



Events

A Hard Day's Night

A Hard Day's Night

Directed by: Richard Lester
Production Company: Proscenium Films Ltd
Produced by: Walter Shenson
Associate Producer: Denis O'Dell
Assistant Director: John D. Merriman
Continuity: Rita Davison
Original Screenplay by: Alun Owen
Director of Photography: Gilbert Taylor
Camera Operator: Derek V. Browne
Editor: John Jympson
Assistant Editor: Pamela Tomling
Art Director: Ray Simm
Costume Designer: Julie Harris
Beatles' Wardrobe: Dougie Millings & Son
Make-up: John O'Gorman
Hairdressing: Betty Glasov
Titles Design: Robert Freeman
Songs by: John Lennon, Paul McCartney
Musical Director: George Martin
Sound Recordists: H.L. Bird, Stephen Dalby
Sound Editor: Gordon Daniel
Studio: Twickenham Film Studios

uncredited

Production Company: United Artists
United Artists Production Executive: George 'Bud' Ornstein
Production Secretary: Beryl Harvey
2nd Assistant Directors: Barrie Melrose, Alex Carver-Hill
3rd Assistant Director: Bob Howard
Casting Director: Irene Lamb
2nd Camera Operator: Jack Atcheler
Camera Operator: Paul Wilson
Focus Puller: Roy Ford
Clapper Loader: Peter Ewens
Stills: Bert Cann
2nd Assistant Editor: Roy Benson
Assistant Art Director: George Lack
Draughtsman: William Alexander
Sound Camera Operator: Mike Silverlock
Boom Operator: Don Wortham
Boom Assistant: Frank Sloggett
Sound Editor: Jim Roddan
Publicity Director: Tony Howard

Cast:

John Lennon (*John*)
Paul McCartney (*Paul*)
George Harrison (*George*)
Ringo Starr (*Ringo*)
Wilfrid Brambell
(*John McCartney, Paul's grandfather*)
Norman Rossington (*Norm*)
John Junkin (*Shake*)
Deryck Guyler (*police sergeant*)
Anna Quayle (*Millie*)
Victor Spinetti (*Richard, television director*)
Richard Vernon (*pompous man on train*)
Eddie Malin (*hotel waiter*)
Robin Ray (*TV floor manager*)
Lionel Blair (*TV choreographer*)
Alison Seebohm (*Dolly, Simon's secretary*)
David Jaxon (*Charlie, young boy*)

uncredited

Pattie Boyd (*Jean, schoolgirl on train*)
Prue Berry (*schoolgirl on train*)
Terry Hooper (*casino croupier*)
Jeremy Lloyd (*club dancer*)
Michael Trubshawe (*club manager*)
Marianne Stone (*society reporter*)
Derek Nimmo (*Leslie Jackson*)
Dougie Millings (*tailor*)

+ intro by broadcaster Samira Ahmed

Shot in a documentary style inspired by the French New Wave, the Beatles' first feature film captured Britain at a moment of social transformation, with a portrayal of celebrity, camaraderie and media frenzy that still resonates today. To mark publication of her BFI Film Classic on *A Hard Day's Night*, author Samira Ahmed's introduction will explore how a film made to celebrate a pop phenomenon became an enduring cinematic classic.

This screening will be followed by a book signing in the BFI Southbank Foyer.

A Hard Day's Night falls into that category of films you can easily feel you've seen without seeing. The Beatles in drainpipe trousers, Chelsea boots and black and white, mop-topped and mob tailed, chased here, there and everywhere around Liverpool's Lime Street station – this is a sequence so often imitated, parodied and quoted that it fully merits that most overused of words, iconic. Other scenes wallpaper almost every Beatles documentary you'd care to mention: the group larking on a playing field, caught on film from a circling helicopter, or Ringo Starr on a strop, short-lived sabbatical from the group, drifting along a riverside in an oversized overcoat. And then, too, it's tempting to discount it as a cash-in and spin-off, a supplement to a music career that can only ever be a secondary work.

In fact the music in *A Hard Day's Night* came after the film, with Lennon and McCartney writing new material specifically for it. The film was titled and only then was the song written, when producer Walter Shenson decided they needed one more number with which to open and close. Shot in a matter of weeks in spring 1964, just after the group's February appearances on *The Ed Sullivan Show*, *A Hard Day's Night* was made under pressure, with the tidal wave of American popularity gathering behind them and a July release date looming in front. The result is an ingenious piece of sustained improvisation by director Richard Lester, screenwriter Alun Owen and the four Beatles, made on the fly and yet combining classic cinematic elements with a breezy irreverence that affected the way pop music performance is shot and edited to this day.

