

# Shake, Rattle, & Roll

With the emergence of youth culture in the '50s, rock 'n' roll became an important element—and sometimes the subject—of features and documentaries. Here are some directors capturing the beat.

**FAB FOUR:** A veteran of documentaries and commercials, Richard Lester was able to work cheaply and quickly—and he had to with only a \$500,000 budget on The Beatles' *A Hard Day's Night* (1964). His distinctive style—rapid-fire editing, cutting to the beat of the music, and use of a handheld camera on "Can't Buy Me Love"—had a profound influence on future generations of directors and made him one of the godfathers of music videos.





**TEEN ANGELS:** Floria Sigismondi moved from directing music videos to features with *The Runaways* (2010), the story of the '70s girl band led by Joan Jett. Sigismondi shot on Super 16 to give the film a period look and worked with the actors to make sure their fingers were in the right place on their instruments.



**SEDATED:** As The Ramones drove down the street lip-synching a performance in a pink Cadillac convertible for *Rock 'n' Roll High School* (1979), director Allan Arkush (top) told Johnny Ramone, "Go with the whole guitar hero thing. I'll put the camera low, and I'll make you a guitar god."



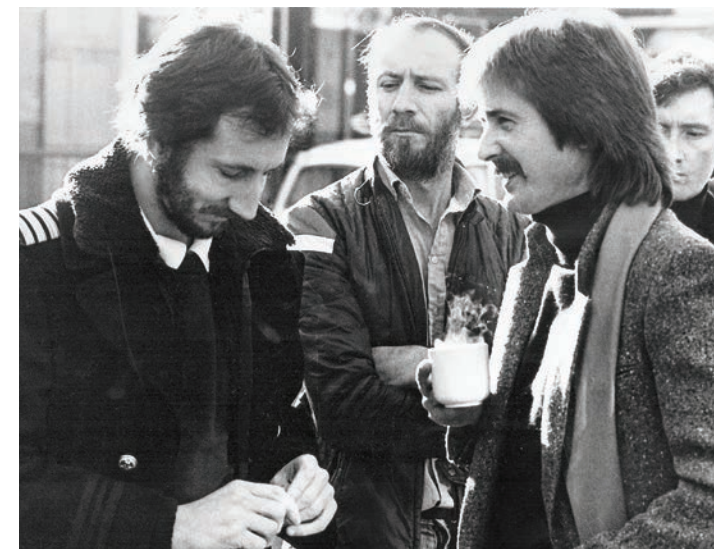
**RAP:** Eminem played a character much like himself in Curtis Hanson's *8 Mile* (2002). Hanson placed handheld cameras in the crowd and onstage to make them a part of the action. Shooting in some of Detroit's toughest neighborhoods, his "number one objective was to try and be truthful to that world."



**A SPLENDID TIME:** Julie Taymor directs Eddie Izzard as the ringmaster of a hippie circus in the "Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite!" number from *Across the Universe* (2007). Taymor played with elements of theater and film in a phantasmagoria of 33 Beatles songs used to propel a '60s romance.

PHOTOS: (TOP) RED RIVER ROAD, (BOTTOM, LEFT) EVERETT, (BOTTOM, RIGHT) COLUMBIA PICTURES

PHOTOS: (TOP) BRUCE FRANKEL, (BOTTOM, LEFT) COURTESY OF FRANK CONNER, (BOTTOM, RIGHT) EVERETT



**LONDON CALLING:** Franc Roddam (right), with Pete Townshend, adapted a 1973 album by The Who for *Quadrophenia* (1979). The film traced the mid-'60s rivalry between the mods and the rockers. "It's about teenage angst. We were very sincere about what we were doing. It's authentic emotion."



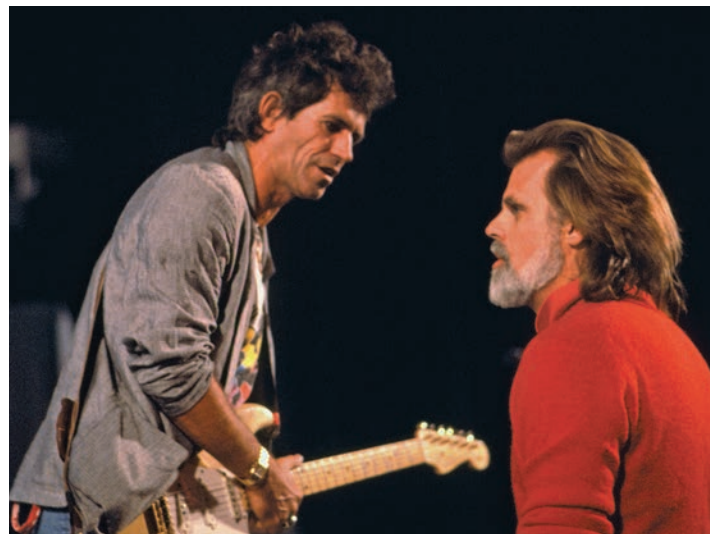
**LIZARD KING:** Oliver Stone working with Jim Morrison's doppelganger Val Kilmer on *The Doors* (1991). Stone picked the songs he wanted to use and created scenes to match the mood. He based concert sequences on the orgy scene in C.B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, using Kilmer's voice for close shots.



