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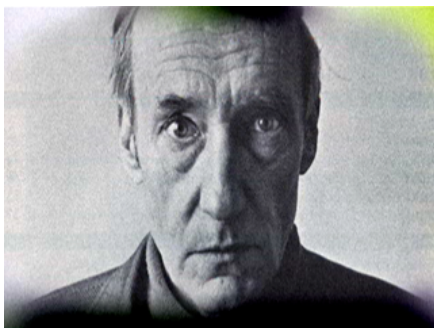
For downloadable images, visit pbs.org/pressroom/

For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/burroughs

***WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS: A MAN WITHIN TO PREMIERE
ON THE PBS SERIES INDEPENDENT LENS ON
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 22, 2011 AT 10PM***

(San Francisco, CA)—Featuring never-before-seen archival footage of the legendary beat author and American icon William Burroughs, as well as exclusive interviews with colleagues and confidants including John Waters, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, Gus Van Sant, and Laurie Anderson, *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within* is a probing, yet loving look at the man whose works at once savaged conservative ideals, spawned countercultural movements, and reconfigured twentieth century culture. Narrated by Peter Weller, with a soundtrack by Patti Smith and Sonic Youth, Yony Leyser's *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within* will premiere on the Emmy® and Peabody Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by America Ferrera, on Tuesday, February 22, 2011 at 10 PM (check local listings).

Born the heir to the Burroughs adding machine fortune, William Burroughs struggled throughout his life with addiction, authority, and personal relationships, but his artistic influence on late twentieth century pop culture is undeniable. In music, artists as diverse as David Bowie, Steely Dan, the Doors, Patti Smith, and Kurt Cobain paid homage; he was embraced by the punk movement and coined the term "heavy metal." He appeared in films by Gus van Sant, while David Cronenberg successfully adapted his masterwork, *Naked Lunch*. Having lived through and written about the extremes of drug and queer culture, Burroughs paved the way for generations to come.



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Burroughs's work emerged from a creative yet troubled life that was shaped by his addictions, a dangerous attraction to guns, the tragedy of his wife's death, and the consequences of neglecting his son. Yony Leyser's riveting documentary breaks the surface of the troubled and brilliant world of one of the greatest writers of the twentieth century.

To learn more about the film and the issues involved, visit the companion website for *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within* at www.pbs.org/independentlens/burroughs. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section, where viewers can share their ideas and opinions.

Featured On Air Participants, in Alphabetical Order

Fred Aldrich - Friend

Laurie Anderson - Artist

Amiri Baraka - Poet

Jello Biafra - Dead Kennedys musician, activist

Victor Bockris - Author

Dr. Dennis Daily - Sex therapist, professor emeritus

Marcus Ewert - Former boyfriend

James Grauerholz - Executor to the Burroughs's estate

Tom Peschio - Friend

Genesis Breyer P-Orridge - Musician/artist

Iggy Pop - Musician

Ira Silverberg - Literary agent

Patti Smith - Musician/writer

Gus Van Sant - Filmmaker

Anne Waldman - Poet

John Waters - Filmmaker, artist, writer

Regina Weinreich - Beat Generation historian

Peter Weller - Actor (star of film adaptation of *Naked Lunch*)

About the Filmmaker

Yony Leyser is a young Chicago-based filmmaker who has directed several short films. After being kicked out of film school, he moved to Lawrence, Kansas, the final home of William Burroughs, and made *William S. Burroughs: A Man Within*.

Leyser also works as a curator, video artist, and photographer, documenting people who are outside the mainstream of society. His photograph series have included a utopian transgender commune in Tennessee; Christiana, an anarchist village in Copenhagen; Kopi, Berlin's largest squat; and naked bike rides in the U.S. His work has been shown in galleries and theaters in Chicago, New York, London, Berlin, Paris, Vienna, and Los Angeles.

Directors Statement

When I picked up my first copy of *Naked Lunch* in high school, I instantly fell in love with Burroughs's pure deviant genius. The work of Burroughs, Kerouac, and Ginsberg, I thought, must have blown a lot of peoples' minds back in the conservative 1950s. These

writers were cultural beacons, breaking away from the grey, conformist, American machine. Half a century later, in the Midwest of the early 2000s, their ideas were still potent.

I picked up all the literature and artifacts that I could get my hands on. After being kicked out of college for my own rebellious act (a deviant art piece criticizing the dean of students), I moved to Lawrence, Kansas and decided to investigate Burroughs's life more thoroughly. Encouraged by his friends and colleagues, I began to shed the angst of my teenage years and gain a better understanding of both Burroughs and myself.

I interviewed numerous people in Lawrence, where Burroughs spent the last years of his life. Later I reached out to scholars, poets, and eventually those closest to him, first building a foundation and working my way up as I developed my skills as an interviewer. Burroughs's circle of friends was incredibly diverse. They included rock stars, trash collectors, intellectuals, "gun nuts," conservatives, shamans, upper class New Yorkers, junkies, and good corn-fed Kansans, and I was able to meet quite a few of them. They were absurdly supportive of the film, and pushed me forward with footage, introductions, and incredible interviews. I was placed in an unsavory situation or two, of course, but that made the process all the more fun. For those not already familiar with Burroughs, I hope this film will motivate them to read Burroughs's work, and explore their own avenues of critical thinking about control and daily existence. I hope Burroughs would be proud.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing Tuesday nights at 10 PM on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement, and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about a unique individual, community, or moment in history. Presented by The Independent Television Service (ITVS), the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. Further information about the series is available at www.pbs.org/independentlens. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS, and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen.

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