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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 helping to create the New York-based documentary company Drew Associates in 1960. Working with Robert Drew, Albert Maysles, and Richard Leacock on films about John F. Kennedy’s administration, Pennebaker became a pioneer of the incipient style of American *direct cinema*. Both a highly technical practice as well as an aesthetic craft, this mode of production involved the synchronous recording of sound and image along with fluid cinematography that immersed the viewer in the unfolding action. |
| 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 helping to create the New York-based documentary company Drew Associates in 1960. Working with Robert Drew, Albert Maysles, and Richard Leacock on films about John F. Kennedy’s administration, Pennebaker became a pioneer of the incipient style of American *direct cinema*. Both a highly technical practice as well as an aesthetic craft, this mode of production involved the synchronous recording of sound and image along with fluid cinematography that immersed the viewer in the unfolding action.  Frustrated with the strictures of commercial television and searching for more artistic freedom to register the sensory experience of being part of an event, Pennebaker left Drew Associates in 1963. Drawn to the American counterculture, Pennebaker shot Bob Dylan’s 1965 tour in England (*Dont Look Back* [1967]) and recorded the rock stars and audience at the Monterey International Pop Music Festival in 1967 (*Monterey Pop* [1968]). During the mid-1970s, Pennebaker formed a lasting personal and professional partnership with the filmmaker Chris Hegedus. The team tracked charismatic musicians (*Depeche Mode 101* [1989], *Only the Strong Survive* [2002]) and Bill Clinton’s 1992 presidential campaign (*The War Room* [1993]), as well as documented inventors and entrepreneurs. Pennebaker continued to embrace his signature filming technique: shifting between extreme close-ups of individuals’ facial expressions and gestures and long-shots depicting whole scenes of activity, thus encouraging viewers to pay attention to how people perform in social settings. For his extraordinary contributions to documentary filmmaking, in 2012 Pennebaker was honoured with a Governors Award by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. List of Works: *Daybreak Express* (1953-1957)  *Primary* (1960)  *Dont Look Back* (1967)  *Monterey Pop* (1968)  *1 PM* (1971)  *The Energy War* (1978)  *Depeche Mode 101* (1989)  *The War Room* (1993)  *Only the Strong Survive* (2002)  *Kings of Pastry* (2009) Paratextual Materials: D. A. Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus’s official website: <http://www.phfilms.com/>.  Copyright: Pennebaker Hegedus Films.  D. A. Pennebaker interviewed by Sam Adams, 4 May 2011:  http://www.avclub.com/article/da-pennebaker-55463. Copyright: The A.V. Club.  Articles on the career of D. A. Pennebaker at the International Documentary Association  website: <http://www.documentary.org/search/node/d.a.+pennebaker>. Copyright: International Documentary Association.  Martin Scorsese’s tribute to D. A. Pennebaker and Richard Leacock for the DocFilm  Institute, San Francisco State University, March 2006:  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dy8viNy8P6o. |
| Further reading:  (Beattie)  (Cunningham)  (Kahana)  (Saunders) |