ROLAND REITER
The Beatles on Film.
Analysis of Movies, Documentaries,
Spoofs and Cartoons

[transcript]
The Beatles on Film - Part One: 1964-1965

A Hard Day's Night

Production History

Following the success of American pop musicals starring Bill Haley, Eddie Cochran and Elvis Presley, similar exploitation films had also become commonplace in British cinema by the mid-sixties. British film producers churned out numerous vehicles for British pop stars, such as Tommy Steele and Cliff Richard, to capitalize on the emerging teenage market. Most of these movies were low-budget productions, designed to exploit the market by generating maximum profits for the lowest possible investment (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 11). As The Beatles had never liked any of the movies featuring their musical heroes, they wanted their film to be different from the formulaic contemporary pop movies. John Lennon points out that The Beatles did not want to participate in a stereotypical exploitation picture: “We'd made it clear to Brian [Epstein] that we weren't interested in one of those typical nobody-understands-our-music plots where the local dignitaries are trying to ban something as terrible as the Saturday Night Hop” (Carr 1996: 30). In fact, The Beatles had already turned down a movie offer before meeting Walter Shenson, who was reportedly the first producer to show genuine interest in The Beatles as performers.¹

Producer Walter Shenson consulted director Richard Lester, who he had previously worked with on a movie called Mouse on the Moon in 1963. To The Beatles, however, Lester was known as the director of The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film, which he had created with British comedy stars Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan in 1959. Paul McCartney says that “[w]hen Walter Shenson came up with the idea of Dick Lester to direct what became A Hard Day's Night, we were excited, for as far as we were concerned anyone connected with The Goon Show

¹ According to Paul McCartney, The Beatles had been offered a film called The Yellow Teddy Bears (vgl. Yule 1994: xi).
In their first movie: “I don’t think it ever occurred to us to ask The Beatles to play the Musketeers, to be anything but themselves” (A Hard Day’s Night 2002: DVD 2). In another interview Lester explains the reasons why this decision was made.

“It was the most logical thing to have four people who were not actors to play themselves in situations and conditions that were normal to them. They were used to doing press conferences, they were used to running from their fans, they were used to getting in and out of cars, they were used to being shouted at and pushed around. All we were asking them to do was to do what they normally did” (Soderbergh 2005).

Owen actually spent three days with The Beatles on tour in Dublin and in London in order to gain basic information for a script which was to portray an exaggerated day in the life of The Beatles. Paul McCartney remembers the way Owen worked with The Beatles:

“The journalist Michael Braun wrote a book, Love Me Do: The Beatles’ Progress, after he’d hung out with us, so this became the way to do it. When it came time to do Hard Day’s Night, we just applied the same idea. They’d hang with you and pick up the feel then they’d go away and write the story and they always wrote something cool because they’d got our sense of humour or they saw we were tongue in cheek. [...] So Alun came around with us and picked up all the little things like ‘He’s very clean, isn’t he?’ [...] And it eventually found its way into the film” (Miles 1997: 159).

After the basic idea of creating some sort of fictional documentary had been agreed upon, Alun Owen had complete freedom with the script (vgl. Harry 1985: 16). On November 1, 1963, the British music magazine New Musical Express already ran an article about The Beatles’ movie plans. At that point Owen had made up his mind about the way he wanted to present The Beatles in the movie: “I aim to create the story around 90 minutes of their own fantastic lives at the top of the pop music profession. But it will be fictional, despite the fact that the things which happen to them in the film are probably the sort of things that happen to them in reality. I aim to utilise their fantastic personalities and sense of humour” (Sutherland 21).

It has become part of official Beatles history that Ringo Starr suggested the title for the group’s first movie. Although it is quite possible that Starr had originally invented the phrase, it first appeared in John Lennon’s surreal short story “Sad Michael” (vgl. Lennon 1997: 29).
which was published before the movie title was agreed upon. Probably
Starr came up with the phrase “a hard day’s night” when Lennon was
writing the story, and Lennon, who admitted that he was sometimes inspi-
red by Ringo Starr’s absurd word creations and phrases, used it in the
story. 4

The Beatles began filming their first feature movie on March 2,
1964. Since the day their movie had been announced, the group had con-
quered the American market with their single “I Want to Hold Your
Hand”, which had reached the number one spot in the Billboard charts in
January 1964. Their visit to the United States in February 1964 had gen-
erated a mass hysteria that seemed to top even Elvis Presley’s effect on
teenage crowds in the late 1950s. Within weeks The Beatles had man-
aged to become the most popular entertainers in the western hemisphere.

While the movie had initially been designed for the British market, it
now became an important property for the American market as well. It
was thought to be the perfect vehicle to define and project each Beatle’s
role within the group and to promote and distribute The Beatles’ collec-
tive image. With A Hard Day’s Night, The Beatles were able to establish
and introduce their image to a worldwide audience. Consequently, the
way the band was to be portrayed in the film was being considered very
carefully by the producers as well as by The Beatles and their managen-
ment.

A Hard Day’s Night and The Beatles’ Image

Since The Beatles and their manager Brian Epstein had previously tried
to project an image of a homogeneous band without an actual leader, this
kind of group image had been the main reason why “the British and
American publics had only the vaguest notion of individual Beatles.
Their defining qualities, to most adult minds, were the identikit Mop-tops
and peculiar accent” (Du Noyer 2002: 74). At that point it became impor-
tant to the group as well as the management to introduce each individual
Beatle to the public. Consequently, newspapers and magazines began
publishing articles and features such as “Close-Up on a Beatle,” a series
of four articles in the New Musical Express, each concentrating on a par-
ticular Beatle. Also, solo activities by the group members were promoted
and the movie’s title, although he falsely refers to “Sad Michael” as poem

4 Some of the rejected titles reportedly were Beatlemania, Moving On, Travelling On, Let’s Go and Who Was That Little Old Man? (vgl. Miles 2001: 137).

5 Photographer Robert Freeman had actually taken some impressive black-
and-white pictures of John Coltrane. With these pictures he applied for a
job at The Beatles’ management. Brian Epstein and The Beatles liked his
work and commissioned him to photograph their second album cover.
THE BEATLES ON FILM

former assistant editor at the Melody Maker, remembers how The Beatles broke with the conventions of traditional music journalism in Britain.

"Started in 1928, the paper had a tradition for upholding 'good musicianship'. Pop singers who 'sang in tune', like Frank Sinatra, were often allowed to cross the line into the paper, but teenage pop had been treated with contempt, as if it had nothing to do with music. [...] The events of that year, and the infectious change in emphasis of the bestselling record charts towards new 'beat music', forced the paper to switch its policy and report the new sounds. [...] The worlds of jazz and adult music, which had grown too holy and insular, found themselves threatened not merely by great, energetic, self-made music led by the Beatles; in Lennon, above all, they faced an articulacy unheard of in popular music" (Coleman 1992: 291-293).

