

The Beatles on new video

◆ **THE BEATLES - RARE AND UNSEEN: UNOFFICIAL ACCOUNT OF THE BIGGEST BAND IN THE WORLD.** Directed by Chris Cowey. Produced by Paul Clark. MVD Video.

Reviewed by Feli Mercado

I first discovered the music of the Beatles some 30 years ago, during my childhood, while growing up in Cuernavaca (central Mexico).

When I first heard the high-arcing sound that typifies the Beatles best moments, it stopped me dead in my tracks – it was like discovering a bright new world of alternatives, the sweet sounds of this new language (*which I did not even understand at the time*) opened up infinite possibilities, taking me to untold places where I could escape the pain of my own tiny world.

Looking back, I remember that I could not wait for my older brother to leave the house so I could play his records over and over again (you see, I was his little sister and I was forbidden to touch his records). Yet, as soon as he left the house for work, my time to “create” along side John and Paul and George and Ringo was only beginning.

Even though I did not know a scant word of English, I would nonetheless follow the lyrics with precise urgency, following the poignant prongs of John’s mercurial voice. As I closed my eyes, my imagination sprouted wings and flew off – flying to new places, meeting new people, escaping my own stagnate reality.

Like so many other kids across the grand expanse of this universe, the Beatles taught me that there are indeed many ways to express one’s self – with music the universal language that allows us to come together as people and share our own *creations*.

Obviously, Chris Cowey’s video has brought back a lot of personal memories for me (while presenting long-time fans with scads of never-before-seen footage).

Here Cowey (with producer Paul Clark) present an “unofficial” record of the most influential rock band of all time. Through an array of home movies, personal pictures and recently unearthed film clips, Cowey rebuilds the timeline and gives us the complete “history” of the Beatles in a new and thought-provoking form.

For those of us who were there at the beginning, the real ‘find’ here is footage of the Beatles performing in Liverpool in 1962. This is reportedly the earliest known clip of the band and it catches the Fab-Four on center-stage, grinding the holy energies of the moment into a brand new song.

Also notable is an interview with rocker Phil Collins. The Collins interview is unique because it puts the singer in the place of “fan” instead of “star” – the viewer able to see how the Beatles’ sound influenced a generation of players from across the globe. In addition, commentary from former roadie Tony Bramwell and press secretary Tony Barrow (1962-1968) give the film its depth and body, recreating the timeline and filling us in on the behind-the-scenes stories.

However, viewers should also expect to get some deep insight into John Lennon from **Rare and Unseen**. As noted, the film gives a complete history of the band, and viewers will no doubt be challenged to review the factors that led to the Fab-Four’s dissolution.

As time has passed, it has become mod for most of us to peg Yoko as the “outsider” who tore John from Paul; yet, in reality (and as Cowey’s film shows), John was pulled away from the Beatles *by himself*. Simply, his work with the band had concluded and it was time for him to spread his wings and independently discover his own artistic self (or, as Lennon himself is heard saying on screen in a French TV interview: “I am not saying anything, I am just living my life...”).

Above all else, this film teaches us that the Beatles were never trying to make any statement or be the “greatest rock-and-roll band” in the world. Instead, they were only trying to “live their lives” and make music – because that was their calling. Basically, Lennon was telling us that it is only each person’s essence that counts – the ultimate idea to express yourself in everything you do with every breath you take.

Accordingly, the Beatles initiated the beginning of my own self-discovery, helping me to accept myself, giving me the guts to say “it is OK to be the *who* that *I am*.” And as **Rare and Unseen** proves, beyond all those great songs and all those historical concerts, this remains the Beatles’ true legacy.

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