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**REUTERS** 

## Yoko Ono in legal feud over rare footage of Lennon

BOSTON (Reuters) - Footage of John Lennon smoking pot, writing songs and discussing putting the hallucinogenic drug LSD in President Nixon's tea is the focus of a court case starting in Boston next week over whether the video should be made public

The case pits Lennon's widow, Yoko Ono, against Lawrence, Massachusetts-based World Wide Video, which claims ownership of nine hours of raw footage of the former Beatle and Ono that was filmed just weeks before the Fab Four broke up in 1970.

World Wide, a New England consortium of Beatles collectors, wants to release the black-and-white footage as a two-hour film titled "3 days in the Life" about Lennon during a pivotal and turbulent time for the most celebrated band of the 1960s.

Rolling Stone magazine dubs it "awesome John Lennon footage you might never see."

The company, which paid more than \$1 million for the footage after legal costs and other expenses, nearly premiered it last year at the private Berwick Academy in Maine but abruptly scrapped the screening after the school received a stop order from Ono's lawyers, who assert copyright ownership of the videotapes.

World Wide has filed a suit in U.S. District Court in Boston against Ono for copyright infringement. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for April 30.

According to court documents, World Wide said it bought 24 original videotapes and their copyrights in 2000 from Anthony Cox, Ono's husband before her marriage to Lennon in 1969.

Cox shot the footage at Lennon's estate in England for a documentary he planned titled "Portrait."

The footage, recorded from Feb. 8 to 11, 1970, shows Lennon composing two hits, "Remember" and "Mind Games," along with a candid discussion of his drug use and scenes that World Wide describes as "intimate and no-holds-barred."

World Wide asserts that shortly after purchasing the videotapes, along with 10 copies, they were stolen in 2000. The company filed a separate civil suit a year later against a New Hampshire man who agreed to return the copies and locate the originals, court documents show.

The original videotapes are now held by Ono, whose lawyers claim in a countersuit that she purchased them legally from World Wide through a Florida man, who has been named as a defendant in the Massachusetts company's suit.

"The decision that should be made in the case is who in fact does have the copyright," Joseph Doyle, World Wide's lawyer, said in a telephone interview. "We're saying that we legitimately own the copyright to this film."

Jonathan Albano, Ono's lawyer in Boston, declined to comment on the case.

Reuters/Nielsen

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