

# Beatles Films: Top 5 [B1]

I Beatles non sono stati solo popstar, ma anche icone del cinema. Dalle commedie surrealiste alle innovazioni nell'animazione, la loro eredità cinematografica prosegue.

---

Last year, director Sam Mendes announced his plan to make four separate films about The Beatles - one from each band member's perspective. While in Mendes' films actors will play the parts, this is not the first time that The Beatles have appeared on screen. Between 1964 and 1970, the Fabulous Four made five feature films. In addition, the promo films for their singles were credited with anticipating music videos and the rise of MTV in the 1980s. The group finally broke up in 1970, but there has been a **flood** of films, documentaries and biopics since then. Here are five of the most famous:

## 1. A HARD DAY'S NIGHT

(Richard Lester, 1964) The feature film debut of The Beatles, made in a **mock-documentary** style right at the beginning of Beatlemania, is a fictionalised day in the life of the group as they **make their way to** perform in a TV show in London. The film helped cement their image as fun-loving young men never taking life seriously. It was a hit with young and old **alike**. George Harrison met his future wife, the model Pattie Boyd, during the train scene.

## 2. HELP!

(Richard Lester, 1965) The band are **struggling** to record music while trying to protect Ringo from a sinister **cult** and two mad scientists all obsessed with stealing one of the drummer's rings. The film influenced the development of music videos. The Beatles were not happy with the movie, feeling they were like extras. Communication was not easy with the musicians, however, as they were smoking marijuana for breakfast during that period! The Beatles

said the film was inspired by the mad style of the Marx Brothers in Duck Soup and the abstract humour of the BBC radio series The Goon Show.

### 3. MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR

(**The Beatles, 1967**) Written, produced, directed and acted by the four members, the plot of this TV film follows a coach-load of eccentric characters on a magical journey in the West Country of England. The group was tired of stage shows by this time, and so they turned to television. Paul had been making numerous home movies, which he said inspired him to embark on this project. The stream-of-consciousness style was not a hit with the public.

### 4. YELLOW SUBMARINE

(**George Dunning, 1968**) Released in the middle of the psychedelic pop cult ure of the 1960s, this musical fantasy movie featured cartoon versions of the group as they tried to save Pepperland, which had been captured by the music-hating Blue Meanies. With dialogue full of puns, double entendres and Beatles in-jokes, the film was greeted with great acclaim by critics and the public. It also generated wider interest in animation.

### 5. BEATLES '64

(**David Tedeschi, 2024**) The Beatles' brief but epochal visit to America is immortalised in this documentary produced by Martin Scorsese. The film contains some powerful statements relating to the social and cultural situation at that time. At one point, Paul McCartney is asked by a journalist about the effect of the group on the history of Western culture. The singer laughed and responded, with typical self-deprecating humour, "You must be kidding with that question. 'Culture'? It's not culture. It's a good laugh!" That was one of the secrets of the Beatles' success. They transmitted their innocent enjoyment to their fans through their songs and their performances. However, these were also tense times: in the same part of the film the African-American singer Smokey Robinson says, talking about a

concert, "I'd been shot at for wanting to go to the toilet", referring to racism and segregation. The African-American singer praises The Beatles' refusal to play to segregated audiences, adding: "Music is the international language. It's the barrier-breaker." Also appearing in the documentary is US writer and activist Betty Friedan. Her 1963 book The Feminine Mystique is credited with sparking the second wave of American feminism. In the film she describes how The Beatles and other "young men with long hair ... are rejecting the typical macho man image" and claims that "They're saying no to that brutal, sadistic, tight-lipped, crewcut, Prussian, big muscle, Ernest Hemingway ... I can be tender and I can be sensitive and I can be compassionate ... and I am a man, I am my own man. And that man who is strong enough to be gentle, that is a new man."

---

# Glossary

- **make their way to** = incamminarsi verso
- **coach-load** = pullman pieno
- **Meanies** = meschini
- **puns** = giochi di parole
- **in-jokes** = battute private
- **I am my own man** = io sono me stesso
- **flood** = alluvione
- **alike** = allo stesso modo, ugualmente
- **plot** = trama
- **acclaim** = acclamazione
- **self-deprecating** = autoironico
- **cartoon** = cartone animato
- **refusal** = rifiuto
- **double entendres** = doppi sensi
- **praises** = lodi
- **mock-documentary** = falso documentario
- **struggling** = avere difficoltà
- **cult** = setta
- **Duck Soup** = La guerra lampo dei Fratelli Marx
- **Goon** = stupido
- **stream-of-consciousness** = flusso di coscienza
- **sparking** = scatenare
- **claims** = affermare
- **tight-lipped** = taciturno
- **crewcut** = taglio militare