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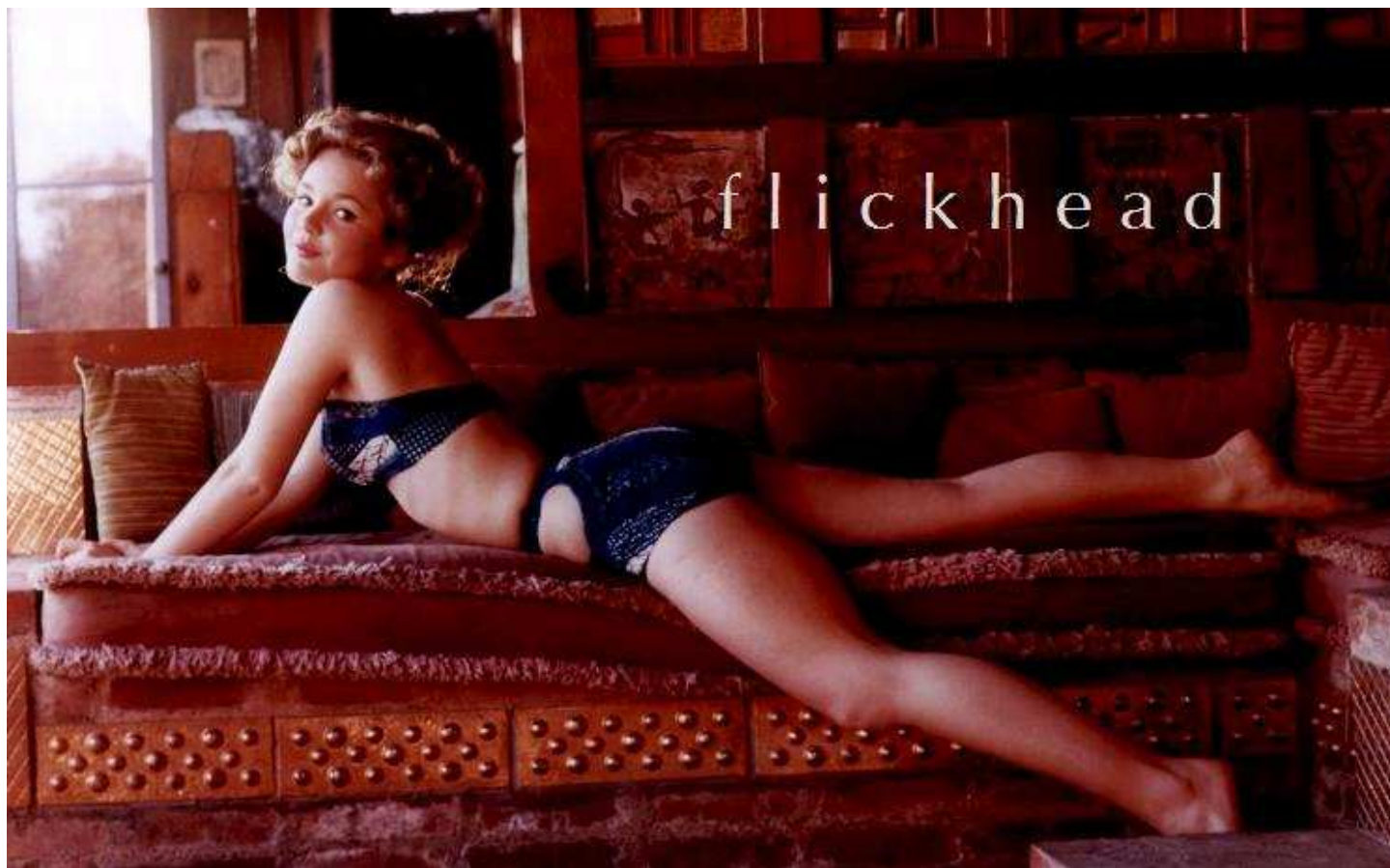
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"On the Web, everyone will be famous for fifteen people."

— David Weinberger



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Above: Tuesday Weld

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

Semolina Pilchard Climbing Up the Eiffel Tower

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The Beatles: Rare and Unseen 90 minutes. Produced by Paul Clark. Directed by Chris Cowey. Distributed by **MVD Entertainment**.

Review by Newton C. Smidge

- In this crazy mixed up world in which we live in, there are few certainties we can always count upon. One of them is that any newly unearthed audio or visual material involving the Beatles will, by hook or by crook, come out in some form. Whether the material is authorized or, more likely, unauthorized, the generation that grew up with the Beatles, and a smaller but equally dedicated group too young to actually remember the group, are grateful for whatever pieces of time get re-discovered and released.

