

Gimme Some Truth: The John Lennon FBI Files

By Jon Wiener

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When FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover reported to the Nixon White House in 1972 about the Bureau's surveillance of John Lennon, he began by explaining that Lennon was a "former member of the Beatles singing group." When a copy of this letter arrived in response to Jon Wiener's 1981 Freedom of Information request, the entire text was withheld—along with almost 200 other pages—on the grounds that releasing it would endanger national security. This book tells the story of the author's remarkable fourteen-year court battle to win release of the Lennon files under the Freedom of Information Act in a case that went all the way to the Supreme Court. With the publication of *Gimme Some Truth*, 100 key pages of the Lennon FBI file are available—complete and unexpurgated, fully annotated and presented in a "before and after" format.

Lennon's file was compiled in 1972, when the war in Vietnam was at its peak, when Nixon was facing reelection, and when the "clever Beatle" was living in New York and joining up with the New Left and the anti-war movement. The Nixon administration's efforts to "neutralize" Lennon are the subject of Lennon's file. The documents are reproduced in facsimile so that readers can see all the classification stamps, marginal notes, blacked out passages and—in some cases—the initials of J. Edgar Hoover. The file includes lengthy reports by confidential informants detailing the daily lives of anti-war activists, memos to the White House, transcripts of TV shows on which Lennon appeared, and a proposal that Lennon be arrested by local police on drug charges.

Fascinating, engrossing, at points hilarious and absurd, *Gimme Some Truth* documents an era when rock music seemed to have real political force and when youth culture challenged the status quo in Washington. It also delineates the ways the Reagan, Bush, and Clinton administrations fought to preserve government secrecy, and highlights the legal strategies adopted by those who have challenged it.



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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

In 1971, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover started a surveillance of former Beatle John Lennon, who was believed to be a threat to national security. Lennon was active in leading a campaign to get younger people registered to vote against the Vietnam War, which was equated with voting against the reelection of Nixon. Wiener (history, Univ. of California, Irvine; *Come Together: John Lennon and His Time*) was engaged in a 14-year court battle to secure the Lennon files under The Freedom of Information Act. This book is filled with excerpts of these formerly classified documents, which reveal the idiocy of the type of information that was kept on Lennon. In many cases, these "secrets" were a matter of public knowledge and were very mundane. Wiener is to be commended for fighting the government's undemocratic use of power, but, unfortunately, his book is often dull and is only recommended for specialized collections in criminology. A Tim Delaney, Canisius Coll., Buffalo, NY
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Review

"A classic case study. There is humor here and mystery, too. But most of all, there is hard evidence--in the FBI's own words--of what happens when government substitutes paranoia for law." -- *Floyd Abrams*

"A scary and fascinating book." -- *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram*

"An astonishing new book." -- *Glasgow Sunday Herald*

"An excellent account." -- *Portland Oregonian*

"An extraordinary portrait of official paranoia." -- *Independent, UK*

"As a procedural history of a battle for the facts, Gimme Some Truth is as thorough and onpoint regarding the Lennon case as one could hope for." -- *Billboard*

"Astonishing." -- *Sunday Tribune (Dublin)*

"One of the most important books ever published about the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). It wins bonus points for being delightful to read while being educational. Even for readers who never intend to use the FOIA, this book is a great supplement to Wiener's 1984 biography, 'Come Together: John Lennon and His Time.'" -- *Christian Science Monitor*

"What GIMME SOME TRUTH adds to the record is both ponderous and appalling." -- *Los Angeles Times, 12/30*

From the Inside Flap

"A strident and impermissible effort to second-guess the wisdom of the FBI. . . . A potpourri of conjecture, supposition, innuendo and surmise."—from the FBI's court documents

"Jon Wiener has put together a remarkable compilation of documents. I know of no keener annotations to any documents illustrating government surveillance. Wiener's commentary is as sprightly as the documents

are foolish. He is thorough, appropriately droll at times, and rightly focused on the question of whether the FBI and the CIA were keeping to their lawful mandates during the years of abandon and evasion."—Todd Gitlin author of *The Sixties*

"The book sheds light on many issues far broader than John Lennon—the Nixon administration for example, and, not less importantly, the particular machinations of Clinton, Blair, and other current world leaders. Very few people know how the process of seeking and retrieving documents supposedly available under the Freedom of Information Act really works; Wiener's book makes this all very clear."—Eric Foner, Columbia University

"A classic case study. There is humor here and mystery, too. But most of all, there is hard evidence--in the FBI's own words--of what happens when government substitutes paranoia for law." —Floyd Abrams

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Quentin Ryan:

Gimme Some Truth: The John Lennon FBI Files can be one of your starter books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that will increase your knowledge in vocab, easy to understand, bit entertaining but nonetheless delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to place every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing Gimme Some Truth: The John Lennon FBI Files although doesn't forget the main place, giving the reader the hottest and based confirm resource info that maybe you can be one among it. This great information could drawn you into fresh stage of crucial contemplating.

Steven Bourg:

In this era globalization it is important to someone to receive information. The information will make a professional understand the condition of the world. The fitness of the world makes the information much easier to share. You can find a lot of referrals to get information example: internet, newspapers, book, and soon. You can see that now, a lot of publisher this print many kinds of book. The particular book that recommended to you is Gimme Some Truth: The John Lennon FBI Files this guide consist a lot of the information from the condition of this world now. This kind of book was represented how do the world has grown up. The terminology styles that writer value to explain it is easy to understand. The writer made some research when he makes this book. Here is why this book ideal all of you.

Cecil Andrade:

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Kirsten Ferguson:

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