



**IN PERSON & PREVIEWS**

## **Life Moves Pretty Fast – The John Hughes Mixtapes Launch: Ferris Bueller’s Day Off**

*Please note, the discussion will take place before the screening. The panel will feature music supervisor (for John Hughes) Tarquin Gotch; journalist and 80s film enthusiast Hadley Freeman; musician, composer and member of The Dream Academy Nick Laird-Clowes. The event will be hosted by writer and broadcaster Matt Everitt.*

Judd Nelson marching across a playing field to Simple Minds’ ‘Don’t You (Forget About Me)’ in *The Breakfast Club* (1985); Molly Ringwald and Andrew McCarthy getting together at *Pretty in Pink*’s prom to OMD’s ‘If You Leave’; Matthew Broderick singing ‘Danke Schoen’ on a float in *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* (both 1986). Some directors craft indelible images, some film unforgettable dialogue. But if no one would claim John Hughes as a visual poet, his 1980s filmography delivers, time and again, narrative crescendos in which the moment and its music are so right for each other that they become more than the sum of their parts.

‘His knowledge of music was incredible,’ recalls Tarquin Gotch, the A&R and manager who, on a visit to the set of *Weird Science* (1985), fell into a day-long conversation with Hughes which led to several years working as his music supervisor. Hughes integrated music from the earliest stages: ‘He would write them into the script,’ says Gotch. Both Ringwald (*Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*, *Pretty in Pink*) and Anthony Michael Hall (*Sixteen Candles*, *The Breakfast Club*) received mixtapes from Hughes as sonic mood-boards for planned projects that never went into production. Fusing scene and song from the start gave Hughes a hotline to his audience, as the intensity of adolescent identification with pop music found itself reflected on screen. ‘He was showing teenagers’ inner lives,’ says Gotch, ‘talking to the outsiders he identified with and telling them they weren’t alone.’ It was a move that came naturally to Hughes, music having already served that purpose when he was a teenager himself. ‘He wasn’t a jock, he wasn’t a nerd; his ability to find cool music was what John used in high school himself to differentiate himself, to give himself a clique.’

‘He had such a keen ear,’ says Nick Laird-Clowes, whose cover of The Smiths’ ‘Please, Please, Please Let Me Get What I Want’, with his group The Dream Academy, scores Cameron Frye’s encounter with George Seurat’s *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte* (1884-86) at the Art Institute of Chicago – a brief oasis of calm in the midst of Ferris Bueller’s general misrule. ‘He was bold enough that he could use pop music – quite indie pop music – and not be frightened to throw out the score. And it wasn’t just to tell you when the film was set, or a marketing tie-in.’ Substituting songs for score also gave Hughes’s films a straightforward vérité: Jon Cryer’s Duckie, mourning unrequited love in *Pretty in Pink*, would most likely listen to The Smiths, not a string orchestra. ‘The long-suffering Ira Newborn [Hughes’s regular composer] described himself as “king of the stings” [short musical phrases], as that was all that was left of his scores after John had finished with them,’ Gotch tells

me. Hughes was hardly the first to raid jukeboxes for his soundtracks, but his selections were carefully designed to express something mere action could not, rather than provide period detail or a quick time-stamp. Compare a precursor such as *American Graffiti* (1973), George Lucas's classic snapshot of teen suburbia, which rounded up 1950s rock 'n' roll (including The Crests' 1958 hit '16 Candles') but with the more blandly comprehensive effect of a Greatest Hits or Best Of.

A forthcoming CD and vinyl set, *Life Moves Pretty Fast: The John Hughes Mixtapes*, a sprawling 74-track compilation, draws on his run of films from *Sixteen Candles* (1984) to *Uncle Buck* (1989). It celebrates his ability to utilise 80s pop, from its dream-home heartaches to its fight for the right to party, from mainstream to underground. And it effectively creates one new master mixtape by shuffling together songs from different films, out of their chronological order. This obscures but doesn't conceal Hughes satisfying a particular obsession: the Day-glo melodies and synthetic sensibilities of the era's British pop music. OMD, Spandau Ballet, Yello, Kajagoogoo, Nick Heyward and New Order, but also its rougher edges: Killing Joke, The Jesus and Mary Chain or The Psychedelic Furs. Gotch had to open an account with Rough Trade to feed Hughes's Anglophile habit. 'The best thing was when we were all in Los Angeles: we'd go round to his house, he'd have an edit of the new film and we'd literally needledrop [with different records], trying music against picture.' But finding exactly the right song was not always the end. 'You'd want to run round the house cheering, but then he'd say, "Now let's try something completely different," and put on some country or opera.'