Photographer Robert Freeman, who had designed the innovative album cover for With the Beatles, was also consulted for A Hard Day's Night. He designed the album cover for the soundtrack LP as well as the movie's closing credits, where his 'polyphoto' images of the individual Beatles are fast-dissolved so that each Beatle morphs into one of his colleagues (vgl. Murray 2002: 116). The fact that he was asked to take photographs of The Beatles for A Hard Day's Night suggests that the group was indeed striving for a continuity of the black-and-white image they had established the year before.

Storyline and Aesthetics

Although many indoor-scenes for A Hard Day's Night were filmed at Twickenham Film Studios, London, the production team decided to shoot several scenes on authentic locations in order to achieve a sense of realism. Denis O'Dell, the movie's associate producer, points out that real locations were needed to convey the impression of a documentary: "Because we wanted the film to be made in a loose cinéma vérité style, it was vital to incorporate as many real locations as possible [...]" (Neaver-son/O'Dell 2002: 33). To achieve the desired effect of authenticity, whole sequences were shot at Paddington Station, on a train constantly going from London to Minehead, at the Les Ambassadeurs Club, at the Scala Theatre, at Marylebone Station, in Notting Hill Gate, at Thornbury Playing Fields, Islington, and in West Ealing.

Since The Beatles had not had experience in the field of acting, Alun Owen constructed their dialogues in a way that restricted their individual contributions to one-liners. Actually, this closely reflected The Beatles' natural talk at press conferences. As pointed out by Paul McCartney,

"[t]he more we told [Alun Owen], the more of us he'd get in it, which is always a good thing, it would just reflect back. We could play it easier, we could identify with it all easier, and this was our first film" (Miles 1997: 160). The fact that The Beatles were only asked to deliver short sentences was a crucial factor in enabling them to feature in a full-length film. It was probably the first time that a feature film starred four non-actors. In order to preserve the spontaneity of the dialogue, director Richard Lester often made use of two or three cameras at a time, a technique he had developed the year before.

"On every film I've made since It's Trad, Dad, I've always used at least two cameras simultaneously. I have never understood why it was not the way that films were made. I see no disadvantages, only phenomenal advantages both artistically and emotionally in terms of the relationship between the film company and its actors. To keep them fresh, to keep them from becoming bored with the actual process of shooting any movie which can often be very slow" (Carr 1996: 23).

In addition to the artistic advantages gained by this technique, using up to three cameras at a time enabled Richard Lester to shoot A Hard Day's Night in only eight weeks and to stick to the tight budget United Artists had provided for the movie. The whole production was achieved in a very short period of time. May and June were spent editing the movie and recording the soundtrack. When A Hard Day's Night premiered on 6 July, 1964, it had only taken four months from the first day of shooting the movie to presenting it in the theatre.

The movie's plot is rather simple; it basically revolves around The Beatles' adventures on the way to a television performance. In order to create conflict, Alun Owen invented the character of 'Paul's Grandfather,' a mean old man causing chaos. At the time of the movie's release United Artists published the following synopsis:

"Once upon a time there were four happy Liverpool lads called Paul, John, George and Ringo and they played their music all over the country. Now, when they'd finished playing in one place they'd run to the nearest railway station and go on to a new place to play some more of their music, usually pursued by hundreds of young ladies.

On the day of our story, John, George and Ringo get to the station and fight their way into the railway compartment where they meet up with Paul, who has a little old man with him, a very dear little old man. Anyway, who is he? The little old man is 'mixing' John McCartney, Paul's Grandfather [Wilfrid Brambell]. Grandfather is dedicated to the principle of divide and conquer. The mere sight of a nice friendly group of clean-cut lads like the Beatles brings him out in a rash of counterpoints.
Norm [Norman Rossington], the boys’ road manager, who is conducting a war of nerves with John, the group’s happy anarchist, collects Grandfather and together with Shake [John Junkin], the general dogsbody[, h]e retreats to the restaurant car for coffee, leaving the boys to settle in for their journey to London and a live television show. However, a well-established first-class ticket holder [Richard Vernon] drives the boys out of their carriage by being pompously officious, so they go and join Norm, Shake and Grandfather in the restaurant car.

By this time Grandfather has managed to get Norm and Shake at each other’s throats and Paul warns the others that this could be only the beginning. Sure enough, Grandfather has started a campaign of dissension that leads to frightening schoolgirls, a proposal of marriage to a chance acquaintance and general chaos culminating with Grandfather being locked in the luggage van where he and the boys complete their journey making music.

When the group arrives in London, they go to their hotel where Norm leaves them to sort out their fan mail. However, Grandfather has noticed that a certain amount of good-humoured banter is directed at Ringo. Here, thinks Grandfather, is the weak link in the chain. Instead of staying in the hotel the four boys sneak out to enjoy themselves at a twist club and Grandfather, trading his clothes for a waiter’s suit, heads straight for a gambling club, passing himself off as Lord John McCartney. Again the boys have to rescue him, much to the old man’s indignation.

The following day sees the boys plunged into the bustle of the television world. Press conferences, rehearsals, make-up, running from place to place, being shepherded by the harassed Norm and got at by the television show’s neurotic director [Victor Spinetti], and always in the background is Grandfather, interfering, disrupting and needling Ringo.

Only for a moment are the boys free. They can enjoy themselves playing in a large, open field, but even that doesn’t last. John, however, does make the most of every second, he is always for the here and now. Paul tries keeping things on an even keel and George has a blind doggedness that sees him through. But the strain begins to tell on Ringo.

Grandfather, of course, plays on this, pointing out the barrenness of Ringo’s life and finally goading him into walking out into the world outside of the group.

The other three boys go out searching for Ringo, leaving Norm to fume and the director to worry himself to near collapse at the possibility of no show. Meanwhile, Ringo has found the world outside not too friendly, and through a series of encounters and misunderstandings, gets himself arrested. He is taken to the station, where he meets up with Grandfather who has been taken into protective custody. Grandfather storms at the Police Sergeant [Deryck Guyler] and manages to escape, leaving Ringo behind in the police station.

He gets back to the television theatre and tells the boys who, pursued again, but this time by the police — go and rescue Ringo.

Finally they are able to do their show in front of a live audience.

The show does well but as soon as it is finished, again it is the mad dash on to the next plane for the next show. The past thirty-six hours have been a hard day’s night. The next thirty-six will be the same” (Gross 1990: 18-19).

