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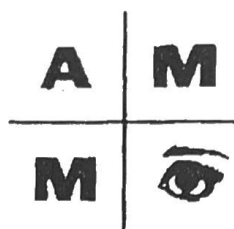
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American Museum of the Moving Image



For Immediate Release
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**RICHARD LESTER RETROSPECTIVE HONORS THE DIRECTOR
OF *A HARD DAY'S NIGHT*, *HELP!*, AND *PETULIA***

SERIES OPENS WITH NEW YORK PREMIERE OF STACY COCHRAN'S
DOCUMENTARY *RICHARD LESTER!*

TONY WALTON, COLLABORATOR AND FAMED DESIGNER, TO SPEAK

MARCH 6-14, 1999

Richard Lester, the director who, with such movies as *A Hard Day's Night*, *Help!*, and *The Knack...and How to Get It* created a fresh, youthful style of filmmaking in the 1960s, will be the subject of a two-weekend retrospective at the American Museum of the Moving Image. Running from March 6 to 14, 1999, the series includes the New York premiere of Stacy Cochran's inventive and affectionate portrait film *Richard Lester!*. Legendary production designer Tony Walton will speak on March 14 after screenings of *Petulia* and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, two movies he designed for Lester. Through the cooperation of Miramax Films, the series features a preview of the upcoming release of the fully restored *A Hard Day's Night*, with new footage and a digitally restored soundtrack. Other offerings include brand new 35mm prints of *Help!* and *How I Won the War*, and a vintage Technicolor print of *Petulia*.

"Richard Lester made some of the most inventive English-language films of the 1960s," said David Schwartz, the Museum's Chief Curator of Film & Video. "He was clearly inspired by the French New Wave, but his freewheeling approach was evident as early as 1956 in his offbeat comedy-variety television program *The Dick Lester Show*."

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When he moved to Europe in the late 1950s, the Philadelphia-born Richard Lester was a successful young television director. After some years as a roaming newspaper reporter and jazz pianist, he settled in London and became a TV producer, creating eclectic and innovative music, comedy, and variety shows. While working on a *Goon Show* special with Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan, Lester took a movie camera outdoors and made a slapstick short, *The Running, Jumping, Standing Still Film*. He was instantly hooked on the fresh possibilities of the medium. Already evident in this 1959 short were the hallmarks of Lester's style: exuberance, bold editing, and a hip sensibility that echoed the mood of the times.

In many ways, Lester's irreverent visual style helped to define the Swinging Sixties, perfectly capturing the spirit of the Beatles in *A Hard Day's Night* and *Help!*. Winner of the Palme d'Or at the 1965 Cannes Film Festival, Lester's *The Knack...and How to Get It* was a lively time capsule of London's hedonistic youth culture. In the late 1960s, Lester made a series of ambitious films that met with mixed critical and popular success, including *How I Won the War*, a dark and deeply personal war satire; *Petulia*, a provocative relationship drama that was his most mature movie to date; and *The Bed-Sitting Room*, a surreal post-apocalyptic comedy that has been described as a precursor to *Monty Python and His Flying Circus*. All three have developed cult followings and have stood the test of time. Lester's early success led to his first Hollywood assignment, an adaptation of the Broadway smash hit *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

With versatility and self-effacing charm, Lester continued to make movies throughout the 1970s and 1980s, with a style that has always been grounded by consummate craftsmanship, keen intelligence, and an ability to elicit fine performances. His exquisite autumnal romance *Robin and Marian*, starring Sean Connery and Audrey Hepburn, was one of the finest films he made before retiring as a director at the end of the 1980s.

Stacy Cochran's loving portrait of Lester captures the affable personality behind these memorable films. As Jules Feiffer said, "Richard Lester has a way of making a film your friend."

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