**Sheeple Chase**

**Episode 1 – “Episode 52: Dead Singer”**

**written by**

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**Edited with additional Materials by**

**Jonathan Sims & Alexander J Newall**

**SFX: a tacky, mystery theme, FULL of synth-y theramin**

1. **INT. Two private urban flats**

**CELIA and GEORGIE are recording remotely, badly. A dog occasionally boofs faintly on Georgie's end.**

**Georgie**

**(peppy)**

**Hi there faithful sceptics and welcome to another episode of *Sheeple Chase*: the podcast that gives a long hard look at the dangerous, the dubious and the downright dodgy. I'm true believer Georgie Barker-**

**Celia**

**(a little awkward)**

**-And I'm Celia Ripley and I don’t believe a word of it!**

**GEORGIE**

**(laughing)**

**So Celia, what weird and wonderful conspiracy have you brought us today?**

**CELIA**

**(checking her notes)**

**Have you ever looked at your favourite celeb and suddenly felt like you don’t recognise them anymore? Like their fame has changed them? Well today, we're investigating claims of three singers dying at their peak and being replaced by doubles.**

**GEORGIE**

**Ooh, are we doing Paul is Dead?**

**CELIA**

**We’re doing Paul is Dead, Avril Esta Morta *and* Mia’s Missing.**

**GEORGIE**

**Sounds like we’re in for a treat after this quick word from our sponsors…**

**2. Clonelyhearts ad**

**SFX: short tacky jingle.**

**Georgie**

**Here at Clonelyhearts we know that sharing is caring and when we asked 100 gays to list their favourite thing about being queer over 3% of them said "Sharing clothes!"

So that's why they created *Clonelyhearts*: the world's first queer dating and wardrobe sharing app.

Just upload your measurements and take their style quiz, and *they’ll* pair you with tens of potential matches who share your dress size and your dress *sense*!

Membership costs less than a new outfit every month so can you afford *not* to try it?**

***Clonelyhearts:* because the couple that slays together, stays together.**

**SFX: short tacky jingle ends.**

**3. podcast**

**Celia**

**So, in the late 60s, a rumour started circulating that Paul McCartney had died in a car crash and was replaced by a lookalike named Billy Shears at the request of MI-5 Because, get this, they were afraid that, if fans found out Paul McCartney had died, the grief would lead to mass hysteria.**

**Georgie**

**They really thought this was a matter of national security?**

**CELIA**

**Don’t forget Beatlemania was a global phenomenon by this point. Luckily for MI-5 though, the American label Capital Records had already held a Beatles lookalike competition and it's said that the winner, William Campbell Shears, became the replacement "Fake Paul" or "Faul" as he's known online.**

**GeORGIE**

**Wait, so the American record label held a competition in the US and just happened to get a scouse, singer-songwriter as the winner?**

**Celia**

**No *but* the other Beatles allegedly taught him how to speak with a Liverpudlian accent, play bass left-handed and sing.**

**GeORGIE**

**Oooh! Do you think that's why there was such tension between him and Lennon? Because the fake Paul reminded him of his dead friend?**

**CELIA**

**I mean, I think it's all a load of bollocks, personally.**

**GEORGIE**

**You’ve got me curious, though… What's the evidence?**

**CELIA**

**"Evidence" is a strong word. No-one knows where the rumour of his death came from but it happened twice, in 1966 *and* 1967. Eventually the Beatles' press manager put out statements saying he was alive-**

**GEORGIE**

**(sarcastically)**

**Oh, well if a *press manager* says it then it must be true!**

**Celia**

**Fair, but he was also obviously fine - walking around and singing and, well... alive. So that was that. Until, September 1969 when a student newspaper at Drake University in Iowa published an article saying he was dead and the other Beatles were leaving clues about it in their records.**

**GeORGIE**

**Oh that explains the famous lyric: “We all live in a yellow submarine/Except for Paul who's dead/He-Died-In-A-Car-Crash-In-1966…”**

**Georgie begins googling totally convincing evidence**

**CELIA**

**Unfortunately, it seems the actual clues were so cryptic they were almost undetectable. At best, *Sergeant Pepper* was the first album released after the rumours and people claimed the sleeve art included “suspicious symbols” like a flower wreath on the ground shaped vaguely like a left-handed bass guitar.**