The plot contains several themes that are developed as the movie progresses. One of the most dominant themes is the theme of escape. On the one hand, The Beatles are constantly trying to escape the hordes of screaming fans pursuing them throughout the movie. On the other hand, the theme is a direct part of the storyline, as Ringo Starr escapes from the band in order to reflect on his own identity. The theme of escape is combined with a sense of permanent movement, around which the narrative in A Hard Day’s Night is tightly structured (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 14). As pointed out by Alun Owen, “[t]hey are always on the move, usually from one box to another, hotels, cars, dressing rooms, but they know what they want [and] where they are going” (Harry 1985: 16).

**Themes and Styles**

The first sequence already establishes the predominant sense of movement and escape. To the sound of the title song “A Hard Day’s Night” The Beatles (without Paul) are shown as they are running from a mob of fans. John, George and Ringo are running along a pedestrian way, while a mass of people is chasing them. Ringo and George stumble and fall but get up again just in time not to be run over by their fans. They manage to get on a train that leaves the station as soon as The Beatles are aboard. The following scenes take place on the train, where The Beatles move from their compartment to the restaurant car and finally finish their journey performing their song “I Should Have Known Better” in the luggage car. In order to convey an air of authenticity, Richard Lester shot the train sequences on a real train constantly going from London to Minehead and back. Associate Producer Denis O’Dell confirms that it was important to Richard Lester to use a real train instead of back-projected images in a studio in order to evoke the flair of documentary: “I wanted to shoot these sequences on a genuine moving train, which pleased Richard who was glad to be working closely with someone who shared his vision and who was prepared to go to the extra distance to achieve the necessary effect. […] We had makeshift camera dollies specially built to fit the walkways and aisles of the train’s interior and a carriage fitted out with a power generator” (Neaverson/O’Dell 2002: 34).

In A Hard Day’s Night, The Beatles always seem to be on the run, or at least on the move. The theme of escape is, however, one of the dominant themes in all of The Beatles’ movies, except Let It Be. While the
need to escape from their fans was certainly a phenomenon based on The Beatles' real experiences, the focus on escape in The Beatles' movies in the context of the times they were produced, also allows a more general interpretation of The Beatles as representatives of a new generation escaping from the restraints of the traditional social system in Great Britain.


The way The Beatles deal with authority in A Hard Day's Night illustrates the change of social paradigms in Great Britain and introduces the theme of generation gap in a light-hearted manner. The character of Paul's Grandfather is an important factor in developing this theme throughout the movie. By contrasting Grandfather's mean ways with The Beatles' humorous and good-natured attitude, The Beatles become representatives of a new generation of humorous and decent young men, who have little in common with the war generation. Although this theme is often used in the genre of pop musicals, it is developed in a rather innovative way in A Hard Day's Night, as The Beatles counter the insults targeted at them by characters representing their parents' generation with their characteristic surreal sense of humor and sarcasm. In addition, with Paul's Grandfather being the interfering troublemaker, Owen achieves a reversal of the usual generation gap argument. While The Beatles are portrayed as rather decent and well-meaning young men, "the representative of the older generation in their midst is far less law abiding" (Murray/Rolston 2001: 35). While this approach would probably appeal to a large segment of The Beatles' young target audience, it also showed older viewers that The Beatles are funny and decent people. In 1964, this way of portraying the pop group caused a greater acceptance of The Beatles among viewers belonging to different generations (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 35). As pointed out by Bob Neaverson, A Hard Day's Night "helped to consolidate their appeal to a teenage audience.

Conversely, however, it also helped to develop and expand their appeal beyond that of contemporary youth [...]” (Neaverson 1997: 27). While The Beatles' music and the portrayal of their screen personae mainly attracted their younger fans, "the form and ideology of the film appealed more to the aesthetic tastes of an adult audience than any previous pop movie" (Neaverson 1997: 27).

Another main theme consists of the relations between image, identity, and reality. Basically, this theme mirrors The Beatles' playful attitude toward their own representation in the media, which they had developed at an early stage in their career. Lester and Owen engage in a subtle game concerning reality and fabricated image. Although Lester uses the formal characteristics typical of documentaries to establish a sense of reality and immediacy, the viewer is constantly reminded that A Hard Day's Night is actually a fictional movie, as The Beatles are repeatedly shown in short surreal sequences. Film scholar Bob Neaverson identifies the most dominant aesthetic influences coming from "a number of different genres, most notably drama-documentary and 'direct-cinema' documentary" (Neaverson 1997: 16). The use of real locations, hand-held cameras, and naturalistic lighting contribute to a sense of actuality which resembles the newsreel documentary material about the Beatles filmed at the time.

For a long time scholars and critics have neglected Albert and David Maysles' documentary What's Happening! The Beatles in the USA, which the two filmmakers produced during The Beatles' first U.S. visit. Although Richard Lester has apparently never commented on it, The Maysles brothers' film seems to have been a quite substantial influence in the way A Hard Day's Night was realized.

Albert and David Maysles had established a reputation as two of America's most adventurous direct cinema documentary film-makers when they received a call from Brian Epstein's management agency, asking them to capture The Beatles' arrival in the United States on film and to produce a behind-the-scenes documentary about the group's first trip to the United States (vgl. Geller 2002: 73). The Maysles had the opportunity to accompany and film The Beatles for the whole duration of their stay. In a 2003 interview, Albert Maysles explained that it was only possible to follow The Beatles' every move because he and his brother David owned modern equipment that allowed them to move easily: "That was at a time, fortunately, when my brother and I had already perfected the kind of instruments we needed. The camera that I could hold on my shoulder would be very quiet and the tape recorder [...] was so technically advanced that we could shoot without being connected with one another" (The First U.S. Visit 2003). The Maysles' direct cinema ap-
The Beatles on Film

proach with hand-held camera and natural lighting allows a credible and apparently authentic look at The Beatles as they prepare their performance at the Ed Sullivan Show and as they travel from New York to Washington. The camera follows The Beatles to their hotel rooms and even films them at a late-night party at a nightclub in New York. The way The Beatles are portrayed backstage, in a car, in their hotel rooms, on the train, at press receptions, and at the airport strikingly resembles several scenes in A Hard Day's Night. This is hardly surprising, however, as it was indeed Lester and Shenson's intention to create a fictional documentary based upon The Beatles' actual public lives.

The British television channel Granada Television already broadcast a hastily edited version of The Maysles brothers' film on February 12, 1964. The short documentary was called Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! - The Beatles in New York, and it was repeated the next day, when fans inundated Granada Television with requests (vgl. Miles 2001: 133). Although it was only a rough cut of the filmed material, its immediacy and the excitement it conveys probably inspired Lester to make some aesthetic decisions concerning his own portrayal of The Beatles.