'The chase,' Alfred Hitchcock said in a 1950 interview, 'seems to me the final expression of the motion picture medium... I would say the chase is almost indigenous to movie technique as a whole.' And *A Hard Day's Night* could be subtitled 'Band on the Run': from the opening Lime Street scenes to its conclusion with the group racing to a helicopter (for a 'midnight matinee in Wolverhampton'), and in between John, Paul and George hunting the AWOL Ringo with packs of police on their heels. Its repeated use of the stage direction 'Exeunt, pursued by fans' echoes Gene Kelly's escape via Debbie Reynolds's car in *Singin' in the Rain*. But the element of clowning also taps in to currents from the earliest film comedies. Ringo's disconsolate wander alludes to Chaplin and Keaton, but it's not the only such moment: all four of The Beatles were surprisingly capable physical comedians. When a song features and the group isn't shown performing it, it usually soundtracks them in extended slapstick goofs – as when they stumble on to a fire escape, and after

Kenneth Haigh
(*Simon Marshall, shirt advertising man*)
Julian Holloway (*Adrian*)
Susan Whitman (*Susan*)
David Langton (*actor*)
Clare Kelly (*barmaid*)
John Bluthal (*car thief*)
Tina Williams (*Tina*)
Terry Brooks (*urchin*)
Phil Collins (*boy in audience*)
Bridget Armstrong
Brian Epstein
Rosemarie Frankland
Susan Bown
Ric Hutton
Hedger Wallace
Heather Bishop
Anne Clune
Paula Smyczok
Lavinia Lang
Martin Gadd
Philip Gadd
Andrea Brett
Peter Newton
Patricia Newton
Dani Sheridan
Edina Ronay
Roger Avon
Margaret Nolan
UK-USA 1964
88 mins
Digital

Become a BFI Member

Enjoy a great package of film benefits including priority booking at BFI Southbank and BFI Festivals. Join today at bfi.org.uk/join

Sight and Sound

Never miss an issue with **Sight and Sound**, the BFI's internationally renowned film magazine. Subscribe from just £25*

* Price based on a 6-month print subscription (UK only). More info:

sightandsoundsubs.bfi.org.uk/subscribe

**SIGHT
AND
SOUND**

BFI Player

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

a hectic dash down it (one almost as dizzying as the Eiffel Tower descent in *The Lavender Hill Mob*), they run wild on an empty playing field.

Yet *A Hard Day's Night* is predominantly forward-looking. Parallels with the *nouvelle vague* may be slightly overplayed, but they are unquestionably there, in its fleetness of foot, and faith in the simple equation of band + camera + wit = film. And it's there too in its impatience with perfection: for the happily amateur dance scene in Godard's *Bande à part* (released the same year), see George Harrison knocking over an amp on stage or losing a shoe boarding a helicopter. Lester's liberal use of handheld cameras, meanwhile, suffuses *A Hard Day's Night* with a kind of fugitive twitchiness, a subtle sense that anyone might just cut and run – even a cameraman.

Richard Lester and editor John Jympson arguably invented a new vocabulary for capturing stage performance, with multiple mobile cameras weaving in between the musicians. Stylistic tics to be seen in any given moment of present-day Glastonbury coverage can be seen coming in to focus for the first time here. Close-ups of Starr's foot on a kick-drum pedal; a shot down the gleaming strings on a guitar neck; the camera roaming behind Starr to gaze out through the band to the wall of teenage faces creating a wall of sound. (The soundtrack, remixed in 5.1 surround by Giles Martin, captures that sound in unnerving, unearthly detail.) Lester often shows us the multiple, unmixed camera feeds seen on monitors by the TV director (played by Victor Spinetti): it's a neat device which brings the mechanics of the medium to the fore and lets the viewer's eye skip freely from viewpoint to viewpoint. One can easily imagine George Harrison being riveted by such details, and that's one more legacy to be remembered when watching *A Hard Day's Night* – a gleam in the eye that would become Harrison's HandMade Films.

Sam Davies, *Sight and Sound*, August 2014