

Rock Ghouls

anon.

1969

As groupies of the linear and electric media sniff at Janice Joplin's empty whiskey bottles for the slightest whiff of a story, WKNR-FM of Detroit has taken rock coverage even farther down the ladder of respectability until it resembles Confidential magazine's reportage even more than its usual Silver Screen approach.

No longer is it "Is Joplin really making it with John Lennon?" They have taken it one step further by promoting the rumor "Is Paul McCartney really dead?"

For months there has been a rumor of Paul McCartney's death in an auto accident as far back as 1966 circulating by those who dig to circulate such rumors. It appeared as valid as the one in the '50s regarding Elvis Presley's having cancer with 6 months to live.

The outrageous rumor of McCartney's death may have remained dormant had not the media, initially WKNR-FM and Russ Gibb, realized the potential of promoting it as a publicity ruse for their station.

Quoting *Time*, "Paul McCartney of the Beatles, he said, has been dead for several years and is being impersonated by a double. Gibb figured it all out from two Beatle's album covers. The new "Abbey Road" cover, he explained, shows Ringo dressed as an undertaker, George Harrison as a gravedigger, and John Lennon as a religious personage. Paul is dressed in a normal suit and is barefoot—the mark of a corpse laid out for burial in Italy. The license plate on a parked Volkswagen reads '28IF,' meaning that Paul would have been 28 if he had lived. On the second album, Magical Mystery Tour (1967), Gibb found an equally arcane message: Paul is dressed in black, the others in white, an inside picture shows Paul as a soldier above a sign reading 'I Was You,' The back cover shows him wearing a black flower—the other three have red ones—alongside a funeral wreath. For a final tip-off Gibb recalled a McCartney look-alike contest held two years ago. The winner was never announced, said the ballroom operator-disc jockey, because he filled Paul's slot."

Beatle producer George Martin denies the rumor as did publicist Derek Taylor, who observed that the Beatles aren't that clever. One wonders who Gibb thinks pop photographer Linda Eastman married earlier this year and who is the father of her child.

Obviously this foul smelling promotional scheme stinks with the worst deception, super hype and rumor mongering yet to be employed in the local battle of cutthroat competition between competing progressive rock stations in Detroit or anywhere. Apparently Keener will stoop to "any means necessary" to gain listeners in their battle with WABX-FM and/or CKLW etc. AM.

Naturally their picking of the Beatles, the new establishment promoted religion, is not accidental. As Frank Kofsky has stated, "Beatle worship makes merchandising and consumption that much easier. You can always sell out an issue of any periodical if you put a story with a couple of Beatle pictures on the front cover of your magazine."

Obviously the same applies for the electric media. Create or encourage a Beatle rumor and see the interest it stirs up on your radio station. Who cares whether there's any truth in the rumor.

Moreover, this is the way that the mass media works—in fact the only way it can work. There is really no time for the people who run the media to digest everything that happens (who for instance could possibly listen to each new rock LP).

It is much easier instead to focus on one person or on one group of persons, blow them up larger-than-life size and devote all your resources to publicizing their lives—not their art, mind you, but their lives, what they eat, where they go, who they ball, etc. There may be better bands, but who cares about that?

Of course Keener's attempt to rationalize the rumor by self analyzing Beatle lyrics and album covers was even more absurd. It is frustrating to imagine the visions of thousands of kids listening spellbound for the pulverization of Beatle lyrics by the contrived interpretations of WKNR's Russ Gibb, John Small, and Dan Carlisle filibustering endlessly like pompous legislators.

These self-styled authoritarians show no pretense of concern about "art;" the only thing that counts (as in female gossip columns) is titillating the listener with those supposedly "intimate" details of "the groovy idols" private life.

To quote Kofsky again, "In this way, people whose own existence is basically hum-drum, frustrating, squalid, suffocating, which is probably the typical biography under capitalism, can, by identification with their favorites, smuggle in a little exogenous, though spurious meaning and excitement into an otherwise arid life."

Radio has always been a highly competitive medium, be it Top 40, R & B, and now in Progressive Rock, but it has never been more obvious that the money grubbing scum will stop at nothing in their campaign to con the listeners and stifle the competition.

Obviously, WKNR-FM feels their Beatle scheme will create an impact and awareness of the station and give the greatest possible degree of personal contact and involvement with the kids.

It is these bullshit techniques, deception, super hype and green, green, green money that will help sell WKNR-FM, not the music. Quality doesn't have a place in two dollar whore houses and some radio stations.

fifth Estate

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