In 2002, Albert Maysles explained how his film was kept from being released for decades: "The Granada deal was that we'd have the complete rights for the US and they'd have the complete rights for England. However, because of the English laws The Beatles never signed release forms. Our film was finished, Richard Lester went and saw our film and ... that's all I'm prepared to say" (Male 2002: 80). For years, the Maysles brothers' film was lost in The Beatles' archives. Finally, in 1994, Apple decided to release an edited version of the movie on DVD in the United States. Another ten years later, the film was repackaged again and saw its first worldwide release on DVD to commemorate the 40th anniversary of The Beatles' invasion of the United States. The anniversary received national attention in the U.S. and led to another revival of public interest in The Beatles, and the DVD release The First U.S. Visit even topped the Billboard DVD charts in February 2004.

Although it is quite certain that Lester and his team saw the Maysles' documentary on television, it must be noted that there were several other important reasons for the aesthetic decisions made by the producers of A Hard Day's Night. First of all, the basic idea of making a fake documentary about The Beatles already dictates certain aesthetic devices in order to make the movie credible. For instance, The Beatles always being on the move means that a hand-held camera is likely to be used to convey the immediacy of movement and a sense of realism. Second, Richard Lester has repeatedly stated that he has always admired the French New Wave cinema. The genre's most prominent exponents, Jean-Luc Godard and François Truffaut, wanted to achieve a realistic portrayal of life using black-and-white film stock, hand-held cameras, and naturalistic lighting (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 49). In addition, the genre of 'kitchen sink films' had been popularized in Great Britain. This was another genre concerned with the portrayal of realistic situations and everyday life. Prominent examples of kitchen sink dramas are the movies A Kind of Loving (1962) and This Sporting Life (1963). Considering the contemporary trend of realism in movies and Richard Lester's own background in making films, the cinematic means and devices for creating such immediate, realistic films were certainly well known to Lester at the time A Hard Day's Night was made, and he became the first auteur to apply the aesthetic and techniques common to realist genres to the genre of musicals. Inspired by the realism of the 'nouvelle vague', Lester and his production team made use of real locations, such as the train, the train station and the theatre. Not only does this aesthetic decision work well in the tradition of direct cinema and nouvelle vague, but it also reflects a realistic situation in The Beatles' every day life as touring entertainers. While Albert Maysles likes to point out the fact that A Hard Day's Night includes a train ride similar to the one in his own documentary, it must be mentioned that The Beatles often travelled by train when they were on tour, especially in Europe. Therefore it is not necessarily true that Alun Owen and Richard Lester were inspired by the Maysles' portrayal of The Beatles' train ride from New York to Washington.

The influence of nouvelle vague films on A Hard Day's Night is, however, by no means restricted to the aesthetic dimension of the movie. It is also apparent in the development of plot and storyline as well as in the depiction of the individual characters. Although the movie does not completely lack conventional cause-effect chains, the narrative contains a number of sequences that do not contribute to the advancement of the plot. This kind of storytelling is very much in the tradition of the nouvelle vague, where characters are not depicted as goal-oriented but merely 'exist' in rather independent sequences (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 17). Unlike most of the contemporary British pop musicals, A Hard Day's Night did not merely imitate conventional narrative structure and film style of the Hollywood musical (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 15). In A Hard Day's Night, the group members are actually portrayed very much in the fashionable and contemporary way of the nouvelle vague, where characters often "drift aimlessly" and "engage in actions on the spur of the moment" (Bordwell/Thompson 1979). For instance, Ringo Starr's solo sequence is a perfect example of such New Wave aesthetic. In this famous sequence, Starr is shown as he walks wistfully along a river bank. He has escaped the television studio and has disguised himself in
order not to be recognized by hysterical fans. However, being by himself he appears to feel lonely and melancholic. When he encounters a young boy at the river bank, the two strike up a short conversation. As the boy leaves to play with three of his friends waiting for him by the river, Ringo realizes that he also needs to be with his three friends, the other Beatles, in order to be happy (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 44). The constellation of the boys clearly parallels The Beatles’ group structure, and the scene of the boys playing and running around the river bank echoes the “Can’t Buy Me Love” scene which allows The Beatles to break free on a soccer field. In his solo sequence, Starr resembles the protagonists of Truffaut’s and Godard’s early movies. The way Starr walks down the streets of London and along the river bank is quite similar to the way François Truffaut’s most famous character, Antoine Doinel, wanders through the streets of Paris in the films The 400 Blows (1959) and Bed & Board (1970).

Image and Identity

Ringo is the best-developed character in A Hard Day’s Night, as his solo sequence provides a more detailed depiction of his inner feelings and thoughts than the solo sequences of John and George. In addition, Ringo is also the central character of the movie, as the movie’s denouement depends on his return to the band at the end of A Hard Day’s Night. By providing this central role for Ringo Starr and allowing their drummer to become the key figure in their first feature film, The Beatles’ management compensated for the lack of attention given to Starr in the media at the time. It was important to The Beatles to be seen as a unit consisting of four equally important band members. While the group’s singers Lennon, McCartney, and Harrison usually had a more obvious presence on The Beatles’ records than Ringo Starr, Starr’s natural talent for acting allowed him to play the group’s main character in A Hard Day’s Night, Help!, Yellow Submarine and in The Beatles television series. In A Hard Day’s Night, Ringo is portrayed as a thoughtful and slightly melancholic character that feels neglected and is worried that nobody really loves him. Owen, who tried to use the real Beatles as basis for the characters, was apparently aware of the fact that The Beatles’ drummer had always enjoyed slightly less public attention than the others and, having joined the band last, he was still trying hard to be accepted as an equal band member, although The Beatles’ management intended to represent them as democratic and equal in public. In his autobiography, published al-ready in 1964, manager Brian Epstein hints at the fact that it had actually taken a while for Starr to be fully accepted by The Beatles and their staff.

“Ringo Starr, last to become a Beatle, came into the group not because I wanted him but because the boys did. To be completely honest, I was not at all keen to have him. I thought his drumming rather loud and his appearance unimpressive and I could not see why he was important to the Beatles. But again I trusted their instincts and I am grateful now. He has become an excellent Beatle and a devoted friend. He is warm and wry-witted, a good drummer, and I like him enormously. He is a very uncomplicated, very nice young man” (Epstein 1998: 164-165).

