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).

and *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* had to be the goods" (Yule 1994: xi).

Richard Lester had worked as a director of live television shows in the 1950s. Since the mid-fifties he had directed several shows featuring Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan, such as *Idiot Weekly* and *A Show Called Fred* (vgl. Yule 1994: 31). After his Academy Award nomination for *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film*, Lester had directed *It's Trad, Dad!*, a pop musical starring teenage idol Helen Shapiro, and *Mouse on the Moon* featuring Margaret Rutherford. His work with Sellers and Milligan is often considered to be the direct precursor to Monty Python's television series *Monty Python's Flying Circus* in the 1960s, since *Idiot Weekly*, *A Show Called Fred*, and *Son of Fred*, as well as *The Running, Jumping and Standing Still Film* shared a similar mode of presentation and the same surreal sense of humor that is now typically associated with Monty Python.

In 1955, Richard Lester had worked with Liverpool actor Alun Owen, when both appeared on *The Dick Lester Show* (vgl. Yule 1994: 37). Since then Owen had become a successful writer of plays and television productions. One of his most noted works was *No Trams on Lime Street*, a television play set in Liverpool. Lester contacted Owen when he learned that his first choice, Johnny Speight, was not available.[2] Owen turned out to be the perfect choice for this project, as he was familiar with the Liverpool area and understood the group's mentality and humor. He agreed to write the script for the movie, and on 30 October 1963, The Beatles' press agent Tony Barrow announced to the press that Alun Owen was going to work on a story for The Beatles' first feature film. Producer Walter Shenson explained the way Owen was to collaborate with the band: "Alun Owen is going to spend a lot of time with the boys and create characters for them that reflect their own. We want to put over their non-conformist, slightly anarchist characters. We want to present their almost Goon-like quality" (vgl. Carr 1996: 25).

While it was quite common in the genre of pop musicals for musicians like Elvis Presley and Cliff Richard to impersonate fictional characters, Richard Lester points out that it was clear from the beginning that The Beatles would play characters based upon their own public personae

2 Richard Lester had wanted Johnny Speight (*Til Death Do Us Part*) to write the screenplay for The Beatles' movie debut. As Speight was not available, he and Shenson suggested Alun Owen to Brian Epstein and The Beatles (vgl. Carr 1996: 30). Paul McCartney's official biographer claims, however, that, according to Walter Shenson, "it was Paul [McCartney] who suggested Alun Owen as the scriptwriter for The Beatles' first film" (Miles 1997: 158).

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),[3]

3 It should be noted that The Beatles' official biographer Hunter Davies was the first to have pointed out the connection between John Lennon's writing

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 inspired 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 conquered 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 generated a mass hysteria that seemed to top even Elvis Presley's effect on teenage crowds in the late 1950s. Within weeks The Beatles had managed 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' collective 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 management.

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 important 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 particular Beatle. Also, solo activities by the group members were promoted

and the movie's title, although he falsely refers to "Sad Michael" as poem (vgl. Davies 1969: 219).

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).

extensively for the first time while the movie was being filmed in March and April 1964. For instance, when John Lennon's first book *In His Own Write* was published in March, the event was covered by the mass media, and John Lennon became known and accepted as an artist in his own right. Richard Lester confirms that the creative team around The Beatles did indeed intend to create a certain kind of image for each Beatle: "When we started on *A Hard Day's Night* the importance of separating out The Beatles' individual personalities was something which we deliberately concentrated on […]" (Carr 1996: 44).

Even though it has been stated that financial reasons forced the production team to film *A Hard Day's Night* in black-and-white (vgl. Du Noyer 2002: 76), the decision to make a black-and-white movie seems also logical from an artistic point of view. First of all, Richard Lester and Gilbert Taylor, the director of photography, had previously only made black-and-white films. Second, The Beatles themselves had established a black-and-white image of themselves in the media since the release of their second LP *With The Beatles*. According to George Harrison, The Beatles had remembered the artistic look of the black-and-white photographs Astrid Kirchherr and Jürgen Vollmer had taken of the group in Hamburg and consequently had asked cover photographer Robert Freeman to try to create a similar artistic look for their second album cover (Beatles 2000: 107). The result was one of the iconic album covers of the time. Initially, EMI, The Beatles' record company, and Brian Epstein did not want to use the photograph, because they thought it was too radical. However, The Beatles and George Martin managed to convince the record company to use the photo (Du Noyer 2002: 66).

The cool, serious look The Beatles displayed at the time actually played a quite important role in the way the public and the media perceived the group. It contributed significantly to the group's credibility as artists and serious musicians. While similar album covers had previously only been used for jazz releases, it was probably the first time a pop group deliberately tried to establish a link between pop music and highbrow culture.[5] Their new image had quite some impact on the way they were perceived by the media and by the public, which is evidenced by the great interest serious music critics and artists suddenly took in the work of The Beatles. For instance, the classical music critic of *The Times* drew a now legendary comparison between John Lennon, Paul McCartney and Gustav Mahler (Du Noyer 2002: 66). Ray Coleman, the

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.

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 […]" (Neaverson/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, Isleworth, 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.

"Die Flucht ist nicht nur Bewegung im Raum der Stadt bzw. der Genre-Topik, sondern bringt darüber hinaus einen schöpferischen élan vital jenseits stabiler Organismen, Identitäten und Bedeutungen zur Wirkung. Dieses – sagen wir es ruhig – revolutionäre Moment der Flucht tritt in *A Hard Day's Night* nicht viel weniger deutlich zutage als in späteren Beatles-Filmen (im TV-Special *Magical Mystery Tour*, 1967 und in *Yellow Submarine*, 1968), in denen die Flucht zum psychedelischen Trip, zur Drogen-, Bus- und U-Boot-Reise in neue Empfindungswelten wird. Der Film verbindet die euphorische Gewissheit, dass die neue Jugendkultur alle Körper und Beziehungen in Leichtigkeit und Bewegung versetzen werde, mit Momenten des spielerischen Verteilungskampfes um sozialen Raum (Beatles vs. Polizei, Parkwächter, Spießer im Zugabteil)" (Robnik 2000: 188).

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-

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 personae 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-

ager in the film. As described by Rolston and Murray, 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 Hol-

lywood 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.

> "[I]t 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 confinements 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 contempo-

rary 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 frage 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 hartnäckig wiederkehrende 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 Musizierens kommt bei Lester gänzlich dezentriert und anti-expressiv ins Bild, als eine beiläufig 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 Musikmachens, 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 world wide 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.

HELP!

'Another Exploitation Picture': The Story of The Beatles' Second Movie

The worldwide success of *A Hard Day's Night* and The Beatles' continuing success as the world's most popular band encouraged United Artists to produce a second movie starring the Fab Four. The Beatles had actually signed a contract for three movies with United Artists, which suggests that they were indeed looking for a way to establish themselves as actors.

