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Paul McCartney Goes Through Beatlemania, Again

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By: [ChartAttack.com Staff](#)

When I was a little kid, there were two faces that I could always pick out from the pages of magazines or on TV. One was John F. Kennedy; the other was **Paul McCartney**. I also distinctly remember my older sisters showing me all the "secret" signs on the Abbey Road album cover that apparently lent credence to the "Paul is dead" rumour. When I entered my teens in the '70s, **Wings** was the first band that I latched onto in a big way (Wings Over America being the third album I bought).



Paul McCartney

From there, of course, it was a quick hop back to the **Beatles'** records — and my life as a serious rock music fan truly began.

So it was a particularly special thrill for me to attend Paul McCartney's press conference, held this past Saturday as the former Beatle swept into Toronto for the only Canadian stop on his current Driving USA tour, a sold-out show at the Air Canada Centre later that night. The tour, his first in nine years, began April 1 in Oakland, California and winds up May 18 in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida.

Though the media conference was delayed an hour-and-a-half, all was quickly forgiven once McCartney finally entered the room triumphantly holding up a Toronto Maple Leafs hockey jersey with his name emblazoned on the back above the number "02." He was greeted with a warm and enthusiastic round of applause from the members of the media present, as he took his seat behind the microphone. There was a palpable sense of excitement in the room for just being in the presence of a former Beatle.

Dressed casually in a dark Adidas sweatshirt, McCartney was relaxed and friendly, often showing his famous charm and sense of humour.

Asked if he had any particular memories of coming to Toronto (his first visit was as a Beatle when the group played Maple Leaf





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Gardens in 1964), Sir Paul cited the British connections as one of the reasons he liked coming to the city. "I just love it as a city. It's a very friendly city, whenever we've been here," he said. "The audiences are great. That's really what you remember."

He also added that he loved coming to Toronto because "it gives us a chance to get out the pipe band" — continuing in a faux Scottish accent — "for the wee Scottish folks who live here." As an encore for that night's show, the Peel Regional Police Pipe Band joined McCartney and his group onstage for a rousing rendition of "Mull Of Kintyre."

The soon-to-be-60-year-old former Beatle has been in the public eye a lot in the past year. Having released his most recent album, *Driving Rain*, in November (hailed by some as a return to form for the tunesmith), he also performed his Oscar-nominated title track from the Cameron Crowe film *Vanilla Sky* at the Academy Awards broadcast in March, played at the Superbowl pre-game show in February and headlined the Concert For New York City in October of last year. He also released a collection of poetry in the past year, called *Blackbird Singing*.

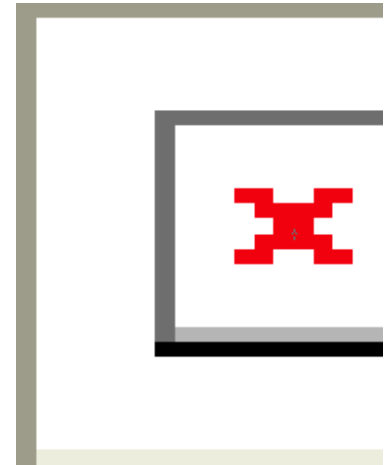
But not everything in recent years has been rosey for the doe-eyed singer. McCartney's wife of almost 30 years, **Linda**, passed away from cancer in 1998 and former Beatle bandmate **George Harrison** lost his battle with the disease this past November. When I got my chance at the microphone, I asked him if he was finding that there was a greater emotional connection with audiences on this tour, perhaps because of his recent personal tragedies.

"Yeah, you know, it's strange, because of my losses, and also the world's losses, it is a very emotional tour, which I like," he said. "When I was 18, I didn't like that. I got very embarrassed about all that stuff. You know, when you're just trying to be cool? Now, I'm much more OK about that. So yeah, the fact that Linda isn't in the band was originally sort of difficult for me, but because it's a new lineup, it's not as difficult as I thought it might be."

McCartney has been paying tribute to those departed friends and loved ones on this tour, performing Harrison's classic "Something" and his own 1973 hit "My Love," one of many love songs written for Linda, as well as "Here Today," written in 1982 for slain ex-Beatle **John Lennon**.

"I wondered whether that would be too difficult," he admitted, "but there's something about the audience and their response — we all kind of let it out. It's like a therapy session and there's something good about that."

"Particularly after September 11," he continued. "I think a lot of people have got a lot of emotions, and in some ways you need somewhere to let it out in a group and that's one of the things that the tour seems to be. If I talk about John or George or Linda, or the events of September 11, there's a sort of feeling that comes over us. We all know what we think and it's kind of very obvious, but it works. I like it. It's a good thing to share."



McCartney's shows on this tour have so far typically lasted for as much as two-and-a-half hours. He was asked how he stays in good voice and how he keeps his energy up.

"I don't even think about it. It's kind of something that I've always done," he said, almost apologetically. "I don't get exhausted, I really don't. I'm kind of exhilarated at the end of a show. I'm waiting for myself to be a bit knackered, but it hasn't happened. I come off every night and think, 'y'know, I could do another hour.' I enjoy it so much." He did mention, however, that the pacing of the show — with rockers and quieter numbers interspersed — allows him to get a bit of a breather.

There was no question at that night's concert that McCartney had every intention of giving the people what they had come for. Consistent with other stops on the tour, 21 of the 36 songs in the set list were Beatles numbers, including a couple — "Getting Better" and "Hello Goodbye" — which he said he had never performed live until now. Four songs from *Driving Rain* plus the underwhelming title track from the *Vanilla Sky* soundtrack constituted the only new songs in the set.

Though it appears that McCartney is wearing his Beatles legacy comfortably these days, he stated that he really didn't care how he would be remembered by people, and that it really wasn't up to him to decide how people remembered the Beatles. "It was a damn good band and we did some real good stuff," he added. "I think we still stand for something good." My nomination for understatement of the year.

Though the press conference lasted only 15 minutes, McCartney lingered to sign autographs for the assembled media professionals, who transformed into rabid autograph hounds faster than you can say "Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da." One fellow from CTV actually brought a vintage early-'60s Beatles "Flip Your Wig" board game from the hey-day of Beatlemania merchandising, that the former mop-top obligingly signed.

I, of course, was above that kind of unprofessionalism — although as I squeezed my way into the fray of journalists-turned-fans in order to retrieve my tape recorder from the table where McCartney had sat, somehow the booklet from my *White Album* CD mysteriously fell out of my clothing (having been held there by static cling, unbeknownst to me, through some bizarre laundry/record collection mishap, I can only surmise) and onto the table where others had placed their tour programs to get signed. But for some reason McCartney chose not to sign the booklet, and so I came away with no Beatle autograph. But I do have the tape of me asking Paul McCartney a question, and him answering it — which I will cherish always... um, for professional reasons, of course.

—Jim Kelly

