

# TRY SOME, BUY SOME - NEW RELEASES

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## THE BEATLES

### A Hard Day's Night 50th ANNIVERSARY RESTORATION

DVD (Second Sight 2NDVD3265)  
Blu-ray (Second Sight 2NDBR4035)

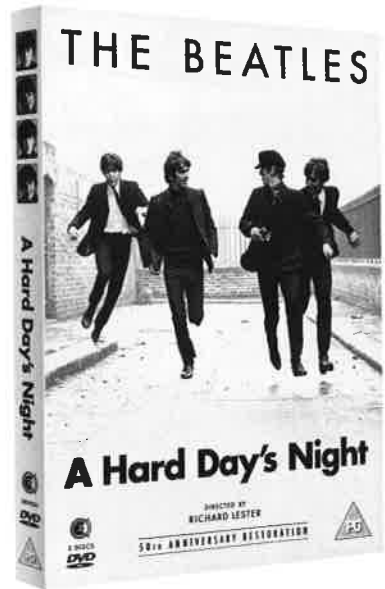
It's always a pleasure to watch A Hard Day's Night again and even though wise counsel had advised me that this newly restored version was best seen in a cinema with Surround Sound and a screen the size of the athletics field where our heroes frolic to 'Can't Buy Me Love', it looks pretty damn good on our wide-screen Apple Mac.

Sharper, with better contrast and a crisper soundtrack that can be heard in either mono or stereo, it looks better than ever before, retaining all its original charm with the additional virtue of state-of-the-art graphics, especially when the camera focuses close in on the faces of John, Paul, George and Ringo. We must be thankful that no one thought to ruin it with falsified colour as is so often the case with classic old films. In 1964 The Beatles were a band in black, white and grey; colour arrived later, turning them into a different band from the one in which all four looked alike, wore smart suits with velvet collars and pursued by screaming fans wherever they went.

Now rightly recognised as a milestone in British cinema, analysed and evaluated by learned film critics and scholars, A Hard Day's Night became the blueprint for the pop videos that would follow, via copy-cat acts like The Monkees, in the eighties when MTV opened up opportunities for rock and pop acts to express themselves visually as well as musically. Director Dick Lester, aided and abetted by John, Paul, George and Ringo, created a minor masterpiece, a film that shredded the tired, patronising star-vehicle format exemplified by all those turgid Elvis movies. His funny, irreverent, fast-paced 87 minutes of celluloid never flags, perfectly capturing the many reasons why The Beatles were so fabulously attractive to so many and why, fifty years later, they are still universally adored.

Since everyone reading this magazine can probably recite long passages of its script off by heart - 'Turn left at Greenland' indeed - it's surely unnecessary to dwell on the '48-hours-in-the-life-of' plot complicated by Paul's disruptive Irish grandfather played by Wilfrid 'Steptoe' Brambell. Nevertheless, I have always wondered why The Beatles were shepherded around by 'Norm' (Norman Rossington), without doubt temperamentally unsuited to the job, quite unable to control their high-spirited anarchy, while in real life their road manager was the unflappable and ever loyal Neil Aspinall, whose cool-headed diplomacy ensured his continued presence at the heart of The Beatles for 42 years. Then again, that might have detracted from the comedy element.

But I digress. Wonderful though the film is, of equal interest to fans is the second disc of special items, although much of it will be familiar to those who collect and retain everything they can. It's a generous selection nonetheless, the first of which is called "In Their Own Voices" and features interviews with The Beatles talking about the film and the experience of film-making, their voices overdubbed on to extracts from A Hard Day's Night, the odd outtake and additional footage from a Heathrow Airport arrival scene and a recording session at Abbey Road. Unusually, the voices of Paul, George and Ringo are taken from a different source than John - this is evident from the sound of the recordings - and John doesn't say much. Paul, George and Ringo's interviews were done for a United Artists promo record given out to DJs, while John's is taken from his interviews with US





journalist Larry Kane done during the August 1964 US tour. Whatever the sources, the 17 minutes makes for an interesting listen and I like hearing how George says they "didn't want to make a crummy film" and when he describes the group as "night owls" someone, probably Paul, hoots in the background.



Following the trailer for the original movie is David Leaf's hour-long film *The Making Of A Hard Day's Night* narrated by Phil Collins (who aged 12 was in the audience at La Scala) and originally released in 1994, its thirtieth anniversary. Featuring interviews with many who worked on the film, most notably Dick Lester and producer Walter Shenson, and musicians like Roger McGuinn and Peter Noone, it's a worthy documentary, enlightening and well worth watching. Collins makes the important point that the way in which The Beatles were presented, their characters (John = cheeky, Paul = charming, George = droll, Ringo = cuddly), is the way they have been perceived ever since and that nothing they ever did subsequently, no matter how much they tried, has ever really changed this. Lester reveals that United Artists executives in the US actually proposed that The Beatles voices be overdubbed by American actors whose accents would be more palatable to American audiences! Equally absurdly, producer Shenson had a hard time persuading his US distributors to make sufficient prints because they didn't think The Beatles would last. "They thought they might be forgotten in year," he says, somehow suppressing an incredulous smirk.

Following on from the Leaf documentary is "Things They Said Today", a series of interviews with behind-the-scenes personnel, including George Martin and Tony Barrow, which looked to me as if they could have been outtakes from the same documentary. "Picturewise", narrated by Rita Tushingham, is an appreciation of Richard Lester's work, including *Help!* and his other non-Beatle films and "Anatomy Of A Style" is a rather academic critique of Lester's work from a cinematography point of view.

Each of these pieces lasts about 30 minutes, as does the penultimate item, "The Road To A Hard Day's Night", a history of The Beatles up to the making of the movie narrated by Mark Lewisohn, which has been newly created to include here. Mark takes us from their births during WWII through Liverpool childhoods, the arrival of rock'n'roll into their lives, the Woolton Church Fete, Quarrymen, Hamburg, the Cavern, Brian Epstein's arrival, signing with EMI, Ringo replacing Pete Best, the advance of Beatlemania, 'Yeah Yeah Yeah' and the conquest of America, all accompanied by stills and footage and, as you would expect, he makes a fine tour guide, probably the best anywhere. In many respects Mark is reiterating the research he did for *Tune In*, his recent definitive biography of The Beatles up to the end of 1962, and we get a tantalising hint of what will follow in the next volume of his monumental work.

By this time, getting on for three hours, you could be forgiven for forgetting why you were watching in the first place so, just to remind us, the closing item is the trailer for the 50th Anniversary Edition of *A Hard Day's Night*. Then John, Paul, George and Ringo jump into their helicopter and off they fly, into the stratosphere where they have remained ever since.



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