Box-office success bought Hughes creative and financial control, and with it the ability not just to license but to commission his favourite artists. His hands-on approach had something of the original meaning of A&R, matching artist to repertoire. Simple Minds didn't write their most famous hit, 'Don't You (Forget About Me)', but were talked into covering the song, written by one of the film's composers. With *Pretty in Pink*, Hughes asked OMD for a short-order emergency rewrite. 'We came over to LA, armed with a two-inch tape of our song "Goddess of Love", which we'd written for the movie,' says Andy McCluskey, the group's singer, 'only to be informed by John, "I like the song but it doesn't make sense now, because we're reshooting the ending... Can you write another?" We worked until 3am writing "If You Leave". It was proper Tin Pan Alley songwriting to order.' After using This Mortal Coil's 'Song to the Siren' (a Tim Buckley cover) during production of *She's Having a Baby* (1988) for its climactic birth scene, Hughes was turned down flat by the group. Their replacement was Kate Bush, whose 'This Woman's Work', unusually, plays from start to finish. It's considered to be one of her greatest songs. 'Unbelievable. I found it so emotional,' says Nick Laird-Clowes. 'I couldn't believe it had been a commission.'

Hughes's approach pre-dated the 90s mixtape movies of Tarantino – a director who's said that he scripts films after, not before, compiling their soundtracks. But he also left an aesthetic strong enough to sustain considerable warping at the hands of later directors: Richard Kelly's *Donnie Darko* (2001), with its high-school setting and Anglophile soundtrack (Tears for Fears, Duran Duran, Echo & the Bunnymen), is essentially a Hughes movie pushed through a subversive wormhole. More recently, the way *Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse* (2018) creates a mixtape of newly commissioned work by hip-hop names that perfectly reflects Miles Morales's adolescent sound-world, written into the fabric of the screenplay, is deeply Hughes-ian. *Stranger*

*Things*, meanwhile, has mined similar Hughes-meets-Amblin effects across four series, giving Kate Bush a Number One in ‘Running up That Hill (A Deal with God)’ – 37 years after its release. ‘If *Stranger Things* wants to do the same for us,’ McCluskey laughs, ‘we’re available.’