The Beatles' second movie was budgeted at £400,000, which, according to producer Walter Shenson, "still wasn't a lot of money in those days" (Gross 1990: 25), although it was twice the budget provided for The Beatles' first movie. As with *A Hard Day's Night*, the production company treated the movie as another exploitation picture. Screenwriter Marc Behm had handed in a script called *Eight Arms to Hold You* to Richard Lester via actor Peter Sellers. Lester asked Charles Wood, who had written the screenplay for Lester's movie *The Knack…and How to Get It*, to revise the screenplay. In only ten days Wood redrafted the script and returned it to Lester (vgl. Yule 1994: 95).[7] However, *Eight Arms to Hold You* proved to be an impossible song title for John Lennon and Paul McCartney, who had been asked to compose the movie's theme song. Consequently, Lester was asked to come up with a new title for the second Beatles movie. He initially changed the name to *Help, Help*, but was informed that such a title had already been registered with the Writers' Guild of America (vgl. Carr 1996: 68). To avoid legal confrontation, Lester decided to just place an exclamation mark at the end of the title. Thus it was decided to call the movie *Help!*, and John Lennon and Paul McCartney composed the title song for it.

On October 30, 1964, the press was informed that The Beatles' second movie would be a comedy-thriller. As pointed out by Walter Shenson, *Help!* was "an attempt not to do another day in the life of the Beatles" (Gross 1990: 25). Richard Lester confirms that while he and the production team "had to make certain that they still played themselves" it was important not to do what had been done with *A Hard Days Night* – "show [The Beatles] at work" (Carr 1996: 61). Consequently, a spectacular fantasy story was dreamed up and The Beatles were shown on the run

7 Bob Neaverson's account of how the screenplay came into existence slightly differs. He claims that Richard Lester and Joe McGrath wrote the original treatment for the movie and that Marc Behm was asked to write the screenplay by Lester (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 32-33).

from religious fanatics and a mad scientist determined to obtain one of Ringo's rings. While the movie still retains the notion of The Beatles being themselves, the makers of *Help!* had no intention of attempting to construct an illusion of reality (vgl. Neaverson 1997: 32). United Artists' press release provides a summary of the movie's storyline:

"In the Eastern Temple of the Goddess Kaili a human sacrifice is about to be made. But the executioner, the High Priest Clang, is stopped by the beautiful Ahme, priestess of the cult who has discovered that the victim is not wearing the sacrificial ring essential for the ritual.
On the other side of the world the Beatles are performing. Ringo sits on the stage playing the drums and amongst his many rings is – the ring – a present from an unknown fan of another continent.
In the days that follow a series of mysterious events make no sense to the Beatles. At home, on the street, a strange force seems to be directed by Ringo. A gang of thugs descend upon the boys and attempt to amputate Ringo's entire hand – and the Beatles realise that it is Ringo's new ring they must have.
After several more attempts, Clang and his gang nearly succeed in stealing Ringo's whole person, but just in time they are saved by Ahme.
A few days later, while the boys are waiting for a meal in an Indian restaurant, the dreaded Clang and his henchman Bhuta appear disguised as waiters. They tell Ringo that since they cannot remove the ring from his finger he is to be sacrificed to the Goddess. The boys flee to the nearest jewellers and ask the man to cut off the offending ring. But the metal breaks the files and the cutting wheel.
The boys call next at a science laboratory run by Professor Foot and his assistant Algernon who put Ringo and his ring through every machine they have – to no avail; the ring resists all the assaults known to science. Foot decides that the ring has properties which could give the owner the power to rule the world and he confides to Algernon that he must get the ring. So the Beatles have two more enemies who will stop at nothing to retrieve the ring. Ahme once again comes to the rescue and they all flee from the laboratory – to the Alps!
In no time the Beatles' winter sport activities are interrupted by the arrival of Foot and Algernon intent on mayhem to be joined almost at once by Clang and his gang. After a frantic chase through snow and ice up mountains and down ski-lifts the boys scramble to the nearest railway station and gasp to the ticket man, 'London!'
Back home they confide their troubles to a Superintendent of Scotland Yard and tell him they must have protection in order to record in peace.
The next day the boys record two songs on Salisbury Plain, under the protection of the British Army, but Clang and his murderous thugs arrive and put the Beatles to flight. Ahme, in a tank, rescues them in the nick of time.
Back in London the murder attempts increase and the Beatles decide to leave the country until the heat is off. Heavily disguised they fly off to the Bahamas. But, alas, the world is too small a place for the Beatles, Clang and his gang and the two power-drunk scientists. Soon, the whole fray is resumed. But Ringo

learns the formula which releases him from the ring. The ring slips off and he hands it to Clang who hastily hands it on to Foot who tries to pass it on to Algernon and so on down the line.
Ahme and the Beatles at last find peace and the dreaded Kaili will have no more victims" (Harry 1985: 30-32).

Richard Lester failed to re-enlist cameraman Gilbert Taylor, who had been Lester's innovative collaborator on *A Hard Day's Night*. Instead, the assignment was handed to David Watkin, who had already worked on Lester's previous film *The Knack...and How to Get It*. Lester and Watkin set out to create their first color film in a way that emphasized the very fact that it was in color.

In 1962, Sean Connery had debuted in his first James Bond film *Dr No*. Since then, the James Bond movies had become the most popular British film productions. It seemed quite natural to Lester to incorporate some of the clichés from the Bond cycle in The Beatles' second movie. On the one hand, this attracted a contemporary, young audience that loved the Bond movies, and it proved that The Beatles were always up-to-date with the latest trends. On the other hand, this also provided an opportunity to make fun of the genre, which supported The Beatles' and Lester's reputation of being masters at playing and re-interpreting the products of contemporary popular culture. As observed by Bob Neaverson, "[a]lthough clearly not conceived from the outset as a Bond parody or pastiche, *Help!*'s finished screenplay manages to mine the popularity of the Bond films in a number of ways. First, the subject matter and narrative construction of the film seem highly reminiscent of the Bond cycle [...]" (Neaverson 1997: 27). One of the most obvious parallels to the Bond movies was the multitude of exotic settings featured in *Help!*. While Paul McCartney claims that these locations were chosen just because The Beatles had never been to the Bahamas or Austria (vgl. Carr 1996: 65), the selection of these particular locations also makes sense in reference to the James Bond cycle, which traditionally took place in unusual and remote settings, in order to add to the visual power of the Bond movies' spectacular action scenes and its special effects orgies. While Bond's investigations take place in Jamaica (*Dr No*, 1962), Istanbul (*From Russia with Love*, 1963), and in Switzerland (*Goldfinger*, 1964), The Beatles' attempts to escape from the religious fanatics and the mad scientist take them to Obertauern, Austria, and to New Providence, Bahamas. The decision to film part of *Help!* on the Bahamas was partially motivated by financial reasons. Producer Walter Shenson as well as The Beatles had invested in a Bahamian company, and it is assumed that they wanted to demonstrate that they were "an asset to the Bahamian business community" ("Films" 2005).

