

# Trolleywood

MOTION IN PICTURES

Ringo Starr  
"Mr. Conductor's"  
peculiar legacy



December 2016

Behind the Scenes of  
*Magical Mystery Tour*  
**Pg. 14**

The Second-Worst  
Show of All Time?  
**Pg. 34**

The Dirty Truth about  
Road Trip Movies  
**Pg. 42**

# Contents

---

Advertisement



Photo Credits for Cover Image: FinnSpotVlogs on YouTube

## Ringo Starr: Busy Beyond the Beatles

“Mr. Conductor’s”  
peculiar legacy  
26



### Behind the Scenes

The Beatles’ *Magical Mystery Tour*  
14

### The Dirty Truth about Road Trip Movies

More Than a Gimmick  
34

### Trucky Throwback

Mother of All Failures  
42

Advertisement

# Contents



**Letter from the Editor**  
**9**

**Travel Destination**  
Rusty’s TV & Movie Car Museum  
**10**

**International Films**  
*The Cyclist*  
**17**

**Vehicle Roundup**  
Wheel & Heel  
**20**

**Hating Your Legacy**  
Thomas’s Bittersweet Creator  
**22**

**The George Carlin Who I Knew**  
Remembering a Different Side of Carlin  
**32**

**Propmaster**  
*Furious 7’s* Wrecked Cars  
**37**

**Rewind Review**  
From 1968: *Yellow Submarine*  
**44**

**Anthropomorphic Profile**  
The Magic School Bus  
**46**



Advertisement

# Masthead

## Editor-in-Chief

Jerrika L. Waller

## Senior Editors

Andrew O’Donnell, Amanda O’Keefe

## Art Director

Logan Jerv Waller, Jr.

## Web Editor

Nina Arsenault

## Associate Editors

Michael Fiedler, Gino Sanchez, Kathryn Bloomberg

## Assistant Editors

Christina Williams, Katt Brown, Waldemar Ramirez, Victoria Male, Camille Zimmerman

## Editorial Interns

Ben Cameron, Ryan Hamilton, Rachel Worthington, Amy Sharkey

## Art Intern

Christina Williams

## Contributing Artists

Tierney Bailey, Cerise Steel, Anthony Whidbee, Jessica Weber, Joseph McGinnis, Carrie O’Brien, Mary Houston

## Contributing Editors

David Bianculli, Rosalind Cummings-Yeates, Dan Schneider, Nicholas Jones, Jane Warren, Britt Allcroft, Bryan Alexander, Renata Adler, Jim Halpert, Pam Beesly, Dwight Schrute, Andy Bernard, Michael Scott, Stanley Hudson, Phyllis Vance, Kelly Erin Hannon, Toby Flenderson, Ryan Howard, Angela Martin, Kelly Kapoor, Meredith Palmer, Kevin Malone, Darryl Philbin, Oscar Martinez, Creed Bratton, David Wallace

## General Manager

Bryhanna Waller

## Circulation

Melanie Thibeault

## Public Relations

Neil Waller

## Vice President, Advertising

Jocelyn Sippola

## Assistant to the Publisher/ Rights and Reprints

Missy Kennedy

## Publisher

Pizza Crown



Advertisement

# Letter from the Editor

---

Dear Readers,

This issue is particularly dear to my heart.

Raised as an unquestioning Beatles fan, I was delighted to learn more about both the band's work outside of music and the work of their quirky, often-overlooked drummer. Despite his own shadow from the Beatles, Ringo Starr has earned significant acclaim in his other pursuits, and remains exceptionally active and hardworking in his 70s (I hope to be even half as industrious in my Golden Years). It is an honor to feature him in our magazine.

Learning more about another Mr. Conductor whose work influenced my upbringing was also a privilege. George Carlin's passionate and clever work is not forgotten by this editor, nor will it likely be by many other people for years to come.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Trolleywood!

Cheers,  
Jerrika L. Waller



*Editor-in-Chief,  
Jerrika L. Waller*

# Rusty’s TV & Movie Car Museum

Rosalind Cummings-Yeates

I like quirky museums. For me, there’s a real rush of discovery that comes with finding a museum dedicated to some crazy subject that you’d never expect to find as the subject of an extensive collection. I’ve visited museums dedicated to pencil sharpeners, washboards, Pez dispensers and coffee and they were all weird fun.

But when I rolled up to Rusty’s TV & Movie Car Museum in Jackson, Tennessee, I didn’t know what to expect. How do you fit cars into a museum? Just how interesting can a pack of old cars really be? Well, I quickly discovered that TV and movie cars represent a lot of nostalgic fun, even for those who aren’t big car fans, like myself. Before I even entered the museum,



Photo Credits: Travel Pulse, Travel Pulse

The Mystery Machine from Scooby Doo

Advertisement





Rusty's TV & Movie Car Museum in Jackson, Tennessee

“TV and movie cars represent a lot of nostalgic fun, even for those who aren’t big car fans”

I was drawn to a ‘50s vintage, cherry red car parked outside. It gleamed in the sun and looked well preserved so I figured it was the owner’s personal car. Until Rusty, the affable owner informed me that it was the car from the ‘80s movie classic, *Christine*.

Based on the Steven King, novel, that movie created a personality and evil spirit that I had never seen attributed to a car. I looked inside at the leather interior and touched the glistening fins and was transported back to the eerie movie. Before I knew it, I was leaning back on the car, posing for pictures. I was totally caught up in the car museum and I hadn’t even stepped inside.

Once I did go inside, I had to adjust to the overwhelming lineup of cars. They were edged along walls and arranged in rooms, some with signs and movie paraphernalia and some just laid out in recognizable movie glory. Although it isn’t a typical museum, Rusty’s car museum requires time and contemplation, just like in other museums. I actually walked through several times before I registered all the movies and TV shows that the cars represented.

There was the iconic *Ghostbuster’s* Ecto-1 Cadillac, complete with green ghost and Stay Puft Marshmallow man. Across from it stood *Scooby Doo’s* iconic Mystery Machine. Several cars from the *Fast & Furious* movies held visitors’ attention but I fell in love with the Bat Cycle from the original Adam West Batman TV series.

On my visit, I also viewed the *Knight Rider* Trans Am, *The Beverly Hillbillies* jalopy, *Herbie’s* Love Bug, *The Blues Brothers* hearse and the *Back to The Future* DeLorean.

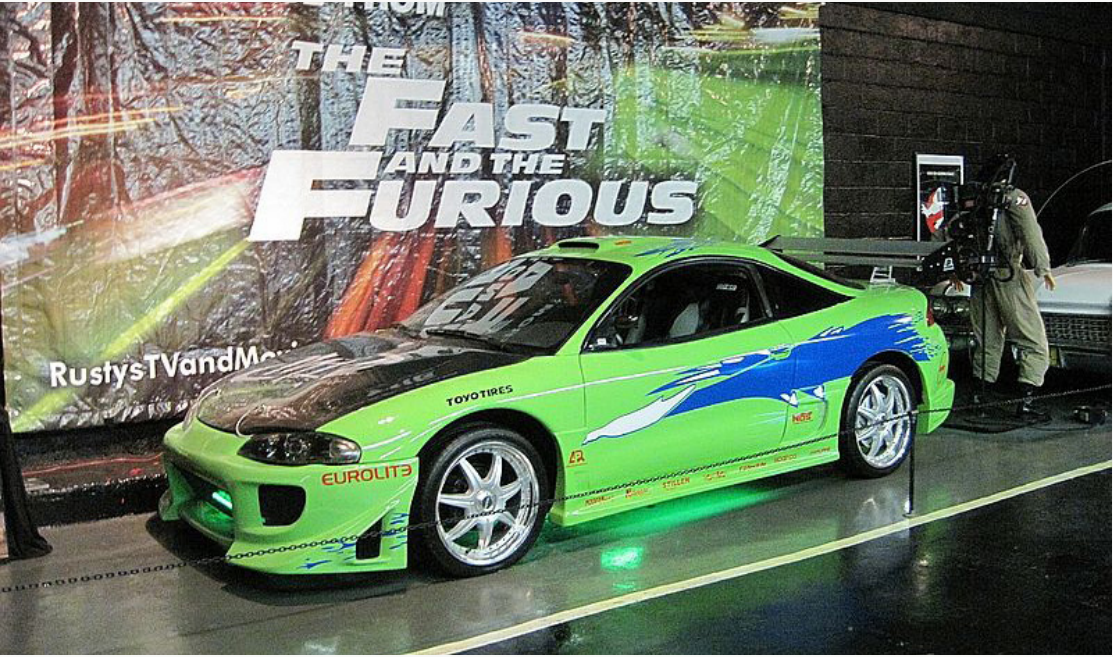
If you’re lucky, Rusty himself will guide you through the museum and explain how he started collecting cars at 14 years old and how he builds some of the cars on display and finds others from Hollywood sales. Rusty says that he has 50 more cars that he rotates, changing the museums displays every week so you never know what car you’ll see.

