

# Paul is Dead?

*An urban legend that refuses to die*

## **A November 9, 1966: 3.30 am - Abbey Road Studios:**

The first recording sessions for *Sergeant Pepper* has not gone well. Paul has been arguing with the other Beatles. He storms out of the studio and drives away in his Austin Healey.

Paul does not immediately go home. Angry - and under the influence of LSD - he drives aimlessly around London. Then he see a teenage girl hitchhiking in the rain. He stops and gives her a lift.

At 4.38 they approach a junction. Perhaps distracted by the girl, Paul doesn't notice that the light has changed to red. He drives through - and another car crashes into the passenger side of the Austin Healey.

The girl dies on impact. Paul is rushed to a London hospital. Doctors do everything they can - but can't save the beloved Beatle. Paul McCartney is pronounced dead just before 5.00am.

**B** According to the legend, the hospital then contacts The Beatles' manager, Brian Epstein. Brian calls the other Beatles. All four are at Paul's bedside when he passes away.

They briefly **grieve** for their old pal. Then the conversation turns to their future.

'What are going to do, Brian?' asks John. 'We can't carry on without Paul! His fans won't stand for it.'

'But you've got contracts to complete,' says Brian. 'You can't just end The Beatles!'

They think about this for a moment.

'We are still making great records,' says John. 'It does seem a shame to stop.'

'We could call up that William Campbell,' says George. 'The guy who won the Paul look-alike competition? He fooled me! And I've known Paul since I was twelve!'

And so **cover-up** begins.

**C** Could this be true? Was Paul really killed in a car crash before he grew his Sergeant Pepper moustache? Did the Fab Four become a Not-So-Fab-Three?

The evidence - from local hospitals and mortuaries - would suggest not. Another problem with the theory is that Paul McCartney was in Kenya with Jane Asher on November 9 1966. It's difficult to be in a car crash if you are not in the country where it takes place.

**D** The probable source is a real motorway accident involving Paul's car happened which happened two months later - on 7th January 1967. A rumour that Paul had been killed in this crash spread quickly. It became so widespread that the February issue of The Beatles Book fanzine published an official denial.

**E** Not exactly. Paul had not been in a fatal car crash (hurrah!). But his Mini Cooper (note the change of cars) had been in a crash on the icy M1. It therefore could not have not spent the day 'safely locked up in the garage', as claimed by Derek Taylor, the Beatles' Press Officer.

## **FALSE RUMOUR**

Stories about the Beatles are always flying around Fleet Street. The 7th January was very icy, with dangerous conditions on the M1 motorway, linking London with the Midlands, and towards the end of the day, a rumour swept London that Paul McCartney had been killed in a car crash on the M1. But, of course, there was absolutely no truth in it at all, as the Beatles' Press Officer found out when he telephoned Paul's St. John's Wood home and was answered by Paul himself who had been at home all day with his black Mini Cooper safely locked up in the garage.

It seems that while McCartney's car had been involved in accident Paul himself had not been present. A Moroccan student - working for a friend of McCartney - had crashed the Mini Cooper. Paul had in fact been travelling with fellow rock-star Mick Jagger in a second car heading to the same nightclub.

**F** Most of the world accepted that the Paul McCartney they saw appearing regularly on TV was the man they knew and loved. At skeptical few, however, were not convinced by the official story. They believed that this supposed 'Paul' was really 'Faul': an imposter called William Campbell (or Mike Campbell according to some Faul experts.

Eh? William/Mike who? Oh yes, Mr Campbell was the winner of the 1965 Paul McCartney lookalike competition. Evidently he also sang like McCartney, too - and wrote songs in the same style. Who would have thunk it?

**G** A bizarre on-air phone call to Detroit radio station on 12 October 1969 gave new life (!) to the controversy. A caller, identified only as 'Tom', declared that the evidence was overwhelming: 'Paul McCartney is dead,' he said

Tom had some startling new information. He revealed that The Beatles had been sending secret messages through their recorded songs. 'Play 'Revolution 9' backwards,' he said. 'And you'll hear what I mean!'

'Wow!' said the DJ, spinning the disk (backwards). 'He's saying 'dead man!''

**H** A week later a Michigan University student published an article: "McCartney Dead; New Evidence Brought to Light". This drew attention to 'Paul' crossing Abbey Road on the album cover barefoot. Surely this was to symbolise of his premature death?

So Mr Campbell, who had stepped into Paul's shoes, was now stepping out of them. Campbell also had a cigarette in his RIGHT hand! Everyone knew Paul was LEFT handed!

Then there was the number plate on the white Volkswagen Beetle: "LMW 28IF". Another message! Paul would have been twenty-seven had he lived to record Abbey Road.

The problem with that clue is that Paul was twenty-seven on the day he walked across Abbey Road. Or didn't walk across....

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### QUESTIONS 29–35

The text has eight paragraphs, A–H. Which paragraph answers the following questions? Write the correct letter, A–H, next to each question

1. So just a false rumour then?
2. Were there more 'clues'?
3. What is the evidence for this improbable tale?
4. The cover up
5. Tragic accident?
6. Where did this story come from?
7. What revived the story?
8. Who was 'Faul'?