The exotic settings, however, were not the only parallels to the James Bond movies. *Help!* is full of parodying references to the Bond movies, making fun of the stock characters appearing in these movies as well as elements of narrative construction, settings and equipment. The religious cult leader Clang and the mad scientist Professor Foot both feature traits of the typical Bond villain in the fashion of Goldfinger, while Ahme, the woman played by Eleanor Bron, fulfils a stereotype that corresponds to the character of Pussy Galore in *Goldfinger*. Neaverson points out that Clang, like Auric Goldfinger, "is both exotic and power-crazed" (Neaverson 1997: 38). while Ahme, the fickle heroine, resembles Pussy Galore, because "she switches sides to help the 'good guys' when she sees the error of her ways" (Neaverson 1997: 38). The movie also makes fun of stock characters typical of action movies. For instance, when the mad scientist Professor Foot fails to free Ringo from the ring, John is enraged and tells him: "You're nothing but a mad scientist."

Help! also sends up the Bond movies' obsession with scientific gadgetry, featuring numerous scenes which "ridicule the sophistication and ruthless efficiency of the hi-tech devices featured in *Goldfinger*" (Neaverson 1997: 38). What is more, *Help!* also includes scenes of relentless brutality, a fact which has been largely ignored by critics and scholars alike. For example, in the fight scene filmed at the Indian restaurant, several people are knocked out, and one man is even forced to put his head in a boiling pot.

Performance Scenes

The way The Beatles perform their songs in *Help!* parallels the semi-diegetic approach Lester had introduced in *A Hard Day's Night*. Again, the visualization of the songs is a mixture of performance footage and non-performance oriented action. The "Ticket to Ride" sequence parallels the "Can't Buy Me Love" sequence in *A Hard Day's Night*, similarly expressing a sense of fun and release, this time by showing The Beatles' first attempts at skiing. The scene was edited by John Victor Smith, who had previously edited a promotional film of The Beatles' "You Can't Do That". As pointed out by Bob Neaverson, "the 'Ticket to Ride' sequence is arguably the first time that the full potential of editing for pace and rhythm was prioritized above choreography in a pop film" (Neaverson 1997: 40). Similar to the "Can't Buy Me Love" sequence, "Ticket to Ride" includes segments filmed from a helicopter. However, for the most part "Ticket to Ride" shows quickly edited scenes of The Beatles fooling around in the snow. While the whole sequence is basically not perform-

ance-based, short sequences of The Beatles singing their hit song and playing a piano on a snowy mountain top add to the surrealistic quality of the whole sequence, which also includes totally disconnected footage of Paul McCartney riding a horse in the snow, and of all four Beatles riding on a train and sliding down the mountain on a sled. Typical of *Help!*, each Beatle wears a different outfit in this sequence. John, George and Ringo even wear different hats.

Although Lester chose to take a profoundly different route with *Help!*, compared to the semi-documentary style he had created in *A Hard Day's Night*, The Beatles are presented as musicians. They are even shown at work in situations ignored in *A Hard Day's Night*. Most importantly, *Help!* features a scene showing them in a recording studio, as they record their song "You're Going to Lose That Girl". However, the way Lester realizes this particular performance scene is far from the documentary-style he had developed in *A Hard Day's Night*. While Lester had experimented with the lighting in *A Hard Day's Night*, he took these experiments a step further in the sequence showing The Beatles' performance of "You're Going to Lose That Girl", as he made use of colored lighting to full effect. The lighting frequently changes throughout the sequence, mainly showing close-ups of The Beatles and their instruments in various shades of blue, red, and green.

The Beatles are also shown performing, albeit in a rather different manner than in *A Hard Day's Night*. While the diegetic performance scenes in their first feature movie had shown them playing for an audience, such as the girls on the train or the many fans in the television studio, they basically perform their songs for themselves in *Help!*. In addition, the level of surrealism is taken to another level in *Help!*. For instance, the group is shown recording George Harrison's song "I Need You" in the middle of a military training field, surrounded by soldiers of the Royal Army, who are ordered to protect the group from the religious fanatics trying to kidnap Ringo. The Beatles also perform the song "The Night Before" on the military training field. The performance is filmed in a quite similar way, with John Lennon playing electric organ instead of his guitar. The camera takes in various strange perspectives, and the scenes are cut extremely quickly and reflect the dynamics of the song. Edited in a break-neck tempo, close-ups of each Beatle and his instrument are intercut with scenes showing the cult fanatics' preparations for an attack. The picture is turned upside down more than once, adding to the surrealism of the scene. Suddenly the Indian fanatics attack, and the whole scene turns into a war scenario.

The performance of "Another Girl", filmed on the Bahamas, is equally surreal, with The Beatles switching instruments (Ringo Starr

plays guitar, George Harrison plays McCartney's famous Höfner bass, while John Lennon is seen playing the drums), and Paul McCartney pretending to 'play' a girl instead of his bass guitar. The sequence shows The Beatles on a beach, where they mime the song. While it had been important to The Beatles to make performance scenes appear real in their first movie, the "Another Girl" sequence is realized in a way that makes clear that The Beatles are not really performing the song, as their electric guitars are not plugged in. A series of disconnected non-performance footage is intercut with the mimed performance of "Another Girl" and adds to the surreal quality of the segment. For example, one of the scenes shows The Beatles diving into a pool of sand.

In contrast, The Beatles' performance of "You've Got to Hide Your Love Away" is realized in a very conventional way, with all of The Beatles playing their respective instruments. With The Beatles miming to the playback of the song, the illusion of a diegetic performance is evoked. It is intercut with a few scenes of Clang, as he is approaching the house to steal the ring from Ringo. This, however, does not disturb the impression of a diegetic performance, as it works in the convention of parallel montage.

The Beatles' Image in *Help!*

Similar to *A Hard Day's Night*, Lester uses The Beatles' second movie to play with the group's image and their individual identities. This theme is introduced at the very beginning, when The Beatles are shown as they arrive at their house. Two women notice them and talk about them.

"First woman: Lovely lads, and so natural! I mean, adoration hasn't gone to their heads.
Second woman: So natural, and still the same as they was before they was." (*Help!* 2000)

The scene seems to develop a joke introduced in *A Hard Day's Night*, where a reporter asks George Harrison whether success has changed his life, and he dryly replies "Yes." However, in *A Hard Day's Night*, The Beatles still project the image of being 'the boys next-door', while *Help!* shows them being rather spoiled and eccentric entertainers. The women's remarks are highly ironic, because as soon as The Beatles enter the house it becomes clear that they lead the most eccentric lives in a modern castle full of luxury and weird gadgets. There is even a lawn inside the house, which is taken care of by a gardener. Paul suddenly appears from the basement playing a spectacular organ on an elevator-like construction.

