

## DA Pennebaker to Speak at Eighth Annual Cityvisions Film Festival



*Shooting Bob Dylan's 1965 tour of England for "Don't Look Back"*

Documentary filmmaker, DA Pennebaker will give the keynote address at Cityvisions 2006, the eighth annual showcase and festival of thesis films from the MFA in Media Arts Production at City College. This year's event, featuring twelve new documentaries and fiction shorts will take place at the Clearview 62<sup>nd</sup> & Broadway Cinema on May 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, starting at 6PM. DA Pennebaker is widely regarded as one of the pioneers of cinema verite filmmaking. The style revolutionized the documentary

genre by discarding narration, reenactments and other staged techniques in favor of direct and uninterrupted observation, creating a fly-on-the-wall sense of immediacy. [\[cont'd on pg 2\]](#)

### Inside this issue...

*Visiting Andrzej Wajda in Warsaw - page 3*

*Student Academy Award Finalist - page 3*

*Alumni & Student News - page 4*

## Christine Vachon – MFA Kaye Artist-In-Residence Gives HBO Sneak Preview of *The Notorious Bettie Page*

Look among the titles of the most daring and delirious American independent films of the past 15 years and you'll discover that a good number of them share one name in common: producer Christine Vachon. Now look among the names of our esteemed MFA faculty at City College and you'll find that name once more. That's because Christine Vachon is also our Kaye Artist-in-Residence for the Spring 2006 semester.

Over the past ten years, Vachon has produced such cutting-edge, controversial, and entertaining films as the Academy Award winning *Boys Don't Cry* (1999), *Happiness* (1998), and *Kids* (1995), directed by Larry Clark, *One Hour Photo* (2001), starring Robin Williams, and Todd Haynes' *Far from Heaven* (2002), among many others. [\[cont'd on pg 3\]](#)

## MFA Documentaries and Albert Maysles Featured @ Docworks NYC

Eight short documentaries from City College MFA students along with trailers for this year's *Cityvisions*-bound thesis films were featured at the first annual "Docworks-NYC" festival held at the CUNY Graduate Center in March. The City College documentaries, ranging in length from 1 minute to 15 minutes, capped off a program, which included thirteen other films from Brooklyn, Queens and Hunter, other CUNY colleges that offer documentary production programs. [\[cont'd on pg 2\]](#)



*MFA Documentary Directors, Elizabeth Harris (left) & Lazara Nelson (center) with Albert Maysles at Docworks-NYC*

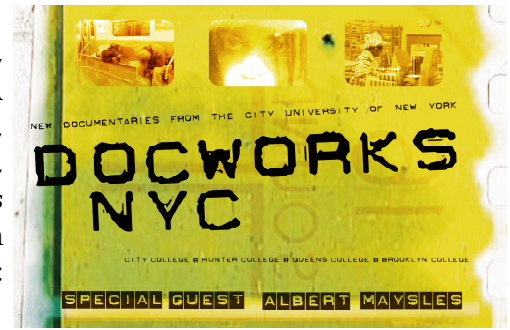
## "6AM" by MFA Student Carmen Vidal - Chosen as Oscar Finalist - [see story on page 3](#)



*Cinematographer/Student Academy Award Finalist, Carmen Vidal behind the camera*

cont'd from page 1

The seminal documentary maker, Albert Maysles (*Grey Gardens*, *Running Fence*, *Gimme Shelter*) was the guest speaker. The CCNY MFA Program was represented by *Hidden Leaf* (Bangbay Siboliban) *Jikken*, (Doug Ing), *Holy Water* (Elizabeth Harris), *Believe* (Lazara Nelson), *Wedding Picture* (Yolanda Pividal), *6AM* (Carmen Vidal), *Brothers* (Daniel Akiba) and *Florida Trilogy* (Lori Chodos). For more information on the films, filmmakers and participating colleges, visit the website: <<http://www.cuny.cuny.edu/cunyfilmfest/docworksny>> □



DA Pennebaker and Chris Hegedus

cont'd from page 1

Since 1977 Pennebaker has partnered with Chris Hegedus on a host of acclaimed films. Most recently they co-directed with Nick Doob *ELAINE STRITCH AT LIBERTY* which earned three Primetime Emmy nominations including Outstanding Direction of a Music, Comedy, or Variety Program. The team received the D.W. Griffith Award for Best Documentary of the Year and an Academy Award nomination for their 1994 film *THE WAR ROOM*, which followed Bill Clinton's first presidential campaign. In the 60s, Pennebaker's portrait of Bob Dylan, *DONT LOOK BACK*, and *MONTEREY POP*, starring Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix, were two of the earliest films using real-life drama to have a successful theatrical distribution.