The Movie & TV Car Museum is open from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. every week-end, Friday-Sunday.

Originally published at TravelPulse.com



The Iconic Ghostbusters’ Ecto-1 Cadillac



The Eclipse from The Fast and the Furious

Photo Credits: Travel Pulse, Offbeat Tennessee



# The Beatles’ *Magical Mystery Tour*

David Bianculli

**The Beatles, it seemed, could do no wrong. And then they did *Magical Mystery Tour*, which was televised by the BBC the day after Christmas as a holiday special. A quarter of the British population watched it — and many of those hated it.**

On Friday night on PBS, Great Performances presents a documentary about the making of a Beatles TV special from 1967 — *Magical Mystery Tour* — then shows a restored version of that special. *Magical Mystery Tour* has the music from the U.S. album of the same name, but it’s not the album. It’s a musical comedy fantasy about the Beatles and a busload of tourists taking a trip to unknown destinations.

It was written and produced in 1967, which was an incredibly fertile period for the Beatles. “Strawberry Fields Forever” came out that year, as well as “Penny Lane” and the Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band album. That was followed, a month later, by the live TV premiere of “All You Need is Love,” broadcast globally. The Beatles, it seemed, could do no wrong. And then they did *Magical Mystery Tour*, which was televised by the BBC the day

after Christmas — on Boxing Day — as a holiday special. A quarter of the British population watched it — and many of those hated it

Back then, the 53-minute program was filmed in color but wasn’t broadcast that way. Imagine the *Sgt. Pepper* cover in black and white, and you can imagine how much was lost in the translation. Reception to the TV special was so poor that the show wasn’t even picked up in the United States — just the soundtrack. Eventually, the special was syndicated to some local TV stations and toured the college film circuit along with *Reefer Madness*. That’s when I first saw it. But on a national level, *Magical Mystery Tour* has never been televised in the United States — until now.

On Friday — as always, check local listings — *Magical Mystery Tour* will be preceded by the new one-hour companion documentary, *Magical Mystery Tour Revisited*. This may be the first case on record in which a documentary about a film is longer than the film itself — but it’s worth it.

The documentary, produced by

Jonathan Clyde of Apple Films and directed by Francis Hanly, is wonderfully thorough. It explains how the idea for *Magical Mystery Tour* came about, and how Paul McCartney originally drew the concept as a pie chart — then shows the chart. It covers the origins of each number written specifically for the show, from the title song and “The Fool on the Hill” to “I Am the Walrus” and “Your Mother Should Know.” It presents lots of outtakes and new interviews with McCartney and Ringo Starr, as well as Martin Scorsese, Terry Gilliam and Peter Fonda. It also includes a vintage interview with George Harrison, whose assessment of the 1967 TV special is as unfiltered as the program itself.

It’s a fine documentary — better, to be honest, than *Magical Mystery Tour* itself. But *Magical Mystery Tour* is so much fun to watch if you’re a Beatles fan, that it serves up one joy after another. John Lennon serving shovels of spaghetti as a waiter in a dream sequence. John and George in a strip club, watching the house band singing a song called “Death Cab for Cutie” —

Photo Credits: Rotten Tomatoes, thebeatles.com

The Beatles look out of the *Magical Mystery Tour* coach skylight, on location in England in September 1967.



which, incidentally, inspired the name of a much more recent rock band. And the closing production number, “Your Mother Should Know,” which has the Beatles in white suits, dancing in unison down a giant staircase.

In addition to the PBS double feature, *Magical Mystery Tour* is also now available as a deluxe boxed set from Apple. It includes Blu-ray and DVD versions of the original special, a vastly shortened version of the documentary, and lots of extras, including outtakes and complete scenes that were cut out of the program before its 1967 premiere. These extras are every bit as entertaining as *Magical Mystery Tour*, and one segment is a minor revelation: singer-songwriter Ivor Cutler, seated at an ornate white organ in the middle of the English countryside, performing his composition “I’m Going in a Field.” It must have been hypnotically bizarre then. It’s hypnotically bizarre now.

It’s no secret that I’m almost ridiculous in my enthusiasm for the Beatles. But for me, all this new *Magical Mystery Tour* material — the restored TV special, the documentary, the boxed set — is like a perfectly timed holiday gift. The boxed set is expensive — but the Great Performances double feature is free. All you need is ... a TV set.

*Originally published for National Public Radio*



Opposite: Paul with a member of the film crew during the filming of “Magical Mystery Tour,”



Opposite: Paul with a member of the film crew during the filming of “Magical Mystery Tour,”



Opposite: Paul with a member of the film crew during the filming of “Magical Mystery Tour,”

# The Cyclist

Dan Schneider

“Sometimes the rawest of art forms can strike deeply into the percipient”

Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s 1987 picture *The Cyclist* (*Bicycleran*) is one of those odd little films (a mere 78 minutes in length) that, technically, is not that impressive, but whose narrative makes it worth watching. Makhmalbaf wrote and directed the film, and also may have edited it. Its technical merits are few, save for the spare screenplay. There are, however, no greatly structured scenes, no effects of any note, and the most interesting shots are those of the lead character on his bicycle and another character riding a motorbike around and around in a pit. Yet, both of these shots are emblematic of the film’s attack on human nature. *The Cyclist* is a polemical film, a political one, but one which succeeds because it does not make those things primary to its nature. The tale follows a middle-aged Afghan refugee, Nasim (Moharram Zaynalzadeh), in a small Iranian town. His wife, called Boo-Boo, is deathly ill and he needs to pay her bills at the local hospital. The utter corruption of the petty bank officials, even in the midst of the reform attitude of the Iranian Revolution, shows how most rotten hegemonies only fall to succeeding ones. Often, the viewer sees that much of the local economy is controlled by thieves, con men, and gangsters in Western suits.

Nasim, a former biking champion, is soon persuaded by his son Jameh (Esmail Soltanian), and a friend, to pedal a bicycle for a week straight to get his wife’s bills paid. This after a suicide attempt, and being beaten for it by locals, and after trying to get involved in a smuggling scam. Why does he sink to such depths? Because the hospital officials are so corrupt and unfeeling that they will toss Boo-Boo out, and even cut off medicine and oxygen, if he cannot pay each day for her. So, he has no choice, and ends up a part of a local contest of wills between public officials and gangsters who bet on whether he can succeed or fail, replete with a referee to keep track of his progress through the night, as Nasim spends his first three days just circling about a lone square. Far more interesting than Nasim is the reactions of the grotesque townfolk who cheer and jeer him, and pay increasing fees, each day, to do so. Even more telling is that the gangsters bribe doctors (who will only look after Boo-Boo with money up front) to dope Nasim one way or another, forcing him to urinate and defecate on the bike. In a sense, this film resembles Tod Browning’s classic film *Freaks*, except that the camera is not looking in at the center of the attraction, but out on the crowd. The fact that they are even scarier than the real freaks of the earlier film, while unsurprising, shows how well an



artist can critique something implicitly, and not get his work censored in an authoritarian society, for the people who gawk at Nasim (referred to as Breeze by his shady promoter) are really the mullahs who want to know every detail of a person's life in an Islamist society. This is made almost explicit when some throw tacks in the path of Nasim's bike, to puncture his tires, only to have his promoters kidnap and steal another biker's bike, and switch Nasim off on it while they repair his tires. Furthermore, despite the claims of Islam being a leavening force in the lives of its adherents, this film shows just how nationalistic the Iranians are, and how much bias they hold toward outsiders. In the third night, Nasim falls off the bike, and his friend rides for a few hours as he sleeps. The referee and others are none the wiser, but how they made the second switch to get the real Nasim back on the bike is never explained. Yet we see the poor man suffer blazing heat in the day and frigid temperatures at night. When

water is thrown on him it boils off of his scalp. He even uses small pieces of wood to keep his eyes open.

