

MOVIE REVIEW

Man on the Run chronicles McCartney's post-Beatles journey

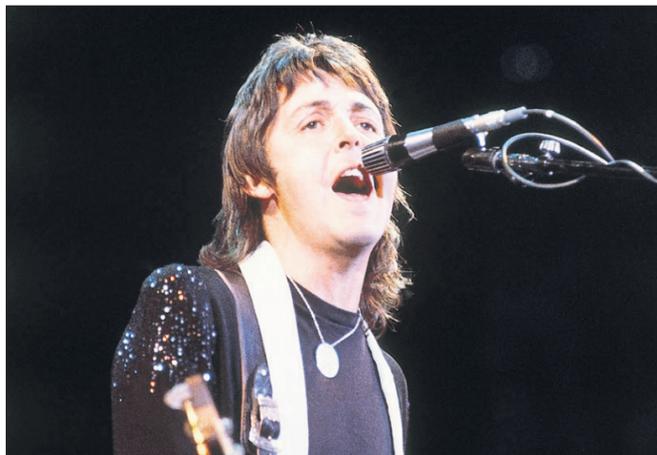
BY JAKE COYLE
AP FILM WRITER

If Peter Jackson's "The Beatles: Get Back" was the supreme document of the Beatles' final moments together and of their dissolution, Morgan Neville's "Man on the Run" is a kind of sequel.

It begins in late 1969, just months after Savile Row rooftop concert. The Beatles have broken up. Paul McCartney has seemingly disappeared. There are even rumors that he's dead. On a remote farm in Scotland, a confused and distraught McCartney wonders whether he'll write "another note, ever."

But the most surprising thing about revisiting this tumultuous, tabloid-ready period of McCartney's life is a simple fact. When the Beatles broke up, McCartney was 27 years old. To say he had lived a lifetime by then would be an understatement. By just the sheer enormity of their production and colossal cultural impact, you might easily mistakenly put McCartney in middle age by then.

"Man on the Run," premiering Friday on Prime Video, is the story of everything that came after. McCartney, an executive producer, is never seen sitting for an interview, but his off-camera



Paul McCartney, of Paul McCartney and Wings, performs at the Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, N.Y. on May 21, 1976.

Richard Drew | AP Photo

musings mark the movie, a chronicle of self renewal. For McCartney, kept boyish by the Beatles, the band's end meant a sudden coming of age.

"I had to look inside myself and find something that wasn't the Beatles," McCartney says in the film.

How you feel about McCartney's post-Beatles career might inform how you feel about "Man on the Run." For Neville, the celebrated documentary filmmaker of "Won't You Be My Neighbor," "Piece by Piece" and "20 Feet From Stardom,"

it's a period that offers no neat narrative, but — quite unlike the mythic Beatles years — something more like the ups and down of life, with regrets and triumphs along the way.

It didn't get off to a good start. McCartney, blamed for the Beatles breakup, was guilt-ridden. His first records were a disappointment. Singing with Linda McCartney, his wife, wasn't greeted well. A 1973 TV special that included a rendition of "Mary Had a Little Lamb" was, to put it mildly, a misjudgment. A curious feature of McCartney's largely

'MAN ON THE RUN'

2.5 out of 4 stars
MPAA Rating: R
Running Time: 126 minutes

sunny disposition is a nagging self-loathing.

"If I hear someone damning Paul McCartney, I tend to believe them," he says, referencing the Beatles split.

"Get Back" offered a revelatory window into the group's dynamics that put many of the old vids of McCartney to bed. Comparisons are tough — "Get Back" is one of the greatest docs of the century — but Jackson's film, drawn largely from footage shot by Michael Lindsay-Hogg, was also incredibly intimate. It captured not only the band's individual relationships but the songwriting process in real time. (The emergence of "Get Back" from McCartney's strumming and humming stands as one of the great sequences in documentary film.)

"Man on the Run" lacks that sense of closeness. By keeping the film in archival — the documentary is full of family photos and home movies — and without present-day talking heads, Neville lets us experience

McCartney's post-Beatles years as he did. It comes as a sacrifice, though, to a nearness to McCartney — and to the creation of his solo songs — that might have deepened the film.

The real arc of "Man on the Run" is building toward the creation of McCartney's first post-Beatles band, Wings. It's in some ways an unlikely centerpiece. In the revolving makeup of the band, Denny Laine was the only permanent member outside Paul and Linda. On the other hand, Wings' "Band on the Run" is the best album McCartney produced after the Beatles, and the clear culmination of years of struggle. If you needed one, this is your cue to go play "Jet" loud.

It turns out, to no one's surprise, it's hard to move on after being in the Beatles — especially for someone like McCartney who believed so sincerely in the band. Like its subject, "Man on the Run" inevitably pales next to films of the Beatles heyday. But it's a meaningful companion piece about the end of an era and the start of a long and winding road.

