



TV / FILM

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DVD Review: *Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney*

Written by [Sherry Lipp](#)

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There's a lot of "desperation" in *Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney*, but unfortunately most of it doesn't have anything to do with the former Beatle. The film is a mockumentary attempting to make something out of nothing. It fails on nearly every level.

In 1965 Ruth Anson was a spirited teen correspondent for *ABC News*. Through her charm and perseverance she was able to push her way to the front lines and interview the likes of Dwight Eisenhower, Ronald Reagan, Princess Margaret, Bob Hope, and Lana Turner. Vintage clips of these interviews are interspersed throughout *Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney*. And of course, there is the interview that eventually inspired this film – Paul McCartney. It seems that at the end of a Beatles press conference, Anson got in one last question to McCartney: "Do you have any plans to get married soon?"

"Only if you'll marry me now," McCartney quipped back to the stunned Anson.

Forty-one years later Anson can't get the comment out of her mind. Anxious to reconnect with McCartney, Anson pitches her tale at an open call for story ideas. The panel of Hollywood "insiders" is somewhat intrigued, but tells her she doesn't have enough material. "Come up with a good story, drop Paul, and make the main character in her thirties," they tell her. "No Paul?" says a disenchanted Anson in what may be one of the few genuine scenes in this film.

Mark Cushman, a screenwriter, decides there may be something to Anson's story. He rounds up a "crew" to document Anson's quest to find Paul McCartney. It is at this point the movie goes from documentary to mockumentary. It's hard to say whether the original intention of the film was to stage everything, but that is the end result. It seems entirely possible that this project found itself with unusable footage and resorted to staged situations to salvage what little material they had.

Unfortunately, instead of amusing and/or interesting scenes of Anson attempting to "find Paul," there are endless scenes of Cushman and his crew – which consists of a couple of PAs and a cameraman - making telephone calls. Most of the calls are to unnamed people who supposedly may have some connection to McCartney or Anson. The crew, who were clearly rounded up from some local college's drama department, do not seem to have ever been involved in a film production in their lives. One PA said that he signed on based on the fact that Cushman must be legit because he wrote an episode of *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (a quick search on the Internet reveals that Cushman only has a *story* credit for [one episode](#) of the show).

Most of film is done like a reality show complete with talking head video diaries and manufactured conflict. The obvious setups include crew members quitting in disgust, doors getting slammed in Ruth Anson's face, and a therapy session for Anson. There is even a bizarre intervention in which Anson's "friends and family" try to convince her to save some dignity and drop out of the project. That may have been good advice if it wasn't clear that Anson was in on the whole thing.

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Comments

I wasn't "in on the whole thing."

I'm Ruth Anson, the former KABC-TV reporter who interviewed Paul McCartney in 1965, and the subject of "Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney."

Our distributor may have done us a disservice by printing on the DVD cover that we won the "Audience Favorite" Award for Best Picture at Mockfest 2008. Doing this labels the movie as a mockumentary, even though it really is not. It is a documentary with a sense of humor.

You are correct that some aspects of the movie have been manipulated. Yes, the director did put me through the ringer. It is also true that the director did think I was a little crazy. He may still think this. I assume that every person who sees this movie will have their own opinion there, as you do. But nothing was faked. The psychology session is one such example. This was very real - and profoundly valuable for me. It was actually an hour and a half long, but, as you know, you can't put everything in. News is edited and therefore manipulated everyday. Most things are not what they seem and, unless you do your homework, you won't know the true facts.

You were also right that the director lost some faith in the project - but he does this on screen. He allows you to see him lose faith, and this is all very real. I think it was brave - and certainly unusual - that he allowed himself and his crew to be filmed so that viewers could see what goes on behind closed doors of reality type productions. He knew he wouldn't be seen in a positive light, but stayed honest with the camera.

I was open to all aspects of this journey and, even though my initial intention was to reconnect with Paul McCartney, I ended up discovering something very real about myself.

Whether you like the movie or not, at least let me set the record straight by telling you that this is a documentary. How the journey began, progresses, and ends is very real.

Truly yours, Ruth Anson.

#2 – September 3, 2008 @ 21:14PM – The Other Chad [\[URL\]](#)

Being a diehard Paul McCartney fan, I watched this documentary. With all due respect to Mrs. Anson, I think it is quite obvious that the "crew" members on camera are acting, as well as the "director". All one needs to do is consult the film's credits (you'll have to check somewhere other than the DVD itself, as this review points out - they are unreadable). The people are actors, not production assistants and so forth.

#3 – September 6, 2008 @ 16:46PM – Marc Cushman

Ruth Anson sent me the link to this site so I could check out a very negative review. She must hate me.

Then I saw the note she posted and the reply from "The Other Chad."

I won't debate anyone's opinion on this movie, but, to set the record straight, I chose to list everyone who is seen in "Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney" as cast members because, whether they liked it or not, they became cast members. That does not necessarily make them actors.

Do a search at Internet Movie Data Base (imdb.com). I don't expect you will find acting credits for any of us prior to this movie, except for Ruth, who, besides doing the news way back when, appeared in episodes of "The Brady Bunch" and "My Three Sons."

It was certainly not my desire to be on camera - especially since I knew I would be coming off as a bit of an ass. The production just went that way (see the movie and you'll understand). I can tell you that Susan Osborn, our Production Coordinator, was not thrilled about being on camera - even though she is delightful. Even I have to admit that those cutting looks she gives me behind my back are priceless. And she still gives them to me.

As for the psychologist, he truly is a psychologist - and a very good one - not an actor. Ruth's family are who they say they are, not actors. The Paul McCartney impersonator is just that, not an actor. And that gay fashion expert wasn't putting on anything for the camera. That's him.

That wonderful older woman - Alice - seems very comfortable on camera, and very outrageous. I told her I thought she could become the next "Where's the beef" woman and should get an agent. She won't. She wouldn't even watch the movie we did. She's afraid she'll be embarrassed.

The shrink session is real, those tears at the intervention are real, and we really did crash the Grammys. And Ron Jeremy was not a plant. He spotted one of my cameramen, who, apparently, has photographed Ron in the past ... in the buff.

I do not deny that I manipulated portions of this movie. You see me doing it on screen. This is, after all, a movie within a movie. But the one thing I was never able to manipulate was Ruth. To the contrary, I have a suspicion that she may have been manipulating me.

Marc Cushman
Director, "Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney."

#4 – September 6, 2008 @ 17:04PM – Sherry [\[URL\]](#)

I appreciate everyone's comments on this movie. It is an honor to get a comment from the director and the subject of this movie.

I would just like to say that this movie won best picture at [Mockfest 2008](#) a mockumentary film festival. That makes it hard to take it as an actual documentary.

Also found in the link above is a comment from Mark Bruder, president of BRI - the distributor of this DVD -

"As the distributor of "Desperately Seeking Paul McCartney" BRI is very excited and proud to be releasing the US DVD retail rights through MVD.

We here at BRI believe that this is a new style of presenting a rock-reality-mocumentary with the most interesting subject matter...a love affair or psychotic affair with a Beatle. And, you are correct, the Cushman character [sic] is a typical Hollywood user, selfish ass...but Marc Cushman is a generous, supportive and caring man in real life. Buy the DVD and support your pay-per-view.

Thanks,
Marc Bruder
President
BRI"

He refers to the director, Mark Cushman, as character - so how is the viewer supposed to know who is being themselves and who is putting on an act?

For the record, I do say the appearance of Ron Jeremy is not staged, but just happened. I also did not say the Paul McCartney impersonator is an actor.