The other film which this one resembles is, unsurprisingly, the great Italian neorealist classic, *The Bicycle Thief*, by Vittorio De Sica. There, too, we see the depths to which a poor man will sink, all regarding a bicycle which is stolen from him, and one which he desperately needs for employment. In the latter film, however, Nasim becomes not merely the bicycle, not merely the cyclist of the film's title, but the very motion. And in doing so, he provides the most damning metaphor of life in such a society- that the individual worth of a person is subsumed by their mere material actions. Beliefs, dreams, ideals, ideas, all mean naught. One sees this even in a minor subplot about one of the ruthless doctors' nurses, who feels badly about Nasim's exploitation, but who, like her boss, is all talk and no action. The other thing that separates *The Cyclist* from *The Bicycle Thief* is that



To pay his wife's hospital bills, Nasim must ride his bike nonstop for a week

Photo Credit: jonathanrosenbaum.net, The Film Walrus

Nasim uses pieces of wood to hold his eyes open



the Iranian film exploits grotesqueries to enhance subjective feelings in the viewer. De Sica's film maintains a distant documentary feel throughout.

The acting is nothing noteworthy, because all involved were likely amateurs. And, again, the camerawork by cinematographer Ali Reza Zarin Dast, is nothing special; even the occasional quick cuts look more the works of error than planning. But, in this, Makhmalbaf's sixth film in a long career, one can discern that he's likely to be a more daring filmmaker than his main filmic rival in Iran, Abbas Kiarostami.

The DVD, put out by Image Entertainment, is of solid video quality, although the audio leaves much to be desired in places. It has no English language dubbing, and only white subtitles (against the color background), for only 85% or so of the dialogue. Often-times this is the result of a bad job by the producers of the film, but, given the low budget feel of *The Cyclist*, it could just as well be that the translators found much of the banter between minor characters, and moments of byplay simply were not worth the time and effort, artistically nor financially. That's a shame, because some of the more revelatory moments in film come from the *sotto voce* moments between characters.

There are no special features whatsoever. And, while I mentioned the audio quality being bad, that is something that may be the fault of the DVD company. What is the fault of Majid Entezami, who did the soundtrack, is the bizarre usage of musical interludes, often at inappropriate places, and often with music that is more Indian than Persian.

Yet, despite its flaws, *The Cyclist* is a film worth watching again. Sometimes the rawest of art forms can strike deeply into the percipient, not so much for the brilliance of its polish and skill, but just for the strength of its plunge, and the sharpness of its edge. This is one of those films. It is not great cinema, technically nor purely, but it is a worthwhile piece of art that distills the pros and cons of humanity in a universal way, as well as detailing the hues of those pros and cons to a specific place and time. If more films and artworks did so, in a similar manner, both art and politics would benefit. As it is, only the audience of Mohsen Makhmalbaf's film benefits. Good for them, and better for Nasim, and all those like him, who rarely get to see films, much less be the stars of them.

Originally published at Cinescene.com



# Wheel & Heel

In the Disney film, *Oz the Great and Powerful*, Oscar uses a hot air balloon as his mode of transport into the Land of Oz, so we thought that we would take a look at some of the other weird and wonderful modes of transport that have been used in movies.



The only car that you will need to transport you to the future is the 1981 **DeLorean DMC-12** from *Back to the Future*! Doc said in the film: "If you're going to build a time machine into a car, why not do it with some style?" Maybe back then it was the most stylish of cars, now not so much, but that doesn't change how awesome this car still is to those who loved the films. Six were used in the films, and only three exist now after one was destroyed in *Back to the Future Part III*. Two are owned by Universal Studios and one is in a private collection and has been extensively restored.

**Catbus** is a character in the Studio Ghibli film *My Neighbor Totoro*, directed by Hayao Miyazaki. It is a large creature, depicted as a grinning, twelve legged cat with a hollow body that serves as a bus, complete with windows and seats coated with fur, and a large, bushy tail. The character's popularity has led to its use in a spinoff film, toys for children, an art car, and being featured in the Ghibli Museum, among other products and influences.



Photo Credit: Wikimedia, Disney, Flickr, Escape Pod, Studio Ghibli Wikia



The **hot air balloon** in *Oz the Great and Powerful* is the mode of transportation that takes Oscar Diggs, a small-time circus magician from dingy Kansas to the amazing Land of Oz where he thinks that he's hit the jackpot and fame and fortune are his for the taking.

In the original novel, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's slippers were actually silver, but the makers of the film wanted to make the most of the new Technicolor film process and instead used **ruby slippers**! Wouldn't it be cool if we had our own ruby slippers and just had to click our heels together three times to get home? Definitely the easiest mode of transport to have with you on a daily basis!



The **Magic Carpet** in *Aladdin*, better known as just Carpet, was the playful almost dog-like mode of transport for Aladdin and his friends. He is found in the Cave of Wonders by Aladdin and Abu as they search for the magic lamp that holds Genie.





Thomas The Tank Engine is now a global brand generating hundreds of millions of pounds a year

# Hating Your Legacy

Nicholas Jones

The assistant in Waterstone's shakes his head. I've asked for *The Three Railway Engines*, the first of many books written by the Reverend W.V. Awdry. 'I don't recognise the title,' he says. Or, it seems, the author.

After much checking, he sends me to another branch. There, tucked away, I find one copy - next to Awdry's more instantly recognisable second book, *Thomas The Tank Engine*.

Photo Credit: Wikimedia Commons

*The Three Railway Engines*, the first book in the Thomas series, was published in 1945, making this the 65th anniversary of the little blue engine.

But, although Thomas is still with us - a new run of his televised adventures starts on Channel Five this month - I can't help feeling that the new stories have strayed too far from Awdry's great books.

Their essential Englishness has been lost, with nods towards multi-culturalism in the form of engines from Japan and Cuba, and the lovingly crafted models have been replaced with computer-generated glitz. Many children do not know they are a British creation at all.

At the core of the problem is the fact that Thomas's world is now a deeply unfashionable one - at least with the adults in charge of children's books and TV programmes.

But youngsters love the hierarchy of the railways, because that's how they see the world. The big engines are like senior boys in the playground - Gordon was named after the bossy son of Awdry's neighbour - while cheeky smaller ones such as Thomas are the younger children.

At the top is the Fat Controller, who is often thought to be a God-like figure - although he was, in fact, intended as a satire on bureaucrats who churned out directives but did nothing to realise them. That certainly still rings true.

And what about the man behind the tank engine? His is a poignant story: an innocent, financially naive man who cared only about entertaining children and who earned little money from the books.

Others, meanwhile, made fortunes by treating Thomas as a commercial property, to be milked for all the cash it could produce. Their actions horrified Awdry.

The TV series, for example, introduced him to another world - one which he said sought to 'cash in on the

books' success', changing them for ever in the process.

I first met Awdry (the initials stand for Wilbert Vere) when producing *The Thomas The Tank Engine Man*, a BBC 2 documentary shown in 1995.

He was born in 1911. His father Vere was also a vicar, and also loved railways. In our security-obsessed age, it's odd to remember that their world was one where gentlemen enthusiasts would climb into locomotives to quiz their drivers on the finer points of the railway system.