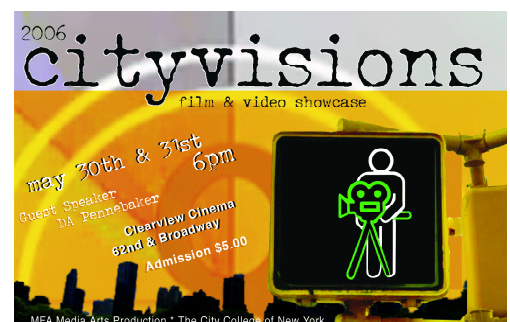
Pennebaker's appearance at Cityvisions is a homecoming of sorts. He taught documentary filmmaking at City College in the 1970's. "City was my favorite teaching gig", he reflected. This sort of celebrates my own connection with that documentary film class. It was a wonderful class and I loved them all. Quite a few have gone on to major achievements since." According to Pennebaker, his return also has an ironic aspect as he was "canned" from the program for advising students to "get out and use their filmmaking skills to earn a living and not worry about the degree City was going to confer on them if they showed up for graduation". He added with a smile, "I certainly deserved some sort of disciplinary action".

This year's lineup of thesis films includes seven new documentaries and five fiction films. Some of the screen stories include, a filmmaker trying to find his birth father to answer questions about his racial identity; the "dumpster diving" movement known as the Freegans; an examination of the life and legacy of writer Hunter Thompson; a parable about the flight of African American slaves, and the ironic story of a hermit who became a media celebrity.

MFA Director, Dave Davidson, commented, "This is such a strong collection of films, perhaps our best ever. It's compelling material – entertaining, but by no means lightweight. This group of filmmakers really exemplifies the philosophy of our program, which is to tell important stories with social implications. We are thrilled with their work." Davidson agrees with Pennebaker that the experience of filmmaking is what counts. "We don't treat these project as student films per se. Rather they are the first professional films in their careers. They are required to create a marketing plan to get them into festivals and distribution. The MFA has a terrific track record of thesis films going to major festivals and getting broadcast and distribution deals."

Cityvisions is open to the public with a general admission fee of \$5.00 per night. DA Pennebaker will speak at 6PM on May 30th. Awards will be presented to films selected by a jury of industry professionals during the second night of the program on May 31st. □

For the complete 2006 Cityvisions film line-up and more information on this event, visit the website at: <<http://www.cityvisions-ccny.com/>>



## CCNY Professors Visit Academy Award Winner in Warsaw, Poland



Director Andrzej Wajda in between questions on set.

Warsaw in January. Who could resist? Clearly not Professors Jerry Carlson and Andrzej Krakowski. Chair of the Department of Media & Communication Arts Krakowski returned to his native city to see friends, family, and fellow filmmakers. Coordinator of Critical Studies Carlson journeyed in his role as producer and host of the long running series on CUNY-TV's *City Cinematheque*.

The specific occasion for the meeting was to produce discussions with Wajda about two of his most important films — *Man of Marble* (1977) and *Man of Iron* (1981) – for screening on CUNY-TV. Both are considered masterpieces of modern European filmmaking and key documents in the Polish struggle to achieve democracy. Carlson traveled with the support of the Polish Cultural Institute of New York in order to help celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of Solidarity, the movement that cracked the door of freedom. The coincidence of Carlson and Krakowski being in Poland at the same time resulted in Krakowski serving as interpreter for Wajda during the interview. This also proved to be somewhat of a reunion, as Wajda was one of Krakowski's professors in his student days.