Instead of sheet music, several comic books, such as *Superman*, are placed on the organ. The comic books are a subtle hint at what Lester set out to create with *Help!*, which is basically a clever mixture of various elements of action comics and the James Bond adventures. Richard Lester's interest in the genre of comics and the references to comics in *Help!* have largely been ignored by most critics, even though John Lennon has pointed out Lester's pioneering role in adapting comics for the cinema. Visual references, elements of narrative construction and the use of color all indicate that Lester indeed intended to pay homage to the genre of action comics. Lester uses colors in a way that resembles the way comics are designed. For instance, the interior of The Beatles' house looks just like a comic panel, with bright colors decorating the walls as well as the floor. Ringo's corner in the house is colored blue, while John's area is brown; Paul's is white and George's is green. When Ringo wakes up his friends after Ahme tried to steal the sacrificial ring, each Beatle is seen wearing a pajama of the color corresponding to his area in the house.

Although there were still parallels to *A Hard Day's Night* in the way The Beatles were portrayed in *Help!*, one of the most obvious differences concerned The Beatles' outfit, which had played such an important part in the public perception of the group's collective image. The legendary mohair suits they had popularized between 1962 and 1964 were substituted by a range of suits and outfits that proved once again that The Beatles were trendsetters not only in music but also in fashion. Especially the clothes they wore in the scenes filmed in Obertauern, Austria, became quite well-known, as The Beatles decided to wear them at the photo session for the cover of the soundtrack album as well. It was a special wardrobe consisting of black skin-tight trousers and ankle-length ski boots in black sealskin. John Lennon sported a black cape lined with white satin, while Ringo Starr wore a tight fitting black sweater with white rings around the sleeves. George Harrison also wore a black sweater with a white stripe down each sleeve, while Paul McCartney wore a loosely-cut ski jacket in sealskin (vgl. Harry 1985: 29). Instead of the uniform outfit they had sported in *A Hard Day's Night*, The Beatles wear different clothes throughout *Help!*. In the course of the movie, they are seen in different-colored turtlenecks as well as in various suits. Changing their outfits is actually almost taken to an extreme in *Help!*, as The Beatles seem to wear different clothes in every other sequence. In this context, the cult leader Clang's comment "They all look the same" is highly ironic and anachronistic, as it reflects an attitude and opinion projected in the press as well as the public at the time of The Beatles' initial success.

The use of color is, however, not the only reference to comics. At several points in the movie, scenes are introduced by cards explaining the situation, such as "In the weeks that followed five more attempts were made to steal the ring" or "End of Part 1." While these explanations can be regarded as references to silent movies, they also work as narrative elements in the tradition of comic books, where individual panels often feature introductions or explanations. Richard Lester even referred to comics when he first described the movie to the press: "It's a comic-strip adventure; one long chase with Oriental church leaders who want to fill their temples with sacrifices and mad scientists who want to blow up the world" (Carr 1996: 73). Lester was very aware of the way he adapted comic conventions for the movie screen. Although not many critics have appreciated Lester's contribution to the genre of comic adaptations, some of the elements introduced in *Help!*, such as the use of colors and camera perspectives, as well as a surreal sense of humor, were popularized by the *Batman* television series a year later. In this context, it should also be noted that Richard Lester went on to direct two *Superman* movies in the early 1980s.

The differences between the four Beatles are even more exaggerated than in *A Hard Day's Night*. While the group's first movie defined each Beatle's public image, *Help!* pushes these images further apart (vgl. Yule 1994: 97). Even though *Help!* does not feature solo scenes comparable to the ones in *A Hard Day's Night*, one sequence allows Paul McCartney to compensate for the missing solo scene in *A Hard Day's Night*. Due to an accident, the shrinking serum intended for Ringo Starr to free him from the sacrificial ring, makes Paul shrink, and he ends up little enough to wrap a chewing gum wrapping paper around his body. While McCartney arguably played the least memorable role in *A Hard Day's Night*, his part in *Help!* finally establishes him as an equally important screen personality in The Beatles. His scene is even introduced with a title saying, "The Exciting Adventure of Paul on the Floor." George Harrison features in a wild action scene, which is particularly reminiscent of the car chases in the Bond movies. John Lennon does not feature in a solo scene, but he remains a dominant screen presence throughout the movie. However, the key role in The Beatles' second feature movie is again played by Ringo Starr. As with *A Hard Day's Night* and *The Beatles* cartoon series, Ringo Starr establishes himself as the most talented actor in The Beatles. His love for acting actually inspired Starr to pursue a rather interesting acting career, with Starr appearing in various independent films now considered cult movies, such as *Blindman*, *The Magic Christian*, *200 Motels*, *Lisztomania*, and *Caveman*.

Although Starr was almost universally accepted as the group's actor, Richard Lester considered John Lennon to be a rather talented actor as well and offered him the role of Sergeant Gripweed in his anti-war-movie movie *How I Won the War*, which was filmed in 1966. Even though Lennon's performance was quite convincing, he did not accept any acting roles after *How I Won the War*, since he found the experience of filming extremely tiring and boring.

It had been Brian Epstein's policy to project The Beatles' image of being four available young men, in order to attract as many female fans as possible. Even though it eventually became a well-known and publicized fact that John Lennon was married, and that the other Beatles had girlfriends, their image of being single was still promoted by their second movie. As with *A Hard Day's Night*, love and romance was entirely excluded from the film. There is only some light-hearted flirtation taking place between the band members and the character played by Eleanor Bron.

The Beatles were not as pleased with *Help!* as they had been with *A Hard Day's Night*. Especially John Lennon regretted that the band had not had any significant input in the making of *Help!*

"The movie was out of our control. [*Help!*] had nothing to do with the Beatles. They put us here and there. Dick Lester was good. With *Hard Day's Night*, we pretty much had a lot of input and it was semirealistic. But with *Help!*, Dick didn't tell us what it was about, though I realize, looking back, how advanced it was. It was a precursor for the *Batman* 'Pow! Wow!' on TV – that kind of stuff. But he never explained it to us" (Gross 1990: 24).

Paul McCartney has also stated that The Beatles had never really been interested in making the movie: "Basically we lost the plot, but I don't think there was much of a plot there to start with. It was this endless 'The ring must be found! Kali must be appeased.' Maybe that's why we didn't enjoy it. I've always felt we let it down a bit, but we just didn't care and that would fit more readily with a poor script" (Miles 1997: 42).

On 29 July, 1965, the world premiere of *Help!* was celebrated in London, where public hysteria again caused officials to shut down Piccadilly Circus for public traffic. On 11 August, 1965, the film opened at 250 theaters throughout the United States. It was the official British entry at the International Film Festival in Rio de Janeiro, where it won first prize. The movie was broadcast ten times on British television between 1971 and 1995. Similar to *A Hard Day's Night*, the television premiere of *Help!* put the soundtrack album back into the album charts, where it peaked at position 33. It was first released on video in 1990 and was part of a limited edition DVD release called *The Beatles DVD Collector's Set*

in 2000. In November 2007, *Help!* finally saw its general release on DVD, storming the music DVD charts all over the world.