Some facts in the Beatles’ history suggest that Starr’s alter ego in the movie was certainly based upon his own characteristics: At Starr’s first recording session with The Beatles, George Martin replaced him with a session drummer because he had been disappointed by Starr’s predecessor Pete Best (vgl. Martin/Hornsby 1994: 123). Starr felt very insulted and reportedly never forgave George Martin. According to Martin, Starr still brings up the topic every time they meet (vgl. Beatles Anthology 2003: DVD 1). In 1968, Ringo Starr was the first Beatle to temporarily leave the band during The Beatles’ recording sessions for their double album The Beatles. In the band’s official autobiography, The Beatles Anthology, he explains that he felt unloved and did not think he was a good drummer anymore. Only after the other Beatles had assured him that he was ‘the best drummer in the world’ he returned to the group (vgl. Anthology 2003: DVD 4). It seems as though Starr did actually feel neglected by his band-mates at times, and that he was treated like an outsider by some members of The Beatles’ staff. Apparently, Owen realized Starr’s unique position in the band and designed the character traits of Starr’s movie persona by exaggerating some of Ringo Starr’s actual characteristics.

Throughout the film, the theme of image and identity is explored in various ways. Each individual Beatle features in a solo-sequence, in which his screen persona finds or defines his own image and identity, except for Paul McCartney, whose solo sequence was cut from the film. By providing a starring scene to John, George, and Ringo, it was possible to introduce them as individuals. What is more, by highlighting each Beatle’s individuality, “the film offers its audience a range of personalities with which to empathise” (Murray/Rolston 2001: 31).

While Ringo Starr’s key role in the film projected a rather many-sided image of the drummer, the characterizations of his band-mates are considerably more stereotyped. John Lennon is portrayed as a sharp-witted cynic and rebel, continuously provoking Norm, The Beatles’ man-
THE BEATLES ON FILM

PART ONE: 1964-1965

Takuma, the character of John would “rather be cracking dirty jokes or chatting up school girls than discussing anything serious with the management. [...] His comic antics and surreal behaviour usually have an undermining effect on the older characters and authority figures in the film” (Murray/Rolston 2001: 32). Besides the manager Norm, also the gentleman on the train and the television director are on the receiving end of John’s relentless sarcasm. His solo sequence features a dialogue with an actress called Millie who is not sure whether John is who she thinks he is. The sequence quite cleverly reflects the movie’s theme of real identity and public image, as John and the actress engage in a short conversation about John’s identity.

“[Millie:] Hello.
[John:] Hello!
[Millie:] Wait a minute – don’t tell me...
[John:] No, I’m not.
[Millie:] Oh, you are.
[John:] I’m not.
[Millie:] Oh, you are. I know you are.
[John:] I’m not. No.
[Millie:] You look just like him.
[John:] Do I? You’re the first one that’s said that ever.
[Millie:] Yes, you do. Look.
[John (looking in a mirror):] No, my eyes are lighter.
[...]
[Millie:] Oh, yes. Your nose is, very.
[John:] Me nose. Is it?
[Millie:] Well, I would have said so.
[John:] Oh, you know him better, though.
[Millie:] I do not. He’s only a casual acquaintance.
[John:] That’s what you say.
[Millie:] What have you heard?
[John:] It’s all over the place
[Millie:] Is it? Is it really?
[John:] Mmm, but I wouldn’t have it. I stuck up for you.
[Millie:] I knew I could rely on you.
[John:] Thanks.
[Millie (putting on glasses):] You don’t look like him at all.
[John (turning away, off):] She looks more like him than I do.”

(A Hard Day’s Night 2002)

When Owen was writing the screenplay, he was certainly aware that the movie would serve as a vehicle to convey The Beatles’ individual images. Having witnessed The Beatles’ rather playful attitude toward their public image, Owen included Lennon’s solo sequence as some sort of reflection on the movie’s theme of image and identity on a slightly surreal level. Out of nowhere the character of Millie appears backstage at The Beatles’ rehearsal for a television show. She stops John, convinced she knows his identity. When John denies being ‘him,’ the woman is struck by ‘their’ resemblance. Millie and John even examine John’s reflection – his image – in the mirror. Finally, when Millie ends the dialogue by pointing out that John does not “look like him at all,” John appears to be very insulted and turns away. The dialogue works as a direct reference to the relationship between public image and real identity. Millie cannot see a difference between John and his image at first. When John insists that he is not ‘him,’ she believes that they are at least quite similar. Only when she puts on her glasses to take a very close look at John, she realizes that there is no resemblance between John and his image. While the dialogue is taking place, actors in full costume rush about in the background, supporting the movie’s game with masked identities.

Throughout A Hard Day’s Night John is repeatedly provoking Norm, The Beatles’ manager in the movie. Consequently, Norm, who is played by actor Norman Rossington, threatens to tell the ‘truth’ about John. Interestingly, The Beatles’ real manager Brian Epstein had actually experienced similar harassments from John Lennon, as depicted in his autobiography.

“None of the Beatles suffer fools gladly. John suffers them not at all and can be very acid, even cruel, if he is goaded. [...] Sometimes he has been abominably rude to me. I remember once attending a recording session at EMI Studios in St. John’s Wood. The Beatles were on the studio floor and I was with their recording manager, George Martin, in the control room. The intercom was on and I remarked that there was some sort of flaw in Paul’s voice in the number “Till There Was You.” John heard it and bellowed back: “We’ll make the records. You just go on counting your percentages.” And he meant it. I was terribly annoyed and hurt because it was in front of the recording staff and the rest of the Beatles” (Epstein 1998: 164).

Owen was apparently aware of Lennon’s tendency to provoke Brian Epstein and bases the conflicting relationship between John and Norm upon the actual situation between Lennon and Epstein.

Rolsten and Murray insist that “[t]he film subtly highlights the fact that the Beatles’ public personae are a creation, quite detached from their actual personalities. The film, too, is at heart a piece of Beatles merchandising, rather than ‘the truth’” (Murray/Rolston 2001: 41). Although there can be no doubt as to the artificiality of The Beatles’ public personae in general, the distinction between reality and image is quite blurred.
in *A Hard Day’s Night*. On the one hand, the movie is realized in a way to evoke the sense of realism because of its documentary-like aesthetics. What is more, not only do The Beatles play a band called The Beatles, but also the names of the other characters partially resemble the actors’ real names. All of these facts support the notion of *A Hard Day’s Night* being a mere merchandising vehicle designed to deceive a juvenile audience into believing the artificial public image projected by the movie. On the other hand, the surreal moments as well as the meta-textual reflections on image and identity are used in a way to suggest that what is presented in the movie is certainly not the truth. The last sequence shows The Beatles ascending to the sky by helicopter, and they cast to the ground the publicity photographs Paul’s Grandfather had wanted to sell to the fans. It indeed seems as though The Beatles symbolically discard their public personae by throwing away the publicity images featuring the group members posing happily and in a perfectly acceptable way, as well as the fake-autographs designed by Paul’s Grandfather (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 41).

