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The Beatles: Magical Mystery Tour
(1967/Apple Corp/EMI Blu-ray)/**Brian Wilson – Songwriter: 1969 – 1982** (Chrome Dreams/MVD DVD)/**The Who: Live In Texas 1975** (Eagle DVD)/**Shut Up & Play The Hits** (LCD Soundsystem Documentary +



Concert/2011/Oscilloscope DVD Set)

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Now for four key music releases featuring major Rock Music talents in transition and at their end in one way or another.

The Beatles: Magical Mystery Tour (1967) is one of the less-discussed projects of the greatest band of all time, made in the fly with no script after they finished their landmark **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band** album, which was a huge commercial and critical hit among so many great albums that year. Paul McCartney had been shooting Super 8mm and 16mm film on his own and was intrigued enough with the formats and experimenting he did that he convinced the band to make this nearly hour-long film that landed up debuting on television, their only material directly made for that medium (give or take the animated children's show they were barely as involved with).

Deciding to take their cues from Fellini and the French New Wave, no script was accompanied by abstract images, surrealism, unusual comedy and hardly any narrative except that the passengers taking said bus (painted in psychedelic colors in their first explicit participation in such iconography) would go different places that were not what a bus tour would normally amount to.

In all this, McCartney was the director and all four bandmates contributed ideas. The band had lost Brian Epstein, peaked with their watershed album, wanted to break away further from their usual constrictions and try to break ground in a new way. However, the film was critically bashed, the album to it was their first not to hit #1 on the album charts (held off by other albums by them) and it even left fans puzzled.

So what happened here? At under an hour, they knew they had not made a feature film and there was not enough material to do so that worked. They had created some bizarre images (the shoveling of spaghetti on a table at a restaurant tends to stick out) and some music moments that

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- > The Beatles: Magical Mystery Tour (1967/Apple Corp/EMI Blu-ray)
- > Dark Shadows (2012/Warner Blu-ray w/DVD)
- > Rock Of Ages: Extended Edition (2012/Warner Blu-ray w/DVD)

tended to be the highlight of the final cut.

However, the film has a preoccupation with death, is never accessible in any way any Beatles project had been before, has them less present than they had been in previous works and shows they were getting a bit bored with themselves. Becoming another band in **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band** is replaced by becoming animals (in roles they switch around in) for the *I Am The Walrus* film clip with its own visual life, death and distorted creatures theme, *Blue Jay Way* has George Harrison "playing" the song on concrete with colored chalk drawings and ending with him possibly getting hit and killed by the Tour bus, *Your Mother Should Know* has the band looking permanently demented dancing semi-robotically in a surreal dance hall joined by couples dancing from the past also suggesting death and even The Bongo Dog Doo-Dah Club singing *Death Cab For Cutie* (inspiring the great band of the same name) in a strip club is a dated club where backup singers are singing corpses, the strip is oddly desexualized and echoes of the living dead permeate the sequence.

The one exception is McCartney singing and dancing around to *Fool On The Hill* and of course, all the Beatles songs here became classics, yet the film is an experiment that ultimately did not work out, no matter what the intent. Yes, it is a document of the status of the band at that time, but they fortunately would have more to say and not break up after this. In the early years of its circulation, it seemed odder, weirder, more abstract and even more visually dense than it does today. Since so many films and even Music Videos have gone for the same editing and surrealism it did at the time, little of which it was the inventor of, the film now seems more standard and comes up short on the other end.

Ultimately, it is still the actual Beatles in action and when all is said and done, McCartney did not do that bad a directing job, though Bob Rafelson would be more successful and subversive a year later in his directing debut of The Monkees in **Head** (1968, reviewed on Criterion Blu-ray elsewhere on this site) using pretty much the same approach in what was the end of that band. That leaves **Magical Mystery Tour** a time capsule of the band in transition before getting serious to make a few more albums before their inevitable break-up and with more successes than failures in the overall body of the film, it is worth revisiting.

