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ARTISTS & MUSIC

'Inside The Yellow Submarine' Tells Tale Behind Beatles Fantasy Film

BY CHRISTOPHER WALSH

NEW YORK—Like almost everything the Beatles touched during their reign over pop culture, the animated feature *Yellow Submarine* was an artistic and critical masterpiece. A classic good-vs.-evil struggle depicted in a trippy fantasy world and set to their increasingly experimental compositions, *Yellow Submarine* is consistent with the Beatles' profound yet playful oeuvre.

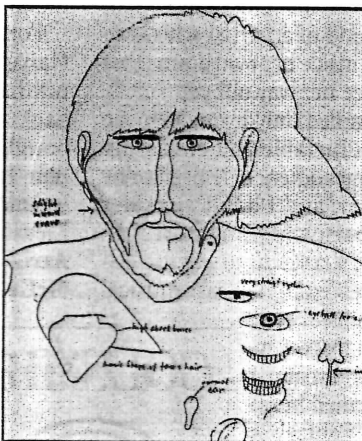
In a new book just published by Krause Publications, *Inside the Yellow Submarine: The Making of the Beatles' Animated Classic* (430 pp., \$24.95), artist/author/broadcaster Dr. Robert Hieronimus explains that the film's creation was, in fact, anything but harmonious: On the contrary, Hieronimus paints a portrait of absolute chaos. That *Yellow Submarine* was completed at all seems miraculous; that it was completed on time and under budget was an accomplishment no less extraordinary than the Beatles' own legendary narrative.

Incredibly, *Yellow Submarine* was largely created before a complete script was even finalized. Barely organized, some 40 writers and 200 artists—ranging from the creative principals to local art students—often worked around the clock to complete the production in an oppressive 11-month time frame. The contentious and often chilly relationship between American producer Al Brodax and, especially, director George Dunning and art director Heinz Edelman made the result even more extraordinary.

Through extensive interviews with *Yellow Submarine's* surviving creators, Hieronimus recounts the film's genesis: a contractual obligation to United Artists and Brodax's experience producing the ABC TV cartoon series *The Beatles*, which ran from 1965 to 1969. Unimpressed by their characterization in the car-

toons, their consciousness and business dealings rapidly expanding, the group's involvement was minimal.

How, then, did *Yellow Submarine* so accurately capture the Zeitgeist? Hieronimus explains that it was because of an incredibly talented and dedicated team, driven by both the pre-eminence of their subjects and the pressure thrust on them by the "suits" at production company King Features.



Visual studies of future Billboard Century Award honoree George Harrison's character in *Yellow Submarine*.

"Heinz Edelman is one in a billion," Hieronimus says of the Czechoslovakian artist, a primary hero of the film's creation. "When artists get together, they're always a lot of fun to be with, whether they're recording, painting—whatever it is. But sometimes, you bump into a super-great that stands above everyone else and says, 'This is the way it's going to be, and if you don't like it, I'm out of here.' Nobody would talk to King Features like he would. They were afraid of losing their jobs, and he didn't give a damn about his."

Despite being overworked and underpaid, the accomplishments of Edelman, whose renowned work foretold psychedelic art; Dunning, the eccentric animator; and scriptwriters including Erich Segal and the unacknowledged Roger McGough were immense. "They did not want to betray the Beatles' legacy," Hieronimus says. "This was in their hands. All they had was the belief that they would leave a legacy that would reflect the accomplishments of this group."

Inside the Yellow Submarine illustrates how, despite everything, a constantly-evolving, near-improvised production became not only a coherent film but an adventurous work of cinematic pop art. With its 1999 release on DVD-Video, featuring visual renovation and a surround-sound remix, *Yellow Submarine* is being discovered by yet another generation.