This rejection of public images is also the main focus in George Harrison’s solo sequence, which takes place in a fashion editor’s office. When George walks into the office, he is mistaken for “a good type, a real one,” that is, someone in the style of The Beatles. As they directly confront him, the fashion professionals cannot tell George from his image. “To the characters in the film, The Beatles’ fabricated images are more real than the actual Beatles” (Murray/Rolston 2001: 40). Actually, the fashion editor in the office wants to transform George into a role model for ‘teenage consumers.’ George shocks the editor when he expresses his contempt for other teenage idols that have been ‘created’ by the editor’s agency. George discards these idols’ artificiality and emphasizes the fact how terribly ridiculous he and his friends find such role models, because they are often completely out of touch with reality. The way George Harrison confronts the fashion designer with his honest opinion supports The Beatles’ image of credible young men who break showbusiness-conventions insofar as they are apparently ‘authentic’ instead of glamorous and superficial.

Again, Brian Epstein’s description of George Harrison supports the public image projected by *A Hard Day’s Night*.

“George is remarkably easy to be with. [...] George is the business Beatle. He is curious about money and wants to know how much is coming in and how and what best to do with it to make it work. [...] Strangers find him an easy conversationalist because he is a good listener and shows a genuine interest in the outside world.

Virtually, if Paul has the glamour, John the command, Ringo the little man’s quaintness, George with his slow, wide, crooked smile is the boy next door” (Epstein 1998: 166-167).

The description of George Harrison provided by Epstein in his autobiography is quite adequate in relation to *A Hard Day’s Night*. In his solo scene, George Harrison is actually portrayed as very aware of business decisions and mechanisms, while he also appears to be the most easy-going of the four throughout the movie.

Considering contemporary press reports, television appearances, radio shows, and press conferences, the individual Beatles’ public image, which was based upon some of their actual character traits, is presented consistently in a variety of media. The only exception is the portrayal of Paul McCartney in *A Hard Day’s Night*, which did quite awkwardly not support the high profile he generally had in the media at the time. In *A Hard Day’s Night*, Paul McCartney comes across as the least ‘natural’ Beatle. According to Richard Lester, this is probably because McCartney was very much interested in theatre at the time and constantly went to performances with his girlfriend, actress Jane Asher. Therefore, he might have been trying to act more theatrically than the other Beatles (vgl. Murray 2002: 116). It is quite possible that McCartney’s theatrical approach to acting resulted in his solo sequence being cut from the film. In interviews Lester usually claims that the scene simply did not work very well in the finished film. However, leaving it out inevitably led to a rather flat portrayal of Paul McCartney’s screen ego. While he was regarded as the ‘cute one’ among The Beatles, *A Hard Day’s Night* did nothing to expand or improve McCartney’s public image. John Lennon, George Harrison, and especially Ringo Starr’s screen egos were much more developed than Paul McCartney’s character. As they were also portrayed in a rather stereotyped way, certain qualities could now easily be attributed to them, while McCartney’s most important characteristic in *A Hard Day’s Night* apparently was to look good. However, while Paul McCartney’s performance in *A Hard Day’s Night* did not prove adequate to his actual role in The Beatles, he developed a more multi-faceted image in subsequent years. McCartney has since designed one of the most complex public images in the music business. His varied activities ranging from experimental music to children’s cartoons – have led to conflicting portrayals in the mass media, which sometimes give the impression that Paul McCartney is actually several different artists. In 1964, Epstein already hinted at Paul McCartney’s multi-faceted character:
“Paul is temperamental and moody and difficult to deal with, but I know him very well and he me. [...] But he has enormous talent and inside he has a great tenderness and great feeling which are sometimes concealed by an angry exterior. I believe that he is the most obviously charming Beatle with strangers, autograph hunters, fans, and other artists. He has a magnificent smile and an eagerness both of which he uses, not for effect, but because he knows they are assets which will bring happiness to those around him. Paul is very much a world star, very musical, with a voice more melodic than John’s and therefore more commercially acceptable” (Epstein 1998: 160-161).

The portrayal of The Beatles in *A Hard Day’s Night* is designed to evoke an authentic and realistic impression. This is achieved by aesthetic devices typical of realist genres such as the documentary or cinéma vérité. On the level of storyline, however, reality is left behind as soon as the fictional character of Paul’s Grandfather appears. First of all, Wilfrid Brambell, the actor portraying Paul’s Grandfather, was a prolific actor widely known by British television audiences for his role as Albert Steptoe in the television show *Steptoe and Son*. In the series, Albert Steptoe’s son often calls his father a ‘dirty old man,’ which resulted in a running joke in *A Hard Day’s Night*, where The Beatles repeatedly point out that Paul’s Grandfather is a ‘very clean old man.’ While this remark works quite well on the level of surrealism projected by the film, it is also a clever in-joke to British audiences familiar with Brambell’s popular television series. Although The Beatles declare Paul’s Grandfather to be a clean old man, he is the character causing most of the unpleasant situations for the group. Grandfather is introduced by Paul as a ‘king mixer’ and stirs up dissent and anxiety within the ranks of the band, and hence instigates the dramatic situations in the film. For instance, he uses Ringo’s invitation to enter a casino, where the band finally finds him and drags him away; he creates a running feud between the TV director and the band; he persuades Ringo to go ‘parading’ on the streets of London rather than sitting in a TV studio (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 35). Therefore, Paul’s Grandfather fulfils the dramatic need to instigate conflicts to advance the movie’s plot.

**Performance Scenes**

As pointed out above, *A Hard Day’s Night* features performances of songs The Beatles wrote and recorded specifically for their first movie. Bob Neaverson correctly states that “prior to *A Hard Day’s Night*, the majority of British and US pop musicals had relied upon the long-established tradition of song performance derived from the classical Hollywood musical” (Neaverson 2000: 154). Therefore, musical sequences in pop movies were generally based around the presentation of lip-synched performances of songs by the star, which essentially attempted to create and convey the illusion of actual diegetic performance. Previous stars such as Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard would perform their songs to a musical backing which was usually provided by a band seen on the screen. Sometimes these songs would serve some narrative purpose, expressing the performer’s inner feelings or emphasizing a certain situation in the narrative (vgl. Murray/Rolston 2001: 39). In *A Hard Day’s Night*, The Beatles’ performances are not used to merely illustrate the narrative. Instead, Lester introduces a variety of innovations to highlight The Beatles’ performance and to visualize the songs. For instance, thirteen minutes into the film, The Beatles, who are still on the train to London, suddenly break into a performance of their song “I Should Have Known Better.” In this sequence, scenes of The Beatles performing “I Should Have Known Better” are inter-cut with scenes showing them playing cards in the same setting. In this sequence, Lester broke with the conventions of traditional musicals and pop musicals, as it was the first instance of a song performance in a musical that is not tied to the narrative in any way. What is more, by juxtaposing clips of a performance with seemingly arbitrary footage of the performers, Lester pioneered the field of modern music video, the main task of which is to illustrate popular music in a way to promote the musician or the musical product. While it had been common to have bands mime to their music, pop songs did not have to be tied to performance in movies anymore after *A Hard Day’s Night*.