Extras include (as you can see in our image on this page) a nicely illustrated eight-page booklet with an essay on the film by McCartney and tech info on the film and disc, feature length Director's Audio Commentary by McCartney, The Making of Magical Mystery Tour (19:05) with interviews by McCartney, Ringo Starr, cast/crew members, never before seen footage and vintage John Lennon and George Harrison material, *Ringo The Actor* (2:30) featurette, *Meet The Supporting Cast* (11:27) featurette, alternate versions of clips for *Your Mother Should Know*, *Blue Jay Way* and *Fool On The Hill*, a 1967 Top of the Pops version of *Hello Goodbye*, *Nat's Dream* unused film clip directed by John Lennon, Ivor Cutler *I'm Going In A Field* meant for the film but not used and a great film clip of Traffic (with Steve Winwood) performing to *Here We Go Round The Mulberry Bush* not used in the film. The song eventually became the title song for a teen counterculture comedy released by United Artists.

For more on The Beatles, try our search engine or start with this link:

<http://www.fulvuedrive-in.com/review/8663/The+Beatles+%E2%80%93+Magical>

At the same time, The Beach Boys were falling apart and their **Smile** album, failed to materialize after Brian Wilson heard **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band**, saying they "new sound" he was looking for was found by The Beatles and he threw in the towel. **Brian Wilson – Songwriter: 1969 – 1982** follows up the amazing **Songwriter: 1962 – 1969** documentary we covered at this link:

[http://www.fulvuedrive-in.com/review/11851/The+Beatles:+Magical+Mystery+Tour+\(1967/.../Brian+Wilson](http://www.fulvuedrive-in.com/review/11851/The+Beatles:+Magical+Mystery+Tour+(1967/.../Brian+Wilson)

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Giving up on **Smile**, still having issues with drugs, his father, depression, Capitol Records and some of his family, Wilson started to retreat and he just became more compromised, sicker at a time when mental health was taboo and more artistically foiled in a very dark chapter of music history. At first, the rest of the band tried to help and got him to write new material, recycling unused **Smile** works where he could not do any work, but this was a temporary fix and a move to Reprise/Warner Records only continued the same patterns until the massive 1973 box office success of George Lucas' **American Graffiti** helped bring back a retro Rock wave. As soon as the band and Reprise decided to capitalize on that, the band voted not-so-unanimously to become a big money retro touring band and insisted on all the songs sounding like their 1960s hits in some way. That decision to stunt any further growth of one of the most important Rock Bands of all time nearly killed Brian Wilson, who somehow survived that, humiliating tour participation, conflict with his brothers, conflict with record labels and an overbearing therapist who was fired only to return later.

This is one of Rock's great untold stories all the way to the final humiliation of being a pawn for the Reagan White House to legitimize its brand of conservatism which was the opposite of anything great the band ever stood for. A bold, depressing, sad, must-see program from the ever-great Chrome Dreams music series, it is as well-researched as any of them and has plenty of licensed music. It also finally answers what happened to the band and with Brian Wilson back, shows us just how much of a survivor he really is.

Three additional interview clips are the extras.

A simple concert turns out to be so much more with **The Who: Live In Texas 1975** as little did they know, they were in the final years of their original, classic configuration as drummer Keith Moon would leave us three years later. Shot on analog videotape, the band delivers a 24-song set including playing most of **Tommy** in a show that is not bad, but hardly the best I have ever seen them perform. Some songs come across better than others. They are playing well, but the energy level is not always consistent. But for the nearly 2-hours they play, it is the real band and we see them in relaxed leisure in a way you rarely see them. Roger Daltrey (perhaps a little tired from recording, touring and making two Ken Russell films that came out that year in **Tommy** and **Lisztomania**, both reviewed elsewhere on this site) might explain some of the limits of the overall performance.

Still, it is the real Who and it is interesting to see them on tape, as most Moon performances we have are usually filmed. In all that, this is a show worth a look, a must for Who fans and very much worthy of a DVD release. There are no extras, but they also play early hits, so that's a plus.

