

[GenEc DVD Review](#)

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[The Beatles: Rare and Unseen \(MVD\)](#)

The Beatles – Rare and Unseen (MVD)

First off, let me acknowledge that I'm not so rabid a Beatles collector that I can judge whether these clips truly are as rare as presented here. In this Internet Age, after years of rampant piracy of unreleased material by both major and minor recording artists, it seems hardly anything can remain "unseen" for very long. The best I can do is tell you what's on this DVD, and give my reaction to it.

As it turns out, my reaction to the presentation as a whole is very positive. Subtitled "The Unofficial Account of The Biggest Band In the World", this would appear to be a British television documentary, and a very good one at that. While the rare, unseen footage is consistently interesting, the main feature of this disc from my point of view would be the excerpts of interviews with a variety of people "who were there" in the Beatles' early days, supplemented by the comments of a few young Beatles fans who grew up to be celebrities in their own right.

Among the interviewees who were there, we hear from Allan Williams, Gerry Marsden (of Gerry and the Pacemakers), Tony Bramwell, Hurricane Smith (in his role as George Martin's recording engineer), and John Lennon himself, in portions of a rare 1975 French t.v. interview. But the most revealing comments of all come from the largely unheralded Colin Hanton, the original drummer for the Beatles' early skiffle-band incarnation, the Quarrymen, whose story is rarely told so well. The early fans who would later become celebrities include Phil Collins, Cockney Rebel's Steve Harley, and – of all people – "Dancing With the Stars" judge Len Goodman. Discussing the Beatles 1963 Paris concert are Mickey Jones (who was the drummer for Trini Lopez, who was also on the bill for the concert) and French star Sylvie Vartan, also on that concert.


The early history of the Beatles is given a quick, yet surprisingly thorough runthrough. However, once the band hits stardom in America, the narrative leaps ahead to the filming of "Magical Mystery Tour". One might surmise that the producers thought the mid-60's were too well documented to warrant rehashing. In any case, this sin of omission, while quite noticeable, does not seriously detract from what IS here. It is worth mentioning that there is also some intelligent analysis of the Beatles as both musicians and as lyricists, so the disc does dig deeper than the more frequently encountered "golly-gee-whiz" fan hagiography.

As to the unseen footage, what we are offered are amateur, home-movie clips, all of them silent. The question as to whether they were originally shot as silent films, or if the music is missing due to the inability to secure rights, is left unanswered. But the footage is

worth seeing, in any case. We have the earliest known footage of the Beatles on stage, Liverpool, February, 1962; the only surviving footage of their first tour of Scotland; home movies of the boys having fun on holiday in the Channel Islands; the aforementioned French concert (courtesy of Mickey Jones), and home movies shot on film sets. If you're a hard-core fan and you haven't seen this material before, consider it significant. Otherwise, consider it a bonus to go along with the documentary interviews.

The "extra features" consist of longer chunks of the interviews excerpted in the main body of the documentary itself. The Colin Hanton segment is particularly important when heard in this longer format. There are also fascinating details about the reaction to the Beatles' visit to Tokyo.

I have to confess I've seen some pretty shoddy, almost worthless Beatles' DVD documentaries in my day. "Rare and Unseen" definitely stands out above the crowd, as one that is well worth seeing.

Posted by Tom Bingham at [4:44 PM](#) 

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