The interview with Wajda took place in the *Andrzej Wajda Master School of Film Directing*, one of the artist's projects to keep alive the rich traditions of Polish and other European national cinemas. A lively, charming man who turned 80 in March 2006, Wajda has a presence that can only be described as charismatic. During breaks in the filming Krakowski chatted with his mentor about ways CCNY and the Polish school might collaborate. Back in New York, post-production of the discussions would be handled at CUNY-TV by bilingual editor Sylvester Lukasiewicz (CCNY B.A. '03 & M.F.A. '05). □

cont'd from page 1

"6AM" a short film by MFA student Carmen Vidal ('06) was selected as a national finalist for the 2006 Student Academy awards, to be held in Los Angeles on June 11<sup>th</sup>. The film was one of two finalists among 149 entries in Region 3, which includes New York and Puerto Rico. "6AM" is portrait of a quiet New York City in the last moments before dawn. Although it is a documentary in the vein of Walter Ruttmann's "Berlin – Symphony of a Great City" and Joris Ivens' "Rain", "6AM" was moved to the "Alternative" category in the regionals, because of its strong visuals and meditative quality.

Vidal, is a second year Cinematography major attending the MFA program at City College from her native Spain. "6AM" was created as a group project for two of Vidal's MFA classes: "Producing & Directing Documentary" and "Research & Writing Documentary-II. For this film she stepped out from behind the camera and, rather than function as the Director of Photography, she was the Writer/Director. The other students from the class of 2006 who collaborated on the project are Octavio Warnock-Graham (DP), Sara Booth (Editor), Ira Blanchard (2nd Camera) and Piotr Kajustura (Producer). "6AM" wasn't even a thesis project, so I never thought to even enter it. My editor, Sara Booth convinced me to give it a try", said Vidal. "Most of the crew was there for the announcement of the finalists. We went crazy. I think we were the happiest people in the room."

The Student Academy Awards is a program of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, and accepts national entries from three regions. The competition, now in its 33rd year, is designed to support and encourage filmmakers with no previous professional experience who are enrolled in accredited colleges and universities. □

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The appointment of Christine Vachon as our Kaye Artist-in-Residence is ideal for the MFA program at City College because we advocate for the production of risk-taking work. Our students are encouraged to create the imaginative, socially meaningful, and cost-effective projects that have become-in large measure due to Christine Vachon--the hallmark of the independent film community. On April 5th, Vachon premiered her newest, yet to be released film, *The Notorious Bettie Page*, to a filled-to-capacity audience in Shepard Hall. Vachon was on hand to introduce the film and field questions from the audience after the screening, including some thorny ones requiring her to be producer, cultural historian and media theorist all at once.



Kaye-Artist-in-Residence Christine Vachon (left) and MFA Faculty at sneak preview screening of "The Notorious Bettie Page"

*The Notorious Bettie Page*, directed by Mary Harron and starring Gretchen Mol, tells the story of the successful 1950's pin-up model, one of the first sex icons in America, who became the target of a Senate investigation before turning her life over to religion. We were fortunate to show it in advance of its opening, and even more fortunate, thanks to the H. Austin and Florence R.S. Kaye Foundation which makes possible the Kaye Artist-in-Residence Program, to have Christine Vachon as a member of our CCNY film community this semester. □



**Octavio Warnock-Graham - 2006**

Octavio has been awarded the 2006 Danielle and Larry Nyman Family Project Award for his Masters Documentary Thesis, *Family Secret*, a 30 minute personal journey examining a mother's choice to conceal her son's racial identity from her community, her family and her child. The Danielle and Larry Nyman Family Project Award is given to one CCNY student whose work exhibits a unique view on the dynamics of family life in America.

**Elisabeth Harris - 2006**

Thesis film, *The Hermit Of Manana*, has been selected as part of a Maine History & Ecology seminar series and MFA student director Elisabeth Harris will give a presentation and Q&A about her thesis film in Maine on July 6th. Please visit the website for film and festival information at <[www.thehermitofmanana.com](http://www.thehermitofmanana.com)>.

**Darren Ryan - 2005**

Darren is working in the Visual Arts Department at Ramapo College of New Jersey as Equipment/Facilities Manager. He is also keeping busy editing side projects such as spec commercials, and original shorts. He will be directing and editing his own original short this Summer, *The Education Of James Lynch*, that will be the first in a series of black and white "Noir" style pieces.

**Julian Renner - 2005**

Julian's MFA thesis film, *A Piece of Mind*, recently entered into NBC's **Independent Producer Showcase**, a program block dedicated to presenting the efforts of independent producers. *A Piece of Mind*, will air this Summer on WNBC's Newest Digital Television Channel 4.4, which is soon to be carried on cable systems throughout the tri-state area. The Independent Producer Showcase is a venue for participants to show their work, and in some cases introduce them to the public. For more details visit: <<http://www.wnbc.com/ips/index.htm>>

**Ben Schwartz - 2005**

Ben is presently employed as the staff director of photography with **Shadowbox Pictures** in Yardley, PA. In recent months he has shot commercials for **Turtle Wax**, **Blue Hippo** and **DirectV**, as well as various corporate assignments. He recently completed the Santa Fe High Definition Workshop for Digital Imaging Technicians, and he has since served as DIT on numerous high-def projects shot with a Sony HDC-950.