**THE WORD:** Randal Kleiser directs Frankie Avalon for the “Beauty School Dropout” number in *Grease* (1978). In adapting the play, Kleiser decided which numbers to keep and how to shoot them. The opening scene was filmed at Leo Carrillo State Park in Malibu and the exteriors of Rydell High at Venice High.



**ROYALTY:** A long way from his biggest hit, *Casablanca*, Michael Curtiz turned *King Creole* (1958), a standard Elvis Presley vehicle, into a darker and deeper film noir. He insisted on shooting in black and white for dramatic effect and limited the musical numbers to when the character would actually sing.



**SOUNDSTAGE:** Taylor Hackford, with The Rolling Stones’ guitarist Keith Richards, combined his love of rock ‘n’ roll and experience in documentaries to direct *Chuck Berry Hail! Hail! Rock ‘n’ Roll* (1987), a 60th-birthday celebration for the pioneering rocker. “I feel very comfortable shooting music,” said Hackford.



**MOTOWN:** Extensive preparation made *Dreamgirls* (2006) less daunting for Bill Condon, working here with Eddie Murphy. “We did extensive pre-vis ... combining storyboards with video footage shot on the rehearsal stage. By the time we were shooting, we had a good idea of which angles worked.”

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF RANDAL KLEISER; (BOTTOM, LEFT) COURTESY OF UNIVERSAL PICTURES; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) PARAMOUNT



**SONGS OF INNOCENCE:** Based on Cameron Crowe’s experience as a teenage journalist on tour with rock bands for *Rolling Stone*, *Almost Famous* (2000), starring Kate Hudson, captures “the way it felt to be 15 and falling in love with life and music.” Crowe had the fictional band Stillwater practice for six weeks.



**NIRVANA:** Michael Pitt plays a Kurt Cobain-like character in Gus Van Sant’s *Last Days* (2005). Working on a tight budget, a dolly shot through a window took seven takes because the production only had three pieces of track and had to take it from the front, then run it around to the back as the dolly moved backward.

PHOTOS: (TOP) KOBAL; (BOTTOM, LEFT) KOBAL; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) HBO



**THE END:** Martin Scorsese meticulously storyboarded shots to fit the lyrics of songs for *The Last Waltz* (1978). After the concert at San Francisco's Winterland on Thanksgiving Day, Scorsese (on crane) filmed a few additional numbers, including this one with Emmylou Harris and The Band on an MGM soundstage.



**LET IT BLEED:** The Maysles Brothers, in the editing room with Mick Jagger and Keith Richards, were in the right place at the right time to record the violence at a Rolling Stones concert at the Altamont Speedway in *Gimme Shelter* (1970). By simply observing events as they unfolded, "in a way, we not only captured history, we made it."



**CINÉMA VÉRITÉ:** D.A. Pennebaker followed Bob Dylan on tour in the UK for *Don't Look Back* (1967). "I was never interested in educating people about Dylan .... There are things happening all the time to real people. You don't have to enact them or write them. I'm trying to make a play, not an educational device."



**SOUL MUSIC:** Alan Parker said he made *The Commitments* (1991), about a Dublin band, because it combined the two elements he was most comfortable with: staging musical scenes and working with young people. He assembled his cast of non-pros based on musical ability rather than acting experience.



**LET'S GO:** Luis Valdez's *La Bamba* (1987) followed the brief rock 'n' roll stardom of Ritchie Valens (Lou Diamond Phillips) before he was killed in a plane crash with Buddy Holly ("the day the music died"). Valdez fleshed out the film with details about Valens' family, and Valens' songs were performed by Los Lobos.



**HIGH TIMES:** Michael Wadleigh, on stage with Canned Heat at *Woodstock* (1970), was "never in love with filmmaking, but was in love with certain messages" films could promote. "I wanted to include songs that were meaningful ... but the problem was that the fucking musicians would just throw away the set list."

PHOTOS: (TOP) COURTESY OF MARTIN SCORSESE; (BOTTOM, LEFT) MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) EVERETT

PHOTOS: (TOP) AMPAS; (BOTTOM, LEFT) COLUMBIA PICTURES; (BOTTOM, RIGHT) AMPAS