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| Pennebaker, Donn Alan (D.A.) (1925–) |
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| A passionate observer of America’s most significant cultural icons and political personalities, documentary filmmaker Donn Alan (D.A.) Pennebaker was born in Evanston, Illinois in 1925. He studied mechanical engineering at Yale University and served in the Naval Air Corps during World War II before joining Drew Associates, the New York-based documentary workshop. While collaborating with colleagues Robert Drew, Albert Maysles, and Richard Leacock on films about John F. Kennedy’s administration and an array of extraordinary citizens, Pennebaker became a pioneer of the incipient style of “direct cinema.” This mode of filmmaking involved the synchronous recording of sound and image along with fluid cinematography that immersed the viewer in the unfolding action. Leaving Drew Associates in 1963 in search of more artistic freedom, Pennebaker became increasingly interested in capturing counter-cultural figures (Bob Dylan in *Don’t Look Back*, 1967) and music festivals and concerts (*Monterey Pop*, 1968). During the mid-1970s, he formed a lasting personal and professional partnership with the filmmaker Chris Hegedus. In addition to continuing to track charismatic musicians and politicians, Pennebaker experimented with documenting inventors, artists, and entrepreneurs in the later part of his career. In 2012 he was honored with a Governor’s Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. List of Works *Day Break Express* (1953-1957): Pennebaker’s first film, *Day Break Express* is a lyrical  five-minute tour of New York City, shot on Kodachrome and set to the jazz  sounds of Duke Ellington.  *Primary* (1960): A feature-length chronicle of the 1960 Wisconsin Primary election  featuring the Democratic candidates John F. Kennedy and Hubert Humphrey.  *Don’t Look Back* (1967): A documentary about Bob Dylan’s 1965 tour of the United  Kingdom that spotlights the folk-rock icon’s mercurial persona.  *Depeche Mode 101* (1989): A group of teenage fans embark on a road trip to  meet the British synth-pop group, Depeche Mode.  *War Room* (1993): A behind-the-scenes look at the journey to Bill Clinton’s 1992  presidential election victory, revealing the backstage contributions of James Carville and George Stephanopoulos. |
| Further reading:  D.A. Pennebaker’s official website: <http://www.phfilms.com/>  Keith Beattie, *D.A. Pennebaker*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011.  Dave Saunders. *Direct Cinema: Observational Documentary and the Politics of the*  *Sixties*. London: Wallflower Press, 2007. |