



# JIM MORRISON

## LAST DAYS IN PARIS

A 52' documentary  
Directed by Olivier Monssens  
Produced by ARTE G.E.I.E, CAPA PRESSE,  
CARTEL PRESSE and MATCHA

PROVISIONAL DELIVERY : JUNE 2021

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DISTRIBUTION

# PITCH

*Was it a heart attack ?*

*An overdose ?*

*A plot by the CIA ?*

Fifty years after Jim Morrison's lifeless body was discovered in the bathtub of his Paris apartment on 3 July 1971, questions still remain. The French authorities may have deemed the star died from natural causes, but the rumor mill continues to grind on, feeding the mystery around his demise. In this documentary, we will examine the evidence and will open the cold case that is Jim Morrison's death.

Part criminal investigation, part rock star road trip, this film will offer both an investigation and a portrait set against the backdrop of Paris in the early 1970s when the French Connection was wreaking havoc on the capital.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## What really happened on that fateful night?

Did Pamela Courson, Morrison's partner, lie to the police? What was the involvement of the mysterious Jean de Breteuil, the "junkie aristocrat" of Parisian nightlife? Why did the police choose not to carry out an autopsy? Why, when the news of Morrison's death was spreading like wildfire, was it only made official two days later? Why was the casket already closed when his manager, Bill Siddons, arrived, and why was this global legend buried in secret, in the presence of just five people?

These many unanswered questions have transformed Jim Morrison's death into an enigma and inspired millions of cult followers to worship him to this day. This film, part investigation and part portrait, is set against the backdrop of Paris in the early 1970s when the "French Connection", as the Americans referred to the Marseille mafia, reigned supreme over the heroin trade. It was a decade when the "White Lady" became the fuel for counterculture.

# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The Doors had just released their sixth album, "L.A. Woman". It was more blues-oriented than the previous releases, with unusual flashes of humor, and, despite initially unsettling the fans, was met with critical acclaim. Rolling Stone magazine said it was the band's best album to-date, with the bewitching "Riders on the Storm" as the final track.

By this point in his career, Jim Morrison may have been tiring of the rockstar lifestyle and had already talked about leaving the band, but the Lizard King was still capable of electrifying audiences. Except that he hadn't toured since 1969 when he was arrested after a concert in Miami for "lewd and lascivious behavior, drunkenness, profanity, and indecent exposure". A member of the public had climbed on stage and doused him with champagne, so the singer removed his shirt and shouted to the audience something like: "Let's get undressed, let's have a love revolution! Do you wanna see my cock?"

At the trial, which was held in the fall of 1970, he was sentenced to a six-month jail sentence and a \$500 fine which his lawyer appealed, and Morrison was released on a \$50,000 bond. Then in March 1971, once recording had been completed on his final album, but before its release, Morrison fled to Paris to join his partner, Pamela Cour-

son, hoping to escape his demons and take a break. After a brief stay at the George V hotel, he moved into an apartment at 17 rue Beautreillis in the fourth arrondissement of Paris, his final abode.

Jim and Pamela were very much in love and strolled through the Place des Vosges, made the Café de Flore their favorite hangout, and went out to the Rock'n'Roll Circus, a temple of the night located on the Rue de Seine, where celebrities of the time would gather. His only wish was to continue writing his poems; a project he considered more important now than his career as a subversive singer. But this was also a time when heroin was claiming its victims. It became a symbol of the counterculture and of an artistic approach as much as it was an element of protest. Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin had already established their own legends by overdosing just a few months apart. Heroin was about a quest for instantaneous pleasure and short-lived ecstasy against a background of guitar chords.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

One drunken night, after being thrown out of Rock'n'Roll Circus by bouncers who didn't recognize him, Morrison was found by Gilles Yéprémian, aged 20 at the time, who took him to the home of his friend Hervé Muller, rock journalist. This little gang, which also included the young director Agnès Varda, took up residence in the cafés of the 17th arrondissement. Morrison always ended up pretty drunk.

