

Moscow's very own McCartney

How a Beatle's stepsister found fame, if not fortune, back in the USSR

from PAUL PALMER

BY MURDOCH

WHEN she was four, George Starr used to give Ruth McCartney piggyback rides in the garden of her home in Liverpool. When she was seven, Mick Jagger read her bedtime stories.

And when she was a teenager, John Lennon took her to swastika parties in London when the stomach sickness had her and turned her against drugs forever.

Ruth was not a child born into fame and fortune, but she lived it nevertheless. Her mother, Annie, then a 19-year-old widow, married Paul McCartney's father, Jim, in 1966. Ruth was aged four. The Beatles had just reached superstardom.

'Before my mother married Jim we lived in a one-bedroom council flat in Liverpool,' remembers Ruth. 'And then I found myself moved to a beautiful detached house, with music and a Beatle as a stepbrother.'

Life as the stepsister of a Beatle had, for Ruth, brought her personal trauma, grief, a degree of disillusion — that was to be today's lesson from life — and, perhaps surprisingly, an ambition to make it in the music business. She saw so much of a child she wanted to be a pop star — or rather, she wanted to be a pop star in Britain, for she is already a major performing artist in the Soviet Union. 'Moscow's Madonna' is what she's called, and for the past year she has played to capacity crowds in Moscow, Estonia, Lithuania and Uzbekistan.

Ruth explains: 'Through another friend I was asked to tour Russia. It really was overnight I had a tape machine, a backing band and me — plus 20,000 every Russians who had never seen anything like it before in their lives.'

Ruth's lifestyle in Russia was far from glamorous. On New Year's Eve this year all she had to eat was a cold tin of beans. She also spent 11 hours on a train with no toilet or washing facilities. But her star treatment was forthcoming eventually. At Moscow airport a KGB man asked her for her autograph — not a copy of Paul's. Like other Russians, he had been seduced by a stage act which is a mix of Western promotion and communism. Her hairstyle is a mass of acrylic dolls' hair attachments which, she'd like to get ready.

Dream

Next month, Soviet TV is filming a special entitled McCartney in Siberia and taught Ruth. 'They haven't told anyone which McCartney they are getting yet.'

Ruth McCartney has found herself constantly and not always reluctantly, living in the shadow of her famous stepbrother. She admits quite openly: 'I use the name because that was the name I assumed as a kid, and in the business I don't think I can do me too much better.'

'During softball matches when I was at school, other girls used to pull pieces of hair off my head and name tags were stolen off my coat.'

The Beatle dream ended abruptly after Paul's father Jim died in 1976. The two sides of the family became bitterly divided over the marriage of Jim's last year. He was in tremendous pain from rheumatoid arthritis.

Paul and his sons wanted him hospitalized. Ruth and her mother wanted Jim to die with his dignity by caring for him at home. Jim died in 1976 and we haven't made contact since.

With Jim's illness and eventual death, the alliance Ruth enjoyed suddenly disappeared. She spent her early



Left: Ruth with stepbrother Paul and, above, as she is today.

MAN PICTURE: ALAN BARRON



years as a teenager in London living in squalor.

But she vehemently denies press reports that she has ever asked Paul for money for a job. 'I will be honest with you, she says, but your fathering for the only time during our conversation. I could have asked him. God knows after I left home I needed it. But what does Paul owe me? Nothing. I know that and, however painful, it stopped me from asking.'

It was to be a more personal trauma that drove her ultimately from Britain. Eight years ago she suffered an appalling facial Attraction neurosis when a man she had been living with for five years threatened to kill her. 'One Sunday afternoon, I decided to leave. I told the car and the chemist and left Britain.'

First stop was Australia where she succeeded briefly as a singer. From there she worked her way to America's West Coast and instantly became a regular face among the tight British expatriate community in Hollywood.

Contract

She has been married twice — the first time to an American film executive she had known for only a week. 'It lasted three-and-a-half years,' she said, 'but I can't tell you who he is because his parents never knew we were married.'

Two years ago, while filming a commercial outside Las Vegas, she met her current husband, German film technician, Dieter Beckmeier. After their marriage in 1987, they returned to Dieter's home city of Munich. 'I came to Germa-

ny, essentially just like the Beatles, to make my name and fortune.'

'I have written more than 200 songs and through various friends I was offered a recording contract with Ralph Siegel — the Pete Waterman of Germany.'

Her Russian success is based entirely on her concert performance — she has yet to release a record. But her first European single, probably a cover version of *The Crazy Pucker* and the Union Gap hit *Young Girl/Boy*, should be released later this year.

Will she make it? Somewhere along the line she has picked up some of the McCartney characteristics — the easy laugh, the tilt of the head, the gift of the gab. Star quality may not be in her blood, but it's in her breeding.

Love is



...a partnership

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