

Film News: Oscar-Winning Director Jonathan Demme Dies at 73

Submitted by [PatrickMcD](#) [1] on April 27, 2017 - 3:00pm

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NEW YORK CITY – He was the helmsman of “The Silence of the Lambs,” which won him Best Director and took home Best Picture at the 1992 Academy Awards, and made numerous other late 20th Century movie classics. Director Jonathan Demme died in New York City on April 26, 2017, at the age of 73.

Film writer Dave Kehr called Demme “the last of the great humanists,” and the director followed through on that description with an incredible run of films in the 1980s and ‘90s, which included “Melvin and Howard” (1980), “Something Wild” (1986), “Swimming to Cambodia” (1987), “Married to the Mob” (1988), “Lambs” (1991) and “Philadelphia” (1993). He also created one of the greatest rock documentaries ever, “Stop Making Sense” (1984, featuring the Talking Heads) and worked extensively with Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young on other rock docs. He even directed an episode of the TV classic “Columbo” in 1978, among his other TV achievements.



Director Jonathan Demme on the Set of ‘The Silence of the Lambs’

Photo credit: 20 Century Fox Home Entertainment

Robert Jonathan Demme was born in Baldwin, New York, and graduated college from the University of Florida. His early career, like so many other filmmakers in the late 1960s and early '70s, was with producer Roger Corman, known for making quickie "youth exploitation" films. He wrote and produced two such movies, until he made his directorial debut in "Caged Heat" (1974), and followed that up with the cult classic "Crazy Mama" (1975) and "Fighting Mad" (1976). His first "mainstream" film followed the Citizen's Band (CB) radio trend, coyly titled "Handle with Care" (1977). It took "Melvin and Howard" in 1980 to get Demme some artistic notice, and the film went on to win two Oscars (Best Original Screenplay and Best Supporting Actress for Mary Steenburgen).

After the film "Philadelphia," Demme never slowed down, doing a couple of remakes post the millennium – "The Truth About Charlie" (2002, a remake of 1963's "Charade") and "The Manchurian Candidate." (2004), and the well-received "Rachel Getting Married" (2008). His last film featured Meryl Streep as an aging rock star, entitled "Ricki and the Flash."

Jonathan Demme is survived by three children from two marriages. He died of complications due to esophageal cancer and heart disease.

Demme's interest in human nature and a summation of his career was expressed in this quote... "Your antagonist has to be every bit as formidable as your hero, or you diminish the character you're supposed to care about. For people starting out writing scripts, they're in that 'hiss-the-villain' mode, and you always want to say 'Wait, wait, wait. They're human too. Give them some problems and you'll end up with a better story.'"

Source material for this article is from Wikipedia. Jonathan Demme, 1944-2017



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