Wilbert's passion for the railway started early. His father, shattered by the death of his older son Carol in the Great War, had retired to Box in Wiltshire and, at night, young Wilbert could hear the goods trains from his bedroom window.

They needed an engine to push from behind to tackle the gradient to the local tunnel, designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

In Wilbert's imagination, the engines spoke to each other as they laboured up the hill, the first one saying 'I can't do it', the smaller one replying: 'Oh yes you can.' That, he told me, was the foundation of his books.

After university, he married a girl called Margaret Wale and became a clergyman. When World War II came, the memory of his brother's death was too painful: Wilbert took a pacifist line. His bishop told him to find another parish.

In 1942, Wilbert found himself nursing his young son Christopher through measles. He decided to create bedside stories about steam engines, sketching pictures of them with faces.

Christopher loved his father's tales of talking trains - but noticed if the details of any story changed when retold. To avoid being corrected, Wilbert wrote the tales down.

That year, for Christmas, he made his son a wooden tank engine and named it Thomas. (A tank engine, by



the way, is a steam locomotive whose water is stored in tanks attached to the boiler, instead of an adjoining truck called a tender.)

Margaret felt the tales should be published. Wilbert was sceptical - he would always be a reluctant author - but in 1945 a Leicester businessman named Edmund Ward agreed to print the stories under the title *The Three Railway Engines*.

Ward paid him £37 and 12 shillings for the copyright to the book, which was reprinted four times in the first year. Some 25 more were to follow.

By the third book, *James The Red Engine*, Reginald Dalby had been employed to provide the artwork, which was inspired by the rolling hills south-east of Leicester.

Many readers found his sketches the biggest attraction - they certainly helped sell the titles to bookshops, as Dalby's bright colours created a unique kind of children's book for the time.

Christopher Awdry has told me that the spotless engines, in fact, seemed anachronistic for the time: post-war trains were usually filthy.

Pop supremo Pete Waterman, who has a collection of preserved carriages and engines, was an early fan of the

books. 'All children look forward to Christmas,' he says. 'But I did especially, because I knew I'd be getting the next Thomas book.'

Adjusting to his second career as an author, Wilbert decided on the principles by which his books should be written.

One must lead on to the next, while the scenery and locations should stay the same from one book to the next. Crucially, his stories had to follow correct railway procedure.

He took plotlines from real incidents in railway magazines. His daughter, Veronica, recalls having high tea with him reading out new stories to her and her sister Hilary, when Christopher was away at school.

As his food went cold, Wilbert would observe their reactions and make changes to the plot.

In all, he wrote 26 books in The Railway Series, the last in 1972. He had run out of ideas.

In 1983, his son Christopher took over his mantle - just as the story took a surprise turn.

TV producer Britt Allcroft had by now bought the rights to televise the stories.

In 1984, *Thomas The Tank Engine And*



The Reverend W.V. Awdry created the famous blue train

Photo Credit: Daily Mail. Thomas the Train Engine Wikia



Britt Allcroft was the brains behind the Thomas The Tank Engine TV cartoon

*Friends* hit our screens, narrated by former Beatles drummer Ringo Starr, and was an instant success.

The series soon sold abroad, crucially in Japan and the U.S., triggering an explosion of Thomas-related merchandise licensed by Britt's company.

She is a truly outstanding TV producer, but by the time I met Wilbert there was - he said - 'a certain coldness' between them.

He'd liked the first two Thomas series because they stuck faithfully to his stories, but then the producers started writing their own. Wilbert was appalled.

The feeling was mutual: I cannot write here what Awdry was called at the PR company engaged by the producers to handle Thomas The Tank Engine. One of its staff told me: 'They've made him millions and all he does is complain.'

But did he make millions? He appears to have handed over the rights to all the books for very little money.

I'd guess authorship had earned him useful thousands by the mid-Sixties, enough for him to retire from a full-time ministry.

By 1995, *Thomas The Tank Engine* was annually grossing hundreds of millions of pounds around the globe in TV

and video sales, books and merchandising that ranged from pasta shapes to slippers.

He has done so ever since: the figure now exceeds a billion each year. It's a far cry from £37 and 12 shillings.

Yet, for all the millions still being made out of Thomas, the original books - and the vision of England they preserve - are being forgotten, and that's a crying shame.

For my film, I read each one again. As a child, my favourite had been book ten, *Four Little Engines*, set on a mountain railway. Reading it again was uncanny: decades later, I could still recall the next picture coming before I even turned the page.

I realised at once why I had loved the books. Wilbert had created a cosy, reassuring world of characters and settings that had been there for me each bedtime, in books whose storylines and images I retained unconsciously all my life.

That was his special gift as an author. I doubt that today's TV-driven story books, aimed at pre-school children, will hold their readers' affections into later life.w

Originally published in the Daily Mail



# Ringo Starr: Busy Beyond the Beatles

Jane Warren

In 1968, Ringo Starr went on a pilgrimage with his fellow Beatles to visit the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India.

He took with him a suitcase full of baked beans.

*Outtake of Ringo Starr shoot for a Craig Stereo Advertisement*







*Ringo Starr  
performing with his  
band in Paris June  
26, 2011*

Two weeks later he'd finished off the last can and knew it was time to leave the ashram. The most down-to-earth member of the band never did like fancy foreign food. The rest of the band stayed on but Ringo had clearly had his fill of matters spiritual.

As he descended from the transcendental Himalayan ashram he famously mused: "It was just like Butlins."

"Ringo is exactly as he says on the tin," says musician and activist Bob Geldof of his unpretentious persona. Despite this unassuming quality, people have always had mixed feelings towards the funny, drumming Beatle, the one christened Richard Starkey who celebrated his 70th birthday on Wednesday – the first of the surviving two Beatles to reach the landmark (Sir Paul McCartney will be 70 on June 18, 2012).

To some, Ringo is the man credited with making the drummer an equal

partner in pop, as well as inventing a whole new style of drumming, a left-handed man playing a righthanded drum kit ("Any more than four drums and I get confused," he once admitted).

To others he will always be "the -lucky Beatle" – the self-taught drummer brought in to replace Pete Best just before the wannabe band hit the big time. When asked if Starr was the best drummer in the world John Lennon jokingly replied: "He's not even the best drummer in The Beatles."

Whatever you think, it's impossible to ignore the fact that we've always heard more about the other three. To address this inequality, there have recently been mutterings about the possibility of a knighthood to upgrade the MBE the fourth Beatle received in 1965.

After all, Paul McCartney, Elton John, Cliff Richard and Mick Jagger are all knights. Why not loyal Ringo? (One journalist even went so far as to start campaigning on his behalf.) But Ringo

**“No, I don’t want to be a Sir. I want to be a duke or a prince. If they come through with that, I’ll consider it.”**

himself doesn't seem too fussed about establishment accolades.

When asked by one interviewer whether he fancied the honour, he replied in trademark laconic style: "No, I don't want to be a Sir. I want to be a duke or a prince. If they come through with that, I'll consider it." His musical contribution may often have been derided – although with enhanced digital technology it is now said to be easier to hear the brilliance of his contribution – but his work within the band was not all for show.

He was the acknowledged peace-maker, the calmest member of a group dominated by the egos and eccentricities of Lennon and McCartney – Ringo's own demons were to emerge after the band split up. At one press conference in America, The Beatles were accused by an aggressive reporter of being four second-rate Elvis impersonators.

Lennon bristled. George Harrison stayed silent. McCartney looked confused. Ringo, meanwhile, leapt forward and said, yes, that's exactly what they were – and promptly convulsed into hip-wiggling contortions to prove it. In an instant he became the most popular Beatle in America and he returned the compliment by falling in love with America.

Starr was the only Beatle who accepted the presence of Yoko Ono and when the band split in 1970 he was the only member to remain close to the other three while they fell out. In part, you suspect, it was because he was so easy to like and had a habit of summing up a situation in the simplest terms.

