

American MASTERS

thirteen
WNET NEW YORK

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press information

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THIRTEEN/WNET NEW YORK'S **AMERICAN MASTERS** CELEBRATES 20 YEARS OF AWARD-WINNING, CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED FILMS WITH ANOTHER EXTRAORDINARY SEASON OF GROUNDBREAKING PROFILES

Ric Burns Offers Fresh Take On Andy Warhol; Sydney Pollack Directs First Feature-Length Documentary On Frank Gehry; John Ford And John Wayne Revisited

Walter Cronkite, Marilyn Monroe, Nat King Cole, Annie Leibovitz And Woody Guthrie Highlight Season

It began in 1986 as an idea whose time had come - a public television series that transcended traditional biography by creating rich mosaics examining the life, work and creative process of America's most inventive artists, writers, filmmakers, musicians, architects, choreographers, composers and performers. Over two decades, **AMERICAN MASTERS** has consistently won over viewers and critics with a fierce dedication to the fine art of the documentary. The result? Six Peabodys. Sixteen Emmys. Two Grammys. And an Oscar. This season, the work continues. **AMERICAN MASTERS** 20th anniversary season launches with **John Ford/John Wayne: The Filmmaker and The Legend**, a look at the 50-year friendship between two film legends on opposite sides of the camera. Their professional collaboration changed the movies, changed themselves and changed the way America saw itself. The film premieres Wednesday, May 10 at 9 p.m. (ET) on PBS.

“When I created **AMERICAN MASTERS** in 1986 my goal was to provide a testament to the nation's greatest thinkers, artists and creative movements. Continuing our role as keeper of the cultural archive is a wonderful way to celebrate our first 20 years,” says Susan Lacy,

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executive producer of **AMERICAN MASTERS**. “We're excited about the coming season. Once again, we put the times into context while providing a deeper layer of understanding of cultural icons who broke color barriers, raised the bar on news coverage, redefined mass media, and spoke for millions through song.”

In addition to **The Filmmaker and The Legend**, other premieres include:

- o **The World of Nat King Cole**, May 17 at 9 p.m. (ET).

This 60-minute film focuses not just on Cole's celebrity, but on the Civil Rights movement and how the singer of such popular songs as “Mona Lisa,” “Too Young” and “Pretend” broke through major racial barriers in the entertainment industry as the first black American to have his own national radio show and the first black American to have his own television show.

- o **Woody Guthrie: This Land is Your Land**, July 12 at 9 p.m. (ET)

His music has been recorded by everyone from the Mormon Tabernacle Choir to U2. Originally blowing out of the Dust Bowl during the 1930s Depression, he blended vernacular, rural music and populism to give voice to millions of downtrodden citizens. His prolific music, poetry and prose were politically leftist but uniquely patriotic and always inspirational. His is a complex story filled with frenetic creative energy and a treasure trove of cultural history - as well as personal imperfections and tragedy.

- o **Marilyn Monroe: Still Life**, July 19 at 9 p.m. (ET)

It is the still images - the iconic face, the expressions and poses - that make up our collective memory of Marilyn. She was, arguably, the most photographed person ever. **AMERICAN MASTERS** tells her story through such artists as Richard Avedon and Henri Cartier-Bresson, Inge Morath and Andy Warhol - her relationship with their cameras produced an enduring body of work that still dazzles and moves us, evoking both desire and pathos.

- o **Walter Cronkite**, July 26 at 9 p.m. (ET).

When Walter Cronkite moved to New York City in 1954 to pioneer the first evening news

broadcast as anchorman, he assumed a central role in the nascent medium of television news. Through nearly 70 years as a journalist, Cronkite has covered virtually every major news event of note, from his early D-Day reporting through the space program, political assassinations, Watergate, Vietnam, the hostage crisis and John Glenn's return to space. Today, he continues to be a voice of reason in an uncertain world.

- o **Sketches of Frank Gehry**, September 20 at 9 p.m. (ET).

