

European 60s

A Hard Day's Night 1964

Friday, June 6 - Thursday, June 12, 2008



Film Information

Directed by
Richard Lester

Language
English

Running Time
87 minutes

Film Notes

Richard Lester was working in British television in the late 1950s when he took a call from a famous fan whose interest would change his life and, indirectly, make possible the endless joy that is A HARD DAY'S NIGHT. Actor Peter Sellers was so impressed by Lester that he bought a 16mm camera just so the two could collaborate on a project. The result, an 11-minute short film titled THE RUNNING JUMPING & STANDING STILL FILM (1960), made for just a couple hundred bucks, wound up earning an Oscar nomination and opened doors for Lester through which the Fab Four would soon pass.

It's said that A HARD DAY'S NIGHT was made at the "height" of the Beatles' popularity, but that's not *quite* true. In fact, the Beatles were still very much on a happy, upward surge that would reach stratospheric (some might say religious) proportions before beginning a kickback that by decade's end brought about a nasty breakup and another decade later the murder of John Lennon. Part of the joy in A HARD DAY'S NIGHT is that it came to being when it did, not so much a reaction to the group's "moment" as a contribution to it. United Artists, the company behind the film, hardly saw a Beatles movie as the no-brainer that would seem obvious to us hindsighters today. When production began, what mattered most to UA was that they have a summer release on budget

(which was relatively tight) and on time (finished in just over a month). And, believe it or not, even with more than 70 million people tuning in to watch the Beatles on Ed Sullivan, many stateside observers in 1964 still considered the British invaders a flash-in-the-pan.

So into this very particular, culture-shifting moment came Lester (and screenwriter Alun Owen), who complimented the world's most innovative band with a film of its own wonderful innovations. Inspired by French directors like Francois Truffaut, Jean-Luc Godard, and Jaques Tati, Lester produced an irreverent, documentary-like, "day in the life" film full of stylistic choices so influential as to be commonplace today. When MTV was born in the early 1980s, its pioneers sent Lester a note calling him "the spiritual father" of the new station. This is what they meant.

—Casey



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“What would you call that
hairstyle you’re wearing?”

“Arthur.”

More Information

Screenplay by
Alun Owen

Featuring
John Lennon
Paul McCartney
George Harrison
Ringo Starr

Cinematography by
Gilbert Taylor

Original Music by
The Beatles

Film Editing by
John Jympson

Country of Origin
UK

“Film is a fantasy always masquerading as reality. We were choosing bits of a kind of reality; their life was pretty unreal, so armed with the fact that it is Beatle-reality and that you’re being screamed at from morning, noon, to night, one was representing the mood and the feel of some of the way their life had become. They were prisoners of their own success. They were being pushed into cars, surrounded by people telling them what to do, and suddenly they break out of low rooms and low ceilings and go play in a field. That was the structure and the spine on which we wrote the film, and that’s their reality. But all film is fantasy.”

—Richard Lester

Also Recommended

Help! 1965 (Dir. Lester)
Don’t Look Back 1967 (Dir. Pennebaker)
I’m Not There 2007 (Dir. Haynes)