The Television Cartoon Series

Beatles for Children: Developing *The Beatles*

On 11 November, 1964, *Variety* announced that the US-based King Features Syndicate had secured the television animation rights to The Beatles. The article was already quite specific as to how ABC-TV envisioned the television series: "Projected cartoon series will follow the premise of the quartet's successful movie, *A Hard Day's Night*. The four lead characters will be based on the personalities of John, George, Paul and Ringo. On the soundtrack, The Beatles will perform a minimum of two songs in each half hour, some of them new, some Beatles classics" (Axelrod 1999: 23).

Television producer Al Brodax was the vital force behind the cartoon series. He developed the show's original format and retained complete control of the production. Brodax, who had produced numerous *Popeye* cartoons, had been trying to combine animation and original music in a creative way: "[T]he infusion of original music rather than the standard use of canned library music to score the *Popeye* animation, or for that matter any animation, would lift it out of the ordinary, enhance its storyline, it's action – would identify the uniqueness of each character. Disney's *Fantasia*, an extraordinary example of this" (Brodax 2004: 5). When Brodax became aware of The Beatles' music he realized that "the 'beat' of Beatle music [was] especially well suited to enhance an animated piece" (Brodax 2004: 11). Artistic considerations aside, The Beatles' enormous success in the United States in 1964 was probably the most important factor in developing a cartoon series featuring the group, in order to cash in on their recent popularity. Since *A Hard Day's Night* had been such a blockbuster, it was decided that The Beatles' characters in the television series would be built upon the public personae the group had embodied in their first feature movie. The stereotypes and character traits projected by the movie thus provided a useful framework for the development of the cartoon characters for the television series.

Al Brodax thought of the original concept for the show. Each half-hour episode would consist of two animated stories based on The Beatles' song lyrics and two Beatle 'sing-a-longs,' which were going to lead into commercials.

Brodax asked artist Peter Sander to create character models for the animated Beatles. The young artist based his designs on photographs he had collected of the group. Model sheets containing Sander's designs were distributed to the studios that were chosen to animate the Beatles series. These model sheets contained information about the basic features, gestures and tendencies of the characters to be animated (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 28).

"John, especially when delivering important lines, really looks the leader. Feet apart, hands on hips, chin up, looking down his nose. With a slightly mocking expression (This pose can also be used when he is pointing)
When facing front, he uses a sly, sideways look to talk to somebody.
Pulls funny faces, especially after orders, which he immediately wipes off. He also looks the other way before giving you an order.
Slightly queer 'showbiz' gestures can be used in long shot. Gives the feeling that John doesn't take his job as leader seriously.
John never sits, he slouches.
Paul is the most poised and stylish Beatle. When he talks, he uses his hands, with fingers spread, to express what he's saying. He always looks straight to whoever he is talking to. He is the one excited when John suggests anything. He doesn't really walk – he skips.
Paul sits as though he is ready to jump up and get on with whatever is happening.
When he is making his own suggestions and comments, especially ones suggesting mischief, he covers up by assuming a mock innocent look, eyes wide and head tilts to one side.
He tends to put his hand to his mouth when he is excited.
George never looks at who he is talking to. But his shoulders, which are hunched when he is in a standing or leaning pose, can indicate the direction.
Head always tilted forward.
George is the same height as Paul.
George is very loose-limbed and angular when he walks. Remember his legs are long and thin. Emphasis on the knees will help the angular appearance.
He often closes his eyes for short periods when he is talking.
George always gives the impression of frowning. This is because his eyebrows thicken as they reach his nose.
Notice distance between the nose and the mouth. His mouth is always lopsided.
George always leans against something. Shoulders hunched, hands in pockets, legs crossed.
Ringo is the nice, gentle Beatle, although he always looks rather sad.
Ringo always looks a bit disjointed whether walking or standing.
Ringo walks in a Groucho Marx pose.
Keep upper lip protruding. Keep Ringo's neck thin to help the disjointed look.
Keep hair, at back long and shaggy. Keep mouth in a wavy line.
When Ringo laughs, having made a funny remark, he squints.

His clothes tend to look as though they are a bit too big.
Normally Ringo is always deadpan, but should expression be required the main movement is arching the eyebrows."
(*Mojo* 35 1996: 19).

The animators were encouraged to watch footage of The Beatles' performances in order to become familiar to the band members' individual characteristics. Animator Dennis Hunt recalls, "We studied the movie and films of the Beatles performing. We would run the films backwards and forwards on the moviola […]. We observed that John stood face on to the audience and bobbed up and down. George and Paul swung their guitars up high and leaned towards each other. Ringo shook his hair all over as he played his drums" (Axelrod 1999: 29).

On the one hand, *A Hard Day's Night* provided realistic models as to how The Beatles moved and behaved – although each character had to be portrayed in an even more stylized and exaggerated way than in the movie, in order to function as a cartoon character. On the other hand, the group's movie debut also inspired one of the most predominant themes in the series – the theme of escape. Throughout the series, the animated Beatles were constantly on the run from screaming fans or from some kind of monster or evil force. As in *A Hard Day's Night*, The Beatles hardly ever find a peaceful place to rehearse or to enjoy their holidays. Although *The Beatles* drew heavily from the stock repertoire of storylines and characters typical of cartoon series, the inclusion of screaming fans as a threat as well as emphasizing the group's lack of privacy were quite clearly influenced by the portrayal of the group in their first feature movie.

Again, Al Brodax was instrumental in the development of storyline ideas. In the course of three seasons he cooperated with four scriptwriters who were responsible for the stories to the series' 39 episodes – Dennis Marks, Jack Mendelsohn Heywood Kling and Bruce Howard (Axelrod 1999: 29). As each episode consisted of two adventures and two sing-a-longs, 78 storylines were developed by this team. While the stories were constructed very much in the tradition of conventional animated television series, it is quite obvious that *A Hard Day's Night* – and later *Help!* – contributed significantly to the thematic range and the choice of settings of the cartoon series.

As with The Beatles' movies, the production company treated the animated television series as a mere exploitation project. The budget was set at $32,000 per half-hour show, the bulk of which was basically financed through advertising. Regarding this kind of sponsoring, The Beatles' manager Brian Epstein was quite specific about what kind of sponsors to exclude from *The Beatles* series. According to Brodax,

"commercials that have anything to do with depilatories, deodorants, etc. would be prohibited." After several potential sponsors declined to finance the new animation series, Brodax was able to find a toy train company in Chicago, A.C. Gilbert, which became the show's primary sponsor (vgl. Brodax 2004: 21). Other sponsors included the Quaker Oats Company and the Mars Candy Company (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 25).