**Doug Ing - 2005**

Doug Ing has moved back to his hometown of Honolulu, HI and is currently working as an assistant professor of Visual Communication at **Hawai'i Pacific University**, teaching graphic design and communications. His thesis documentary, *Jikken* had its world premiere at the Port Townsend Film Festival and also screened at the Northwest Asian Film Festival (Seattle). Doug and his team of one, **Masked Men** completed a short documentary: *Tokiwa*, for the 1st annual International Documentary Challenge. His genre was direct cinema and theme was freedom.

**Anjanette Levert - 2005**

Anjanette Levert's thesis film "The Wedding Proposal" was picked up for distribution by Filmmakers Library. It has screened in New York and Atlanta, most recently at the Reel Sisters of the Diaspora Film Festival and the Independent Black Film Festival. Last summer she was the Assistant Production Coordinator for the indie film, *A Very Serious Person*, produced by adjunct Professor, Richard Guay. The film makes its debut at the 2006 Tribeca Film Festival. For more information on Additionally Levert's work, visit her website at [www.anjanettelevert.com](http://www.anjanettelevert.com).

**Bill Harkins - 2004**

Bill recently left Teletime Productions to expand his horizons experiences as a writer and director. His short, *Home Free*, is a current play option for a new show aired on WNYE'-25, called **Backdrop NYC**. He is also in the final stages of completing his feature screenplay, *Thurcon Exclusive*, as well as cutting a documentary entitled, *Tree Sellers*. Bill also freelances as a commercial director and field producer. His thesis film, *Marcus' Story* ([www.marcusstory.com](http://www.marcusstory.com)) screened at Smmashfest, Queens International Film Festival, Cinequest On-Line, and, most recently, will screen at Aarhus International Film Festival in Denmark in April 2006.

**James Machado - 2004**

James recently edited a 3-hour documentary special on MSNBC entitled, *Real Journeys: Love and Marriage*, which examined the lives of four very diverse married couples in America and the turning points of their relationships. This spring he will begin cutting a magazine style talk show for **CNBC**, called *DLife TV*, geared towards an audience of Diabetes sufferers. James is also looking for funded independent projects (fiction and documentary) to work on after the completion of the *DLife TV* show. Meanwhile, he also teaches AVID at **DCTV**.

**Joelle Gonzalez-Laguer - 2002**

After three years of a self-imposed hiatus from Production, Joelle is proudly inaugurating his own Production Company, **JOKE Productions**. He is currently teaching at Hunter College, and working on an adaptation of Francisco Arrivi's play *Vejigantes* for his New York debut, and also aims to publish a book on poetry in the near future.

**Robert Green - 2002**

Robert Greene's documentaries and experimental works have played in film festivals across the country. His most recent video, *One Dead in Ohio* was selected to screen at the 2006 Portland Documentary and Experimental Film Festival. For more information on Robert Green's work, visit <<http://imdb.com/name/nm1914992/bio>>.

**Eunjoo Yi - 2001**

Eunjoo's recent screenplay, *Secret Yet*, won a grand prix award from a screenplay contest held on October, 2005 in Korea by the Korean Film Council. She was invited to the ceremony and won \$10,000 and an all expenses paid trip. While in Korea, she met investors who are currently negotiating with her to make the film in NY. If given the opportunity, she will be the director of a feature length fiction film.

**Ingeborg Lichtenberg - 2001**

For the past four years, Ingeborg has worked in South Africa as a freelance camera-person. In addition, he's also producing, writing, directing and shooting four of his own documentaries, two of which he editing on his own. Ingeborg also joined one of South Africa's three biggest production companies, **Urban Brew**, to help build their new venture in South Africa.

**Andrew Clark - 2001**

Andrew currently works at **travelocity.com** as an Interface Developer. He also working various web design projects on a freelance basis.

To send us news for our next issue, find out more about the MFA in Media Arts Production Program at CCNY, or to request an application for Fall 2007,



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