On 28 June 1971, a fine summer day, they decided to go on a trip to Saint-Leu-d'Esserent on the outskirts of Paris with photographer Alain Rosnay, who would take the last photos of Morrison. It was five days before his death on the night of 2-3 July. He seemed happy, clean-shaven, and very much in love with Pamela, who never left his side.

But Morrison, the former sex-symbol and now an overweight alcoholic, saw his health deteriorate rapidly. On the morning of 3 July, he was found dead in the bathtub of his Paris apartment. According to police reports, he had suffered a heart attack at the age of 27. Despite Morrison's history, the police did not order an autopsy. The official line matched Pamela Courson's story: The singer died during the night at their home. She called Alain Rosnay and Agnès Varda to help her inform the emergency services after having discovered Jim's body in the bathtub, because she didn't speak French. But

Courson continued to give contradictory and sometimes incoherent versions of the story until she died from an overdose in California, four years later in 1974.

The Doors' manager Bill Siddons jumped on a plane, but the casket was already closed when he arrived. Morrison was buried on 7 July at the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, in the presence of just five attendees. News of his death, which had already traveled across the globe, was only officially confirmed two days later. In "Les Doors, la vraie histoire" by journalist Jean-Noël Ogouz, Bill Siddons explains that Morrison's entourage played events this way in order "to avoid the circus that had surrounded the deaths of Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin".

In 1983, a British journalist implicated the CIA in a plot to eliminate a series of counter-culture personalities. Others spoke of the implication of the French Secret Services or a Zionist plot. These theories are still debated on the internet some 40 years later. Journalist and writer Sam Bennett disputed the thesis of a heart attack, suggesting that the rock icon succumbed to an overdose. In his book published in 2007, he claims that Morrison did not die in his bathtub but in the bathroom of a Parisian nightclub he managed, namely the Rock'n'Roll Circus.



# DIRECTOR'S NOTE

He says that a doctor declared Morrison dead at the club, and then two men, from whom Morrison had bought drugs sometime earlier, dragged his body into a taxi and took it back to his apartment. To avoid a scandal, the nightclub owner didn't call the police. Could this version be credible?

In fact, it was confirmed by singer Marianne Faithfull in 2014, during an interview given to the British magazine "Mojo". She said Jim Morrison died from a drug overdose after being supplied by Jean de Breteuil, her boyfriend at the time, and a notorious dealer on the rock scene.

Several other witnesses attest to this version, citing the name of Breteuil and an accomplice linked to the "French Connection". Once the dealers had taken the body back to Morrison's apartment, they told Pam Courson to call the police and say she found him there when she woke up.

One thing we do know for sure is that Jean de Breteuil and Marianne Faithfull left in a rush the next morning for Morocco, where de Breteuil's mother lived. A few months later, Breteuil died of an overdose, taking his secret with him.





# TREATMENT

In this documentary, we will hear from those who crossed paths with Morrison during the last months of his life: His manager, Bill Siddons; writer Sam Bennett; his friends, Gilles Yeprémian and Hervé Muller; the photographer Alain Rosnay; Alain Raison, the firefighter who was the first on the scene; and Cameron Watson, DJ at the Rock'n'Roll Circus who was present on the night Morrison died.

The film will also provide an occasion to revisit the twists and turns of the Morrison's life through archive images. As such, we will look back at the trial in Miami, images of Jim driving his Mustang, the Doors on stage, rare photos of Pamela and Jim taken by Alain Rosnay, Jim's last interview on the terrace of the Café de Flore, and interviews with Agnès Varda. This archive material also includes an exceptional document, namely the voice of Ray Manzarek, organist for The Doors, in a CD he recorded called "Paris: The Mystery", where he describes his experience of Jim Morrison's death. He describes the band's last recording for the album "L.A. Woman", Jim's decision to go to France, phone calls with him during his stay in Paris, and the announcement of his death. It's a fascinating tale.