Brodax also developed a rather innovative concept to realize the television series within the constraints of time and budget dictated by King Feature Syndicate. In order to meet the deadlines, Brodax cooperated with animation studios around the world instead of relying on King Features' partner studios in the United States. Therefore, the model sheets containing information as to how to draw and animate The Beatles were sent to animation studios all around the world. While outsourcing is now a common practice in the world of animation, it was Al Brodax who first thought of this way of producing animated films. Although employing studios in Great Britain, Australia, Canada and Holland was an efficient way to save time, Brodax and his production team had to find further solutions to keep to the tight budget. Brodax remembers the first meeting with two of the series' directors, George Dunning and Jack Stokes: "We then proceed[ed] to suggest techniques that [would] serve us well in our joint effort to produce an outstanding series on a miniscule budget: running cycles, cycle everything … carefully filed and stored backgrounds for reuse, simply designed Beatle figures, extensive sound effects, undifferentiated blobs and splashes of paint […]" (Brodax 2004: 28). Brodax indeed managed to keep the costs low. However, it proved to be rather impossible for him to produce what he had imagined to be an "outstanding series." Outsourcing the animation to studios in Australia and Great Britain actually meant that quite inexperienced teams of young animators were employed to work for the series. While *The Beatles* series prompted the evolution of an industry of animated films and television shows in both countries, the episodes produced there at that time were quite rudely animated and lacked the standards and continuity of American animated shows. In Great Britain, animation was still a very new industry. Basically, animation had been restricted to advertisements before *The Beatles* series, which was the first mass cartoon series produced, at least in parts, in Great Britain. In Australia, the situation was quite similar, as the Artransa Park TV Studios had previously not worked on a comparable project for television. Ron Campbell, who worked on the series as animator, storyboard artist and director, explains that "[t]o anybody viewing the show today, it's easy to tell the Australian episodes from the English. For example, if Ringo's nose was drawn too fat in one scene and too long in the next, the episode was made in Australia. If the

inking wavered and seemed uncertain, or drawn with a too-heavy hand, it was made in Australia. If the backgrounds were minimal, it was Australian" (Axelrod 1999: 76). The episode "I'm Happy Just To Dance With You" is one of many examples of the series' low standards of animation. In this episode, a dancing bear falls in love with Paul and wants to cuddle and dance with him. Here the animation of the dance sequence completely lacks any sense of flow in the movement of the characters. What is more, the final sequence is animated in an extremely crude way, with characters suddenly popping up in the picture in the middle of a scene.

Songs and Stories

Not only was the animation below King Features' standards at the time, but also the storylines were rather simple and repetitive. The basic idea for many of the episodes was that The Beatles were at some remote place looking for some peace and solitude. However, they were always disturbed or followed by somebody who got them into trouble of some sort. In the end, one of their songs would always help them to get out of an unpleasant situation. For instance, in the episode "Not a Second Time," The Beatles fly to Africa to perform a concert there. They are followed by screaming fans, who make it impossible for The Beatles to rehearse. However, they manage to escape their fans and rehearse the song in front of an amphibian audience. In "I Should Have Known Better," The Beatles are in Rome looking for a place to rehearse for their evening performance. In the end, they rehearse in the Coliseum where they literally bring the house down (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 140-148). Other episodes show The Beatles fighting against evil forces, such as Dracula (in "Misery") or the mad Professor Psycho (in "Baby's in Black").

Although the animated band performances were inspired by The Beatles' performance in *A Hard Day's Night*, the animators realized most of these sequences in the 'musical'-tradition, with the band breaking into a performance at an apparently arbitrary point in the story. This way of integrating music in the narrative actually works in the tradition of classic animated movies, such as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the first full-length animated feature, where Walt Disney introduced such musical elements in the world of animation. The difference, however, is the instrumentation. While the song performances in *Snow White* are largely without the accompaniment of musical instruments (except for the party scene at the dwarfs' house), the cartoon Beatles always have their instruments ready to perform. Here, the portrayal of the band roughly resembles the way Lester presents them in *A Hard Day's Night*, showing

parts of The Beatles' instruments in detail. However, no great care is taken in the way this presentation is achieved, as the animated Beatles often do not seem to be performing the specific song presented in a particular episode. Although the cartoon Beatles open and close their mouths and imitate certain movements of the real Beatles, the way they use their instruments seems quite primitive in comparison with Disney's or Warner Brothers' classic cartoons from the 1930's and 1940's. Considering the fact that the series was produced in the mid-sixties, The Beatles' and their manager's criticism concerning the animation is quite understandable. Especially the fact that the songs are often sung by the wrong Beatle must have annoyed The Beatles, who were always concerned about an accurate depiction of what each band member contributed to The Beatles' music. For example, Paul McCartney refused to watch the movie *Backbeat*, a fictional account of The Beatles' time in Hamburg, when he found out that the character playing John Lennon performs the song "Long Tall Sally" in the movie, because this was 'his' song. There are numerous examples of such errors in The Beatles series. For instance, in "I'm Happy Just to Dance with You" John Lennon is seen singing the song, although it is actually sung by George Harrison, while in "Mr. Moonlight" the Paul character sings the song originally sung by John Lennon.

Not all songs were presented as diegetic performances. In some cases they illustrate or contrast the animated action on the screen. Although this way of using The Beatles' music as a score may also have been inspired by Lester's visualization of "Can't Buy Me Love" in *A Hard Day's Night*, it is not always used to effect in *The Beatles* series. For instance, in "Anna", Paul is kidnapped by a female Japanese ghost, who keeps him on her ghost ship 'AH-NAH'. The Beatles' performance of Arthur Alexander's song is heard while the cartoon Paul worships the ghost. In this case, the lyrics do not have anything to do with what is shown on the screen. In other episodes, the songs are used in a more clever way, at least for comical effect. For example, in "I Wanna Hold Your Hand", The Beatles encounter a lovesick octopus, who eventually finds a girl-octopus to hold hands with.

The sing-a-longs are hardly ever performance-oriented. In most cases, they are simply animated visualizations of each song's theme. Sometimes the pictures tell a story that is related to the lyrics in some way or other. For example the sing-a-long for "Don't Bother Me" shows the character of Paul suffering from a broken heart. He seems to be stranded on a little island but refuses to be rescued, because he does not want to be disturbed. Often the lyrics are interpreted in a slightly surreal way, in order to create the sense of comedy necessary for an animated

children's program. As pointed out by Axelrod, "in the first season of the series, the sing-a-longs were fun and ambitious. In the last two seasons, they became less of a Beatles adventure and more of a surreal piece of imagery. [Some s]ing-a-long segments, especially in the third season, didn't feature the Beatles at all. For the song "Girl" the names of each Beatle would slowly pass by as the song went on" (Axelrod 1999: 184). The lyrics to the songs are always shown on the screen to enable the children to sing a long at home.