**Georgie**

**I can kinda see it… if you squint and turn it upside down.**

**Celia**

**Anyway, people were saying *everything* was a coded reference to Paul's death: he's turned away from the camera on the back cover, in another photo, he's wearing a black patch on his sleeve that says O.P.D-**

**Georgie**

**(gasps)**

**For Other Paul Died!?**

**SFX: Spooky Theremin sting, it goes on a little too long.**

**Celia**

**(laughs)**

**Sure why not? On the Abbey Road cover, he's barefoot, so *obviously* that's a sign -**

**GEORGIE**

**Obviously.**

**CELIA**

**-and on page 13 of the Magical Mystery Tour he's got his shoes off again-**

**Georgie**

**It’s almost like people were obsessed with a famous guy’s feet…**

**CELIA**

**-and in another photo, everyone else is wearing red corsages but he has a black one.**

**Georgie**

**Ok, that one is actually a bit weird...**

**CELIA**

**Then there's the alleged hidden backmasked messages in the songs themselves.**

**GEORGIE**

**Backmasking being when you play a record backwards and it's supposed to say something else?**

**CELIA**

**Exactly. Some people claim there’s a bit in *I’m So Tired* where if you play it backwards it sounds like “Paul is dead man, miss him, miss him.” And there’s another from *Revolution Number 9* which apparently says “Turn me on, dead man”.**

**Georgie**

**Weirdly sexual but okay.**

**celia**

**What? You’re not hot for dead, barefoot Paul McCartney?**

**GEORGIE**

**No, and you'll be really proud of me, because I'm actually very sceptical of backmasking.**

**Celia**

**How come?**

**GEORGIE**

**Well, playing records backwards absolutely ruins them, right? So, say, thousands of Iowan students are all playing their records backwards to listen to secret messages in their Beatles songs, guess who has to now go and *replace* their Beatles albums...It's all a con by the labels to sell more records!**

**CELIA**

**(laughs)**

**So, you don't believe this conspiracy, but only because you believe there’s a different, more profitable conspiracy behind it?**

**GeORGIE**

**You've got to admit, it makes sense.**

**Celia**

**But then how do you explain Avril Lavigne?**

**GeORGIE**

**(sarcastically)**

**Don't you mean Melissa?**

**CELIA**

**Maybe! There is a theory floating around that Canadian singer-songwriter Avril Lavigne died in 2003 and was replaced by a lookalike named Melissa Vandella. At least if you believe the original source of a single Portuguese Blogspot from 2011.**

**GeORGIE**

**"Avril Esta Morta"**

**CELIA**

**That’s the one. The claim got picked up by Brazilian media then spread among English speakers after a gossip journalist posted a viral thread about it in 2017. The blog suggests that just before the release of her second album, Avril's grandfather died, and her depression became so severe that she killed herself. Then, rather than make the death public and shelve the album, the record label convinced a decoy Avril they'd hired to completely take over her career.**

**Georgie**

**So *Let Go,* in 2002, that was Avril and then *Under My Skin* in 2004 and everything afterwards, that was Melissa? Not bad for a look-a-like…**

**CELIA**

**(doubtful noise)**

**The blog does claim you can hear the difference but the whole thing rests on two clips of her singing live: one from 2002 and one from a few years afterwards.**

**Georgie**

**And do they sound different?**

**Celia**

**I mean maybe? But it’s just one clip/ Maybe she had laryngitis that day, or her voice was strained from touring for too long, or…**

**Georgie**

**Maybe she spent all day yelling at a moose?**

**SFX: Moose sounds

Beat.**

**Celia**

**What?**

**Georgie**

**She’s Canadian. Moose live in Canada. They're pretty scary.**

**Celia**

**Okay then yeah, I think it's more likely her voice was tired from yelling at a moose than that she secretly died and was replaced by a clone.**

**GEORGIE**

**Any other evidence?**

**CELIA**

**I mean there's a lot of song lyric stuff and talking about how her style has changed over time.**

**GEORGIE**

**But wasn't she 18 when she got big, though? You'd kind of expect her style to change.**

**Celia**

**She was 17.**

**Georgie**

**Exactly, god when I was 17, I said I'd never move to London, get a tattoo or start a podcast, so you can’t really-**

**Celia**

**I didn't know you had a tattoo?**

**Georgie**

**(changing subject)**

**Mmmmm but what about this stuff about her face changing? That seems more convincing.**

**CELIA**

**You mean that plastic surgeon who claims her nose has changed shape? Because as every plastic surgeonknows, being replaced by a double is the only way that can happen.**