"Man on the Run," an Amazon MGM release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association for language. Running time: 126 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

AI music startups Suno and Udio seek industry ties after backlash

BY MATT O'BRIEN AND RODRIQUE NGWUI
ASSOCIATED PRESS

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — Suno CEO Mikey Shulman pulls up a chair to the recording studio desk where a research scientist at his artificial intelligence company is creating a new song.

The flute line sounds promising.

The percussion needs work.

Neither of them is playing an instrument. They type some descriptive words — Afrobeat, flute, drums, 90 beats per minute — and out comes an infectious rhythm that lives up the 19th century office building where Suno is headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts. They toggle some editing tools to refine the new track.

Much like early experiences with ChatGPT or AI text-to-image generators, trying to make an AI-generated song on platforms like Suno or its rival, Udio, can seem a little like magic. It takes no musical skills, practice or emotional well-spring to conjure up a new tune inspired by almost any of the world's musical traditions.

But the process of training AI on beloved musicians of the past and present to produce synthetic approximations of their work has angered the music industry and brought much of its legal power against the two startups.

Now, after their users have flooded the internet with millions of AI-generated songs, some of which have found themselves on streaming services like Spotify, the leaders of Suno and New York-based Udio are trying to negotiate with record labels to secure a

foothold in an industry that shunned them.

"We have always thought that working together with the music industry instead of against the music industry is the only way that this works," said Shulman, who co-founded Suno in 2022. "Music is so culturally important that it doesn't make sense to have an AI world and a non-AI world of music."

Sony Music, Universal Music and Warner Records sued the two startups for copyright infringement in 2024, alleging that they were exploiting the recorded works of their artists.

Since then, the pair have strived to make peace with the industry. Suno, now valued at \$2.45 billion, last year struck a settlement with Warner, and Udio has signed licensing agreements with Warner, Universal and independent label Merlin. Only one major label, Sony, has not settled with either startup as the lawsuits move forward in Boston and New York federal courts. Suno also faces legal challenges in Europe brought by groups representing music creators.

The first of the settlement deals, between Udio and Universal, led to an exodus of frustrated Udio users who were blocked from downloading their own AI-generated tracks. But Udio CEO Andrew Sanchez said he's optimistic about what the future will bring as his company adapts its business model to let fans of willing artists use AI to play with and potentially alter their works.

"Having a close relationship with the music industry is elemental to us," Sanchez said in an interview. "Users really want to have

an anchor to their favorite artists. They want to have an anchor to their favorite songs."

Many professional musicians are skeptical. Singer-songwriter Tift Merritt, co-chair of the Artists Rights Alliance, recently helped organize a "Stealing Isn't Innovation" campaign by artists — including Cyndi Lauper and Bonnie Raitt — to urge AI companies to pursue licensing deals and partnerships rather than build platforms without regard for copyright law.

"The economy of AI music is built totally on the intellectual property, globally, of musicians everywhere without transparency, consent, or payment. So, I know they value their intellectual property, but ours has been consumed in order to replace us," Merritt said in an interview in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Shulman contends technology "evolves very often

faster than the law," and his company tries to be thoughtful about "not breaking the law" but also "deliver products that the world really wants."

SUNO CEO DOESN'T REALLY THINK PEOPLE DON'T ENJOY MAKING MUSIC

When the music industry first confronted Suno over alleged copyright infringement, the company's antagonistic response alienated professionals like Merritt.

Symbolizing the divide was a clip last year in which Shulman was quoted as saying, "it's not really enjoyable" to make music most of the time. Shulman started learning piano at age 4 but later dropped it. He took up bass guitar at 12, playing in rock bands in high school and college. He said that experience gave him some of the best moments of his life.

"You need to get real-

ly good at an instrument or really good at a piece of production software," Shulman said on the "The Twenty Minute VC" podcast. "I think the majority of people don't enjoy the majority of the time they spend making music."

"Clearly, I wish I had said different words," Shulman told the AP. The context, he added, was that "to produce perfect music takes a lot of repetitions and not all of those minutes are the most enjoyable bits of making music. On the whole, obviously, music is amazing. I play music every day for fun."

UDIO CEO PITCHES HIS COMPANY AS THE FRIENDLY ALTERNATIVE

Sanchez, the Udio CEO, also loves making music. He's an opera-loving tenor who's sung in choirs and grew up crooning Luciano Pavarotti in his family's

home in Buffalo, New York.

Founded in 2023 by a group that included several AI researchers from Google, the startup now employs about 25 people. It has fewer users and raised less venture capital than Suno, which likely gave Udio a stronger incentive to be first to settle with record labels, said copyright lawyer Brandon Butler.

"A service (like Suno) that gets more venture backing is in some sense hungrier to find revenue streams and more on the hook to all those backers to make sure that they achieve profitability, which would make settling and compromising less attractive," said Butler, director of the copyright advocacy group Re:Create. "Whereas a company with fewer backers, with less capital, with less access would be weaker and less able to resist the risk that they're incurring by being involved in litigation."

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