Although the sing-a-longs were an effective idea to promote The Beatles' songs through low-budget animation, The Beatles were not pleased with the way King Features treated their recordings. In order to fit the two-minute time slot of each sing-a-long, the songs were heavily edited by the series' production team. A memo from King Features Syndicate to the animation studios is quite specific about the shortening of The Beatles' songs: "In some cases where the sound track is longer than 2 minutes and the music track has to be cut to accommodate a 2 minute song, it is advisable to use teenage audience screams to cover the cut in the track so that the music beats may match" (Axelrod 1999: 190). In actual fact, the songs were often cut in a rather arbitrary way, which simply destroyed the structure of the songs. This lack of respect to their work was another reason why The Beatles themselves did not support the series in any way.

Image and Ideology

In hindsight it is not surprising that The Beatles did not like the series and even prevented it from being shown in Great Britain. On the one hand, the series was not up to contemporary animation standards and did nothing to support the group's increasing reputation as innovative musicians and artist. On the other hand, the show significantly lacked sensitivity and tact in the portrayal of ethnic groups as well as in the portrayal of women. Even though an animated film or series is likely to project a certain set of stereotypes in the way different cultures are portrayed, *The Beatles* series lacked the charm and subtlety that might excuse the stereotypical depiction of nationalities, for instance, in Walt Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* or *Pinocchio*. In actual fact, many episodes of The Beatles cartoon series would probably disturb contemporary audiences, since society has grown quite sensitive to the issue of 'political correctness.' The show itself would probably not pass any contemporary broadcasting commission.

While not all the episodes are necessarily racist, it seems that especially the episodes produced in Australia featured a rather heavy dose of discrimination. As observed by Mitch Axelrod, "[t]he series was made right at a time when Australia was in the midst of a change in social thinking. Many episodes in the series featured cartoon African cannibals licking their lips and chanting 'Unga Bunga'" (Axelrod 1999: 78). Australian animator Ron Campbell points out that "Australia still had in force a racially motivated immigration policy. It had been written into law long before, and it permitted only Europeans to immigrate" (Axelrod 1999: 80). In the episode "Can't Buy Me Love" an African chief wants John to marry his daughter. The man and his whole tribe are portrayed in a rather offensive way, featuring many of the stereotypes that would simply be considered racist today. The chief looks outright silly with his huge earrings, enormous lips and savage outfit. Other Africans are portrayed in a way that is reminiscent of Hollywood movies of the 1920's or minstrel shows, where white people dressed up the way they imagined a black person, which made them look like bad caricatures. What is more, the chief's two assistants look completely identical, which reveals quite a lot about the way the animators envisioned African people. This inability to accept the individuality of people from different ethnic groups or countries is a rather dominant feature of the latent racism typical of the time. The animators would probably not have considered making white people look completely identical in the series. The discrimination in *The Beatles*, however, was not exclusively directed toward Africans. Many episodes also make fun of Asian people. For example, "No Reply" features the stereotype of a wise but very silly-looking old Japanese man, while a similar stereotype is used in "It Won't Be Long" – this time it is an old Chinese with his – again – two identical-looking assistants. While stereotypes are often necessary in short and simple storylines in order to enable a narrative without lengthy characterization, the portrayal of most ethnic groups in *The Beatles* is simply offensive. This probably did not amuse The Beatles who were quite aware of racial issues.

Although the portrayal of ethnic groups is far less than charming, the way women are presented in *The Beatles* is equally offensive from today's point of view. By 1965, the public had become used to the reports of 'Beatlemania' in the media, depicting and showing mostly teenaged girls on the verge of hysteria, screaming and running after The Beatles wherever they publicly appeared. Especially their concerts had become outlets for their screaming fans, making it impossible for The Beatles to hear the music they were playing. *A Hard Day's Night* had integrated this aspect of The Beatles' overwhelming success and showed hysterical fans at several points in the story. The whole issue was entirely ignored in

Help!, where The Beatles are followed by religious fanatics and a mad professor instead of hysterical teenagers. Since the animated series was pretty much based upon The Beatles' first feature film, it made use of the screaming fans-motif in excess, as this particular phenomenon could be used effectively in an animated series. However, while a bunch of screaming fans following The Beatles may have been a funny idea for a couple of episodes, the way these girls are portrayed is far from charming or entertaining. Screaming fans always appear in a group in *The Beatles*. Instead of talking they only scream "Beatles!" and run after their idols. They seem threatening, and it is not surprising that the cartoon Beatles want to escape from them. While the screaming fans are always encountered with humor and affection by The Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night*, their animated alter egos simply want to avoid their female fans, because they are annoyed by them. There are no other recurring female characters in the series except for the screaming fans. The only other role sometimes taken by a female character is the role of the villain. Throughout the series, The Beatles encounter numerous scary female characters, such as witches, girl vampires and ghosts. The way women are generally portrayed in the series is quite revealing as to the way the creators of *The Beatles* envisioned the group's fans. While the hysteria surrounding The Beatles' success lent itself to spoofery and pastiche, the way it was dealt with in *The Beatles* was rather cynical and lacked the charm of later spoofs, such as Eric Idle's fake-documentary *The Rutles – All You Need Is Cash*.

In addition to the flat portrayal of side-characters in *The Beatles*, the portrayal of The Beatles themselves was less than flattering. Although the show was reportedly modelled upon *A Hard Day's Night*, the production team of *The Beatles* failed to adapt The Beatles' good-natured humor and their clever banter for the television screen. In *The Beatles*, the humor is pretty much reduced to slapstick situations and clumsy imitation of The Beatles' natural humor. Most of the comedy revolves around the character of Ringo, who is basically depicted as a good-natured fool. Similar to the feature movies starring the real Beatles, Ringo becomes the main character in the series. It is quite easy to imagine a child audience empathising with the cartoon Ringo, and he actually became the kids' favorite Beatle at the time. Although each Beatle is allowed to feature in the different episodes, Ringo draws most of the attention to himself, with his naivety and silly laugh, which – probably intentionally – resembles the way Walt Disney's beloved character Goofy laughs. In addition to being the most endearing character in the series, Ringo plays another dominant role in the segments introducing the sing-a-longs in each show. Before each sing-a-long there is an introduction where either John,

George or Paul encourage their child audience to sing along. As the property man is ill, Ringo sits in for the prop man and is requested to come up with the right decoration and equipment for the song. Ringo, of course, basically causes chaos with the equipment he provides.