**Georgie**

**Alright but, what about her height? That used to be listed at 5'2 and now it's changed to 5'1 as though she’s had height altering surgery…**

**Celia**

**…or was measured wearing two different pairs of shoes…**

**GEORGIE**

**Okay fine but people have been finding new evidence and adding to the theory for years. Where does stuff like that come from, if the whole thing's just one big shitpost?**

**Celia**

**Well, people started calling the fake Avril “Melissa” after a photo shoot where Avril Lavigne's holding her fist up and the word "Melissa" is written on it in felt tip. The idea was like, "oh, they've labelled her, so they don’t lose track of who’s who” but the photo's clearly from around 2010, when the original Avril Lavigne's supposed to have already been dead for 7 years!**

**Georgie**

**Maybe she was just proud of her name, telling everyone, “Hey, it's me, Melissa!"**

**Celia**

**That’s one interpretation but it doesn’t explain the surname Vandella which seems to have just come from nowhere.**

**Georgie**

**Sounds like a cover up to me…**

**Celia**

**Oh Georgie, "Why'd you have to go and make things so complicated?"**

**SFX: Buh-Dum-Tss

Beat.**

**CELIA**

**Sponsor time?**

**GEORGIE**

**Sponsor time.**

**4. Pong Reloaded AD**

**SFX: rhythmic beeping from the game Pong**

**georgie**

**The Rolling Stones. The Godfather. The Watergate Scandal.**

**Everyone loves a classic, but times have changed and so have videogames.**

**SFX: The beeping is now jazzed up a stupid amount with extra elements and even a Wilhelm scream.**

**georgie**

**That’s why it’s finally time for the all new Pong Reloaded!, now fully remastered for next gen consoles generation, with cutting edge graphics-**

**celia**

**(clearly reading script)**

**"It was incredible, I felt like I was actually *in* Pong."**

**Georgie**

**New mechanics-**

**celia**

**(still reading)**

**"Don't forget to grab the paddle ups - there's a fresh wave of zomballs on the way!"**

**SFX: Zombie’s Rarr**

**georgie**

**And a story mode that critics are calling "the greatest tragedy of our times"-**

**celia**

**(flat)**

**It's truly the Romeo and Juliet of table-tennis simulators.**

**georgie**

**Pong! Reloaded: available now for console and PC.**

**SFX: shotgun reload followed by Pong beep.**

**5. podcast**

**CELIA**

**So do you want to introduce Mia's Missing, since I know how much you’ve wanted to talk about it?**

**Georgie**

**Oooh Yes!**

**(spooky voice)**

**It’s 2018 and the Riot Grrrl revival is in full swing, baggy jeans, bikinis and basslines everywhere. And nobody's jeans were baggier nor their lines bassier than *The Manic Pixie Scream Girls.* Their cover of Dolly Parton's *9-5* goes viral and they sign with Revolution Records.**

**Celia**

**Their debut, *Nowhere and Everywhere,* went to number 3 in the UK, and I think number 6 in the US?**

**Georgie**

**Yeah, they were huge for an alternative act but then as they start promoting their second album, things get... weird.**

**SFX: return of the excessive spooky sting**

**Celia**

**It wasn't that weird.**

**Georgie**

**Oh it was weird. Everywhere they went, people would just...not recognise Mia Hill. There's videos of people who'd definitely met her before clearly having to be told who she is at awards ceremonies and stuff.**

**Celia**

**She dyed her hair and a couple of people didn't recognise her at first. That's not sinister!**

**Georgie**

**And what about all those websites where they captioned band photos but left her name off?**

**Celia**

**Yeah I looked into it and it seems there’s only actually two times it happened and one of them was the Daily Mail so…**

**Georgie**

**Really? It felt like there were loads…**

**Celia**

**People talk about it like there were loads but it’s always just those two misprints. Either way it’s still enough for people to start sharing the theory that the original Mia Hill had died and been replaced by a lookalike.**

**Georgie**

**There was so much song lyric analysis... I remember being very convinced by *Six Feet Down:* “So bury me deep/If it helps you sleep/You’ve tried to replace me/But you can still taste me.” And then there's the fact that you can't really hear Mia on any of the tracks.**