A slew of CDs and DVDs have been issued over the years that compile public domain film clips and audio interviews which were never intended to be released in any venue besides the local nightly news or popular teen magazines. 1960s Beatles press conferences, once cut down to a few sound bytes (before the term was popularized), held in, say, Minneapolis or Los Angeles, can now be found in their

entirety on various DVDs or YouTube postings. Magazine interview tapes made by journalists for print transcription make their way onto CDs that announce NO ORIGINAL BEATLES MUSIC IS INCLUDED. The market demands more new material from the group that changed the world and split up nearly forty years ago. How can we miss them if they won't go away? It's as if the Beatles were the Undead. The blood is the life, Mr. Renfield.

The unfortunately named **Wienerworld company** has released **The Beatles: Rare and Unseen**, a DVD that collects brief clips of home movie footage, some shot by Beatles themselves, in Liverpool, on tour in Scotland, filming *Help!* and *Magical Mystery Tour*, and more, including snippets of a 1970s John Lennon interview on French television. These silent clips — the *raison d'être* for this DVD — are interspersed with interviews, some of which are with people who had genuine connections to the early Beatles — tour managers and press officers, friends, fellow musicians. Some of the interviews are rather charming (Gerry Marsden of Gerry & the Pacemakers) and some insightful (press agent Tony Barrow), while others are typically marginal for these efforts (I don't get why comedian Ken Dodd or ballroom dancer Len Goodman are here at all). The biggest name present is Phil Collins, whose main Beatles claim to fame is that he was an extra in *A Hard Day's Night*. Collins gives a straightforward account of how he found himself working on the film despite ending up on the cutting room floor. He also, in the bonus interviews, gives a nice drummer's appreciation of Ringo's too readily dismissed drumming.

One section of the DVD is devoted to **Mickey Jones's** home movies from the Paris Olympia Theatre eighteen-day run in early 1964. Most of this footage, made while drummer Jones was backing Trini Lopez, is already available on another DVD that Jones put out some years ago, most prominently featuring footage he shot while touring with Bob Dylan. But this recounting of the Olympia shows is better, with the added plus of an interview with co-star French pop singer **Sylvie Vartan** (who still looks pretty damn good at 65). Between Jones and Vartan we get a good sense of the Beatles as individuals literally days before they left for America to play their first **Ed Sullivan Show**. After that nothing would be the same.

This collection is chiefly for Beatle maniacs (and maybe Phil Collinsiacs). But it is entertaining and, aside from some self-consciously Beatlesque background music that comes oh-so-close to plagiarism, the DVD and eight-page booklet written by **Tony Barrow** are far more enjoyable than sitting on a cornflake.

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posted by Flickhead @ 7:34 PM

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5 Comments:

At [8:25 PM EST](#),  Anonymous said...

Smildge, you bastard, you owe me twenty-five bucks!

At [10:29 PM EST](#),  Greg said...

I'm still waiting for the rain to come.

Doesn't sound like much but I'd love to hear Collins talk about Ringo. I drum and I'm telling anyone who'll listen: Ringo was a great drummer with something few drummers in rock have ever had - a distinctive style.

Anyway, maybe this will end up on Netflix instant viewing soon enough.

At [12:50 PM EST](#),  Flickhead said...

I remember a night back about 32 or 33 years ago, when Smildge and I were on line to see a movie. We were with a guy who was the world's biggest Stones fan, and he and Smildge got into a discussion on their drummers.

"Ringo?!? My god, you must be joking! It sounds like he's banging on garbage can lids!"

To which Smildge replied, "Well, Charlie Watts sounds like he's kicking big boxes!"

Like, totally retarded...

At [4:03 PM EST](#),  Anonymous said...

I have no memory of making that comment and seriously doubt any recollection you claim to have about ANYTHING that happened while standing on a movie line - ANY movie line - given the massive quantities of Liquid Plumber you and I indulged in. back then

Given that, I probably said it.

There are three reasons why probably I said it:

1) As a teenager I foolishly took part in the Beatles vs. Stones battle raging then, mostly with our pal Chas Turner - whose own preference for Drano over Liquid Plumber caused many more arguments.

2) Charlie Watt's magnificent drumming was poorly recorded and mixed in the '60s and the drums did indeed sound like muddy cardboard boxes. Problem solved after they got decent engineers.

3) I was a dickhead. But I'm not now. Anyway, I had to say SOMETHING besides "Oh Yeah?!?"

I now declare Charlie Watts to be the greatest drummer in rock history. Ah, the snap of his snare...

That is all {{{BONG}}}

Smildge

At [6:39 PM EST](#),  [Flickhead](#) said...

You're such a tool.

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