

Doctoral thesis title:

Music documentaries by Donn Alan Pennebaker (1961-1989)

Abstract

Music documentary is undoubtedly one of the most popular types of nonfiction film. Conceived at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s, it has been appreciated by music and film fans alike. One of the artists behind the success of music documentary and the originator of the very concept was the American film-maker Donn Alan Pennebaker. Pennebaker rose to fame as the creator of the first rockumentaries and will be remembered in the history of cinema as a full-time chronicler of the pop culture evolution. Through the lens of his camera he captured such iconic events as the legendary Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England, the Monterey Pop Festival of 1967 or the symbolic death of glam rock during the final performance of Ziggy Stardust.

Although his involvement in the creation and evolution of music documentary is undisputed, Pennebaker's artistic profile, his music-oriented works and their possible implications are yet to be thoroughly researched. This thesis aims to address this gap by offering a comprehensive overview of Pennebaker's music documentaries directed from 1961 to 1989 and examining his artistic legacy in a historical context.

The main focus of this study is Pennebaker's directing style and the evolution of his film language over the years. Crucial for this research are both the direction in which his ways of expression had been changing and the underlying factors that shaped their course. The presented analyses discuss such influences as technological breakthroughs in the film industry, the evolution of television, social and cultural events, economic aspects and the political background. The central part of my thesis is concerned with situating Pennebaker's works within the context of movements characteristic for the given decades (particularly the idea of direct cinema) and against the backdrop of television documentary and propaganda films. His role in the development of music documentary is also discussed.

In my thesis I have predominantly employed research methods used in historical studies, film studies, culture studies and comparative studies. The adoption of a broad cultural outlook and the use of contextual analysis have played prominent roles in my research.

The thesis is divided into four parts comprising seven chapters in total. The first part discusses the initial assumptions that I have made. The second part investigates Pennebaker's

works produced between 1961 and 1969. The third part discusses movies covering the period from 1970 to 1989. The final part synthesises and attempts to formulate conclusions from the presented analyses.

This thesis contributes to expanding and refining the body of knowledge about music documentaries directed by Pennebaker. The findings include the identification of Pennebaker's distinctive filming techniques, demonstration of the effects of his film language on the broadly defined music documentary and investigation of the relationship between the director's artistic evolution and the contemporaneous changes, including cultural, social and technological progress. The analyses offered as part of this thesis clearly demonstrate that Pennebaker's works, spanning nearly 30 years, closely mirror these events.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. Pennebaker', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.