

UNBELIEVABLE, ABSOLUTELY TRUE!

The Turtles' Howard Kaylan's outrageous chronicle of one night in London (1967) when he met Brian Jones, Donovan, Graham Nash, The Beatles and an up-and-coming musician, Jimi Hendrix.

MY DINNER WITH JIMI

**JUSTIN HENRY
ROYALE WATKINS**

from the Director of
TAPEHEADS, Bill Fishman

Screenplay by **HOWARD KAYLAN**
Produced by **HAROLD BRONSON**



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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Directed by: **Bill Fishman**

Synopsis:

My Dinner With Jimi is an autobiographical film written by Howard Kaylan. Produced by Harold Bronson and directed by Bill Fishman, it is a story not only of the rock band The Turtles, but of the pop music scene in general of 1966-1967.



The film chronicles the events leading up to the night in 1967 when Howard Kaylan met Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles.

"It's an absolutely true story," Kaylan recounts. "It was our first trip to London, and we met Graham Nash, Donovan, the Stones, and the Beatles—who played us Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band before it was released—all on the same night! I wound up eating dinner with Hendrix at 4 a.m...!"

...and therein lies the tale.

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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Producer's Notes: by Harold Bronson

It was May 31, 1967, the day before the release of the Beatles "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band" album. The Turtles, riding high on back-to-back hits, "Happy Together" and "She'd Rather Be With Me," had arrived in London that evening from the States. They were tired, but not too tired to get their taste of the hip London scene. They descended the stairs to the Speakeasy club, checked in at the membership desk, actually a coffin, and glided past the painting of Al Capone. They

turned the corner, and sitting at the in-booth were their heroes, the Beatles. The Beatles had arrived from a recording session at De Lane Lea, and weren't in the mood to be acting like heroes that night. Drummers are known for "pounding the skins," but Ringo Starr was doing it on the top of a girl's breasts. Paul McCartney was crawling under the tables taking pictures up girls' dresses. John Lennon, when not flinging insults, exhaustedly nodded into a table candle.

Later the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones introduced Turtles lead singer Howard Kaylan to Jimi Hendrix. As Jimi's album hadn't been released in the States, Howard didn't know anything about Jimi or his music. Jimi had seen the Turtles play in Seattle, was a

fan—he even reviewed their latest single for Melody Maker. The two settled in for a getting-to-know-you dinner.

In my 24 years co-running Rhino Records—with co-founder Richard Foos—my most enjoyable times were spent with Howard Kaylan and Mark Volman working on various Turtles and Flo & Eddie (the groups they fronted) projects. One bonus was hearing their marvelous stories. For many years, I've not only wanted to tell their story in a feature film format, but to give the viewer more of an idea of this special time.

It can be very difficult trying to squeeze the few years of an individual, or a band's career into a movie. I've produced a couple, the Frankie Lyman story, "Why Do Fools Fall in Love" starring Halle Berry, and the Monkees story, "Daydream Believers." In most biopics, in jumping from one dramatic moment to another, you don't get much of an idea of what it would be like to hang out and get to know these personalities. When Howard related the Turtles experience in Swinging London, and his dinner with Jimi Hendrix, I felt we could.



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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Producer's Notes: by Harold Bronson

Despite the fruitfulness of the period, 1967's London scene is very poorly captured, either with documentary film or subsequent dramatizations. Although we had a low budget, it was important to strive for accuracy. Most importantly, the screenplay was written first hand, by Howard Kaylan. Not having to manipulate the truth to conform to a typical dramatic structure, there is a higher degree of accuracy to what's depicted on the screen than in most movies "based on actual events." Consultants were called in. Doors expert, manager and author, the late-Danny Sugerman, advised us on the Jim Morrison character, and was on the set for that day's filming. Herb Cohen, depicted in the movie by Curtis Armstrong, came to the set for his character's day of shooting, and for the one featuring Frank Zappa, whom Cohen had managed. English rock 'n' rollers Paul Gurvitz and Cyrano Langston advised on the Speakeasy Club.

Around the time "Daydream Believers" debuted on VH-1, Showtime premiered "Hendrix." I felt the actor didn't look or act like Jimi. In "My Dinner With Jimi," I wanted to get closer in look and essence to Jimi. A number of people who knew Jimi felt we got it right. Andrew Loog Oldham, the original manager and producer of the Rolling Stones said, "The actor they've got doing Jimi Hendrix, he's incredible." Steve Rosen, writing in Harp Magazine, said, "As Jimi Hendrix, Royale Watkins is so seductively sweet and wise—so winning—that he deserves an Oscar nomination."



With Watkins in a lead role, and with the Academy Award Nominee Justin Henry in the other, playing Howard Kaylan, our goal was to find actors who could embody the roles. Among the more recognizable personalities—the Beatles, Jimi Hendrix the Rolling Stones' Brian Jones—and even among those lesser known, it was important to find actors who also physically resembled their characters. I wanted viewers to get so caught up in the authenticity of the movie and the characters, that they would be apt to suspend disbelief, rather than thinking, as I have done while watching other programs, that "this actor's pretty good, but he doesn't look like the character he's playing."

"My Dinner With Jimi's" director, Bill Fishman, has a long career directing music videos, and is best known for his work with the Ramones and Good Charlotte, and for directing the "Tapeheads" feature. I admired his creativity and sense of humor, and hired him for a number of Monkees' projects. He seemed ideal to direct "My Dinner With Jimi."

