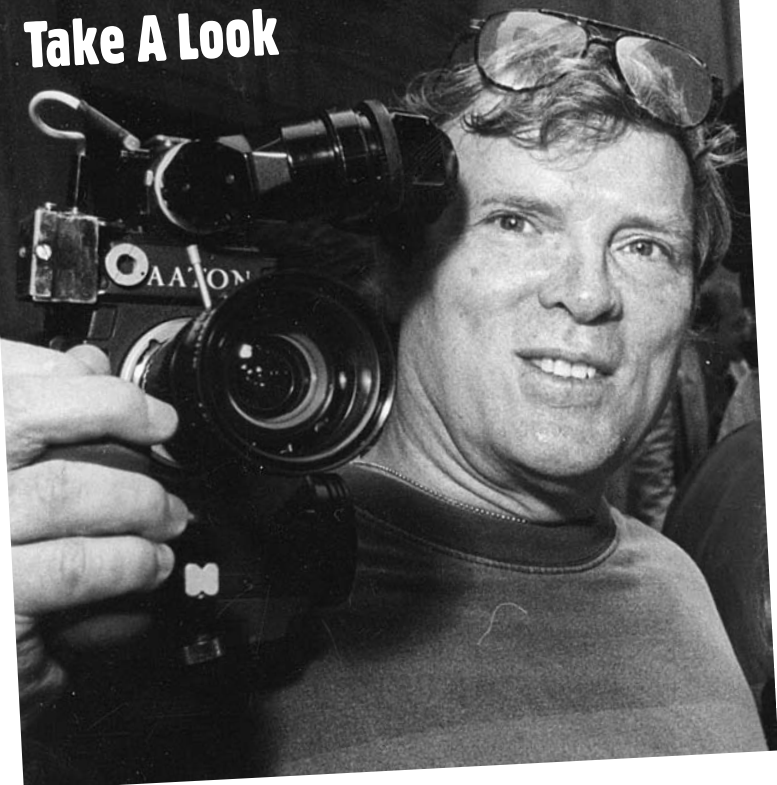


D.A. PENNEBAKER

Take A Look



the characters, leaving it up to the viewer to learn who they are. He feels that this same responsibility should apply to documentary films. When you watch a Pennebaker film, no one will tell you what you're seeing. The camera simply moves from performer to audience and back again, leaving you to understand the story that is being told.

Pennebaker was working for Time-Life films when Bob Dylan's manager Albert Grossman appeared in his office and asked him if he would like to accompany Dylan on his 1965 tour of England. Pennebaker was anxious to create theatrical films and readily agreed. He brought along a soundman to record the concert audio, but describes the project as largely a "one man adventure."

He didn't know much about Dylan at the time, but he "liked his way with language. I thought of him as a Kerouac kid. He took it another step and invented himself everyday. He had a seriousness that hadn't been seen in pop music in this country in recent years."

Pennebaker followed Dylan around England with his camera for three to four weeks and says that they got along well.

The English audiences "seemed older, more mature. There were no posters or promotion, but whenever they appeared at a venue, people were

waiting." He credits this to a

certain "Messiah quality" that seemed to emanate from Dylan.

The result of their travels is the classic film *Don't Look Back*, now being feted with a special 40th anniversary reissue that is packaged in a lavish new boxed set that contains, in addition to the original film, an all new film created by Pennebaker for the occasion. "I didn't want to make *Don't Look Back II*. I kept songs out of the original film, because I didn't want to make a musical; I wanted to make a film about a musician."

The new film includes much more music because when Pennebaker was preparing it, he listened to the music again and realized that Dylan is "a hell of a poet. The music has a fantastic charisma." The new package also contains a book with the original film's dialog and a flip book that allows the viewer to recreate

the video of "Subterranean Homesick Blues" that opens the film and has been called the first music video.

No discussion of D.A. Pennebaker's career would be complete without covering his classic *Monterey Pop*. When Lou Adler and John Phillips asked him to film the one and only Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, he was immediately struck by how many bands were scheduled to appear. "It was like an Encyclopedia Britannica of bands," he says. His original plan was to film one song by each band. What he didn't count on was Jimi Hendrix. Like most Americans, Pennebaker didn't know much about Hendrix when he appeared at Monterey. At first, he wondered what the racket was. "It took me five minutes to realize that it was fantastic."

Another legendary performer further complicated things. He had planned to include white R&B bands like Paul Butterfield, and the Electric Flag in his film, but when Otis Redding appeared, Pennebaker says he "blew every imitation white band away."

Pennebaker decided that his film should tell a story, and bands were included according to their role in helping to tell it. From the rough blues of Canned Heat to the sublime spirituality of Ravi Shankar, Pennebaker was determined to provide a "dramatic ending to a mystical process." As anyone who has seen the disc of outtakes included in the film's 2003 boxed set can attest, there were some great performances that didn't make the final cut.

After more than 50 years as a filmmaker, D.A. Pennebaker is not done yet. The *Don't Look Back* boxed set will be released on Feb. 27.

by Ken Shane

D.A. Pennebaker has been present at a number of significant moments in the history of popular music. Fortunately, he has been there with camera in hand, recording these moments for eternity. His ability to combine a certain amount of good fortune, an uncanny prescience and a great deal of talent has resulted in several of the most important documentaries of the rock era. Pennebaker's discerning eye has allowed him to capture some of rock's most storied musicians at the moment that they became legends.

Pennebaker did not set out to pioneer the filmmaking style for which he has become famous. It was more out of necessity than design that his handheld, narrative-free style evolved, and when his early films were well received in Paris, the French called his style *cinéma vérité*, or "film truth."

The director is not opposed to narration in documentary films, but feels that the audience has a certain responsibility to do their homework, and points out that in most fictional films, no names appear beneath