"I think you're both nuts," he said bluntly to Lennon and Ono when, for avant garde reasons, they took to performing on stage inside black bags while the others tried to ignore them. Given Ringo's level-headed attitude, it seems surprising that he went so badly off the rails in the years that followed the band's demise. It was after the band broke up, John Lennon was murdered

and his surrogate "family" – as he called it – disintegrated that his problems began.

To begin with his future post-Beatles looked promising. Despite a writing credit for just two of the songs in The Beatles oeuvre, he was first off the blocks with a solo recording career, a fact that surprised many. He even appeared in a few films in which, according to film-maker Ray Connolly, he showed promise.

But he remained unassuming. When asked why he hadn't continued with it he explained that having met real actors he'd realised he was "just a personality who can speak lines, that's all". It's a comment reminiscent of the one he made when he was starting off as a Beatle: "I don't want to invest me money in stocks or anything. I just want to have it and draw 20 or 30 quid a week. The main thing is, I don't ever want to go back to work."

Following a poor working-class childhood in Liverpool, in which he was beset by serious illness, he had dropped out of school and worked as a delivery boy for British Rail, a barman on a ferry and an apprentice joiner. In 1975 he was divorced from his first wife Maureen, with whom he has three children, Zak, Jason and Lee, now in their 40s, and in 1981 he married a bona fide Bond Girl, the actress Barbara Bach, who had starred in The Spy Who Loved Me and to whom he remains devoted.

Together the couple set about living it up. There was said to be no rock and roll party in Los Angeles if Ringo wasn't there, and by the mid-Eighties he was downing a bottle of Mumm champagne before lunch and rounding off his day by consuming more nefarious substances.

He once said he wouldn't go out because you'd have to be in the car for 40 minutes without a drink. He'd started drinking in the mid-Seventies, replacing cognac with brandy Alexanders, and then when his addiction really es-



calated wine, often sinking 16 bottles a day.

“I got involved with a lot of different medications and you can listen to my records go downhill as the amount of medication went up,” he once said. “I’ve got photographs of me playing all over the world but I’ve absolutely no memory of it. I played Washington with the Beach Boys – or so they tell me. But there’s only a photo to prove it.”

However, it was only when he began to worry that he couldn’t stop drinking that he sought help. Seven years after their marriage, he and Barbara booked into a drying out clinic in Tucson, Arizona. “I’m not a violent man,” he reflected recently, “But I was getting violent. And it was just painful, waking up in the morning and starting drinking again.”

He has admitted beating up Barbara so badly during one binge that he thought he had killed her. The clinic helped him to turn his life around and he claims that he hasn’t touched a drop since. Even when his first wife Maureen died of cancer in 1995 and their daughter Lee was diagnosed with a brain tumour requiring major surgery, he didn’t see drink as a way out.

Six months after finishing rehab he put together his first All-Starr Band which has been touring on and off with a changing line-up for the past 22 years. The band, of course, is just for fun. The serious money rolls in from what he calls “my other band”, enabling him to live like a pampered rock god with the permatanned good health of a

man who can afford to travel with the weather. Lean and boisterous in tight jeans, T-shirt and designer sunglasses he has been described as looking “like a fiftysomething in the first throes of an affair with a younger woman”.

He and Barbara, who is eight years his junior, happily divide their time between their homes in Los Angeles, Monaco and Surrey – where, despite disliking the gloomy climate, he often loyally sets off the fireworks for his neighbours in the village of Cranleigh.

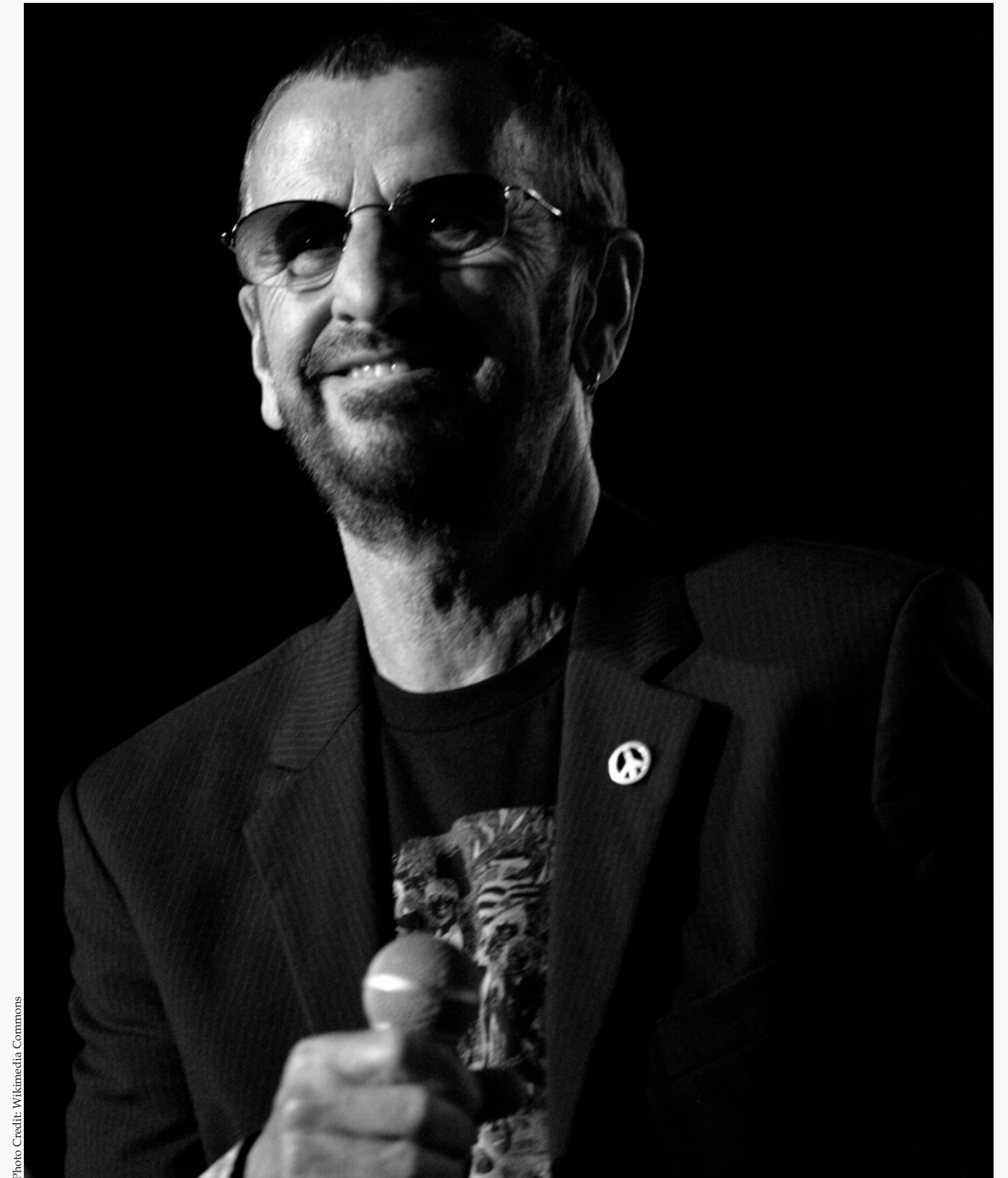
In recent years he has developed genuine spiritual beliefs of his own and practises transcendental meditation, the technique he was taught on that celebrated trip to India in 1968. “Things have happened which have brought me up short,” he said a few years ago.

“My daughter’s tumour, the death of my ex-wife, my wife’s mother and Linda McCartney. Things like that make you look at yourself. I feel blessed. Without any hesitation I’d say I was a lucky person.” What sustains him, he says, is “just working out, just eating carrots” – that and the music that he continues to create.

His band may play to small halls rather than packed stadiums but he’s still performing, which seems to be the main thing. “I joined bands because I wanted to play with good players,” he once said. “That’s all I’ve ever wanted to do. Of course the band I ended up in were really great but it went a bit crazy.”