Finally we have the end of a band that never hit its commercial stride, but was better than it got credit for. Dylan Southern and Will Lovelace co-directed **Shut Up & Play The Hits** (2011), which shows "The Very Loud Ending Of LCD Soundsystem", a fun, smart, Pop/Rock/Electronic band that has a big following and produced several albums over their lifespan that some loved and others did not. Still, they never sold out and quit while they were ahead.

The mastermind of it all is lead singer/songwriter James Murphy, who (like The Beatles and The Who above), can still play and create the music, but is at a sort of creative end and decides to call it quits for the band. He is alone, living alone, a little tired and needs a break from everything, even if the band was not the biggest in the world, the stress and day-to-day operations thereof are so stressful, it might as well have been.

At 105 minutes, we get an open view of the man, his music, the final concert and other aspects of his life including clips of the band's past

success, his promotion of the final show and his introspections of what he has accomplished. A solid documentary, having two directors may have stopped it from being greater, but it is still a key document of one of the few bands anyone will be talking about from the last 15 years decades from now leaving many wondering why they were not more commercially successful. Murphy may be down, but not out, possibly having more to say later and definitely needing this break now.

Extras include the Original Theatrical Trailer, Outtakes with LCD Manager Keith Wood and Murphy, Extended Interviews with Chuck Klosterman & Murphy and *Catching Up With Keith* as Mr. Wood goes into retirement on DVD One and two bonus DVDs featuring the entire final concert on 4/2/2011. We also get an essay by Nick Sylvester on a side of the paperboard foldout that contains all three DVDs.

The 1080i 1.33 X 1 digital High Definition image transfer on **Mystery Tour** looks great, was shot on 16mm film entirely and proves yet again how great the format can look in HD. Though the film was restored and issued on DVD years ago looking decent, the new 4K HD master of the film (also used for 35mm blow-up prints) brings out color, depth, detail and warmth that has never been seen on home video and very few film prints of the film. McCartney's love of film really pays off and along with various cameramen; the visual look is pretty consistent. For those who were never fans of the film, the fidelity here can be so stunning, they should give this a second look just to see how good this really looks and plays.

Needless to say the "Music Video" moments are the most effective. I just wonder why this is not 1080p. Still, color, detail and depth will really surprise.

The anamorphically enhanced 1.78 X 1 image on **Wilson** is equal to the picture quality of the previous entry about his work and life, with new footage and vintage footage (ranging from good to great and sometimes rough) well-edited throughout making for as good a visual presentation as one could expect in this format. The anamorphically enhanced 1.85 X 1 image on **Hits** is much the same, but has much less vintage footage resulting in better overall playback, but we also get motion blur and detail limits. I would like to see both of these on Blu-ray.

That leaves the 1.33 X 1 on **The Who** with what is an older analog NTSC video source that has been as cleaned up as possible. However, despite consistent color, definition is limited; we get some bleeding, ghosting and other flaws typical of such a taping of the time. I cannot imagine it looking much better, though.

The DTS-HD MA (Master Audio) 5.1 lossless mix on **Mystery Tour** is easily the best-sounding of the four releases here, offering The Beatles classics in real multi-channel sound, including on most of the alternate takes in the extras, plus the Traffic song also gets this treatment. Sounds like all the audio on the film was from magnetic sound sources and they have been taken care of. Add the recent sonic restorations of the entire Beatles' catalog and you get a film with a great sonic upgrade. You can also hear the improvements in the PCM 96/24 2.0 Stereo and lossy Dolby Digital 5.1 mixes, but neither are match for the DTS.

The lossy Dolby Digital 5.1 on **Hits** is the second-best sounding of the releases here, though I wondered why (especially with the concert DVDs) why Oscilloscope did not have DTS here as well, but maybe a future Blu-ray version could offer that. The concert is well-recorded, while the documentary has a mix of silent moments, talking-only and location audio where the surrounds are obviously not as engaged.

The lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 Stereo on **Wilson** is fine for a documentary and for all the great and odd licensed music, but PCM or some kind of 5.1 sound mix would have been nice. Still, what is here is fine. That leaves the lossy Dolby Digital 2.0 on **The Who** disc which is also in Stereo, but with limits.