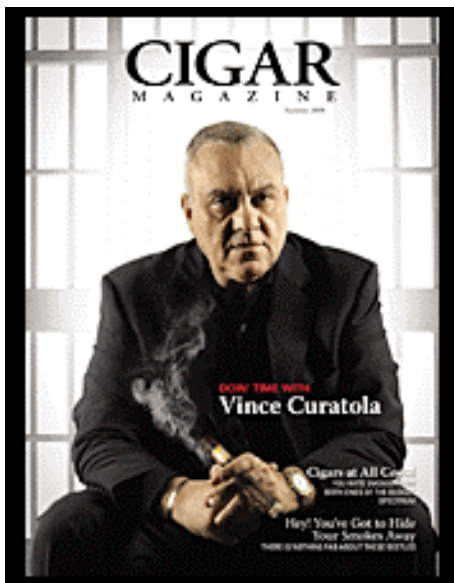


My Two Loves

By Jennifer L. Vanderslice

I believe that everyone at some point in time would love to be able to find a link, if not combine, two passions that seem unrelated to one another. Take for example the “Seinfeld” episode called “The Blood” where George decides to combine sex with food. My two hobbies, the Beatles and an occasional cigar will meet this summer in Las Vegas when my husband and I attend LOVE: Cirque du Soleil and attend the International Premium Cigar & Pipe Retailers convention. I had to wonder if there were any other connections between the Beatles and Cigars.



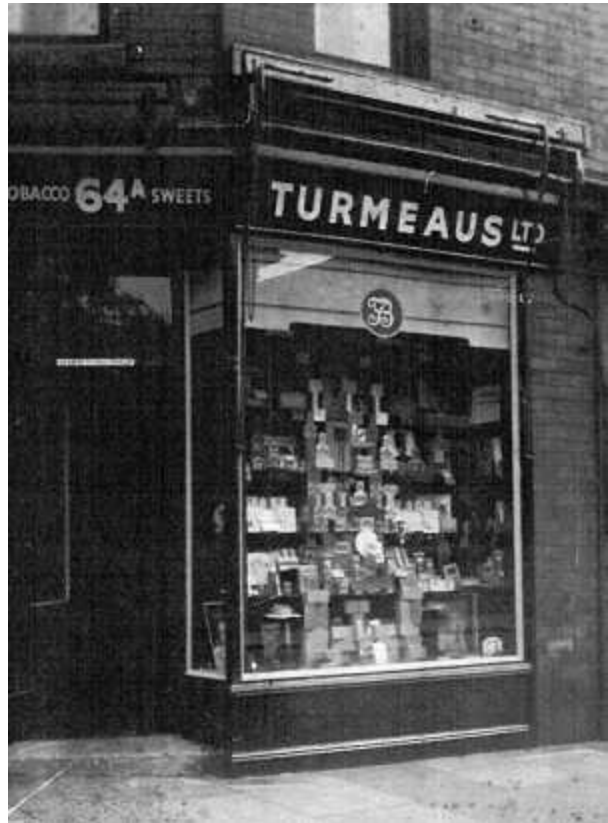
What really kick started my search is the current issue of “[Cigar Magazine](#)”, with an article titled “Hey! You’ve Got to Hide Your Smokes Away” and



subtitled, “There is nothing fab about these beetles!” Not only did the editor choose to reference the Beatles in the title, there is also a beautiful caricature by [Christine Fusco](#) of “The Beatles” as cigar beetles. Even though the article’s author, Frank Seltzer, who happens to be a good friend and also a Beatles fan, makes no mention of the Fab Four, it did set me on my quest to find more of the connections that I crave.

But I would need...Help!

It was time for an email to my good friend and cigar expert, Mitchell Orchant, in London. Mitchell owns [CGars Ltd.](#), and Turmeaus, the oldest and only cigar store in Liverpool. Turmeaus opened in 1817, and one can't help but imagine the Fab Four going in as lads in the 1950's and 60's to buy their fags. I haven't yet been able to get a story from Mitch, but I know that hidden within those 190-year-old walls is a story about four young lads from Liverpool who made it big!



My first search of the internet on these distant topics brought about some surprising results... bands! No, not the musical bands, but the paper rings on cigars. In the 1960's several companies, including Murillo and Morrita, put out sets of cigar bands with images of the Beatles on them. These are known to fetch a pretty penny at online auctions. I decided to send out another email to inquire about these. I emailed Tony Hyman, owner of the [National Cigar Museum](#).

Though he admitted his expertise was in US-Canada and Cuban cigar related items, he could tell me that labels like these were created strictly for collecting. He said you could tell by the fact that there is no white tab on the ends for gluing. He also made another interesting point: In the 1960's, the majority of Beatles fans were teenage girls and why would teenage girls want cigar bands? This might explain why these types of labels are so rare today!

Still, these beautiful treasures did not provide me with the links I wanted. So my search continued. The next door that I opened was an email to my fellow Beatles Freak and the host of Breakfast with the Beatles, [Andre Gardner](#).

