

GOOD OL' FREDA

INTERVIEW WITH FILM DIRECTOR, RYAN WHITE

By Helen Marketti

Freda Kelly was the secretary for The Beatles from their early days until the band's break up in 1970. A special documentary will be shown this year at the Cleveland International Film Festival in which she shares special stories and experiences from working with the Fab Four. Freda will attend all three screenings of the film in Cleveland where fans will be able to meet her.



Film director, Ryan White has put his love for photography, documentaries and film making into an incredible story about a woman who kept her privacy and stayed out of the spotlight until now. Freda Kelly has a special place in the hearts of Beatles fans as well as being part of history during one of the most unique eras for music. Freda started her time with the group from their humble beginnings at the Cavern Club when they had not yet conquered the world.

"Freda was only 17 years old when she started working as The Beatles secretary," said Ryan. "She was only a teenager at the time during those first few years when Beatlemania was hitting strong. She was 28 years old by the time she "retired" from working for them when they broke up."

Freda played many different roles that went outside the realm of what was "normal" by today's standards of being a secretary. She assisted Beatle manager, Brian Epstein, with many duties while keeping fans happy by granting many of their souvenir requests. "She would go with The Beatles to their barber, sweep up their hair and then send locks of it to their fans," said Ryan. "One time a fan sent in four pieces of gum for each Beatle to chew. Freda then sent the pieces of gum back to the fan. There are many stories she shares in the film that everyone will enjoy. It's a real snapshot to an era that doesn't exist anymore and probably never will again. I think what Freda did is completely singular in music history. I don't think there will ever be

a system in place like that again where fans were given such personal attention."

After fifty years of keeping her silence, Ryan explains why Freda has agreed to share her story. "I do have a personal connection with Freda. I have known her since I was a kid. My uncle is Billy Kinsley who was in the band, The Merseybeats. They were a contemporary band of The Beatles and were from Liverpool, England. I grew up going back and forth to visit my aunt and uncle in Liverpool. Freda was a friend of my aunt's. It seems many of my aunt and uncle's friends were entrenched in the music scene and all were connected to The Beatles in some way, but they kept it private. I remember sitting next to Freda at wedding receptions and things like that but never thought any more about it. I knew she worked as a secretary for a law firm but I never had a clue she worked for The Beatles. She has known me since I was a kid and she trusts me. We have a good relationship. She wasn't going to do the documentary with someone she didn't trust."

"Freda has had countless offers over the years to write a tell-all book or to have a movie made about her time with The Beatles. She could have very easily done so if she wanted because she was with them

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for everything," said Ryan. "She never has because that's not who she is. I think a lot of it has to do with working for The Beatles and the loyalty that grew. She has always been weary of the press and how the four of them were treated. She has a natural respect for others."

Ryan continues, "Freda has gotten to the point where she likes to joke that she is now on borrowed time. She has a two-year-old grandson and one day she was thinking that she wanted to leave him her history. She wanted him to know what she did. I feel that Freda made this movie for only one reason and that is her grandson. At our first premiere, Freda's daughter, Rachel attended. She talked with me after she saw the film and said that 95% of the movie was completely new to her. She had no idea of the stories that her mother was sharing. I feel I have played a special role for this family. It's a privilege to hear Freda's stories and document them for her daughter and grandson."

Realizing there is so much out there on the market about The Beatles, which continues to this day, Ryan was ready with an answer for those who asked him what was special about this documentary. "When I was pitching the film for business purposes, I was often asked what was new about this film because everything on The Beatles has already been said. My response is that everything in the film is new. Every story is a personal story

from Freda. She is rooted in each one," explains Ryan.

"I made this film with a lot of affection because I have a lot of affection for Freda. You can also tell she has the same feeling for those four boys," said Ryan. "It's interesting, compelling and beautiful. It's her personal memories that she has never shared before with anyone. Everything in this film is 100% true."

Why are people still interested in The Beatles? "I think it was their music, first and foremost. I don't think I know of another band that put the music out there as The Beatles did," said Ryan. "There were no predecessors before them. They were thrown into this wild mania and so was Freda by proxy. It was the first time that kind of mania took over the world which will never be matched again."

Screenings of Good Ol' Freda will be shown three times during the Cleveland International Film Festival. (CIFF)

Thursday, April 11 @ 7:20 pm at Cedar Lee Theatre

Friday, April 12 @ 7:45 pm at Tower City

Saturday, April 13 @ 12:20 pm at Tower City

For ticket information please contact CIFF:
www.clevelandfilm.org
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For more information on Freda Kelly:
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