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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Producer's Notes: by Harold Bronson (Continued...)

The film fared well in the handful of festivals in which it was featured, garnering a Best Feature Film award in the Asheville Film Festival (North Carolina), and a Best Screenplay Award from Park City's Slam Dunk Film Festival. But as a period rock movie with no stars, it has been difficult to interest distributors. Billy Bob Thornton was such a fan he recommended it to Bob Weinstein at Dimension/Miramax. Brooks Arthur, record producer and Adam Sandler's music supervisor, loved the movie and set up a screening for Sandler. Although Sandler told us it was "Excellent," he didn't think it was comedic enough to put through his Happy Madison distribution deal with Sony. A & R exec Jay Landers turned Barry Gibb onto it, who also had positive comments.

The Beatles and the groups who followed had a profound affect on me. My passion steered me to building a record company that was considered the best in the industry at reissuing this great music of the past. I always wondered what it would have been like to have been a fly on the wall in that magical time. With "My Dinner With Jimi," I believe we've come close.



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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Credits

My Dinner With Jimi

A Fallout Films and Rhino Entertainment production.

Produced by **Harold Bronson**

Directed by **Bill Fishman**

Screenplay by **Howard Kaylan**

Howard Kaylan - **Justin Henry**

Jimi Hendrix - **Royale Watkins**

Mark Volman - **Jason Boggs**

Bill Uttley - **George Wendt**

John Barbata - **Brett Gilbert**

Jim "Tucko" Tucker - **Sean Maysonet**

Jim Pons - **Kevin Cottleer**

Al Nichol - **George Stanchev**

John Lennon - **Brian Groh**

Paul McCartney - **Quinton Flynn**

Ringo Starr - **Ben Bode**

George Harrison - **Nate Dushku**

Mama Cass - **Lisa Brounstein**

Henry Diltz - **John Corbett**

Jim Morrison - **Bret Roberts**

Mary - **Allison Lange**

Louella - **Wendie Jo Sperber**

Frank Zappa - **Adam Tomei**

Herb Cohen - **Curtis Armstrong**

Psychiatrist - **Taylor Negron**

DOP - **Philip Holahan**

Editors - **Londin Angel Winters, Peter Shelton**

Music - **Andrew Gross**

Production designer - **Phillip Vasels**

Art director - **Kent Casey**

Costume Designer - **Connie Cappos**

Line producers - **Preston Holmes, Cal Naylor**

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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

Press

"By its very goofball nature, My Dinner succeeds ...pointing out that one of the best things about rock & roll is that it's a milieu where misfits, for once, rule."

- Los Angeles Weekly

"It's not good, it's great. It's absolute magic because Howard Kaylan understands the way people spoke."

- Andrew Loog Oldham, Self Service Magazine

VARIETY

By **ANDY KLEIN**

Howard Kaylan -- lead singer of the '60s pop group the Turtles, later a member of the group best known as the Mothers of Invention, and then half of the duo Flo & Eddie -- penned this memoir of his early career and his encounters with (among others) the Beatles, Graham Nash, Donovan, Brian Jones, and, most importantly, Jimi Hendrix. On a minuscule budget, director Bill Fishman ("Tapeheads") and his enthusiastic cast recreate the exciting, topsy-turvy world of 1966-67. The overall energy more than compensates for budgetary constraints, and with proper handling, the film should attract an audience of nostalgic boomers, and might even cross over to younger audiences with a curiosity about the era.

Pic's first half covers the year leading up to the Turtles' biggest hit, "Happy Together," which knocked the Beatles' "Penny Lane" out of the top spot on the pop charts in March of 1967 and stayed there for three weeks. In the pre-"Happy Together" days, the group is playing L.A. clubs and scuffling along with some minor hits. In their off-hours, they hang out at Canter's Deli, along with Frank Zappa (Adam Tomei), Mama Cass (Lisa Brounstein), and Jim Morrison (Bret Roberts). They worry about the draft; Kaylan (Justin Henry, the kid in "Kramer vs. Kramer") and bandmate/best friend Mark Volman (Jason Boggs) have to con their way through a draft physical.

Second part of the film follows the band's adventures when members arrive in England to exploit the success of "Happy Together." They look up old buddy Graham Nash, who plays them an advance reel-to-reel of "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band," then takes them to a club to meet the Beatles. This confrontation with the Fab Four, and with John Lennon (Brian Groh) in particular, is the most intriguing scene in the movie, more revelatory than the subsequent, much longer conversation that gives the film its title.

Still, Kaylan reproduces -- as best as he can remember through a haze of liquor -- the gist of his long sitdown with Jimi Hendrix (Royale Watkins, in a completely believable turn); and his memories are a convincing recreation of a special cultural moment from the unique perspective of someone who started out as just another fan of what was happening and then became a big enough star to cross over into the world of his heroes.

Film was shot in 12 days -- a hasty schedule, which nevertheless almost never compromises the tech credits; the generally rough feel appears as part of the movie's stylistic plan. Groh and Watkins are easily the best cast of the celebrity impersonators -- a few of the other actors portraying rock stars simply don't look quite enough like their universally recognizable models to suspend our disbelief -- and most of the smaller roles are filled by memorable, underused character actors like George Wendt, Curtis Armstrong, and Taylor Negron

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MY DINNER WITH JIMI

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