

# Letters on actor Richard Harris

6 November 2002

The following letters were received in response to the obituary, “Actor Richard Harris: a great talent only occasionally fulfilled,” by Paul Bond, published 30 October 2002.

Dear Mr. Bond,

This is the best and most thoughtful piece I have read in a long time regarding Richard Harris, his career as an actor and his unfortunate choice of roles. Though he often seemed to be at home in the hedonistic sixties, I think if he had been around a few decades earlier or later you would have seen him really fulfill his promise.

I can hardly believe that financiers and producers would have actually made the horrible films that I’ve seen him in during any other period of film history.

Also, Mr. Harris rushed himself into stardom, forgoing the years of training on the stage which would have given him a greater legacy to be remembered for once film stardom came his way, but I think that he was in a rush to prove to his father that he could be a success. His father was a very practical man, who considered Richard’s career folly and waste. Further, Richard suffered in the knowledge that he was the only child in the family whose name his father forgot constantly. I think that this is one of the reasons that he wanted his name up front and in big letters from the very beginning of his career.

Thank you for a really enjoyable article on my favorite actor. He was truly a unique spirit and the juxtaposition between his superior talents and his mediocre film career is one of the great paradoxes of Richard Harris’s legacy.

Sincerely,

MF

I have just read Paul Bond’s story on the life and death of Richard Harris.

I have read, I suppose, just about every article on the Internet on Mr. Harris since his recent passing. Perhaps fifty. Sometimes, when I can’t sleep, I’ll search for an

article here, maybe in London—or there—maybe in Melbourne. But I read them all.

Why? You see, as a teen I studied Richard Harris. I stutter and at times, as a practice to overcome it, have studied acting. And I picked the study of the voice of Richard Harris, in particular. And with that voice comes a certain demeanour. A certain confidence. A personality.

Because of this I, myself, grew to become a public speaker. Each time, before speaking, I would close my eyes to think of Harris’s style, rhythm and precision of speech. For that brief moment in time before that audience, I would become Richard Harris.

It worked. And because of it I developed a bond with the actor that, to the day, I cherish.

In 1997 I broke my arm and found out that a tumour caused it. Faced with my own mortality, on the night of the operation to determine how bad it all was, I turned to Harris’s readings of “The Prophet”. I read “On Death”. Because of that, I entered the operation with courage, determination and a calm I never thought I had. I wasn’t scared.

The tumour was benign. But the connection to Harris’s work solidified. So after his death, I read. Everything I can about him, I read. Learning a little more with every click of the mouse.

Yours, Mr. Bond, without a doubt, is the best. Yours is the one that Harris would have liked himself, I think.

Literate, honest. Pointed.

For this, I thank you. Because, you see, even though I never met him, Richard Harris was my friend.

RJ

St. Louis

You forgot to mention Harris’s performance as the poverty pimp Trumbull in Milos Forman’s screen version of Brecht’s *Three Penny Opera*, *Mac the Knife*. It was one of the few performances I’ve seen from Harris in recent years that was actually not painful to watch.

MH

Some time in the '70s I saw a made for television movie. Richard Harris was the star of that movie. The name was "The Snow Goose." That was the only time I had ever seen Richard Harris and I was very impressed.

I often have wondered if there is a video available of this movie. I loved it. Would you have any idea where I could find out if there is one? Since Paul Bond did not mention it in his article I am assuming he never saw this movie. I am sure he would have enjoyed it.

KL

Hi, I'm a Richard Harris fan and I very much enjoyed the article. Is there printed biographical material available about him?

KG



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