*Originally published at Express.co.uk*

*Ringo Starr and his  
All-Starr Band -  
Hordern Pavilion,  
Sydney, Australia.*





# The George Carlin Who I Knew

Britt Allcroft

I don't know the George Carlin being memorialized this week in pieces like "George Carlin, expert troublemaker."

Like anyone else, I have been saddened by his passing, realizing the depth of our collective loss when I watch the hours of news coverage showing clips of the edgy, sometimes angry, comic whose hilarious stand-up routines, such as "The Seven Words You Can Never Say on TV," became cultural touchstones.

I also hear the familiar voice of the man who would leave me phone messages as hilarious as his comedy bits. I experience again the same dry, irreverent humor of a man who once sent me a T-shirt with the slogan "Britt Happens."

But I have yet to see the George I knew.

For the entire six years we collaborated during the 1990s on the PBS television show "Shining Time Station," this George worked with a teddy bear at his side. This George was swamped by children wanting to talk to him or get his autograph. This George could take the same voice known for angry rants about society's hypocrisies and turn it into a gentle invitation to kids to explore a safe, accessible fantasy world.

George starred as Mr. Conductor, the tiny magical guy who lived in the station house wall, came and went in gold dust and told the stories of *Thomas the Tank Engine and Friends*. He succeeded Ringo Starr, our first Mr. Conductor.



Photo Credit: New York Daily News

*The early 90s saw Carlin dabble in family-friendly fare as the conductor on 'Shining Time Station.'*

George came into my life when Ringo decided to leave our show to focus on his music again. We began to panic. The voice and presence of our tiny storyteller was critical to the show.

My collaborator, Rick Siggelkow, asked me to listen to a voice, never telling me who it was. The first word I heard, "stuff," won me over. As one who was living in England during the peak of his popularity here, I had no idea it was from one of George's most famous monologues.

But although the words were aimed at adults, I heard a universal voice. I heard a sound that, for children, could be intimate, lyrical, sometimes spooky, soothing and, most important, kind.

During the first day of work in the sound booth on our set in Toronto, George was out of sorts. As he sat down, he realized he had no audience. The man who could easily make thousands of people roil in laughter in an arena was nervous about performing in the booth by himself.

We knew it wasn't possible to have an actual kid in the booth for George to tell the story to, so I asked George if he had owned a teddy bear growing up. He did. So we sent for one to put in the booth, where it remained his companion at every recording session in the sound booth. Years later, as he was wrapping up his tenure on the show, George and his late wife, Brenda, visited me for dinner. They arrived with a present -- a teddy bear, christened Teddy Carlin, that sits on my piano to this day.

Since George's death, I have been intrigued that some of the obituary writers and people penning appreciations express surprise that someone known

for being an edgy comedian could also voice a popular children's program -- as if it were a piece of the George puzzle that didn't fit. "So go figure," Robert Lloyd wrote in *The Times*.

Looking back, it makes perfect sense to me. George and I had initially bonded over our mutual bouts of loneliness as children, and "Thomas" was one way we expressed it creatively. During an interview for one of his obituaries this week, I was asked whether George found this role something of a respite from his angry comedian persona, as if filling some kind of void in his life. It's an interesting, provocative question that I will never know the answer to, but I suspect may well be on the right track.

In the last phone message I received from George, he wanted to make sure that I knew that he was very proud to have been our "Thomas" storyteller and that *Shining Time Station* had given him some of the happiest times of his life.

I believe our show made George realize that he had a special, previously unrealized bond with children. Years earlier, he had succeeded in connecting with a generation of young adults by tapping into their thinking when he was the most provocative and popular comedian on college campuses.

Then, ironically, playing an 18-inch-high storyteller allowed him to connect with their children. The quintessential stand-up comic had found yet another audience. And, of course, one teddy bear.

*Originally published in the Los Angeles Times*



Zac Efron and Robert De Niro in 'Dirty Grandpa.'



Jim Carrey, Rob Riggle and Jeff Daniels in 'Dumb and Dumber To.'

Photo Credit: Lionsgate, Universal

# The Dirty Truth About Road Trip Movies

Bryan Alexander

Yes, that is Robert De Niro rolling through spring break in Daytona Beach with Zac Efron in trailers for *Dirty Grandpa*.

With a battle cry of "Party 'til you're pregnant," De Niro has rejoined the road trip genre he previously drove to perfection in 1988's *Midnight Run*.

But the R-rated *Dirty Grandpa*, which Lionsgate hasn't previewed ahead of Friday's official release, joins 2013's *Jackass Presents: Bad Grandpa* as players in a far raunchier road trip resurgence.

"Hollywood likes to come back to these films, which are getting cruder and cruder," says Jeff Bock, box office analyst for Exhibitor Relations. "That's how they are selling this one, come see Robert De Niro as grotesquely rude and crude. That's either a master stroke or desperate times."

A look at the wild state of road trip films finds a few key trends:

## Crude is king

A steady stream of major studio R-rated road trip comedies have flowed into theaters, ranging from July's *Vacation* (a successor to 1983's *National Lampoon's Vacation*) to 2014's *Tammy*. The rebirth is partly strategic nostalgia.

"We're seeing more of these because

today's filmmakers grew up with classic '80s road trip movies like *Planes, Trains & Automobiles*," says Dave Karger, senior correspondent for Fandango.com. "But these classic films are simply hard to live up to."

While the crudeness is amped up, often as the critical approval ratings have dropped, the new films have made money. 2014's *Dumb and Dumber To* raked in \$86 million with a 29% critical approval on review aggregation site RottenTomatoes.com, while *Vacation* hit nearly \$59 million (27% approval), *Tammy* made \$84 million (23%) and *We're the Millers* took \$150 million (47%).

Even the Chipmunks hit the highway with the PG-rated *Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip*. ParentPreviews.com notes that "potty humor aLind flatulence jokes are used." Road Chip has quietly rolled to \$81 million w(17%).

## Some are critically acclaimed

Film historian Leonard Maltin says quality road adventures are out there, they're just harder to find.

"There's unlimited life in road trip movies, even if it hasn't yielded great results of late," Maltin says. "It's a sta-



ple of the storytelling process, because it's all about what happens getting here to there."

Maltin points to Lily Tomlin's *Grandma*, as well as Jason Segel and Jesse Eisenberg in *The End of the Tour*, as "sturdy" independent examples in 2015.

**Road trip movies are evolving**  
*Grandma* writer/director Paul Weitz says the urge to get out and explore America, the essence of many great road trip movies, has lessened in the modern age.

"People are having road trips on their iPads," Weitz says. "Before, if you wanted to have these experiences, you had to get up and go somewhere."

Meanwhile, Weitz believes the genre is heading into bold new worlds, like spaceships. "In a weird way, (the new) *Star Wars* is a road trip movie with all that stuff happening in the Millennium Falcon."

The future could get odder.  
"Once there are self-driving cars, that will take it to a whole new level," Weitz says.

Originally published in USA Today



After 1983's 'National Lampoon's Vacation,' a grown-up crew hit the road in 2015's 'Vacation.'

Lily Tomlin and Julia Garner in 'Grandma.'



Photo Credit: Universal, Sony Classics, and Warner Bros. Pictures

# Furious 7's Wrecked Cars

Steve Knopper

## Filmmakers destroyed 230 cars for *Furious 7*. A look at where they are now

Not long after stuntpeople for Vin Diesel, Michelle Rodriguez and the rest of the *Furious 7* crew filmed their usual death-defying car chases on a twisty mountain road west of Colorado Springs, Colo., Richard Jansen received a call. Somebody from the movie had seen his "we buy junk cars" highway sign, and wondered if the owner of Bonnie's Car Crushers could haul away 20 or 30 vehicles smashed beyond repair, including several black Mercedes-Benzes, a Ford Crown Victoria and a Mitsubishi Montero. "Sure," Mr. Jansen said.