Frank Gehry is the rare architect who has garnered both critical acclaim and popular recognition. His designs dramatically blur the line between art and architecture, creating dynamic structures and unpredictable interiors. Gehry's close friend, the award-winning producer/director Sidney Pollack, directs his first feature documentary with an approach akin to Gehry's own impromptu, free-hand style.

- o **Andy Warhol**, September 27 and 28 at 9 p.m. (ET).

No artist in the second half of the 20th century was more famous - or, perhaps, more famously misunderstood - than Warhol. Director Ric Burns explores Warhol's astonishing artistic output - paintings, drawings and photographs, films and television, books, magazines and musical performances - from the late 1940s to his untimely death in 1987. **AMERICAN MASTERS** is the first to explore in depth the immense archives at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh.

- o **Annie Leibovitz**, tbd.

Annie Leibovitz has produced some of the most iconic images of the last 30 years and is, literally, our most influential woman photographer. She's shot the rich and famous, the profound and powerful, the exceptional and notorious, and the horrors of war. Masterful at exposing her photographic subjects, Annie's own life has been private and protected. In this film, she made the decision to bare her artistic process, her personal journey and her delicate balancing of fame and family to the camera - a camera that is being vigilantly pointed by a filmmaker who is her younger sister.

AMERICAN MASTERS is scheduled to broadcast several encore presentations from its remarkable film library, including Leonard Bernstein (9/6), Ray Charles (5/7), Albert Einstein (8/16), Aretha Franklin (5/24), Judy Garland (8/30), George Gershwin (6/7), Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan (8/23), Edward R. Murrow (8/2), Willie Nelson (8/9), Cole Porter (6/14), Preston Sturges (9/13), Muddy Waters (5/24), and last year's critical and audience favorite, Bob Dylan (6/28 and 7/5).

Susan Lacy is the executive producer of **AMERICAN MASTERS**. Barry Schulman is director of cultural and arts programs for Thirteen/WNET New York.

To take **AMERICAN MASTERS** beyond the television broadcast and further explore the themes, stories, and personalities of masters past and present, the companion Web site (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters>), created by Thirteen/WNET New York, offers interviews, essays, photographs, outtakes and other resources.

AMERICAN MASTERS is produced for PBS by Thirteen/WNET New York. This acclaimed series, now celebrating its 20th season, has become a cultural legacy in its own right. The **AMERICAN MASTERS** film library is one of the most highly honored in television history with profiles of more than 130 artistic giants. In addition to six Peabodys, an Oscar and two Grammys, **AMERICAN MASTERS** has won 16 Emmys, including Outstanding Primetime Non-Fiction Series for 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004.

AMERICAN MASTERS is made possible by the support of the National Endowment for the Arts and by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Additional funding for **AMERICAN MASTERS** is provided by Rosalind P. Walter, The Blanche & Irving Laurie Foundation, Jack Rudin, The Marilyn M. Simpson Charitable Lead Trusts, The André and Elizabeth Kertész Foundation, and public television viewers. More information about **AMERICAN MASTERS** can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

Thirteen/WNET New York is one of the key program providers for public television, bringing

such acclaimed series as *Nature*, *Great Performances*, ***American Masters***, *Charlie Rose*, *Religion & Ethics NewsWeekly*, *Wide Angle*, *Secrets of the Dead*, and *Cyberchase* - as well as the work of Bill Moyers - to audiences nationwide. As the flagship public broadcaster in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut metro area, Thirteen reaches millions of viewers each week, airing the best of American public television along with its own local productions such as The Ethnic Heritage Specials, The Thirteen Walking Tours, *New York Voices*, and *Reel New York*. Thirteen extends the impact of its television productions with educational and community outreach projects - including the Celebration of Teaching and Learning in Spring 2006. And as broadcast and digital media converge, Thirteen is blazing trails in the creation of Web sites, enhanced television, CD-ROMs, DVD-ROMs, educational software, and other cutting-edge media products. More information about Thirteen can be found at: www.thirteen.org.

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