What if Morrison's death was faked? Manzarek himself has fueled this theory. Citing a conversation he had with Morrison a year before his death, Manzarek confessed to a British tabloid that he wondered if his friend had simply staged his death to start a new life incognito. To give body and soul to this story, we will also hear the voice of Jim Morrison. We will hear excerpts from a 26-minute interview with journalist Tony Tomas from Canadian CBC radio, broadcast on 27 June 1970, a year before his death. Jim gives his vision of society,

youth, the hypnotizing power of television, rock'n'roll, his new interest in jazz, his need to express who he really is, sex, and the superiority of women. We will also hear from an 8' recording on vinyl of Jim Morrison reciting one of his poems, recorded on 8 December 1970. The poem is called "Whisky, Mystics and Men". He seems drunk and sings a cappella. The recording is extremely moving, as if one were in a room with him.

And finally, to convey the atmosphere of Paris in the early 1970s, we will show images of the Place des Vosges, the Café de Flore and nighttime strolls through the city streets and its nightclubs shot with a rendering reminiscent of a Super-8 camera, like the one Pamela constantly used during that period. At the Père Lachaise cemetery, Morrison's grave is still a cult destination. Every year, Morrison fans come from around the world to pay their respects here.

Two decades after he passed, his parents had an inscription carved in the marble in Greek that reads, "James Douglas Morrison, faithful to his demons." The myth of the man who foretold his own tragic end by calling himself N°4 after the deaths by overdose of Brian Jones (July 1969), Jimi Hendrix (September 1970) and Janis Joplin (October 1970) has remained intact, 50 years after his demise.

**Olivier Monssens**

# LIVING WITNESSES



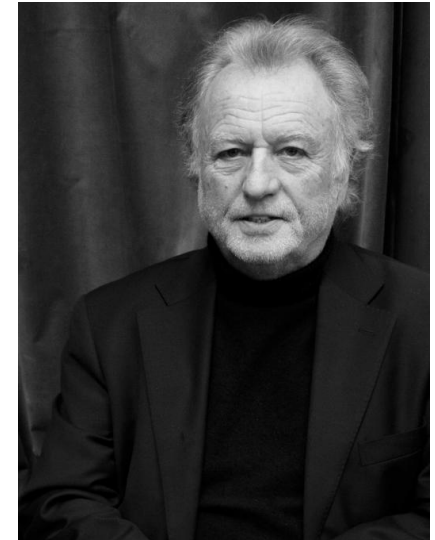
Hervé MULLER



Marianne FAITHFULL



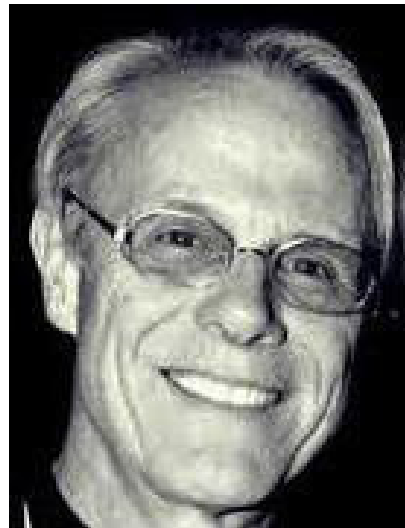
Gilles YEPREMIAN



Sam BERNETT



Alain ROSNAY



Bill SIDDONS



Alain RAISSONS

# WITNESSES FROM THE PAST



Pamela CARSON (1946-1974)



Jean de BRETEUIL (1949-1972)

# LOCATIONS IN PARIS



CAFE DE FLORE  
The couple's favorite hangout



PLACE DES VOSGES  
Where inspiration happened



LE ROCK'N'ROLL CIRCUS  
Nightclub



17 RUE BEAUTREILLIS  
Jim's apartment



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