Then Mr. Jansen and his crew, based in nearby Penrose, spent several days loading the cars onto a semitrailer truck to haul them away. Filmmakers insisted he shred or crush them all, to prevent anyone from fixing one up and getting hurt in a damaged movie car. So today, a large, black, scrap-metal Benz cube once driven in a "Furious 7" car

chase exists somewhere in the world. "It was kind of unusual, to see some relatively late-model Mercedes-Benzes, all crunched up and good for nothing," Mr. Jansen says.

How cars are built and prepped for action movies has been well documented: The process involves mechanics, roll cages, drag tires and fuel cells. But after the movie ends, what happens to the cars that parachute out of planes, plunge off cliffs and get run over by tanks?

"It's pretty easy," says Dennis McCarthy, picture car coordinator for the *Fast and the Furious* franchise, whose latest installment, *Furious 7*, premieres in theaters this week. The film crew has to follow a specific protocol, documenting every step for both accounting and liability reasons, he says. "We have to account for every single car destroyed in each film."

*Fast and Furious* filmmakers wreck hundreds of cars every movie—more than 230 alone for *Furious 7*. For 2013's





The Furious 7 crew hired Bonnie's Car Crushers to clean up after smashing cars while filming in Colorado.



A view inside one of the garages of Cinema Vehicle Services

Photo Credit: Jeffy Curry, David Walter Banks for the Wall Street Journal

*Fast & Furious 6*, when a tank bursts out of a military transport and flattens numerous cars on a highway in Tenerife Island, Spain, Mr. McCarthy's people made deals with local junkyards and used-car lots. "We'd wreck 25 cars a day, they'd come out at night, scoop 'em up and bring us 25 more," he says. "It was a round-the-clock process, with multiple tow trucks and car carriers." For 2011's *Fast Five*, in which the "Furious" crew haul a massive bank vault through Puerto Rico, filmmakers struck a deal with the government to transport used cars inexpensively from San Juan's wrecking yard to the set, destroy them, then deliver them back to the yard.

After filming the *Furious 7* mountain-highway chase on Colorado's Monarch Pass, the car crew stowed its crashed cars in the parking lot of the small nearby Monarch Ski Resort. Mr. Jansen had two days to remove them so the resort could prepare for its opening season. "We probably destroyed 40-plus vehicles just shooting that sequence," Mr. McCarthy says.

In the early days of car-chase movies, producers arranged to haul the smashed cars to junkyards and forgot about them. This is what happened to

Steve McQueen's wrecked Mustang in 1968's *Bullitt*, according to the historical car website MustangSpecs.com. (A second Mustang, used mostly for the high-speed driving scenes, wound up in the hands of collectors.) Of the 300 highflying Dodge Chargers that rotated into production as the orange General Lee in the *Dukes of Hazzard* TV show in the early 1980s, many were recycled into set cars for the background of the show. Others went to the junkyard, sometimes not for long. "There were people down in the South that would actually go to the junkyards and try to restore them," recalls Craig R. Baxley, a veteran stunt coordinator and director who worked on the show.

As car-chase movies have evolved from cult classics to multimillion-dollar franchises, Hollywood car wranglers have strengthened their policies for disposing of smashed cars. Nobody wants to be sued when a fan makes off with a restored Mini Cooper from *The Bourne Identity* and drives it down a flight of stairs. "I don't handle anything that has a roll cage in it, like a stunt car—we will automatically get rid of them," says Ray Claridge, president of 39-year-old Cinema Vehicles Services in Los Ange-



Ray Claridge, owner of Cinema Vehicles Services, poses next to an under-restoration Eleanor, the modified 1967 Ford Mustang piloted by Nicholas Cage in *Gone in 60 Seconds*.



Advertisement

*As car-chase movies evolved from cult classics to multimillion-dollar franchises, Hollywood car wranglers strengthened their policies for disposing of smashed cars.*

Photo Credit: David Walter Banks for the Wall Street Journal



les, which recycles and junks cars destroyed or damaged in films. “I don’t like the liability issues.”

Two years ago, Mr. Claridge and his crew assembled 150 vehicles for *Captain America: The Winter Soldier*. After the movie finished filming in Cleveland, they showed up to find them in varying stages of destruction at a warehouse. It took five 18-hour days to sort them into two categories: the no-hope vehicles, including a city bus, went to a local wrecking yard for crushing. The remaining 40 or so returned to Los Angeles for recycling.

The stories of what happened to crashed vehicles in big-screen car chases can be as dramatic as the movies themselves. After 1983’s *Christine*, about Stephen King’s demon car, filmmakers sold and donated the two Plymouth Fury cars that survived the on-screen destruction: MTV auctioned one of them, and a Santa Cruz, Calif., public-radio station auctioned another. “We bought and cannibalized 25 Plymouths. We ended up smashing, beyond recognition or repair, 15 of those,”

says producer Richard Kobritz, who is today president of Columbia College Hollywood. “One ended up in Arizona at one of the car auctions and went for about \$164,000. Then somebody in Florida bought it. He called me three weeks ago to verify it.”

Every now and then, a stuntperson who drives a famous car finds a way to bring it home. Two of the 1970 Novas that Kurt Russell’s character Stuntman Mike souped up and smashed in Quentin Tarantino’s *Death Proof* were destroyed, “straight to the junk pile,” says Buddy Lee Hooker, stunt coordinator for that movie. But Mr. Hooker kept a third version, used mostly for background shots. Mr. Hooker occasionally visits his friend, Mr. Tarantino. The stuntman takes the *Death Proof* Nova and the director drives the Pussy Wagon from *Kill Bill: Volume 1*. “Every once in a while, we’ll go for a little drive,” he says.

*Originally published in the Wall Street Journal*

# Mother of All Failures

**In 2002, *TV Guide* named *My Mother the Car* second worst show of all time. It was beaten only by *The Jerry Springer Show*.**

For almost fifty years, *My Mother the Car* has remained a punchline, easily the most infamous of all the “What idiot thought THIS was a good idea?” sitcoms to hit the air. Just how did a comedy about the spirit of a man’s dead mother inhabiting an old automobile get on TV?

In hindsight, it had to happen. During the 1960s, the network schedules were overrun with comedies based on completely unrealistic and usually lame-brained premises. There was a talking horse (*Mr. Ed*), a Martian being passed off as an uncle (*My Favorite Martian*), a genie servant to an astronaut (*I Dream of Jeannie*), a playboy with a robot girlfriend (*My Living Doll*), an average American family made up of movie monsters (*The Munsters*), another family of creepy oddballs (*The Addams Family*), and the most unrealistic family of weirdos of them all, the Nelsons (*The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*). In this context, it’s not such a leap for a woman

planted six feet under to possess (or repossess) a car.

The premise, in a nutshell, is that Dave Crabtree is a lawyer whose momma takes a break from pushing up daisies to return and take over the body of a 1928 Porter. She talks to him through the radio speaker. His wife is Barbara and his two young kids are Randy and Cindy. The wealthy, evil Captain Manzini is always trying to get his hands on Dave’s car to complete his automobile collection.

As with anything, it’s the execution of the idea that matters most. A show such as *Bewitched* demonstrates how charm, a great cast, and the right “touch” can turn an unbelievable premise into an entertaining series. *MMTC*, on the other hand, was extremely pedestrian. Despite the lurid hook, it was a rather lame undertaking. None of the characters on the series had any actual character or personality; they were just “types.” The only thing that could be said about Dave Crabtree (Jerry Van

*Jerry Van Dyke starred in the failed sitcom from 1965-1966*



Dyke), the dutiful son, is that he was a trusting and dull dullard. His wife and kids were as generic and forgettable as they come. His arch nemesis, Captain Manzini, would have been more at home as a villain on *Batman*, but only on the weeks the writers decided he should be.

The 1928 Porter, as seen in the series, did not exist. A 1924 Ford T-tub hot rod, built by Norman Grabowski, was modified to turn it into the car seen on the series. A second “effects car” was built by George Barris for the scenes requiring the car to seemingly drive itself, move its headlights, and the like.

