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1226 N Salsipuedes Unit C 1(805)704-5994 |https://hollywoodglee.com Larry@HollywoodGlee.com



My Psychedelic Love Story (Errol Morris, 2020): USA

Description

Posted and reviewed by Larry Gleeson



The latest documentary from the renowned filmmaker of the *Thin Blue Line* and *Fog of War*, Errol Morris, comes a tell-all story of Johanna Harcourt-Smith, a once young, jet-setting, an aristocratic Jewish woman who cavorted with the high priest of LSD, Timothy Leary. *My Psychedelic Love Story* is the story of Harcourt-Smith and Oâ??Leary as they circumvent extradition and indulge themselves in daily acid trips for a two-month period before Leary is extradited back to the US and incarcerated.

Having recently watched *The Trial of the Chicago 7,* on Netflix, I cannot say I was surprised to see Timothy Leary jailed for such a long period of time for such a small amount of marijuana possession. The underlying story was the Nixon Administration making an example of another high-profile individual who encouraged others to think and act â??outside the box.â?• All in the name of law and order.

Morris bases his work in *My Psychedelic Love Story* on a four-tape interview Leary gave with a prison psychologist. In agreeing to be interviewed, Leary makes clear in the tapes he wanted the love of his life, Ms. Johanna Hardourt, to have custody of the tapes. But, according to Harcourt, her life centered on Leary and getting him his release from prison. Leary was undergoing hallucinogenic treatment while

incarcerated. First from Harcourt smuggling in acid tabs in her belly button and through postage stamps on her letters sent through the US Postal Office.

Eventually, the government (the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Drug Enforcement Agency) threatened Leary with an ultimatum â?? publicly announce his cooperation to halt the LSD crisis or spend the remainder of his life in a psychiatric ward with a fried brain. His incarceration would soon include his ingestion of stronger and stronger doses of hallucinogens until he lost his mind. Leary agreed to cooperate, was released from prison in the Witness Protection Program, and was living in a small cabin in Idaho with no electricity. One night he and Harcourt had an argument. Leary left in the middle of the night and Harcourt never saw Leary again.

Only within the last few years when some of her belongings were sent to her did Harcourt listen to the interview tapes from 1974. Morris has his interracamera, as well as several other cameras, place at various angles and vantage points as Harcourt delivers a monologue of epic proportions. As Harcourt drifts from topic to topic Morris introduces still photographs, archival footage, and a clip from Alice in Wonderland as Harcourt is a compelling storyteller. During her two-month jet-setting romance with Leary, she recalls her conversations with Keith Richards and how she encouraged him to go to America and make albums with the Rolling Stones. The trips to Switzerland, Norway, France, and back again. Listening to her tell her tale coupled with Morrisâ?? use of image inserts of colorful Tarot cards, I felt captivated and often wondered how could Harcourt have such a vivid recollection of her and Learyâ??s travels on the run from the law. Nevertheless, *My Psychedelic Love Story* is quite a tale. Highly recommended!

Category

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hollywoodglee