“I Should Have Known Better” is also another example of the director’s intention of creating something more than a fictional documentary, as it contains elements pioneering the non-diegetic level of modern music videos. It is not the only sequence in *A Hard Day’s Night* where the film takes a non-conformist attitude to both time and space. Richard Lester explains that he intended to introduce the audience to the surrealistic dimension of *A Hard Day’s Night* by careful preparation of the scenes.

“It was always clear that if you’re going to play games with time and space for music, you need to warm the audience of its coming. A perfect example is the performance, on the train, in the baggage cage when The Beatles suddenly switch from playing cards to singing “I Should Have Known Better.” Three or four minutes before that sequence, there’s this scene where, first, The Beatles are in the carriage and then suddenly there’s this quick shot of them outside the carriage, running and cycling and banging on the window to be let in. It’s just a little thing to let the audience know that all is not just documentary” (Carr 1996: 31).
Following their disagreement with a conservative gentleman in the train compartment, The Beatles suddenly appear outside the moving train, pulling faces and taunting him with the schoolboy cliché, “Hey, Mister, can we have our ball back?” (Neaverson 1997: 18). After this surreal interlude, The Beatles perform “I Should Have Known Better,” and the audience is now prepared for the unconventional way this scene is edited.

The sequence featuring “I Should Have Known Better” was groundbreaking, as it introduced a new way of presenting popular music on the movie screen. However, the way Richard Lester illustrated The Beatles’ song “Can’t Buy Me Love” was even more revolutionary in mainstream cinema. In the narrative, “Can’t Buy Me Love” marks the point when The Beatles manage to break free from the confines of their celebrity, if only for a short while. They are portrayed running and jumping around in a playing field, accompanied by their own hit single “Can’t Buy Me Love”. Some of the footage was shot from a helicopter, and the shaky pictures filmed by Gilbert Taylor using a hand-held camera show The Beatles from above as they enjoy their escape from stardom on a soccer field. In his autobiography, associate producer Denis O’Dell explains how Richard Lester managed to turn financial restrictions into stylistic innovations in this particular sequence.

“When we were doing the aerial shots from the helicopter, we realized that there would be a problem with camera shake, but we didn’t have the time or the money to obtain gyroscopic stabilization equipment to overcome this. Rather than abandon the shooting, Richard told Gil Taylor to shoot on regardless. In the final edited version the camera shake works beautifully to echo the excitement of the soundtrack song and adds a new and experimental dimension to the movie as a whole” (Neaverson/O’Dell 2002: 32-33).

With the sequences featuring “I Should Have Known Better” and “Can’t Buy Me Love,” A Hard Day’s Night was arguably the first film of its genre to fully realize the illustrative potential of pop music. As explained by Neaverson, “the ‘Can’t Buy Me Love’ sequence [...] broke entirely with conventional approaches and in the process freed the musical from its traditional generic slavery” (Neaverson 2000: 154). The pop song works in a similar manner to conventional incidental music, “as an abstract entity capable of punctuating action which is not performance-oriented” (Neaverson 1997: 19). Therefore, the sequence conveyed and supported the emotion inherent in The Beatles’ song more adequately than a mere performance segment would probably have done.

While the footage supporting The Beatles’ songs “I Should Have Known Better”, “Can’t Buy Me Love,” and the opening sequence featuring “A Hard Day’s Night” could be regarded as precursors of contemporary music videos,6 Lester’s direction of The Beatles’ concert at the end of the movie set standards concerning the way concert performances have been filmed ever since. For this particular film shoot, the La Scala Theater in Soho was converted to a television rehearsal studio. Lester used six cameras to film this performance sequence to shoot seventeen minutes of footage on only one day (vgl. Yule 1994: 14). The use of six cameras allowed Lester and Gilbert Taylor, the director of photography, to capture the interaction between The Beatles and their audience in an authentic way, as it was possible to juxtapose footage of The Beatles’ performance with footage showing the fans’ immediate, hysterical reactions in close-ups. This way of filming enabled Lester to edit the film in a dynamic way which reflected the excitement and hysteria surrounding The Beatles’ performance and conveyed The Beatles’ live impact to the movie screen.

Lester’s portrayal of The Beatles on stage differed greatly to the way performance clips had previously been produced. On TV as well as in movies, performances had usually been filmed statically from front and side, with most emphasis upon vocal performance rather than instrumentation, as the main diegetic source (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 19). The performances filmed at the Scala Theatre are fundamentally different from this conventional approach, as The Beatles are filmed from a multiplicity of angles – from above and behind. What makes the performance footage in A Hard Day’s Night special is the fact that Lester also provides a detailed view of the instrumentation, i.e. close-ups of George Harrison’s guitar and Ringo Starr’s drums. By focusing on the instruments, Lester contributed significantly to popularizing The Beatles’ gear, which became an important factor in the visual representation of the band until they stopped touring 1966. After seeing A Hard Day’s Night, The Beatles’ fans were definitely aware of Starr’s Ludwig drum kit, McCartney’s particular Höfner bass guitar, and Lennon and Harrison’s Rickenbacker guitars. In addition, Richard Lester also managed to convey the group’s typical stage attitude of playing their instruments and singing their songs without any apparent effort. This seemingly careless way of performing had become an important part of their stage show, and it distinguished them from other contemporary groups, such as The Who or The Rolling Stones, whose members seemed to be entirely engaged in the performance. The Beatles’ performances seemed rather detached in comparison – the band members evoked the impression as though they were actually thinking about something else than performing in front of an audience. Drehli Robnik provides an accurate description of how Les-

---

6 When MTV was launched in the mid-eighties, Richard Lester was actually awarded a birth certificate by MTV America.
ter visualized The Beatles’ live performance, and how it supported their apparently careless attitude toward performance.