Despite a universal lambasting by the critics and lousy ratings, *MMTC* was kept on the air by NBC for a full season opposite *Rawhide* on CBS and *Combat* on ABC. It probably is remembered today thanks to Johnny Carson, who made it a frequent punchline for years to come.

*Originally published at TV.com*



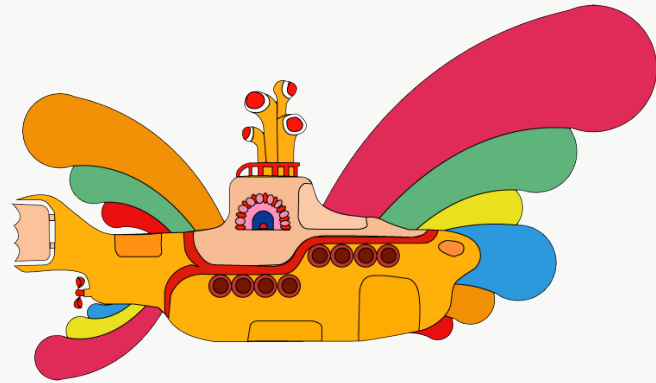
Photo Credit: Sitcomsonline.com, Consumer Guide

*Called a 1928 Porter on the show, the vehicle was actually cobbled together from several cars. The body was that of a 1924 Ford Model T.*



# From 1968: Yellow Submarine

Renata Adler



**Y**ellow Submarine, which opened yesterday at the Forum and Tower East, is the Beatles's first feature length cartoon, designed, for the most part beautifully, by Heinz Edelmann, in styles ranging through Steinberg, Arshile Gorky, Bob Godfrey (of the short film *The Do It Yourself Cartoon Kit*), the *Sgt. Pepper* album cover, and day comic strip. The Phantom appears. So do many other pop art and comics characters. (Dick Tracy's inspired Moon Maid would not have been out of place.)

The story concerns the kingdom of Pepperland, invaded by the Blue Meanies, the only antidote to whom is music. There are twelve songs, most of them from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, and it becomes clear throughout the film not only that the rhythm of movie direction (by George Dunning) and the rhythms of music are meant for each other, but also that any human occasion demands—before pictures, before prose even—something in music.

"Do you ever get the feeling...?"  
"Yeah."

"That things are not as rosy as they appear to be underneath the surface?"

"There's a cyclops?"; "But he's got two eyes?" A bicyclops; "Black, Blue, White, Red. Can I take my friend to bed" ("Can I bring my friend to tea" is another refrain); "Tell us where we're at," The Socratic question—the whole movie, alternately washed and hard edge, art nouveau, and full of flowering shrubs and thistles, is full of enfolded meanings, jokes, puns—some of them lemon-infantile, none of them aggressive, pretentious, or self-indulgent—that would delight a child, or a head, or anybody who loves and admires the Beatles, even though this is a film in which they either redo old songs or appear once, in person, briefly, in one of their worst acted appearances ever. "Come on. The whole world is being attacked"; "Hook up, and otherwise commingle"; "All together now"—these are the lines in which the Beatles, with their special talent, life, and energy, launch their unfrenetic, unhardsell, upbeat message to the world.

There are completely lovely visual

ideas: a fish with hands, which swims breast stroke; a consumer creature with a trumpet snout, who ingests the whole world, decanting people out of a glass ball, by means of a hole that has been picked up from an op polka-dot field of right-side up and upside-down holes; a submarine that is convertible into a bravely smiling fish; a fort that disgorges a cavalry charge against Indians, and a cigarette lighter. The Dantesque landscape of otherworldly types; the Alice in Wonderland snails; mushrooms; trains emerging from under sinks; bleachings of color from hyperactive corridors; teeny weeny Meanies, and particularly the thistles are drawn with such care and amiability by Heinz Edelmann. (He is not so good on people or anthropomorphic types: they tend to Popeye distortions below the waist, and undistinguished faces above.) Not a great film, after all, but truly nice.

*Yellow Submarine* is a family mov-

ie in the truest sense—something for the little kids who watch the same sort of punning stories, infinitely less nonviolent and refined, on television; something for the older kids, whose musical contribution to the arts and longings for love and gentleness and color could hardly present a better case; something for parents, who can see the best of what being newly young is all about. *Hard Day's Night* and *Help!* were more serious, and more truly Beatle saturated. But *Yellow Submarine*, with its memories of Saturday morning at the movies, and its lovely Oswald the Rabbit in Candyland graphics, makes the hooking up and otherwise commingling very possible. When invited to, the whole audience picks up the "All together now" refrain and sings.

*Originally published in the New York Times*

Still from Yellow  
Submarine



Photo Credit: Invisible Work, Cinapse.co

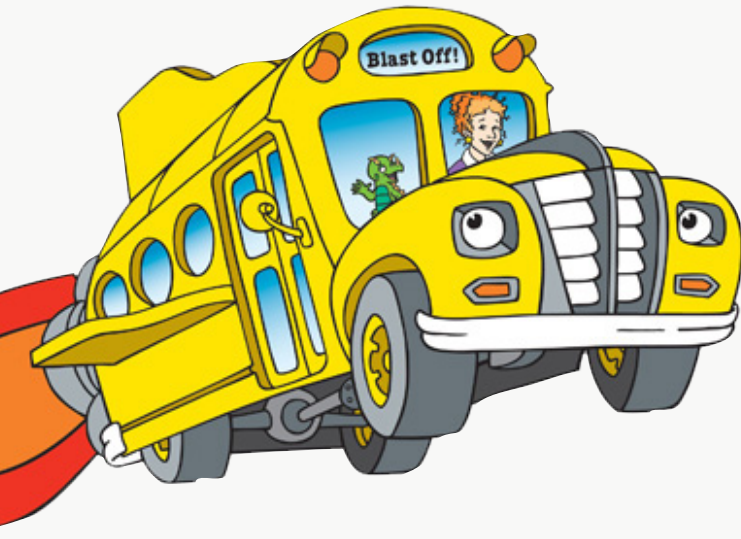
# The Magic School Bus

The bus is “very unusual” and sometimes seems to have a mind of its own. It is capable of shrinking and expanding, as well as transforming itself into many kinds of items, most commonly as robotic animals in order to blend in with the environment in safari-type field trips.

When it shrinks, so do its passengers, and occasionally, when the bus returns to its normal size when something was left behind, the other item is set back to normal too, like in “Gets Eaten”.

It is usually completely under Ms. Frizzle’s or Liz’s control, although in certain episodes the bus exhibits independent, even irrational, behavior: in “The Magic School Gets Ready, Set, Dough,” the bus malfunctions with size despite Ms. Frizzle trying to fix it; in “The Magic School Bus Holiday Special”, the bus disassembles itself into raw materials (while scowling), after having done so to several other structures (though Wanda did angrily slam her fists in the bus’s hood before it self-disassembled); and in “The Magic School Bus In The City”, the bus after becoming a bear wanders off from the class into the city looking for food.

Its abilities are due to unspecified, magical additions—the origins of which are never fully explained, although it would appear that the new components are subtle enough to avoid attracting much attention from outsiders as the bus is often seen undergoing inspection without anyone commenting on them—the Bus is capable of



transforming into multiple objects, ranging from a speck of pollen to a time machine to a small planet. It is interesting to note that some of the bus’ technologies also have specific names.

For example, the device that allows the bus to shapeshift is called the “Mesmerglober”, and the device that allows it to change size is called the “Shrinkerscope”, (a portable version is called the Porta-shrinker). In some transformations, the bus itself comes in different colours. The dew-dinger is the device used to indicate whether the Shrinkerscope is wet, in which case it won’t work.

Some episodes have featured the class having to deal with problems in the Bus itself, such as a field trip to a bakery being jeopardised when the bus shrank unexpectedly, and another trip requiring the class to shrink down and travel through the bus itself after its engine was clogged by an inspector’s peanut butter sandwich.

*Originally published on Wikipedia*

Advertisement

Photo Credit: Michael Harris



