

Muppet Mania hits Edinburgh



In association with the Jim Henson Legacy Foundation, [Filmhouse](#) is delighted to present an in-depth retrospective of work by Jim Henson, creator of the Muppets, during the Easter holidays from 18 – 26 April 2011. In addition to his best loved feature films, Filmhouse will be screening, for the first time in the UK, nine comprehensive programmes of much rarer content: short films, early experimentations, commercials, TV appearances, and so forth.

James Rice, Programme Manager at Filmhouse, said:- “It’s an unmissable programme, for both families and grown-up Henson enthusiasts, alike. We’re also thrilled to welcome a special guest, Martin G Baker. Martin is a longstanding Henson collaborator and a producer on ‘The Muppets’ – the brand new Muppet movie currently in production – and he will visit Filmhouse to present a unique guided tour called ‘[Muppet History 101](#)’. Filmhouse warmly thanks the Jim Henson Legacy, Brooklyn Academy of Music, and Park Circus, for making the entire programme possible.”

Martin G Baker will also introduce some of the other screenings in the season. In twenty years spent working with The Jim Henson Company, from 1979 to 1999, he was responsible for managing an assortment of projects in television, film, home video and theme park productions. He served as Producer of three Muppet feature films, an Associate Producer on the feature film Labyrinth, and received an Emmy for his work as producer on the television show Muppets Tonight. Since 2000, Mr Baker has been working as an independent producer, working with executive producers on a variety of projects including Jack and the Beanstalk: The Real Story and Mirrormask for The Jim Henson Company, and The Muppets Wonderful Wizard of Oz for

the Walt Disney Company.

Jim Henson started performing with puppets in high school, and had his first television appearance during the summer before college. From the beginning, he decided to refer to his puppets as Muppets.

☒ Henson's interests soon turned to film and in 1964 he made the Academy Award®-nominated short *Time Piece*, which he wrote, directed, produced and starred in. Around this time he also made *The Cube* and *Youth '68* (cited by *Variety* as one of the year's best films), which were aired in segments on NBC's *Experiments in Television*.

By 1969 the Muppets had firmly established themselves after guest spots on various variety shows and hundreds of commercials. Henson received his big break when his company signed a deal to provide puppetry services to PBS' *Sesame Street*.

The success of his puppetry on *Sesame Street* led to the opportunity to create *The Muppet Show*, which became the most widely watched variety show in the world during the 1970s.

Henson went on to make three feature films starring the Muppets: *The Muppet Movie*, *The Great Muppet Capers* and *Muppets Take Manhattan*. *Time* magazine said of his creations: "The beauty of the Muppets, on both *Sesame Street* and their own show, was that they were cuddly (but not too cuddly), and not only cuddly. There is satire and sly wit; Bert and Ernie quarrel; Miss Piggy behaves unbecomingly; Kermit is sometimes exasperated. By adding just enough tartness to a sweet overall spirit, Henson purveyed a kind of innocence that was plausible for the modern imagination. His knowingness allowed us to accept his real gifts: wonder, delight, optimism."

By the early 80s Henson turned his attention to his other interests and stopped producing *The Muppet Show*. In 1982 he released *The Dark Crystal*, an ambitious fantasy film that

showcased the further developments he was making in puppetry and animatronics. He had not, however, completely turned his back on the Muppets, and continued to produce numerous television specials. In the early 80s he started two more ongoing television series, Fraggle Rock and the animated cartoon Muppet Babies. In 1986 Henson released Labyrinth, a fantasy film in the same mould as The Dark Crystal that combined live actors with puppets. In 1987 Henson launched the television show The Storyteller, an ambitious programme that showed a more dramatic use of puppetry and special effects than his previous television work.

Tragically in 1990, while working on the effects for Nicholas Roeg's The Witches (also screening at Filmhouse on 2 April), Henson died of a rare bacterial infection. The Jim Henson Company, now run by Henson's five children, continues his legacy of innovative entertainment that inspires and delights audiences around the world.

This series is produced by The Jim Henson Legacy and Brooklyn Academy of Music. Tour Executive Producer Irena Kovarova.