**Sam Davies, *Sight and Sound*, December 2022**

***Life Moves Pretty Fast – The John Hughes Mixtapes* is released on Friday 11 November from Demon Music Group.**

#### **FERRIS BUELLER’S DAY OFF**

*Director:* John Hughes  
*Production Company:* Paramount Pictures Corporation  
*Executive Producer:* Michael Chinich  
*Producers:* John Hughes, Tom Jacobson  
*Associate Producer:* Jane Vickerilla  
*Production Associates:* Ramey Ward, Mauri Syd Gayton  
*Unit Production Manager:* Arne Schmidt  
*Location Manager:* Charles J. Newirth  
*Post-production Co-ordinator:* Bill Brown  
*Production Assistant:* Ronald W. Payne  
*2nd Unit Directors:* Bennie Dobbins, Kenny Ortega  
*1st Assistant Director:* Stephen Lim  
*2nd Assistant Directors:* Kenneth Collins, James R. Giovannetti Jr  
*2nd Unit Assistant Director (Chicago):* Linnea Wicklund  
*Casting:* Janet Hirshenson, Jane Jenkins  
*Casting (Chicago):* Jane Alderman, Shelley Andreas  
*Screenplay:* John Hughes  
*Director of Photography:* Tak Fujimoto  
*2nd Unit Photography (Chicago):* George Kohut  
*Camera Operator:* Jamie Anderson  
*Grip:* Tom Ramsey  
*Special Effects Co-ordinator:* John Frazier  
*Computer Animation/Displays:* Video Image  
*Editor:* Paul Hirsch  
*Production Designer:* John W. Corso  
*Set Designer:* Louis Mann  
*Set Decorator:* Jennifer Polito  
*Production Illustrator:* Carl Aldana  
*Costume Designer:* Marilyn Vance  
*Men’s Costume Supervisor:* Silvio Scarano  
*Women’s Costume Supervisors:* Barbara Bolticoff, Wingate Jones  
*Make-up:* Michael Germain  
*Titles/Opticals:* Pacific Title  
*Music:* Ira Newborn, Arthur Baker  
*Additional Music:* John Robie  
*Orchestrations:* Alf Clausen, Don Nemitz  
*Music Supervisor:* Tarquin Gotch  
*Supervising Music Editor:* Richard Stone  
*Supervising Music Editing:* Segue Music  
*Music Recording:* Gary Ladinsky  
*Choreography:* Kenny Ortega  
*Sound Recording:* James Alexander  
*Sound Re-recording:* Robert J. Litt, Elliot Tyson, Steve Maslow  
*Supervising Sound Editors:* Wylie Stateman, Lon E. Bender  
*Sound Effects Editors:* Terry Allen, Jim Cox, Randy Kelley, Dan Rich, Hugo Weng  
*Supervising ADR Editors:* Stan Gilbert, Joe Mayer  
*Stunt Co-ordinator:* Bennie Dobbins  
*Stunts:* Clay Boss, Tom Elliott, Marcia Holley, Rick Lefevour, Eddie Matthews, John Michael Stewart, Kay H. Whipple, Jerry Wills, Bob Yerkes  
*Technical Consultant:* Jeanne Weber  
*Dog Trainer:* Scott Hart

#### **Cast**

Matthew Broderick (*Ferris Bueller*)  
Alan Ruck (*Cameron Frye*)  
Mia Sara (*Sloane Peterson*)  
Jeffrey Jones (*Ed Rooney*)  
Jennifer Grey (*Jeanie Bueller*)  
Cindy Pickett (*Katie Bueller*)  
Lyman Ward (*Tom Bueller*)  
Edie McClurg (*school secretary*)  
Charlie Sheen (*Garth Volbeck*)  
Ben Stein (*economics teacher*)  
Del Close (*history teacher*)  
Virginia Capers (*Florence Sparrow*)  
Richard Edson (*garage attendant*)  
Larry Flash-Jenkins (*attendant’s sidekick*)  
Kristy Swanson, Lisa Bellard, Max Perlich, T. Scott Cofey (*economics students*)  
Eric Siefert, Jason Alderman, Joey Garfield, Kristin Graziano, Bridget McCarthy, Anne Ryan, Eric Edidin, Brendan Babar, Tiffany Chance (*Shermerites students*)  
Jonathan Schmock (*Chez Lui maître d’*)  
Tom Spratley (*men’s room attendant*)  
Dave Silvestri (*businessman*)  
Debra Montague (*girl in pizza joint*)  
Joey Viera (*pizza man*)  
Louis Anderson (*flower deliveryman*)  
Stephanie Blake (*singing nurse*)  
Robert McKibbon (*balloon man*)  
Paul Manzanero (*Pumpkin Head*)  
Miranda Whittle (*girl on trampoline*)  
Robert Kim (*police officer*)  
Dick Sollenberger (*politician at parade*)  
Bob Parkinson, Richard Rohrbough (*ministers at parade*)  
Edward Le Beau (*gym teacher*)  
Polly Noonan (*girl on bus*)  
Dee Dee Rescher (*bus driver*)  
Heidi Meyer, Lee Ann Marie, Annette Thurman, Gail Tangeros, Tricia Fastabend, Sue Cronin, Vlasta Krsek, The South Shore Drill Team, The Lockport High School Band (*parade participants*)  
Sunshine Parker (*bum on street*)\*

USA 1986

102 mins

\* Uncredited

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**Programme notes and credits compiled by the BFI Documentation Unit**

**Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email [prognotes@bfi.org.uk](mailto:prognotes@bfi.org.uk)**

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