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Magical Mystery Tour Revisited
on THIRTEEN's *Great Performances*
Friday, December 14 at 9 p.m. on PBS

The story behind the controversial and surreal Beatles film features new interviews with Paul McCartney and Ringo Starr

Songs you'll never forget, the film you've never seen and a story that's never been told. In August 1967, in the wake of the extraordinary impact of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, The Beatles made a film. It was seen in the U.K. by a huge audience, at 8.35 p.m. on BBC One on Britain's Boxing Day...and all hell broke loose.

The story behind that film – *Magical Mystery Tour* – is revealed on ***Magical Mystery Tour Revisited*** on THIRTEEN'S ***Great Performances***, Friday, December 14 at 9 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.)

Magical Mystery Tour was chock-full of thinly veiled references to psychedelia, anarchy and fantasy, all in the setting of a traditional British sightseeing bus outing to the seaside. This was a far cry from the innocent loveable mop-top japery of *Help!* and *A Hard Day's Night*.

Middle Britain had tuned in but was a long way from turning on and dropping out – the nation was baffled and outraged by the film’s unexpected and uncompromising surreal, non-linear narrative. Paul McCartney appeared on *The Frost Programme* on rival ITV the day after transmission. He was called upon to account for himself and the rest of the group.

Could it be that a pearl was cast before swine and then thrown away? To its small band of admirers, it was a masterpiece of surreal British wit and imagination in the tradition of *The Goons* and *Alice in Wonderland*.

Now with the film fully restored to the highest technical standard with a remixed soundtrack, it’s time to tell the extraordinary story of *Magical Mystery Tour*: why it was made, how it was made and the circumstances in which it was made. In the summer of 1967, The Beatles had the world at their feet. It’s impossible to overestimate the effect of *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*; that was revolutionary too but everyone loved it. In August, Brian Epstein tragically died, leaving the Beatles not only without a manager, but without their ambassador. They decided to go ahead with the film they’d been planning.

To tell the story, this film calls on those who were there, most notably **Paul McCartney**, who had the original idea, and **Ringo Starr**, who is credited as the director of photography. **John Lennon** and **George Harrison** are represented through interviews over the years and through their appearances in the film itself and in the copious and fascinating outtakes.

Line producer Gavrik Losey and cameraman Michael Seresin evoke the heady atmosphere of the shoot, along with Jeni Crowley and Sylvia Nightingale who, as teenagers, reported from the coach for The Beatles’ Fan Club magazine. Paul Fox, then controller of BBC One, recalls making the deal with The Beatles for the film. Also sharing their reminiscences are **Peter Fonda**, **Paul Gambaccini**, **Terry Gilliam**, **Neil Innes**, **Paul Merton**, **Barry Miles**, **Annie Nightingale** and **Martin Scorsese**.

Finally, this is a chance for the film’s admirers to have their say; its detractors have been given plenty of opportunities to have theirs. It provides a chance to evoke 1967 as it was – post-war Britain as much as the summer of love, when a new set of artists with The Beatles at the helm came up with an alchemy that turned the ordinary and the commonplace into the magical and mysterious.

Magical Mystery Tour Revisited was filmed and directed by Francis Hanly; Jonathan Clyde is producer; Anthony Wall is executive producer for BBC; and Jeff Jones is executive producer for Apple. For *Great Performances*, Bill O’Donnell is series producer, and David Horn is executive producer.

Major funding for the *Great Performances* telecast is provided by the Irene Diamond Fund, The Starr Foundation, Vivian Milstein, The Agnes Varis Trust, the Philip and Janice Levin

Foundation, and public television viewers. Visit ***Great Performances Online*** at www.pbs.org/gperf for additional information about this and other programs.

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