During the making of *The Beatles* series conflicts arose at the very first stage of production. Since it was made clear to the producer that The Beatles themselves would not be interested in lending their own voices to their cartoon doubles, the production company insisted on dubbing the cartoon series with American actors. As this was totally against Brian Epstein's and The Beatles' interest, Al Brodax found a solution which seemed reasonable at the time: "English speech is often too difficult for Americans to decipher […]. Since the series' initial airing will be to an American audience, I insist upon a split cast, that is one American, one Englishman, to give the audience at least a fifty-fifty chance of comprehension" (Brodax 2004: 29). American actor Paul Frees lent his voice to the cartoon Lennon and Harrison, while English actor Lance Percival took on the voices of McCartney and Starr. For The Beatles themselves, however, the cartoon series was always a rather controversial issue. They were not satisfied with the quality of the animation and did not like the fact that their voices had been 'Americanized.' In addition, the image projected in the cartoon series was not compatible with the image the band had in the United Kingdom. While the American public still considered The Beatles mainly as boy-group phenomenon, they had already become respected artists to a wide-ranging audience in Britain. Therefore, it had been clear from the very beginning that *The Beatles* would not be broadcast in Great Britain. John Coates, the Managing Director of TVC Animation Studios, recalls that Brian Epstein was particularly concerned about the dubbing: "[I]t was because of the voices picked, that the Beatles cartoons were not allowed to be shown in England. The decision was made by none other than Brian Epstein himself" (Axelrod 1999: 55). The Beatles have distanced themselves from their animated television show ever since. Although George Harrison admitted to like the series in a *Billboard* interview in the 1999, the group excluded the whole issue from their own Beatles history project, *The Beatles Anthology*.

The Beatles on TV

The Beatles' cartoon show premiered on September 25, 1965, at 10 a.m. Eastern Standard Time on ABC. It consisted of two five and one half minute episodes, the plot of which was based upon the lyrics of a Beatles song featured in each adventure. In between the two adventures, the car-

toon Beatles introduced two 'sing-a-longs,' which consisted of animated sequences showing the lyrics of two of The Beatles' songs. All in all, seventeen episodes of The Beatles' television series were produced for the first season.

The show was an instant success, opening with a share of 51.9 per cent of the viewing audience. In the United States, it became the second most successful Saturday morning show of the season (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 107), encouraging ABC to order thirteen new episodes for a second season. The great success of *The Beatles* cartoons inspired Al Brodax to consider the production of similar television shows designed to revolve around the band lives of British beat bands such as Herman's Hermits and Freddie and the Dreamers (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 122). While Brodax failed to convince television companies of his idea, the show inspired a whole genre of television cartoons in the 1970s, when animated shows such as *The Jackson Five*, *The Osmonds* and *The Brady Kids* invaded American homes via television. Like *The Beatles*, these shows featured bands getting into mischief and rescuing themselves with the power of their songs (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 128).

By the end of the second season, ratings had diminished significantly. This was reportedly caused by the emergence of another extremely successful cartoon series called *Space Ghost*, which introduced a whole new trend in Saturday morning television. CBS, ABC's greatest rival at the time, recognized the growing interest in superheroes and began to focus on the genre, airing animated children's series, such as *Frankenstein Jr.*, *The Impossibles*, *Superman*, *Mighty Mouse and The Mighty Heroes*. *Space Ghosts* was slotted opposite *The Beatles* and reached a 44% share, compared to *The Beatles*' 36% share (vgl. "The Beatles" 2005). Although this was still a reasonable result as to market shares, some rather clumsy programming decisions were made by ABC Television, as recalled by Edwin Vane, the Director of Daytime Programs at ABC, which added to the series decline.

> "[We ordered only thirteen episodes] so that we could run them clean through the fourth quarter of 1966. Then for repeats, we'd mix in some of the original seventeen with the new thirteen to put a little distance between re-runs. However, you can't fool the kids. When they watched "Roll Over Beethoven" the first time, they thought it was hysterical. By the sixth time, it wasn't quite so funny. And that's why the ratings went down" (Axelrod 1999: 124).

For the third season only nine new episodes were ordered in 1967. Despite the decision to mainly broadcast re-runs of early episodes, ratings were still fine and ABC-television kept the show alive for yet another season. However, the fourth season consisted entirely of re-runs, which

means that the production of *The Beatles* cartoon series was cancelled. On April 20, 1969, ABC-television aired the last *Beatles* episode.

The initial success of *The Beatles* animated series also introduced a whole new branch of Beatles merchandise in the shops. In addition to the official and unofficial band merchandise products sweeping the American teenage market between 1964 and 1966, the likeness of the cartoon characters was licensed to numerous companies. Beatles candy sticks, cups and hand puppets were among the officially licensed merchandise products destined for the young target group addressed by the cartoon series. Companies such as Lux and Nestlé also cashed in on the Beatle craze and offered inflatable Beatles dolls to their loyal customers (vgl. Axelrod 1999: 112-121). In 2004, McFarlane, an American producer of toys, acquired the rights to produce a new set of Beatles merchandise based upon the cartoon characters featured in the television show.

As mentioned above, The Beatles and Brian Epstein prevented the show from being aired in Great Britain at the time it was produced. In 1980, *The Beatles* finally debuted on British television, when it was featured on early morning television on Granada Television. In 1988, the full series was featured on ITV's *Night Network* magazine show.

Although *The Beatles* series was shown on various TV programs around the world in the 1980s, it has disappeared from public awareness since The Beatles' company Apple bought the rights to the series in the early 1990s. Apple has prevented the show from being shown anywhere in the world, and since it was not even mentioned in The Beatles' official autobiography *Anthology*, it is not clear whether the series will ever be commercially released. However, with Paul McCartney's and Ringo Starr's latest excursions into the world of animation[8] and The Beatles' more recent effort to project a timeless image of the band, it is possible that Apple will compile a DVD featuring the better episodes of the series. In fact, the series could become an important means to introduce The Beatles to new generations of fans. Similar to the way The Beatles' film *Yellow Submarine* has attracted children in the last four decades, *The Beatles* series could contribute to preserving The Beatles as a timeless phenomenon. Despite its flaws, the animated series was an important factor in keeping a certain facet of The Beatles' image alive already in the mid-sixties. Tony Barrow, the group's press officer, points out that the

8 In 2004, Paul McCartney released a DVD called *The Music and Animation Collection*, featuring three animated short films produced by his company MPL. In January 2005, it was announced that Stan Lee, the creator of cartoon heroes such as *Spiderman* and *Hulk*, was developing a multimedia franchise in which Starr would play a superpowered animated version of himself.

animated series was quite important in terms of medial presence and image perseverance.

"Whilst generally helping to sustain The Beatles' record sales at a healthy level between concert tours (and beyond that short-lived era), the cartoon programs also preserved in Peter Pan fashion the early carefree and playful "Four Mop Tops" image, which children loved and parents approved of […]. This crucial aspect of the Al Brodax venture was not even considered, let alone appreciated, by Brian Epstein, but the rest of us saw it as a significant factor in prolonging the career of The Beatles in the commercially important teenyboppers' sector" (Hieronimus 2002: 32).