**Celia**

**Yeah, but nothing that can't be explained by bad production.**

**Georgie**

**It is a bit too coincidental, though - The not being recognised, being left out of articles, the barely audible sound - it's all happening at the same time, and it's only happening to Mia.**

**Celia**

**Well, the first reference to her rumoured death is this interview in the *Liverpool Echo* with a cleaner at one of the hotels the Manic Pixie Scream Girls stayed in for a tour, and it was basically just gossip about the state of one of the rooms when they left. Apparently, it "looked like the site of a cage match" and the bathroom "smelled like someone had died in it." Which seems to be enough to set all of this off.**

**GEORGIE**

**You know “Mia's Missing” was trending on TikTok for a while?**

**Celia**

**Yeah, most of the comments were saying things like "this is really far-fetched" or "this person's an obvious troll" but there was a petition for a government inquiry into why the police weren't investigating Mia Hill's “murder”.**

**Georgie**

**Yeah, I never signed that petition.**

**Celia**

**It was ridiculous!**

**Georgie**

**Yeah, cause either they're not investigating because they don't think she's been murdered which, like, fair enough. Or they're not investigating because whoever did it is influencing the police and so is definitely powerful enough to shut down an inquiry. Either way it’s pointless.**

**Celia**

**Right… I mean I *suppose* those are both options... although I think one's a lot more likely than the other...**

**Georgie**

**So who do you think did it?**

**Celia**

**Well, nobody. I don't think she was murdered.**

**Gefrgie**

**Sure, but if she *was* murdered, who’s your suspect?**

**Celia**

**So, for any listeners who don't know, people can’t decide if it was an obsessed fan who broke into her room, the band's manager, Callie Jones, or one of her band mates. If I *had* to pick, I guess the band mate theory is the least ridiculous…**

**Georgie**

**Nope. It was the manager. She had access to the room, knew Mia's schedule and Callie was always hovering around fake Mia when the rumours started. She probably found the lookalike, trained her up and was keeping an eye on her.**

**Celia**

**But there are a lotof people that would need to be in on it: the rest of the band, the manager, the producers, friends and family, everyone involved in training the replacement... it would be a whole production.**

**Georgie**

**Right, but this is the entertainment industry, putting on productions is literally their job!**

**Celia**

**I guess that's true. Well either way, that’s us done on the Doppelgänger suite. So, what do you think? Are you convinced by any of these theories?**

**GeORGIE**

**Hmm...definitely not the Avril Lavigne one. I don't think Paul McCartney is dead, but I think the record companies have stoked it because so many of the clues can only be found if you buy more records. As for ‘Mia's Missing...’ I was convinced by it at the time as she really did seem different but it sounds like I've built it up in my memory to more than it was, so maybe not.

I think the real conspiracy is the music industry in general. How about you? Do you believe there's a crisis of imposter celebrities?**

**Celia**

**Unsurprisingly, I don’t, no.**

**GEORGIE**

**Then I guess that closes the case of the celeb swappers, conclusion: Singers fine, music industry sketchy.**

**CELIA**

**Sounds about right…**

**GEORGIE**

**Well thank you for bringing those three weird and wonderful conspiracies, Celia - they really… struck a chord!**

**SFX: ba-dum-tss**

**CELIA sighs.**

**Georgie**

**So, any big plans for the weekend?**

**CELIA**

**Nothing much. You?**

**GEORGIE**

**(genuinely excited)**

**I'm taking Captain Barker for another haircut! They give her a little bandana at the end and everything! And dog-cologne!**

**CELIA**

**…I'm sure she'll look very dashing. But I think you need to get out more.**

**GEORGIE**

**You can talk! Anyway, join us next week for another episode and in the meantime, you can rate and review us on all your favourite podcast apps and remember: if you're a band manager, it never hurts to keep a few lookalike agencies on speed dial!**

**SFX: tacky theme tune.**

**ANNOUNCER**

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**This episode was written by Sasha Sienna and edited with additional materials by Jonathan Sims and Alexander J Newall, with audio edits by Nico Vettese, mastering by Meg McKellar, and music by Nico Vettese.**

 **It featured Sasha Sienna as Georgie Barker and Lowri Ann Davies as Celia Ripley.**

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**Thanks for listening.**