

If you've been to a Beatlefest -- and you'll know it if you have, because you'll smell vaguely of patchouli and hotel shampoo for weeks -- then you are the target audience for *Magical Mystery Tour Memories*. Everyone else is advised to watch with caution. Such a heavy dose of unfiltered Beatlemania can be hazardous to your health.

**True story: I once purchased an adult-sized inflatable Yellow Submarine chair and brought it to my office proudly on the Monday after a Beatles fan show. The following Friday, I was fired from that job. I spent the afternoon sitting cross-legged on the floor trying to shove all the idiotic air out of that idiotic chair.*