"Was, so frag ich (mich), gibt es für Ringo in praktisch jeder Playback-Szene von A Hard Day's Night und Help! zu grinsen? Wohin schaut er da immer, während er so tut, als würde er trommeln, was sieht er da im Off der Szenerie [ ... ]? [...] Abseits von Kausalität und Intentionalität ist die harmlos wiederverwendbare Abgelenktheit nichtsdestotrotz bezeichnend und sinnwirksam im Rahmen einer Inszenierung, die das Musikmachen mit Nachdruck als etwas zeigt, das keiner sonderlichen Konzentration bedarf. Der Akt des Musikierens kommt bei Lester gänzlich dezentriert und anti-expressiv ins Bild, als eine beiläufige und im Halbschlaf ausgeführte Tätigkeit [ ... ]. Diese entspannte Distanz zum Einsatz von Stimmen und Instrumenten, aus der heraus nicht nur Ringo, sondern alle Fab Four mehr oder weniger zerstreut und zumeist in verschiedene Richtungen ins Off grinsen, unterscheidet sich wesentlich von jener existenziellen Phänomenologie des Musikmachers, welche die Visualisierung populärer Musik dominiert. Üblicherweise sieht man PopmusikerInnen (sofern sie singen oder Instrumente bedienen) in pathetischer Anspannung und Konzentration von Körper und Bewusstsein, und ihre Musik erscheint als kreativer Ausdruck, der sich in klarer Ausrichtung an ein anvisiertes Gegenüber (Sexualpartner, Rivale, Publikum... ) wendet. Das gilt sowohl für Musikfilme, TV-Auftritte und Clips im Gefolge der Beatles-Filme als auch für die ihnen vorangehenden Filme mit Rock ‘n’ Rollern wie Elvis, Johnny Halliday oder Peter Kraus" (Robnik 2000: 187-188).

The Impact of A Hard Day’s Night

According to journalist Roy Carr, United Artists executives from the United States tried to persuade Richard Lester “into wiping The Beatles’ voices from off the soundtrack and re-dubbing it with mid-Atlantic voices supplied by professional actors” (Carr 1996: 46). The American company apparently feared that the American public would not be able to understand The Beatles’ Liverpool ‘Scouse’ accent and would consequently not want to see the movie. Lester was reportedly furious about this suggestion and did not replace The Beatles’ voices. In Great Britain, The Beatles’ way of speaking had been an important factor in the Beatlemania phenomenon. The British public had become used to The Beatles’ particular way of talking and regarded it as an entertaining feature that was also exploited in the press. With their Liverpool accent, they were regarded as ‘four ordinary boys next door.’ As pointed out by Bob Neaverson, “[t]he group’s unselfconscious projection of themselves as ‘ordinary’ and largely ‘unaffected’ working-class boys further endeared them to the grassroots ‘underdog’ sympathies of the British public and popular press, who, in their patriotic stories of the group’s fame, wealth and international ‘conquests’, upheld them as symbols of the new social mobility and ‘classlessness’ of sixties Britain” (Neaverson 1997: 22). The way The Beatles’ artificially stuck to their Liverpool accents was actually a quite considerable factor in the way they contributed to undermining the British class system. Before The Beatles, artists had usually tried to avoid local dialects, because dialects had diminished their chances to succeed nationwide. Peter Brown, one of Brian Epstein’s personal assistants, explains that “[i]n London, the Liverpool accent was a sign that you were poor and badly educated. It was important if you were going to be successful that you get rid of it” (Wiener 1993: 148). As unusual as The Beatles’ vernacular initially was in British public life, it was considered to be even more peculiar in the United States and almost led to A Hard Day’s Night being re-dubbed. The following year, The Beatles actually had to comply with King Features’ proviso that they use an American actor for the voices of John Lennon and George Harrison in The Beatles cartoon series.

A Hard Day’s Night was the first production in film history already making profits before the actual movie was being distributed to the cinemas. This unique situation unfolded because of the high advance orders for The Beatles’ soundtrack LP of the same title. With orders of more than 2 million, The Beatles were already topping the charts before the album was actually released. Since United Artists had acquired the license to release the movie soundtrack, they had already earned back the £200,000 budget and gone into profit by the time the film prints were finally distributed to the theatres. If United Artists had not earned anything with the soundtrack album, they would still have been very pleased with the commercial success of the movie itself as, according to Roy Carr, “demand for A Hard Day’s Night resulted in the unprecedented worldwide order of between 1,500 and 1,800 prints of the movie. The United States alone accounted for 700 prints while the UK took a minimum of 110” (Carr 1996: 47). The movie simultaneously opened in 500 cinemas and earned $1.3 million in rentals during its first week. The movie brought in approximately $14 million on its initial release (vgl. Harry 1985: 27). Considering the low production costs, the movie became one of the most profitable films of all time. In addition to the movie’s commercial success, it also received two Academy Award nominations. Alun Owen was nominated for an Oscar for his script, while George Martin was nominated for best musical direction.

The world premiere of A Hard Day’s Night was celebrated at the London Pavilion on July 6, 1964. Princess Margaret and Lord Snowdon were also in attendance and posed with The Beatles for the press. The
presence of royalty added another touch of acceptance by the establishment to The Beatles’ reputation, making The Beatles the first pop group to be officially approved by establishment figures.

*A Hard Day's Night* was first shown on American television in 1968 and has received repeated screenings in the United States and in Great Britain. In Britain the film was broadcast over the Christmas period in 1970, 1971 and 1973. The first-ever television screening of *A Hard Day's Night* generated quite some public interest and was even responsible for the re-entry of the soundtrack album into the charts, where it peaked at number 30.

The Beatles’ image from 1964 was still projected to the world at a time when they had already completely changed their appearance and attitudes, i.e. when they had dissolved as a working unit. As The Beatles themselves had reduced their television appearances since the height of Beatlemania in 1964, the effect of reinforcing their anachronistic image in 1968 should not be underestimated. While they were still highly successful recording artists, they had estranged themselves to a considerable part of their target audience, as many of their fans did not share The Beatles’ views on drugs, culture and politics. Showing *A Hard Day's Night* on television in 1968 thus reminded the public of The Beatles and their image at the time they had reached the pinnacle of their popularity. Producer Walter Shenson, however, was not very pleased with the fact that The Beatles’ movies were shown on television: “I'm angry with United Artists. I don’t think they ever had the respect for the Beatles’ films that they deserve. They considered them exploitation films and let them go for stupid hundred dollar bookings and TV. They should have held them back” (Harry 1985: 27). In 1979, Walter Shenson regained control of the film. He re-released it in the theaters for a limited time in 1981 and licensed the release as a video cassette in 1984. In 2001, Miramax released *A Hard Day's Night* on DVD in the United States and in Great Britain. The Beatles themselves did not promote any of the re-releases. For instance, none of The Beatles took part in the 1994 television special *You Can't Do That: The Making of A Hard Day's Night*, hosted by Phil Collins, nor in the production of an extensive bonus DVD released in a package with the original film in 2001. Finally, in July 2004, Paul McCartney attended a private screening of *A Hard Day's Night*, in order to commemorate its 40th anniversary and to promote the movie’s worldwide release on DVD.