He told me of a photograph of George Harrison and Ringo Starr dressed in tuxedos and smoking cigars. This photo (which is available for purchase at www.rockartshow.com) was taken on March 23, 1964 at the Carl-Alan Awards where the Beatles were presented with two awards and



were also informed that they were the recipients of three Ivor Nivello Awards. Sounds like a good cause for a celebration!

Another [photograph](#), taken by Terry O'Neill in 1965 shows Ringo standing in front of 10 Downing Street in London with a large cigar clutched between his teeth and flashing his customary peace sign with his left hand. Even though I have not been unable to find an explanation of this photo, it did reaffirm that Ringo did enjoy a fine cigar now and then. But does he still indulge this passion? And if he does, it may be time for me to email the editors of Cigar Aficionado and ask why Ringo Starr has not graced their cover?

It's been interesting to find cigar references in other places in Beatles history. In 1968, the movie "Yellow Submarine" was released. In it there is a scene called "Sea of Monsters". As the Yellow Submarine (with the Beatles contained within) travels through the sea of monsters, they encounter a boxing dinosaur in a green polka dotted jacket. In order to avoid being 'knocked out', they stuff a cigar (with a flowered band) into the dinosaur's mouth and light it by flipping up the top of the submarine like a Zippo. While this is all happening, Bach's 'Air on a G-string' begins playing right before the cigar explodes. When asked about this scene, George Martin has admitted that they used that particular piece of music as a reference to Hamlet Cigars, who's use of Bach's Air on a G-string in their ads is well known throughout the U.K.



So is George Martin (sometimes referred to as the 5th Beatle) a cigar lover too? Not according to his son, Giles. "Wow- that's obscure!... No my dad has never smoked cigars!" was his reply when asked.

And is it coincidence that the motto for Hamlet Cigars is "Happiness is a cigar called Hamlet"? After a little research I found that the similarity to the song "Happiness is a Warm Gun" are just coincidental. John Lennon got his title from the cover of a gun magazine.

During a 1966 interview with John Lennon and Paul McCartney for Flip Magazine, a DJ named Jim Savilla walked into the dressing room and sat down. John commented to Jim that he wasn't smoking. Jim replied that George had complained about the dressing room being filled with smog. After John declared, "That was George", Jim promptly lit up a large cigar. Interesting that it was George Harrison, a chain smoker, who had complained and John who approved. So I shot off a quick email to author and Beatles expert, [Larry Kane](#). When asked whether or not he knew if John was a cigar



smoker, his reply was short, "As far as I know...he did not." Not quite satisfied with this answer, I emailed John's former girlfriend, [May Pang](#). She sent a note back within the day stating, "John did not smoke cigars. He barely liked the cigarettes he was smoking." Ah, isn't it just as you would imagine it to be...John being so open and accepting of others and their vices?

It was now time for me to move on to Paul McCartney and this is where my panic set in! When I thought about it, I realized that Paul McCartney lives in sort of a bubble world that we can only see the outside. Getting inside his world to talk to his people was going to be a little difficult. And Paul is an ex-cigarette smoker, but even ex-smokers still smoke an occasional cigar.

I started out by sending a note to famed photographer [Jorie Gracen](#) (*Paul McCartney: I Saw Him Standing There*). She may have seen him standing there, but she never saw Paul smoke

a cigar. Another email went out to [Paul Gambaccini](#), the author of “*Paul McCartney: In His Own Words*” and “*The McCartney Interviews: After the Break-Up*”. Even with all his research and knowledge on Paul McCartney, his reply was, “Wow. I’ve never heard this question before. Unfortunately, I haven’t a clue how to answer it, either!” Hmm...maybe he’ll put my question in his next book of interviews.

While researching this piece, I sent queries to Paul’s people at MPL Communications and Ringo’s people, but haven’t received a reply as of this writing. When (more like ‘if’) their peeps contact my peeps, I will add an addendum to this article. I’m really not expecting one though with Ringo touring and Paul planning an upcoming tour.

After two weeks, I think I’ve come to the conclusion that my search for a link between my two loves, the Beatles and cigars, is coming up null. I don’t consider this a defeat though. I know that when my husband and I make our annual trek to Las Vegas this year, I will be able to enjoy both my pleasures together. And while we’re dining with Steve Saka, President of [Drew Estate](#) cigars, maybe I’ll ask him some Beatles related questions that will leave him saying, “Wow! I’ve never heard that question before!”

Links

I-BFD: <http://www.i-bfd.com/>

Cigar Magazine: www.cigar-magazine.com

Christine Fusco: www.thebluestudio.com

CGars Ltd.: www.cgarsltd.com

National Cigar Museum: www.nationalcigarmuseum.com

Andre Gardner: www.andregardner.com and www.myspace.com/breakfastwiththebeatles

Ringo At Number 10 photo: www.gettyimages.com

Larry Kane: www.larrykane.com

May Pang: www.maypang.com

Jorie Gracen: www.joriegracen.com

Paul Gambaccini: www.paulgambaccini.net/

Drew Estate Cigars: www.drewestate.com

©2008 Jennifer L. Vanderslice

This article may not be copied or reprinted without written permission.